

IN-SIGHTS



words & PHOTOS by Micronesian Youth

Guam and its indigenous Chamorro people have deeply rooted historical and cultural ties with other islands in the region of Micronesia. In many ways, however, these connections have been dramatically altered given the very different colonial histories of Guam and the islands in the rest of the region, particularly in relation to the U.S.

The migration of “Micronesians,” as they have come to be called, to Guam over the past twenty years has presented a number of perceived challenges to the larger Guam community that have focused on such complex, and oftentimes contested issues as adaptation, discrimination and identity. The possible opportunities associated with the migration process, including diversity and its richness, economic contribution, innovation, and cultural preservation and connectedness have been largely overlooked, as have Micronesian perspectives.

Through the project, “*The Micronesian Question, Issues of Migration, Identity and Belonging on Guam*” the Guam Humanities Council focuses on the many issues surrounding the migration of islanders from other parts of Micronesia to Guam. The lives and experiences of Micronesians in Guam are also explored. The project is multifaceted in scope and includes our Motherhead family literacy program, a series of films/discussion and readings/discussion, a youth-centered photography and creative writing project and community conversations. Given the anticipated migration to Guam of several thousand people largely from the U.S. mainland, Hawai’i and Asia as part of the planned military expansion set to begin in 2014, the project is especially timely.

The youth-centered component of the project, *In-Sights*, has the objective of giving voice to the youth of Micronesian communities through the visual medium of photography and the writing of personal and/or community narratives. Fifty-seven youth, who represent the region’s diversity and come from all five public high schools, participated in a series of ten workshops to learn to tell their stories. They worked with professional photographers and humanities scholars to express what it means to grow up Micronesian in Guam through selected images and words that appear in this exhibition, which will travel throughout the island.

The four main themes highlighted in the work of participating Micronesian youth and that reflect important aspects of their lives include: Representation, Culture and Identity, Faith and Community, and Education. Each of these themes is explored throughout the exhibition, as are the important and creative voices of young Micronesians in Guam.

The *In-Sights* exhibit project is made possible through grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, We the People Initiative and the Guam Council on the Arts and Humanities Agency (CAHA). The Council’s main exhibition tour sponsor is Triple B Forwarders with the Agana Shopping Center as the sponsor for the exhibit opening. We are also grateful for the support of the Honorable Nonito Blas and the Mangilao Mayor’s Office for providing the workshop venue. Pizza Hut and Subway Restaurants and Micronesia Mall have likewise contributed to the project.

The Council would like to thank the project’s humanities scholars, Dr. Sharleen Santos-Bamba and Carol Simpson-Warner, and the professional photographers, Victor Consaga and DL Lasrithammavan, for conducting the youth workshops. A very special thank you goes to the Micronesian youth participants, as well as their parents, for their enthusiasm, hard work and commitment to the project, and for allowing us to share their insights of Guam as home.

THE MICRONESIAN QUESTION

by Emelihter Kihleng

For those who
Think they know
Wonder
Don't care
Or haven't given thought to...

WHAT IS A MICRONESIAN?
No, not a POLYNESIAN
Not a MELANESIAN
MICRONESIAN
MICRONESIAN
MICRO-NESIAN

Micro
Small
Miniscule
Invisible
Ignored
Isolated
Distant, "tiny islands"

MICRONESIANS
Migrating
Moving
Island hopping
On Continental Air Mike
Departing from our islands
Descending upon the U.S.
who gave us
permission
back in '86
slowly getting noticed
across Honolulu
FOB MICRONESIANS
women wearing
colorful,
bright,
long skirts
Pink combs in long hair
Walking by the road
On The Bus
With babies
Accompanied by
other women
With babies
Dangling gold earrings
Crammed into apartments
Movin' on up
Stereotyped
Misrepresented
Speaking "MICRONESIAN"
If you read the news
You'd think we were
Invading legal aliens

Newspaper Headlines Read:

"MICRONESIAN BILL TOO LONG OVERDUE; THE ISSUE: THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OWES HAWAII NEARLY \$100 MILLION FOR SERVICES PROVIDED TO IMMIGRANTS FROM MICRONESIA"

"MICRONESIANS: THE INVISIBLE MALIHINI"

"HAWAII MAY GET HELP IN HELPING MICRONESIANS"

we are a "BURDENSOME" group
of more than 10,000
50% living below
federal poverty level,
relying "not only on educational services but on social-welfare services, health care and safety-net programs"

CAYETANO CLAIMS:

"WE SIMPLY CANNOT ABSORB THE EXTRA COSTS OF PROVIDING SOCIAL SERVICES AND MEDICAL AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE NEEDED BY SUCH POOR MIGRANTS"

Are MICRONESIANS the only "POOR MIGRANTS" coming here?

Are MICRONESIANS guilty of consuming all food stamps

invading all
KPTs,
Mayor Wrights,
and Palolo housings

Using up all
QUEST,
WIC,
MEDICAID
and welfare on island??

I DON'T THINK SO.

So where are all these "MICRONESIANS" coming from?
Who are we?
What are we?

MICRONESIA
POLYNESIA
MELANESIA
colonial constructions
colonial creations
imaginations
configurations
divisions of Pacific Islands

MICRONESIA in the Western Pacific
between Hawaii and the Philippines
And YES, Guam, the U.S. Territory,
is located in MICRONESIA
And the people there, Chamorros,
are MICRONESIANS in denial

the term "MICRONESIAN"
Was first coined on Guam
To distinguish Guamanians from
Their non-U.S. citizen, inferior neighbors migrating to Guam
MICRONESIAN became a means to
Discriminate and target a vulnerable population

At George Washington High School
On Guam
MICRONESIANS
Are discussed on a daily basis

Those fucken MICRONESIANS

I'm not sitting by stupid Trukese

I would never go out with a fucken Trukese, I'd shoot her if she tried to kiss me

my school
segregated
MICRONESIANS in A and B wings
in the cafeteria eating free lunch
Filipinos in C and D wings
Chamorros in E and F wings
And everyone else around someplace
Chuukese, AKA Trukese
not allowed
To wear red
The school
Said that was
The Chuukese gang color

MICRONESIANS don't identify as MICRONESIANS
We were given that identification after leaving home
Upon coming to Guam and Hawaii
Each of us unique like
Tongans,
Samoans, and
Hawaiians
Who do not merely identify as Polynesians

WE ARE:

Pohnpeians
Palauans
Chuukese
Chamorros
Kosraeans
Nauruans
Yapese
Gilbertese
Marshallese
and More

WE SAY:

Kaselehlie
Alii
Ran Annim
Hafa Adai
Lenwo
Mogethin
Yokwe

So what is a MICRONESIAN?

Can you tell me what is a MICRONESIAN?

An outside invention?
A misconception?
A location?
A population?

MICRONESIAN lacks concrete definition

An inadequate
Insufficient
Identity
Misplaced
Bestowed wrongly
Upon a large and diverse
Pacific Island population
Who are not under one flag
Who do not speak one tongue
Who do not eat the same food
And most of all who
Do not want to be recognized as one