



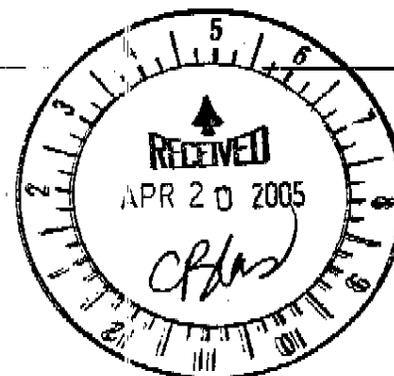
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### **A MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR OF GUAM ON THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES' CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE RESOLUTION 1595**

Mr. Chairman Pombo, Congressman Rahall II, Delegate Madeleine Bordallo, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee, Members of Congress, Officers of the Executive Branch, honored guests and my fellow citizens...

My name is Felix Perez Camacho, Governor of Guam and descendent of a Great Generation of loyal Americans and courageous freedom-fighters.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, we are the sons and daughters of a generation of quiet heroism, strength and patriotism. As the Governor of Guam and a people living in the mainland United States and across the globe; and the current representative of countless ancestors and dependents of our great land, it is my duty to present before Congress my strong and unwavering support for the repatriation of a Great Generation's legacy. Whether this be by the appropriation of war claims and a recognition of the injustice laid by absolution of Japan's responsibility over the war crimes committed upon our people... history will remember that just men and women who sit in these halls of Congress today honor the lives and stories of America's finest citizens during our country and our island's darkest hour.

Although there are differing opinions on the legislation before you that seeks to place closure on an injustice that occurred more than half a century ago, I have a duty as the Governor of a proud people to fight for them... to speak for those whose tragedy and silence have haunted them all these years. I avail myself of this honor to defend my people and to speak of Guam's darkest hour when our ancestors embodied our country's finest moment.

While my words can never fully illustrate the pain and suffering, then the extraordinary triumph of my people, it is my God-given duty to impress upon you the memory of those who have since passed and the sentiments of the few who can tell this story today.

The Japanese Imperial Army began two-and-a-half years of brutal bloodshed as their planes dropped bombs on our people during the solemn celebration of the island's Patroness, Our Lady of Camarin. The bombing commenced the same day Pearl Harbor was destroyed. Hundreds of soldiers stormed our shores and held our people captive with bayonets, guns, grenades, swords and other weapons. Our people were armed with nothing but a love for America. Families were immediately separated and our people were forced into servitude. They watched their neighbors,

mothers, fathers, children and friends die at the hands of merciless men who did not understand our deep faith in God and country. They were forced to work the land for food that they would never eat while their loved ones starved. Women were taken at the pleasure of soldiers who saw them as objects. Hundreds were forced into concentration camps for annihilation. Doves were forced to dig graves that only minutes later they would lie inside after being executed. Mothers died carrying their infants. Men were beheaded for refusing to bow to the rising sun that represented a deity in whom they did not believe. Children were whipped for speaking of the country they truly loved and prayed would return someday. Commerce was reduced to labor in support of the Imperial Army.

In the face of such extraordinary risks, one would think that the Chamorro people would simply submit to such force and brutality. Our parents and grandparents proved to the world that the American spirit is unbreakable. In the silence of their hearts, Guam was filled with the sounds of patriots who kept the Stars and Stripes in their homes, listened to radio broadcasts on American signals and conspired to help American soldiers retake the island.

With the same courage and faith as the founding fathers of our country, men and women thought it more worthy and honorable to give their lives in the service of freedom than to live as slaves at the mercy of would-be conquerors. The resolve of the Chamorro people is as unfaltering as the determination of the spread of American freedom.

Yet, it confounds my people why our country absolved the Crown of Japan from its war crimes committed against the innocent people of Guam. The most heinous of crimes including murder, rape, unimaginable torture and internment were committed upon our people. Hundreds lost their homes and businesses. Society was reduced to a community whose infrastructure was destroyed. Whole cities were obliterated. And my people built their lives against the backdrop of a blood-stained graveyard. Because of the absolution, Japan never paid any reparations to our people, nor have they recognized or apologized for the inhumane treatment of your fellow citizens.

In the years that followed the War, America rebuilt Germany, France and other European countries. Our nation restored Tokyo and other cities of the very country that caused so much grief to this American community. Why have my people – your fellow citizens – not received the same respect and consideration?

Japanese-Americans deprived of their God-given freedom at internment camps in the United States received reparations and an apology from the government. The Imperial Family will soon visit our neighbors in the Northern Mariana Islands to pay tribute to soldiers and civilians who suffered and died under Hirohito's regime. Guam's people have not received this same consideration.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, my people – your fellow citizens – deserve better. They have earned their place among the mantle of heroes and heroines in mankind's plight for peace and freedom for all humanity.

