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## Island Paradise to Urban Streets: Identifying the Effects of Military Forced Displacements on Indigenous Islanders

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ISLAND PARADISE TO URBAN STREETS:  
IDENTIFYING THE EFFECTS OF MILITARY FORCED  
DISPLACEMENTS ON INDIGENOUS ISLANDERS

By

Alexandria N. McKinnell

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Honors College at the University of South Alabama and the Bachelor of Arts and Sciences in the Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work Department.

University of South Alabama

Mobile

May 2021

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Kathy J. Cooke  
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To Kathy,  
for giving me the support I needed to  
become a better person and academic,  
and for letting me call you by your first name  
even though it took me until now to do so.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

First, I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Mark Moberg, whose academic passion inspired me to find a cause that I can dedicate my life to. I could not be more thankful for your willingness to share a personal connection with me and engender an everlasting fervor for justice and change in the world.

I would also like to thank my readers, Dr. Erin Nelson and Dr. Philip Carr, for instilling in me a respect for archaeology. Dr. Nelson, your respect for me and what I have to say gave me the confidence to speak out on obscure but important issues like these. Dr. Carr, your continued support for my community research has never gone unnoticed and will forever be appreciated.

To the Philosophy Department at the University of South Alabama, thank you for teaching me the critical thinking skills necessary for me to do this research in a holistic and thoughtful manner, and allowing me to utilize your resources as well as your minds when I got stuck in logical dilemmas more than a few times.

To the USA Honors College staff, thank you for allowing me solace in your facilities making connections with people on my behalf. Your ability to find resources in places I never would have thought to look has been essential to my work and I cannot thank you enough.

Last, but definitely not least, I would like to thank my partner, Paul, for all the support he has given me during my senior year which happened to coincide with a worldwide pandemic. I would not have been able to manage the stress of writing a thesis while trapped indoors for a year without the constant positivity and love radiating from your being. Thank you for teaching me the importance of self-care and confidence in my ability as a researcher.

## ABSTRACT

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During the twentieth century, indigenous islanders across the world were forcibly removed from their native lands by Western powers for militarily advantageous reasons. The Bikinians' removal is the most notorious case of military forced displacement, but many other island communities faced the same fate during the superpower struggles of World War I, World War II, and the Cold War. This study analyzes two documented cases of military expulsions of indigenous islanders, the Bikinians and the Chagossians. I created a matrix analyzing the common cultural experiences shared by both communities as a result of their expulsions and how those effects persist today. The cultural experiences shared between both indigenous communities, relating to their identity, desires, and perceptions of the event, show many similarities are shared with others removed from their native islands. The list of common cultural experiences include shifts in self-perception and identity, marginalization in society, idealization of the homeland, desire for reparations, suffering and neglect at hands of the military forces, lack of sovereignty, issues with rights to return or ownership of native lands, and pursuit of legal resolution. I then discuss two other cases, the Chamorro removal from native lands in Guam and the Aleuts' expulsion from the Aleutian Islands in Alaska, to discuss their effects from militarily forced displacements. All communities share these experiences to some degree. By analyzing these similarities, this study will provide the basis for creating a compendium of military forced displacements during the twentieth century. This compendium can not only be used to further investigate the effects of forced displacements, but also allow affected communities and scholars to discuss the issues of land rights, sovereignty, indigenous identity, and cultural change that still persists today as result of these events.

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## INTRODUCTION

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During the wars of the twentieth century, the American military, as well as others, developed a pattern of forcibly displacing indigenous peoples from lands that were deemed strategically located and militarily advantageous. According to historian Roxane Dunbar-Ortiz, these military projects in their overseas empire were the fundamental basis for the United States' development into an imperialist power and also the reason why many indigenous peoples today are subjugated to suffering impoverished conditions and lack of autonomy. In her 2014 retelling of history "An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States," not only does Dunbar-Ortiz include the Bikinians and the Chagossians in her list of displaced islanders, whom I discuss within this study, but also Puerto Rico's Vieques Island, the Inughuit of Thule in Greenland, the Okinawans of Japan, and thousands of other indigenous within Micronesia (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014:225). Although anthropologists have conducted fieldwork within these communities and some historians have addressed the militarization of the oceans during war, no compendium has been collected that compares the experiences of these displacement communities and how the effects of displacement persist today within these communities.

This study will provide the foundation for a future compendium of similar cases by creating a matrix that delineates the common experiences and effects of removal. A future compendium would allow us to further investigate the effects of displacements on the concepts of land rights, right to return, sovereignty, and patterns of self-perception and identity. This compendium is also useful to affected communities to utilize in legal pursuits for representation and resolution. However, this study is limited to analyzing the common cultural experiences of two well-researched communities, the Bikinians and the Chagossians, and further analyzing two others, the Chamorros and Aleuts, to further understand how common these experiences are.

