



# *Ekungok, Listen*

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***Argotist Ebooks***

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Thanks to the editors of the following journals for publishing earlier versions of these poems: *Prairie Schooner*, *IKA Literary Journal (New Zealand)*, *Cream City Review*, *World Literature Today*, *Wasafiri: International Contemporary Writing*, and *Resist Much / Obey Little: Inaugural Poems to the Resistance*. Thanks to Joseph for the title, and to Lane, Tina, Joseph, Will, Kam, Joshua, Lynley, Charmaine, Lee, Angeline, Sashily, Shandini, and Cavan for the editorial guidance.

*Ekungok, Listen*

## Family Trees

*written for the 2016 Guam Educators Symposium on Soil and Water Conservation*

1

Before we enter the jungle, my dad asks permission of the spirits who dwell within. He walks slowly, with care, to teach me, like his father taught him, how to show respect. Then he stops and closes his eyes to teach me how to *listen*. *Ekungok*, as the winds exhale and billow the canopy, tremble the understory, and conduct the wild orchestra of all breathing things.

2

“Niyok, Lemmai, Ifit, Yoga', Nunu,” he chants in a tone of reverence, calling forth the names of each tree, each elder, who has provided us with food and medicine, clothes and tools, canoes and shelter. Like us, they grew in dark wombs, sprouted from seeds, were nourished by the light. Like us, they survived the storms of conquest. Like us, roots anchor them to this island, giving breath, giving strength to reach towards the Pacific sky and blossom.

3

“When you take,” my dad says, “Take with gratitude, and never more than what you need.” He teaches me the phrase, “*eminent domain*,” which means “theft,” means “to turn a place of abundance into a base of destruction.” The military uprooted trees with bulldozers, paved the fertile earth with concrete, and planted toxic chemicals and ordnances in the ground. Barbed wire fences spread like invasive vines, whose only fruit are the cancerous tumors that bloom on every branch of our family tree.

4

Today, the military invites us to collect plants and trees within areas of Litekyan slated to be cleared for impending construction. Fill out the appropriate forms and wait 14 business days for a background and security check. If we receive their permission, they'll escort us to the site so we can mark and claim what we want delivered to us after removal. They say this is a benevolent gesture, but why does it feel like a cruel reaping?

5

One tree my dad never showed me is the endangered hayun lågu, the last of which is struggling to survive in Litekyan its only home. Today, the military plans to clear the surrounding area for a live firing range, making the tree even more vulnerable to violent winds, invasive pests, and stray bullets. Don't worry, they say. We'll build a fence around the tree. They say this is an act of mitigation, but why does it feel like the disturbed edge of extinction?

6

*Ekungok*, ancient whispers rouse the jungle!  
*Listen*, oceanic waves stir against the rocks!  
*Ekungok*, i taotao□mona call us to rise!  
Listen, i tronkon Yoga' calls us to stand tall!  
*Ekungok*, i tronkon Lemmai calls us to spread our arms wide!  
Listen, i tronkon Nunu calls us to link our hands!  
*Ekungok*, i tronkon Ifit calls us to be firm!  
*Listen*, i tronkon Niyok calls us to never break!  
*Ekungok*, i halom tano' calls us to surround  
i hayun lågu and chant: "We are the seeds  
of the last fire tree! We are the seeds of the last  
fire tree! We are the seeds of the last fire tree!  
Ahe'! No! We do not give you permission!"

7

## Ode to Fina'denne' & Kikkoman Soy Sauce

1

A wood carving of the last supper  
hangs on the wall above our dining table  
in Mongmong, Guam, circa 1980s.  
*Where's the fina'denne'?* I wonder.

