

Barnard College, Columbia University

Blood on Their Hands

The American Legacy of Nuclear Calamity in the Marshall Islands, 1946-1996

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“Mr. President,” said Oppenheimer slowly, “I feel I have blood on my hands.”

“I told him,” Truman said afterward, “the blood was on my hands—to let me worry about that.”

—Ray Monk, *Robert Oppenheimer: A Life Inside the Center*, 2012.

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Introduction

Between 1946 and 1958, the United States conducted a thermonuclear testing program in the Marshall Islands to strengthen its military power within the context of the Cold War. The United States detonated 67 bombs and released 108 megatons of radioactivity.¹ The testing program had the equivalent potency of dropping one Hiroshima-sized bomb every day for 19 years.² The United States' competition against the Soviet Union for nuclear sovereignty was detrimental to the land, culture, and health of the Marshallese people. The failure of U.S. government officials to accurately predict the scope of the atomic tests exposed inhabited atolls to radiation levels that were two to twenty-five times above operational tolerances.³ Further, the Marshallese were displaced several times during the nuclear testing program to islands previously deemed unfit for human survival. The nuclear testing program allowed the United States to study the destructive power of the thermonuclear bomb and measure the lasting effects of radiation exposure on the human body.

The United States evacuated between 162 to 167 native islanders from Bikini Atoll, the site of the first tests in 1946.⁴ Again, in December, 1947, the United States relocated 145 Enewetakese to Ujelang Atoll, which was significantly smaller and uninhabited at the time.⁵ The relocations of the Bikinians and the Enewekatese disrupted the livelihood of the Marshallese and

¹ Keith M. Parsons and Robert A. Zaballa, *Bombing the Marshall Islands: A Cold War Tragedy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017), Preface.

² Parsons and Zaballa, *Bombing the Marshall Islands*, Preface.

³ Barbara R. Johnston and Holly M. Barker, *Consequential damages of Nuclear War: The Rongelap Report* (California: Left Coast Press, 2008), 98.

⁴The number of Bikinians evacuated was debated in these two sources. See, W. A. Shurcliff, *Bombs at Bikini: The Official Report of Operation Crossroads* (New York: Wm. H. Wise & Co., Inc., 1947), 17; Jonathan M. Weisgall, *Operation Crossroads: The Atomic Tests at Bikini Atoll* (Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1994), 4.

⁵ Martha Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance: The United States and the Marshall Islands during the Cold War* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2016), 17.

led to long-lasting environmental contamination.⁶ However, the arguably greater injustice was the failure to evacuate the Rongelapese during the Castle Bravo Test of 1954, which resulted in high-levels of radioactive exposure. The Marshallese suffered long-term health consequences from irradiation, such as increased rates of cancer, high rates of miscarriages, and congenital birth defects.⁷ Further, at least 1,400 Marshallese lost their land, after the atomic testing commenced, when the United States began using Kwajalein Atoll to test missiles with nuclear warheads in the 1960s.⁸

The United States was able to conduct the nuclear testing program in the Pacific because they annexed the Marshall Islands from Japanese control at the end of World War II. In early 1944, the United States released 15,000 tons of explosives on Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands and 42,000 marine and army forces fought the Japanese for control of the islands.⁹ The conflict at Kwajalein Atoll resulted in 7,870 Japanese deaths and 265 people were taken as prisoners of wars, while the United States suffered 2,000 casualties.¹⁰ The United States gained control and domination of the Pacific arena for several decades. The U.S. navy first claimed territorial control of the Marshall Islands after World War II. At the time, Micronesia was a

⁶ The Bikini and Rongelap Atolls remain uninhabitable to this day. See, Parsons and Zaballa, *Bombing the Marshall Islands*, 109.

⁷ Barbara R. Johnston, "Atomic Times in the Pacific," *Anthropology Now* 1, 2 Special Atomic Issue (2009): 2; The data is limited on exactly how many cases of radiation-related illnesses resulted directly from the testing program. However, the Nuclear Claims Tribunal, a compensation fund established under the Compact of Free Association between the United States and Marshall Islands, recognized thirty-five medical conditions presumed to be the result of nuclear testing. The list included: leukemia, multiple myeloma; lymphomas; tumors of the salivary gland, parathyroid gland, and brain; cancers of the thyroid, breast, pharynx, esophagus, stomach, small intestine, pancreas, bile ducts, gallbladder, liver, colon, urinary tract, ovary, central nervous system, kidney, rectum, cecum, and bone; non-malignant thyroid disease; hypothyroidism; growth retardation; unexplained hyperparathyroidism; unexplained bone marrow failure; meningioma; radiation sickness; beta burns; non-melanoma skin cancer. See, Johnston and Barker, *Consequential damages of Nuclear War: The Rongelap Report*, 141.

⁸ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, 4 August 1969, p. 22140.

⁹ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 3.

¹⁰ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 3.

region of the central Pacific Ocean which consisted of the Marshall Islands, the Marianas, Palau, and other island groups.¹¹ By 1947, Micronesia became a United Nations Trust Territory administered by the United States called the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI), which had a population of around 150,000 people spanning over 2,000 islands.¹²

The United States maintained militaristic and administrative authority over the entire Micronesian region until 1986. Under the Reagan administration, the United States signed a Compact of Free Association with the Marshall Islands which granted political autonomy to the island nation. Today, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) operates as a sovereign nation that is free to conduct foreign relations under the terms of the Compact, while the United States maintains “full authority and responsibility for security and defense.”¹³ The United States is currently responsible for defending the Freely Associated States (FAS), which includes the RMI, Palau, and Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), and controls the Kwajalein Missile Range. Despite granting political autonomy to the Marshallese, the United States maintains a strategic military base located in the Marshall Islands to this day.

The nuclear testing program which obliterated atolls in the Marshall Islands and shattered the lives of many of its peoples constitutes a dark chapter in the history of American foreign policy. Few would disagree with this judgement. But few have taken note of the fact that in the decades following the tests, the United States did little to redress the calamity it inflicted on the Marshallese; in many respects, American policies made matters much worse. This thesis examines both the original calamity—the nuclear testing program—and the recurrent failure of political leaders to make amends and publicly acknowledge America’s role in perpetrating

¹¹ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 4.

¹² Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 4.

¹³ "Marshall Islands Fact Sheet," *U.S. Department of State* online, last modified December 27, 2016, accessed March 18, 2018, <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/26551.htm>.

injustice against the Marshallese. This raises a larger question: Why did a nation, dedicated to the proposition of “liberty and justice for all,” ignore for many decades the calamity it inflicted upon the Marshallese?

The Marshallese suffered under several Presidential administrations, beginning with Harry Truman through Bill Clinton. Several scholars have discussed the nuclear testing program, but few have examined the enduring legacy of injustice that persisted after 1958. Further, historians have neglected to analyze how the U.S. presidents publicly addressed the Marshall Islands. This thesis evaluates how each president conducted public relations, regarding both the nuclear testing and the colonial relationship with the Marshall Islands from 1946 to 1996. The primary source documents for this thesis were derived from the presidential public papers archives to analyze how U.S. presidents justified committing nuclear calamity in the Marshall Islands.

Dominant literature and historiography on the nuclear testing program in the Marshall Islands from 1946 to 1958 was relatively recent. In 2016, Martha Smith-Norris, a professor at the University of Saskatchewan, offered a comprehensive examination of the United States’ nuclear testing program in the Marshall Islands in *Domination and Resistance: The United States and the Marshall Islands During the Cold War*. Smith-Norris provided a thorough overview of the enduring legacy of injustice endured by the Marshallese under U.S. control, from 1946 through 1987. She referenced presidential decisions in her analysis of Marshallese dissent beginning in the 1960s; however, she did not address how the presidents’ public statements justified their actions.¹⁴

¹⁴ For example, Smith-Norris’ Chapter 5: Negotiating a Cold War Treaty documented the presidential actions starting with Kennedy through Reagan. This thesis seeks to further Smith-Norris’ discussion regarding presidential decision-making during the long negotiations process with the Marshallese for

Prior to Smith-Norris' comprehensive history, two scholars published non-traditional historical accounts of the U.S. atomic testing program. Jonathan Weisgall, who served as the Bikinian's official lawyer starting in 1975, published the first non-government account of the two nuclear tests at Bikini Atoll in 1946, titled *Operation Crossroads—The Atomic Tests at Bikini Atoll*, in 1994.¹⁵ In addition, Jack Niedenthal, worked as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Marshall Islands beginning in 1981, sought to preserve the histories and traditions of the Marshallese who lived through the testing program. Published in 2001, Niedenthal's *For the Good of Mankind: History of the People of Bikini and Their Islands*, offered an oral history, as he consulted leaders and elders who were children or young adults during the atomic testing.¹⁶ These two texts offered an important historical perspective from American's who worked closely with the Marshallese in their fight for justice.

In addition, scholars outside the discipline of history have studied the testing program since the early 2000s. In *Consequential Damages of Nuclear War: The Rongelap Report*, Barbara Rose Johnston and Holly M. Barker, conducted ethnographic research and examined the existing scientific literature regarding the contamination of the environment, exposure to radioactive substances, and the physical and emotional damages that resulted from forced relocations and displacement, during the testing program.¹⁷ Their research focused primarily on

independence, by evaluating specifically what the presidents publicly announced at the time decisions were made. See, Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 125-151.

¹⁵ Weisgall filed three lawsuits against the federal government for the Marshallese between 1975 and 1988. However, the text was primarily a history of Operation Crossroads testing. See, Weisgall, *Operation Crossroads*, xvi.

¹⁶ This text was consulted for the individual perspectives of the Marshallese who lived through the atomic testing program, in the conclusion. For example, Lore Kessibuki's "Bikinian Anthem" is analyzed to understand how the Marshallese viewed the United States' actions. See, Jack Niedenthal, *For the Good of Mankind: The History of the People of Bikini and Their Islands* (Hawaii: Bravo Publishers, 2001), 153.

¹⁷ Johnston and Barker, *Consequential damages of Nuclear War*, 43.

the radioactive exposure of Rongelap, Rongerik, and Ailinginae during the Castle Bravo Test of 1954.¹⁸ Johnston and Barker's anthropological research argued for individual reparations and was helpful in elucidating where historical analysis falls short.¹⁹

By analyzing the presidential papers of the Cold War presidents, it is evident that American political leaders justified and largely ignored the nuclear calamity they inflicted upon the Marshallese. The argument that follows does not utilize chapters. Instead, the American legacy of nuclear calamity from 1946 to 1996 is discussed chronologically, divided into subsections of each presidential administration, beginning with President Harry Truman and ending with President Bill Clinton.

¹⁸ Johnston and Barker, *Consequential damages of Nuclear War*, 95.

¹⁹ The argument does not utilize Johnston and Barker's work for historical analysis. However, their primary source documents were useful for examining the U.S. scientific understanding of atomic testing. In addition, this text was used for understanding its long-term health ramifications. See, Johnston and Barker, *Consequential damages of Nuclear War: The Rongelap*, Appendix, 258; Johnston and Barker, *Consequential damages of Nuclear War: The Rongelap*, 141.