The effects of military displacements of indigenous islanders from their native lands persist in the modern day communities, as evidenced by their current pursuits for reparations, monetary or otherwise. Many of these islanders face loss of cultural identity, due to their removal from their land which was directly intertwined with their culture. Many indigenous islanders not only have land tenure directly intertwined with their kinship organization, but also for their economic and political structure. Not only did their removal cause disruption within their

community structure, but also with their sovereignty and cultural identity. However, simultaneously, their removal created a community through shared suffering. Laura Jefferey discusses this concept throughout her work with the Chagossians, describing the contradictory nature of simultaneous cultural continuity of a people's identity and the uprooting of their traditional identity in favor of adaptation to society in exile.

By analyzing case studies, historical texts, national and international records, legal addendums, as well as local and international news media, this study identifies eight common cultural experiences held in common by the Bikinians and Chagossians that also apply to similar cases of military island expulsions. The common cultural experiences include shifts in self-perception and identity, marginalization in society, idealization of the homeland, desire for reparations, suffering and neglect, lack of sovereignty, issues with right to return, and pursuit of legal resolution. Further on in this study, the matrix will be used in comparison with the Chamorros and Aleuts. However, the latter two cases are not as well-researched as the former two, which is where key markers assist. Each common cultural experience has several key markers that help identify the experience as a common one shared between the communities. Key markers can be discovered within an array of source materials and will be exceptionally important to uncovering common cultural experiences when research is lacking for a specific community (See Table 1).

Most of these removal events affect a relatively small population of marginalized peoples that don't have the privilege to be documented or attract the attention of the international community. In the case of the Bikinians, their story was internationally recognized, but in a way that altered the reality of the situation. Due to the power of these Western governments, much effort was applied to keep dissenters under control and to positively rather than accurately report the events of their expulsion. In order to give power back to the indigenous populations, we must first address why these events occurred, what measures were taken to prolong the groups' survival, the process of the removal itself, as well as the effects the removal had on the population and future descendants of the community. We will also address the legal avenues they took advantage of to gain representation and reparations for the wrongs done against them. Technology has allowed us to reach a much broader audience and it is our duty to bring light to gross abuses of human rights that have swept under the rug for nearly a century. This study plans to do just that as well as set up procedures for identifying future abusive expulsions and lay the

foundation for the legal investigation of conviction of governments who choose to take advantage of marginalized peoples for military advantage.

Not only are these communities facing permanent cultural change, but also modern effects of climate change, economic recession, and lack of proper representation in the international community. Climate change, especially, has caused many islanders to become climate refugees due to flooding, storms, and lack of agricultural production. The Bikinians living on Kili have especially suffered from this. A compendium that collects cases of displaced indigenous islanders can allow affected communities to build legal court cases to seek representation and reparations. This study can provide the foundation for community leaders, refugee groups, legal representatives, and scholars to use this information to assist in their pursuit for better representation and reparations for the affected communities.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

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Western military superpowers during the twentieth century attempted to gain advantage during the World Wars and Cold War by occupying strategically located islands in the Mauritius, Seychelles, Marshall, Marianas, and Aleutian Islands. However, many of these islands were already inhabited by indigenous communities with intricate cultures, complex social and political systems, and developed ecosystems. Their native lands were geographically advantageous and coveted, especially by the United States, for war-related uses, and plans were made to construct military bases and nuclear testing sites on many of these islands. Forced depopulation and expulsion of islanders subsequently resulted and was achieved by controversial political promises, intimidation, and brute military force. The removals of the Chagossians and the Bikinians by the United States government are the most well-documented events of expulsion with ethnographic and legal reviews of their cases. The events of the Chamorro, Aleuts, and other communities displaced by the American military are far less researched, although recent cultural movements have drawn anthropological and national attention to them.

This research will primarily draw from ethnographic case studies published by anthropologists who have conducted research within these communities. Other sources include peer-reviewed articles, written by historians who specialize in the history of the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and reports on the status of the cases within international and national law. Investigation into the removal of the Chamorro and Aleuts involved investigation of government records, partial summaries in history books, as well as analysis of oral histories and interviews of residents. The lack of research in this subarea of forced migrations does cause some difficulties with regard to finding similar cases, cultural reactions, records of personal narratives, anthropological research, and modern life of the communities.

Although the Caribbean is home to many indigenous populations that have been forcibly removed, such as the Isleños, Caribs, Garifuna, and Galibi peoples, their experience differs in important ways from the twentieth century military occupations discussed in this research. These groups do classify as military expulsions of indigenous islanders, but the islands have since been released from military control and have regained an identity and autonomy unique to them or have assimilated to modern culture. This does limit this study's research to twentieth century removals as a result of modern warfare tactics, especially resulting from the World Wars and

Cold War. This study is also limited to indigenous displacement only, even though other non-indigenous communities were displaced for military occupation in Europe.

