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RMI Holds Con-Con National Election



photo: President Heine casts her vote at the Aur Absentee polling station located at Majuro Middle School (pictured below).

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On 21 February, the Republic of the Marshall Islands held the National Constitutional Convention Elections.

A Constitutional Convention (Con-Con) is held for the purpose of reviewing a series of proposed Constitutional amendments. So far there are at least 20 proposed amendments to the Constitution that have been approved by the Nitijela to be transmitted to the Constitutional Convention at its convening. check out the [Nitijela's website](#) for the proposed amendments.

The Constitutional Convention will be the 4th since the Constitution of the Republic of the Marshall Islands came into effect on May 1st, 1979. For the latest unofficial results, please contact the Chief Electoral's Office.



Nuclear Victims Remembrance Day

By law, March 1st of every year is recognized throughout the nation as an official holiday to honor all those who were affected by the nuclear weapons testing program conducted on the lands and in the waters and skies of the Marshall Islands.

The date commemorates the infamous BRAVO hydrogen bomb detonated at Bikini on March 1, 1954. The second thermonuclear H-bomb in history, it was the most powerful weapon ever detonated by the U.S. and radioactive fallout from the massive blast blanketed Rongelap, Utrik, and other northern atolls and created significant levels of radiation at every atoll.

But the nuclear legacy of the Marshall Islands dates back even further, to early March 1946 when the people of Bikini were moved from their atoll by the U.S. military in preparation for Operation Crossroads.

Less than one year after the atomic bombs were dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the world's fourth and fifth such weapons were detonated at Bikini. The second of those two devices, an underwater shot codenamed Baker, created what one knowledgeable expert called the world's first nuclear disaster.

Marshall Islands Nuclear Legacy Conference: “Charting a Journey Toward Justice”

In her State of the Nation address last month, President Dr. Hilda C. Heine (pictured) announced that the Cabinet is developing a strategy for nuclear justice which will be actively pursued in the coming months. Part of that work includes hosting an international conference to address the Marshall Islands nuclear legacy.

Coinciding with the annual commemoration of Nuclear Victims Remembrance Day on 1 March, the conference will be held from 1-2 March 2017 in Majuro under the theme “Charting a Journey Toward Justice.” Preparations for the conference are underway by the conference coordinating committee, under the leadership of the Office of the President's Nuclear Advisor Bill Graham.

The conference is expected to bring together experts as well as media representatives to inform and create awareness among the people of the Marshall Islands, the United States, and the world at large, and to develop a detailed strategy for action and engagement both with the United States and with the international community.



At least nine international experts are scheduled to make presentations about various aspects of that legacy, including the following:

- Dr. Neal Palafox, an American medical doctor with many years experience in the Marshall Islands, including 10 years as the director of the special medical program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy for the people of Rongelap and Utrik who were exposed to fallout from the Bravo test in 1954. He will discuss the health consequences of the nuclear weapons testing.



- Professor of Physics Emlyn Hughes from Columbia University in New York, who directs the school's center for nuclear studies. He will present a paper on the external radiation measurements that he and a small team of students took at Enewetak, Bikini and Rongelap in 2015 as well as plans for a forthcoming survey to measure radiation levels in food plants at those atolls.
- Professor of Chemistry Ivana Hughes from Columbia, who will talk about what can be learned about the worldwide threats of nuclear weapons and climate change from the past and current experiences of Marshall Islanders.
- Dr. Barbara Rose Johnston, an anthropology professor and human rights activist who will speak about human radiation research, especially as conducted in connection with the nuclear weapons testing program in the Marshall Islands.
- Professor of Anthropology Glenn Alcalay from John Jay College in New York, a former Peace Corps Volunteer at Utrik in the mid-1970s, who will make a detailed presentation on the history of the nuclear weapons testing in the Marshalls.
- Professor Laurence Carucci, who spent time living with the Enewetak people both at Ujelang and Enewetak and who has been an active researcher and participant in Marshallese life for more than forty years. He will speak about contradictions in policy and practice surrounding the nuclear testing.
- Professor Seiichiro Takemine of Meisei University, whose topic "The Invisible Nuclear Catastrophe" will focus on the people of Ailuk atoll, whom he describes as "invisible overlooked victims" of fallout from the Bravo test.
- Dr. Trudy Peterson, a Certified Archivist who has been overseeing digitization of the records of the Nuclear Claims Tribunal for the past five years so that they can be given secure and permanent storage with provision for online access to major portions of this unique and historical archive.
- Professor Michelle Keown from the University of Edinburgh, who is working with the University of South Pacific campus here in Majuro and who will speak on how artistic responses to the Marshall Islands nuclear legacy can provide for creativity as a route to social justice.