Key Terms and Context

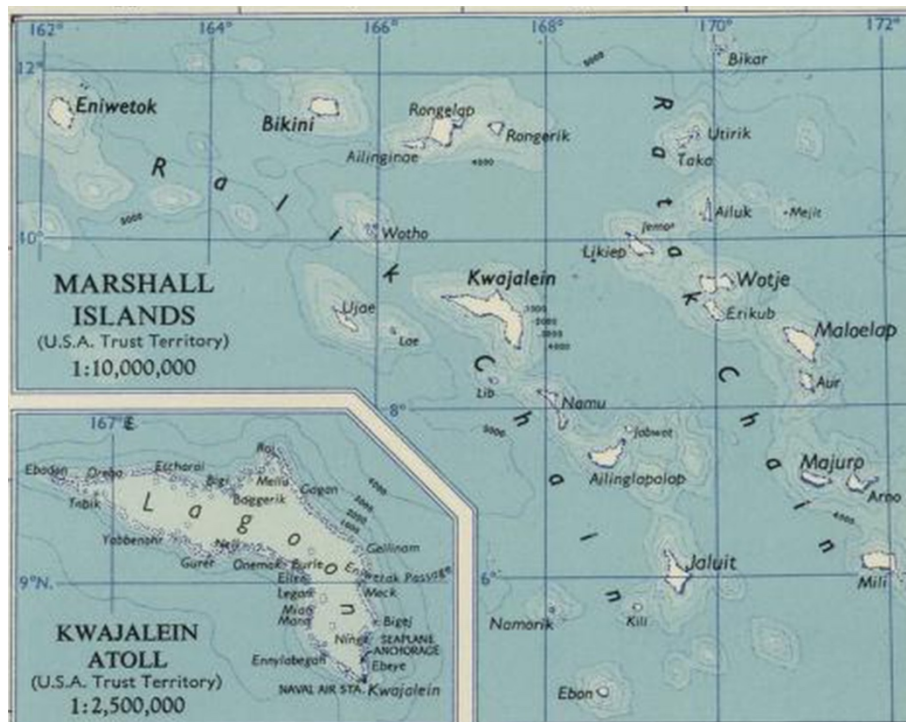


Figure 1²⁰

The Marshall Islands is located halfway between Hawaii and Australia in the North Pacific Ocean. The nation is part of Oceania and consists of two archipelagic island chains consisting of 29 low-lying coral atolls, each made up of small islets, and five coral islands.²¹ An atoll is defined as a ring-shaped coral reef, island, or group of islets that surrounds a lagoon.²² Atolls are formed as underwater volcanoes erupt and lava piles on the seafloor.²³ The Marshall

²⁰ John Bartholomew, cartographer, *The Orient, Plate 9, v.1*, 1958, 49 x 61cm, in *The Times Atlas of the World* (Boston: John Bartholomew & Son LTD, 1959), accessed April 17, 2018. Cropped.

²¹ "The World Factbook: MARSHALL ISLANDS," *Central Intelligence Agency* online, last modified February 22, 2018, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rm.html>; Robert C. Kiste, "Marshall Islands," *Encyclopædia Britannica* online, last modified January 17, 2018, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Marshall-Islands>.

²² "Atoll," *National Geographic Society* online, last modified October 9, 2012, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/atoll/>.

²³ "Atoll," *National Geographic Society* online, 2012.

Islands includes 11,673 square kilometers of lagoon waters, which includes the atolls of Bikini, Enewetak, Kwajalein, Majuro, Rongelap, and Utirik.²⁴ The majority of the United States' nuclear testing occurred at Bikini and Enewetak Atolls, but surrounding atolls were affected by radiation poisoning. Today, more than two-thirds of the population lives on the atolls of Majuro, the capital of the RMI, and Ebeye, as they are the two largest economic centers.²⁵

Further, the Marshall Islands is part of the Micronesian subregion of Oceania. The region includes more than 2,000 islands of the nations of Palau, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, and Kiribati.²⁶ It is located between the Philippines and Hawaii.²⁷ The term "Micronesia" in this thesis refers to the subregion, not the Federated States of Micronesia. Many of the primary documents do not differentiate the United States' specific relationship to the Marshall Islands, instead generalizing under the term Micronesia.

Lastly, the economy of the Marshall Islands remains dependent on United States' assistance, payments for the leasing of Kwajalein Atoll, and remittances from family members who migrated to the United States. The local economy remains limited to handicrafts, tuna processing and the production of copra, dried coconut meat. Agricultural production is primarily subsistence farming on small plots of land and imports vastly exceed exports.²⁸

²⁴ "The World Factbook: MARSHALL ISLANDS," *Central Intelligence Agency* online, 2018.

²⁵ "The World Factbook: MARSHALL ISLANDS," *Central Intelligence Agency* online, 2018.

²⁶ Miriam Khan, John L. Fischer, and Robert C. Kiste, "Micronesian Culture," *Encyclopædia Britannica* online, last modified September 20, 2017, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Micronesia-cultural-region-Pacific-Ocean>.

²⁷ Khan, Fischer, and Kiste, "Micronesian Culture," *Encyclopædia Britannica* online, 2017.

²⁸ "The World Factbook: MARSHALL ISLANDS," *Central Intelligence Agency* online, 2018.

The American Legacy of Nuclear Calamity in the Marshall Islands: 1946-1996

Give 'em Lies Harry: The Truman Administration

The nuclear testing program conducted in the Marshall Islands between 1946 and 1958 was an exercise of United States military power in the wake of the atomic age. Six months after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, on January 10, 1946, President Harry S. Truman approved the Joint Chiefs of Staff's "detailed administrative and technical plan of action" to test atomic weapons in the Marshall Islands.²⁹ The primary objective of the nuclear testing in 1946 was not to develop weaponry, but to measure the effects of the atomic bomb. The two bombs dropped on Bikini Atoll in 1946 were identical to the Nagasaki Fat Man.³⁰ Physicists and doctors wanted to understand the values of pressure, impulse, accelerations, shock-wave velocity, measurements of gamma and neutron radiation, and the early symptoms of radioactive poisoning on humans resulting from flash burn, radiation, and the impact of secondary fires, floods and food shortages.³¹ W. A. Shurcliff, the official historian of Joint Task Force One, in *Bombs at Bikini: the Official Report of Operation Crossroads*, reported, "A few technical men said that the tests were unnecessary."³² The information obtained from the Alamogordo, New Mexico tests and the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki provided sufficient information on the atomic bombs.³³ While the nuclear testing program in the Marshall Islands was designed to fill the gaps in scientific understanding of the effects of atomic warfare, it was arguably "unnecessary."³⁴

²⁹ Shurcliff, *Bombs at Bikini*, 13.

³⁰ Parsons and Zaballa, *Bombing the Marshall Islands*, 14.

³¹ Shurcliff, *Bombs at Bikini*, 6-7.

³² Shurcliff, *Bombs at Bikini*, 6.

³³ Shurcliff, *Bombs at Bikini*, 6.

³⁴ Shurcliff, *Bombs at Bikini*, 6.

Further, the Truman Administration assured the American public that atomic testing was conducted in the name of peace. In 1946, the United States evacuated 162 to 167 native islanders from Bikini Atoll, the site of the first testing initiative titled Operation Crossroads.³⁵ Shurcliff reported in *Bombs at Bikini*, “The Bikinians, convinced that the Tests would be a contribution to world peace, indicated their willingness to evacuate.”³⁶ Keith M. Parsons and Robert A. Zaballa argued in *Bombing the Marshall Islands: A Cold War Tragedy*, the concept of the Bikinians as “cheerfully cooperative” was a “shameless piece of self-justifying propaganda.”³⁷ In fact, Truman recognized the hypocrisy of using the atomic bomb as a symbol of world peace. Though he stated in his announcement to use the A-Bomb on August 6, 1945, “Atomic power can become a powerful and forceful influence towards the maintenance of world peace,” Truman's actions in 1946 displayed the contrary.³⁸ The testing at Bikini Atoll was originally planned for May 15, 1946 and the second test was planned for July 1, 1946. However, the Paris Council of Foreign Ministers were set to meet in late April or early May of 1946. Parsons and Zaballa argued Truman delayed the nuclear testing by six-weeks because “[setting] off nuclear explosions while involved in planning a major peace conference would [...] send mixed signals.”³⁹ Truman's statement that atomic power led to the “maintenance of world peace” was a public relations tactic to distract from the upheaval of the indigenous population of Bikini Atoll.

³⁵The number of Bikinians evacuated was debated in these two sources. See, Shurcliff, *Bombs at Bikini*, 17; Weisgall, *Operation Crossroads*, 4.

³⁶Shurcliff, *Bombs at Bikini*, 93.

³⁷ Parsons and Zaballa, *Bombing the Marshall Islands*, 15.

³⁸ Harry S. Truman, “Statement by the President Announcing the Use of the A-Bomb at Hiroshima,” August 6, 1945, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed February 2, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12169>.

³⁹ Parsons and Zaballa, *Bombing the Marshall Islands*, 19.

The Truman administration remained quiet about the tests at Bikini Atoll until a press conference three years after Operation Crossroads. On July 28, 1949, Truman announced, "It's a gloomy subject. This atomic explosion is one which we all dread, myself more than anybody else, because I never want to have to use it again."⁴⁰ However, a second nuclear testing program was already underway in the Marshall Islands at Enewetak Atoll. In December 1947, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and United States Navy evacuated 145 Enewetakese 150 miles southwest to Ujelang Atoll for Operation Sandstone.⁴¹ Ujelang Atoll was uninhabited at the time and the Enewekatese stated in a petition to the United Nations, "Navy personnel hurriedly put up tents and gave us some canned food. Then they left."⁴² In the Spring of 1948, the AEC conducted three nuclear tests at Enewetak Atoll, which ranged from 18 to 49 kilotons.⁴³ The Truman administration's statement on Bikini Atoll in 1949 did not acknowledge the tests at Enewetak Atoll.⁴⁴ In early 1950, Truman ordered the AEC to test a more powerful hydrogen bomb after the Soviet Union conducted their first nuclear test.⁴⁵ Truman's statement to never drop the bomb again did not apply to the testing program nor the Marshall Islands.

In 1953, at the end of Truman's presidency, the United States conducted two more nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands, which were more powerful than any prior tests. In the Spring of 1951, the United States conducted four atomic tests, including the first thermonuclear

⁴⁰ Harry S. Truman, "The President's News Conference," July 28, 1949, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed February 2, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13256>.

⁴¹ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 17.

⁴² Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 17.

⁴³ U.S. Department of Energy, *United States' Nuclear Tests: July 1945 through September 1992* (Rev.16), September 2015, p. 29.

⁴⁴ Truman, "The President's News Conference," 28 July 1949.

⁴⁵ Lewis L. Strauss, "Hydrogen Bomb Tests in the Pacific," *Department of State Bulletin* 30 (1954): 548.

test, code-named George, which yielded 225 kilotons of TNT.⁴⁶ In 1952, the AEC prepared for the largest test to date, code-named Mike under Operation Ivy, which had an explosive yield equivalent to 10.4 million kilotons.⁴⁷ The Mike test was 700 times more powerful than the Hiroshima bomb and the explosion obliterated the entire island of Elugelab with a three mile radius of complete destruction.⁴⁸ On January 7, 1953, Truman addressed the nuclear testing program in the Marshall Islands in his final Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, as he passed the responsibility to handle the damages incurred by the Marshallese to Dwight D. Eisenhower. He stated, “But atomic power, like any other force of nature, is not evil in itself. Properly used, it is an instrumentality for human betterment.”⁴⁹ Truman ended his presidency reflecting on atomic power as a weapon for “human betterment,” made possible by the sacrifices of the Marshallese.

