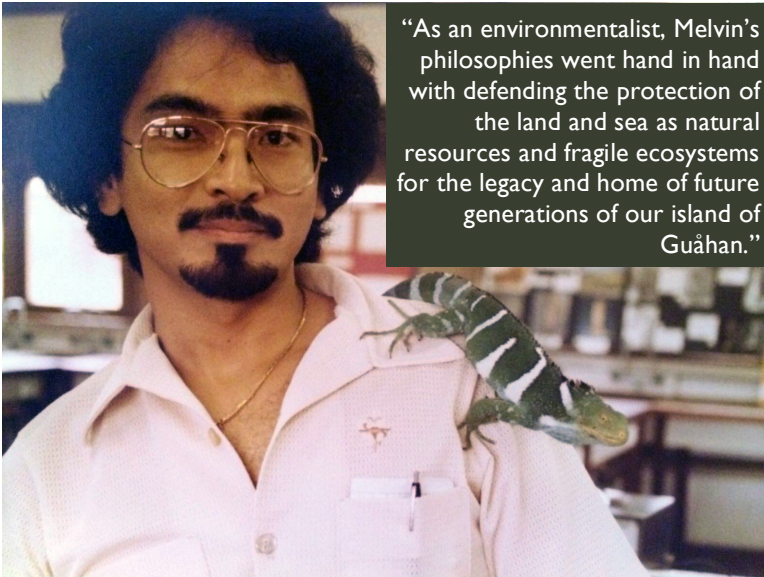


# Hita La'mon: Hasso Independence



"As an environmentalist, Melvin's philosophies went hand in hand with defending the protection of the land and sea as natural resources and fragile ecosystems for the legacy and home of future generations of our island of Guåhan."

Maga'taotao Melvin B. Borja, microbiologist and former Guam Environmental Protection Agency spokesperson

## Hu Guaiya iya Guåhan: Why we should prioritize and protect our environment & natural resources

"If you deliberately dump toxic waste in someone's community or disproportionately exploit their natural resources without adequate consultation and compensation, clearly you are abusing their rights. Over the past 60 years, as our recognition of environmental degradation has grown, so has our understanding that changes in the environment can have a significant impact on our ability to enjoy our human rights...because damaging the environment can damage the rights of people, near and far, to a secure a healthy life."

- *Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 6 Cross-cutting Themes*

"If we husband our lands and waters, they will feed and care for us ... We are stewards of the earth, our mother, and we offer an ancient, umbilical wisdom about how to protect and ensure her life...No one knows how better to care for ... our island home than those of us who have lived here for thousands of years."

- *Haunani-Kay Trask, Native Hawai'ian Educator, Political Scientist, and Writer*

## Native Lands Belong in Native Hands

"The root cause of many of the environmental issues facing Aboriginal communities lies in the process of colonization and subsequent colonial policies that continue to grip our Nations in contemporary times. Aboriginal Nations still do not have control over their Traditional Territories. We are still not able to make decisions about how our land will be used, or not used, how we will govern, and to a large extent, how our children will be educated."

- *Leanne Simpson in Indigenous Environmental Education for Cultural Survival,*

"This land, tiny as it is, belongs to us just as surely, just as inseparably, as we belong to it. No tragedy of history or declaration of conquest, no legalistic double-talk can change that fact. Guam is our legacy."

- *Governor Ricardo J. Bordallo*

## How does Guåhan's Unincorporated Territory Status Impact our Environment?

As an unincorporated territory, we are not able to negotiate mutually beneficial terms and conditions with other countries. Nor can we control the types of contamination and destruction from U.S. military testing and training activities that occur in our air, our waters, and in nearly a third (30%) of our land that is occupied by the U.S. Thus, Independence would allow us the freedom to create and implement policies that are environmentally and culturally conscious of our values as *i Taotao Tano'*.

"I believe in Independence for Guåhan, because the newest U.S. administration has made its position on climate change very clear. They don't believe in it. We, as a Pacific, need to be united now more than ever. And if Guåhan was able to become Independent ... they would be able to contribute to the movements on climate change...we need to be united together as a Pacific. Biba Independent Guåhan!"

- *Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner, Marshallese Poet, Author, Climate Change Activist, and Educator*

## Learning from An Independent Model Nation: Samoa



School children planting mangroves in Samoa as a natural solution to climate change.

The Independent State of Samoa, formerly known as Western Samoa, is a group of islands in Oceania. It consists of two main islands, Upolu and Savai'i, and seven smaller islets. Upolu is home to the capital city Apia, where nearly three quarters of the country's population resides. Samoa became the first Pacific Island nation to achieve political independence in 1962.

**Domestically, the government has implemented conservation programs in an integrated manner through economic and governance reforms.**

-Samoa actively participates in regional and international collective efforts to address environmental and sustainable development issues and to pursue cooperative arrangements between the government, private sector and non-governmental organizations to **advance environmental integrity** and achieve sustainable development for the benefit of future generations.

### **Samoa incorporates environmental values into decision-making and development**

- In 1993, the Government developed its National Environmental Management Strategies (NEMS) setting out the procedures and structure for environmental management and sustainable development. In recognition of existing laws that proved inadequate in preserving and protecting the environment, Samoa revised those laws and implemented new ones.

-Samoa has benefited from becoming a signatory to international and regional conventions, and receives resources from the international community for capacity building, training of professional staff for ongoing projects, and to invest in human resource development as the framework for meeting the challenges of social and economic development in the years ahead.

-The "Strategy for the Development of Samoa" recognizes that **the Fa'a – Samoa or Samoan culture – is a key factor in achieving and maintaining social harmony** within Samoan society. It is a valuable social security system that provides cohesion in the community.

– *World Summit on Sustainable Development Assessment Report*

### **Nihi Ta Hassuyi Este (Questions To Consider):**

1. Do you own or lease the land you live on? How does this affect your ability to care for your land according to your values?

2. How can an Independent Guåhan use Chamoru values to protect and sustain our environment for future generations? Describe specific laws, programs, and partnerships with other nations that we should explore when we become independent.



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