

1 Decolonization in itself is not self-determination.
2 It doesn't really free a country and all of its people of
3 oppression, as we seen happening in the Micronesian nations
4 today. And as we heard earlier, self-determination requires
5 responsibility. And that's why we are here today.

6 And so with that, I would like to introduce our first
7 panelist, Ms. Elfriede Suda. Elfriede Suda is from Weno, Chuuk,
8 and is a graduate of Xavier High School, which is also in Weno,
9 Chuuk.

10 After high school, she attended the College of
11 Micronesia-FSM where she received her liberal arts degree and
12 also attended the Fiji School of Medicine for a year to pursue a
13 diploma in pharmacy.

14 After graduation from COM-FSM, she moved to Honolulu
15 with a full scholarship to attend a clinical psychology summer
16 program at the University of Hawai`i Manoa, and returned back to
17 Micronesia -- I'm sorry -- this time to Saipan where she worked
18 as a computer data analyst.

19 In 2000, she moved back to Chuuk and worked as a
20 volunteer teacher and administrative assistant for a year; then
21 moved back to Hawai`i to pursue an undergraduate degree in
22 speech here at the University of Hawai`i Manoa.

23 While doing this, she was introduced to The Judiciary,
24 State of Hawai`i, Office on Equality and Access to the Courts,
25 and became an interpreter. She is now officially registered

1 with the judiciary as a freelance interpreter and as also been
2 appointed by the Hawai`i state chief justice to represent the
3 Pacific region and the committee on court interpreters.

4 In 2006, she started her studies here at the
5 University of Hawai`i Manoa, Center for Pacific Island Studies,
6 School of Hawaiian, Asian, and Pacific Studies. Her area of
7 research is in language access in the legal setting for Chuukese
8 immigrants in Hawai`i.

9 In the project related to her studies, she is
10 currently working on an arraignment-and-plea legal glossary in
11 the Chuukese language, and this will be made available to the
12 (indiscernible) of interpretation and translation here at the
13 University of Hawai`i Manoa.

14 THE JUDICIARY - STATE OF HAWAI`I, COURT INTERPRETERS
15 BY MS. ELFRIEDE SUDA:

16 Thank you, Lillian. Before I (indiscernible) with
17 whatever I have to say today, I do want to pose a question to
18 the audience or even fellow Chuukese or fellow Micronesians who
19 are (indiscernible; not speaking into microphone).

20 Why do I have a job at the court? What needs to take
21 place in order for me to (indiscernible) interpreter? If no one
22 can answer, I do have an answer for you. The state has to
23 accuse you or the Chuukese of violating the Hawai`i Revised
24 Statutes or the Revised Ordinances of the City and County of
25 Honolulu or violate the Hawai`i Administrative Rules.

1 And when you do, when you do go to the courts, that's
2 where I step in. My role there is not to advocate, but I
3 function there as a conduit of words. And that means to
4 maintain as impartial as possible and not to function as an
5 attorney.

6 Although I may understand the system, I am very
7 limited in my role there. As much as I'd like to advocate for
8 my fellow Chuukese (indiscernible), I regret to say or to
9 apologize to the clients who go there, that I am not trained in
10 the law or I am not a trained attorney. And I must admit that I
11 always envy the service providers for -- the service providers
12 for having the opportunity to advocate.

13 But today, I'm very fortunate to ask you a question of
14 why are you (indiscernible) advocating for us, the Chuukese? Do
15 you (indiscernible) for us? Or do you want personal
16 enhancement? Or do you just want (indiscernible) for, you know,
17 personal gain?

18 If you are doing it for personal gain, I think you're
19 in the wrong position. You should be able to feel like I feel
20 when I'm at the courts. And because I'm very limited, like I
21 said earlier to my position, I'm very sorry to fellow Chuukese
22 that I cannot advocate for you at the courts.

23 As an interpreter, we are expected to be skilled
24 professionals who fulfill a (indiscernible) role in the
25 (indiscernible). And how is that acquired? I have to be

1 skilled in language of the courts, that is, English, in order to
2 translate into the Chuukese language.

3 And that poses a difficult thing for me as a Chuukese
4 interpreter because there is not one word for any legal terms in
5 the Chuukese language. When I was introduced to the job as an
6 interpreter, I was not trained in the legal field. As Lillian
7 may have shared with you in a brief bio, I was personally
8 health-related matters, because it was at that time when I was
9 young, relevant to the needs back home.

10 But now, I am pursuing things that are legal that
11 would not only benefit the Chuukese clients that I work with,
12 but also my fellow Chuukese interpreters. And in doing that, I
13 realized that when I became an interpreter, I had no Chuukese
14 resource available; or if there may be one, I was not able to
15 locate one.

16 And if there was a Chuukese language dictionary, it
17 was done by a (indiscernible). Most of the languages, most of
18 the words, the terms, to find it in a (indiscernible) were
19 languages that was not relevant to the work that I'm currently
20 doing.

21 So when I started studying, when I finished my
22 undergrad here, I was in speech. That position that I took up
23 as an undergrad studies was to empower me to be able, to be able
24 to speak in front of a lot of people, which I was never given an
25 opportunity back home to have the opportunities (audience

1 interruption) and talk like this, like I am doing right now.
2 And I was very fortunate to have been given the opportunity to
3 further that study here.

4 And then having to work as an interpreter, I realized
5 that I needed to advocate in a way to help the Chuukese clients
6 who constantly go to the courts. And in doing that, I decided
7 to take up a class offered to the Center For Interpretations and
8 Translations which I was very inspired, very much inspired that
9 I have to --.