The people of Guam, on the eve of their Liberation, took American flags hidden in their homes and began displaying them in defiance to their occupiers. Men from the village of Malessos

sabotaged their aggressors and took the city until American soldiers arrived. And as the Liberation continued, men, women and children began a long journey back to their war-ravaged homes to build an American society that today stands as the Western-most frontier of the United States... a beacon of freedom and democracy for all the world. They built new homes, embraced democracy, time-and-again demonstrated their love for this great country and raised generations of peace-loving Americans. They rose from the ashes of War with grace, gratitude and admiration for the ideals bravely defended by soldiers, sailors and airmen throughout our history.

Men and women from Guam continue to fight and die with honor at the frontiers of freedom wherever the Star-Spangled Banner calls... It is not merely out of a profound sense of gratitude for those brave soldiers who went before us securing this blessed land of freedom... not only from sincere and overwhelming patriotism... not just to defend everything we hold near and dear to our hearts. It is also in tribute to the trial, faith, bravery and resolve of men, women and children who smiled at the ideals of our country in the gallows of an occupied land far removed from freedom.

No where else in American history will you find a story as compelling and deeply-rooted in the proud traditions and ideals of our country than in the suffering and triumph of the Chamorro people. Where else can it be demonstrated that a people's loyalty was tried by the occupying force of foreign aggressors on American soil? Where else can it be said that even in the face of torture and death, a people stood up past the abyss and became martyrs for their country?

As we enter the 64<sup>th</sup> year of the invasion and occupation of the only American people in history to suffer at the mercy of foreigners and the 61<sup>st</sup> year of our Liberation by our beloved country, I reflect on the long struggle of an heroic people who have yet to receive the tribute they so justly earned. I thank all our friends in Congress and in the administration who have stood up for the plight of our Great Generation. I express a heartfelt "Dankolu na si Yu'os Ma'ase," on behalf of my people for those who continue to tell the story of the Chamorro people. And I implore the Congress and the President to honor the loyalty and memory of so many of your brave fellow citizens of the United States who gave their lives and continue to give their sons and daughters in the service of freedom and our country's greatest cause.

I would be remiss if I did not thank the members of the Guam War Claims Review Commission for their dedication and commitment to the fallen and surviving heroes and heroines of the Japanese Occupation on Guam. Because of their tireless efforts, scores of stories never before told about my people's extraordinary resolve were entered into American history for our descendants to take pride in. The Commission's work is admirable; and it is my just hope that its efforts to secure reparations for all Chamorros who endured the Japanese Occupation succeeds in this Committee, in Congress and with the President.

In the discourse that follows over the details of this legislation, I humbly pray that divine Providence guide your decision to do what is right and stand proudly with those who stood by the Flag of Freedom to the very end.

I cannot, however, in good conscience support a measure that excludes and plainly forgets the contributions and sacrifice of so many brave Chamorros who died before an arbitrary date.

There is no justifiable explanation for this provision. I urge the Committee to amend House Resolution 1595 to include ALL Chamorros who suffered at the hands of the Japanese Imperial Army.

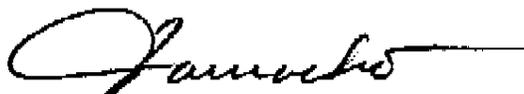
I rise, however, in support of House Concurrent Resolution 68 by Mr. Evans, Ms. Bordallo and many other friends who sit here in Congress stating that it is the "sense of Congress that the government of Japan should formally issue a clear and unambiguous apology for the sexual enslavement of young women during colonial occupation of Asia and World War II, known to the world as 'comfort women.'"

My fellow Americans, let us not forget the enormous contributions of freedom-loving men, women and children who demonstrated an unwavering loyalty to our country under threat of death and torture. Let us always remember and pay tribute to a people who took up arms against enemies of the State, always hopeful that the Stars and Stripes would once again rise at the apex of the Pacific. Let us today and for all time embrace those who loved our country and its foundations so much, they gave their lives so that we may live in the America that grows each day in peace and justice.

I present this testimony today on behalf of my people, all our ancestors whose memory honors the bedrock and proud traditions of America's freedom fighters and all our descendants who deserve to know the truth of their proud heritage.

FOR OUR ANCESTORS AND DESCENDENTS, I remain,

Loyally Yours,



**FELIX P. CAMACHO**

*I Maga' Låhen Guåhan*

Governor of Guam