

# Status vote will drive away investors

Against the advice of my family and my friends, I would like to comment on the issue of "self-determination" to be decided solely by a "Chamorro Registry." In my opinion and the opinion of many legal scholars, this procedure is illegal and unconstitutional.

It is an exercise in futility, creating divisiveness in a small island community and a waste of money and valuable resources. The amount of public money and resources being spent could best be used for more nurses, police officers, teachers and other professionals, not to mention the distrust and apprehension that it is needlessly creating.

It has been my honor and privilege to have been a resident and involved in business on this island for the past 50 years. During that time, I have successfully convinced global lending institutions in world financial centers, such as Hong Kong and New York City, to finance projects on Guam. These projects have results in tens of millions of dollars in revenue for the government of Guam, and have directly or indirectly employed thousands of residents.

It is Guam's ability to attract investment that has fed, clothed and educated the people of this very blessed location and will determine its future prosperity and well-being.

The recent push for a Chamorro-only vote to choose whether Guam should remain American soil and its people remain U.S. citizens, tears at the very foundation of our ability to prosper. This agitation for ethnic-only voting and a withdrawal of our U.S. status is costing us incalculable losses in human resources and economic opportunities.

The Chamorro-only vote, for example, sends a signal of ethnic separation to the outside world, harming everyone who lives here, whether or not their ancestors were here before 1950. Such a vote is illegal and unconstitutional. But more than that, it is costly. Just proposing such a vote gives an impression that Guam does not welcome people of talent and resources and will not treat them fairly.

The proposal for an alternative status tells financial markets that the stability and reliability of our laws can't be counted on, eroding our competitive edge. It results in a human cost which will wound our community and destroy our children's opportunities, forcing them to go elsewhere to find prosperity.

One of the characteristics that makes Guam very attractive to business and to global resources is the fact that we are so diverse. The original Guam natives are of Malayan descent, originating in the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia. There are many common words in all three languages. The clothing, songs, culture and habits of indigenous Guamanian res-

idents are of Spanish, Filipino and American origin. Our present composition of residents can be extrapolated from the census taken in 1812 which showed that the island population was: 50 percent Chamorro; 48 percent Filipinos and 2 percent others. Today, all of those descendants call themselves Chamorros. This diversity and multiculturalism is a source of deep pride and bodes well for our potential to thrive in an increasingly diverse global economy.

Guam's credibility is greatly diminished when people claim we are colonized. Every time we start spouting about being a colony, we lose the respect of intelligent people. It is a smoke screen for our unwillingness to work on our own problems and take advantage of our opportunities. We are not a colony. We are modern, enlightened and progressive. We are the benefactors of Spanish, Filipino and American culture, which ushered in a better quality of life,

with all of its attendant rights and opportunities. We disparage ourselves by saying we are a colony. When we say that, we align our selves with all the tribes and ethnic groups that are disgruntled and rebel against the modern world. No people in our region or on this globe have the incredible opportunities we have as U.S. citizens on United States soil.

Not only do we enjoy unparalleled freedom and opportunities, but our little community enjoys more influence and attention than any similar community in the United States. One recent example is our present governor who has aggressively sought out opportunities to draw attention to Guam and build friendships with leaders in Asia and Washington. What other small community has its governor on a first-name basis with the president of the United States?

If we want an improved status, we should stop all this talk of "colony" and "subjugation" These are harsh and hateful words that lead nowhere. This approach is denigrating to all of us. The rest of the world would like to be in our shoes as a "colony" of the United States. Let's celebrate being U.S. citizens on U.S. soil. We can brag about that while we lobby the United States for more.

The positive approach adds some dignity and makes Guam and the United States look good. Why not take that approach and say that we enjoy what we have now. But we

want more resources and increased opportunities because we can do great things for ourselves and the United States.

Instead of fighting diversity, why not celebrate it? Instead of acting like we have been colonized, why not proclaim that we are more American than the United States itself? If we are solid in our pride as U.S. citizens, investment and prosperity will follow. If we welcome "outsiders," they will bring their skills and their futures here.

If we give the signal that we are bright and opportunistic enough to take advantage of it, prosperity will follow.

We must show we are not sulking over a perception of being wronged in our past. Instead, eagerly reach out to take advantage of our resources and our future potential. It is prosperity that determines one's destiny.

We should learn from the Philippines. A few politicians agitated for independence in lieu of the existing

commonwealth status. A land of milk and honey, of law and order and stability, with a great future, was turned into a third-world country. Only the politicians benefited, to the detriment and misery of the entire population.

Has anybody formulated the type of government that we would live under if we broke away from the United States, e.g. parliamentary, republic, dictatorship, monarchy, etc.? What type of laws would be enacted? What would replace the large federal subsidies now in place? It definitely wouldn't come from military land rentals that are being suggested.

Our previous administration encouraged the pullout of our military, thereby losing millions of dollars of revenue to the local economy and to the treasury of Guam. Guam has become obsolete as a military base in this modern day.

Let's come to down to earth and face reality. The whole world is trying to achieve what our leaders achieved in the 1930s: Citizenship and political and economic stability. The Bordallos and the Guerreros were the legitimate, elected representatives of the island population, and authorized to negotiate and choose the present political machinery.

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(Editor's note: Joe Murphy's column will return tomorrow.)