Building on the outcomes of the nuclear conference, a detailed strategy for action and engagement with the United States and the international community will be developed.

photo: the infamous 15-megaton device codenamed Bravo at Bikini, Operation Castle in 1954.

The National Nuclear Commission

The Cabinet's 2017 Legislative Agenda includes a Bill to establish a Nuclear Commission with a purpose to develop a strategy on nuclear justice as well as coordinate and integrate all aspects related to the U.S. Nuclear Weapons Testing Program conducted in the Republic from 1945 to 1959 and its effects.

This supports Priority Government #7 of Agenda 2020, which is to sharpen foreign policy and development assistance and to seek nuclear justice. The Bill is being considered by the Nitijela for adoption.

The Commission will consist of three members appointed by the President, through the Cabinet, for an initial term of three years. Members of the Commission shall have substantial background, experience and knowledge relative to the U.S. Nuclear Weapons Testing Program ("the Program"), the Compact of Free Association, as amended, and other related matters. Duties of the Commission include:

- Develop a detailed strategy and plan of action for pursuing justice as concerns the Program and its effects;

- Exercise general oversight, where otherwise appropriate, of all Government ministries, offices, and agencies, 1) that have responsibility for addressing the consequences of the Program and/or 2) monitoring, assessing, documenting, or otherwise dealing with the effects of the Program.

- To ensure the coordination and integration of all the present and future efforts related to the Program and its effects;

- To preserve the findings, conclusions, and records from all past activities related to the Program and its effects;

- To serve a cooperative function for researchers, journalists, filmmakers, and others who seek to study, report on or otherwise create products which address or are related to the Program and its effects, provided that there is a written consent from the President.

(photo by National Nuclear Security Administration/Nevada Field Office: Baker Underwater Shot, Operation Crossroads (world's fifth atomic bomb))



The Changed Circumstances Petition

“The Marshallese people know too well the devastating impacts of nuclear weapons and continue to live with the painful legacy of the U.S. legacy of the U.S. testing everyday of their lives.”

Section 177 of the Compact of Free Association provides that there be a “just and adequate settlement” of all claims “for loss or damage and person...resulting from the nuclear testing program” conducted in the Marshall Islands by the U.S. from 1946 to 1958.

Unfortunately, since the years it was signed, it has become clear that the agreement for the implementation of Section 177 has not in fact provided for a just and adequate settlement.

Article IX of that agreement provides that if there are “Changed Circumstances” which render the provisions of the agreement “manifestly inadequate,” the Republic

of the Marshall Islands may request the Congress of the United States to provide such previously unidentified damages.

Such a request was submitted in September 2000 in the form of a Changed Circumstance Petition (CCP), but to date there has been no conclusive action by the Congress to address the requests made in the said petition. The U.S. Administration, however, has stated that the RMI’s claim does not constitute changed circumstances.

“The 177 settlement agreement did not provide justice for the many victims of the nuclear weapons testing program...My administration is committed to continue seeking a fair and just resolution of the damages caused by the program.”

**quotes by President Dr. Hilda C. Heine*

New York Academics Discuss Recent Work Relating to Nuclear Weapons Testing Program

President Dr. Hilda C. Heine met with two highly accomplished New York City academics, during a courtesy call, to discuss their recent work relating to the nuclear weapons testing program. The courtesy call was held months ago at the President’s Office.

