

DEEP PACIFIC PODCAST

A frank conversation about Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC) and its effect on culture, environment, and politics in the Kingdom of Hawai'i

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Welcome to the first bonus episode of Deep Pacific, a podcast that shares Pasifika voices.

I'm Kalani Reyes, your millennial indigenous advocate and host! So excited to bring this bonus episode to your beautiful Pasifika ears and minds and hopefully hearts.

We are recording in the second week of July, 2020. Which, btw I loved seeing the fokai (fokai in chamorro means to fight) your fourth of july decolonization motorcades going on in different places, I completely support it, though I know not everyone does.

I would like to begin with the acknowledgement that I am recording on Guåhan, gi Islas Marianas, currently a territory occupied by the U.S. I am not from here so I am a settler, although I am Chamorro, it is still with respect that I occupy this land and space. Speaking of being a settler, please note that the next bonus episode will be about Article 12 in the CNMI and our land laws which covers exactly about why I call myself a settler while here on Chamorro land. So keep a lookout for that!

We begin every episode with a quote from an indigenous person that resonates.

Today's Quote is an excerpt from "collective poem" by the Cancel RIMPAC Coalition which I will include a link to in the show notes.

"In a world without militarization

Words like "colonization" and "occupation" become words used in the past tense

What possibilities emerge when we are free?

Islands as space for creative growth and true security

The entire Pacific Ocean unafraid to breathe."

-D. Keali'i MacKenzie, an awesome queer indigenous (kanaka maoli) author, and a Poet-Facilitator with the Honolulu based non-profit Pacific Tongues, who received his Master's Degree from the University of Hawaii at Manoa in Pacific Islands Studies.

This quote resonates because this episode will be about the Rim of the Pacific Exercises (which I will refer to as RIMPAC) and their impact on the kingdom of Hawaii.

As this is the first bonus episode, I'm sure you're wondering what the difference between a bonus episode and a regular episode is, so let me enlighten you: a bonus episode is an episode that does a deep dive into a topic specific to one region, and because RIMPAC occurs in Hawaii but affects all of the Pacific, I decided that this would be best suited for that. My aim for bonus episodes is to provide a platform for specific issues so that we can be more well-informed about what's going on with our Pasifika familia.

So if you've been listening to the pod, you may recall that in Episode 1 of Identity the scientific paper I discussed was about RIMPAC and it paralleled Craig Santos Perez's book entitled "SAINA", which is actually Book 2 in his "from unincorporated territory" series (actually I just ordered one of his books and I cannot wait to read it). So if that is all you know about RIMPAC, or basically if you would like to know more, you've come to the right place.

As this is relevant, I would also like to acknowledge that the Kingdom of Hawaii has been under siege by the United States since the American businessmen conspired to overthrow their Queen Liliuokalani in 1893, their annexation in 1898 and then became a state against the will of the indigenous kanaka maoli in 1959. I stand in solidarity across the Pacific and support kanaka maoli with their fight for sovereignty.

On to the episode: a little necessary background on RIMPAC:

- RIMPAC has been occurring every other year in the waters off Hawaii and its effects have been felt throughout our Pacific lands, water, and people since 1971 during the Nixon Administration. This was a tumultuous time much like today, when there were protests in the U.S. on its involvement in the Vietnam War, which had begun in 1955 and did not end until 1975. Nixon was known for 1) Water Gate scandal and 2) his focus on foreign affairs by easing Cold War tensions between Russia and China. Funny how he eased tensions in one way yet gave zero flying fish about kanaka maoli.
- After 1971, RIMPAC was held every year until 1974 when it transitioned into an every-other-year type deal. The first allies were Australia, colonized by the Brits originally, Canada, colonized by French and Brits, New Zealand, or Aotearoa, colonized by the Brits, the United Kingdom, the current Brits, and the United States, or former Brits. Am I noticing a pattern? This was a way for a mega-colonizer to control the entire Pacific for their own gain, and I hope that isn't lost on anyone. In 2020 one of the biggest realizations of many might actually be that we don't need white people to police us, we just need to defund them and their militaries.
- Anyway, RIMPAC has increased in scope and complexity since it began and has grown to include a bunch of other countries like Brunei, Chile, China, Colombia, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Republic of South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Peru, The Republic of the Philippines (Philippines is a Republic? I thought they were a dictatorship), Russia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tonga, and Vietnam with a couple of other countries invited to observe.
- RIMPAC 2018 brought
 - 25 nations attending bringing

- 25,000 military personnel, or about half of the average attendance at Disneyland Park, and more than all of the registered student population at the University of Hawaii.
- 46 surface ships
- Five submarines
- Over 200 aircraft
- 17 land forces
- Usually conducted in three phases: Harbour Phase, Force Integration Training Phase, and Free Play Phase.
- These phases include things like bombing, anti-ship missile practice, blowing up actual ships at sea, anti-submarine warfare, live-fire shooting drills, the use of long range sonar, and much more.

