

Undergraduate Research Symposium May 16, 2014 Mary Gates Hall

Online Proceedings

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DECOLONIZING MICRONESIA

Session Moderator: Holly Barker, Anthropology

258 MGH

3:30 PM to 5:00 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

Saluting the U.S. Flag?

Kwani Chin, Senior, Anthropology

Martina Santos, Junior, American Ethnic Studies

Mentor: Holly Barker, Anthropology

What influences “Micronesians” to join the U.S. military? What effects does militarization have on reconstructing Micronesia? How does this also influence Micronesians’ decisions to join the US military? In our study, we researched the reasons that influence Micronesians to join the military and how militarization affects the reconstruction of Micronesian identity and culture. Micronesians have one of the highest rates per capita of enlisting in the United States military, and in turn have a death rate that is five times the average in the US. Despite these numbers and the nuclear history in Micronesia, men and women are still deciding to join the military. To study these reasons, we used methods such as surveys, interviews, and participant observation. As cultural insiders, we utilized our connections to family, friends, and communities to highlight the experiences of Micronesians in the U.S. military. Through conducting our research, we anticipated that the main influences of enlistment would be access to a better quality of life, career, and a chance to move away from the islands. We hope to give insight to the reasons for choosing this path while also bringing awareness to the possibilities of other choices and challenge this mindset of the military being the last resort for Micronesians.

Healthcare Legacies: Misconceptions in Micronesia

Brianne Salas (Brianne) Ramos, Senior, Anthropology:

Medical Anth & Global Hlth

Rachael Lyne Gurwan (Rachael) Tamngin, Sophomore, Pre-Health Sciences

Kwani Chin, Senior, Anthropology

Mentor: Holly Barker, Anthropology

It is important to see how health care policies in the United States and citizenship affect Micronesians who move away from the islands. Despite having the ability to travel freely

to and from the United States, the non-citizen status of many Micronesians denies them access to proper health care. The argument among policymakers is that Micronesians create a burden on taxpayers and that the responsibility should not fall on them, but the reality is that Micronesians who fall under the non-citizen status are also among those who pay income taxes. In our research, we studied the reasons for these inequalities and disparities and the ways in which Micronesians are being blamed for matters out of their control. To sufficiently unveil our research, we used discourse analysis to look at how the government responds to Micronesians who are in this situation, qualitative interviews of Micronesians affected by health care to reflect on their experiences and how they have responded, and surveys to gain a sense of the understanding US society has of Micronesians and their access to health care. We hope that through our research, we can bring awareness to the disparities Micronesians face in the health care system and the unique experience they face as displaced peoples affected by their citizenship status.

Fishing for Change

Alekisanita Kulikefu (Alex) Puloka, Junior, Pre-Major (Arts & Sciences)

Ryan M. (Ryan) Javier, Junior, Pre-Social Sciences

Mentor: Holly Barker, Anthropology

It is important to see the way that the word “Micronesia” itself belittles the people and culture, because when it is broken down, it means “small islands.” Such language connotes the idea that Micronesia is insignificant and unimportant. However, these islands have a rich cultural background in navigation and fishing. Through our research, we studied the ways that knowledge about navigation and fishing is passed down and why it is important to learn the values it brings to the people and culture. We conducted interviews, utilized object and artifact analysis, as well as cultural mapping on how the importance of learning this knowledge is today. We anticipate that our research will show the interconnectedness and reci-

procuity of Micronesian culture, the understanding and respect for the land, societal roles, and the ways of living.

Empowerment of the Arts

Suliana Fiftalao Mei (Suliana) Aho, Junior, Anthropology

*Desiree Mereng (Desiree) Gross, Sophomore, Pre-Major
(Arts & Sciences)*

Mentor: Holly Barker, Anthropology

How has colonization affected Micronesian art forms and what is the process of reviving and reclaiming culture through art today? Through our study, we are going to show the importance of art as a connection to culture, not for entertainment or aesthetic purposes. We anticipate that our research will show the vastness and unique qualities of Micronesian art forms such as carving, weaving, music, dance, and tattoos. The ways in which we are conducting our research is through artifact and object analysis through items found in the Burke Museum, interviews with individuals who practice different Micronesian art forms within the community, and our own positionality as students who identify with Micronesian culture through art. Through our research, we hope to inform others of the importance of keeping these traditions alive and how we can dispute the negative connotations of being “Micronesian” by practicing various art forms.