

# *Pacific Women Speak Out*

**FOR INDEPENDENCE AND DENUCLEARISATION**



Edited by Zohi de Ishtar

A joint publication by Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Aotearoa),  
the Disarmament and Security Centre (Aotearoa) and Pacific Connections (Australia)

# Pacific Women Speak Out ...



*The story of the Marshallese people since the nuclear weapons tests has been sad and painful. Allow our experience, now, to save others such sadness and pain.*

Darlene Keju-Johnson Marshall Islands



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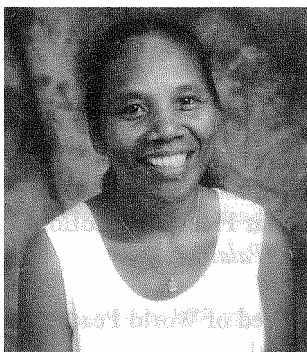
## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The idea for this book comes from Women for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific (WNFIP) Britain, whose booklet *Pacific Women Speak: Why Haven't You Known?* (Greenline, Oxford, 1987) inspired so many around the world. Special thanks to the Pacific women who shared their powerful stories with such honesty and clarity. Without these gifts this book would not have been possible. Thanks also go to those who conducted interviews, and helped with the editing, proofing, layout and graphics.

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*We dedicate this book to Darlene Keju-Johnson of the Marshall Islands, who died of breast cancer in 1996, aged 45. Her courage and vision inspired many*

## INTRODUCTION

*Pacific Women Speak Out* is a collection of stories of resistance against incredible odds, stories of survival.

Indigenous women speak to us from Aotearoa (New Zealand), Australia, Belau (Palau), Bougainville, East Timor, Ka Pae'aina (Hawai'i), Marshall Islands, Te Ao Maohi (French Polynesia) and West Papua (Irian Jaya).

They tell of the impacts of invasion and war, nuclear weapons systems, nuclear testing, militarisation, human rights abuses, sexism, tourism, non-Indigenous settlement, mining, industrialisation, imposed economic dependency and all the manifestations of colonisation.

Despite all this violence, Indigenous women have maintained a strength and a compassion that come from their people's ancient connection with the land and water that have sustained them since the beginning of time. These women are sharing their stories here in a bid to break the silence that has concealed the violations. The hope is that as people around the world learn what is happening in the Pacific they will be inspired to stand beside them, to act. As Pacific peoples reclaim their inalienable sovereign rights; and determine to protect their lands and oceans from the myriad forms of racism, they are inviting us to join them.

The task is nothing less than leading the world back from the abyss of nuclear annihilation, environmental destruction, and military domination.

Covering half the Earth's surface, the Pacific is the home of 32 countries, and many more nations. And, although many nations are small, they are united in their determination to recreate an independent and nuclear free Pacific. They are empowered by the knowledge that they walk in the footsteps of their ancestors and are responsible for the future generations.

We hope that you can take up their challenge, not least because one thing is certain - until the Pacific is decolonised it will never be demilitarised; and until the Pacific is demilitarised we are all held to ransom.

This book is a contribution to the Hague Appeal for Peace, a global campaign to de-legitimize war. It arises from our concern that Indigenous Pacific women are rarely heard in the wider international arena and is an attempt to make their wisdom more available.

We hope that it will become a source of information into the new millennium, and that it will, in particular, encourage the younger generations to pick up the struggle. Any profits from the sale of this book will go into a trust fund to help support the work of Pacific women.



*A nuclear free Pacific demonstration in Suva in August 1986.  
(Photo: Matthew McKee/Tu Galala)*



## RECLAIMING THE SACRED 'AINA (LAND)

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*Kalama'okaina Niheu - Ka Pae'aina (Hawaii)*

We did not want to have our Queen overthrown. We did not want to have the United States land on our shores. We did not want our lands stolen from us. We did not want to become part of the United States' union. All of these things we resisted and refused and it was totally against our wishes. We never gave our consent. We have never given up our sovereignty.

The Kanaka Maoli people have repeatedly and constantly rejected the colonisation of our peoples and our lands. Our people have repeatedly said, "No. We do not want you here. Go home!" They said it in a million different ways. They said it in songs, they said it in actions, they said it in armed rebellions and they said it in plain language – "Go home!"

Our government was overthrown primarily for money - to take our land to grow pineapples and sugar - and also for military purposes, but the main reason was that Queen Liliu'okalani wanted the power back for our people. There had been many rebellions, but each time we resisted, the plantation owners called in the United States' military. Our monarchy was forced to increasingly transfer its power over to the plantation owners. Then Queen Liliu'okalani became monarch and declared that power would be invested back into the Kanaka Maoli people - that white plantation owners would no longer have the power over our people that they had had in the past. The military just came in outright, with their arms, and took it. When we finally had a strong monarch who said, "No. No more concessions," they removed and imprisoned her.

After the overthrow in 1893, people were organising to have an armed rebellion but Queen Liliu'okalani, believing that the Americans would be inherently just, that the US government would return the sovereignty

### **KALAMA'OKAINA NIHEU**

*Kalama'okaina Niheu was born into the struggle of her people. She traces her genealogy to the island of Ni'ihau, Pu'u'uwai and Kamalino.*

*Her ancestors are Welokiheia-keailoa and Irene Niheu and her parents Soli Niheu and Gwen Kim, strong activists in the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement.*

*She is a member of Ohana Koa and the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement and has represented her people globally.*

**KA PAE'AINA (HAWAI'I)** *Ka Pae'aina is a stolen land. In 1893, sugar merchants, with the backing of US warships and troops, overthrew the Kanaka Maoli monarch, Queen Liliu'okalani, and established a provisional government.*

*When US President Cleveland, denouncing their move as an "act of war", called for the Queen's restoration, the provisional government declared a "republic". In 1898, US President McKinley annexed the archipelago illegally - contravening both the US Constitution and international law. Statehood was declared in 1952 following a plebiscite in which 83% of voters were non-Indigenous.*

*On November 23, 1993, President Clinton officially apologised for the violations. This followed over 100 years of resistance by the Kanaka Maoli people who have consistently demanded that their inalienable sovereignty to their ancestor lands and waters be respected and their independence re-established.*

of our peoples, asked the people to stand down. The actual rebellion occurred in 1895, after they didn't return our sovereignty.

The military backed the overthrow of our Queen Liliu'okalani because they wanted our lands for military bases. The whole purpose of stealing our nation was that they knew what a wonderful strategic military base Ka Pae'aina would be. It's smack bang in the middle of the Pacific. It's got a wonderful harbour, it's got wonderful resources, it's a perfect centre for going out and oppressing peoples throughout the world.

Ka Pae'aina is the head of the serpent, the head of the killing machine. It is the military centre for the United States throughout the Pacific, for more than fifty percent of the world, covering an area from Alaska down to Antarctica, from the Americas all the way over to Africa. It is the headquarters; of the Commander in Chief of the Pacific which affects everything that happens throughout the entire region - military manoeuvres in Korea, surveillance on China, selling military arms to Indonesia. Its main purpose is to defend their colonial resources and interests abroad - the oil, the raw materials, the resources, the gold, the uranium.

Hawai'i is the centre from which oppression occurs throughout the entire Pacific. Even though guns are not being shot off in Ka Pae'aina as regularly as in East Timor, those guns are coming from Ka Pae'aina. The French could set off nuclear bombs in Tahiti because the United States was providing resources through Ka Pae'aina.

The US needs a secure base so that if turmoil, strife or war should occur anywhere in the Pacific, the head of command remains unscathed. The military pieces around the Pacific can be taken out and the military can

still function. They've invested billions of dollars in infrastructure. Big highways were built to connect the military bases so that if a military emergency exists they can quickly go anywhere with their tanks, guns and nuclear weapons. The streets themselves were set up by military design. They can shut off and close down any section of Honolulu and the entire island.

There are 110 military installations in Hawai'i. This includes facilities such as Pearl Harbour and Makua Valley. The United States military controls 25% of the island of O'ahu, one-third of the coast line. It is one of the largest landholders.

Pearl Harbour is important not just because of the harbour capabilities, even though that is significant. People say that there are caverns there that are complete underground cities with storage, housing, eating and sanitary facilities. There are lots of underground tunnels, it's just a geological phenomenon. Underground water erodes pathways which over the aeons get larger and larger. We have many stories of warriors and travellers who would utilise these underground caverns throughout the island. They connected one side of the island to the other and warriors would escape through them, or they would arrive in places where they would ambush and fight. The US has extended and built upon these caverns to connect its military installations.

Makua is one of the very few places in the islands where they can do complete amphibious manoeuvres. They sail from California with their fleet, re-enact an amphibious landing in Makua, take the beaches, go up into the lowlands and take the mountains. They are training to invade a tropical Pacific isle. Makua has the exact conditions under which they will be fighting - a tropical isle with beach access to the mountains. The United States' allies are trained at Makua to oppress the people in their own countries and their colonies.

They bomb the hell out of Makua. They bomb the hell out of a lot of places. Kaho'olawe was a bombing range. We, Kanaka Maoli and our supporters, occupied the island several times, even while the military was bombing it. After about twenty years of constantly endangering our own lives - two of our young people were killed there - we were successful. The military returned the island. Now we are working to heal it.

People don't realise that nuclear testing was done in our islands – at

Kalama, commonly known as Johnston Atoll. I saw pictures of Honolulu at night, before and after the atmospheric bomb was detonated. Before it was detonated it could have been any city, there were lights in the distance in the darkness. You couldn't see very much. After the detonation the entire sky was purple, green and pink, lit up from horizon to horizon. All you could see was the swirl of colour across the sky. That was a nuclear bomb that they set off at Kalama.

Now the fishermen find turtles that have tumours all over them. People who eat fish can get poisoned and die. All these effects are from the testing in our islands. Of course people are not aware that there was testing in Ka Pae'aina! Would you go to Hawai'i and bounce around in the surf if you knew that nuclear bombs were detonated on Kalama?

Kaneohe Marine Corps Base is one of the largest bases. It is on a very sacred peninsula of Mokapu where, we believe, the first Kanaka Maoli was created. Our tradition tells us that Papa and Wakea (Papahānau means "She who gives birth to islands", Wakea is the sky) are the original mother and father entities from which all creation flows. Descended from them is Haloa Naka, which means "quivering stalk", who was stillborn and buried in the ground in front of the *hale* (house), where they lived. From the place where he was born grew the first *kalo* (*taro*) plant. The second child was Haloa, named after his older brother, and so they as siblings took care of one another. Haloa was the original ancestor of the Kanaka Maoli people.

Mokapu is one of the largest burial sites in all of Ka Pae'aina. In our belief system our *mana*, our special power, our spirituality, is invested in our hair, our nails and our bones. The bones of many ancestors are buried at Mokapu and they are constantly being desecrated to build huge airstrips, housing facilities, water reservoirs and to allow the military personnel to cavort on the beaches. This is an ongoing struggle. We are trying to get our bones back, we are also trying to prevent further desecration and removal of our ancestors from their traditional place.

The military does not want to give up control of Hawai'i. They will fight to their last breath to stay here. It is one of the reasons why they want us to remain a colony. Sovereignty and military bases cannot exist together. Their military machine is living as a parasite on the people of the land. It's existing on the suffering, and the blood and tears of our people. It's a beast that doesn't coexist with the way of life that we imagine for ourselves. The sovereignty in Ka Pae'aina is intrinsically

and intimately tied to the sovereignty and self-determination of peoples in over 50% of the world.

People say, “What are you going to do if the United States withdraws? What about all the money they give to the Hawaiian government?” But an independent study in 1994 found out that for every dollar that the United States invests into Ka Pae’aina they take out a dollar fifty, so they’re making a tremendous profit - in taxes, land revenues, tourism.

I fear for places throughout the world that want to encourage tourism. Tourism permanently dispossesses Indigenous people of our ancestral homelands. It takes up a hell of a lot of land and resources. Money comes in but it does not come into the native populations. It comes in and goes directly out again.

Forty-one major landowners own about 95% of the land. In the 1970s it was 60 or 70 landowners. So we are seeing an increasing consolidation of land in fewer hands.

They have progressively stolen our land. What did they think we would do without food, without water, without family, without any place to live? Die? What did they think we would do? It is obvious that they expected us to die. We were expected to disappear more than a hundred years ago. We had a population collapse, from one million to about 40,000. Only one person in ten survived. The colonisers inadvertently introduced venereal diseases and leprosy and allowed them to spread by withholding medication. But contrary to their wishes we did not die, we are still here.

There have been successive, repeated removals at Makua. First because cattle ranchers want to use our fertile valley for cattle grazing, and then because of what is now called the “Makua Military Reservation”.

The cattle was another thing that contributed to the overthrow. Introducing cattle was a common tactic to steal our land. If you overrun a family with cows or goats or sheep, they eat all the food, drink all the water, contaminate the resources, and the people have no choice but to leave.

In 1941, after the bombing of Pearl Harbour, the military declared martial law in Ka Pae’aina, removed the ranching community from Makua and seized the land. They completely removed the Indigenous

inhabitants. Since then there have been many instances of the people returning, building homes for themselves and subsequently being removed.

The last eviction was in 1996, and before that in 1983. QOver the intervening period a community of 300 people grew up on the shores of Makua. Many of these families had been part of the earlier removals, including a few who could trace their genealogies back to the original traditional inhabitants of the valley.

The community was a place of healing. Many who had been deeply wounded by colonisation found that the valley healed them. They created a community that was beautiful. They took care of one another. They found security and safety in this place which the United States is bombing! We are a minority in our own homelands - only 18% of the population - but this community was overwhelmingly Kanaka Maoli; 95%.

In 1996, hundreds of armed men forcibly removed the community. Only about 50 to 60 sheriffs moved in but hundreds of armed men waited as backup. There were fire trucks, helicopters, four or five boats in the harbour. All for 300 unarmed men, women and children. They had hollow-point bullets - the most lethal bullets. When it hits you it shatters into your body and tears you apart. They weren't going in there with rubber bullets to suppress and keep down the people, their intention was to kill if there was any resistance. They completely destroyed all their homes, everything. They gathered all their belongings and took them to the dump, or stole whatever they wanted. No reparations were ever made.

Always the excuse has been that the State needs the beaches for a public park. To date the only park facilities that they have erected is a plaque and two tremendous steel gates. The beach itself is State property but any time the US army wants it they close off the beach. The valley is covered with unexploded bombs. Young people and children still find unexploded bombs underneath the sand, and wild goats and the sun set off exposed bombs up in the valley. They've dumped nuclear waste out in the ocean, in barrels that are due to leak.

The campaign to restore Makua to our people has been going on since the mid-1970s and it is just one of the land struggles that have occurred. Just one of them!

Dispossession has been permanent and ongoing across generations. We are not the ones who are living in suburbs. We're the ones living in garbage heaps, in parks, out of cars, anywhere we can. People are screaming that we don't have land, that we don't have homes, and yet we are accused of trying to have a free ride. It is an outright lie. My people live on the streets, on the beaches, because tourism, the cattle industry and the military have taken all the land and the cost of living is extremely high. They simply do not have any other place to go. This is their land. It belongs to them. They have every right to live here. As Indigenous peoples this land is ours.