Wow. You ok there?

How about you take a drink of water. Inhale, exhale.

And now, I will let Kawena fill you in.

—

Now that you have heard from Kawena, how about you take a break and then I will give you my take.

- Environmental
 - RIMPAC is unsustainable and has a hugely negative effect on the carbon output which is not counted against the U.S.'s total carbon emissions
 - RIMPAC displaces thousands of marine species or has them act in a way that is unnatural to avoid the area where the exercises take place
 - RIMPAC kills or injures up to thousands of marine organisms by
 - RIMPAC disturbs and destroys the environment where exercises take place by Clearing land to have access to firing ranges Putting up fencing to keep the environment contained (thereby also separating wildlife on either side of the fence)
 - These exercises cost American taxpayers
 - These exercises use fuel, manpower, and munitions
- In the media
 - RIMPAC and similar exercises are glorified by the media as a “show of force” and brute strength of American Imperialism
 - It is important to remember who owns the media. Many media outlets in HI are settler-owned and therefore push imperialist and pro-military agendas without consideration, I personally love to pay attention to and support the Honolulu Civil Beat, also check out their podcast called OFF SHORE Podcast, it really goes into detail into a lot of Hawaiian historical cases and history and wrongs, link in the show notes

Kawena said that Hawaii is viewed and used historically by the United States as a strategic maritime location and a floating aircraft carrier or extension of their military power for the past 127 years of their history. This has allowed kanaka maoli to be displaced from their lands, today they continue to be displaced, and their lands desecrated by war and war games such as the rim of the pacific exercises.

Over 20% of the land in Hawaii is used by the U.S. military. On Guam, which is viewed in much the same way, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the island is also used by the U.S. military to hold their Air Force base, their NAVY base, and now after being kicked out of Okinawa for the atrocities they committed there, also a marine base, in which our ancestor's bones were unceremoniously bagged up and sent to a laboratory without our input or knowledge. Can you imagine how mad white people would get if we did the same to their ancestors? Anyway.

In the CNMI where I am from, our Northern islands which were designated as a marine monument by George W. Bush before he went out of office was a meaningless gesture because the exception to everything is the U.S. military being allowed to train there, bomb the islands, and use them for live fire drills and other exercises, just like Hawaii when President Barack Obama had designated a large swath of hawaii's ocean to also become a marine monument.

These past presidents who hold no ties to our islands told us "let me make a huge decision on your behalf: you are not allowed to fish here commercially, or benefit from these pristine waters because I want to preserve it. However, if the military wants to bomb the waters and kill all the whales there for the readiness of a land 8000 km away, that is A-OK. I will call it a monument and erect this monument for your people and for our nation." Or something like that.

These monuments are empty promises. They are a trick of the mind. These monuments are monuments to war, and not to preservation of the environment like they were advertised. Why does the United States have a problem with monuments of the confederacy toppling, of monuments of white men being destroyed, yet no problem with our monuments being destroyed? Why do they still actively use us as human shields like kawena said, as floating aircraft carriers, as targets for the war they are getting closer to engaging in? We do NOT want to be targets. The "privilege" of being second class citizens and not being able to vote and having a non-voting delegate in Washington D.C. is not worth the target on our backs.

Who will the delegate represent when North Korea makes true on their promise to destroy Guam? Who will that delegate represent when Russia, China, and North Korea team up against the United States and our islands are in the middle? Please tell me. Because we didn't want this. We never did. Hawaii is illegally occupied. Guahan is illegally occupied. American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands are all illegally occupied in addition to all the other indigenous lands claimed by the U.S. to be theirs.

The military's presence in our islands is unwanted for a reason. And let me just say for those ignorant people out there who want to paint people who share these same ideas in a bad light: we do not fault individual servicemembers for wanting to join to escape oppression and better their economic situations. Our islands are kept in these horrible economic conditions and are a conveyor belt of fresh recruits to the military because of colonization and to keep our populations,

where 1 in 8 people are in the military, in their place. We do not fault our brothers, sisters, and siblings for wanting to make a better life for themselves.