“Peace and Prosperity”: The Eisenhower Administration

The largest nuclear test occurred at Bikini Atoll on March 1, 1954, code-named the Castle Bravo Test, under the Eisenhower administration. The wind blew radioactive fallout towards communities living in Rongelap, Ailinginae, Rongerik, and Utirik atolls, which were between 100 and 300 miles away from ground zero.⁵⁰ U.S. government officials failed to protect the inhabitants from the damages of the nuclear fallout. The Navy first relocated the people of

⁴⁶ U.S. Department of Energy, *United States' Nuclear Tests*, 29.

⁴⁷ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 18; U.S. Department of Energy, *United States' nuclear Tests July 1945 through September 1992*, September 2015, 29.

⁴⁸ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 19.

⁴⁹ Harry S. Truman, "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union," January 7, 1953, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed February 3, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14379>.

⁵⁰ Johnston, “Atomic Times in the Pacific,” 1; Johnston and Barker, *Consequential damages of Nuclear War*, 98.

Bikini Atoll and Rongelap Atoll in 1946 for Operation Crossroads.⁵¹ However, the Rongelap community was not evacuated in 1954 for the Bravo event, despite the fact that U.S. military personnel were aware that the atolls could potentially be affected by radioactive fallout.⁵²

On March 31, 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower hosted a press conference where he deflected the topic of Pacific nuclear testing to the Chairman of the AEC, Lewis L. Strauss. After the President took questions on other issues, Strauss read a prepared statement based on his report to the President on March 30, 1954.⁵³ In the statement, Strauss described the United States' Pacific proving grounds, where he witnessed the thermonuclear tests occur, and clarified

⁵¹ Johnston and Barker, *Consequential damages of Nuclear War*, 89.

⁵² Barker and Johnston argued the U.S. Department of the Interior changed the official "danger zone" to place the Rongelap, Rongerik, and Ailinginae communities outside the area that necessitated evacuation. Because they were not evacuated, the Rongelapese were exposed to 200 roentgens of whole-body radiation, which was recognized as a potentially lethal dose of radioactivity. This was particularly dangerous to children. See, Johnston and Barker, *Consequential damages of Nuclear War*, 95-96.

It is important to note that there has been scholarly debates regarding the intentionality behind the decision not to evacuate the Marshallese communities near ground zero of the Castle Bravo Test. Parsons and Zaballa argued, "A plan to use the Bravo shot to irradiate test subjects on distant atolls would not have been a procedure that any planner, however sinister, could rationally propose." See, Parsons and Zaballa, *Bombing the Marshall Islands*, 154.

The Brookhaven National Laboratory, which conducted research on the bodies of the Marshallese exposed to radioactivity during the Castle Bravo Test, claimed "the wind shifted unexpectedly toward inhabited atolls just before detonation and the explosion produced higher amounts of fallout than predicted." See, Mona S. Rowe, "Brookhaven Statement on Marshall Islands," *Brookhaven National Laboratory* online, accessed March 13, 2018, <https://www.bnl.gov/newsroom/news.php?a=111002>.

Barker and Johnston acknowledged the changing wind conditions, yet stated, "Despite the fact that the Bravo event would send fallout blasting toward the inhabited atolls of Rongelap, Rongerik, and Ailinginae, the test continued as planned." See, Johnston and Barker, *Consequential damages of Nuclear War*, 96.

Parsons and Zaballa claimed "It is one thing to say that the weather situation just prior to Bravo would *possibly* have deposited the fallout on those atolls. It is another thing entirely to say that the winds could be *depended upon* to transfer large amount of radiation to the desired site (e.g. inhabited atolls)." See, Parsons and Zaballa, *Bombing the Marshall Islands*, 154.

⁵³ Dwight D. Eisenhower, "68. The President's News Conference," March 31, 1954, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed February 4, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=10196>.

the “exaggerations” and “mistaken characteristics” surrounding the Castle Bravo Test.⁵⁴ Strauss stated, “The impression that an entire atoll or large islands would have been destroyed in these tests is erroneous. It would be more accurate to say a large sandspit or reef.”⁵⁵ Strauss assured the American public that all tests at Bikini and Enewetak Atolls were conducted on “uninhabited, treeless sand bars,” which contradicted the fact that Bikinians were evacuated in 1946 and the Enewetakese were evacuated in 1947 for testing.⁵⁶ Strauss corroborated the meaning of no longer inhabited and “uninhabited.” Lastly, Strauss argued that the event contributed to the peaceful development of nuclear energy. Strauss ended the statement, “We should soon be more free to increase our emphasis on the peaceful uses of atomic power.”⁵⁷ Following the sentiment of Truman’s final State of the Union Address, the Eisenhower administration further justified the damages caused by atomic testing in the Marshall Islands in the name of peace.

Further, the wind conditions on the day of the Castle Bravo Test exposed several inhabited atolls to radioactive fallout. Strauss assured that winds carrying radioactive fallout typically blew away from any inhabited atolls during the months of the testing program.⁵⁸ However, six hours before the Castle Bravo Test occurred weather reports indicated that “winds at 20,000 feet were ‘headed for Rongelap to the East.’”⁵⁹ The test continued as planned and residents of Rongelap, Rongerik, and Ailinginae Atolls were exposed to radioactive fallout for three days before they were evacuated to Kwajalein Atoll on March 4, 1954—two days after

⁵⁴ Strauss, “Hydrogen Bomb Tests in the Pacific,” 548.

⁵⁵ Strauss, “Hydrogen Bomb Tests in the Pacific,” 549.

⁵⁶ Strauss, “Hydrogen Bomb Tests in the Pacific,” 548; Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 17; Weisgall, *Operation Crossroads*, 4; Shurcliff, *Bombs at Bikini*, 17.

⁵⁷ Strauss, “Hydrogen Bomb Tests in the Pacific,” 549.

⁵⁸ Strauss, “Hydrogen Bomb Tests in the Pacific,” 549.

⁵⁹ Johnston and Barker, *Consequential damages of Nuclear War*, 96.

U.S. military personnel were evacuated from Rongerik.⁶⁰ The levels of radioactivity on the atolls were found to be two to twenty-five times above the AEC's operational tolerances.⁶¹ The Marshallese suffered from immediate effects of the radioactive fallout, including beta burns, hair loss, depressed red cell and leukocyte counts, flu-like symptoms, fingernail discoloration, radioactivity in urine, and cellular changes in blood and bone marrow.⁶² The United States' failure to protect the Marshallese from radioactive fallout offered an opportunity for American scientists to further study and develop the effects of radiation poisoning.

In 1956, the AEC employed the Brookhaven National Laboratory to attend to the medical needs of the Marshallese exposed to radioactive fallout during the Castle Bravo Test. According to Mona S. Rowe, spokeswoman for the Brookhaven National Laboratory, in the "Brookhaven Statement on the Marshall Islands," the winds shifted "unexpectedly" and produced higher levels of fall out than anticipated, which exposed the residents of Utirik, Rongelap, Ailinginae, and American servicemen at a weather station on Rongerik Atoll to high levels of radiation.⁶³ The Brookhaven National Laboratory took over after the emergency medical team and many Naval physicians joined the lab in 1956.⁶⁴ The Energy Research and Development Administration and the AEC administered \$52 million in health care monitoring after the Castle Bravo Test.⁶⁵ In

⁶⁰ Johnston and Barker, *Consequential damages of Nuclear War*, 98.

⁶¹ Johnston and Barker, *Consequential damages of Nuclear War*, 98.

⁶² Johnston, "Atomic times in The Pacific," 5.

⁶³ Mona S. Rowe, "Brookhaven Statement on Marshall Islands," *Brookhaven National Laboratory* online, accessed March 13, 2018, <https://www.bnl.gov/newsroom/news.php?a=111002>.

⁶⁴ Robert Conrad, the head of the Brookhaven National Laboratory program, and his team took trips to the Marshall Islands, annually, to treat radiation-related illnesses, collect environmental samples, and measure radiation levels in the environment. See, Rowe, "Brookhaven Statement on Marshall Islands," *Brookhaven National Laboratory* online.

⁶⁵ In addition, the Department of the Interior paid over \$66 million for the damages of the nuclear testing program prior to the Compact of Free Association, which established the official reparation package. However, only 36% of the payments went directly to individuals affected by atomic testing (around \$15 million), while the remaining 64% was placed in trust funds, and individuals received payments from

2000, the Republic of the Marshall Islands Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alvin Jacklick, wrote in a letter to the General Accounting Office, that the environmental and medical testing was one of the “many examples” in which the United States “benefitted” from the atomic testing program.⁶⁶ Though disguised as medical aid, the research conducted by the Brookhaven National Laboratory was used to further the scientific understanding of the effects of nuclear testing on the environment and the human body.⁶⁷

In June 1957, the Rongelapese were permitted to return to their atoll under false claims that the land had been restored. The United States assured the Marshallese people that Rongelap was habitable based on radioactivity levels measured at 200 feet above the ground.⁶⁸ Repatriating the atoll discredited medical recommendations that “highly” advised conducting “a complete survey of [Rongelap] Atoll,” instead of relying on “external” measurements.⁶⁹ For decades the Marshallese people suffered from health consequences, including increased rates of cancer, stunted physical and mental development of children, high rates of miscarriages, and congenital birth defects, from returning to their lands before it was safe and consuming contaminated foodstuffs.⁷⁰ The nuclear testing program continued into 1958 and the people of Rongelap Atoll remained at high risk for additional exposure to radioactive fallout. In 1958, Operation Hardwick detonated three additional nuclear weapons on Bikini and Enewetak Atolls, which increased Rongelapese body burdens of Fe-55.⁷¹ Though Robert A. Conrad, the director of the Brookhaven

interest over time. See, U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Better Accountability Needed Over U.S. Assistance to Micronesia and the Marshall Islands*, May 2000, p. 19.

⁶⁶ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Better Accountability Needed*, p.72.

⁶⁷ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Better Accountability Needed*, p.72.

⁶⁸ Johnston and Barker, *Consequential damages of Nuclear War*, 114.

⁶⁹ Doctor Gordon M. Dunning to Doctor C. L. Dunham, memorandum, June 13, 1957, “Resurvey of Rongelap Atoll,” See, Johnston and Barker, *Consequential damages of Nuclear War*, appendix, 258.

⁷⁰ Johnston, “Atomic Times in the Pacific,” 2.

⁷¹ Johnston and Barker, *Consequential damages of Nuclear War*, 116.

National Laboratory, claimed Rongelap was “perfectly safe,” he conducted experiments on the people on Rongelap because they “afford[ed] [the] most valuable ecological radiation data on human beings.”⁷² The Brookhaven National Laboratory continued researching the effects of radiation on the Marshallese until 1998.⁷³

In 1960, Eisenhower justified Brookhaven Medical Center funding, a hospital of the Brookhaven National Laboratory, as “primarily” devoted to medical research purposes.⁷⁴ He did not explicitly mention that the “medical research purposes” involved testing the effects of radioactive poisoning in the Marshall Islands. The next year, Eisenhower endorsed the Brookhaven National Laboratory program claiming it would “help the United States to continue its leadership in the study of the behavior of the basic matter of the universe and the effects of radiation on man and his environment.”⁷⁵ He did not mention that the Marshallese were the subjects of the experiments. Overall, Eisenhower did not explicitly address the testing program in the Marshall Islands during his presidency, despite vaguely referencing the medical testing at the Brookhaven National Laboratory and introducing Lewis Strauss’ report on the Castle Bravo Test.

⁷² Robert A. Conrad et al., *March 1957 Medical Survey of Rongelap and Utirik People Three Years After Exposure to Radioactive Fallout* (Upton, N.Y.: Brookhaven National Laboratory, 1958), 22.

⁷³ Rowe, “Brookhaven Statement on Marshall Islands,” *Brookhaven National Laboratory* online.