The Kanaka Maoli movement over the past twenty years has increasingly become united around the idea of sovereignty. Exactly what form it will take differs but, given that we have always been locally based and have always respected our boundaries and the differences within them, it is not surprising that we don't have one vision. But we are united in that we demand our inalienable sovereignty; our independence; we want the military off our shores, off our lands; and we demand the return of our sacred *'aina* (land) as an economic and spiritual base.

Recently, in the past maybe thirty years, we Kanaka Maoli women have started to understand what we have lost because of colonisation. We don't have whiteness and masculinity to give us privilege so we are able to understand that the colonisers have taken everything away from our women. We are beginning to reclaim the power that we've had in traditional times. We have nothing left to lose and everything to gain. That is the state of things for Kanaka Maoli women.

The Western European system has imposed this idea that men are stronger than women, men are better than women. This wasn't the case in our cultural history. Even though women and men had certain tasks it was always the understanding that the male and the female aspects were needed for true balance in our universe. Without the female aspect the world was out of harmony. Without the male aspect the same thing was true. The patriarchal system has imposed this idea that the world revolves around the male aspect. That is the reason why their cosmos, their world, is so out of sorts - they have neglected the female aspect. There's no balance.

And so we are standing tip for ourselves and saying, "We will not participate in this patriarchal cultural system. We will not participate in the unfounded belief that men are better than women." We believe that

the only way that we can get together as a nation, as a people, is if we unite. No one can lord over another person. No one can be considered better than another person simply because of sex, race or sexual orientation.

Our nation as a whole, including the men, are starting to come to terms with that. We are trying very hard *to* work together so that we have both the male and the female aspect, so we have balance. Without a good strong male aspect and only a strong female aspect, which is really coming up strong, our nation would still be out of balance. We need both - to have strong men and women - so that we have a strong nation, strong children who are safe, cared for and loved. And not hurt, like they are being hurt right now.



## FOR THE GOOD OF MANKIND

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*Darlene Keju-Johnson - Marshall Islands*

In 1946 a US navy officer came to Bikini Island and told chief Juda, "We are testing these bombs for the good of mankind, and to end all wars." Very few of us Marshallese spoke English or even understood it. There was one word that stuck in the chief's mind: "mankind." He knew that word because it is in the Bible. So he said, "If it is in the name of God, I am willing to let my people go." The navy official did not tell the chief that the Bikinians would never see their home again. Bikini is off limits for 30,000 years. It will never be safe for people ever again.

When that navy official came there were already thousands of soldiers and scientists on the atoll, and hundreds of airplanes and ships in the lagoon. They were ready to conduct the tests. The Bikinians had no choice but to leave their islands, and they have never returned. The Bikinians were promised that the United States only wanted their islands for a short time. The chief thought maybe a short time is next week, maybe next month. So they moved to Rongerik.

Rongerik is a sandbar island. There are no resources on it. It was too poor to feed the people. We live on our oceans - it's like our supermarket - and from our land we get bread-fruit and other foods. But on Rongerik there was nothing. The United States put the Bikinians on this island and left them there. After a year *they* sent a military medical official to see how they were. When he got there he found out that they were starving. Imagine: move someone else from their own home by your power, dump them on a little sand and don't even bother to go back and see how they are doing for a year. The people



**DARLENE KEJU-JOHNSTON**

*Darlene Keju-Johnson was born on Ebeye, and grew up there and on isolated Woiye Atoll. She studied public health in Hawai'i for 17 years before returning to the Marshalls in 1984 where she directed the Marshall Islands Family Planning programme from 1987-1992, and then the Ministry of Health's Division of Adolescent Health until her death from breast cancer in 1996. During that time, she founded Youth to Youth in Health, a peer health education and leadership programme for young people.*

*In her memory, YTYIH continues one of her last projects - building a \$US 1 million Youth Health Centre in Majuro, the capital.*

of Bikini have been moved or relocated three times. The people of Eniwetok Atoll were also relocated. You cannot imagine the psychological problems that people have to go through because of relocation. In 1954 the US exploded the world's first hydrogen bomb, code named "Bravo", on Bikini. It was 1,000 times stronger than the Hiroshima bomb. The Marshallese were never warned that this blast was about to happen on our islands. Our islands were covered with fallout.

The people of Rongelap and Utirik (which were most directly affected) were not picked up until three days after the explosion. It was horrible. Some American soldiers came and said, "Get ready. Jump in the ocean and get on the boat because we are leaving. Don't bring any belongings. Just go in the water." There was no boat to get the people to the ship, not even the children and the old people. People had to swim with their children. It was very rough. When they got to the ship each family was given one blanket. Some families had ten or twelve children but they had to share one blanket.

They were taken to Kwajalein. It took one night to get there. They didn't give people a change of clothing, they had to sleep in their contaminated clothing all the way. You imagine. They were burnt, they were vomiting. When they got to Kwajalein they were given soap and were told to wash in the lagoon. The soap and the salt water was supposed to wash off the radiation. They were not told what had happened, why it had happened, what was wrong with them. Their hair was falling out, finger nails were falling off- but they were never told why.

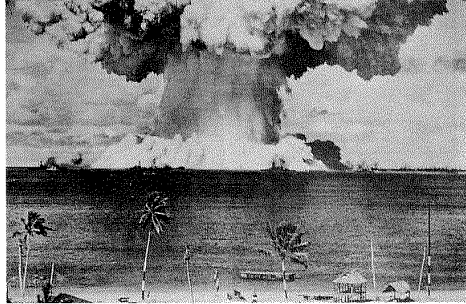
**MARSHALL ISLANDS** *In 1947, the US became administrator of the Marshall Islands, promising to protect the Marshallese people and their lands, and lead them to independence. But nuclear testing had already begun in 1946, detonating 66 nuclear bombs, and in 1958 the US developed a missile base at Kwajalein which has contributed more to the nuclear arms race than any other place on earth. Imposed economic dependency resulted in the Marshallese accepting a Compact of Free Association. Implemented in 1983, it gave the US sole military rights, a veto over foreign affairs, and excused it of any responsibility for the future impacts of its nuclear activities.*

The people of Rongelap and Utirik were on Kwajalein for three months before they were moved again. The people of Utirik went back to their contaminated island. The people of Rongelap didn't return to Rongelap for three years - it was too contaminated.

Twenty-eight American men who were on Rongerik monitoring the tests

and the crew of a nearby Japanese fishing boat were also contaminated. We are in touch with one of these men who was studying the tests. He told us that the United States knew that the wind was blowing towards islands where people lived, but that they went ahead and tested anyway. It was not a mistake. It is interesting that the United States government moved the Marshallese in the 1940s when the small bombs were being tested, and then when the biggest bomb ever was tested the Marshallese were not even warned. This is why we believe that we have been used as guinea pigs.

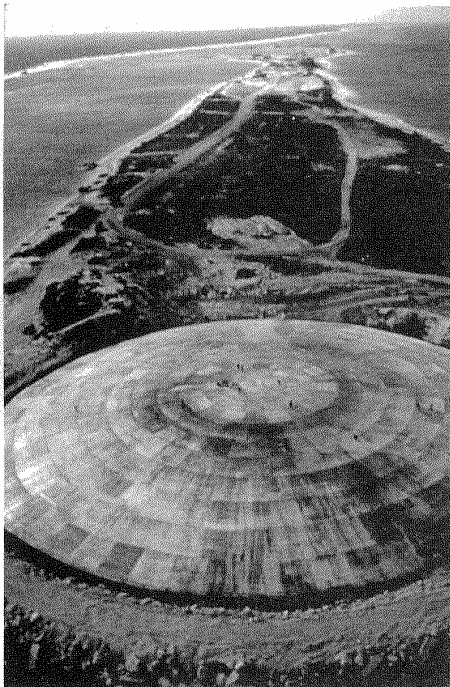
*Baker, the second U.S. atomic bomb test at Bikini Atoll July 1946. (Photo: U.S. Navy, courtesy Pacific Concerns Resource Centre)*



Since the testing there has been a tremendous increase in health problems. The biggest problem we have now, especially amongst women and children, is cancers. We have cancers in the breast. We have tumour cancers. The women have cancers in their private places. Children are being deformed. I saw a child from Rongelap. It is an infant. Its feet are like clubs. And another child whose hands are like nothing at all. It is mentally retarded. Some of these children suffer growth retardation.

Now we have this problem of what we call “jelly-fish babies”. These babies: are born like jelly-fish. They have no eyes. They have no heads. They have no arms. They have no legs. They do not shape like human beings at all. But they are being born on the labour table. The most colourful, ugly things that you have ever seen. Some of them have hairs on them. And they breathe. When *they* die they are buried right away. A lot of times they don’t allow the mother to see this kind of baby because she will go *crazy*. It is too inhumane.

Many women today are frightened of having these “jelly-fish babies”. I have had two tumours taken out of me recently and I fear that if I have children they will be “jelly-fish babies” also. These babies are being born not only on the [US declared] radioactive islands but throughout the 35 atolls and five islands of the Marshalls. I’ve interviewed hundreds of Marshallese women in the northern islands and this is their story I am



*Runit Island Dome - Marshall Islands  
(Photo: Pacific Concerns Resource Centre)*

telling you. The health problems are on the increase. They have not stopped. It is not just the people who have been affected, but also our environment. For example, we have breadfruit - it is like a potato. Instead of being green and healthy looking, it is mutated. It is deformed. Just like our infants. A lot of these foods are no longer edible.

Enewetak Atoll was also used for testing. It is west of Bikini. The United States tested 23 bombs on Bikini and 43 on Enewetak. In Enewetak Atoll there is one little island called Runit. It is off limits for ever. After the testing the United States tried to clean up the radiation from Enewetak. It collected all the nuclear debris from the southern islands (the northern islands were too contaminated) and dumped it

into a bomb crater on Runit. Then they covered it up with concrete. It is a huge dome. Now the scientists are saying that it is already leaking but they say it doesn't matter because the lagoon is already radioactive. There are people living only about three or four miles from there.

Then there are the northern islands, only ten miles away. They are off limits too. But people used to go there for food. Now they are told not to eat those coconuts and crabs but the United States' ships bringing food are often delayed and are irregular. And they don't bring much food. The people have no choice but to eat from the off limits islands.

The US government has never conducted an epidemiological survey. The Department of Energy sends their medical team but they only go to Rongelap and Utirik - the two islands that the US recognises as affected by the fallout from the 1954 bomb. But there are many others.

If a person is found to have a thyroid and it is cancerous and needs to be removed they are sent to either the United States, Hawai'i or Guam. They don't explain to you exactly what they are doing to your throat. They just say that you are to go. There is no translator. Only the Department of Energy goes and meets them, but they don't speak Marshallese. They are told not to make any phone calls to any relative or friend. They are told to speak only to the Department of Energy (DOE) members.

There are no medical records kept. An individual has a right to know what is happening to her, a right to question what exactly is going on in her body. That right has not been given to us. You just go, get rid of your thyroid and then you go back home. A lot of Marshallese are fed up with the DOE and the United States government. The Rongelap people said, "We have had enough! You are not going to treat us like animals, like nothing at all! We are moving." The whole island, 350 people, moved to live on Mejato, which is a small island in Kwajalein Atoll. Kwajalein landowners gave them that island. But the US wouldn't help. Instead they did a campaign to discredit the Rongelapese.

By doing this the Rongelap people said that they don't want to be part of this whole nuclear craziness. That their bottom line is: "We care about our children's future." In the Marshalls, leaving your island is not easy, but they decided that their children came first. They know that they are contaminated. They know they'll be dying out soon. They are dying now - slowly.

As if it wasn't enough to be under this reality, the US decided to use Kwajalein Atoll for missile testing. Once again our people were relocated by force. Two thirds of Kwajalein's lagoon, which is the largest in the world, was taken for missile testing and the people shoved off the many islands on to tiny Ebeye, which is only 66 acres. Today there are more than 10,000 people living on that island.

There are many problems on Ebeye.



*Rongelap girl, 28 days after the Bravo test on Bikini Atoll. (Photo courtesy Pacific Concerns Resource Centre)*



*Tanira Jorju of Rongelap Atoll holds her grandson, Kimo, born to parents who were children at the time of the Bravo fallout in 1954. She blames Kimo's retardation on the bomb. (Photo: Dennis O'Rourke / Nuclear Playground)*

For example, when there is a test being conducted the Marshallese are not allowed to go out fishing. The people on Ebeye have to survive on canned foods, rice and bread. We can't eat our traditional food. We have a problem with malnutrition. Children are not healthy because their diet is very poor.

That is why in 1982 the people of Kwajalein decided to take direct action. They sailed in to take over eleven off-limits islands - and lived there for four months. A thousand

people. They were saying to the United States, "You are not going to treat us like second class citizens in our own islands!" They shut the base down and stopped the missile testing, for a while. The sail-in was repeated in 1986.

We are only a very few thousand people out there on tiny islands, but we are doing our part to stop this nuclear madness. And although we are few we have done it! Which means that you can do it too! But we need your support. We must come together to save this world for our children and for the future generations to come.

## LEARNING FROM RONGELAP'S PAIN

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*Lijon Eknilang - Marshall Islands*

I was born on Rongelap and I lived there at the time of the nuclear weapons testing programme.

I was eight years old at the time of the Bravo test on Bikini in 1954. It was my birthday, March 1st. I remember that it was very early in the morning that I woke up with a bright light in my eyes. I ran outside to see what had happened. I thought someone was burning the house. There was a huge, brilliant light that consumed the sky. We all ran outside our homes to see it. Soon after we heard a big loud noise, just like a big thunder and the earth started to move - the ground started to sway and sink. The loud noise hurt our ears. You can never imagine. We were very afraid because we didn't know what it was. The elders said another world war had begun. I remember crying.

A little later in the morning we saw a big cloud moving to our islands. It covered the sky. Then it began to snow in Rongelap. We had heard about snow from the missionaries, and other westerners who had come to our islands, but this was the first time we saw white particles fall from the sky and cover our island.

For many hours poison from the bomb kept falling on our islands. We kids were playing in the powder, having fun, but later everyone was sick and we couldn't do anything. We started to feel itchy in our eyes, like we had sand in our eyes. The fallout was in the air we breathed, in the fresh water we drank, and in the food we ate during the days after Bravo. We wanted to drink water so bad, so we went to the water drums and the water was changing colour.



**LIJON EKNILANG**

*Lijon Eknilang was born on Rongelap and played in the radioactive fallout that followed the "Bravo" detonation in 1954.*

*She now lives on Ebeye. She has represented her people globally, including in the US (Congress), Japan (Hiroshima and Nagasaki), Britain, Europe and the Pacific. In 1995 she represented the Marshall Islands, the Pacific and all peace-seeking people of the world before the International Court of Justice in its Advisory Proceedings on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons.*

But we drank it anyway because we were very thirsty. I remember we ate some fish and drank some coconut.