Dr. Emlyn Hughes is a Professor of Physics at Columbia University and Director of the K1 project, the University’s Center for Nuclear Studies. In August 2014, he and three students visited Majuro and learned about some of the effects of the weapons testing through interviews with many of the Marshallese who were affected. They also obtained perspective from a few knowledgeable individuals in the U.S. on the RMI’s

“Nuclear Zero” cases at the International Court of Justice. Upon their return to NYC, the students completed a short documentary entitled Marshalling Peace, which won awards at the 2015 International Peace and Film Festival and the Nukebusters short film contest.

During the summer of 2015, Prof. Hughes led another group of students to the RMI to record new video for another documentary and to take measurements of external radiation at Enewetak, Bikini, and Rongelap. In June of last year, the group published a paper reporting the results of those measurements, which they noted to be “of relevance to safety of human habitation and resettlement.” The Abstract of the paper states that “To

determine conclusively whether these islands are safe for habitation, radiation exposure through additional pathways such as food ingestion must be considered.”

Professor Hughes informed President Heine that he intends to return to the RMI to assess radiation levels in various foods so that estimates of total radiation dose, including through eating and drinking locally grown and caught items, can be made accurately.

Links to the Marshalling Peace documentary, to the radiation measurements paper and various media reports about it, and to other K1 Project activities can be found at <https://k1project.columbia.edu/>.

Dr. Glenn Alcalay is a Professor of Anthropology at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York, as well as at Montclair State and William Paterson Universities in New Jersey. He served as a Peace Corps Volunteer at Utrik Atoll from 1975-1977 and has been an outspoken advocate for Marshallese and others affected by nuclear weapons testing ever since. He has conducted extensive research and written numerous articles and papers about the effects of those weapons and has testified as an expert witness before U.S. Congressional committees and the Marshall Islands Nuclear Claims Tribunal.

Professor Glenn has recently launched a new website “designed to give voice to the people of the Marshall Islands who have firsthand knowledge of thermonuclear weapons.” The site contains an extensive selection of photographs, audio files of interviews he has done over the years, many historic documents, and links to videos and relevant documentaries.

During his time in Majuro, Glenn reacquainted himself with many members of the Utrik community, recording additional interviews and taking more photos which will be posted to the website, <http://www.atomicatolls.org/>.

Accompanying the professors on the visit were Dr. Hughes’ daughter Inge and her friend Jenni Hill, both of whom are high school sophomores in the NYC area. They shot video of both Majuro and Ebeye and recorded interviews with several local high school students for a short documentary which they will be producing.

(photo: President Heine with President’s Office Nuclear Advisor Bill Graham, and visiting academics at the President’s Office)





President Heine and First Gentleman Kijiner Host Dinner for 2017 ELDP Participants

President Dr. Hilda C. Heine and First Gentleman Thomas Kijiner Jr. recently hosted a dinner reception at their residence for the participants of the Executive Leadership Development Program (ELDP), a program that assist insular governments with “developing and retaining qualified, skilled staff that will become future leaders of their respective countries.”

There are currently three Marshallese participants in the program- Deputy Chief of Mission Anjanette Kattil at the RMI Embassy in Taipei, Associate Commissioner Junior Paul for Secondary and Career Education at PSS, and Power Plant Operations Manager Shem Livai. The participants meet four times a year to develop skills in leadership, management, government finance, procurement, and auditing.

In her welcome remarks, President Heine shared her thoughts on leadership and expressed her support for programs like ELDP that address emerging personnel needs faced by insular governments. President Heine said as the number of ELDP graduates grow, so does the opportunity for governments to benefit from a graduate’s training and experiences.

Participating governments include American Samoa, Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau.

The program is administered by the Graduate School USA’s Pacific and Virgin Islands Training Initiatives, with funding support from the United States Department of the Interior’s Office of Insular Affairs.

(top photo: President Heine and ELDP participants. bottom photo: President Heine receives gift as token of appreciation for supporting ELDP)