⁷⁴ Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Annual Budget Message to the Congress: Fiscal Year 1960,” January 19, 1959, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed February 4, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=11379>.

⁷⁵ Under the budget for fiscal year 1961, Eisenhower increased expenditures by the Atomic Energy Commission to over \$210 million in the physical and life sciences department. The largest part of the budget increase went to three new particle accelerators in the multibillion electron-volt energy range, including the alternating gradient synchrotron at Brookhaven National Laboratory. The BNL was responsible for testing the effects of radioactive poisoning in the Marshallese, as well as developing new energy technologies. See, Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Annual Budget Message to the Congress: Fiscal Year 1961,” January 18, 1960, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed February 4, 2018. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=11763>.

From 1946 to 1958, the United States' atomic testing program in the Marshall Islands was justified as an instrument for world peace. Truman distinguished between dropping the bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki and testing the atomic bombs at Bikini and Enewetak Atolls. "I never want to have to use [the atomic bomb] again," Truman declared in 1949, just as he was planning to drop thermonuclear bombs, hundreds of times more potent those used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, on the Marshall Islands.⁷⁶ For Truman, testing atomic bombs was not the same as "using" them. As he passed the atomic torch to Eisenhower, Truman reminded the American people that atomic power was not "evil" when used "properly."⁷⁷ Similarly, Eisenhower shied away from publicly discussing the atomic testing in the Pacific under his presidency. Instead, Strauss, Chairman of the AEC, released a statement on the Castle Bravo Test assuring the American people that only "uninhabited, treeless sand bars" were damaged in the atomic testing program.⁷⁸ However, the fact that the Brookhaven National Laboratory conducted medical tests on the Marshallese for decades indicated that people were harmed by radiation effects of the testing program.

Truman and Eisenhower distracted from the damages and radiation poisoning of the United States' atomic testing program in the Marshall Islands by claiming the atoms were used for peaceful purposes. They differentiated between atomic bombs used in warfare from atomic testing for human betterment. The calamities of the atomic testing program, which included radiation poisoning, long-term illnesses, birth defects, and environmental damage in the Marshall Islands, illuminate the hypocrisy of Truman and Eisenhower's justifications.

⁷⁶ Truman, "The President's News Conference," July 28, 1949.

⁷⁷ Truman, "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union," January 7, 1953.

⁷⁸ Strauss, "Hydrogen Bomb Tests in the Pacific," 549.

“Independence” for the Marshallese: The Kennedy and Johnson Administrations

In the early 1960s, Cold War tensions escalated between the United States and the Soviet Union. The nuclear missile race inaugurated, in 1961, after the Soviet Union secretly conducted 40 nuclear weapons tests that developed missiles with thermonuclear yields up to 58 million tons of TNT.⁷⁹ The threat of Soviet nuclear superiority “forced” President John F. Kennedy to adopt the deterrence strategy, known as “Mutually Assured Destruction,” and stockpile defensive weapons to prevent the Soviets from launching a nuclear attack.⁸⁰ In 1962, Kennedy announced the United States’ “thorough” and “thoughtful” plan to test missiles with radioactive warheads in the Pacific.⁸¹ He assured the American people that the AEC and Department of Defense would “carefully” monitor the location, wind, and weather conditions to limit radioactive fallout.⁸² By 1963, the Kennedy Administration tested around 60 long-range missiles from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California to Kwajalein Atoll annually.⁸³ Kennedy stated it was “deeply regrettable” that “even one additional individual's health may be risked.”⁸⁴ However, he justified the missile testing program as a “necessary” action with “peaceful intentions” to “make the world safe for all mankind.”⁸⁵ Similar to Truman and Eisenhower, Kennedy conducted the nuclear missile tests under the name of peace; however, he promised to monitor the radioactive

⁷⁹ John F. Kennedy, "Radio and Television Address to the American People: 'Nuclear Testing and Disarmament,'" March 2, 1962, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed April 1, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9084>.

⁸⁰ Kennedy, "Radio and Television Address," March 2, 1962; Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 108.

⁸¹ Kennedy, "Radio and Television Address," March 2, 1962.

⁸² Kennedy, "Radio and Television Address," March 2, 1962.

⁸³ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 108.

⁸⁴ Kennedy, "Radio and Television Address," March 2, 1962.

⁸⁵ Kennedy, "Radio and Television Address," March 2, 1962.

fallout and expressed greater concern for the risks associated with nuclear testing than any president prior.

Further, the United States increased military control over the Marshall Islands, while the international trend towards decolonization gained traction. On December 14, 1960 the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 1514 which granted independence to colonial countries and peoples and dissolved many United Nations Trusteeships.⁸⁶ Declaration 4 of Resolution 1514 indicated that “armed action or repressive measures of all kinds directed against dependent peoples shall cease in order to enable them to exercise [...] their right to complete independence.”⁸⁷ The United States outright rejected Resolution 1514 and abstained from the vote.⁸⁸ In fact, the United States continued to inflict “repressive measures” against the Marshallese under the nuclear missile testing program. In 1962, the United States removed 50 Marshallese residents from Kwajalein Atoll to test the Nike-Zeus System, the United States’ first anti-missile missile used to intercept intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), without compensating the Marshallese for the loss of their land.⁸⁹ By forcing the Marshallese to evacuate, again, for military purposes, the United States violated Resolution 1514 and denied the Marshallese their “right to complete independence.”⁹⁰ The United States government prioritized military interests in the Pacific and contravened the international push for the decolonization of UN Trusteeships.

To preserve the existing political and military framework, the Kennedy administration worked towards creating a permanent trusteeship relationship with the Marshall Islands. On July

⁸⁶ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 126.

⁸⁷ UN General Assembly, *Resolution 1514 (XV)*, Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Peoples and Countries, 14 December 1960, p. 2.

⁸⁸ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 126.

⁸⁹ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 108.

⁹⁰ UN General Assembly, *Resolution 1514 (XV)*, p. 2.

10, 1962, Kennedy publicly called for the development of the Pacific Islands Trust Territory: “We intend to move forward, as rapidly as possible and with the cooperation and the full participation of the citizens of the Trust Territory, in all other areas requiring development,” he said.⁹¹ Kennedy’s public statement portrayed the relationship between the United States and Micronesia as mutually beneficial and aimed to fully cooperate with the citizens of the Trust Territory. However, in 1962, Kennedy approved the National Security Action Memorandum 145 (NSAM 145) which aimed to establish a system of pseudo self-government in Micronesia that maintained United States’ control over the region.⁹² Further, Kennedy worked with Anthony Solomon, a Harvard economics professor, who proposed the establishment of the United States Territory of Micronesia by 1968, based on the perceived inability of the Micronesians to self-govern, in the *Solomon Report*.⁹³ NSAM 145 and the *Solomon Report*, attempted to limit self-determination. While Kennedy’s public announcements supported the growth and development of the Marshall Islands, he was working with Solomon to deliberately block Marshallese independence.

In 1963, the Limited Test Ban Treaty marked a critical moment in controlling nuclear testing and radioactive fallout. The Treaty banned nuclear weapons tests from occurring in the atmosphere, underwater, and in outer space.⁹⁴ However, Kennedy did not mention the atomic testing program in the Marshall Islands in his message to the Senate on August 8, 1963 nor in his

⁹¹ John F. Kennedy, "Statement by the President Upon Signing Bill Accelerating the Development of the Pacific Islands Trust Territory," July 20, 1962, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed April 1, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=8777>.

⁹² Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 126-127.

⁹³ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 126-127.

⁹⁴ John F. Kennedy, "Special Message to the Senate on the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty," August 8, 1963, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed February 3, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9370>.

address to the nation on July 26, 1963.⁹⁵ In Kennedy's message to the Senate he stated, "It should be remembered that only one atomic test was required to complete the development of the Hiroshima bomb."⁹⁶ He did not reference the 67 bombs dropped on the Marshall Islands from 1946 to 1958 to determine the scientific and environmental effects of the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.⁹⁷ Further, in his address to the nation on July, 1963, Kennedy illuminated the horrors of nuclear warfare, as if the risks had not already occurred. He stated, "The loss of even one human life, or the malformation of even one baby—who may be born long after we are gone—should be of concern to us all."⁹⁸ Kennedy's "concern" did not mention the inhabitants of Rongelap, Rongerik, Utirik, and Ailinginae Atolls who suffered high rates of miscarriages, and congenital birth defects after the Castle Bravo Test in 1954.⁹⁹ Though the Limited Test Ban Treaty was a pivotal moment in restricting nuclear testing, Kennedy evaded mentioning the existing damages of U.S. nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands.

Following Kennedy's assassination in 1963, the Johnson administration endorsed self-government for the people of Micronesia. Johnson distanced himself from the *Solomon Report* and believed in a government run by representatives of Micronesia.¹⁰⁰ In March 1967, after meeting with the High Commissioner of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, William Norwood, Johnson stated, "I am confident that the people of the Trust Territory can look forward

⁹⁵ Kennedy, "Special Message to the Senate on the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty," August 8, 1963; John F. Kennedy, "Address to the Nation on the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty," July 26, 1963, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed February 3, 2018, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/ZNOo49DpRUa-kMetjWmSyg.aspx>.

⁹⁶ John F. Kennedy, "Special Message to the Senate on the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty," August 8, 1963.

⁹⁷ Autumn S. Brodner et al., "Measurement of background gamma radiation in the northern Marshall Islands," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 113, 25 (June 21, 2016): 6833.

⁹⁸ Kennedy, "Address to the Nation on the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty," July 26, 1963.

⁹⁹ Johnston, "Atomic Times in the Pacific," 2.

¹⁰⁰ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 127.

to new victories in the never-ending battle against poverty, ignorance, and disease.”¹⁰¹ Johnson did not draw a connection between “disease” and the high rates of cancer, birth defects, stunted growth and development, and miscarriages resulting from the atomic testing program.¹⁰² Further, references to “ignorance” and “poverty”¹⁰³ failed to mention the legacy of the nuclear testing program. In fact, forced relocations expanded under the Johnson administration, as the central two-thirds of Kwajalein Atoll called the Mid-Atoll Corridor, which included 47 islands, were used to test missiles with nuclear warheads.¹⁰⁴ By 1967, 3,800 people were living on Ebeye, which was only one-tenth of a square mile wide.¹⁰⁵ Ebeye was significantly overpopulated, there were not enough latrines, no available drinking water, and all the food had to be imported.¹⁰⁶ The “poverty” that Johnson described in his statement following his meeting with High Commissioner Norwood was directly caused by continued U.S. military interests in the region.¹⁰⁷ Though Johnson supported political autonomy for the Marshallese and Micronesians, he did not publicly acknowledge the impact of the United States’ nuclear testing program in regards to independence.

The Kennedy and Johnson administrations expanded the United States’ military control over the Marshall Islands, while other international powers pushed for decolonization. Kennedy worked to preserve the existing military relationship with the Marshall Islands by advocating for

¹⁰¹ Lyndon B. Johnson, “Statement by the President Following a Meeting With the High Commissioner of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands,” March 21, 1967, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed March 15, 2018.

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=28154>.

¹⁰² Johnston, “Atomic Times in the Pacific,” 2.

¹⁰³ Johnson, “Statement by the President,” March 21, 1967.

¹⁰⁴ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 109.

¹⁰⁵ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 111.

¹⁰⁶ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 105.