Late in the afternoon I became very sick, like I would throw up, and I had a bad headache. The other people on the islands experienced the same problems. Towards the evening our skin began to burn like we had been out in the hot sun all day. The next day the problems got worse. Big burns began spreading all over our legs, arms and feet and they hurt very much. Many of us lost our hair. Of course we did not know that the snow was radioactive. The fall-out that our bodies were exposed to caused the blisters and other sores we experienced over the weeks that followed. The serious internal and external exposure we received caused long-term health problems that affected my parents' generation, my generation, and the generation of my children.

We remained on Rongelap for two and a half days after the fall-out came. Then Americans came to evacuate my people to the American base' on Kwajalein Atoll. Some of them tried to explain what was happening but there wasn't enough time for us to understand and we were very sick and couldn't pay attention to anything. We had very high fevers and felt like we wanted to drop. We had very ill people - they couldn't pay attention even to their own kids. Some of us left by airplane, but most of us left on a large ship. We did not take our belongings or our animals.

We stayed on Kwajalein for three months to receive medical treatment and observation. After that we moved to Majuro and we stayed there for three years because Rongelap was too dangerous to live on. In 1957 the US Atomic Energy Commission doctor came to tell us that it was safe for us to return back home. We did not know, when we left on 3 March 1954, that we would be leaving our homes for almost three years.

In June 1957, when we did return, we saw changes on our island. Some of our food crops, such as arrowroot, had completely disappeared. Makmok, or tapioca plants, stopped bearing fruit. What we ate gave us blisters on our lips and in our mouths and we suffered terrible stomach problems and nausea. Some of the fish we caught caused the same problems. These were things that had not happened before 1954. Our staple foods had never made us ill.

We brought these problems to the attention of the doctors and officials who visited us. They said we were preparing the foods incorrectly, or



that we had fish poisoning. We knew that was impossible because we had been preparing and surviving from these foods for centuries, without suffering from the problems that appeared after 1954. Although our blisters, burns and hair loss eventually cleared up, we later experienced other, even more serious problems. In the early sixties we began to experience all of the illnesses we are having now. Many people suffer from thyroid tumours, still births, eye problems, liver and stomach cancers and leukaemia. Even people who were not on Rongelap in 1954, but who went there with us in 1957, began to experience the same illnesses as we did in later years. Foreign doctors and other officials called these people the “control group”, and we were told the sickness of that group proved our illnesses were common to all Marshallese. We did not believe that, and we learned only recently that the “control group” had come from areas that had also been contaminated by radioactivity from the weapons tests.

I will tell you something of my family. My grandmother lived to 107 years old. She died in the 1960s because of thyroid and stomach cancer. My father, a first captain in the Marshall Islands, had already died on June 30, 1954, because he was somewhere around the area when they were testing the bomb. My cousin died of cancer in 1960. In 1972 I had another cousin die of leukaemia. Two of my sisters had thyroid surgery in 1981.

My own health has suffered as a result of radiation poisoning. I cannot have children. I have had seven miscarriages. On one of those occasions, I miscarried after four months. The child I miscarried was severely deformed - it had only one eye. In 1978 I had thyroid surgery to remove nodules. Now I have to take thyroid medication every day for the rest of my life. Doctors recently found more nodules in my thyroid, which have to be removed in the near future. I have lumps in my breasts, as well as kidney and stomach problems, for which I am receiving treatment. My eyesight is blurred, and everything looks foggy to me.

Women have experienced many reproductive cancers and abnormal births. Marshallese women suffer silently and differently from the men who were exposed to radiation. Our culture and religion teaches us that reproductive abnormalities are a sign that women have been unfaithful to their husbands. For this reason, many of my friends keep quiet about the strange births they had. In privacy, they gave birth, not to children as we like to think of them, but to things we could only describe as “octopuses,” “apples,” “turtles,” and other things in our experience. We

do not have Marshallese words for these kinds of babies, because they were never born before the radiation came. The most common birth defects on Rongelap and other atolls in the Marshall Islands have been “jellyfish” babies. These babies are born with no bones in their bodies and with transparent skin. We can see their brains and their hearts beating. There are no legs, no arms, no head, no nothing. Some of these things we carry for eight months, nine months. The babies usually live for a day or two, before they stop breathing. Many women die from abnormal pregnancies and those who survive give birth to what looks like strands of purple grapes which we quickly hide away and bury.

Many of these women who have given birth to these “monster babies” are from atolls which foreign officials told us were not affected by radiation. We know otherwise, because their health problems are similar to ours. One woman on Likiep gave birth to a child with two heads. There is a young girl on Ailuk today with no knees, three toes on each foot and a missing arm. Her mother had not been born by 1954, but she was raised on a contaminated atoll. Other children are born who will never recognise this world or their own parents. They just lie there with crooked arms and legs and never speak. Sometimes I feel that I have a baby inside me. I feel very happy that I will have a baby but then I am afraid what kind of baby it is going to be. I live in two separate kinds of world: one part of me wants to have a baby, but this other part of me is scared.

We began to learn about leukaemia when the body of Lekoĵ Anĵain, a 15 year old boy who had been strong and healthy, was returned to Rongelap in a coffin. We did not understand his illness or the illnesses for which we were sent to the United States to be treated. Many of us were sent from our islands for the first time in our lives to hospital in the United States and Guam. We had surgery and treatments which we knew little about because we did not speak English and, in most cases, there were no translators. Some of us had brain tumours and other cancers removed. In more recent years, we have come to learn that some of us had our entire thyroids removed.

Lekoĵ Anĵain’s father, John, began to keep a list of all the Rongelapese who died, and all of those who went to the United States to have their thyroids removed, because there were so many people involved. We were afraid we would not remember all of them. We had to ask ourselves why had this happened? Every year the US Department of Energy doctors came to Rongelap to examine the people. They would tell us that

everything was okay - that we didn't have anything to worry about. We told them we didn't feel any better, that our bodies felt weak all the time. Many children and seemingly healthy adults died unexpectedly in the years following Bravo.

Since we returned to Rongelap in 1957 we have worried about living on our contaminated island. In 1978 the Department of Energy doctors did a special study of Rongelap Atoll and another island in the Marshalls. After the study they told us that we were not allowed to eat the fish, coconuts and other food from the northern parts of Rongelap. They told us that it is safe for us to live in the southern parts of the atoll where there is low-level radiation. These studies made the people of Rongelap very scared for the future of their children. Since that time we wanted to leave Rongelap. So we planned to move from Rongelap. We signed a petition on the island - everyone signed it - to send to the US government asking them to help us. They refused. They said that the island was completely safe and that there was no reason for us to leave.

Our own government is very closely tied to the US government and

*Aboard the 'Rainbow Warrior' during the trip to Mejato. (Photo: David Robie/Eyes of Fire)*



they wouldn't help us either. So in 1985 the people on Rongelap evacuated themselves from the atoll to another island in Kwajalein Atoll with the help of the Greenpeace ship, Rainbow Warrior. We have lived in exile ever since. There are now 350 people living on tiny Mejato island. It is only one mile long. There was nothing on the island when we got there. We had to build shelters for the babies, women and oldest people from the things we carried from Rongelap. It was very hard to leave, our islands behind, especially for the older people. It wasn't easy for them to leave their home. Three of them just went inside their huts and never came out until the day they died.

Life on Mejato is not easy. There is not enough food on the island for my people. Only a few coconuts and some fish. There is only about one acre that will grow food because there is not enough soil. Mejato is mainly sand and coral. The US government is supposed to give us food but they never bring enough and most of the time the boat is delayed. We have to get our supplies from Ebeye twice a month. Ebeye is another small island right next to Kwajalein Island, the US base for the world's largest missile range.

It wasn't easy to leave Rongelap. We had to give up everything. Many people don't think that our tiny island of Rongelap is very important to us. But it is our home. We are meant to be there. Our land is everything, our medicine, our food, our houses, our everyday supply. Our land is our memory of those people we've lost, their spirit is in the land. Our land is everything and it has been ruined by the US government. But we had to plan ahead for our children. I know it is too late for me and the others, our lives have already been ruined, but it's the future we're thinking about. We don't want our kids to receive all the sickness we are receiving now. The story of the Marshallese people since the nuclear weapons tests has been sad and painful. Allow our experience, now, to save others such sadness and pain.

I know first-hand what the devastating effects of nuclear weapons are over time and over long distances, and what those effects mean to innocent human beings over several generations. I plead with you to do what you can not to allow the suffering that we Marshallese have experienced to be repeated in any other community in the world. While no government or other organisation can restore the health of the Marshallese people or our environment, steps can be taken which will make it less likely that the same kinds of horrors will be experienced again.

## NO URANIUM MINING ON MIRRAR LAND

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*Jacqui Katona - Australia*

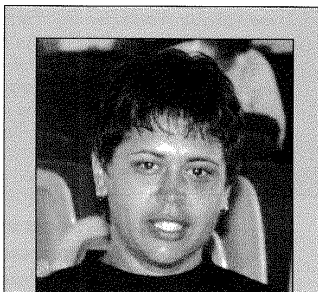
Many people know Kakadu as a holiday destination, as a place to have fun in the sun, go for a swim, see the wildlife, look at the spectacular beauty of the country which has been nurtured by Aboriginal people for 50,000 years.

For Aboriginal people, Kakadu is our home. It's a place where we educate our children. It's a place where we live, where we're born, where we die. It's a place which our people have nurtured and a place that has nurtured the survival of our people. It has nurtured the survival of a worldview which has sustained country, which has not sought to desecrate country, which has ensured that that country has remained sacred so that the peoples of that land are able to survive as a proud race.

Twenty years ago it was the will of the Australian people that the Aboriginal Land Rights Act would be legislated for the Northern Territory, to bring about some restitution for the social and economic problems which have been experienced by Aboriginal communities.

The Land Rights Act became a dilemma for the government when large amounts of uranium were discovered in Kakadu. The mining lobby, which is very powerful, placed intense pressure on the government to ensure that mines would be approved. They had to eliminate the rights of Aboriginal people to be able to veto such destructive development. This development is destructive not only to the Aboriginal community, the people who are most directly affected by uranium mining, but for other peoples around the world.

The Mirrar have always been opposed to uranium mining. Our people



**JACQUI KATONA**

Jacqui Katona is an executive of the Gundgehi Aboriginal Association. She is a relative, and works under the direction, of Yvonne Margarula who inherited the responsibility of Senior Traditional Owner of Jabiluka from her father, Toby Gengali.

Jacqui has travelled widely, usually accompanying Yvonne, to encourage a global response against the mine.

**AUSTRALIA** The Mirrar Gundgeghi land is east of Darwin in Australia's Northern Territory. The Mirrar have opposed uranium mining at Ranger and Jabiluka, in the Kakadu World Heritage Park, for over 20 years because it destroys their living tradition and jurisdictional and political structures, desecrates sacred and religious sites, devastates the environment, and provides fuel for the nuclear arms race.

have an obligation, recognised and imposed by our law - Aboriginal law - to protect our country. We have been well aware of the destructive force of uranium beyond mining, and held fears for the use of uranium when it left Kakadu. We don't want uranium from our country to be used to hurt other people.

There has been opposition expressed throughout the Kakadu region for over twenty years. That opposition was overridden by the Ranger agreement in 1978. Our opposition created a problem for the government so it created the Fox Inquiry. The aim of this inquiry was to look into the feasibility of opening four uranium mines within an 80 kilometre radius of each other. It was charged to investigate the likely social and economic impacts on the Aboriginal community, the nuclear fuel cycle and the environmental consequences.

The Inquiry recognised that Aboriginal people had a clear and unquestionable right to successfully claim their land; that Aboriginal people were absolutely opposed to the mining of uranium; that the opposition of Aboriginal people should not prevail; that, instead, Kakadu National Park should be created, a township would be established and strict environmental controls would monitor the four uranium mines.

Our people continued to oppose uranium mining. Government representatives visited our community and told the people they couldn't say no. There was a media lockout. The Northern Land Council was advised that if approval was not given by traditional owners then the Land Rights Act would be dismantled. We were told that approval for Ranger was in the "national interest". Independent advisers were refused permits by the Northern Land Council, and in the words of one of the Land Council members, the Ranger agreement was signed through lies and trickery.

Next came the approvals process for Jabiluka. Our people continued to oppose uranium mining. In this case, the land was still under a claim under the Land Rights Act, a claim which was strenuously opposed by the mining company, Pan Continental. The campaign of aggression then took another step. In exchange for opening limited negotiations on the agreement, before approval for the project had been sought, the

Northern Land Council suggested to the company that they withdraw their opposition to the land claim. Pan Continental agreed. In fact Pan Continental was so supportive, so grateful for the limited negotiations, that they paid a large part of the cost of the land claim. They also paid a large cost involved in negotiating the agreement.

The Jabiluka agreement was executed in 1982. The government was determined to ensure that a mining lobby, a private company, would be the major beneficiary. There was duress applied to the Mirrar People. They had no option but to agree to Jabiluka going ahead. They were given no choice. They were told that it was in the national interest for uranium mining to take place on Aboriginal land, for their right to say “No” to be extinguished. It was in the “national Interest”! It was a benefit for this country to extinguish Aboriginal people’s right to say “No”! This happened twenty years ago, and it is happening again.

Then we were fortunate to have a change of government and a huge public debate as to whether Australia should participate in the nuclear fuel cycle. The Labour government decided to create the “Three Mines Policy”. This ensured that Jabiluka was not developed for the next fifteen years.

This brings us to today with the change of government again. The Liberal government has chosen to view uranium as being the same as any other mineral. We know that it is not. We know that the level of toxicity which is created at every stage of the nuclear fuel cycle, wreaks permanent damage not only on country but on people.

This time the debate hasn’t been allowed to occur in the Australian community. The Liberal Government has made their decisions behind closed doors. The approval process locks traditional owners out. By “traditional owners” I mean land owners, title holders. The Mirrar have successfully claimed their land back under the



*Kakadu. (Photo courtesy Friends of the Earth, Australia)*



*Delegation of Mirrar People to the Medical Association for Prevention of War Conference in Canberra 1997. (Photo: Sue Wareham)*

Land Rights Act. They have the right to protect country; to ensure that their way of life, their world view, their culture and their society can be sustained for their survival as a people.

This is at the heart of our struggle to stop Jabiluka. This is not just an environmental issue, this is not just an issue about pollution, this is about human lives. This is about the lives that we live today and the lives of our children and our grandchildren.

The Mirrar are not prepared to sacrifice the lives of future generations so that this government gains some benefit, a private company makes a profit, and Australia once again is told lies about how our economy is going to benefit. The reality is that there is no benefit from uranium mining. Aboriginal people have known that for many years. Our communities experience Third World social and economic standards and yet the media would have you believe that the Aboriginal people who are “beneficiaries” of this agreement are millionaires.

The reality is that, in the hand, people receive \$500, four times a year.



That is their direct benefit. That's for tonnes of toxic waste - with a life of 250,000 years - to be stored in their land. For that they receive \$2,000 a year! That isn't a benefit. We have watched our people die in the shadow of industrial gain. It isn't a benefit when there is a very high mortality rate, when people are dying from lifestyle diseases, when there is no employment, when there is a huge alcohol problem, when there are no high school graduates. It isn't a benefit when there is a sense of hopelessness and despair in the Aboriginal community because their rights have been extinguished. The Government, in making its decision, has ensured the desecration of a dangerous sacred site. Dangerous not only to our people but to other people in the region.