2

Fina'denne' (*pronounced fin-ah-den-ee*)  
is the most important condiment, sauce,  
and/or marinade in Chamorro cuisine:

*1 part soy sauce*  
*1 part lemon/lime juice or white/coconut vinegar*  
*chopped onions (white and/or green)*  
*chopped donne' (red chili peppers)*  
*chopped tomatoes and/or garlic (optional)*

*Mix in a bowl, chill, serve.*

3

Fina'denne' is holy water  
at every special Chamorro event.  
Spooned over rice, grilled meat and fish,  
cooked vegetables, and even green salad.  
On Guam, fina'denne' is served  
at McDonalds and KFC.  
It was recently featured in *Saveur Magazine*,  
and now has its own Wikipedia page!

4

On ordinary days, my dad  
simply places the soy sauce  
bottle in the middle of the table.

"Who's Kikkoman?" I once asked him.  
In his myth-making voice, he bellows:  
"Kikko is an ancient Chamorro chief



who once caught 10,000 green sea turtles  
and stored their tears in bottles.”

“And soy,” he says. “Soy is a magic bean  
that grows in the Far East. The turtles eat them  
before swimming to Guam. It means, long life.”

5

I stare at the Kikkoman bottle and imagine  
the Nakajima Ki-84 Hayate fighter jets  
that bombed our island on December 8, 1941.  
I stare at the red cap and imagine  
the imperial rising sun of the Japanese flag,  
how my grandparents were forced to bow  
during those violent years of occupation,  
how the blood of 1,000 Chamorros  
marinated the land. Yet

where the Greater East Asia  
Co-Prosperity Sphere failed,  
the Greater Asian Amino Acids  
Concentration Sphere conquered:  
our stomachs continue to bow  
to the fifth taste of “umami”  
(*pronounced oo-ma-mee*),  
and the sixth taste of empire.

6

Now, listen to the legend of Kenji Ekuan:  
as a child, he watched his mother pour soy sauce  
from a half-gallon bottle into a tabletop dispenser.  
He witnessed the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.  
His younger sister died in the explosion.  
His father, a Buddhist monk, died from cancer.  
Kenji traced his father’s shadow and became a monk  
at a temple in the ruined, irradiated city.

Having faced nothingness, Kenji decided to make  
human things. He studied art, started a design company,  
and after three years and 100 prototypes,  
created the transparent Kikkoman bottle in 1961.

“The shape is gentle,” he once said. “During the war, we were forced into acting differently. But for 1,000 years, the history of the Japanese people was very gentle.”

Kenji also became famous for designing motorbikes and bullet trains.

7

More than 300 million Kikkoman soy sauce dispensers have been sold in more than 70 countries since then. They infiltrate every Chamorro kitchen and table. Soy sauce gently bullets through our intestines.

“Is it healthy for me to consume soy sauce everyday?”  
“Is Kikkoman soy sauce made from genetically-modified soybeans?”  
“Are companies like Kikkoman testing on animals?”  
“Does sodium increase blood pressure and heart disease?”

8

I watch my dad chop the ingredients and place them in an empty bowl.  
“Pass me the *ketchâp*,” he says.

In Chamorro, the word for soy sauce is *ketchâp*, which is also our word for American tomato ketchup.  
“Same difference,” he says.

I ask him: “If soy sauce is Japanese, what makes *finâ'denne* Chamorro?”

“It’s Chamorro,” he smiles, “because we made it better, we spiced it up.”

He raises and tilts the teardrop shaped bottle until it bows to us.

## Micronesians in Denial

“And YES, Guam, the U.S. Territory,  
is located in MICRONESIA  
And the people there, Chamorros,  
are MICRONESIANS in denial”

—Emelihter Kihleng from “The Micronesian Question”

1

Every year, I'd watch the mango tree  
in my grandma's yard blossom and bud.  
Somedays, we picked the unripe, green fruit,  
and dipped them in salt, soy sauce, and tabasco.  
Somedays, we pickled them in vinegar, sugar, and chilis.  
Above us, hundreds of mangoes still suspended  
like small islands in a sea of leaves and sky.

