

Guam to host international conference on decolonization

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Commission on Decolonization Executive Director Melvin Won Pat-Borja delivers his testimony during the United Nations Regional Seminar in St. George's, Grenada on May 2-4, 2019.

Distinguished experts from around the Pacific and Caribbean will be on Guam this month for a conference that will focus on decolonization and human rights.

The special international conference, "Fanhita: Our Continuing Quests for Decolonization," will bring together a wide array of civil rights pioneers, from elected officials to scholars to community activists, hailing from Australia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Hawai'i, American Samoa, the CNMI, Belau and West Papua.

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According to an Adelup release, these experts will share the experiences of their community or territory in seeking self-determination or decolonization with the hopes of increasing local awareness and building a broader network of solidarity.

Following is the list of invited presenters:

- Former President of Belau, Johnson Toribiong;
- Lt. Governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Tregenza Roach;
- Secretary of the United Liberation Movement for West Papua, Rex Rumakiek;
- Former CNMI Representative, Felicidad Ogumoro;
- CEO of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, Sandra Creamer;
- Former Minister of State for External Affairs of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Carlyle Corbin;
- Founder of Na Koa Ikaika o Ka Lāhui Hawaiʻi, Mililani Trask;
- Former Director of the American Samoa Government Office on Political Status, Constitutional Review and Federal Relations, Dan Aga;
- Former Director of the Guam Commission on Self-Determination, Leland Bettis; and
- **Puerto Rican Human Rights Attorney, Wilma Reverón-Collazo.**

Melvin Won Pat-Borja, executive director of the Guam Commission on Decolonization, said the invited presenters are individuals who have made a profound impact in their respective communities on issues of human rights and decolonization.

"Like Guam, they come from nations that are colonized or have been colonized, and as our island continues its quest for self-determination, we hope this conference will generate a deeper interest and understanding of this process," Won Pat-Borja said.

In collaboration with the University of Guam, the Commission on Decolonization will host the Fanhita conference on Sept. 12 and 13 at the Sheraton Laguna Guam Resort.

It will be open to the public, however, those interested in attending must register with the Commission on Decolonization.

"This will be a great opportunity for our people to learn from a very diverse and influential panel. We are reaching a critical moment in our history," Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero said. "It's imperative that we have a solid foundation as we move forward because what we do next will define our future."

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Panel presentations will focus on the following topics:

- * Solidarity Between US Territories;
- * Decolonization and Indigenous Peoples;
- * Davis vs. Guam Case;
- * Micronesian and Wider Pacific Allies; and
- * U.S. Federal Negotiations

The conference will be broadcast live on PBS Guam and recorded for rebroadcast. The conference is made possible through funds provided by the U.S. Department of the Interior for increasing public education on Guam about self-determination and possible future political status options.

It is also supported by local Government of Guam funds, and made possible through collaboration with the University of Guam and the three political status task forces: Statehood, Free Association, and Independence.

The co-chairs for the conference are Dr. Michael Lujan Bevacqua, Assistant Professor of Chamorro Studies at the University of Guam, and Mr. John Reyes, Vice President of Business Intelligence at the Bank of Guam and member of the Commission on Decolonization.