In 1994, Energy Resources of Australia (ERA), the leaseholders for the Ranger and Jabiluka deposits, wanted to dump 500,000 cubic metres of high level contaminated water into the wetlands systems of Kakadu National Park. The people who were living downstream, the neighbouring clans of the Mirrar people, instigated a legal case and a campaign to prevent them from doing that. The court was not sympathetic to the views of the people. They said that if the best practicable technology was used there could hardly be any real effect to the people who lived on and used those wetlands as a resource and as their homes. Country won that struggle for the people. The rainy season had subsided enough for there to be no justification for the company to release that water.

ERA releases contaminated water from the Ranger mine into our wetlands every year. These wetlands are protected, by a variety of environmental standards - National Heritage Estate, National Parks status, and World Heritage Listing. We have been devastated to learn that neither traditional owners' opposition, nor internationally recognised standards, are capable of preventing further release of contaminated water. How much is Australia prepared to sacrifice to meet the needs of an industry which so callously disregards the consequences of its activities?

There is nobody who can give any information to our community, or to any other community, about the long term effects of that release but the issue is certainly very clear in people's minds. There is a very real fear as to what exactly do we eat? Exactly what animals are affected, not only by the contaminated water but by the operation of the mine itself? What ducks have landed on the tailings dam? Where do they fly to, and who ends up eating them, and what is the effect on our community? Our people live off that land, those waters.

Our concerns are not only about imminent development, but about developments which have taken place in the past. Like Nabarlek uranium mine, which is now decommissioned. The tailings dam is buried under a pile of earth and nobody can explain what is going to happen if there is a huge climatic event which shifts that toxic waste.

The threat, the danger, is present now. It's not only about our communities which are in the front line, but it is about natural values, it's about simple things like fresh air and water. It's those things that are under threat. This government will stop at nothing. There is nothing that they view as being sacred to Aboriginal people which should be recognised by non-Aboriginal law.



The Mirrar people have taken a stand in terms of direct action. They have approached the Ranger uranium mine - the shareholders, the customers of ERA and the mine workers themselves. They have erected a banner which has provided a real icon for tourists, from the Mirrar point of view. The symbol on the banner is a black hand on a red and yellow radiation sign. It ensured that the 300,000 tourists that visit Kakadu National Park each year are aware of the traditional owners' opposition to the mine. It has since been worn away by the elements and taken down.

This is an initiative of the traditional owners, not the environment movement. It is extremely rare for people who have been dispossessed, who have been living with such a sense of hopelessness for such a long period of time, to undertake these acts of true resistance. The Mirrar people are to be admired.

Getting the banner up the escarpment was quite an epic. We wanted to unfurl it on World Environment Day. We spent ten hours the day before hauling it up. It was 180 kilos, so it was quite a weight. None of us had any experience of rock climbing or abseiling, so it tested our personal conviction. When we finally got it on the edge of the escarpment we found that the paint had glued the entire banner together. We had to unfurl it - the full 20 metres by 13 metres of it - on a three foot ledge,

and throw it over the 70 foot drop. So we were out with our timing, but we got it there.

It is time that people take responsibility for the decisions that are being made on our behalf. It can't be left to politicians and petty bureaucrats. It's time to stand up. These are things that we all are responsible for. We have to ensure that they govern responsibly, that they govern effectively, that they govern for the future for all of us. This government has to be brought to account. It has to be exposed' internationally. We're talking about a uranium development in a World Heritage Listed National Park where the traditional owners are saying "No", seeking to protect country, seeking to uphold their way of life. We cannot let the mine go ahead.

Nothing can replace our country when it's mined. Nothing can reverse the damage to our water system and our food sources. Our culture can't be replaced by money.

Inherent in our laws and culture is an obligation to protect and preserve our homeland for future generations. It isn't negotiable. It isn't a matter of convenience. It's our tacit responsibility to future generations.

Stopping the Jabiluka mine is the first step in changing the future for our community. We have a responsibility to our children, and grandchildren and their children, to strengthen their heritage by acting now. This is our future. Without industrial domination. Without aggression. With meaningful positive change. For us, by us.

We say "No!" to uranium mining now and for the future. Our right to say no comes from our ancestors, our heritage, our law and culture.

## INDEPENDENCE IS AN INALIENABLE RIGHT

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*Tamara Bopp du Pont - Te Ao Maohi (French Polynesia)*

### **TAMARA BOPP DU PONT**

*Tamara Bopp Du Pont is the only female member of the French Polynesian Territorial Assembly. She is instrumental in the women's sector of Tavini Huiraatira no Te Ao Maohi, the Polynesian Liberation Front, the foremost pro-independence party.*

In 1789, several years before the French Revolution, Bougainville came to Tahiti. He returned to France with idyllic stories about our islands, the organisation of our communities and the natural kindness of our populations. French philosophers consolidated those stories into their theory of the "Noble Savage" which they used to abolish the French Kingdom.

Fifty years later the French were again in Tahiti, this time with an army. For 55 years the Maohi people had to defend their land, community and traditional customs against the French invader. Wars took place in the Marquesas Islands, in Tahiti, in the Tuamotu Atolls, in the Austral Islands, in the Leeward Islands, in every - archipelago. France won all of those wars.

In 1842, France imposed their sovereignty. This consisted of hoisting a flag and delivering a declaration of possession act, imposing a protectorate. The chiefly system that was in place at that time was overthrown by the French. Thereafter France signed a treaty with the Indigenous people that they did not respect. There is nothing in this treaty that has actually been respected - like issues relating to the land, to the chiefly system, to customs and culture. Naturally this was after having killed the last Indigenous warriors whom the Christian missionaries had not succeeded in pacifying. In the history of colonisation, the Bible and the gun are always linked.

Then came the time of colonisation itself with all its tools of psychological alienation, or brainwashing - a new religion (Christianity), a new language, schools and universities in that new language, new culture, new food, new alcohol, new diseases and a new blood. While the Maohi were dancing and singing marvellous gospels, their eyes fixed to heaven, they could not see the coloniser taking their land and resources. Loss of identity, loss of food, loss of land and extermination are the consequences of colonisation. Indigenous populations are transformed into clones that react exactly as Western people would. Then the marketing of Western products, and land and resources spoliation, become much easier.

Today all the traditional systems have disappeared and we have now the same system that you find in France. There are no more of our indigenous customs. The society that we have today is a society that France decided to create.

Since 1997 French Polynesia has had an internal autonomous status. In the French system it is the most decentralised power that a sovereign power can give to a territory. It's a kind of self-governing government, but not really. It is a strategy that France adopted to calm resistance towards French occupation after their decision to resume testing nuclear weapons in 1995-96.

Article Two of the French constitution says that, "The Republic of France is an indivisible republic." So there is no chance for French Polynesia to be a self-governing state within France. The idea is that France remains the main power. In terms of powers, France has sovereignty over air, land and sea. The economic and maritime zone is under French power, although they delegate some decision-making power to the local government. Money, scientific research, immigration and justice are still under French power.

There is a legislative body (the "Territorial Assembly") and an executive government. The Territorial Assembly has power in ruling the country but all the laws are decided in France. The President of the Parliament has no real power. The French President has the last word. The government promotes France's interests. Pro-France autonomists have demonstrated their incompetence through serious failures in economic, social and education matters. Imperialism, colonialism, injustice and corruption characterise the government.

Democracy is a socio-political system designed to maintain a colonised country under the coloniser's sovereignty. In the Indigenous

#### ***TE AO MAOHI (FRENCH POLYNESIA)***

An independence movement has existed in Te Ao Maohi since 1843 when the French overthrew the Tahitian monarch Queen Pomare IV. Fleeing to Raiatea, she led an armed resistance and it was only after her death in 1877 that Tahiti was ceded to France. By 1900 France had taken all five archipelagos.

In 1947 France unilaterally removed Te Ao Maohi from the UN Decolonisation List and, in 1957, constituted French Polynesia. The Maohi resistance movement is campaigning to have their nation reinscribed on the list. Beginning in 1966, 46 atmospheric tests and 147 underground or sub-lagoon tests were carried out on Moruroa and Fangataufa Atolls. After testing ended France began to dismantle the test site facilities but radioactive contamination is contained within the fragile atolls.

society's form of organisation, democracy is what Christianity is in religion. Both of those notions have been imported, imposed, as absolute values. They conflict with Indigenous people, who have their own beliefs and their own organisation that are traditionally transmitted from generation to generation. It is particularly dangerous when traditional ways are meshed with French colonialism - when a few people are given a power exercised in the traditional customary way and become dictatorial and corrupt.

A false economy has been developed with nuclear testing. In 1962, before the nuclear testing programme, the economy was based on traditional agriculture and fishing. Sustainability was a way of life all over the Pacific. About 75% of economic activity belonged to the primary sector, exports reached 80% and the grassroots people lived modestly but well. When France established the infrastructure for the testing programme, and the tourism industry developed, people became used to wage earning occupations. Today the primary sector is only 5% and imports are nearly 98%. We have a huge rising debt of \$US 600 million dollars (budget 1997) which is a lot for a population of only 200,000.

To remedy this imbalance France created what we call a "balloon economy." They cut French Polynesia from international trade with the rest of the world; forced the local government to impose taxes on imports (providing 80% of its budget); and injected billions of dollars to reinforce the imports.

So we are living in a pseudo-comfortable, protected autocracy. Tourism and black pearl exports are only an illusion. The first view to strike a tourist is not the mythical paradise but the highest prices in the world.

People say that France injects money, but more than twice as much is sent back to France, and that doesn't take into account the nuclear activities. Not only does French Polynesia cost France absolutely nothing, it contributes to the development of the French economy and geostrategic interests all over the world, particularly in the Pacific.

Since 1992 France has agreed to several "progress pacts" but we are still waiting for the money that was promised. In July 1996, after the nuclear testing stopped, France signed an agreement to pay \$US180 million per year for ten years. We haven't seen that money. For this the pro-France government has limited France's liability for 150 years of colonisation and the 35 years of nuclear testing.

Other effects have been the delocalisation of people - migration. People have been leaving the outer islands to come to the main islands. This leads to social problems. We have a big land issue. The price of land is very high for Maohi, but cheap for outsiders, so a lot of people are losing their land. There is 80% Maohi drop-out rate from schools, although we spend a lot of money on education, because the curriculum is French. We are taught in school that our ancestors are French, that when the French came to the islands there were no Indigenous people.

Then there is the nuclear testing. After the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, from 1946 to 1996, fifty years in total, 66 atmospheric devices were detonated in the Marshall Islands, 12 in Australia, 12 in Johnston Atoll [in Ka-Pae'aina/Hawai'i], 30 in Kiribati and 46 in French Polynesia, and again in French Polynesia another 147 underground tests.

The direct victims of those nuclear tests are Indigenous people. There are also the indirect victims, which is the whole world. We hope to join forces with other victims of the Pacific, and the world, to create an Indigenous Pacific Declaration and a World Indigenous Declaration which condemns nuclear weapons testing.

We believe that the Pacific has to deliver that message to the world and future generations. The Marshall Islands knew before French Polynesia the serious damage caused by the nuclear military industry in economy and politics, in corruption and social matters, in education, in mentality, in people's habits, in the way of life, in culture, in health and finally in all that our biodiversity contains.

The world's biodiversity is in danger. France must acknowledge its obligation to control the radioactivity in French Polynesia particularly on, in and under the atolls of Moruroa and Fangataufa. We do not believe their lies that radioactive nuclides are imprisoned in vitrified rock. Contaminated sea water wells up through the rock and leaks outside. In 1994 they discovered Strontium 90, Caesium 137 and Plutonium, 12 miles off Moruroa. Where do they come from? Tahiti is contaminated by Caesium 137, the Mangareva Islands are contaminated.

The French have lied, there are consequences. People are speaking out, particularly people who have worked on Fangataufa and Moruroa. Before nuclear testing there was no case of cancer. After the second year there were four cases and today there are at least three people sent to France every week for cancer.

People who have been living near the islands where the nuclear testing took place are saying that two years after the nuclear testing they couldn't eat the fish. Today there are only two fish that they can eat without problems. France covers by saying that it is not nuclear testing, it's ciguatera. It's not radioactivity, it's people's way of life today. They deny that there are problems.

The Evangelical Church, which is the largest Church in French Polynesia, in collaboration with Hiti Tau, a non-governmental organisation, investigated all victims of the French testing. They have published a book, *Moruroa and Us* - it is a study of the social and medical impacts.<sup>1</sup>

When France established its nuclear base 30 years ago only three of the Assembly's five permanent members voted yes. From that day the others have been protesting. Those who said yes did so because France said, "If you say yes you are being involved in the progress of humanity." That was how they put the issue of nuclear testing, they did not explain what it was.

What people saw was not what was happening at Moruroa or Fangataufa but the building of the hospital, a new airport, schools that were needed for the many French people coming from overseas. The leaders said, "Yes, it might be a good thing. It is developing our country." But they never saw what was happening at the test sites. Indigenous people who were working in these two islands were not in contact with the outside. It is only today, when people are going back to their islands where they were born, that they are beginning to see the problems for their kids, the malformations.

Nuclear colonialism has destabilised the Maohi people and created an economic and cultural dependence on France. The goal of this dependence is to influence people's political choice against self-determination. It is a "whitening policy" which encourages integration. Nevertheless the independence movement has increased over the last three decades and today there are two main political movements which divide the country in two. There is independence on one side and pro-French, supporting the status quo, on the other.

The Territorial Assembly has 41 seats, and 11 of those seats are pro-independence seats. So about 35% of the voters of last year's election are for independence. But you have to put that in context. Electoral fraud takes place. In the whole of French Polynesia, on every island, in



every atoll, and in every community there is political and electoral pressure exercised by pro-France politicians. Populations are terrorised.

France uses its money to buy people's support. It threatens people, saying that if French Polynesia was to get its independence then they will withdraw everything. It tries to appear like a kind benefactor and says, "You will recede into chaos and civil war. See what's happened in East Timor. Look what is happening in other Pacific islands. That's what will happen to you if you come out from under our umbrella."

In reality, the system that France has been promoting for the past 30 years is failing and people know they have to look at how they want their country to be in the future. A growing number of people are now aware that independence is not threatening, and that it is something that has to happen. Even the autonomists are, for the large part, against nuclear weapons but the system is such that they want to remain in the good life. They are afraid that if there is independence they will lose their benefits.

More than 85% of the European and Chinese population are against independence but according to the United Nations resolution 1514 of December 14th, 1960, and resolution 1541 on December 15th, 1960, the right to self-determination is the concern only of the Indigenous peoples. They alone have an inalienable right to self-determination and also the right to themselves recognise who is Indigenous.

