

## Other views

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# Angel Santos should use political skill in his fight for landowners' rights

**N**o one should be surprised at the prison sentence handed down to former Sen. Angel Santos for defying a court order to stay off federal property.

Throughout history, men and women have been jailed for standing up for their beliefs.

In many cases, those imprisoned are elevated to a loftier status upon their release — a badge of honor, so to speak, for having given up their freedom for their cause. It will probably be the same in Santos' case.

When he returns to Guam six months from now, Angel Santos will command a new respect from his followers. Not many people are willing to risk time behind bars to make a point.

He'll have to shake off his "radical" label, earned several years ago when he jumped military fences and spit on soldiers, if he wants the support of others, though. Having a job would certainly help his image. If he hadn't ended that hunger strike on his own, I would've told him to eat so Guam taxpayers won't have to support his children.

Santos in no way ranks up there with such civil rights heroes as Rosa Parks, whose arrest for refusing to give up her bus seat to a white man in Alabama in 1955 led the U.S. Supreme Court to outlaw racial segregation.

Thankfully, though, Santos has taken the seemingly more peaceful route of civ-



**Jayne Flores**

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il disobedience.

Whatever you may think of Angel Santos, he has a point. It makes no sense for the feds to hang on to all this land when Uncle Sam continues to militarily bail from Guam as if we were a sinking ship.

Other local politicians seem to think that doing the "Amerikanon pao asu" routine, schmoozing with the powers that be in our nation's capital, may help our cause.

And every so often the DC politicians throw us a few crumbs of excess acreage in an effort to make us think the schmooze is working.

You know, to "keep the natives quiet." Santos seems to be one of the few natives not fooled by these "crumbs." I'd have to advise him, though, that civil disobedience is not the way to go.

First of all, most Chamorros aren't going to be willing to risk their freedom and their livelihoods in order to reclaim fed-

eral property that used to belong to their families.

Second, the return of excess federal lands is an extremely complicated issue.

We already know the feds aren't going to turn any land over to the original owners. Rather, they'll give it to the local government.

Yet a lot of people don't trust our government to do right by those owners. As the Cable News "Landscam" reports showed us a decade ago, some of the biggest

thieves of land on this island were Chamorros themselves.

Santos should use his time behind bars to think about the direction in which he wants to take his Chamorro rights movement.

Hopefully, it will be a more statesmanlike route. He has a definite following and proved his oratory skills during the 1998 gubernatorial debates. Also, few people are as passionate about their beliefs as this man is.

Whatever your opinion of Angel Santos — make no mistake. This Chamorro rights activist is going to be a force to be reckoned with in his effort to convince the federal government that excess military land should be returned to the original landowners.

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