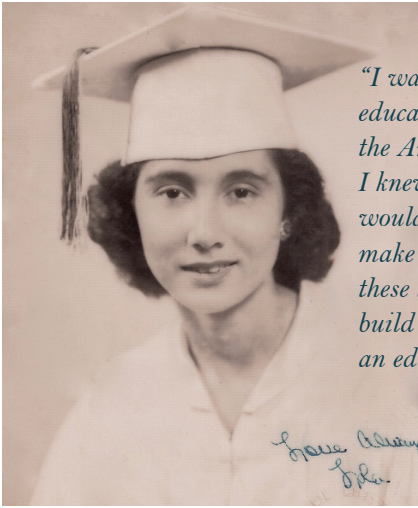


Hita La'mon: Hasso Independence



"I was not meant to get an education, but I took education everywhere I could get it. I took it from the Americans; and I even took it from the Japanese. I knew that whatever was happening around me, I would become educated. I knew that was how I would make things better for myself. Even today, with all of these things happening around you young people, the build up, the wars...what is really going to help you is an education."

—Gloria "Lola" Borja Nelson

Education in an Unincorporated Territory

"Education in Guam prior to the Second World War was more about learning how not to be a native, a savage, an uncivilized man—a Chamoru—and less about learning how to be an educated, civilized American."

—Mary T. F. Cruz, *(Re)searching Identity*, 2012

"The broader agenda of education fostered a situation in which the focus of public instruction largely shifted away from the academic training of students toward attempts to mold young pupils in ways that served the interests of assimilation."

—James Perez Viernes, *Negotiating Manhood*, 2015

"Despite these countervailing trends and the cultural nationalism of the past decade, institutions operating on Guam remain basically impervious to fundamental change. It could be argued that these institutions, such as schools, remain resistant to change because they originate from and operate on assumptions external to Guam. In short, they are colonial and colonizing."

—Robert A. Underwood, *Education and Chamoru Identity*, 1989

"We have seen and experienced how the colonial educational policies of the last 200 years have suppressed Chamoru language and culture. We have seen and experienced how the American school curriculum has been embraced with complete and unquestioned acceptance. The colonial policies entrenched in our system have, and will continue to negate the implementation of an effective and genuine Chamoru language and culture agenda."

—Pilar Lujan, *The Role of Education*, 1996

Not Adding Up

In 2015, the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) compared academic achievement in 73 countries. The United States ranked 40th in math (below the average score), 24th in reading (only 4 points above average) and 25th in science (just 3 points above average). Singapore, a small, independent nation similar in size to Guam, ranked first in all three categories according to *The Washington Post* (2016).

The American education system is not the best in the world and it is not working for our students on Guam, as revealed in historically low test scores. Our high schoolers consistently and alarmingly score well below the national average on the federal ACT Aspire assessment test. Students meeting the minimum acceptable standards for English range near 20% and average less than 10% for Math and Reading, according to the 2015-2017 *Annual ACT Aspire Report*. This does not mean our students are failing, but rather our schools are failing to reach them.

Thieves

Anne Perez Hattori

Thieves, they called us.
Religious converts, they made us.
Said we were sinful,
naked, savage, primitive
Playmates of Satan,
native souls blackened and corrupted
by immoral appetites.

Exterminated they called us.
Half-castes, they branded us.
Said we were impure,
racially-culturally-spiritually
Casualties of inauthenticity,
native blood contaminated and polluted
by casual miscegenation

Infantile, they called us.
Wards of the state, they made us.
Said we were immature,
UNeducated, UNdeveloped, UNCivilized
Victims of illiteracy,
native intelligence retarded and muted
by indifferent laziness

Now they tell us
we are simply, sadly, contemptibly
OVER-developed
OVER-modernized
OVER-theologized
OVER-Americanized.
UNDER-Chamoricized

From *Storyboard 5*, 1998

Decolonizing Education

"Under colonialism indigenous peoples have struggled against a Western view of history and yet have been complicit with that view. We have often allowed our 'histories' to be told and have then become outsiders as we heard them being retold. Schooling is directly implicated in this process. Through the curriculum and its underlying theory of knowledge, early schools redefined the world and where indigenous people were positioned within the world ... Decolonization, however, does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge. Rather, it is about centering our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes."

—Linda Tuhiwai Smith,
Decolonizing Methodologies 2nd ed., 2012

Learning from an Independent Model Nation: Aotearoa (New Zealand)



Māori Immersion School

“New Zealand's education system has been ranked top of the world in ‘educating for the future’...New Zealand is marked highly for focusing on ‘future skills’ and project-based learning in its school curriculum and teacher training.”

-NZ Herald, 2017

“Curriculum content strives to connect traditional Māori practices and knowledge with the skills and capabilities students need to confidently live in the digital world. It does this while reinforcing the critical importance of understanding the past to inform future practice that benefits people and the environment.”

-New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2017

“Students with high academic achievement and literacy in their native language have a tendency towards higher academic achievement and literacy development in English.”

-Pacific Policy Research Center, 2010

“International research shows definite benefits of speaking more than one language. These benefits include the ability to think more creatively and laterally, an appreciation of differing world views, a stronger sense of self and cultural identity and an enhanced ability to participate in more than one culture.”

- Ministry of Education, 2015

“A curriculum designed to provide a blueprint for the expression of Māori values and beliefs in Māori medium schools has been officially launched after more than three decades in the making ... The philosophy embraced different aspects of the child's development, which included, wairua (spirituality), hinengaro (mental wellbeing), whatumanawa (emotions) and tinana (physical wellbeing).”

- Townend, 2015



Nihi ta Hassuyi Este (Questions to Consider)

1. If you could design an independent educational system in a decolonized Guåhan, what would it look like? What would you want to teach our children to prepare them for life? How would you teach them (describe the setting, resources, information, activities, teachers, etc.)?
2. What are tangible ways we can begin to decolonize our educational system and schools in Guåhan today?



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. Contact us at independentguahan@gmail.com.