When an Indigenous community votes for integration into an independent State I consider that choice to be absolutely democratic, because that choice has been expressed by the Indigenous community itself and not by anybody else. It doesn't matter if that choice is to be absorbed into another State, or for independence, or for free association. The important thing is that that decision has to be the



*(Photo: David Robie / Tu Galala)*

democratic decision of the Indigenous people concerned. When French metropolitans are also given the right to vote in acts of self-determination they vote automatically for France and the right to self-determination is not fulfilled.

It remains necessary to convince people of the importance of being independent and sovereign in their own country. We work with the people so that they understand that they have to build a new country where they are sovereign to protect the future generations from losing everything, even their own country.

We are training up a new layer of young militant activists of the pro-independence movements. France has real material means to buy the support and silence of young people. It can buy a sort of laziness by giving a higher standard of living than what other people in the Pacific have. This creates a confusion and contradiction in the minds of young people. They can see what is happening around them, that they don't really have control over their own affairs, but at the same time France creates this material world that is relatively comfortable. So for us the struggle isn't like in East Timor where you are very much forced into it by the pressure of arms. France has established systems which allow us to think that we are independent. It uses money, psychological pressure and all the various cultural needs to buy off the majority of the population.

On the international level our task is to convince people around the world that independence is a right of all people. An international campaign has to be mobilised to force France to meet the obligations of the United Nations declarations it has agreed to. The United Nations General Assembly has adopted resolutions for the eradication of colonialism during the Decade of Indigenous People (1994 to 2004).

We are confident that we have the resources and ability to survive as a people, but that at the moment the resources are not going towards sustaining the people. The first step is for the Maohi people to reclaim their identity and independence.

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<sup>1</sup> Pieter de Vries and Han Sent, *Moruroa and Us: Polynesians' Experiences During Thirty Years of Nuclear Testing in the French Pacific*, Centre de Documentation et de Recherche sur la Paix et les Conflits, Lyon (France), 1997.

## EAST TIMOR'S TIME IS HERE

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*Ceu Brites - East Timor*



### **CEU BRITES**

*When Ceu Brites left East Timor in 1975 as a 14 year old refugee from the Civil War she fully expected to return home within a few months. She is still waiting.*

*Her experiences led her to work for her people's liberation and she is now instrumental in the East Timor Relief Association. She has represented East Timor widely in the global arena. She dedicates her work to the women and children in East Timor.*

The Civil War started when Portugal began to withdraw from East Timor. In April 1974 they changed from a fascist government to a social democratic one. One of its priorities was to give independence to the colonies. All the other colonies, like Mozambique and Angola, got their independence, because they were already in armed struggle with Portugal. But, because we were less developed, they wanted to decolonise East Timor first. They said that we should have our own political parties and decide what we wanted.

The two major parties were the Association Social Democratic Timor (ASDT), which later became Fretilin, and the Democratic Union of East Timor (UDT).

I've heard rumours that because Indonesia wanted East Timor they had their intelligence behind the scenes working with the UDT to stir up

trouble so that they could invade. The UDT had a coup on 11 August 1975. Fretilin had a counter coup on 20 August. That was the Civil War, and people were afraid to leave their homes. Many people were captured by both sides. Then the Fretilin moved towards the UDT's camp and they ran away to Indonesia.

I had just come down from the mountains to Dili so that I could enrol in high school. A man from the Red Cross told people to go to the port, that it would be a neutral area. Many women and children went there. We were there for about a week, sleeping in a huge warehouse. All of us - me, my four brothers and my three sisters and my brother-in-law - but my parents had already gone back to the mountains to take care of their coffee plantation. At the port the Portuguese governor said, "What are you people doing here at the port? Do you think that you are going to

**EAST TIMOR** is occupied by the brutal Indonesian regime, now led by President Habibie. Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975, just as Portugal was ending its 500 year colonial rule. East Timor was preparing for independence when Indonesia, backed by Australia (wanting East Timor's oil) and the US (because of its strategic location), invaded, killing 60,000 Timorese in two months.

The small nation was illegally annexed in 1976 despite ongoing resistance by the East Timorese and diplomatic protests from Portugal. Since then over 200,000 people have been killed, and human rights violations are rife.

get any help? If you think there is a boat coming, it is only in your dream. You had better all go back to your homes.” The Portuguese government officials, the public servants, the military, and their wives and children, had already left East Timor. Only the East Timorese were left - and a few Portuguese who didn't want to leave. Only the governor and the paratroopers were left behind.

But some people had sent an SOS for any ships that went past the

East Timor Sea to stop. The next thing there was a huge ship there in the middle of the ocean. My elder sister decided that my two sisters, my younger brother and I should leave because we were young and if we came to Australia there would be a future for us, but not for them. She, and her husband, decided not to come. It was hard for my brothers because they weren't allowing men on the ship.

Then the smaller boats started to take us towards the ship. We evacuated at night time. The bombs were dropping all around us, into the water. I thought we were going to die. We finally made it. Dili was all dark and you could hear the guns, it was a sad way to leave our country. When the ship made a signal that it was leaving East Timor I thought, “Oh, I don't know what is going to happen in the future.” I thought it would only be temporary, that I would come back to East Timor.

I was really sad. I had said goodbye to my elder sister, who is like a second mother to me, and to my brothers and friends. But later I saw her on the ship and that made me really happy. She said, “It was getting really bad. The bombs were just dropping and dropping. I couldn't stand it any more. So I jumped in.” I found out that two of my brothers were hiding under some bags. That made me feel a little bit better, although my parents were left behind. I thought, “Will I see them again?”

My parents were in our village in the mountains and we couldn't communicate with them before we left. It was all so fast. So they didn't know that we had left to go to Australia. It was not until October, when one of my brothers came to Dili and couldn't find us, that he was told

that we had gone on the ship. Until then they didn't know if we were alive. I didn't hear anything about them until November 1977, and then the only news was that my Dad passed away and that one brother had been killed in January 1976 fighting the Indonesian military on the outskirts of Dili. But I never heard from my Mum until late 1979, when she was captured by the Indonesian military and taken to Dili. My cousin wrote us a letter, she worked for the Red Cross. Then in 1983 we asked my mother to come to Australia. She hadn't wanted to come earlier because my brother was still there, but after he was killed in 1981 she decided that she didn't have much choice. In November 1983 she left through Djakarta. We had to pay so much money, bribing her way, and for my first and second brothers' sons - \$A10,000. But I never saw my father again.

I would like to go back. For me, in my mind, East Timor is still the peaceful place that I lived in until I was 14 years old, although I know that it isn't. It was a peaceful country where you could never think that a war could come. For me this has never gone away. This is what has kept me working for East Timor, trying to do the best I can to highlight the crisis.

I remember my Mum telling me the stories about the Second World War. I was ten and I wanted to know. She took me to our village and she showed me holes in the ground and said, "This is the hideaway where we went underground when the Japanese came with the plane and bombarded us." I said, "How could this happen here? Do you think that something like this can happen again?" She said, "Let's pray to the Lord that it doesn't." I said, "Of course it can't happen again." I was growing up in a different East Timor. It was very peaceful, people talked to one another, everybody was friendly, you didn't worry about travelling at night or during the day - you were welcome at any place. Maybe I had a feeling that something was going to happen because I said to her, "If a war happens please don't leave us scattered around. Don't ever leave us alone. I want to be so close to you that I will be holding onto your skirt everywhere we go because, no matter what, I don't want to be separated from you." What I feared happened, it happened so fast.

People would say, "Why would Indonesia want East Timor? We are only small." But when we see what Indonesia is exploiting we see we are very rich. Coffee, first. Then marble, one of the rarest in the world. Sandalwood, which is good for perfuming. We have the sea - fisheries, seaweed. The Timorese would only use it for their own, now it is all

commercial. And we have the oil, one of the world's richest deposits. So we realised that it is not us that they want, it is our richness.

The war has really wrecked East Timor. We have never been so poor before in our history. Spiritually poor. Many Timorese have been killed. During the Second World War 40,000 to 50,000 people were killed. But this war is different. Whole families have been wiped out. Villages have disappeared, no more people there. According to Amnesty International's data an estimated 200,000 have been killed, but it is probably much more. It has been devastating in whatever way you think of it. It is just unbelievable.

People say, "Why are you still fighting, after 23 years?" But our people say, "It is because of the injustices that the Indonesians have done." They say, "This is our country and you cannot just come and take it." That is what has kept the struggle alive.

I am not saying that the Portuguese were good, but during their time the government didn't really interfere. Although we didn't get the rights and resources we wanted, people could live on their land and grow enough corn or rice, they were happy. But now they cannot live on their land. They are forced to move into government camps where they cannot grow crops and can't travel freely. If they grow food they are accused of giving it to the Resistance and are beaten, tortured. Nowadays most food comes from Indonesia and you have to buy it. But how can East Timorese buy food when they have no money? Even those few who go to university can't find a job because the jobs go to Indonesians. Even the ones who can grow their own food can't grow enough to make any money. What people do manage to grow they keep for themselves. They are being forced to think, "Should we share food, if I share my kids might not get enough." This is not our way. We still try to share what we can.

There are many human rights abuses. The atrocities committed by the Indonesians are beyond your imagination. People are still being taken away in the night. Bodies found here and there. It is still happening. Just last week we heard of someone whose thumbs were chopped off because he was accused of feeding the Resistance. I have heard so many bad, bad stories about what has happened to the women of East Timor. It is beyond your imagination. One of the main atrocities has been rapes. When the military catch a woman, first they rip off her clothes. Then they put five or six people there, watching, and they rape her one by

one. Then, to really humiliate her, they sometimes bring her father, her brother, her husband, and force them to watch. They get cigarettes and they burn her vagina, her nipples, or they use the electric shock. There are many women who are tortured in this way. In 1979 they inserted pythons, snakes, into a woman's vagina. This is part of the every day torture that everybody goes through.

They make women their sex slaves. When the soldiers leave after two years' service they'll pass the name of their woman onto another new soldier. "This is a woman. Someone else come and take over. Who will be with her?"

There is a village, called Kraras, it is called the "Widow Village". There are only widows, and their children, there. In 1983 the military gathered the men and boys and killed them. Only the women were left. The military use these women, sexually. Many women have given birth to children of the military. Their daughters have grown up now, they're 13 or 14 years old, and they're also sex slaves for the military. No one can go into that village but some women have come out - secretly - and have told their stories, but then they go back because their children are there. Why don't the women leave? Where would they go? Indonesia has 30,000 military in East Timor, and it is not a big island. Okay they can go to the mountains but then if they are caught they know what can happen to them. So they are locked into this village, surrounded by the military. People from outside that village cannot go there, not even from villages nearby. If you go in, the women are so frightened because the military will say, "Why is this woman here? What does she want? She's not from here!" Then if you can't answer them they start the atrocities. So the women just stay there. No men in that village, my goodness, it is beyond your mind. It is hard to believe but it is there. You think, "How can a human being do this to another human being?"

The East Timor Women's Forum works with victims of the military - the ones who have been raped, or tortured. They try to help them. It is not easy because usually it is a long, long time before the victim can speak about it. Some women go to the priests, like the Bishop. Here in Australia people have all this professional help, counselling and all, but in East Timor we are just starting. The Forum also talks about gender problems, equality. They do drama plays educating the community about the role of the women - that she is not just an object for men to send to do this, and do that. They say that society should accept women on an equal basis, not to look down on women.

Women work hard in East Timor. They keep the family going, looking after the children. There are so many widows, because their husbands are killed or disappeared - even if they didn't do anything. Women have many children - not just one or two, they have five or six. Suddenly she is the sole bread-winner and has to find a job and help the children. She is left alone, especially if she is blacklisted because her husband was part of the Resistance. She can't get a job. Her children don't get an education, unless the church give them an education. If they go to a public school the Indonesians will tell them to go home. "No. You don't deserve an education." So it is very hard. All she can do is find something, or cook something, and sell it on the street. That's the only way that she can get an income.

Women are very much part of the Resistance. It is mainly women who do the clandestine work, they are the ones who take communications, letters. But you don't see women in front, speaking, like the East Timorese here in Australia. This is because women don't feel it is their role. They live in a different world, and they see that the role that they do is more important than merely just speaking out to people, they'd rather do the work more quietly. Their husbands become really worried when the women become involved because if they are caught they can suffer really badly.

The biggest thing is humiliation. This woman said that her husband had been taken by the military and not given any food for days. Then they came to the cell and asked, "Are you all hungry?" They got milk and threw it on the floor. "Okay, go and eat it!" The men refused. The military said, "Well, didn't you say that you were hungry? So go now! Lick it!" They made them lick the food from the floor. "Now, is that enough?" and they threw more. This is how they do it. This woman said, "It is not just a matter of torture. Torture the body can take it, or not take, but it is the humiliation that really hurts the people." Like rape in front of families. She says that her husband and his friends laugh about it. "Remember when they threw the food and we had to go and lick it?" It is good that they can laugh. At least it is a way of looking at it, it is a relief, a protection. If you don't laugh and if you keep it inside it can get worse.

After the invasion in 1975 thousands of people retreated to the mountains. Initially, from 1975 to 1977, there was some food around, from the farms, but the food started to run out. The military came with planes and bombed the farms and shot the people. Tens of thousands of



people died. Starvation and illness, such as malaria and diarrhoea, killed many more. The water was contaminated from the napalm bombs. Yes, they used napalm bombs in 1978. If you ask Timorese what was the worst year everyone says 1978. People died in thousands every day. They couldn't drink the water. They were hiding in big groups but the military knew where they were. They tried to go into caves covered with big stones, the military bombed them in there.

All the children were dying. A woman told me, "Their parents just covered them with dirt and put the empty baby bottles on top. In one place you could see fifty graves all with bottles on top and you knew it was children that had died." It was so bad.

That affected the resistance a lot, because many were dead, but slowly the resistance began to build up again. This time they had learnt that a big group was an easy target so they worked in small groups. It wasn't a real fight back. It was ambushing and getting the guns and clothes and moving on from there. The resistance was mainly done by the diplomatic front outside East Timor. If it wasn't for the diplomats then the work done inside East Timor would have been forgotten.

In 1983, Xanana Gusmao spoke to one of the Indonesian generals. He said, "There is so much blood already, not only from East Timorese but also from your side, many military have died. Let's agree on a cease-fire. Let's stop this war." The general agreed. There are photos of them sitting together in March 1983 working on a cease-fire.

The cease-fire only lasted three months. Then Benny Murdani, who was in charge of the Indonesian military in East Timor, said to this general, "Who are you to make any decisions? Decisions come from me, not from you. So let's cut this crap out about the cease-fire and let's really hit them." They started attacking. They made Timorese walk together in front of the military. It was called the "Fence of Legs". It stopped the East Timorese from shooting at the military because they would have killed their own people. They retreated without retaliating, but many people were killed. This is a war with Indonesia, one of the world's military elite. They get all their weapons from the US and England. What do the Timorese have? Nothing! Only a few guns from the Portuguese. We managed to survive, but many Timorese have been killed.

People began to say, "How can we work together to really fight this

bigger nation?" Xanana and others thought that they should build something that every Timorese could be proud to be part of. They said, "Let's organise a structure that everybody should be part of because this is our country and we should really fight for one thing, to end this illegal and brutal occupation." So CNRM (National Council of Maubere Resistance, now National Council of Timorese Resistance) was formed, in 1988. Xanana said, "We must find a solution for East Timor."

