

December 13, 1972

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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Marianas Political Status Commission,
High Commissioner Johnston, District Administrator Ada,
distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, and all of the
people of the Marianas:

I bring to each of you greetings from the President of the United States, from officials of his Administration, from leaders of the Congress of the United States, and the good wishes of my fellow countrymen.

A quarter of a century ago we came to your islands in force out of military necessity as a consequence of armed aggression, and of circumstances not of our making which caused you and your people suffering and hardship. During the intervening years we have remained with you as the Trustee of the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands. Today the American delegation is here as your guests, having been invited to come to Saipan to begin a free and open and voluntary process leading to your stated desire--a close and enduring association between the Mariana Islands District and the United States upon the termination of your trustee status.

We are aware of the historic significance of this occasion. We are aware that for more than a decade, the people of this District have sought through referenda, through resolutions of their legislative bodies, through petitions to the United Nations, and through direct representations to my government, an end of the trusteeship and a new political status within the structure of the American nation.

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Over the past four hundred years, you have been exposed to and have been governed by peoples of other lands. Historically, you have known colonialism and you have known subjugation and privation -- within the lifetime of many of those present.

According to a formal statement made in the halls of the United Nations by one of your elected representatives:

"After the Americans came, slowly but surely, things began to change. The American Administration guaranteed to us the fundamental freedoms which are the rights of all men None of us had ever known these freedoms before. All of us ... wanted to make certain that we would never lose them again. Sentiment for joining the American family was born."

The aspirations of the people of the Marianas for close association and political affiliation with the United States, springing from this sentiment and from the freely expressed will of the people is a matter of record. This desire has been recognized by visiting missions of the UN Trusteeship Council, and by the findings of the initial report of the Congress of Micronesia's Political Status Commission. The indisputable fact that the Marianas aspire to a different kind of future relationship with the United States than the representatives of the other Districts of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands had also been acknowledged by the Micronesian Joint Future Status Committee. You have thus made your views known, openly and persistently to the United Nations, to the Government of the United States and to the Congress of Micronesia at each of its recent sessions and special sessions.

Last April your representatives, with the knowledge of the Joint Future Status Committee, formally requested the United States to enter into separate talks leading to a close and permanent union with my country. The petition stated:

"More than any other nation with which we have had contact, the United States has brought to our people the values which we cherish and the unique goals which we desire. Continued affiliation with the United States offers the promise of the preservation of these values and the implementation of these goals."

To this the United States replied:

"As the record shows, U. S. policy as the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands has been to develop Micronesia toward a common status upon termination of the Trusteeship Agreement and our efforts have been directed toward this end. ...

"The further pursuit and implementation of this objective, against the expressed will of the people of the Marianas, would deny them their right of self-determination and impose upon them a future political status which they have said is unacceptable.

"Under these circumstances, I would like to state that my Government is willing to respond affirmatively to the request that has been formally presented to us today to enter into separate negotiations with the representatives of the Marianas in order to satisfy a desire which the Joint Committee has already recognized."

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In a subsequent letter signed by a broadly representative group of your elected leaders, the United States was informed that in several meetings held with the villages, municipal councils, and district government, support for separate talks was reaffirmed. The letter went on to say:

" ... The desire of the people of the Mariana Islands District to become a permanent part of the United States of America is fundamental and has existed for many years. Our exposure to American democracy spans over a quarter of a century since the United States assumed administrative responsibilities of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands at the conclusion of World War II. During this time, we have grown to appreciate and cherish the ideals of democracy and we wish to join the American political family. We pledge to you and your government, our loyalty and dedication to the principles for which America stands, and further, we stand ready to accept the responsibilities of the freedom that the United States guarantees and defends."

As an American and as the representative of the President of the United States, I cannot help but be moved by these words and the eloquence and sincerity of the statements of your leaders which I have cited on this occasion. As a free people, with all of our human imperfections, we cannot be less than enheartened and grateful that after coming to know us, the people of the Marianas would have reached the

conclusion, voluntarily, that you desire to become a permanent part of the American family, that you have chosen to place your faith in the ideals which continue to guide and motivate the American nation as it strives to perfect its own system and to improve the quality of life of its citizens and peoples everywhere.

As I have thought about your sentiments, your words of hope and commitment, I am reminded of what Adlai Stevenson once said:

"When an American says that he loves his country, he means not only that he loves the New England hills, the prairies glistening in the sun, the wide and rising plains, the great mountains and the sea. He means that he loves an inner air, an inner light in which freedom lives and in which a man can draw the breath of self-respect."

We know, too, that the people of these islands, young and old, rightfully love their own land and its special kind of beauty. We recognize that you have your own traditions and a cultural heritage which is meaningful to you--one which you will, as you should, take steps to preserve as you move toward a new relationship with America.

The United States is more than a political union. It is a union of people from all parts of the world coming from different historical, ethnic and religious backgrounds. Our country has gained strength and renewed purpose from the diversity of its people, from those who by personal choice have sought to become its citizens and who have joined with their fellow Americans of all races and creeds in a common cause.

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of assuring their own liberty, of improving their own standard of life, and of contributing to the betterment of the larger American community and the world society. We thus look forward to your becoming a part of our future, knowing that your own special contributions will enrich our national life.

Today, our two delegations set out together on an historic venture, which with good will on both sides, should set the peoples of the Marianas high on the path toward the realization of their long cherished aspiration. We welcome the opportunity and the invitation to be here to work closely with your appointed delegates. As we approach the task of planning for a new beginning of our relationship we will be building on the trust which already exists. With mutual respect and good will we are confident that our deliberations can bring to early fruition a freely sought and a freely made covenant which will serve and protect your interests. Our aim will be to honor and respect your wishes and to build a firm foundation for a lasting friendship and a mutually beneficial and satisfactory future relationship.

In the end the product of our joint effort will be subject to the popular will of the people of the Marianas. Through referenda and other means you have already made known and unmistakably clear the ultimate objective which you seek. By plebiscite you will be given the due credit the opportunity to review and approve the final agreement between the Mariana Islands District and the United States.

I would now like to read to you a message from the President of the United States which he has asked me to convey to the Members of the Marianas Political Status Commission and to all of the people of the Marianas:

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"Dear Ambassador Williams:

You have my very best wishes as you begin discussions with the representatives of the Mariana Islands looking toward a close and permanent association between the Islands and the United States. I wish you every success in these talks.

Please convey my warm greetings to the representatives of the Mariana Islands. The United States, as a Pacific nation, is deeply concerned both for the stability of this vital area, and for the security and well-being of the Marianas people. In this spirit we are looking forward to a continuing mutually advantageous relationship with the Mariana Islands.

Sincerely,

RICHARD NIXON

Ambassador Franklin Haydn Williams
The President's Personal Representative
for Micronesian Status Negotiations
HICOMPACIS
Saipan"

President Nixon's words of support and encouragement and the sentiments expressed here this morning by your leaders will serve as an inspiration to us as we strive to achieve your long awaited and anticipated goal. It is my fervent hope that when our work is ended, we will have added new substance and glory to our beloved anthem,

"America the Beautiful"; which ends with those words which I think especially appropriate on this occasion:

"America, America! God shed his grace on thee,

And crown thy good with brotherhood,

From sea to shining sea!"

THANK YOU.

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