

1 come from an oral society, like maybe all of the rest of the
2 Pacific. And so a lot of our communication is done indirectly.

3 And you know, I'm half-American and I even
4 remember visiting family in America, and they would say, gosh,
5 it's so interesting how the Micronesians communicate. You're,
6 like, doing eyebrow things and (audience interruption) with your
7 nose. And we don't even realize that we do that because that's
8 just, you know, from birth until now.

9 So you're probably laughing because you've seen
10 some of this with the Micronesians and you're hearing from the
11 panelists and then (indiscernible). And as you continue to work
12 with Micronesians, you will learn more. And please share that
13 with the other non-Micronesians trying to help the Micronesians.

14 So anyway, thank you so much (indiscernible) for
15 those insightful information.

16 Now moving on to our third panelist, we have
17 Ms. Brengyei Katosang. And she comes from the beautiful islands
18 of Palau which is a northernmost island nation in the region of
19 Micronesia.

20 She has lived in Hawai`i for about four years
21 now. She first came here to Hawai`i to go to law school here at
22 the University of Hawai`i, William S. Richardson School of Law.
23 She is currently staff attorney at the Legal Aid Society of
24 Hawai`i here on O`ahu. She just took her bar exam at the end of
25 February. So we'll all pray for the good news in May that she

1 passed.

2 She's in the housing unit at Legal Aid Society of
3 Hawai`i and is currently the only attorney at Legal Aid Society
4 from Micronesia.

5 LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF HAWAI`I

6 BY MS. BRENGYEI KATOSANG:

7 (Speaking in foreign language.) I just thought I'd
8 thank everybody for being here. I think it's amazing that we've
9 come this far to have -- well, people (indiscernible) that we
10 have a conference dedicated to us and how cool we are and
11 (audience interruption).

12 But what does it mean to be an advocate? To me this
13 means standing up for someone whose voice isn't being heard. My
14 challenge to everybody today is to be an advocate for people
15 from Micronesia.

16 We are the voices of Micronesia. We have been given
17 this honor of being the voice for our families in the homeless
18 shelters or families on the beach or families sitting in the
19 waiting room scared that we're not gonna get help 'cause
20 (indiscernible). We are their voices. We're the voices of the
21 kids who are at school who struggle and think that their only
22 voice -- their voice can only be heard through their fists,
23 through the violence that we're going through.

24 I don't want to cry. It's just my voice shaking, so
25 don't worry.

1 I have been given the opportunity to be a voice in our
2 community here. (Indiscernible) here in Hawai`i. Since
3 October 15, 2007, Legal Aid Society of Hawai`i has been able to
4 start serving people from Micronesia. And I want to take a
5 second to acknowledge Mr. Chuck Greenfield. He's the executive
6 director of the Legal Aid Society --

7 (Audience applause.)

8 Before October 15, 2007, Mr. Greenfield was -- at
9 first I wanted to say he was our only voice. But that might
10 send a message of disregarding all the other hard work that
11 other people have put into it. So I will say that within the
12 legal aid organization, he was the loudest voice.

13 And most recently, it was through his hard work and
14 dedication and love for us that made it possible for us people
15 from Micronesia to get assistance from Legal Aid Society of
16 Hawai`i.

17 So how are we at Legal Aid doing our part to be a
18 voice for our people? At Legal Aid, we provide free legal
19 service to very low income people in the community. Our areas
20 of law include family law. That includes, like divorce,
21 adoption, and people need help with getting power of attorney.
22 Also public benefits that includes welfare, food stamps, or
23 social security. We also have housing; that's the unit I'm in.

24 I help with people who have issues with
25 landlord/tenant issues, whether it's stuck in this place that

1 could be a whole lot better. I need to get my sewer fixed or my
2 pipes fixed, but my landlord can't do anything about it. What
3 can I do? I'm afraid to talk to them or they're ignoring me.

4 They can come to me. They can come to Legal Aid
5 Society. We're here for them.

6 I want to say that even though I'm the only person
7 from Micronesia working at Legal Aid Society, Legal Aid Society,
8 as a whole, we are one loud voice speaking for our people. So
9 don't feel intimidated.

10 I know a lot of my clients that I'd had recently, or
11 since I started, will say we want to come and ask for you. Can
12 we ask for the Micronesian attorney? And I'll say I can only
13 help in housing 'cause that's all I know.

14 But everybody at Legal Aid is really helpful -- our
15 staff, all the other attorneys. So even if there is that
16 language barrier, everybody's patient and willing and wanting to
17 help. So I just want to put that out there for everybody who
18 knows somebody who's looking for legal assistance and hesitating
19 to come to us.

20 What we don't do is criminal law. That means if we
21 have a cousin or a brother or a sister who has a DUI or got
22 (indiscernible) for fighting, we can't help them with that. So
23 I know we have a lot of questions or clients that come ask about
24 that. But we don't do criminal law.