Now it looks like there is a solution for East Timor. We will accept autonomy as a transitional period that will last between five to ten years, maybe fifteen. We see it as a step towards what we want, which is independence. But until then we want to ensure that East Timor is never removed from the United Nations agenda as a non-self governing territory, because once it is removed then it can be forgotten.

Portugal must keep East Timor on its constitution as a colony to be decolonised. It never finished decolonising East Timor, it was interrupted by the invasion. Indonesia is the illegal occupier but Portugal is still the administrating power. This has been very good for us because it meant that Portugal could not just walk away and forget about East Timor, it has a responsibility to finish off the decolonising process. If the UN has East Timor listed as a non-self governing territory then Portugal must finish off the decolonisation.

The first step to autonomy is that the military must go, not all at once. The government will have to step aside and let the people elect their own government. The people will elect Xanana as their president. He is the leader of the people, although he is still in prison. He says that he doesn't want to be the president but there is no choice for him, the people will elect him. He has given so much - his life - for *East* Timor. How can you not vote for someone who has been so good for East Timor?

Indonesian government staff should also move aside so that we can have the Timorese in charge of actually governing East Timor. Then international agencies will come freely to carry on with the work. The health situation is appalling, we need the World Health Organisation. There are so many orphans, children must go to school. These are the priorities. We will train the Timorese to be police. I don't know if there will be military in East Timor, that is up to the people to decide.

We are preparing ourselves for the future. Jose Ramos Horta had a vision.

He said, “We should have a congress, right now. It is time we looked into what we want for East Timor.” The congress was supposed to be about 90 people but it was 220. Many issues were discussed and we created the Magna Carta. It shows how the Timorese see an independent East Timor. It will be a democratic country, that has freedom of expression, where people can discuss what they want; freedom of the media, the rights of the children and the elders; protection of our environment; free of nuclearism; East Timor’s international role would include stopping human rights abuses; and we should speak out for the Asia-Pacific region. When East Timor wins its independence we will have a constitution and this will all be in it. It brings together all our visions.

Indonesia has offered autonomy but we will have to see if they lie. If they do then we will have to see where we go to from there. But I think that the time of the Timorese is here, now.



*The black, yellow and red East Timorese flag of independence*

## SURVIVING A NINE YEAR WAR

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*Josephine Kauona Sirivi - Bougainville*



**JOSEPHINE KAUONA SIRIVI**

*Born in 1967 in the village of Taungparu-Kieta, Central Bougainville, Josephine Kauona Sirivi was studying in PNG, when the war forced her to take refuge in the jungle with her husband, a former PNG Defence Force Officer who later became the General of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA). She was still living in the bush in 1998, when this book was written.*

*In 1997 she founded, and became the first President of, Bougainvillean Women for Peace and Freedom. She represented women of the Bougainville Interim Government in the negotiations for peace and attended the Cease-fire Agreement as BIG's Minister for Women's Affairs.*

I'm the wife of the "most wanted man" in Bougainville, being married to the BRA (Bougainville Revolutionary Army) General. The Papua New Guinea government deployed its army (PNGDF) to hunt down the BRA leaders: Sam Kauona Sirivi, Francis Ona, Joe Kabui and many others, plus the BRA soldiers. They gave an order to "shoot to kill" BRA soldiers without any question - even their supporters: women, children and old men. They placed a K200,000 price on my husband's head, Sam K. Sirivi. They said that whoever catches my husband dead or alive would receive the reward.

I became a mother on the run as the PNG "Defence" Force hunted us down. Sam and I fled into the jungle seeking our hiding place. I was seven months pregnant and the difficulties I faced made life and the journey very hard. I had to carry everything - clothes, bedding, cooking utensils. We sought our hiding place in the jungle where the "Defence" Force could not reach us easily.

During the bloody war on Bougainville we mothers and children have suffered most of all because of the total blockade imposed on us by the PNG government.

The first part of the war was from 1989 to 1990. It was the most dangerous and frightening time of my life. The way the PNGDF treated my people really broke my heart and I didn't want to get the same treatment. I really feared them. They were so cruel. They stole people's things and burned their houses. Some houses were big and made of permanent materials that had taken a lifetime of hard work to build in

villages with difficult access. The PNGDF showed no concern for the value of what they destroyed. People were left homeless and were forced to build small camps in the jungle.

While on patrol, raiding, looting and destroying, the PNG “Defence” soldiers raped our young daughters, sisters and even the married mothers, right in front of their husbands, brothers and uncles. The men could do nothing when faced with the high-powered army weapons. Some unfortunate young girls died instantly after being raped and some were murdered.

At the roadblock, on the Panguna highway, just after the war broke out, PNG soldiers confiscated goods the people had just bought on their shopping trips to Arawa town. People were forced at gunpoint to lie face down on the melting heat of the bitumen road. They forced others to lick each other’s sores and to swallow the pus soiled bandages. Other men and women were forced to undress in front of the soldiers and dance naked. They were forced to hold each other’s private body parts.

News of these incidents led us to depart our village in August 1989 at 7pm in the moonlight. We came to a resting place in the jungle and I was suddenly faced with the worries every mother would have. Many questions like: “There is no garden nearby, what will we do for food? How and when are we going to get home? Will we be safe from the “Defence” Forces? Where will I find medicine in times of need? Will anyone help us? Where will we set up a new camp? How long will we be forced to hide in the bush? How will our boys fare in the battlefield? Will the war end soon?” And I worried for my baby: “Will the baby be safe in the damp, wet jungle? Will I be okay in labour with my first baby? I should be at a hospital where people can help me but I can’t go because the soldiers are looking for me.” I had already just managed to escape their searching questions on my last clinic visit by pretending to be someone else. As many of my questions remained unanswered, my only recourse was to pray and trust God for His care and mercy to help me. I also placed my trust in my mother who chose to come with us.

Being pregnant, I was put through real suffering. Traversing through rugged mountains and wild terrain, I finally gave birth to a daughter but this was not the end of my difficult journey. I was in labour for two full days without any medical assistance whatsoever. Melanie was born three weeks after setting off into the jungle on a rainy day on 19 September 1989.

**BOUGAINVILLE** first declared its independence from Papua New Guinea (PNG) on September 1, 1975, but Australia had developed the world's largest copper mine in its islands and PNG refused to relinquish control.

In 1988, after the destruction of the Nasioi lands and livelihood, local land-owners responded to rejections for compensation by blowing up the mine's electricity pylons. PNG sent in troops, beginning a nine year war.

The Bougainville Interim Government (BIG) and Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) were formed and Bougainville redeclared its independence on May 17, 1990. In July 1997, recognising that they had won, the BIG/ BRA began a peace process which led to a Ceasefire Agreement on April 30, 1998. Negotiations are continuing, and Bougainvilleans still aspire to independence through peaceful means.

to new locations in the pouring rain with a four month old baby in my arms. Finally, towards the end of 1990, the first Cease-Fire declaration took effect and we came down from the mountains back to our village and civilisation.

Thinking that the war was ended, we re-declared our Independence Day for Bougainville (we first declared our independence on 1st September 1975) and formed our Interim Government on the 17<sup>th</sup> May 1991.

By 1992 PNG had declared war on Bougainville again, aided by Australia's supply of arms. Bullets supplied to PNG from Australian taxpayer money started to turn our island of Bougainville into a sea of blood.

My worst experience was when I heard the humming dragonfly flying above my head and looking up I saw machine guns. That's when I knew it was true about helicopter gunships. The fear inside me grew stronger and life became a nightmare. No longer were we safe to travel in the daylight. To overcome this difficulty Mother Nature provided bright moonlight for travel on our rough journeys.

I was very ill because I had retained some afterbirth and my mother, administering bush herbal potions to expel the retained placenta, saved my life. I felt so ill I could not feed my baby properly for a week. I couldn't sleep for the pain from blood clots I retained. A week later I resumed my journey on foot not knowing how my baby would survive.

I was like a nomad. I found out that the PNG "Defence" Force was searching for me as a target to capture my husband. So I had no rest. I continued my paths through rocky creeks and rivers and scaled mountain ridges always looking for a safe place. At times there was nothing to eat. I well remember the constant journeying

This is my personal experience, but some unfortunate mothers suffered and died innocently without any help. We have lost a lot of mothers, children and newborn babies. One such example is the mother of my adopted daughter Imelda. Her mother died from three weeks of continuous bleeding after giving birth. Four days before she eventually passed away she asked me to raise her baby. I fed her with coconut milk and then mashed sweet potato. She is now six years old.

As mothers we also faced problems like:

- *no schools for our children (during the years we were always on the move for security reasons);*
- *no clothes (because the soldiers burnt all our possessions and houses and stole our things);*
- *no way to get money (the blockade cancelled our access to currency, markets, shops);*
- *no hospitals and medicine (and nowhere to bring our sick and injured for any treatment);*
- *insufficient cooking and gardening utensils for family subsistence living (this problem escalated over nine years of isolation by the blockade).*

Without all these essential needs, all mothers really suffered in the struggle for family survival. We lived because the jungle gave us rich, fertile soil in which to grow our vegetables. We harvested food from the jungle and used bush medicine instead of modern western medicine.

Slowly the war came to another standstill with the Honiara Declaration in 1994 when Mr Julius Chan became Prime Minister of PNG. But this accord fell through and war broke out again. This time it appeared to us that we were at war with Australia even more than with PNG. We all knew that we had beaten PNG to a standstill; it was the continued financing of war with Australian taxpayer money that kept PNG flying four helicopters and floating four patrol boat “warships”. The troops moved in on the BRA strongholds in Central Bougainville by taking up positions from the north, east, west and south. At this time of Operations “High Speed 1 and 2” the island was “turned upside down”, and yet the operations to wipe out our BRA were unsuccessful.

Eventually we became more organised and developed community based humanitarian programmes behind the battle lines. Our BRA protected our communities and we started organising women’s groups.

Having seen and witnessed the suffering, I decided to do whatever I could to help our own unfortunate mothers and children. To this end I called women together in 1997 - all the mothers in my small community - so that we could work together. Our aim at this stage was to find some way to earn a little income to assist those who were in more unfortunate circumstances amongst our own families. The mothers responded with great interest and we began meetings that concerned our own affairs. We appointed one day each week to plant and work in a group garden, and another weekly time to make oil from coconuts and to grow rice together. We sold our produce at special fundraising sales.

Our initiative was rewarded by not only helping those in need, but by enthusiastic responses from an ever-widening circle of women. Now the enlarged group is learning new skills that include running sewing courses and clothing people with appropriate garments.

After much war and suffering, the governments of PNG and our own Bougainville Interim Government have entered into a Peace Process. We are at the stage where we have to talk. In 1997 and 1998 the need arose for women representatives to be included in the Bougainville Interim Government (BIG) / Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) Negotiation Team that was invited to New Zealand for an All Bougainville Leaders' Meeting. Our leaders (women among them) came to Burnham military camp in Christchurch to unite the Bougainvillean people. This was the birthplace of the Peace Process and where we Bougainvilleans made our Burnham Declaration which set in place the negotiating steps to attain our freedom.

Our small group of women sought out suitable women to attend but, during that period of danger in wartime, none was prepared to speak out. I had begun to feel new courage and had gained some confidence through our local leadership initiatives, so I decided to accept the position and stand up for the women in our own BIG/BRA controlled area. Other women accompanied me from Bougainville, the Solomons and Australia.

We called a big meeting for all women who wished to help us organise for the Burnham One negotiation talks. We convened another meeting to brief the women on our return. It was held at Roreinang in late July 1997.

Then came Burnham Two, when a truce was signed between both parties.



Then the Lincoln Agreement on Peace, Security and Development, which was chaired by the Prime Minister of our sister country the Solomon Islands. The Solomons, Fiji, Vanuatu, New Zealand and Australia witnessed the signing between PNG and Bougainville. With the experience I had gained in being part of our earlier meetings representing mothers and children, I was encouraged to work extra hard to convince our own men to see the mothers' needs.

We have made very good progress. The women have all been so supportive and ready to work on women's affairs. The mothers proposed to invite women from all areas of Bougainville to be represented in our movement. We therefore encouraged women from other areas to follow our own method of organisation and arrange for representatives to contact us at the BRA base headquarters. This is how our organisation of Bougainville Women for Peace and Freedom was formed.

From January 6th, 1998 we began to hold formal meetings because our women's movement had expanded and represented all areas of mainland Bougainville. We re-elected officials for both executive function and negotiation representation. Agenda items focused on the present and future needs of education, health and all matters relating to nation building.

A further meeting was held to meet with Mrs Skate (wife of the PNG Prime Minister, Mr Bill Skate) and visiting women from the Bougainville Transitional Governments areas of North Bougainville. At this meeting we clearly stated our stand for peace and freedom and our belief for political independence. We discussed how important it is for us to determine our own needs and our preferred ways of implementing development, and we considered the potential for accepting invitations from our sisters in the north to visit them when BIG clearance could determine a suitable future time.

We women acknowledge the enormous task of food preparation and hosting large official functions that repeatedly occur whenever important guests come to Bougainville. In this manner we are playing a significant support role to our men as contributors to the peace process. The official meetings of negotiation and the peace process are successful because the men have our full support and we women back them up all the way.

The necessity for us to fulfil such roles is precisely why our women's organisation must be accepted and endorsed by our whole community.



*Peace at last: beaming delegates to the Lincoln conference applaud the agreement. (Photo: John Kirk-Anderson / The Press)*

We are very happy to do this work and we desire to continue to serve under the leadership of the BIG. It is to this end that all areas of Bougainville have now begun to organise similar women's groups with executive members to form one body. I was able to represent them in April 1998 for the ceasefire negotiations as BIG Minister for Women's Affairs.

We are addressing the practical needs of some of the mothers

who urgently require help with sewing equipment, gardening tools, clothing for families, and medicine - especially for the children. We have little but we share what we have because we are suffering for our freedom.

We have started building and operating schools despite shortages of proper facilities, equipment, stationery, and sporting equipment. Our teachers are trying their very best and create opportunities for teaching even though they have no salary.

It is for all these reasons that we mothers support the Peace Process. We believe the Ceasefire Agreement has made it possible for the warring parties to end hostilities and for Bougainvilleans to exercise our freedom of speech. It's time for our Bougainville people to work as one and achieve our everlasting peace and freedom.

## ETHNOCIDE IS NOT 'UNITY'

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*Nancy Jouwe - West Papua (Irian Jaya)*

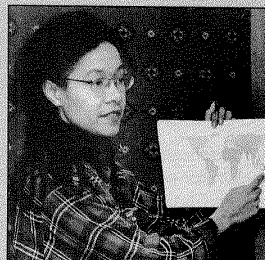
My people, the people of West Papua, have been fighting for independence since 1962 when they were forcibly incorporated into the Republic of Indonesia. It was an act of violence which was endorsed and condoned by the United Nations. And it was done with the help of the US, notably the Kennedy administration,

The brutal incorporation was made official in 1969 through a people's referendum called the "Act of Free Choice." Out of one million Papuans, 1,025 people (there was only one woman among them) were picked out to choose independence or incorporation into Indonesia. With guns held almost literally against their heads you can imagine the choice was easily made. Thus we have become the 26th province of Indonesia, officially named "Irian Jaya".