2

My grandma lives on Guam, the largest  
and most populated island in the Western Pacific.  
Mapmakers named our part of the ocean,  
“Micronesia,” because they viewed our islands  
and cultures as small and insignificant—

small enough to be colonized  
by Spain, Britain, Germany, Japan, Australia,  
New Zealand, and the USA. Small enough  
to become plantations, church missions,  
military bases, nuclear testing grounds,  
detention centers, and tourist destinations.  
Small enough to be extracted  
for our souls, phosphate, tuna, sugar,  
copra, labor, soldiers, and corporate profits.  
Small enough to be invaded, occupied,  
diseased, divided, bombed, and assimilated.  
Small enough to hide the crimes of empire.

3

I used to watch the mangoes grow and

ripen into a yellow, orange, and red sunrise.  
I could barely wait to eat them  
for breakfast with a bowl of Cheerios,  
for a sticky after school snack,  
for dessert chilled in the fridge.  
A tropical kiss in every bite.

4

Towards the end of the Cold War,  
Micronesia was kissed by decolonization.  
Nauru gained independence in 1968  
and Kiribati in 1979.  
The Northern Marianas became  
a US commonwealth in 1978.  
The Marshall Islands, Palau,  
and the Federated States of Micronesia  
(Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae)  
became independent and signed  
Compacts of Free Association  
with the USA in 1986,  
which allowed citizens of these new  
island nations to migrate,  
work, and live as “habitual residents”  
in the states and territories,  
including Guam.

Yet Guam has remained a US territory  
since 1898. Guam is still on the United Nations  
list of non-self-governing territories,  
one of the last 17 colonies in the world.<sup>1</sup>

That’s why they say Chamorros  
are Micronesians in denial:  
we have been denied our right  
to self-determination and sovereignty.

5

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<sup>1</sup> The FSM voted “yes” on UN Declaration Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007. The Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Palau, and Nauru were “absent” during the vote.

I will never forget the day  
I rode my bike to grandma's house  
and all our mangoes were gone.

*Stolen.*

"Those fucking Micronesians,"  
I spit and pick up stones  
to throw.

SOUNDBITES:

"Those criminal Micronesians."  
"Those dirty Micronesians."  
"Those drunk Micronesians."  
"Those homeless Micronesians."  
"Those welfare Micronesians."  
"Go back to where you came from."

That's why they say Chamorros  
are Micronesians in denial:  
we have denied being like *those*  
*uncivilized* Micronesians.

That's why they say Chamorros  
are Micronesians in denial:  
we have denied the humanity  
of *other* Micronesians.

6

I never tasted another mango from grandma's tree  
because that year my family migrated to California.

Today, nearly 20,000 Micronesians from COFA  
nations have settled on Guam.

Today, nearly 75,000 Chamorros  
have migrated off-island.

7

Dear Micronesian cousins, I'm sorry  
for dehumanizing you. I recognize  
that you work hard, pay taxes,

and only want to build a better future  
for your children. *You deserve better.*

I'm sorry I displaced my anger onto you.  
So much has been stolen from my people.  
So many others have settled our island  
without asking permission. I'm sorry for  
seeing you as competition and not as family.

8

Micronesian Cousins, I ask you to recognize that Chamorros—  
the longest, continuously colonized people in the world—  
*deserve better as well.* Recognize Guam as not simply  
your American “horizon,” but as our sacred homeland  
that we are fighting to protect and reclaim. Cousins, I  
ask that you stand with us and support our struggle  
for justice and independence. Rise with us, cousins,  
because if you don't, Uncle Sam will take everything,  
and our people will be forced to migrate further  
and further away from home, and our children will  
never again know the taste of sweet mangoes.

## Off-Island Chamorros

My family migrated to California when I was 15 years old. During the first day at my new high school, the homeroom teacher asked me where I was from. “The Mariana Islands,” I answered. He replied: “I’ve never heard of that place. Prove it exists.” When I stepped in front of the world map on the wall, it transformed into a mirror: the Pacific Ocean, like my body, was split in two and flayed to the margins. I found Australia, then the Philippines, then Japan. I pointed to an empty space between them and said: “I’m from this invisible archipelago.” Everyone laughed. And even though I descend from oceanic navigators, I felt so lost, shipwrecked

on the coast of a strange continent. “Are you a citizen?” he probed. “Yes. My island, Guam, is a U.S. territory.” We attend American schools, eat American food, listen to American music, watch American movies and television, play American sports, learn American history, and dream American dreams. “You speak English well,” he proclaimed, “with almost no accent.” And isn’t that what it means to be a diasporic Chamorro: to feel *foreign in a domestic sense*.