25 So what other fabulous things has Legal Aid doing for

1 our people? And there's three things that I thought of when I
2 thought of this question.

3 First, we're doing outreach. So we're going out
4 (indiscernible) the community, giving people information about
5 what we do and our availability. So I talked to our outreach
6 direct -- or outreach queen, I should say, (indiscernible).

7 I talked to her this morning and she said that it's
8 okay for me to give her name. So if anybody or agencies or
9 groups or anybody who wants us to come and give information
10 about Legal Aid or give a little outreach to tell you what we
11 can do for you, then you can call us.

12 I also have brochures and my business card that you
13 can come meet me afterwards. I'll just put 'em up here after I
14 talk, and then it has information about what we do and our
15 contact information.

16 And also, we have, actually, a team, I should say, at
17 Legal Aid that goes to the homeless shelters and goes to the
18 beaches to try to get out there to the people who are, really
19 don't know about Legal Aid or hesitating to come. So we do have
20 people that are doing that.

21 Another area, the second area is fair housing. Fair
22 housing -- well, for me, I just do landlord/tenant, the
23 technical stuff. Like my stuff needs to get fixed or I'm about
24 to be evicted and I don't think should be (indiscernible).
25 That's me, or the specific area I'm in.

1 And then you have fair housing. Fair housing, they
2 deal with discrimination law. So that can be discrimination
3 based on disability, age, race, etc. So we have that in fair
4 housing.

5 And we are making, we're recognizing more that people
6 from Micronesia are being discriminated against. It's not
7 landlords as much as it's (indiscernible) everybody is really
8 nice. (Indiscernible) straight up say, oh, you're from there?
9 Yes. (Indiscernible) (audience interruption).

10 So fair housing is -- we have specifically fair
11 housing. So they have their own hotline and everything to help
12 that specific issue because it is such a major issue of
13 discrimination.

14 And lastly, what we've done -- and I think
15 (indiscernible) yesterday, was some of the other people were
16 saying that they provided agencies with trained (indiscernible).
17 They'll go to the agencies and talk to them about people from
18 Micronesia, cultural sensitivity stuff.

19 So I'd proud to say we've done that too. We had staff
20 training when I first started and we did that. We had some
21 people from the Micronesian community come and talk to us about
22 what we should be aware of, what we shouldn't do or we shouldn't
23 do. I think that's really important.

24 So I just want to thank everybody who are part of that
25 effort to educate agencies, because it really is important,

1 because some things people might think that it's totally fine
2 (indiscernible) to do. But it's a different culture. We are
3 kind of a (indiscernible) aback and we don't know how to redact
4 to that.

5 So I think agency training is really good. And we
6 have, I'm proud to say that we've done that. And they hired me,
7 so that's good. I'm very, very grateful.

8 And I think it is something. Like (indiscernible)
9 like Canisius mentioned. You know, just that comfort level,
10 that the familiarity brings to all of us. I know that with my
11 clients, when they come, they feel that way towards me too.

12 But I'd just like to say everybody here is really
13 nice, don't worry. But it's always good to have a familiar
14 face. So encourage all agencies to hire us. We're fabulous.
15 That's me. That's my little spiel.

16 So come up and get (indiscernible) business cards.
17 (Indiscernible) call me. (Indiscernible) brochures about Legal
18 Aid after. Thank you.

19 * * * * *

20 (Audience applause.)

21 MS. SEGAL: Brengyei, thank you for educating us on
22 the important services that are being provided by the Legal Aid
23 Society. That was very informative.

24 And I think the work that your agency is doing
25 with outreach into the community and really going out there and

1 getting the information out is awesome -- and that there are
2 things such as fair housing laws that protect against
3 discrimination.

4 And how very true that we currently do have a lot
5 of Micronesians going through difficult issues with renting and
6 landlords. In Micronesia, we believe having many children are
7 our resource. It's hard to fit those big families in the one-
8 to two-bedroom apartments that are more affordable to our people
9 here.

10 And thank you for making that comment about
11 (indiscernible) having a familiar face. And that's one of
12 beautiful things about this conference is that I think it is, we
13 have familiar faces in all these different important offices and
14 organizations here in Hawai`i, here to support our fellow
15 Micronesians and here to partner with the service providers.

16 And like Josie was representing Dr. Craig
17 (indiscernible) who was also one of my professors during my
18 undergrad years at UH Hilo, how true and important it is to have
19 people who are not Micronesian themselves, but who are
20 advocates, like you again, and can be friendly and understanding
21 and reaching out to the Micronesian students and people. So
22 thank you very much.

23 And with that, I'd like to move on to our final
24 panelist, Ms. Catherine Aubuchon. Catherine is a citizen of the
25 FSM. She was born in Pohnpei and grew up in Kwajalein in the