As a result we have experienced the genocide, the ethnocide, of our people. At least 150,000 people have died due to military actions by Indonesia. Our people have lived on their land, which they consider to be sacred, for thousands of years. They speak at least 240 distinct languages. They have their own cultures, beliefs and religious practices. We do not feel Asian. We are Pacific people. We have a clear historic bond with the people of the Pacific.

Because we are so scattered around the world it's very hard for us to convene as Papuans, to set up a political agenda. But all of us agree that we are being colonised and that we want to assert our right to self-determination and have the choice to our own future.

I cannot go home. I cannot be with my relatives who live under constant fear of repression. My culture and my land were stolen from me. I am part of a political refugee community in the Netherlands - the Dutch



**NANCY JOUWE**

Nancy Jouwe is a second generation West Papuan refugee living in the Netherlands. Involved in her people's struggle from an early age, she has travelled and spoken widely on their behalf. She is currently a board member of HAPIN, a Dutch based fund that financially supports small scale projects in West Papua, and PNG.

**WEST PAPUA (IRIAN JAYA)** West Papua's former coloniser, the Netherlands, began a process towards independence in 1961 (to be implemented in 1970) but Indonesia intervened. In 1962, the US and Indonesia negotiated for West Papua to be transferred to the UN for six years leading to a national vote to determine independence or integration with Indonesia.

But Indonesia became the interim administrator and in 1969 a false "Act of Free Choice" handed West Papua to Indonesia despite protests from 15 countries.

In 1971, West Papua declared its independence and established a Revolutionary Provisional Government backed by Organisasi Papua Merdeka OPM people's army (formed in 1963). West Papua continues to fight for its sovereignty.

were our former colonisers. As a political refugee community we have become faceless and nameless because we are not even considered an ethnic minority according to official Dutch standards. Why? Because we are the reminders of a shameful page in Dutch colonial history which they would rather forget. To say I'm West Papuan is a political statement.

I have the opportunity to talk to you today because my Papuan sisters cannot get a visa out of their own country. If they were to succeed in getting out of the country they might as well apply for refugee status somewhere; because when they speak out internationally they are signing their own death warrant. They will be killed when they go

back and their families will also be harassed and abused.

I want to tell you about our current coloniser - Indonesia - and to remind you that colonisers do not just come from the North, from the so called "First World"; that racists are not just white - they can have brown faces too; that colonialism is not just history, it is a fact.

Indonesia is a case in point. A colonial apparatus has been kept alive through a cruel military regime, the strongest military force in the south-east Asia and Pacific region. It has been engaged in the genocide of the people of West Papua, East Timor and Aceh. I wish that governments both in Europe, the US, Asia and Australia, all of which have active political and economic partnerships with Indonesia, would stand up and say, "No More!"

It is exactly these partnerships which keep Indonesia in control so that they can continue their military rule over my people. They supply the Indonesian military. Britain has delivered Hawk fighters to Indonesia. The Netherlands, Germany, the US, Australia, and many other countries, deliver military arms, services and training. They all give financial support to Indonesia.

I want to tell you about racism. Indonesia has a national slogan: “Unity through Diversity.” It is better to say “Unity through Javanisation.” The Javanese are the dominant ethnic group. They have placed themselves on the top of an ethnic hierarchy. It will not come as a surprise who is at the bottom.

Papuans are considered stupid, backward, primitive, standing on one foot in the stone age. They are seen as people who need uplifting by others because they certainly can’t do it by themselves. This is blatant racism. Papuans have to live with it on a daily basis. The process of Javanisation has destroyed our ethnic identity. We’re not allowed to speak our own language; we have to learn the Indonesian language. We can’t practice our own culture. Wearing traditional dress is seen as an act of resistance against the Indonesian government.

The Indonesian government does not recognise most indigenous claims to land and already thousands of Indigenous people have been forced off or removed from their own lands because of transmigration. The transmigration programme and influx of so-called spontaneous migrants has created an Indonesian population of around 700,000 in our country as opposed to around 900,000 Papuans. This is a statistic from the beginning of the 90s, so I guess we’re already in a minority now. We Papuans have been outnumbered. We have become second rate citizens in our own country since all economic activity is in the hands of the immigrants, and racism rules.

The government aims to resettle 2,150 families each year into “model villages” controlled by Indonesian authorities. We’re being relocated from our indigenous communities to model villages that are shaped around Indonesian ideas, which is a perfect way of controlling our people. When Papuans and other Indigenous people are alienated from their lands they do not merely lose their land for hunting, gathering and

*Activists with the banned 'Morning Star' banner of West Papua. (Photo: David Robie / Tu Galala)*



agriculture, but their entire cultural identity. Land is not merely a commodity; it is our ancestors and also our future. What are the consequences of colonisation for Papuan women? Women have become third rate citizens. Living in a patriarchal, strongly militarised society, and through combined racism and sexism, Papuan women have become an underclass.

Racist ideology is often internalised by our people. That same racist ideology makes Papuan men find Javanese women more attractive. Interracial marriage is actively encouraged by Indonesia since it is such an excellent strategy of dissolving a people. Papuan men have more job opportunities if they marry a Javanese woman. It is also cheaper for them to marry Javanese women because they do not have to pay a bride price to the future wife's family, a traditional custom in our culture.

While our men are being lured into the modern cash economy, women still carry the heavy workload in their community. The transmigration programme has a major effect on women's lives. Women have been forced to use Norplant or be sterilised. Or they're forced into a programme of population control. This is happening although we do not have overpopulation in our country, in fact you could say that we are underpopulated. The United Nations awarded the Indonesian Family Planning Programme a prize in 1989.

Through the structural presence of military troops in West Papua numerous women, and their children, have been raped, repeatedly. Young women have been picked up from school by the military and raped. Their parents dare not resist out of fear of being branded OPM, the Free Papua Movement, who are involved in armed struggle against Indonesia. Being branded OPM means death.

With the coming of immigrants and transnational corporations, prostitution has been introduced in West Papua - a practice formerly unknown to our people. Immigrants have also brought AIDS into our country; and our people do not even know what it does to them.

Grassroots women form the majority - and the backbone - of society. They are the main food producers and workforce in their communities. They are the most marginalised group of people in society, hardest hit by external negative influences like foreign logging and mining companies which ravage the environment and threaten the existence of rural communities. They're left to pick up the mess. That's why it's the

women, more than the men, who are a more united front and willing to fight against Indonesian rule.

Women organise themselves in women's groups. Although they try and work with and for women, they are constantly restricted by strong government control and oppression. The women do not feel free to do things they want on their own terms. An exchange programme had been set up with women's groups in PNG. This is an important partnership because the West Papuan women exchange skills and get a lot of support and solidarity from PNG women. Many women have joined the underground armed struggle.

I stand here today in solidarity with my sisters of the Pacific. Let us not forget the sisters of Tahiti who have fought nuclear testing for so many years; the sisters of Kanaky who are still colonised by the French; the sisters of Bougainville who have experienced a war because of colonisation. Places you might have never heard of but where the peoples face oppression, human rights abuse and death to this present day. I stand here with my East Timorese, Aceh and Papuan sisters who fight a common enemy.

## WEAVING MAORI WOMEN'S LIVES

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*Pauline Tangiora - Aotearoa (New Zealand)*



**PAULINE TANGIORA**

*Pauline Tangiora, Rongomaiwahine Tribe, is a Maori elder and has affiliations to many other tribes. She is a Justice of the Peace, a former President of WILPF Aotearoa, the Regional Women's Representative for the World Council for Indigenous Peoples, a member of the Earth Council and a life member of the Maori Women's Welfare League.*

There have been several women from my tribal area of Rongomaiwahine Te Mahia on the East Coast of the North Island, who have had a major influence on my life - strong women, though they never spoke much.

On the *marae* (sacred gathering place) one used to sit between their legs under a blanket. You learnt you didn't want to get up to go to the toilet because if you got up they tugged your pigtails and you sat back down again. It was a way of not disturbing the flow of the *tangihanga* (time of mourning) or anything big. It always felt cosy, knowing there is a comfort in older people. It has been a good support growing up with older people, learning from them that there is a necessity in life to know who you are and that you can stand up for what you believe is right. We owe them so much.

My father used to bring me home frequently whenever there was a *tangihanga*, at Tuahuru Marae in Mahia. There were also many things going on at Kaiuku, Mahanga and

Opoutama because, although we are a small peninsula, we have many *marae*. There was always something on at one *marae* or another.

There was talk in my early years of the wars that were caused in our area off the Coast and Waikaremoana about Te Kooti and the *Pakeha* (Europeans) chasing him through the bush. He wanted his land back but they got rid of him, imprisoning him down on Rekohu for two years. In Mahia, Toiroa the Prophet prophesied that the "Upraised Hand" would arise in the area. That was many years before Te Kooti Rikirangi returned from Rekohu with the Ringatu Religion.

Many of our Maori men went overseas and were killed in the Second



World War. Relations used to say, “What a waste of life. Why do we have to have war?”

In the late 1950s many issues concerned me, but being in the full blush of motherhood with a young family, there was little time. My main concern was that bombs were being tested in the Pacific and about what was going to happen to our land and the Pacific if the testing continued. We were brought up to be very careful with water - only to use enough for cooking, drinking and bathing - and although the early reports were not specific about the utter desecration of land and water as a result of those tests, enough was said to make me think.

The issue of our self determination gained strength in the early 1960s. We became aware that we were being assimilated into a society which was not a part of Maori society. So we Maori in Taumaranui set up fundraising for the Maori Education Foundation and the Government matched us dollar for dollar.

Sir Apirana Ngata had said, “You take those things of the *Pakeha*, but hold on to those things of the Maori.” In the 1960s Maori began realising we weren’t holding onto very much - that we were losing so much. It was an oppression - “Well you don’t have to be Maori, we’re all the same in this country!”

Most of my children had been educated on Maori education scholarships so it was a case of standing up and being counted. If one wanted to take the money from the *putea* (collective funds) for my children’s education it was beholden to me to take a stance about where we were as Maori in our own country. From there I became even more involved with the Maori Women’s Welfare League.

The League has made, and continues to make very good submissions to the Government about testing in the South Pacific, the Maori language and many social issues to do with Maori. What is good for us as Maori is also very good for the rest of the country. People need to accept that what Maori do is a Maori decision under the Treaty of Waitangi, but it is also going to benefit all those around us. Many of us have grown up knowing that we don’t own the environment - that we live within it and take care of it for the future.

My *whanau* (family) - eight children of my own (living) and six stepchildren and many, many *mokopuna* (grandchildren) and great

**AOTEAROA (NEW ZEALAND)** is a country colonised by the British in the early 19th century. A Declaration of Independence was signed in October 1835 by the Confederation of United Tribes. This was followed by the Treaty of Waitangi in February 1840, between the British Crown and signed by some Maori tribal leaders. This Treaty has yet to be honoured. Maori people have been in a continual struggle to re-assert their sovereignty in Aotearoa.

*mokopuna* and *wbangai* (children who have joined the family) - give me the strength to take responsibility to challenge decisions on many issues. The future generations will be the judge and jury.

In the 1970s, the focus became more on the issues of the Treaty of Waitangi. The Land March in 1975 started up North and went all the way

down the North Island to Parliament. That focus on the land strengthened Maori. A whole lot of issues came back to the land. Let us remember Eva Rickard and her fight to retain her land at Raglan. *Moe Mai e Whaea* (May your spirit rest peacefully). The stake she planted for the land ignited the fire throughout the country, to reclaim Maori land.

Remember the continuing struggle of Nganeko Minhinnick who for years has been trying to replant her whole area in native trees and to protect the site behind the steel mill where the bones of her people have been bulldozed up. How she has had to sit there with her family. More recently she has been trying to draw attention to the sacrilege of putting a sewer pipeline through the Stonefields, one of Aotearoa's oldest known settlements, which is of equal significance to Stonehenge in England.

Earlier land confiscations - Parihaka land confiscation, and the *raupatu* (illegal seizure of tribal lands by Government) of Tainui, Tauranga, the Bay of Plenty and many others – were not taught in history at school. It's sad that even to this day children are taught about Julius Caesar and the Magna Carta but not the history of this country. One of the challenges we face as we go into the new millennium is to teach the children the history of this country, not what the parents or grandparents thought they knew of the history.

It's still happening in this day and age. In Tamaki Makaurau (Auckland), Bastion Point is a good example. Here was a piece of land handed over by the tribal people, Ngati Whatua, for the use of the people of Auckland. Then the Government of the day ordains that it was such an exclusive piece of land that they could make millions out of it if they sold it. Well, where is the justice in that? There was a sadness when delivering *kai* (food). You couldn't do anything other than support the people who

occupied the Point protesting that sale. The strength of Maori stopped the injustice but at such a cost to the people. But, the ordinary person in the street said, “Those Maoris again! Here they are wanting their land back!”



*Women protesting at Bastion Point, Auckland, Aotearoa. (Photo: Gil Hanly)*

We’ve got to be honest about how we teach these issues. The occupation of Pakaitore at Whanganui challenged *Pakeha* about their claim of “non-Maori land.” Yet most New Zealanders only believe what they read in the paper.

The environment is another issue - heavy topdressing and emptying of bilge water from ships into the ocean. We’re pouring so much poison into the oceans and waterways in Aotearoa, it’s causing destruction. Plantings of pine trees have replaced forests that have been cut down unilaterally. The pine trees are exported to the Asian market. We’ve really not thought it through because the logs are being exported, not processed here. Now we’ve got a back-up of logs in many ports. If we want to plant forest why don’t we plant forest that will regenerate, and look at a long term system of native reforestation?

There is also the issue of flora and fauna which is the WAI262 claim to the Waitangi Tribunal launched by Del Wihongi. That’s one the Government doesn’t want to move on. They know the whole world is

watching and whatever the Government and Maori come out with is going to have an impact on the biodiversity laws of the whole world and decide who has the responsibility to be custodians of the fauna and flora.

One cannot really separate one issue from another, because every issue overlaps or is woven into the next issue. From the Maori perspective everything is within the circle of the holistic worldview. Once you start pulling one thing apart you disturb the others.

The fishing issue has become a real thorn in the sides of many people. Suddenly in the 1980s and 1990s it's become worth so much money. With the destruction of the fisheries in the northern hemisphere the ships are moving down here and are fishing out some species. No one knows whether they'll recover. In 1987-88 the Maori Council put an injunction in to the Government that Maori own the fisheries. It was going through court on and off, then suddenly, in 1992, we were called to a meeting in the Maori Affairs Office in Wellington and presented with a document - the Sealord agreement - and asked to sign it. I remember standing up and saying, "Hey we can't do this, we haven't discussed this with our people back home. We can't put signatures on this. Rongomaiwahine won't be signing this deal." Tribal areas didn't know what was going on and if we are true to ourselves as communities - Maori communities - we don't give that authority to anybody else. Many people were upset with this decision, Tipene O'Regan was one of them, but someone had to stand up and be counted on behalf of our people.