Over the last 50 years, Chamorros have migrated to escape the violent memories of war; to seek jobs, schools, hospitals, adventure and love; but most of all, we’ve migrated for military service, deployed and stationed to bases around the world. According to the 2010 census, 44,000 Chamorros live in California, 15,000 in Washington, 10,000 in Texas, 7,000 in Hawai’i, and 70,000 more in every other state and even Puerto Rico. We are the most “geographically dispersed” Pacific Islander population within the United States, and off-island Chamorros now outnumber our on-island kin, with generations having been born away from our ancestral homelands, including my daughter.

Some of us will be able to return home for holidays, weddings, and funerals; others won’t be able to afford the expensive plane ticket to the Western Pacific. Years and even decades might pass between trips, and each visit will feel too short. We’ll lose contact with family and friends, and the island will continue to change without us until it becomes unfamiliar. And isn’t that, too, what it means to be a diasporic Chamorro: to feel foreign

when you return to your own homeland. To all my fellow

off-island Chamorros: there'll be times when we'll feel adrift, without itinerary or destination. We'll wonder: what would our lives have been like if we'd stayed? If we return? When the undertow of these questions begins pulling you out to sea, remember: migration flows through our blood. Remember: our ancestors taught us how to carry our culture in the canoes of our bodies. Remember: our people, positioned like stars, will form new constellations when we gather and re-connect. Remember: home is not simply a house, village, or island; home is an archipelago of belonging.



## Ode and Elegy to Drinking a Can of Coconut Water with My Dad in California

Once, I bought a can of coconut water for my dad  
because he felt homesick for the island of our birth.

After the first taste, he can't stop talking story  
about the tropical past. He claims, as a barefoot

child, he climbed tall coconut trees that touched  
the Western Pacific sky. And he swears his grandpa

removed the husk with his teeth and cracked the shell  
with his knuckles. And he swears his grandma grated

the meat with her fingernails, and squeezed it into milk  
and oil. These products are trendy and expensive now,

I tell him, imported from plantations in Sri Lanka,  
the Philippines, and Thailand. He laughs and says

his great-aunties sat in a circle weaving coconut leaves,  
and if you pressed your ear to their woven mats,

you could still hear their gossip and singing, even after  
they died. And because circles make memory seem less broken,

he recalls his great-uncles, too, sat in a circle braiding  
dried coconut fibers into rope, used to lash canoes

and thatched houses, just as our veins bind our genealogies  
to endure the lashing of waves and conquest. I read aloud

the nutrition facts label: 45 calories, 30mg sodium,  
470mg potassium, and 11g sugar. Fat and cholesterol free.

He responds with this origin tale: once, a young girl,  
beloved by our entire island, dies during a time

of drought. The family buries her and weeps upon  
the grave, from which an unfamiliar tree sprouts.

They watch it grow and bloom until its hard, strange  
fruit falls and opens on impact. The girl's mother braves

the first sip, then smiles for the first time in years,  
as if her body, after having been completely emptied,

is finally replenished. From that harvest, we planted  
a sapling whenever a child was born. As generations

passed, the trees became kin, teaching us how to bend  
without breaking, how to create without wasting,

and how to take without depleting. My dad tells me,  
during his last visit home, that invasive beetles

are devouring our coconut trees. We discard the aluminum  
cans in the recycling bin and swallow the bitter aftertaste.

## Guam, Where America's Voting Rights End

1.

