

Hita La'mon: Hasso Independence

The Legacies of War



"I was supposed to marry before the war, but then the war happened. After the war, my boyfriend came to look for me and I told him that I was sorry, 'I forgot how to love you.' Who's gonna think to love when you are suffering?"

-Master Techa Magdalena
"Tan Deda" S.N. Bayani,
World War II Survivor

"As the world's most extensive industrial enterprise, the military generates huge quantities of hazardous wastes--used oils and solvents, paint sludges, plating residues, heavy metals, asbestos, cyanide, PCBs, battery acid, pesticides, herbicides and virtually every other toxic substance known to man."

- Los Angeles Times

To'to Contamination

The *Ibanez, Guerrero, and Montecalvo Properties (10 acres)* were used as a World War II military landfill called the 5th Marine Supply Depot (Fifth Field),

"Sections of the top-soil, primarily on the Ibanez property, were found to be contaminated with hazardous levels of mercury, lead, arsenic, pesticides and polychlorinated biphenyls commonly known as PCBs."

-from the Army Corp of Engineers Proposed Remediation Plan

"When I was a kid all you have to do is pick it up and throw it and it sparks and there's an odor coming out of it; we don't know also if that's a potential hazard for us or our children among this compound."

- Vicente Ibanez regarding calcium hypochlorite glass ampules found on his property

"A 1986 interview with Mr. Jose Guerrero indicated that the Guerrero property was the site of 6 military supply warehouses, a military vehicle baseyard, and a shooting range. When American forces left the area to mobilize for the Korean conflict, a large pit was excavated and excess military equipment and supplies were dumped into the pit. The land was then backfilled."

- Pacific News Center

Since these properties were designated as part of a Formerly Used Defense Site (FUD), the responsibility the Army Corps of Engineers was responsible for cleanup. Based on the severity of contamination, in 2011 they recommended "Excavation and Off-site Disposal". While they began this process on the Ibanez property, they ran out of funding and never completed the project.

Seeping Into i Tano' Yan i Tasi

"The Superfund program is responsible for cleaning up **some of the nation's most contaminated land** and responding to environmental emergencies, oil spills and natural disasters."

- Environmental Protection Agency

The Ordot Landfill and Andersen Air Force Base are listed as Superfund sites.

Ordot Landfill (Superfund Site)

- In 1988, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency determined the Navy is a responsible party for the contamination found in Ordot dump. The Navy owned and operated the dump before and after World War II.
- An EPA study identified 17 Toxic Chemicals in the Ordot Dump. All of them belong to the EPA's 2002 list of "Priority Toxic Pollutants", including: Arsenic, Lead, Aluminum, Barium, Antimony, Cadmium, Chromium, Manganese, Pesticides, PCBs, Toluene, Ethylbenzene, Xylenes, Zinc, and Cyanide.

Andersen Air Force Base (Superfund Site):

- Contaminants Found: Arsenic, Asbestos, Lead, DDT, DDE, Thallium, Chlorinated Dioxins and Furans, Antimony, PCBs and TCE in Marbo Annex groundwater
- The sites on Andersen AFB consist of chemical weapons storage areas, landfills, firefighting training areas and other items that can affect the environment through releases or mishaps.

Cocos Island:

- Formerly used for a long-range navigation station from 1944-1963
- Elevated level of PCBs found
- "The U.S. military used PCBs in the past in electrical equipment such as transformers and capacitors. It is thought that contamination in the Cocos Lagoon is the result of PCB-contaminated equipment being discarded on the land and in the water, along with the transport of PCBs in runoff from the island."

-Pacific Daily News

As an independent nation, we would have the opportunity to completely reorient the way that we treat the land. We could create land-use policies rooted in Chamorro stewardship practices; practices that will not treat our land as expendable dumpsites. In healing the land, we can heal ourselves.

Comparative Model: Ho‘oula ‘Āina

“ O Ka Hā O Ka ‘Āina Ke Ola O Ka Po‘e”

“The Breath of the Land is the Life of the People”

-Hawaiian Proverb



Originally started in 1972, the non-profit organization of Kokua Kahili Valley was established as a way to decrease the growing health disparities that existed amongst the valley’s low-income immigrant population, comprised mostly of Asian and Pacific Islander groups, approximately 98%. Of the residents in the valley, about 38% are originally from places outside of the Hawaiian Islands. To encompass all of these diverse cultural differences, the organization’s founders envisioned programs that would create an “inclusive community in which neighbors help to heal neighbors, and people see themselves as part of a larger whole, connected to each other, to their culture, and to their shared land.” Today at KKV, the community-run organization works to make comprehensive and holistic health services available to the residents of Kalihi Valley: medical, nutrition, and chronic disease self-management, to name a few.

One set of programs that have been particularly successful in the community have been their environmental restoration and food cultivation workshops at Ho‘oula ‘Āina. Ho‘oula ‘Āina is a phrase meant to encompass the love for one’s land and how that land is meant to care for the people living on it. Literally translated to mean, “to grow the land” and “to grow because of the land”, thousands of people throughout the Hawaiian Islands gather to volunteer at the Kokua Kalihi Valley (KKV) as a way to embody the Hawaiian-based value system of Ho‘oula ‘Āina.

Since 2004, members of KKV have developed and cultivated over 100 acres of land in the Kalihi Valley, which they named Ho‘oula ‘Āina. Through programs and workshops at KKV, these volunteers work tirelessly to bring life to Ho‘oula ‘Āina by restoring its forestry and surrounding fauna. As restoration efforts have given life to the land, the community has been successful in sustainably developing thriving gardens that all can partake in.



Rooted in Hawaiian worldviews and shared respect for the land their lives are lived, the folks of Kokua Kalihi Valley, consisting of multiple ethnic groups, have created a tight-knit community of mutual aid, deep holistic connections to health, and a sense of taking things into their own hands. In Guåhan, we can learn from examples like these and begin to think of the ways that bringing community together rooted in respect and responsibility to the land can help us collectively solve our problems and provide opportunities. One of the ways we say Independence in Chamorro is “Hita La’mon” which can be translated to “it is up to us.” Examples like these demonstrate the living breath of this spirit of independence to help prepare us for our future nation.

Nihi Ta Hassuyi Este (Questions To Consider):

1. What are some land use/stewardship policies you would want to see in an Independent Guåhan?
2. How can village residents work together to implement independent practices today?

www.independentguahan.com  independentguahan@gmail.com

Independent Guåhan empowers the Chamoru people to reclaim our sovereignty as a nation. Inspired by the strength of our ancestors and with love for future generations, we educate and unify all who call our island home to build a sustainable and prosperous independent future.