

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA
ISLANDS
THIRD CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION
OPENING REMARKS
OF
DELEGATE BENJAMIN T. MANGLONA
JUNE 5, 1995
SAIPAN

“Strength Through Diversity”

MR. PRESIDENT, FELLOW DELEGATES, HONORED GUESTS,
MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. A
WARM Hafa Adai and Good Morning to you all....
Greetings from the people of your friendly
neighboring island of Rota.

Our delegates have spoken. You are elected our
President. Our work begins. Congratulations to you.

I really feel good and proud to be with you
today. As member of this convention, I seek
friendship.... I seek unity... I seek understanding and
cooperation amongst us. I firmly believe that these
important ingredients which I seek from you could
guarantee ourselves to achieve great success in
this convention, to make one strong Commonwealth
out of our small islands and one strong voice from

OUR PEOPLE. IN THIS CONVENTION, LET THIS PRINCIPLE BE OUR GUIDING LIGHT AS WE BEGIN OUR DIFFICULT TASK.

AS I LOOK AROUND THIS CHAMBER AND LOOK AT THE FACES OF OUR ESTEEMED DELEGATES, WE SEE DIFFERENT PEOPLE, WE SEE A DIVERSE GROUP OF PEOPLE. AMONGST US ARE HONORABLE & DISTINGUISHED MEN AND WOMEN; THERE ARE PEOPLE REPRESENTING MAJOR ETHNIC GROUPS; THERE ARE PEOPLE REPRESENTING DIFFERENT POLITICAL VIEW POINTS; AND THERE ARE PEOPLE REPRESENTING DIFFERENT ISLANDS. ALL THE DIFFERENT TRADITIONS, SO IMPORTANT TO THE LIFE AND ENERGY OF OUR PRECIOUS AND GREAT COMMONWEALTH, ARE GATHERED IN THIS CHAMBER.

IN THIS DIVERSITY, THERE IS STRENGTH. THERE IS POWER IN THESE DIFFERENCES. LET OUR UNIQUE BACKGROUNDS AND VIEWPOINTS NOT DIVIDE AND WEAKEN US, THEY ARE THE CEMENT THAT BRINGS AND HOLDS US TOGETHER AND STRENGTHENS OUR POLITICAL UNION.

OUR DIFFERENCES GIVE US THE STRENGTH. THE POWER, AND THE FORCE TO TURN AWAY ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DANGERS THAT THREATEN US. THEY PROTECT US FROM THOSE WHO WOULD TRY TO TAKE AWAY THE UNIQUE FEATURES OF OUR NORTHERN MARIANAS GOVERNMENT.

THEY GIVE US THE STRENGTH TO FORGE SOLUTIONS FOR THE MANY INTERNAL PROBLEMS THAT WILL FACE OUR GOVERNMENT IN THE NEXT CENTURY.

THERE IS A REAL STRENGTH IN OUR DIVERSITY. WE MUST RESPECT OUR DIFFERENCES OR WE WILL WEAKEN AND NOT MAKE STRONGER OUR GREAT COMMONWEALTH.

LOOK AT THE EXPERIENCE OF AMERICA, OUR GREAT NATION, IF WE WANT TO SEE HOW DIVERSITY CAN CREATE STRENGTH. THE UNITED STATES, THE GREAT "MELTING POT", MAY HAVE MANY PROBLEMS, BUT THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT ITS LEADERSHIP IN THE WORLD RESULTS FROM ITS RESPECT FOR DIFFERENT TRADITIONS AND A RAINBOW OF PEOPLES.

TODAY, OUR ISLANDS HAVE, ITSELF, BECOME A "MELTING POT" OF DIFFERENT TRADITIONS. OUR DIFFERENT GROUPS AND OUR DIFFERENT ISLANDS ALL MAKE UNIQUE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PRINCIPLE OF THE MELTING POT.

MR. PRESIDENT AND FELLOW DELEGATES, IF WE WANT OUR COMMONWEALTH TO HAVE ENERGY, IDEAS, AND CREATIVITY, WE MUST RESPECT AND PRESERVE OUR

DIFFERENT TRADITIONS. PROPERLY TENDED AND STIRRED, OUR MELTING POT WILL PRODUCE A GOVERNMENT AS STRONG AS THE LATTE STONE IMPRINTED ON OUR FLAG THAT SYMBOLIZES THE STRENGTH OF OUR COMMONWEALTH.

TODAY, WE ARE CALLED TOGETHER IN A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION IN ORDER TO BUILD A STRONGER AND MORE WORKABLE GOVERNMENT THAT NO MATTER WHERE YOU LIVE AND WHAT YOU ARE, A SAIPANESE, A ROTANESE OR A TINIANESE, A GOVERNMENT THAT WILL WORK FOR THE PEOPLE OF OUR ISLANDS IN THEIR OWN SIMPLE, UNIQUE AND MODEST WAY OF LIFE. THE WORK WE DO HERE TODAY AND THE DAYS AHEAD WILL BE AIMED AT MAKING OUR CONSTITUTION MORE FLEXIBLE AND MORE RESPONSIVE TO THE CHANGING NEEDS OF OUR PEOPLE, AND MORE DEMOCRATIC.

WE HOPE OUR AMENDMENTS IN THIS CONVENTION WILL MAKE OUR GREAT COMMONWEALTH MORE FLEXIBLE SO WE CAN BEND, NOT BREAK, UNDER THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PRESSURES OF THE COMING CENTURY. WE HOPE OUR AMENDMENTS WILL MAKE US MORE RESPONSIVE TO ALL OUR PEOPLE SO WE CAN BE MORE RESPONSIVE TO THE LEGITIMATE DEMANDS AND NEEDS OF A GROWING NUMBER

OF MINORITY GROUPS THAT HAVE BEEN INTEGRATED INTO OUR POLITICAL FAMILY.

WE HOPE OUR AMENDMENTS WILL MAKE OUR GOVERNMENT MORE DEMOCRATIC BY BALANCING POLITICAL POWER INTO THE HANDS OF THE MANY AND NOT CONCENTRATING INTO THE HANDS OF A FEW. DEMOCRACY WORKS BEST WHEN MORE, NOT FEWER, PEOPLE PARTICIPATE IN IT.

THERE IS STRENGTH IN A SHARED DEMOCRACY. WE MUST SPREAD POLITICAL POWER, NOT CONCENTRATE IT, OR WE WILL WEAKEN, NOT MAKE STRONGER, OUR COMMONWEALTH. WE MUST RESPECT OUR DIFFERENCES OR WE WILL WEAKEN, NOT MAKE STRONGER, THE GOVERNMENT WE NEED FOR THE FUTURE.

MR. PRESIDENT, I FIRMLY TRUST THAT YOU ARE VERY CAPABLE IN PROVIDING US WITH THE KIND OF LEADERSHIP THAT WOULD NOT ONLY UNITE OURSELVES IN THIS CONVENTION, BUT ALSO A LEADERSHIP THAT WOULD UNITE ALL OF OUR PEOPLE IN ALL OF OUR ISLANDS.

THANK YOU AND MAY GOD BLESS US ALL.