My 7th grade social studies teacher made us, the children of Guam, memorize the names of all 41 American presidents, whose portraits stared down at us in the furthest American territory from the White House. As I recited their names at home, my parents watched Bill Clinton play saxophone on television. "Are you voting for him?" I asked. My dad, wearing his Army t-shirt, said: "Didn't your teacher tell you that our votes don't count. It doesn't matter that we're citizens or veterans."

2.

A few years later, my family migrated to California, where I became a resident, graduated high school, and registered to vote. But after Al Gore lost, I learned that living in the states doesn't guarantee your ballot will actually count. I learned how easy it is to memorize the name of a president who wages two wars and sharpens your island into a weapon. And isn't that what an American president is: a name to which our lands and bodies are ultimately sacrificed.

3

When Barack Obama campaigned in 2007, his name gave me hope because it descended from slavery, from the civil rights movement, from a mixed raced family, from the Pacific. Yet Obama only visited Guam once. In 2011, his plane landed at night on the air force base, refueled, then departed. That's when I learned the arc of history doesn't bend justice towards Guam. I learned no matter what the president's name is, he remains our commander, and our island remains a forgotten name.

4.

For thirty years, a straw poll on Guam has accurately predicted the result of U.S. presidential elections. In 2016,

Hillary Clinton won the poll, yet still lost to Donald Trump, thus breaking our historic (and ironic) streak. I voted for neither candidate, which felt like a betrayal to my kin back home, who don't have a voice in the election. Some activists now petition to extend voting rights to the territories; instead, I want our decolonial voices to be counted, I want Guam's liberation from American presidents to be inaugurated.

## Ode and Apology to the Chamorro Restaurant in the Diaspora

Your grand opening is a celebration  
for all Chamorros. For those on-island,  
you're a sign that we've arrived, safely,  
and settled into our destination.  
For those off-island, you remind us  
culture can be served from any kitchen.  
But when I read your Yelp reviews, I burn  
with anger at how diners fail to appreciate  
your complex flavors. They say, you're  
a confusing mix of Mexican and Filipino dishes;  
they question the combination of coconut,  
chicken, lemon, hot pepper, and onion;  
they describe your marinade as part Texan,  
part Asian; they call you, "inauthentic"  
and claim L&L Hawai'ian Barbecue is real  
Pacific Islander food. I've heard all this before,  
since ever since my family migrated to California.  
I say to you: si Yu'us Ma'ase, *thank you*, brave  
chefs, for believing in our cuisine, for the  
shine of your red rice, the tang and depth  
of your kelaguen, the spice of your fina'denne.  
Si Yu'us Ma'ase for proudly displaying our flag  
and printing the Guam seal on your menu.  
Dispensa yu, *I'm sorry*, for not visiting you  
more often, but home still tastes bittersweet,  
and it turns my stomach knowing that lack  
of business will force you to close soon,  
and you will be forgotten, just as our islands  
have been forgotten. I'm sorry that you,  
like all diasporic Chamorros before you,  
will choke on this bony truth:  
there's no recipe to make our culture  
visible and digestible to the world.