¹⁰⁷ Johnson, “Statement by the President,” March 21, 1967.

pseudo self-government, while he publicly promised to work with the Marshallese to develop the region. Further, Johnson neglected to acknowledge that the United States' nuclear and missile testing programs caused "poverty" and "disease."¹⁰⁸ After the nuclear testing ended in 1958, the United States continued to use the Marshall Islands as a strategic weapons testing site, as Cold War tensions heightened. Kennedy and Johnson failed to publicly acknowledge that the U.S. military actions detrimentally impacted the socio-economic conditions of the Marshall Islands.

From Swords to Plowshares: The Nixon Administration

The tension between the Marshallese and the U.S. army escalated at the beginning of Nixon's presidency, as the United States continued to develop and test intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and anti-ballistic missiles (ABMs) at Kwajalein Atoll. On March 14, 1969, Nixon reinstated the 1968 Sentinel antiballistic missile system under a new name, the Safeguard program, with modifications to appease the "strong debate[s]" and "controversy" in Congress.¹⁰⁹ The only changes to the missile testing were switching from a "fixed deployment schedule" to a "phase schedule" and the implementation of annual reviews, which Nixon argued would "limit" the number of tests.¹¹⁰ Nixon stated the new Safeguard program was "vital for the security and defense of the United States [...] and in the interest of peace throughout the world."¹¹¹ However, the Marshallese described the U.S. Army presence in Kwajalein Atoll as "an illusion" that led to

¹⁰⁸ Johnson, "Statement by the President," March 21, 1967.

¹⁰⁹ Richard Nixon, "The President's News Conference," March 14, 1969, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed February 23, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=1951>; The Sentinel program tested two interceptor missiles, the Spartan, an improved version of Zeus, with a nuclear warhead, which intercepted missiles in the upper atmosphere, and the Sprint missile, which destroyed missiles that re-entered the atmosphere. See, Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 111.

¹¹⁰ Nixon, "The President's News Conference," March 14, 1969.

¹¹¹ Nixon, "The President's News Conference," March 14, 1969.

“nothing but pain and suffering” in a 1968 petition.¹¹² They recognized their “obligation” to “play [a] part in the maintenance of international peace and security,” but declared U.S. motivations “questionable.”¹¹³ Over 1,000 Marshallese signed the petition to increase eligibility for compensation for the testing of “dreadful weapons of war,” as only 192 people received compensation out of the 1,400 that lost their land during U.S. missile testing.¹¹⁴ Nixon never mentioned the Marshallese nor the use of Kwajalein Atoll during his announcement of the Safeguard program.

The Nixon administration’s failure to directly address Marshallese dissent sparked protests at Kwajalein Atoll. On July 9, 1969, Ataji Balos, a Micronesian Congressman, submitted a memorandum to the Army Commanding Officer of Kwajalein Atoll stating the Mid-Corridor people would return to their islands “with or without permission” in 60 days.¹¹⁵ The memorandum requested four provisions from the U.S. Army and Trust Territory Government: transportation between Kwajalein and Ebeye, the rehabilitation of 14 islands in the Mid-Corridor region, government subsidized housing and sheltering on the islands, and food and other basic necessities.¹¹⁶ Copies of the memorandum were sent to the United Nations, U.S. Congress, Nixon, and major U.S. newspapers without response.¹¹⁷ After “exhaust[ing] all legal and proper means,” Marshallese protesters sailed to Kwajalein from Ebeye and forced the U.S. Army to cancel two missile tests resulting in an estimated loss of \$2 million.¹¹⁸ The High Commissioner, Edward Johnston, chief U.S. representative, convinced the protesters to leave Kwajalein while

¹¹² U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 4 August 1969, p. 22140.

¹¹³ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 4 August 1969, p. 22139.

¹¹⁴ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 4 August 1969, p. 22140.

¹¹⁵ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 4 August 1969, p. 22139.

¹¹⁶ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 4 August 1969, p. 22139.

¹¹⁷ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 4 August 1969, p. 22139.

¹¹⁸ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 4 August 1969, p. 22139.

he worked to resolve their demands.¹¹⁹ Nixon did not publicly address the protesting at Kwajalein and the ABM testing continued in the region.

Further, Marshallese concerns surrounding missile testing were introduced in Congress when a correlation was found between nuclear weapons tests and rising infant and fetal mortality within the United States. On August 4, 1969, Professor Ernest J. Sternglass' article "The Death of All Children," on the genetic risks of nuclear testing was presented before Congress.¹²⁰ The article documented the effect of strontium 90 on human reproductive cells, stating that at least one of three children, who died before their first birthdays, in the 1960s, in the United States may have died due to "peacetime nuclear testing."¹²¹ Sternglass documented that fallout from the "dirty" surface tests in the Marshall Islands, between 1946 to 1948, reached the southern part of the United States through annual rainfall.¹²² In addition, the fetal death rate in California increased two to three years after the hydrogen bomb tests in the Marshall Islands in 1954.¹²³ The Sternglass article discussed U.S. citizens affected by the nuclear testing program in the Marshall Islands, but not the Marshallese. After the article was presented before Congress, the speaker extended concern to the Marshallese whose grievances with the United States' missile testing program at Kwajalein Atoll had "fallen on deaf ears."¹²⁴ The speaker urged Congress to pay "attention" to the "frustrations" of the Marshallese when "contemplating further tests of [...] missile weaponry in these islands."¹²⁵ It was not until 1969, that the calamities of nuclear and missile testing were applied to the Marshallese. The United States eventually paid \$420,000

¹¹⁹ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 4 August 1969, p. 22139.

¹²⁰ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 4 August 1969, p. 22134.

¹²¹ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 4 August 1969, p. 22134.

¹²² U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 4 August 1969, p. 22135.

¹²³ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 4 August 1969, p. 22134.

¹²⁴ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 4 August 1969, p. 22138.

¹²⁵ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 4 August 1969, p. 22138.

annually for the use of Kwajalein Atoll, beginning in 1970.¹²⁶ However, Nixon did not publicly discuss Marshallese concerns during his presidency.

Though Nixon did not directly acknowledge Marshallese protests, his administration negotiated with Soviet leaders to prohibit the spread of nuclear weapons and limit missile tests. Nixon signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons into effect on November 24, 1969, which marked a watershed moment in the control of nuclear weapons—it remains the only binding multilateral commitment to disarmament by Nuclear-Weapon States.¹²⁷ The Treaty prohibited the spread of nuclear weapons to Non-Nuclear States. In addition, the International Atomic Energy Agency conducted inspections to verify States maintained “peaceful nuclear activities.”¹²⁸ Nixon signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty to “transcend the past and work together [with the Soviet Union] to build a lasting peace.”¹²⁹ After the Treaty was ratified, the Nixon administration committed to achieving a “mutually acceptable limitation” of nuclear weapons through the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT) with the Soviet Union.¹³⁰ The SALT negotiations at Helsinki, Finland between the U.S. and the Soviet Union led to the Antiballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, which was ratified in 1972. The ABM Treaty limited each

¹²⁶ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 112.

¹²⁷ Richard Nixon, "Statement on Signing the Instrument of Ratification of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," November 24, 1969, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed March 15, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2339>; "Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)," *United Nations* online, accessed April 1, 2018, <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt/>.

¹²⁸ Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, 729 U.N.T.S. 161, 1968, 21 U.S.T. 483, accessed April 1, 2018, <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt/text>.

¹²⁹ Richard Nixon, "First Annual Report to the Congress on United States Foreign Policy for the 1970's," February 18, 1970, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed March 16, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2835>.

¹³⁰ Richard Nixon, "Message to Ambassador Gerard C. Smith at the Opening of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks in Helsinki," November 17, 1969, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed March 16, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2324>.

nation to two missile defense systems at low levels.¹³¹ Nixon wrote in a letter to Carl B. Albert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, that by “limiting offensive weapons” the United States had “done [its] duty by our clients, the next generation.”¹³² Nixon's non-proliferation negotiations inadvertently aligned with the interests of Marshallese protestors; however, he was fighting for the “next generation” of Americans, not the Marshallese.

Further, the Nixon administration questioned Marshallese reparations claims for damages incurred during the nuclear and missile testing programs. Nixon only publicly mentioned Micronesia once during his presidency and never explicitly addressed the United States’ ongoing military presence in the Marshall Islands. On January 26, 1971, Nixon renewed the 1969 Executive Agreement with Japan, which required each country to contribute \$5 million to Micronesia for damages suffered during World War II.¹³³ He also ordered Congress to establish a commission “to determine the validity of additional claims for property damage arising after the war.”¹³⁴ Nixon described the impact of the United States' nuclear and missile testing programs, which rendered certain atolls uninhabitable and displaced thousands of Marshallese, as “property damage.” Further, he questioned the “validity” of Micronesian reparations claims.

¹³¹ Richard Nixon, "Letter to the Speaker of the House Transmitting the Antiballistic Missile Treaty and the Interim Agreement on Strategic Offensive Arms," June 13, 1972, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed March 16, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3461>; Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 113.

However, the ABM Treaty only applied to ABM tests and both nations continued to develop “increasingly powerful” ICBMs and multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRVs), long-range missiles with multiple nuclear warheads. See, Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 115.

¹³² Nixon, "Letter to the Speaker of the House," June 13, 1972.

¹³³ Richard Nixon, "Special Message to the Congress Resubmitting Legislative Proposals," January 26, 1971, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed March 10, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3143>.

¹³⁴ Nixon, "Special Message to the Congress," January 26, 1971.

Though Nixon reinstated Congress' reparations package to "render overdue justice" to Micronesia, he was skeptical of any damages resulting after WWII.¹³⁵

Lastly, Nixon eulogized the death of Lewis L. Strauss, the chairman of the AEC from 1953 to 1958, without mentioning the Marshall Islands. "His vision and his leadership literally helped us to convert the most lethal of swords into the most promising of plowshares," Nixon said.¹³⁶ He even praised Strauss for supporting the use of "atoms for peaceful purposes."¹³⁷ Not only was Strauss' work perceived as "promising" and "patriotic," but it ushered in "a new technology for America and the world"—the hydrogen bomb.¹³⁸ Nixon's statements on Strauss' work echoed the language used in 1946 to convince the Bikinians that leaving their atoll "would be a contribution to world peace."¹³⁹ From Truman through Nixon, the leaders of America extolled the programs, that obliterated atolls in the Marshall Islands, for promising world peace and advancing science and technology.

Betrayal of Trust: The Ford and Carter Administrations

In the 1970s, leaders from the Marshall Islands resumed calls for political autonomy. The United States wanted to establish a single compact of free association that included all the island groups of Micronesia, including the Marshall Islands and Palau. However, the damages incurred by the Marshallese under the United States' nuclear testing program necessitated specific reparations. In 1973, the Marshall Islands' legislature, the *Nitijela*, began negotiating a separate treaty with the United States. The *Nitijela* voted unanimously for separate negotiations from the

¹³⁵ Nixon, "Special Message to the Congress," January 26, 1971.

¹³⁶ Richard Nixon, "Statement About the Death of Lewis L. Strauss," January 22, 1974, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed February 15, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=4219>.

¹³⁷ Nixon, "Statement About the Death of Lewis L. Strauss," January 22, 1974.

¹³⁸ Nixon, "Statement About the Death of Lewis L. Strauss," January 22, 1974.

¹³⁹ Shurcliff, *Bombs at Bikini*, 93.

rest of the Micronesian subregion in 1976.¹⁴⁰ Though the United States initially advocated for pseudo self-government under the Kennedy Administration, the State Department began negotiations for Marshallese independence that granted political autonomy, while preserving U.S. military interests in the region.

In 1974, Richard Nixon resigned after the Watergate scandal and Gerald Ford was tasked with reinstalling national trust in both the government and his administration. On August 12, 1974, Ford stated, “There will be no illegal tappings (tapings), eavesdropping, buggings, or break-ins by my Administration.”¹⁴¹ However, on December 13, 1976, Bob Woodward of *The Washington Post*, who helped break the Watergate scandal, wrote an article, that in 1973, Henry Kissinger had spearheaded the Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA) “clandestine intelligence gathering and spying operations” in the Pacific Trust Territory of Micronesia.¹⁴² The “clandestine” activity included “recruiting and paying Micronesian residents for information” regarding independence negotiations and bugging a negotiation room for three months in 1975.¹⁴³ According to Woodward, Ford was alerted in 1976 that the State Department questioned the legality of the surveillance in Micronesia, but “did not order the surveillance stopped.”¹⁴⁴ Though Ford promised no illegal wiretappings would happen under his presidency, he did not end the CIA’s surveillance activities in Micronesia when he was first alerted of their occurrence.

Following the peak public distrust in the government, President Jimmy Carter campaigned on a platform of moral decency. “I’ll never tell you a lie. I’ll never knowingly make

¹⁴⁰ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 130.

¹⁴¹ Gerald R. Ford, “Address to a Joint Session of the Congress,” August 12, 1974, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed February 15, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=4694>.

¹⁴² Bob Woodward, “Kissinger Tied to CIA Surveillance,” *Washington Post*, 4 May 1977, pg. A1.

¹⁴³ Woodward, “Kissinger Tied to CIA Surveillance,” pg. A1.

¹⁴⁴ Woodward, “Kissinger Tied to CIA Surveillance,” pg. A1.

a misstatement of fact. I'll never betray your trust," Carter stated several times throughout his campaign in 1976.¹⁴⁵ However, Carter worked to bury the Micronesian wiretapping scandal from the American people, as it carried into his presidency. First, Carter blocked the release of the Senate Intelligence report "because of a sentence revealing the CIA had a spy on the Micronesian negotiating committee."¹⁴⁶ Further, on June 28, 1978, under the provisions of Section 1-201 of Executive Order 12065, President Carter designated several officials within the Executive Office to classify information regarding Micronesian status negotiations as "Top Secret."¹⁴⁷ Carter never publicly discussed the wiretappings in Micronesia though he supported foreign intelligence surveillance reform. In 1977, he called for "a freedom from the abuse of power by those who are charged with major responsibilities," when he remarked on the proposed Foreign Intelligence Surveillance legislation in Congress.¹⁴⁸ Carter did not discuss the "abuse of power" in the Trust Territories, and restricted his concern to the "rights of our [American] citizens."¹⁴⁹ Both Ford and Carter refused to condemn American spying on Micronesian independence negotiations, even though Micronesians were violated under U.S. administrative control.

¹⁴⁵ "The Nation. Jimmy Carter. Not Just Peanuts," *Time* online, last modified March 8, 1976, accessed April 5, 2018, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,879613,00.html>.

¹⁴⁶ Woodward, "Kissinger Tied to CIA Surveillance," pg. A1.

¹⁴⁷ Jimmy Carter, "National Security Information Order Designating Certain Officials To Classify Information "Top Secret"," June 28, 1978, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed February 15, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=31010>.

¹⁴⁸ Jimmy Carter, "Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Remarks of the President, Attorney General Bell, and Several Members of Congress on Proposed Legislation," May 18, 1977, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed February 15, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=7526>.

¹⁴⁹ Carter, "Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Remarks," May 18, 1977.

Signing the Compact of Free Association: The Reagan Administration

The final negotiations regarding the Compact of Free Association occurred under the Reagan administration. In 1981, Ronald Reagan established the Senior Interagency Group for Micronesia (SIGM) to conduct a six-month policy review of granting some degree of political autonomy to the Marshall Islands.¹⁵⁰ The group outlined the need to maintain U.S. militaristic control over the territory and preserve U.S. interests, while moving away from the existing colonial relationship. After the review, Reagan announced the resumption of negotiations on September 24, 1981. The announcement called for a negotiation over a Compact of Free Association which was “distinguishable both from independence and from an extension of United States sovereignty.”¹⁵¹ The Compact would retain the “plenary defense rights and responsibilities” of U.S. military control in exchange for for “internal self-government” of the Marshall Islands.¹⁵² Reagan made no mention of the legacy of U.S. atomic testing in the region. On July 23, 1982, Aton A. deBraun, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Marshall Islands, discussed the United States rejection of full independence for the Marshall Islands at a press conference in Honolulu, Hawaii. The United States advocated for “limited autonomy under ‘free association’” or “continuation of the United Nations Trusteeship” as the only options appearing on the Marshallese plebiscite.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 136.

¹⁵¹ Ronald Reagan, “Announcement of the Resumption of the Micronesian Status Negotiations,” September 24, 1981, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed February 16, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=44295>.

¹⁵² Reagan, “Announcement of the Resumption of the Micronesian Status Negotiations,” September 24, 1981.

¹⁵³ Robert Trumbull, “U.S. and Marshall Islands Split on a Plebiscite,” *New York Times* online, last modified July 25, 1982, accessed Nov. 19, 2017.

The Compact of Free Association provided several reparations provisions that benefitted the Marshall Islands in exchange for U.S. military control. The citizens of the Marshall Islands were allowed to freely inhabit and work in the United States indefinitely, without documentation.¹⁵⁴ Further, economic benefits provided to the Marshall Islands, granted the U.S. continued use of the Kwajalein Missile Range, and compensated for damages of the nuclear testing program. The United States paid the Marshall Islands \$9 million per year, plus \$6 million for the development of Ebeye.¹⁵⁵ Further, the Republic of the Marshall Islands received \$40 million in annual funding and a \$150 million compensation trust fund for nuclear testing damages. Over the course of fifteen years, the people of Bikini Atoll were granted \$75 million, the Enewetakese \$48.74 million, the Rongelapese \$37.5 million, and the Utirikese \$22.5 million of the allocated trust fund for nuclear damage reparations.¹⁵⁶ The economic benefits packages and ability to move to the United States were the main draw for the Marshallese to approve of the Compact.

However, political officials, leaders, and protesters in the Marshall Islands did not share Reagan's enthusiasm over continued U.S. military control. Reagan insisted the American armed forces were essential to "preserving regional security," while the Marshallese, themselves, did not perceive U.S. presence as the preservation of "security."¹⁵⁷ DeBraun argued that many Marshallese leaders and officials did not want a Compact of Free Association that granted

¹⁵⁴ Franco Ciammachilli et al., "Medicaid Parity for Pacific Migrant Populations in the United States," *Asian American Policy Review*, 24 (2013/2014), 43.

¹⁵⁵ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 142.

¹⁵⁶ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 142.

¹⁵⁷ Ronald Reagan, "Message to the Congress Transmitting Proposed Legislation To Approve the Compact of Free Association Between the United States and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands," March 30, 1984, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed February 16, 2018. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=39707>.

continued military rights over the Kwajalein Missile Range to the United States. According to *The New York Times*, more than 800 landowners in Kwajalein occupied parts of the missile range beginning in June 19, 1982.¹⁵⁸ On June 30, 1982, Walter Pincus of *The Washington Post*, published the article, “Missile Tests to Continue Despite Protest on Atoll,” which exposed that the Air Force had fired a Minute Man III missile test while Marshallese protestors occupied Kwajalein.¹⁵⁹ The three nuclear warheads fell into the Pacific Ocean, north of the atoll, away from the protestors. A top Defense Department official stated the protest by Kwajalein landowners was “illegal” and “[would] not shut down the operation” and continuation of the U.S. missile tests.¹⁶⁰ The Marshallese protested for several reasons, including demands for additional rental funds for the development of Ebeye, protest of the Compact of Free Association granting U.S. military control, and the abolition of U.S. nuclear missile testing.¹⁶¹ Reagan did not acknowledge the protestors at Kwajalein Atoll during the occupation. He hosted a press conference on June 30, 1982, and did not discuss the status of Micronesia when asked about his foreign policy initiatives.¹⁶² Ultimately, Regan failed to acknowledge Marshallese disavowal of American military presence in the region.

Reagan did not publicly acknowledge Marshallese dissent before the Marshallese voted on the Compact of Free Association. In September 1983, the Marshallese voted on whether to

¹⁵⁸ Reagan, "Message to the Congress," March 30, 1984.

¹⁵⁹ Walter Pincus, “Missile Tests to Continue Despite Protest on Atoll,” *Washington Post* online, last modified June 30, 1982, accessed March 5, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1982/06/30/missile-tests-to-continue-despite-protest-on-atoll/e3ea9982-2d1e-4302-a6a4-75861200cef2/?utm_term=.eb867c336c95.

¹⁶⁰ Pincus, “Missile Tests to Continue Despite Protest on Atoll.”

¹⁶¹ Pincus, “Missile Tests to Continue Despite Protest on Atoll.”

¹⁶² Ronald Reagan, "The President's News Conference," June 30, 1982, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed March 5, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42693>.

approve the referendum. Out of 15,000 eligible to vote, 10,000 Marshallese went to the polls.¹⁶³ Of these; only 58% of the population endorsed the Compact.¹⁶⁴ The atolls directly affected by the U.S. nuclear and missile tests strongly opposed the Compact: 79 percent on Bikini/Kili; 86 percent on Rongelap; and 70 percent on Kwajalein.¹⁶⁵ However, on March 30, 1984, Reagan cited the “high voter participation” as indication that the Marshallese approved of the Compact provisions “by impressive majorities.”¹⁶⁶ Marshallese voters in the test regions did not share Reagan’s judgement.

Further, the Reagan administration was forced to confront the United States’ relationship with the Marshall Islands during the ratification of the Compact of Free Association. Between 1984 and 1986, Reagan rationalized the atomic testing program as a sacrifice for world peace and emphasized “the good will and affection between our peoples.”¹⁶⁷ On May 4, 1984, Reagan answered written questions regarding United States foreign policy in the Pacific. In response to a statement that South Pacific nations “complained that not enough attention is paid to them in Washington,” Reagan stated, “I can assure you that the U.S. Government is very conscious of the island states and sensitive to their needs and aspirations.”¹⁶⁸ Reagan addressed the “needs” and “aspirations” including economic and social progress in education, healthcare, and the

¹⁶³ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 144.

¹⁶⁴ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 144.

¹⁶⁵ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 144.

¹⁶⁶ Ronald Reagan, "Message to the Congress," March 30, 1984.

¹⁶⁷ Ronald Reagan, “Statement on United States Relations With the Northern Mariana Islands, Micronesia, and the Marshall Islands,” November 3, 1986, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed February 28, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=36691>.

¹⁶⁸ Ronald Reagan, “Written Responses to Questions Submitted by Pacific Magazine on United States Policy in the Pacific Island Region,” May 4, 1984, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed February 28, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=39862>.

development of infrastructure in the Marshall Islands, Palau, and Micronesia. He argued that after the United States' Compact-related funds run out "the Micronesians [states] will have the tools and resources to make significant progress towards economic self-sufficiency."¹⁶⁹ Reagan assured the Marshall Islands would benefit from Compact-related development and financial aid after its expiration, despite claims that they felt neglected prior to the Compact going into effect. When Reagan was explicitly asked about the United States position on atomic testing, he responded, "The United States is sensitive to the nuclear concerns of the island people. We share the desire to protect the ocean from pollution."¹⁷⁰ Reagan did not mention the impact on the health of the Marshallese affected by radiation poisoning. As the political agreement garnered attention for the development of the Micronesian states and the legacy of the atomic testing program, Reagan steadfastly assured the partnership would be mutually beneficial and cater to the needs of the Micronesian people.

The Advent of Diplomacy: The Bush Administration

During the early years of the Compact of Free Association, under the George H. W. Bush administration, the diplomatic relations between the United States and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) improved. In 1989, Bush signed law H.R. 2214 which approved diplomatic relations agreements and established an embassy in Majuro, the capital of the RMI, with resident American ambassadors. "This change will portray accurately the nature of our relationship with these countries," Bush declared.¹⁷¹ The establishment of permanent embassies in the RMI acknowledged the political autonomy established under the Compact. However, Bush

¹⁶⁹ Reagan, "Written Responses to Questions Submitted by Pacific Magazine," May 4, 1984.

¹⁷⁰ Reagan, "Written Responses to Questions Submitted by Pacific Magazine," May 4, 1984.

¹⁷¹ George Bush, "Statement on Signing a Bill Approving Diplomatic Relations Agreements With the Marshall Islands and Micronesia," July 26, 1989, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed March 1, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17357>.

did not mention the United States' atomic testing program when he described America's relationship with the Marshall Islands. He stated American forces "liberated" the Marshall Islands from the "bloodiest fighting of the Pacific campaign," and thus, administered the islands as part of a United Nations trusteeship until late 1986.¹⁷² Bush excluded the damages of the atomic testing program from the history, painting the United States as the Marshall Islands' "liberator." Diplomatic relations between the two nations improved after the Compact; however, the history of the atomic testing program was still excluded from America's collective memory.

Further, under the Compact of Free Association the United States' president had the ability to proclaim duty-free treatment for most products of the Freely Associated States (FAS), including the RMI and Federated States of Micronesia.¹⁷³ Reduced rates of duty applicable to imports of certain tropical products on a temporary basis unburdened and opened United States foreign trade with Pacific nations to stimulate economic development. However, in 1989, Bush "terminated" the preferential tariff treatment allocated under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP).¹⁷⁴ The GSP status was important because it exempted the FAS from the most-favored-nation principle under the World Trade Organization, which insured the United States did not discriminate between trading partners, such as leveraging duty-free trade with the FAS.¹⁷⁵ Thus, Bush's "termination" of GSP eliminated an exemption established by the Compact which was designed to stimulate economic development. The RMI was forced to compete

¹⁷² Bush, "Statement on Signing a Bill Approving Diplomatic Relations Agreements," July 26, 1989.

¹⁷³ George Bush, "Proclamation 6030—To Provide for the Tariff Treatment of Goods From the Freely Associated States, To Implement Tariff Reductions on Certain Tropical Products, and for Other Purposes," September 28, 1989, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed March 2, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=1749>.

¹⁷⁴ Bush, "Proclamation 6030," September 28, 1989.

¹⁷⁵ "Principles of the Trading System," *World Trade Organization* online, accessed March 5, 2018, https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/whatis_e/tif_e/fact2_e.htm.

equally with all U.S. trading partners, which disadvantaged trade development in the early stages of their nationhood.

Though Bush restricted economic development in the RMI, he continued to publicly support policies to strengthen diplomacy between the U.S. and RMI. In 1990, Bush endorsed the South Pacific Environmental Protection Convention, which sought to protect marine environments from various pollutants.¹⁷⁶ Bush publicly addressed the importance of global disarmament of chemical weapons, by stating, the United States planned to destroy all chemical weapons at Johnston Atoll, between Hawaii and the RMI, and he emphasized U.S. “interest in ridding the world of these terrible weapons.”¹⁷⁷ Though President Bush did not mention the environmental legacy of nuclear weapons in the Marshall Islands, he initiated the destruction of chemical weapons and declared Johnston Atoll would no longer be used as a hazardous waste disposal site. Lastly, Bush issued Proclamation 6288 to observe May 1991 and May 1992 as “Asian/ Pacific American Heritage Month.”¹⁷⁸ He briefly mentioned recognizing those who “trace their roots” to the Marshall Islands in the Proclamation.¹⁷⁹ Throughout his presidency, Bush did not explicitly address the legacy of atomic testing and maintained a contradictory stance on the RMI. Bush terminated trade exemptions and negatively impacted economic development in the RMI, yet publicly supported diplomatic relations between the two nations.

¹⁷⁶ George Bush, "Message to the Congress Transmitting the South Pacific Environmental Protection Convention and Protocols," September 25, 1990, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed March 5, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=18861>.

¹⁷⁷ George Bush, "Remarks at the Conclusion of the Pacific Island Nations-United States Summit in Honolulu, Hawaii," October 27, 1990, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed March 5, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=18968>.

¹⁷⁸ George Bush, "Proclamation 6288—Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month, 1991 and 1992," May 6, 1991, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed March 5, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=47302>.

¹⁷⁹ Bush, "Proclamation 6288," May 6, 1991.

Not Qualified Aliens: The Clinton Administration

The Compact of Free Association also permitted Marshallese citizens to migrate to the United States to gain employment in the labor economy. Article IV, section 141 of the Compact of Free Association outlined the migration policies between the Marshall Islands and the United States. The Compact allowed for Marshallese citizens to “lawfully engage in occupations, and establish residence as a nonimmigrant in the United States and its territories and possessions.”¹⁸⁰ In 1986, COFA migrants established communities in Guam and the CNMI, due to their proximity to the RMI. By 1990, COFA migrants moved to Hawaii to access higher quality health care. COFA migrants did not migrate to the U.S. mainland until 1999.¹⁸¹ The U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) conducted between 2005-2009, estimated around 56,345 COFA migrants were living in the United States.¹⁸² The data is limited on the impact of Marshallese migrants on local economies; however, in 2011, COFA Migrants made up “between 14 and 37.9 percent of the total workforce at some plants of major poultry producers, such as Tyson, Cargill, and George’s” in Springdale, Arkansas.¹⁸³ Tyson is one of the major employers of COFA migrants and has recruited directly from the Marshall Islands, as Marshallese officials have reported visits from Tyson representatives.¹⁸⁴ Further, COFA migrants living in the United States and island territories have reported markedly higher average incomes than in the Marshall Islands, as the average annual household income in the CNMI is \$25,450; Guam, \$24,800; Hawaii, \$42,150; while, the U.S. mainland, \$62,800.¹⁸⁵ Though COFA migrants enjoyed

¹⁸⁰U.S. Congress, *Compact of Free Association Act of 1985*, 14 January 1986, p. 35.

¹⁸¹ Ciammachilli et al., “Medicaid Parity for Pacific Migrant Populations,” 44.

¹⁸² U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Compacts of Free Association: Improvements Needed to Access and Address Growing Migration*, November 2011, pg. 63.

¹⁸³ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Compacts of Free Association*, November 2011, p. 62.

¹⁸⁴ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Compacts of Free Association*, November 2011, p. 62.

¹⁸⁵ Ciammachilli et al., “Medicaid Parity for Pacific Migrant Populations,” 44.

economic benefits, their standard of living in the United States was compromised by their immigrant status in the 1990s.

In 1996, President Bill Clinton passed welfare reform which excluded specific immigrant groups living in the United States. On January 9, 1996, Clinton did not approve H.R. 4, the "Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1995," because he felt "welfare reform [was] about moving people from welfare to work, not playing budget politics."¹⁸⁶ Clinton urged Congress to find a bipartisan solution that would not prevent groups from accessing welfare in sake of the budget. However, when he signed the final version of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in 1996, legal immigrants were barred from accessing welfare programs under certain restrictions. Clinton's PRWORA denied legal immigrants from accessing Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, and Title XX social services for five years upon entering the United States.¹⁸⁷ After the five-year bar, legal immigrant access to TANF, Medicaid and Title XX became a state decision.¹⁸⁸ Legal immigrants were prohibited from accessing benefits programs to decrease the federal welfare budget. The Congressional Budget Office reported "the alien provisions reduce[d] direct federal outlays over 7 years by \$23.7 billion."¹⁸⁹ Legal immigrants were disproportionately disadvantaged by federal welfare cuts under the PRWORA, which included COFA migrants. Clinton proclaimed he was against cutting welfare for "budget politics" during the negotiations process.¹⁹⁰ Yet, his actions proved otherwise.

¹⁸⁶William J. Clinton, "Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval Legislation on the Welfare System," January 9, 1996, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed November 18, 2017, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=52614>.

¹⁸⁷ Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report for Congress, *New Welfare Law: The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996*, 21 November 1996, p. 3.

¹⁸⁸ CRS Report for Congress, *New Welfare Law*, p. 3.

¹⁸⁹ CRS Report for Congress, *New Welfare Law*, p. 3.

¹⁹⁰Clinton, "Message to the House of Representatives," January 9, 1996.

Between 1986 and 1996, COFA migrants accessed United States' health care and federal benefits as legal immigrants. However, Clinton's exclusion of the Marshallese in the PRWORA was nearly explicit. The PRWORA created two categories of eligibility for non-citizens residing in the United States. The two categories included "qualified aliens" who gained access to welfare through residing in the United States for a certain period of time or serving active duty, and "not qualified aliens." The list of qualified immigrants entailed: permanent residents (i.e. green card holders), refugees, persons granted parole by the Department of Homeland Security for a period of at least one-year, Cuban and Haitian entrants, abused immigrants and their children/family members, and victims of trafficking.¹⁹¹ The list did not include COFA migrants and Clinton deemed them "not qualified" for Medicaid and other federal benefits programs.

The Clinton administration was fully aware of the consequences of PRWORA for legal immigrants and publicly disapproved of the provision. On August 22, 1996, Clinton expressed he was "deeply disappointed" that the PRWORA denied federal and state assistance to legal immigrant families.¹⁹² Clinton recognized barring legal immigrants from health care programs would burden states, localities, hospitals, and emergency clinics that serve immigrant populations; however, he did not offer a solution beyond "direct[ing] the Immigration and Naturalization Service to accelerate its unprecedented progress in removing all bureaucratic obstacles that stand in the way of citizenship."¹⁹³ Clinton did not offer a short-term solution to immigrant health care access and left the responsibility of expanding benefits to state legislatures. Some states continued funding Medicaid coverage to immigrant groups and non-

¹⁹¹ Ciammachilli et al., "Medicaid Parity for Pacific Migrant Populations," 44-45.

¹⁹² William J. Clinton, "Statement on Signing the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996," August 22, 1996, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed March 5, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=53219>.

¹⁹³ Clinton, "Statement on Signing the PRWORA," August 22, 1996.

citizen residents. Several of the states that had over 1,000 Marshallese COFA migrants provided some sort of access to Medicaid, though no state has granted full access.¹⁹⁴ Arizona, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Utah covered medical emergency services for COFA migrants; Arkansas provided access to prenatal care regardless of immigrant status; Florida provided coverage to children regardless of immigration status in a few counties, and others allowed coverage at full cost under Health Kids and MediKids; California provided prenatal care, long-term care, and breast and cervical cancer treatment regardless of status; Oregon covered children and pre-natal care; and lastly, Hawaii provided the widest access to Medicaid, which included children, pregnant women who were “qualified” immigrants, those Permanently Residing Under Color of Law (PRUCOLs), and COFA migrants.¹⁹⁵ Medicaid coverage expansion differed by state, but COFA migrants rarely gained affordable access to full routine medical care after 1996.

Lastly, COFA migrants suffered from long-term health consequences resulting from the nuclear testing program conducted in 1946 to 1958 while residing in the United States, but did not have widespread access to health care programs. COFA migrants experienced rates of diabetes at over 400% the national average in the United States. Further, Marshallese mothers living in the United States experienced lower birth weight rates than the average.¹⁹⁶ COFA migrants only had access to health care through employer benefits; however, it was often insufficient to support dependents. While an estimated 58.4 percent of single-race identified Native Hawaiians or Pacific Islanders from ages 27 to 64 were insured privately through their work, the contribution for dependent coverage was usually too high, and workers have been

¹⁹⁴ Ciammachilli et al., "Medicaid Parity for Pacific Migrant Populations," 45.

¹⁹⁵ Ciammachilli et al., "Medicaid Parity for Pacific Migrant Populations," 48.

¹⁹⁶ Pearl A. McElfish et al., "Interpretive policy analysis: Marshallese COFA migrants and the Affordable Care Act," *International Journal for Equity in Health* 15, 91 (2016): 2.

forced to opt out of family coverage.¹⁹⁷ For COFA migrants after 1996, employment benefits became one of the only options for accessing routine health care and it was not widely affordable.

The Marshallese suffered from American policies even after the Compact of Free Association granted them political autonomy. Clinton's explicit exclusion of the COFA migrants from accessing federal benefits programs disadvantaged Marshallese who migrated to the United States to improve their economic and social welfare. The decision to exclude COFA migrants from the "qualified alien" list due to budget cuts indicated a lack of political compassion for the Marshallese who had already suffered for several decades under U.S. administrative control.

¹⁹⁷ Ciammachilli et al., "Medicaid Parity for Pacific Migrant Populations," 45-46.

Rendered Helpless and In Great Despair: Conclusion

“Bikinian Anthem”

No longer can I stay; its true.
 No longer can I live in peace and harmony.
 No longer can I rest on my sleeping mat and pillow
 Because of my island and the life I once knew there.

The thought is overwhelming
 Rendering me helpless and in great despair.

My spirit leaves, drifting round and far away
 Where it becomes caught in a current of immense power—
 And only then do I find tranquility

*I jab ber emol, aet,
 i jab ber animon
 ion kineo im bitu
 kin ailon eo ao im melan ko ie*

*Eber im lok jiktok ikerele
 kot iban bok harte jonan an elap pipa*

*Ao emotlok round I'm lo ijen ion
 ijen bin joe a eankin
 ijen liken ao emotlok im ber im mad ief*

Written in 1946 by Lore Kessibuki (1914-1994).¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ Niedenthal, *For the Good of Mankind*, 153.

Between 1946 and 1996, the Marshallese suffered a series of injustices conducted by Republican and Democratic presidents alike. Truman and Eisenhower dropped 67 bombs for “the good of mankind and to end all wars.”¹⁹⁹ Kennedy pushed for pseudo self-government that prioritized U.S. military interests in the Pacific over Marshallese self-determination. Johnson promised to help the Marshallese overcome “poverty, ignorance, and disease” without acknowledging the detriment caused by U.S. nuclear and missile tests.²⁰⁰ Nixon praised the chairman of the AEC for his “patriotic” contribution to science and “world peace.”²⁰¹ Ford wiretapped the Compact of Free Association negotiations while Micronesia was under U.S. administrative control. Carter classified the Micronesian Independence Negotiations as “Top Secret.”²⁰² Reagan mischaracterized Marshallese support for the Compact. And Clinton barred COFA migrants from accessing affordable health care and federal benefits programs within the United States. To try and rank injustice or compare suffering is a dangerous and unnecessary task. The important fact is that the continuous legacy of abuse occurred for over 50 years under the guidance of several presidents with supposedly differing political beliefs.

While America was founded on the principle of “liberty and justice for all,” the practical implementation of democracy lends itself to utilitarianism. Alexis de Tocqueville stated in 1835 that “democracy does not consist [...] in favoring the prosperity of all, but simply in contributing to the well-being of the greatest possible number.”²⁰³ To protect the world from nuclear

¹⁹⁹ Said by Commodore Ben H. Wyatt, the military governor of the Marshalls, in February 1946, to convince them to leave Bikini for the U.S. nuclear testing program. See, Niedenthal, *For the Good of Mankind*, 2.

²⁰⁰ Johnson, “Statement by the President Following a Meeting With the High Commissioner of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands,” March 21, 1967.

²⁰¹ Nixon, “Statement About the Death of Lewis L. Strauss,” January 22, 1974.

²⁰² Carter, “National Security Information Order,” June 28, 1978.

²⁰³ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America: Volume I* (1835; Urbana, Illinois: Project Gutenberg, 1996), retrieved March 20, 2018 from <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/815/815-h/815-h.htm>.

destruction, American political leaders risked the lives of a few to contribute to the well-being of the “greatest possible number” of Americans. The Marshall Islands was chosen for the nuclear testing program because the nation was situated in a remote location in the Pacific Ocean and the “local population was small and co-operative.”²⁰⁴ Truman and Eisenhower justified the initial calamities of the nuclear testing program under a utilitarian calculation that privileged scientific advancement and American nuclear superiority. Legal scholar John Hart Ely argued in “Constitutional Interpretivism: Its Allure and Impossibility,” United States foreign policy “begins with the questions how many are helped, how many are hurt, and by how much.”²⁰⁵ However, injustice results from the failure of political leaders to accurately answer Ely’s questions— the system fails when “how many are hurt” is greater than “how many are helped.” The injustices of the U.S. nuclear testing program in the Marshall Islands, which supposedly “far exceeded the size expected by scientists,” encapsulated the weakness of democratic utilitarianism.²⁰⁶ American political leaders failed to accurately predict how much damage the Marshallese would suffer— if suffering can be rationalized at all.

The connection between democracy and utilitarianism is vital to understanding how American political leaders initially justified testing atomic bombs in the Marshall Islands, which exposed the Rongelap, Rongerik, Utirik, and Ailinginae communities to radioactive fallout, and contaminated the environment. However, the theory of utilitarianism does not explain why the

²⁰⁴Said by Vice Admiral William Blandy, commander of Joint Task Force One, in 1946. See, Weisgall, *Operation Crossroads*, 31.

²⁰⁵ John Hart Ely, “Constitutional Interpretivism: Its Allure and Impossibility,” *Indiana Law Journal* 53, 3 (1978): 407.

²⁰⁶ “The Legacy of U.S. Nuclear Testing and Radiation Exposure in the Marshall Islands,” *U.S. Embassy in the Republic of the Marshall Islands* online, last modified September 14, 2017, accessed April 1, 2018, <https://mh.usembassy.gov/the-legacy-of-u-s-nuclear-testing-and-radiation-exposure-in-the-marshall-islands/>.

United States did not take public ownership over the nuclear calamities and continued to make matters worse. For nearly 30 years, the United States failed to address Marshallese protest and dissent of continued U.S. military presence at Kwajalein Atoll. The United States' prolonged reluctance to grant political autonomy and just reparations to the Marshallese reflected the burgeoning disconnect between America's values and foreign policy decisions.

During the Cold War, American politicians feared the spread of communism violated the principle of self-determination—a core value of United States foreign policy after World War I. “Peoples may now be dominated and governed only by their own consent. ‘Self-determination’ is not a mere phrase. It is an imperative principle of action,” President Woodrow Wilson stated in 1918.²⁰⁷ However, when the Marshallese demanded independence in the 1960s, American leaders failed to heed Wilson's commitment to self-determination. The threat of Soviet nuclear superiority “forced” Kennedy and Johnson to expand U.S. military control over the Marshallese.²⁰⁸ Further, the United States outright rejected decolonization. Throughout the 1960s, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon failed to address Marshallese calls for independence—the Marshallese plight “[fell] on deaf ears.”²⁰⁹ The United States did not engage in formal negotiations for the Compact of Free Association until Ford's presidency.²¹⁰ The failure of U.S. presidents to legitimize Marshallese pleas for independence reflected the hypocrisy between our theoretical belief in self-determination and our actions. Historian Brad Simpson, argued in “The United States and the Curious History of Self-Determination,” U.S. presidential actions, during

²⁰⁷ Woodrow Wilson, "Address to Congress on International Order," February 11, 1918, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed April 1, 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=110448>.

²⁰⁸ Kennedy, "Radio and Television Address," March 2, 1962; Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 111.

²⁰⁹ U.S. Congress, *Congressional Record*, 4 August 1969, p. 22138.

²¹⁰ Smith-Norris, *Domination and Resistance*, 111.

the Cold War, “mock[ed] the role they claimed for self-determination as a foundation U.S. foreign policy.”²¹¹ Self-determination represented both “principle and peril.”²¹² Because the United States profited from the colonial trusteeship relationship with the Marshall Islands, the presidents denied the Marshallese their right to self-determination and failed to grant just reparations for several decades.

The American legacy of nuclear calamity persisted for 50 years. For 50 years, the United States profited from their transactional relationship with the Marshall Islands. The Marshallese sacrifices contributed to the development of science and nuclear weapons technology throughout the Cold War. But the injustices endured beyond the nuclear and missile testing programs because the United States continued to exploit their colonial power over the Marshallese. Even after the Compact of Free Association was signed in 1986, the Marshallese suffered at the hands of American presidents. Clinton’s Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 explicitly excluded COFA migrants from accessing affordable health care and federal benefits programs, within the United States, on the basis of budget cuts.²¹³ Today, COFA migrants “are not citizens or nationals of the United States,” and do not have the right to vote.²¹⁴ They do not have the power to influence reelections nor the political careers of the American leaders who have taken away their land, health, and rights.

Lastly, the Marshallese undeniably felt betrayed by the United States during and after the nuclear testing program and questioned the rhetoric used by American presidents to justify their

²¹¹ Brad Simpson, “The United States and the Curious History of Self-Determination,” *Diplomatic History* 36, 4 (2012): 676.

²¹² Simpson, “The United States and the Curious History of Self-Determination,” 675.

²¹³ CRS Report for Congress, *New Welfare Law*, p. 3.

²¹⁴ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Status of Citizens of the Freely Associated States of the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands*, 3 November 2015, p. 1, <http://www.fsimgov.org/status.pdf>.

actions. In 1946, Lore Kessibuki, a Marshallese leader from Bikini Atoll, wrote the “Bikini Anthem” to articulate the “helplessness” and “despair” felt by the Marshallese who lived through the atomic testing program.²¹⁵ Kessibuki wrote, “No longer can I stay; its true./ No longer can I live in peace and harmony.”²¹⁶ The word “peace” remains important because it was the same word used by several United States political officials—including Truman, Lewis L. Strauss, Eisenhower, Nixon, and Reagan—to justify testing atomic bombs in the Marshall Islands. The United States atomic testing program simultaneously “[contributed] to world peace,” and destroyed the ability for Marshallese communities to “live in peace and harmony.”²¹⁷ The rhetoric and justifications spun by U.S. presidents contrasted the reality of the people who made the sacrifice and relegated them to a position that lacked political compassion and impact.

The history of the Marshall Islands relationship with the United States between 1946 and 1996 was a bipartisan history of abuse. The Marshallese were bombed, displaced, irradiated, wiretapped, and denied access to affordable health care under both Republican and Democratic presidencies. Whether it be measured by distance or size, the suffering of the Marshallese did not generate political compassion from any American presidents. The abuse suffered by the Marshallese was of atomic proportion, but the impact on the American political system was miniscule.

²¹⁵ Niedenthal, *For the Good of Mankind*, 152.

²¹⁶ Niedenthal, *For the Good of Mankind*, 152.

²¹⁷ Shurcliff, *Bombs at Bikini*, 93; Niedenthal, *For the Good of Mankind*, 153.

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