

Status forum helps clear up plebiscite for Sanchez teens

By Julian Aguon

For Pacific Daily News

A forum held yesterday helped Simon Sanchez High School students understand the three choices that will be on the ballot when Guam holds a political status plebiscite for Chamorros.

Statehood, independence and free association are the three options in the plebiscite scheduled for July 1, but which could be postponed to Nov. 7, according to Pacific Daily News files.

After the three-hour forum at the Yigo school's cafeteria, about 150 students filed out of the venue more informed about the different arguments for each status choice, students said yesterday. Eight students from the school's Advanced Placement American Government class prepared the forum under the guidance of instructor Beverly San Agustin.

Leland Bettis, Commission on Decolonization executive director, provided an overview of the historical aspect of Guam's self-determination efforts. Joe Garrido represented the free association task force, Eddie Duenas represented the task force on statehood and Antonio Sablan represented the task force on independence.

Jenny Toves, a senior, said she left the forum with more of an open mind. "(The forum) got rid of that single-

minded attitude for only supporting statehood to help me to see the good points of each side," Toves said.

"I never supported independence but through this forum I was able to understand (independence supporters') point of view," said Toves, 18. "They actually do have a pretty good plan for a good economy."

Other teens agreed that the forum helped them understand the plebiscite issues.

"The forum clearly defined the proposed options, kind of making the road clearer as to what lies ahead," said Ehrine Manzana, a senior at Sanchez.

Manzana, 17, expressed a better understanding of Chamorros' goals for the non-binding plebiscite — which include determining the course for the island's future political status and preserving indigenous culture.

Joseph Heath, a senior, said he had mixed feelings about the presentations. "I believe Chamorros have a right to decolonize but they should not set up a government that favors certain races or people above others," the 16-year-old Heath said. "Racial pride has in the past led to horrible injustices committed against defenseless people. If we continue to repeat the mistakes of the past we will not be able to progress as a civilization."

**Chamorro
Plebiscite**

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