## 100 Healing Rituals for Chamorros Suffering from Homesickness and Diaspora

1. Open a can of Spam. Follow your instincts home.
2. Make fina'denne and pour it over everything.
3. Call your Chamorro grandparent(s) and ask them for a story about home.
4. Read the Pacific Daily News online.
5. YouTube Jesse Manibusan's song "Forever Chamorro." Sing along.
6. Build an altar using shells, coral, postcards, photos, or other souvenirs.
7. Call your Chamorro parent(s) and ask them for a story about home.
8. Read Guampedia online.
9. Open a can of Vienna Sausages and a can of Budweiser. Call that dinner.
10. Google Earth your village.
11. YouTube Jesse Ruby's song "Guam take me back." Follow their voices home.
12. Make kaddun pika, even if you live in Arizona.
13. Explore the Chamorro Roots Genealogy Project. Follow this map home.
14. Close your eyes and imagine the most beautiful sunset you've ever seen.
15. Open a can of Corned Beef. Cook two eggs, any style. Eat with two scoops white rice, fina'denne, and Budweiser. Call that breakfast.
16. Read Michael Lujan Bevacqua's blog while eating breakfast.
17. Lather coconut oil over everything.
18. Read the *Hale-ta* Book Series. Follow your roots home
19. Sport your Fokai, Crowns, or Magas apparel!
20. Call your Chamorro godparent(s) and ask them for a story about home.
21. Tell your non-Chamorro friends taotaomo'na stories. Tell your Chamorro friends how your non-Chamorro friends don't understand taotaomo'na stories.
22. Read Faye Untalan's "An Exploratory Study of Island Migrations: Chamorros of Guam" (1984).
23. Buy the Chamorro-English dictionary on Amazon. Hold on to that moment when you open it for the first time.
24. If you don't speak Chamorro, learn a new word of our beautiful and endangered language everyday. Hold each word carefully, as if you were holding the last of our beautiful and endangered birds.
25. Youtube K.C. DeLeon Guerrero's song, "Kustumbren Chamoru." Dance your way home.
26. Make red rice.
27. In order to make red rice, you'll need to buy achiote. Drive to the closest Asian grocery store. Look for Mama Sita's powdered achiote from the Philippines, which comes in thin yellow packets. Remember your grandma's red-stained hands after she harvested achiote seeds from her yard.
28. Go to the nearest KFC and order red rice and fina'denne. Act surprised when they act surprised.
29. Read Tanya Taimanglo's book *Attitude 13*.
30. Go for a hike that ends in a waterfall. Close your eyes and call this place home.

31. Chew the pugua you've been hoarding in the freezer.
32. Buy a round-trip ticket home for a holiday, wedding, christening, graduation, or funeral. Worry about credit card debt later.
33. Listen to the "Beyond the Fence" podcast online through KPRG Public Radio Guam.
34. Wear your Chamorro bracelets and let them clang like your grandma used to.
35. Bump JD Crutch's song "Bente Uno" really loud on your morning drive to work.
36. Date a fellow diasporic Chamorro (make sure you aren't related before going on a second date). Or date a non-Chamorro and enjoy the temporary pleasure of being exoticized.
37. Listen to Dakot-ta Alcantara-Camacho's song, "Where you From," on his All Life is Sacred EP (which you can find on Soundcloud).
38. Visit the Spam Museum in Austin, Minnesota.
39. After the Spam Museum, visit The Herbivorous Butchershop in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the first ever vegan butcher shop, which was founded by two diasporic Chamorros.
40. Play bingo.
41. Fanginge' every Chamorro elder you meet.
42. YouTube Island Trybe's, "Blow ya Mynd." Lowride your way home!
43. Wear your Sinahi everywhere.
44. Read any book by Peter Onedera.
45. Get a Latte stone or plumeria tattoo.
46. Read Robert Underwood's essay, "Excursions into Inauthenticity: The Chamorros of Guam." (1985), especially the section "The Emergence of the Migrant Stream."
47. YouTube Erica Nalani Benton's song, "Back to Guahan." Replay your way home.
48. Buy a Chamorro language children's book and imagine your parents reading this book to you when you were a child.
49. When someone asks, "Where are you from?" Point to the empty space on the map and say, "I'm from this invisible island."
50. Cha-cha-cha everywhere.
51. Youtube Melvin Won Pat Borja's poem, "No Deal."
52. Recite the "Inifresi."
53. Drive to the nearest military base. Close your eyes and imagine Angel Santos and the entire Chamoru Nation flying over the barbed-wire fence.
54. Just Tabasco everything.
55. Read Michael Perez's essays "Pacific Identities Beyond US Racial Formation: The Case of Chamorro Ambivalence and Flux" (2002).
56. YouTube Jesse Bais's song, "Guam on my Mind."
57. Make chicken kelaguen.
58. In order to make chicken kelaguen, you must first buy a coconut. Drive to the nearest Asian grocery store. Crack open the coconut at home only to find that it is completely rotted inside. Drive back to the grocery store with your machete. Get into an argument with the Asian owner, who won't exchange the coconut. Go back to

