

Climate Change Impacts and Traditional Places: Rights and Responsibilities

2013-2014 High School Photo Essay Contest Winners

Siona Ole Mauga Pa'ia

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"Siona Ole Mauga Pa'ia" is a Christian congregational church located in the village of Leone on the island of Tutuila, American Samoa. This majestic church is a historic site that marks the arrival of the first Christian missionaries in 1832 by the London Missionary Society. The arrival of Christianity brought new changes to the Samoan people and continues to be a central part of the Samoan culture. This building serves as a landmark that symbolizes the rights and responsibilities it upholds within the Samoan way of life.

Based on an interview with High Chief Fepulea'i Arthur Ripley Jr., Christianity humbled a warring people and culture to one that promoted respect, humility and harmony. Through the spreading of the gospel, the missionaries learned the Samoan language and then translated the Bible into Samoan, thus developing a written language and introducing a form of education. The Samoans have the right to speech and education due to their written language, the right to live a righteous, peaceful and harmonious life and the right to religion.

Today, there are a few major responsibilities that the churches in Samoa have acquired. One responsibility is to continue to teach and maintain the Samoan language due to the influences brought in with advance technology and easy access to outside information. Another responsibility is to preserve the cultural values that are changing because of the impacts of the western world. Finally, the responsibility of the church is to teach the Bible, moral values and how to live in harmony and with respect.

The Samoan culture is centered on religion and church. Siona Ole Mauga Pa'ia epitomizes the strong faith Samoans have in God. This historic church has stood the test of time for nearly one hundred and eighty years.



Siona Ole Mauga Pa'ia, circa 1937. Photo by Julius E. Cerruti.



Siona Ole Mauga Pa'ia, January 15, 2014. Photo by Louisa Faulkner.

E ho'a 'o no I pau kuhihewa (Just do it)

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The realization of potential damage only occurs once the damage is done. America enters World War I with 10,000 warriors from Hawaii serving the country. 101 of the heroes sacrificed their lives in the "Great War." To honor those brave individuals, the State of Hawaii received \$250,000 and in 1927 the Waikiki War Memorial opened where famous swimmers such as Olympic Gold Medalist Duke Kahanamoku trained and competed.

On December 7, 1941, the day that lived in infamy, Pearl Harbor was bombed by the Japanese. World War II had begun. The U.S used the memorial as a training ground, speeding up the weathering of the natatorium.

Slowly, we are killing the planet and increasing the rate of climate change. Pollution occurs every day by simply driving a car. The release of carbon dioxide ricochets off our ozone layer creating a greenhouse effect and trapping the toxic chemicals in the atmosphere. Most of our oxygen comes not from trees but from the ocean. However, increasing levels of carbon dioxide being dissolved into the water is increasing the acidity of the ocean.

For decades the Waikiki War Memorial wasn't restored due to the high cost. While the State of Hawaii and City of Honolulu fight to knock down the natatorium, the Natatorium Preservation committee remains committed to its preservation. As the debate continues, the concrete is absorbing the salt water and causing the continuous breakdown of the walkways. The area has been gated due to the potential threat of falling debris.

Climate change is happening right now and has been for decades. Although it does not seem like a threat, it has been eating away our ozone and allowing the sun's penetration to be significantly strong. The Waikiki War Memorial Natatorium is degrading rapidly due to physical and chemical weathering. By the time the debate ends to restore or demolish the memorial, the weather will dominate. When the Waikiki War Memorial Natatorium vanishes, it will be like having a canoe set sail while leaving the warriors behind.



Before: Ewa Seawall- Waikiki Natatorium War Memorial near Kaimana Beach. Date: May 2, 2008.



Ewa Seawall- Waikiki Natatorium War Memorial has been eroding into the pool and in ocean. Date: June 16, 2014

FIRST STEWARDS



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Tumon

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The tourism industry contributes a great deal to Guam's economy, and Tumon is the center of that industry. Now, it is very common to see many stores, establishments, and hotels of different kinds in Tumon due to this tourism. What about before the tourism industry developed? The interview that was held with my chosen ma'iana covered how Tumon and beaches are traditional places, rights and responsibilities in the past, and rights and responsibilities in today's society.

First, how are Tumon and the beaches of Guam traditional places? Though they may not seem like significant traditional places, all beaches and shorelines are very important to Guam. Ancient Chamorros had relied on the beach, as it was the connection from their land to the sea. The sea provided food for the ancient Chamorros, for it is where they had fished and were taught how to fish. Also, as depicted in the pictures, Two Lovers Point is seen in the background – a traditional place for both Guam's culture and mythology.

Furthermore, there were rights and responsibilities for places, like Tumon, in the past. Prior to any colonization, upper-class Chamorros had the right to fish and sail in the waters around Guam; they had the responsibility to not overfish and to share what they had. In the pre/post World War II period, responsibilities were similar, but more focused on keeping their practices unchanged.

Lastly, rights and responsibilities have not changed so much in today's society, but have increased in number due to our technology. One such responsibility that we have today is to make sure the way we live does not disturb the environment negatively. Tumon, being the tourism center of Guam, requires construction, and as locals, we need to make sure that the development does not harm marine life with sedimentation.

References:

- 1 Ms. Helen "Lani" Bordallo. Personal comm.
- 2 *Hotel-Ta Series: Governing Guam: Before and After the Wars.*
1 *Ma Gubetna-ko Guam: The Political Status Education Coordinating Commission.*



Tumon Bay before tourism development



Tumon Bay today

Sugar Dock

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During the Japanese era in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), one of the most helpful infrastructure to our economy was created. By the 1930's large sugar cane plantations and processing plants were operating in Saipan and sugar was being exported at the Sugar Dock. What was astonishing about this dock was that it was connected to a canal leading to a lake, which was the starting point for the sugar cane to reach the boat. All components of this process were completely man-made by the people of the islands. Mr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero, Mount Carmel School president, mentioned that the Sugar Dock, lake, and canal stood as a symbol of "strong work ethic" at the time. Sugar cane being the only industry of the islands at the time, it supported the lives of many people. During that era the Northern Mariana Islands was one of the leading producers of sugar cane. Thus, the Sugar Dock was heavily depended on to export products out of Saipan.

After the end of the sugar cane industry, Sugar Dock transformed from an exporting outlet to a peaceful family gathering site and tourist attraction. It is a symbol of hard work, and it serves as a reminder to the people of the CNMI that we have the potential to bring back this industry. It is the duty and right of the people to restore our islands' reputation, and this can only be done with collaboration and motivation. We need to value what our islands have to offer and appreciate the abundant resources available to us. We may not be the most financially successful society, but we are rich in spirit, ambition, and natural resources that we can tap.



Sugar Dock, Saipan, 1944, Eric Johnson



Sugar Dock, 2014, Carey Demapan

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