

I know that this is a formal occasion and protocol calls for a different greeting but as I look out I can only say Wow! I see the fabric of my life for the past 40 years -- so many special people all so dear to me, including Linda and Kip and Scott, Naomi and Bobo who traveled here. I welcome those of you who came across the ocean to be here, President Peter Christian, the judges and justices from the CNMI. I also am so grateful to share this time with my sisters from the Palau Judiciary. I am so honored that all of you are here today. Thank you all so much for being here.

Judge Sukola, thank you for those wonderfully kind remarks.

I am very honored and humbled to stand before you today as the first female chief justice of the Micronesian region. I am especially grateful as although my family roots are from some distant lands, I embarked on a journey of discovery about 40 years ago that brought me here to Guam where I have been warmly welcomed and made to feel a part of the fabric of families here ... so much so that I consider myself an adopted daughter of Guam.

About one hundred years ago, my grandmother left her native Ireland and immigrated to the United States. Thirty years later, my mother left Chicago and moved to the western state of New Mexico. Continuing their tradition, in 1977, I stepped onto a PanAm airplane that brought me to what is now my home, here in Guam. I also discovered and have been made to feel at home throughout Micronesia.

Originally, I planned to stay for just a couple of years and experience this part of the world. Clearly, I did not appreciate then the vastness and diversity of the Pacific region; I did not understand the richness of the cultures here and I did not know of the wisdom and strength of the people, especially the women of Micronesia. But through the warmth, generosity and sincerity of the people throughout Micronesia, I was welcomed to family gatherings and eventually learned firsthand about the fabric of the families and clans that were more often than not, matriarchal societies. And I became one with the people and this became my home.

I learned that for hundreds of years, strong senior women held positions of respect and authority, managing the affairs of their families or their clans. I

saw and admired women who managed the wealth and property, cared for their children and taught and kept the cultural ways in times of peace as well as in times of war and strife. I started seeing the transition of women from their traditional roles to leadership in government, although the transition has been slower and at times, more of a struggle than some would have envisioned.

When I started working at the Guam Legislature in 1977, Dr. Katherine B. Aguon was the Vice-Speaker and eventually more than thirty years later in 2008 we saw Dr. Judith Won Pat elected Speaker. Madeleine Bordallo has the distinction of being a First Lady, Senator, Lieutenant Governor and Congresswoman. Here in the Judiciary, we have seen women serve as Justices and Judges including Janet Weeks, Monessa Lujan, Frances Tydingco-Gatewood, Anita Sukola, Elizabeth Barrett-Anderson, Maria Cenzone, Elyze Iriarte and Linda Ingles. Until recently when more judicial officers took office, most of Palau's Justices and Judges were women. I hope for the day when there will have been so many women in these government positions that we no longer can name them or count them on both hands. I am encouraged and believe that more young Guamanian and Micronesian women are aspiring to positions of leadership just as young Guamanian and Micronesian men do.

It all begins with the desire to serve, and the belief that you can ... serve your families, your people, your island ... to make them better. Leadership is about listening and observing ...and being able to encourage dialogue ...in an open and transparent environment. It's about identifying problems, and initiating change that can make real improvements. It's about having a vision . . . and achieving it by working closely with others. That's what encouraged me to seek the position of chief justice.

As I undertake the responsibility of leading Guam's judicial branch, I promise to do my best to administer the branch as fairly and as firmly as I possibly can. This I cannot do alone. I invoke the strength and wisdom from my Heavenly Father who charges judges to: "Consider carefully what you do, because you are not judging for man but for the Lord, who is with you whenever you give a verdict. Now let the fear of the Lord be upon you. Judge carefully, for with the Lord our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery." He helps us and He answers our prayers. To be sure, there are judges of different faiths

and callings too. Yet we must all remember and share the common and universal call to judge carefully, impartially, and justly.

I will also be relying on my fellow judicial officers and the finest employees in all of government. We are all committed to reaching the best judgments possible and enhancing the rule of law throughout our island. We have asked for the addition of one more trial judge to enhance the performance of the trial courts. With another judge we will be able to address some of the cases which are progressing slowly because of the criminal caseload and jury trials.

The next few years are going to be especially challenging because our facilities will be undergoing massive renovations. I assure you that we are working hard to minimize disruptions to hearings, trials and other judicial proceedings. We all want to continue to provide services as efficiently as possible. In the end we will have a beautiful, historic, appellate courthouse that will meet the needs of the public we serve. This building will be modernized so that the trial courts will be better equipped to serve the people. The historic building will also serve as a proud tribute to the important role of the judiciary

in our society which blends elements of America and the West with the cultural, religious, and historic traditions of Guam and Micronesia.