- your car and get the machete. Walk back into the produce aisle of the store. Crack open the coconuts until you find a good one. Pay for the coconut, machete in hand. Say, “Keep the change.” Drive off like the most bad ass islander who’s ever lived in an American suburb.
59. Blame it on the cha-cha-cha.
  60. Buy a round-trip ticket home for no reason. Worry about credit card debt later.
  61. Eat at the Chamorro restaurant and/or food truck in your area. Try not to ruin the meal by comparing the food to your parents or grandparents cooking.
  62. Recite the novena in Chamorro using the rosary your grandma gave you at the airport. If you can’t say the novena in Chamorro, YouTube “Chamorro rosary.”
  63. Read Vicente Diaz’s book, *Repositioning the Missionary*.
  64. Give chenchule’ every chance you get.
  65. Watch the Muña brothers documentary *Talent Town*.
  66. Cook Calrose rice. Use your fingers to measure. When you smell the rice steaming, close your eyes and call this scent home.
  67. Get your clan name tattooed across your back.
  68. Youtube Jack Lujan’s song, “Inifresi.”
  69. Wear your “Prutehi yan Difendi” t-shirt.
  70. Close your eyes and remember the last time you hiked to Pãgat.
  71. Place a Guam or CNMI Seal sticker on your truck and drive on the freeway until another diasporic Chamorro spots you.
  72. Visit the Waikiki Spam Jam in Honolulu, Oahu.
  73. Read Keith Camacho’s book *Cultures of Commemoration*. Remember what your ancestors survived.
  74. Tell yourself that you will return one day, you just have a few more things to take care of out here.
  75. YouTube Flora Baza Quan’s song “Hagu.” Hail the Queen of Chamorro music!
  76. Go to the closest zoo that houses a Micronesian Kingfisher. Tell the bird, “Soon it’ll be safe enough for you to return.”
  77. Attend the nearest Liberation Day party, which you can locate using the [guamliberation.com](http://guamliberation.com) website.
  78. Read my poetry books (no refunds)!
  79. YouTube Chamorro Mixed Martial Arts fighters Jon Tuck, Frank “The Crank” Camacho, “Baby Joe” Taimanglo, and Pat Ayuyu. Shadow box your way home.
  80. Call any one of your Chamorro aunties and uncles. Be thankful to your grandparent(s) for having so many children that there’ll always be someone to give you a story about home.
  81. Learn how to craft a kulo’. Blow the kulo’ everywhere.
  82. Read Jesi Lujan Bennett’s MA thesis, “Apmam Tiempo Ti Uli’e Hit (Long Time No See): Chamorro Diaspora and the TransPacific Home.”
  83. Youtube Jesse Bais’s song “Uno Hit.” Remember that off-island and on-island Chamorros are one.



84. Get “Dandan I Paneretas” stuck in your head all December and air stick dance with an imaginary partner.
85. Attend the nearest Feast Day of the Immaculate Conception.
86. BBQ everything.
87. YouTube “Malafunkshun.” Laugh your way home.
88. Look at your American dollar bills. Find the word, “Gumataotao.”
89. Read Lehua Taitano’s poetry book, *A Bell Made of Stones*.
90. Wear zoris everywhere.
91. YouTube episodes of Nihi! online and imagine watching them with your parents when you were a child.
92. Buy a one-way ticket home.
93. Youtube Johnny Sablan’s song, “Nobia Nene.” Dance with someone you love.
94. Remember that migration flows through our blood and this is just another stop on our epic itinerary.
95. Join the nearest Chamorro, Marianas, Sons and Daughters of Guam, or Hafa Adai Club in your state. If there are none, start your own Chamorro club in your church, community center, military base, high school, or university. Remember: when our people gather, we become stars forming new constellations of home.
96. Attend the Chamorro Cultural Festival in San Diego. Call this gathering home.
97. Build a Guma' Chamorro in Balboa Park.
98. Shout, “I exist! I exist! I exist!”
99. Whisper, “mahalang,” the only word built to carry all this longing.
100. Drive to the ocean. Take off your zoris and step into the salt water. Return your tears to the sea, where they belong. Close your eyes, and call your body home.