When walking out of Parliament I decided to travel around the world to let governments know that this wasn't a deal, since you couldn't even say half of the Maori tribes agreed to it. My visit took me to the office of the Commonwealth Secretary-General and one of the Lords in the British Parliament. A few tribes have gone to the United Nations and asked for the UN Human Rights Commission to look into this situation.

In the discussion leading up to that deal we were told that buying a half share of the Sealord fishing company was a good proposition for Maori, and that getting into a multi-national deal was what Maori should be doing. But one needs to question whether we should be in multinational deals when it's multinationals which, at the end of the day, are oppressing not only Maori but many Indigenous people around the world. Sealord says it gives scholarships for Maori for education and for this, that and

the other, but it's not the issue - where will the multinationals take us if they buy us out? Factory ships may still wipe out sustainable fishing.

We must acknowledge those people who have motivated a resurgence of Indigenous peoples - Nga Wahine Toa, Nga Tama Toa, Waitangi Action Group, Titewhai Harawira in the 1970s with the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement, the Pakeha Treaty Action - and the support of Reverend Maurice Gray for his people.

Maori are great weavers. The many strands in our history will tell of dedicated *Pakeha* people who have been being woven into our history by being there for us, obtaining resources to make things happen. *Pakeha* who have challenged their own people to seek the truth - among those are Helen Jensen, Joan Macdonald and Kate Dewes. Today's struggle is still very much alive. Mana Motuhake is ever strong. Self determination will succeed. One only has to look at the dedication of Maori in raising up *Kohanga Reo* (Maori language nests) and *Kura Kaupapa* (total immersion learning centres in Maori). The dedication of urban Maori, who have been living in cities for the past two or three generations.

We have an overflowing basket of young people, coming forward strong and dedicated, too numerous to name - amongst whom are Hilda Halkyard-Harawira, Joseph Te Rito, Annette Sykes and others not so young, but with wisdom, such as Moana Jackson, Tariana Turia, Peter Sharples and Mereana Pitman, to whom this chapter is dedicated.

*Kia Kaha, Kia Maia, Kia Manawanui.*  
(Have strength, uplift your spirit and hold firm).

## THE WORLD'S FIRST NUCLEAR FREE CONSTITUTION

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*Isabella Sumang - Belau (Palau)*



**ISABELLA SUMANG**

*Isabella Sumang campaigned to protect the constitution. She was instrumental in running the last lawsuits that challenged the US and Palauan governments.*

*She has lobbied the US Congress and represented the constitutionalists internationally. Her determination to protect her people from military threat continues.*

In 1979, Palauans drafted the world's first nuclear free constitution. Since then we have fought with the United States government against its objective to make Palau a colonial, nuclear military base.

We have been under the United States since 1946 when the UN made them our administrators. The US was obliged to make Palau independent, and to put in electricity, build hospitals and schools. They neglected their responsibilities. Only in Koror, the capital, do we have running water and electricity. Angaur and Peleliu islands only have roads and runways because they were built in the Second World War.

In the 1960s US President Kennedy sent a team to the Micronesian islands to find out how to keep control over Palau and other countries. The Solomon Report said that they found the "natives" were self-sufficient, relying on fishing, coconuts and food we grew ourselves. It advised the US

to destroy our self-reliance by giving us some money, just enough to whet our appetites, but enough to make us too frightened to be independent.

The US is not like the other colonisers - the Spaniards who "discovered" our islands; the Germans who bought our islands; or the Japanese who won our islands. They wanted to make an illusion that it was the will of the people, and so they had to manipulate us.

In 1979, 92% of our people voted for our constitution. It contained a nuclear clause which said that 75% of the people had to agree before nuclear weapons could be brought into Palau. We did not want nuclear weapons or power. We knew that Marshallese babies were being born

deformed. We'd lived through the Second World War and didn't want a nuclear war in Palau. We believed that it was our right to choose our future. The US immediately said, "No, that is in conflict with our plans. You have to allow nuclear weapons." Although the people were afraid of the US they voted again to be nuclear free. The constitution was implemented in 1981.

The Compact (which allowed nuclear weapons and military bases) was first introduced to the people in 1983. Our government, which is a puppet of the US, promoted the Compact. They said it would give us a lot of money. But they were lying. Before the Compact we were eligible for US grants but when it went into effect money began to drop off. They made a lot of propaganda that the Compact was the best thing that had ever happened to Palau. They never said what was in the document itself. Now the congressmen are saying, "There is not enough money in the Compact." But we voted and they didn't get the 75% approval required by our constitution to allow nuclear weapons into our country. We voted against it ten times, then the last time, the eleventh time, it passed. We voted, and voted, and voted, and voted against the Compact. We say "no" ten times and they don't take "no" for an answer, then you say "yes" one time and they take that. In American democracy you vote and vote until you get the right answer. That is not democracy. At least the people should have to vote 'yes' ten times.

The 1987 vote for the Compact was under a reign of economic coercion and violence. The government turned off the lights, the power and water and laid off the government workers. They said, "This is what it will be like if you don't vote for the Compact." Palauans do not have much other income than what they receive from the government, which is subsidised by the US. There isn't any money coming from anywhere else so the US is very powerful.

I found independence by working in the taro swamp with the other women. They said, "Don't worry about the government. They are the ones who are used to cooking with an electric stove, to air-conditioning, to running water. They are the ones who are going to suffer. So we wait and see. They will come back to us." These women go to the taro swamp early in the morning,

**BELAU (PALAU)** In 1979, Palau created the world's first nuclear free constitution. The nuclear free clauses of the constitution conflicted with US military intentions and it forced 11 plebiscites over 15 years until, in 1994, a Compact of Free Association was implemented and Palau was declared independent. The Compact granted the US military control, a veto over foreign affairs, and the right to take any land with 60 days' notice.

they cook the taro while they are there and then they take dinner home to their families. These are the women who are older. They remember what it is to be independent. I grew up with my grandmother and she taught me so, even though I went to school and went away, I have a sense of knowing what independence is like. But now the US says, "This land that you cultivate for your food, whenever I want to I can take that away from you - any time I want to, any size I want to, for any purpose I want to - for military, for nuclear."

For the Compact to be approved it had to receive a 2/3 vote in the House and the Senate. It never did. But our President ratified the Compact and sent it to President Reagan who ratified it and then it was to be sent to the US Congress. Then 24 women filed a suit against the Palauan President because he had unconstitutionally ratified the Compact. That was in 1987.

When they did that, some of the laid-off workers went to the homes of the women and threatened to kill them if they did not withdraw their suit. Most of them were drugged with a laced punch. They had guns and they went around shooting. They put up signs saying, "September 8. Rest in Peace." The father of one of our women was shot and killed - they were trying to kill her brother who was a lawyer. They burned many houses in Koror because the majority of the people there voted against the Compact. They shot at my sister's house and fire bombed the house of the women's leader. The lights were off and everything happened at once. Then the police went to women's homes and had them sign to withdraw from the law suit. Finally two of the women went to the court and said that the women withdrew their case. The American judge went outside the court and he saw the men were all around the court-house, dressed in camouflage and with guns. He said that the case was withdrawn under duress and that the women could refile their suit at any time.

When it was brought up in the US Congress to be ratified, the leader of the women, Gabriela Ngirmang, went to tell them that we were going to refile our suit. After we had been there for a couple of days she had a heart attack, so I had to speak to the US Congress. We asked them to give us time because we were working under very dangerous circumstances. A year later we took it back to court and the Compact was declared null and void. We were very happy but that victory was short lived because we were forced to vote again, and again. They amended the constitution to 51%, from 75%, so the Compact could be



passed with a simple majority. We never thought that it takes 51% to cancel 75%. By then our courts had different judges who were very hostile to us.

In 1994 we filed more law suits. But no one in Palau would defend us, because it was not safe and we didn't have money. We got a lawyer from the US. But that didn't work out so we asked him not to represent us anymore. Then we couldn't make an appeal in Palau or pursue our case in Honolulu because we couldn't afford another lawyer. So, we withdrew and the Compact went through, and in October 1994 Palau was declared independent. It felt terrible. If we had done our best and the court had been hostile I wouldn't have minded so much but we lost, not on principle, but because we couldn't get the full cooperation of our lawyer. I feel a lot of anguish about that.

One "yes" hooked us into the US military, at least for the next 50 years and possibly forever. The Compact gives the US the authority to install military bases, to bring in nuclear capable vessels and aircraft. They can take any land with 60 days' notice and it must be given to them. It can alter the sites and when it's finished it has no obligation to restore the land to its original state. They promise that they will abide by the environmental policies and regulations of Palau and the US but the US President can waive them.

The US wants Malakal Harbour, which is the deepest harbour in the Pacific, and our ocean. Palau is strategically placed between the Philippines (and the two US bases that used to be there), Guam (which has an air force and a communications base), the Marshall Islands (which has Kwajalein Missile base), and Hawai'i which is the headquarters for the Pacific. In return the US will give Palau \$US450,000,000 in economic assistance for 50 years. The agreement cannot be terminated by Palau only, it has to be mutually agreed. This means that it could be a perpetual agreement. If the US doesn't want to terminate the agreement then it goes on forever.

Our islands are changing fast because independence means security for big businesses. Japanese, Chinese and Koreans are coming with their big hotels, factories and businesses. Palauans are not used for that kind of work, they bring in their own workers. Foreign workers are flooding in, bringing more problems. Filipinos come to work, mainly in the construction companies or as prostitutes in the Japanese bars. These women were involved with the American bases in the Philippines (Subic

Naval Base and Clark Air Force Base) which were shut down because of the protest and the volcano. We had a population of 16,000, now there are a lot more people. Many buildings have gone up since the Compact went into effect. In Koror it is hard to believe that we live on a small tropical gem.

The US, English and Palauan governments colluded to force us into accepting the Compact. The power plant that was serving the country was an old oil one built by the US military after the war. They needed a new power plant so they found a company in England that would build one. They sold their power station to Palau for \$US32 million. (Later a US Congress investigation found that a power plant at that time should have cost \$ US 15 million.) The US government gave permission to use money that was in the Compact although we hadn't accepted it yet. The idea was to get us into debt. If they lent us the money to buy the power station we would have to vote for the Compact to pay them back. They used the debt to force us into voting for the Compact. We are still paying for that loan today.

It has been women who have stood strongest against the US, not the men. The men disappeared under US pressure. But when we women worked against the Compact it was men we were faced with. In Palau, in the US Congress, in the UN. It was men. Our government is all male because the US imposed their own system. Everything is men, even though women are the ones who put them there. We organise the campaigns. We go door to door. We get them into the government. Traditionally Palau is matrilineal. The women hold the power because they decide about the land and the traditional money. When a man is a chief he has to listen to his sister. The women choose the chiefs and when they are there we support them but as soon as a chief becomes unbearable we recall him. There is a balance. The women I work with are not afraid of the men but the younger generation is. If we don't claim our rights now as women we will lose our matrilineal culture altogether. We have to promote international awareness of what the US is doing. There are people who are dying from nuclearism and we have to work together to make this world safe for us all.

Why is it that people who live many, many miles away from my island can take my land? Why does my small island have to stand up against this superpower, the most powerful nation in the world, to protect our land? It is not over. It can't be over until Palauans are free and our lands are safe from the military threat.

## PLANTING THE MUSTARD SEED OF WORLD PEACE

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*Cita Morei - Belau (Palau)*

Don't take people's land. Don't erase one group of people from the face of the Earth. Let Belauans be Belauans. We can never be Belauans anywhere else.

The realisation that the US could exercise their military option to use Belau's limited land and water at any time they want is painful. The experiences we went through during the decade of struggle against the US were painful. In 1994, when we approved the Compact, it was like a blow to the face. The women who fought against the military felt very sad. We could not believe that anybody could turn against their mothers, but that is what happened in Belau.

The anxiety that comes with this knowledge is stressful, but it is done! It's over. We have to live with the results.

There's so much more work to do that we have to come together as Belauans and really sit down on the floor and look at each other as Belauans and start from there.

The campaign against the Compact has stopped. Now the women are turning to their connection with the land. Our environment is so fragile that we have to protect it. Belau has the reputation of being an underwater wonder of the world. There are 363 underwater species in Belau that are not anywhere else in the world, and others that have never been discovered, so it could be a sanctuary. It should be protected. We must take care of our environment if we are to ensure the conservation of our ocean resources, the fish which we depend on, the land which we depend on, for our food.

So there's some hope that Belauans will not give up their land to the US military without a fight. If, and when, the US takes up the option on



**CITA MOREI**

*Cita Morei is the daughter of one of Belau's leading Machas (women elders), and as such has been involved in the struggle to protect her lands and heritage from an early age. She has travelled globally raising awareness about Belau's struggle to protect its constitution. A teacher, she is concerned about the future of the young generations.*

our land the whole society might react against them. For some people it is because they know that they have to have land in order to eat. For others, who see the value of the land in terms of dollars, it will be because the military will not pay for their land. Tourism is growing, more people are visiting Belau. They will want to keep their land.

The fight against the Compact has been a painful struggle but the good news is that it did not kill the women's spirit, our spirit. The spirit that resists the evilness of war, of nuclear weapons. The mustard seed for world peace that was planted in Belau's nuclear free constitution did not die.

The fire the women at Greenham Common started did not perish. The other day, for the first time, I saw the abandoned nuclear base. My God, what evil men do lives on after them, the goodness often buried. It is the goodness in each other that we need to draw out. At Greenham I saw nature taking back the land, vines were growing and breaking the concrete. It was a celebration of life. The same day, we visited the women's peace camp at Aldermaston. I was moved to tears, tears of joy, of relief. Tears of thanksgiving! All things are possible.

In Belau, we are writing new chapters of our nuclear free struggle. We have established a women's centre, called Otil A Beluad, meaning Anchor of the Land. The centre operates a women's market and serves as a meeting place for women to congregate and exchange information. As a multi-functional centre there is space for the young people to come and we can talk to them about various issues and current events. We feel that we have to educate our young not to lose touch with who they are as Belauans.

Otil A Beluad centre was made in part by generous contributions of the Norwegian branch of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. I sincerely thank them - you have made a difference to our lives.

My dear sisters and citizens of the world, we have been wearing each other's shoes from when we walked into this hall on the day this conference started and when we leave I beg you - a small voice out there in the vast Pacific - let's not take each other's shoes off.

Look around you, look hard at your sister sitting next to you. Feel the pain of the refugees, the cries of the women at the mercy of their attackers,

the cries of innocent children missing their parents. Feel the atrocities and realities of nuclear weapons from Kazakhstan to Moruroa in the Pacific.

Let us find the neglected, the violated, the abused right within our families, and love them - and then when peace breaks out there will be no stopping it.

What has to be done locally, can be accomplished globally. We can resist the US military. There is a possibility that with a united voice we can stand together to ask the US not to exercise their military options to use our land.

Please work with us so that the thoughts and dreams of my people, and their children and the generations to come, to live in a nuclear free world will not have died when we approved the Compact of Free Association with the United States.

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