

Remarks of Former Senator and now Businessman Paul J. Bordallo, presented as panelist organized by the Guam Humanities Council at the University of Guam Lecture Hall on December 7, 2005, subject: Guam and the Organic Act in the 21st Century.

Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen. My name is Paul Bordallo, and I am a member of the Chamorro Nation. When I say "Chamorro Nation", I mean not only as a political entity, but as a historical, social, and cultural one as well. For, as a nation of unique people, we inherit and bear witness in common to a long and proud history, traditions, and institutions. We may not always articulately express these qualities, but even those who have lived and struggled alongside my fellow Chamorros can attest to their presence and their influence in Guam today.

I am also a proud American, one whose father lobbied Congress in 1937 for the citizenship we all enjoy. In fact, from the time I was a child, my parents taught us the English language, anticipating our eventual inclusion into the American Empire. I was a young man when the Organic Act was passed, and I was enjoying the fruits of that elevated status by studying at the most prestigious universities in the mainland. Since that time I have seen my children and the children of my siblings grow and prosper in ways our parents could scarcely have imagined. Today, no one can deny that the Bordallo family has reaped the benefits of American citizenship.

However, as I understand it, to be a true American and a true Chamorro, we must speak honestly about the Organic Act. We must speak to its original intentions and the times in which it was crafted. We must speak about those in the past who attempted to abuse it, but also those who strove to uphold it. For, as I felt at the time and as I do today, the Act is merely a stepping stone on the way to a greater, self-determined status for Guam. For me and many others, the Act is not the terminus of U.S./Chamorro relations, but rather the departure point:

I would like to share with you why I believe more firmly in the "Organic"-ness of the Act and what is at stake for Guam: We stand at the doorstep of a new century poised between two stars- one which has reached its zenith, and the other which is quickly rising. Of course, I speak of the Americas and Asia. These two economies are so interlocked and are so great in size that the world's wealth—natural resources, people, information- basically, anything of value or importance flows into or out of these two economies in one way or another. As we speak Chinese entrepreneurs are setting up factories in Shenzhen, and their Chinese-American cousins are opening warehouses in San Gabriel Valley. Geographically, we are the closest American soil to the country which produces a majority of the consumer products sold in the U.S. But in order for us to inject ourselves into this raging torrent of trans-Pacific activity we must have a legal environment which helps and not hinders. Now, more than at any time in Guam's history, if our children are to thrive in this new world, we must reform the law to level the playing field.

If there is one idea which all of us can take away from this occasion, it is that the status of Guam to the United States and to the world at large is still an ongoing process. The people's voices still need to be heard by those in power who have an obligation to bring their mandate to fruition.

I humbly propose that the various groups on Guam embrace mutual understanding, tolerance, and trust in one another and as a united community, instruct the local political leadership to forward to Delegate Madeleine Bordallo the "Draft Commonwealth Act" for re-submission and hopefully, the enactment by the Congress of the United States.