**Ode (Ending with a Confession) to the First Mango  
I Ate on Guam After Decades Away**

All the mangoes I've tasted  
in California were imported  
and lost their true flavors in transit.  
All the mangoes I've enjoyed  
in Hawai'i were home grown  
and ripened by island sun, but  
they often act too glamorous,  
with their own annual festival  
at a 5-star hotel, where local chefs  
and mixologists dress them  
in fancy pupus and cocktails.  
But you, my love, are modest.  
My godfather picked you from  
his farm, and my godmother placed  
you on a plate for my breakfast.  
I'm alone this humid morning,  
so I fondle your skin, supple  
and cool in the air-conditioned  
dining room. I slowly undress  
you, nibbling your tropical flesh  
until I reach the spot where all  
your fibers tremble. When I look  
up, I notice a large statue of  
the Virgin Mary, staring at me,  
my fingers, lips, teeth, and tongue  
sticky with the juice of our sin.

## **During Your Lifetime, 2016**

*for Guam's "Greatest Generation," which refers to the generation of native Chamorros who died and survived the massacre of World War II on Guam, including my grandma, who is now 94 years old*

You survived violent Japanese military occupation and the bloody march to Manenggon. You endured American

bombing, and felt the wounds of our island stitched by barbed wire fences. You said goodbye to the sons and daughters of Guam

as they donned uniforms and deployed overseas. You hugged all your children as they migrated, one by one, off-island.

You witnessed invasive beetles devour half our coconut trees. You prayed as diabetes and cancer diseased half

our relatives. You listened as English endangered our language and snakes silenced our birds. Dear grandparents,

I doubt if we'll ever receive reparations, or sovereignty over our own nation. I can't count how many more body

bags will arrive with tough boxes and folded flags. I'm not sure if our language and birds will sing wild once again

beneath healthy coconut trees. And I don't know if all your children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren,

will return home, together, during your lifetime, to show the abundance that you will be survived by.

The Pacific Written Tradition

In 2010, I read aloud from my new book

to an English class at one of Guam's public high schools. After the reading, I

notice a student crying. "What's wrong?" I ask. She says, "I've never seen our culture in a book before. I just thought we weren't

worthy of literature." I wonder how many young islanders have dived into the depths of a book, only to find bleached coral and

emptiness. *They* teach us that missionaries were the first readers in the Pacific because *they* could decipher the strange signs

of the Bible. *They* teach us that missionaries were the first authors in the Pacific because *they* possessed the authority of written words.

Today, studies show that islander students read and write below grade level. "It's natural," *they* claim. "Your ancestors were an illiterate,

oral people." *Do not believe their claims.* Our ancestors deciphered signs in nature, interpreted star formations and sun positions,

cloud and wind patterns, wave currents and ocean efflorescence. That's why master navigator Papa Mau once said: "if you can *read* the ocean

you will never be lost." Now let me tell you about the Pacific written tradition, about how our ancestors tattooed their skin with defiant

scripts of intricately inked genealogy, stories of plumage and pain. Or how our ancestors carved epics into hard wood with a sharpened point,

their hands, and the pressure and responsibility of memory. Or how our ancestors stenciled petroglyphic lyrics on cave walls with clay, fire, and smoke. So the next time someone tells you

islanders were illiterate, teach them about our visual literacies, about how we are reclaiming

the skill to read and write the intertextual sacredness of all things. And always remember: *if you can write the ocean we will never be silenced.*

## **About the Author**

Craig Santos Perez is a native Chamorro from the Pacific Island of Guahan (Guam). He is the author of three books, most recently from unincorporated territory [guma'], which received an American Book Award in 2015. He is an associate professor in the English department at the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa.