

The Insular Empire

AMERICA IN THE MARIANA ISLANDS

Beauty queens and soldiers walk proudly in the annual CNMI Liberation Day parade.



What is it like to be a colonial subject of the Greatest Democracy on earth?

The Insular Empire is a one-hour PBS documentary about the Mariana Islands and their troubled relationship with the United States. Six thousand miles west of California, the Marianas are American territory – but after generations of loyalty, the people of these islands remain second-class US citizens. Following four indigenous islanders, *The Insular Empire* takes a nuanced look at the legacy of colonization and the tragic ironies of America’s “insular empire” in the Pacific.

The Mariana Islands include the U.S. Territory of Guam and the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. For generations, the Marianas’ indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian people have been fighting, and dying, under the stars and stripes. Yet these patriotic Americans have no

voting representation in the legislature of their nation – and no vote for their commander-in-chief.

The Mariana Islands are a part of America that calls into question the fundamental tenets of America’s national identity. They have played a vital role in shaping American foreign policy for over a century, but most Americans know nothing about them, or about the fellow Americans who call the Marianas home. *The Insular Empire* will change this.

From the beaches of Guam to the White House, from the CIA to the Peace Corps, from beauty pageants to the United Nations – *The Insular Empire* is ultimately a story of loyalty and betrayal, about a patriotic island people struggling to find their place within the American political family.

Four people Four viewpoints

HOPE CRISTOBAL, SR.

Former Guam Senator, Miss Guam 1967, and creator of Guam's Commission on Decolonization. For the past thirty years Hope has been struggling to make her people's voices heard at the United Nations. Today she wonders who will follow in her footsteps.

CARLOS TAITANO

US Army veteran of WWII, former Guam legislator, and chief architect of Guam's Organic Act. After a lifetime fighting for his people's rights, Carlos fears he will die before achieving his ultimate goal: American statehood.

LINO OLOPAI

Retired police officer and farmer, and a former employee of both the CIA and the US Peace Corps. Lino now teaches celestial navigation, and remains deeply conflicted about what America has to offer his islands.

"The ultimate goal is statehood."

Carlos Taitano

"To be a colony is to really work on your psyche... to make you feel less."

Hope Cristobal

"Being an American citizen means being part of the greatest nation in the world."

Pete A. Tenorio

"I still feel today, that we would be better off as an independent nation."

Lino Olopai

PETE A. TENORIO

CNMI Resident Representative to the US, and one of the key negotiators of the Northern Marianas' Covenant with the US. Today, after signing away his people's sovereignty, Pete finds himself begging Washington for the basics, and struggling to maintain his faith in the American dream.

From upper left, clockwise:
Pete A. Tenorio, Lino Olopai, Hope Cristobal, Sr., Carlos Taitano



About the Film The Marianas Buildup

The Insular Empire: America in the Mariana Islands is the debut feature of filmmaker Vanessa Warheit. Eight years in the making, the film's release could not be more timely: the United States is currently preparing a massive military buildup for the Mariana Islands, testing the limits of the islanders' long-standing patriotism and loyalty to the US.

The planned military buildup threatens to overwhelm the islands' indigenous culture, and destroy much of its natural environment. The US EPA has deemed the buildup's Draft Environmental Impact Statement "environmentally unsatisfactory." The local people of Guam – many of whom have family members serving in the US military – have spoken out in unprecedented numbers against the buildup. Yet many people in the Northern Marianas are eager to bring a US military base to their islands. *The Insular Empire* will help shed light on the differences between these islands – islands which share the same culture and language, but have been divided by their colonial history.



The Insular Empire is a personal story about believing in the American dream, even while being denied the rights and privileges that most Americans take for granted. Part political tragedy, part

"We have to hang on to every little glimmer of hope that we can. It's the only thing that we have. The US has not given us anything, other than the military."

– Hope Cristobal, Sr.

personal history, *The Insular Empire* explores America's role in the Marianas – and how the islanders have resisted, accommodated, assimilated, and survived.

"*The Insular Empire* proves a valuable addition to any classroom across the humanities and social sciences disciplines and, more important, has the potential to find a home in the community at large outside of academia due to its accessibility."

James Perez Viernes
The Contemporary Pacific



PACIFIC ISLANDERS
IN COMMUNICATIONS



Where to See The Insular Empire

The Insular Empire is distributed by New Day Films. For information on ordering DVDs or streaming the film online, please visit www.newday.com, or call **1-888-367-9154**.

The Insular Empire is a program of Pacific Islanders in Communications and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Broadcast nationally on PBS in 2010, it has screened at universities and festivals throughout the United States and internationally. For more information about bringing *The Insular Empire* to your community, please contact Horse Opera Productions at info@horseopera.org. Producer/Director Vanessa Warheit is available for speaking engagements.



Filmmaker Vanessa Warheit

About the Filmmaker Vanessa Warheit

Vanessa Warheit has worked as a documentary director, producer, editor, and cinematographer since 1999. Her films include the feature documentary *The Insular Empire*, and the short documentary *Constructing Experience*, both broadcast on PBS.

Vanessa was also Associate Producer for the award-winning PBS documentary *Great Wall Across the Yangtze*; Editor for the CBC series *The Week the Women Went*; and Additional Cinematographer for the award-winning ITVS documentary *Daddy and Papa*. She works freelance for

corporate and non-profit clients, and she teaches film history, theory, and practice to high school and university students.

Vanessa holds a Master's degree in Documentary Film & Video Production from Stanford University, and a BA with honors from Bryn Mawr College. Prior to her life as a documentarian, Vanessa ran an award-winning communications design firm in San Francisco. She lives with her husband and son in San Jose, California. She can be reached at vanessa@horseopera.org.

“Deftly told with inventive graphics and superbly researched archival footage... Warheit has provided depth and character to these issues of identity... The compact and information-packed format of the film make it a valuable resource for teaching and organizing.”

**John Junkerman
Japan Focus Magazine**



“After years of serving in the army, liberating people, I said, ‘How about my own people?’”

– Carlos Taitano

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