Indeed people from all walks of life come through these doors, the court patrons and the litigants. They all stand -- and must stand -- as equals in the eyes of the law. We must treat their causes with respect and must strive to do our best to adjudicate them fairly. Judges and justices alike must be mindful of our duty to judge cases and treat the litigants before us with "compassion, decisiveness, open-mindedness, sensitivity, courtesy, patience, freedom from bias and commitment to equal justice." This is the all-important quality of "judicial temperament" which all judges and justices are expected to possess. We must maintain this approach, even as the time does come when hard decisions must be made and judgments are issued. We are so fortunate on Guam that the people we serve treat us with respect and honor our decisions. As an island we abide by the rule of law, as it should and must be under our tripartite system of government: executive, legislative, and judicial -- three co-equal branches.

The Judiciary, our courts, are viewed as problem solvers and have the awesome responsibility of making sure we, as a people, care for the most vulnerable members of our society, whether it is an infant abandoned by her parents; a person overwhelmed by a mental illness and a danger to himself or others; a person who is incompetent and who could be manipulated or defrauded; an abused or neglected child; or a member of a minority who has been discriminated against and denied his or her civil rights. When those in need come to us we want to do them no more harm. However, the traditional justice system inherently involves an adversarial process in an emotionally charged atmosphere. We must continue to find effective ways to strike a balance.

Presiding Judge Lamorena and Chief Justices Carbullido and Torres have led efforts to administer justice in a therapeutic atmosphere, where appropriate. It is my goal to continue the progress we have made. We have established through the Public Guardian an effective way of providing services to our elderly and persons with disabilities.

We need to do the same for children in need of services. There are two approaches to meeting their needs. One is to provide greater mediation services at the beginning of a case involving a child. We can use traditional mediation or adopt the circle around the child as is done in many places in the Pacific. The second is to start a court appointed special advocate or CASA program. CASA volunteers are appointed by judges to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children in court and other settings. One of the primary responsibilities of a CASA volunteer is to "Be the glue", seeking cooperative solutions among individuals and organizations involved in the children's lives. As one volunteer said: *"Be the glue that connects the pieces in a complicated child welfare system."*

Both of these approaches require cooperation between the judiciary and our community partners and volunteers. In other jurisdictions where these programs are in place the children are better able to navigate the judicial process and obtain services. I look forward to working on these projects soon.

I plan to continue working to improve our services in the Judiciary's core responsibility by promptly adjudicating criminal and juvenile delinquency cases. Our communities deserve a safe place to live. On the other hand, someone

standing accused of a crime is innocent until proven guilty. This requires that the defendant's constitutional and statutory rights be respected and that includes having a prompt and public trial. When we get cases to trial quickly we meet the public's expectation of (1) adjudicating the innocence or guilt of the person accused, and (2) treating those found guilty appropriately, whether by removing them from society by incarcerating them and preventing further harm, or monitoring their movements. In doing all of this, we meet our constitutional mandate of treating defendants fairly and impartially.

The just and fair dispensing of justice requires that judges and court staff alike continue to be educated and well-trained. Guam was instrumental in creating the Pacific Judicial Council which provides educational opportunities to the courts of Guam, CNMI, FSM and its member states and American Samoa. I anticipate continuing to work to promote the goals of the PJC so that the working relationships among the members will continue to grow and our various judiciaries will continue to benefit from shared resources that we receive.

Guam's Judiciary never lacks challenges and always faces hard work. It is the inherent nature of any institution of significant importance in our society.

There are always new issues that arise, new problems to conquer, and new and different needs to accommodate that vary with the changing times. I assure you that we continue to be ready to meet the people of Guam's needs and expectations. Everyone continues to pledge to uphold the Constitution, the laws of Guam and the laws of the United States as they apply to Guam, and to enhance respect for and compliance with the law. As judges and justices, we believe in and promote these cardinal commitments and principles.

I thank the many people who supported me throughout the years as I have transitioned from lawyer to judge, to associate justice, and now to the position of chief justice. I thank my two colleagues, F. Philip Carbullido and Robert J. Torres, for voting to seat the first female chief justice in the region. Most of all I thank the people of Guam -- this very special island in Micronesia in the Western Pacific -- for trusting me to be their public servant for these many years. I am deeply honored to serve as the region's first, but I trust not the last, female chief justice.

Thank you for being here with me to share this special day in my life. God Bless the work we do in the Judiciary. God Bless Guam.