10 In order to best help the Chuukese clients to go to
11 the courts, I have to know what a legal term is. And in order
12 to provide that legal interpretation, I have to know what it is
13 first in English.

14 But then when I researched it in English and I said
15 where is the Chuukese dictionary or legal dictionary? Then I
16 was inspired to put up this arraignment-and-plea legal glossary
17 which is still in the process of becoming a -- projects -- and
18 this is to help the fellow Chuukese interpreters who are trying
19 our best to provide the best service at the courts to insure
20 that the Chuukese have the right to equal access, to equal
21 access to the courts.

22 Like I said earlier, the (indiscernible) as
23 interpreters have a professional code of conduct to abide by.
24 And in order to do that, we have to understand it and abide by
25 it.

1 And one of it is to maintain as neutral as possible.
2 And then I was exposed to the problem, and I said, what does
3 neutrality mean? That means if you, for example, if you know a
4 client that goes to the courts and you should disclose that
5 information to the court or the judge, and the judge will
6 determine, who's the only neutral party there, to determine
7 whether you can interpret or not to interpret.

8 But it's almost difficult to say I don't know this
9 client because he's not related to you. You must know him
10 somewhere, maybe at Wal-Mart, or you must have seen him that
11 summer. It's a small community.

12 Although people might say there's a lot of Chuukese,
13 but we still connect somehow and we still belong to each other.
14 That feeling of belongingness, it's almost impossible for me to
15 say I don't know that person. And my job there is to make sure
16 I disclose that information, to abide by that written code of
17 conduct.

18 I would like to also reflect on the idea of advocacy.
19 And like Dr. Hilda Heine mentioned yesterday in her
20 presentation, she mentioned in her or she posed a question about
21 accountability for COFA problems here in Hawai'i.

22 Who is accountable for the individual who goes to
23 court, not knowing what's wrong? Or who is the conduit for that
24 Chuukese client that goes to the court? Is it the individual?
25 Is it the government, the sending government for not educating

1 that person about the expectations or what to expect in coming
2 to the United States, that there are certain rules and
3 regulations that we have to abide by?

4 Or could it be, for example, where a (indiscernible) a
5 common violation that I dealt with (indiscernible) is driving
6 without an insurance or driving without a license.

7 First of all, I would like to emphasize the idea that
8 it's not my interpretation here is my interpretation. It
9 doesn't reflect that of the courts. And I wanted to make that
10 out available to the audience.

11 And I think when we don't, we Chuukese don't have a
12 driver's license, it's because maybe when we first go to the
13 satellite city hall, (indiscernible) you call that, office, we
14 don't know the language of the written exams or we may not be
15 able to understand it.

16 And maybe the problem here is not being able to
17 comply, to fulfill the requirement, I mean, to take -- I mean,
18 to have a driver's license in the first place. So it's not
19 ignorance. Maybe instead of saying ignorance, I would like to
20 say that it could be maybe not understanding the language of the
21 (indiscernible).

22 What I would like to recommend for today, maybe for
23 the policymakers here, if we could make the language of the
24 written exam available in different languages. This issue was
25 raised at the symposium a long time ago. It held at the state

1 capitol. (Away from microphone.) And I don't know; it
2 (indiscernible) progress or it has been taken action
3 (indiscernible) it was just (indiscernible). But I would like
4 to see some action taken upon that.

5 Or can, if you recognize as individuals or immigrants
6 in the United States or in Hawai`i contributing to the economy,
7 can you also or would there be, who did this (indiscernible) to
8 recognize our Chuukese driver's license? Because sometimes when
9 the clients come to court, they do have a Chuukese driver's
10 license. (Indiscernible) cited for driving without a
11 (indiscernible) license.

12 Then they would be penalized for driving without a
13 license. Or can we reinstate the citations with (indiscernible)
14 for policymakers to consider that. (Voice fading.)

15 And I think my interpretation of why we go, constantly
16 go to the courts is we don't plan to fail -- we as a people plan
17 to fail here. The reason why we moved here is for all to share
18 the American dream, fellow citizens (indiscernible) like
19 everyone, everyone else.

20 When we come here, we don't plan to fail. But what I
21 would like to say is that maybe we failed to plan. And U.S.
22 policymakers, I challenge you to please help us, if you can help
23 us to plan so that we don't constantly go back to the courts.
24 Thank you.

25

* * * * *

1 (Audience applause.)

2 EMCEE HOWARD: Thank you so much, Elfriede. That was
3 very enlightening for me too. I've done a little bit of
4 interpretation of the (indiscernible) the court, but not that
5 degree.

6 So to recap, you're talking, it sounds like
7 you're talking about --. Well, I thought it was interesting
8 that most of the Micronesians' first introduction to the legal
9 system here is when we get in trouble with the law and how maybe
10 some of that can be avoided with language issues being bridged
11 across English and the other Micronesian languages.

12 So I hear you largely talking about access in
13 terms of language, the importance of translating the legal
14 vocabulary. And thank you for your hard work in you're doing
15 right now in translating (indiscernible) you are for the
16 Chuukese. Hopefully, it's a model for some of our other
17 Micronesian languages. And thank you for the policy
18 recommendations that you're making.

19 And I have also often wondered about that
20 possibility of the Micronesian driver's licenses being accepted
21 here in Hawai`i. But thank you very much.

22 So moving to our next panelist, we have Ms. Emma
23 Reimers. Emma comes from the Marshall Islands where she was
24 born and raised. Her mother comes from Arno, and her father
25 comes from Majuro.