When I say I dislike the military, I am saying I dislike the military complex, the system of military top brass and their history which has historically committed so many wrongs against our peoples. Bikini atoll was bombed. The Marshall Islands--people born with birth defects. Chamorros of Guam born with birth defects and have huge rates of cancer from Agent Orange exposure, ironically with Obamacare not being extended to the territories so we are left scrambling to form medical fundraisers to send our loved ones off-island for care because our facilities on our islands are not equipped to deal with the after-effects of being associated with the United States. The island of Tini'an was used to launch two bombs that killed hundreds of thousands of innocent lives in Japan. The islands of Pagan and Farallon de Medinilla are bombed continuously for readiness of a faraway nation. Lower-ranking members in the military have zero say, and so do the people living in these islands and we will be kept that way if we don't learn our own histories, and if we don't make an effort to support decolonization in our lands and in our Pacific Ocean. We must join hands and link up and when we do, the power we could have collectively will be amazing.

Speaking of the island of Farallon de Medinilla, also known as FDM. There was an interesting peer-reviewed study done there which was published in 2014 in the Journal Marine Pollution. I won't get into the details of the paper in this bonus episode, but I will include the link to it if you want to see for yourself. All I'm gonna do is spill the tea, I mean read the highlights to you.

- Title: De-facto marine protection from a Navy bombing range: Farallon De Medinilla, Mariana Archipelago, 1997 to 2012
- Authored by
 - Steven H. Smith who works for the U.S. Navy-Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center Pacific Energy and Environmental Sciences Group, USA
 - Donald Marx jr. who works for the U.S. Navy-Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center Pacific Energy and Environmental Sciences Group, USA
 - Apparently this paper was their only paper published for the both of them
- Highlights
 - Between 1997 and 2012, 14 surveys were conducted at Farallon De Medinilla; annual surveys were conducted from 1999 to 2010.
 - There was no evidence that any of the biological resources assessed had been impacted to a significant degree.
 - Restricted access has resulted in a de-facto preserve effect and outweighs minor negative impacts from training.
 - Abundance, health, biomass of fishes and corals are comparable to or superior to those in similar habitats in the Archipelago.
 - Our research suggests that the greatest threat to FDM's marine resources is from fishermen, not military training activities.

So now knowing everything you know about RIMPAC, militarization, and science. After hearing from the perspectives of two people who come from places that are directly impacted by the military: what are you going to do about it? What is "enough"? Here is what I do:

1. I support these voices. I uplift Pasifika voices. I remember to keep an abundance mindset: I have enough love in my heart for all of these causes, and I understand that I don't have to have all the problems in my own home solved for me to care about problems elsewhere in the world. I keep in mind that I might not be able to help to the fullest extent that I want to: but I also know that I cannot sit by and live my life feeling like I should have done more. I really can't. I'm a Virgo AND a Pasifika!! So anyway, I subscribed to the Cancel RIMPAC Coalition on Youtube. I follow a few coalition members on Twitter, including Kawena who's @ I will put in the show notes. I try to de-normalize the occupation in as many ways as I can. I think about demilitarization. I ordered Craig Santos-Perez's book. I follow the poets in the poem on Twitter and try to support all of their work.
2. I submit public comments every time the military solicits for them, and I try to remember to always do that. The comment can be as short as three sentences but mine usually end up being half a page to a page and a half or so. I enjoy reading the comments that other people have posted as well as they are very insightful.
3. I've been to two protests this month on indigenous sovereignty, more if you count the Black Lives Matter movement which I also support. Numbers are numbers.
4. I show up to meetings if I hear about them, usually on facebook, which I keep only to find out about these things since the only thing I do on there is log on (no, I don't have the app), then I check on the environmental group, read what they're saying, then log off.
5. I educate myself and take care of my mental health, because if I burn myself out I won't be of much use to the movement then, will I?

Finally, I produced this episode to spread more awareness to you, my awesome Pasifika listener. I did this for you. For my islands. For my kanaka che'lus across the ocean struggling for sovereignty. For my Pacific that is struggling for sovereignty.

Let me repeat back to you once more the poem from earlier, by D. Keali'i MacKenzie:

"In a world without militarization

Words like "colonization" and "occupation" become words used in the past tense

What possibilities emerge when we are free?

Islands as space for creative growth and true security

The entire Pacific Ocean unafraid to breathe."

Saina ma'āse and thank you for your attention. Let us know what you think.