

No status for Guam, no constitution

By Hope Alvarez Cristobal

On the subject of Guam's political development, one wonders why we are being taken back some 20 years to once again discuss a Guam constitution at a time when we are in the middle of an education program for the upcoming plebiscite to determine political status.

As a Chamorro, I recognize it as a way to tilt the playing field, presumably, until our processes guarantee politically correct outcomes.

In our collective wisdom, we rejected two constitutions in 1972 and 1979. The 1979 constitution was based on U.S. law that mandates strict parameters under U.S. sovereignty. Why should a people be made to write their own, first-time document in their history as a people with their hands tied? The rally cry then was, "No status, no constitution." It's clear that in order to construct the framework of our "house," our constitution, we must first establish a solid foundation on which it will stand. The requisite foundation is political status. It gives a constitution its essential form. Without status, our

constitution will be all sail and no anchor.

Rep. Don Young's introduction of H.R. 3999 muddles and attempts to subterfuge the current Chamorro decolonization process. It appears he is completely unaware of that. Furthermore, the fact that Del. Underwood is not a sponsor speaks loudly of Guam's position of non-support for this bill.

H.R. 3999 resurrects the 1976 U.S. laws 94-584 and 96-597. Its amendment provision detracts from current education efforts of the government of Guam's Commission on Decolonization. This provision implicitly acknowledges that there are American citizens on Guam who have an inalienable right to self-determination and yet it appears to nullify H.R. 3999.

After such a constitution is ratified, there will still be a group that has a right to self-determination to be exercised at some unknown time. Apparently, it also aims to legitimize settlers who are here and to reposition the indigenous people never to be able to exercise self-determination as embodied by the U.N. Charter.

Some solutions? Teach courses about self-determination, decolonization and what independence, free association and statehood could do for a decolonized people. The media can use correct nomenclature and bring out all truths. Reports on the annual review process of Guam as a non-self governing territory at the U.N. are long overdue.

The U.S. self-constructed, legal relationship with Guam reflected as "appurtenant to the United States and belongs to the United States but is not a part of the United States," will not change should H.R. 3999 become law. We are considered a possession, a piece of property and there is not even a tacit commitment that Guam would ever permanently be a part of the U.S. internal or integrated system.

So, we must ask ourselves what good would it be to now draft our document under a system that binds rather than frees. Will it be another legal pretense to stack the deck against the Chamorro people until the Chamorro "breadfruit" becomes ripe for the picking?

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