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Sen Guaiya Håo Guåhan 2017 Youth Conference

GALA, INCORPORATED, GUAM COMMISSION ON DECOLONIZATION, INETNON GEF PA'GO CULTURAL ARTS PROGRAM & THE UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

April 27, 2017 to April 28, 2017
The Guam Museum and the University Guam

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We, the youth attendees of the *Sen Guaiya Håo Guåhan* Youth Conference 2017, offer the following points on our island and culture today:

[1] To be CHamoru, means we: show respect, are family-oriented, practice our CHamoru traditions (e.g, *balutan, inafa'maolek*, "CHamoru borrow"), practice our religion, and show our pride and loyalty to our culture.

[2] As CHamorus, some struggles we experience include the influences of modernization and westernization that leads to the current language loss and the lack of knowledge of our culture and history.

[3] We acknowledge that we have different identities yet we experience the same struggles. In this melting pot of cultures, we are all Micronesians. Along with those struggles we are aware that there is a language barrier, but we can work to save it. We can save our language by coming out and not being ashamed to speak. We can save it by forms of art such as dancing. We can save the language by learning it, speaking it, and passing our knowledge down to the youth.

[4] We currently use arts as a form of expression for our culture. We use it to show our appreciation for our home. It aids us to share our beliefs and stories with one another because we have a home, identity, and culture to protect. Our culture is not fading.

[5] We face many struggles with our environment, but our current and continuous concern is our island's relationship with the federal government. President Trump and the U.S. Department of Defense are taking our lands. WE DON'T NEED YOUR MONEY, WE NEED OUR LANDS!

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[6] When given the chance to create our dream island of Guahan, we chose characteristics that resemble Independence as our political status for Guåhan, without us being aware of it. However, some of us still appeal towards statehood and free association characteristics.

[7] We know that our elders were once punished for speaking the CHamoru language. Today, we are ashamed and discouraged by the people around us but instead, should empower one another to speak CHamoru regardless if [our skill level] is bad because in order to speak good CHamoru we need to speak bad CHamoru.

[8] We understand that we are surrounded by resources such as the internet, our family and our teachers. There is no single way or person to save the language. It is our responsibility to take initiative to save it. It is going to take all of us.

[9] We understand that language is the key to our culture. It is what makes us unique to the world because without our language, we have no culture, without a culture, we have no people and without our people we are alone.

[10] We are inspired to be the generation that changes the mentality, the perspective, and the stigma towards the language. We will not be ashamed and we will not give up because the movement starts with us.

[11] We are aware of the threats to our water source on Guam, especially with the buildup in Litekyan. Water is essential to life yet we only have three sources on Guam. We need to conserve water, establish awareness organizations and media accounts and be careful of dispensing chemicals properly.

[12] We have a desire to protect the soil and forests from the buildup in Litekyan by constructing rain gardens, permeable parking lots, getting our community engaged in the issue, and promoting agroforestry.

[13] We need to protect and respect the habitats because they are homes to other animals and plants. The buildup in Litekyan will take up 4,000 acres and will endanger other species, both plants and animals.

[14] We must acknowledge and respect the environment. The water, the soil, the forest and the habitats are all important elements to us, our island and our culture, that is why we must protect Litekyan.

[15] We resonate what it means to be CHamoru by being family oriented, having pride in your culture, and staying true to your values (respect, love, passion, etc.).

[16] We face struggles in terms of CHamoru identity, some include difficulty showing pride in our culture, labels, language issues, lack of desire to immerse oneself in the culture, others' lack of knowledge and ignorance toward our culture.

[17] We are aware of the stereotypes that CHamoru people encounter some include ideas that we are judgmental, that our language does not equal success, and that our looks are not "CHamoru enough."

[18] We need to strive for more clubs/organizations, CHamoru education emphasis, youth empowerment, and CHamoru as a core subject.

[19] We acknowledge that the role of arts in promoting culture whether it be traditional arts, literary arts, dance, music, and/or film, makes us who we are and gives us a sense of security and a purpose in life. It is an outlet for us to express ourselves and exert our negative energy into positive energy.

[20] We will strive to preserve and perpetuate our language and culture as well as influence the younger generations through the role of the arts. We would like to expand programs for everyone to engage in the arts.

[21] We understand that the role of the arts is universal and serves as a medium to communicate our language and culture to others. It is our way to connect with our ancestors, ourselves and our audience.

[22] We are aware that there will be negative perceptions regarding cultural arts. We will receive and accept the judgement as we continue to do what we love and keep our language and culture alive.

[23] We, the new generation of cultural perpetuators, will push aside our differences that were previously put in place and unite as one people. We will dedicate a day in which all forms of cultural perpetuation may occur without segregation. We will encourage the young to continue to further their knowledge in all cultural aspects. We will encourage our mothers and fathers not be intimidated to participate.

We, the Youth of this conference, hereby acknowledge these points of concern and have courage to continue to empower ourselves and our culture. We offer ourselves to protect and defend the beliefs, the culture, the language, the air, the water and the lands of the CHamoru people. ***Ufresen hami para ta prutehi yan difende i hinegge. i kottura, i lengguahi, i aire, i hanom yan i tano' CHamoru!***