The ethnographic methods of Robert C. Kiste (1974) and Laura Jeffery (2016) prove vital to the research of the Bikinians and Chagossians, respectively, as their ethnographies exhibit specialized attention to indigenous perspectives. Both case studies include primarily sourced data from residential ethnographic research and investigate the communal historical records rather than military-biased government records that most historians rely on. Kiste and Jeffery performed research within the communities and interviewed residents which attributed an essential *emic* perspective to their data that other researchers could not achieve. Jeffery, in particular, lived multiple years within or near both the Mauritian and Crawley communities, giving her a unique perspective especially within Chagossian advocacy groups. Both anthropologists were able to experience the effects of the removals firsthand, documenting the loss of culture and marginalization from the perspective of the afflicted populations.

For the Chamorros, the anthropological work of D. S. Farrer and James D. Sellmann (2014) was essential for not only providing a thorough review of the history of Chamorro people on Guam, but also the chronology of events after European contact and the acquisition of Guam by the United States. They also provide insight into the modern cultural revitalization of their traditional culture as well as the interviews with residents surrounding the construction of national monuments and parks on their native land. As for the Aleuts, Katherine L. Reedy-Maschner (2010), Charles Mobley (2015), and Mobley's team's work with the National Park Service (2015) provided most of the anthropological information with a recent grant funding by the Alaskan National Park Service in 2008 and 2011 to document the effects of the internment camps on the Aleuts after their removal. The study is still ongoing so many of the oral histories are not archived and available to the public, but Mobley has published some of his work in 2015 which is utilized for the National Park Service website.

Supplementary information is provided by legal cases, government records, demographic data reports, historical texts, psychological and biological research articles, archaeological research, as well as local news, oral histories, and personal narratives provided by advocacy groups, residents (academic and otherwise), historians, and journalists within the communities or on behalf of the communities with personal research. Most of the supplementary source materials were necessary to fill in the gaps of anthropology research for the Chamorro and Aleuts, as they

are significantly less studied than the Bikinians and the Chagossians. Recent news media, demographic data reports, and other government reports were especially necessary to update the case of the Bikinians as Kiste's work was published in 1974 as well as Jeffery's work as the resolution of the Chagossian case in the London High Court was decided several months after the publication of her case study.

Stephen Allen (2017) also provides a case study from the perspective of international law and policy which approaches political contexts that were not thoroughly addressed in Jeffery's account. Jeffery does accentuate the political divisiveness of the removal and the key military policies and agreements, but Allen provides further detail to the agreements, policies, laws, and other legal materials and decisions during expulsions. Allen provides supplementary information essential to understanding the international violations of human rights as well as a historical chronology of the events alongside the publications of these major documents. This paper strives to provide a proper background for displacements with special attention to legal violations relation to displacements. This attention to the legality will provide a basis for future research on the matter which makes the inclusion of Allen's work integral for further study.



## BACKGROUND

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Indigenous native lands are heavily intertwined with their social, political, and kinship organizations that define their culture. The history of European contact and military occupation disrupted these land traditions and, therefore, their community organization and culture. Island communities were forced to abandon hundreds of years of tradition in favor of a more Western form of society in order to survive as a people, which also retained their cultural identity. Native groups still battle this dynamic today although many of the communities discussed in this study faced removal over half a century ago. This study will first discuss the contexts of both the Bikinians' and Chagossinas' removal as well as how their culture changed as a result.

I will then discuss the common effects of displacement shared by both, or common cultural experiences. It is important to note the legal discussions surrounding the removal and the desires for compensation and right to return during and after removal, as well as the results of those pursuits. Close attention will be given to the legal issues surrounding the Chagossian removal as their displacement took place after the 1948 UN Declaration of Human Rights where Article 13 explicitly states that "Everyone has the rights to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including [their] own, and to return to [their] country" (United Nations 1948). Although the UN document isn't legally binding, it does bring about issues concerning human rights when covering cases of indigenous forced displacement on an international level of analysis. The removal of the Bikinians took place shortly before this international document which is notable when addressing their legal rights to return to their homeland.

### **The Bikinians and Operation Crossroads**

Bikini atoll lies in the northwest quadrant of the Marshall Islands nearly 3200 km southwest of Hawaii. The Marshall Islands contain 29 atolls and 5 islands within two parallel chains called Ratak and Ralik. Bikini atoll lies in the northern Ratak Chain, along with Rongerik Island and the U.S. military base on Kwajalein. Most Marshallese live in the southern Ralik Chain where the climate is warmer and the islands are closer together. However, there were a few island populations in the northern Ratak chain, but they rarely employed expeditions to visit one another and generally remained to themselves. Legend claims that after a dispute between

competitive members on Wotje Atoll, a clan departed the atoll and arrived at Bikini Atoll. They would take dominance over the lands and displace a small group of islanders who resided there. (Kiste 1974; 1-5,16).

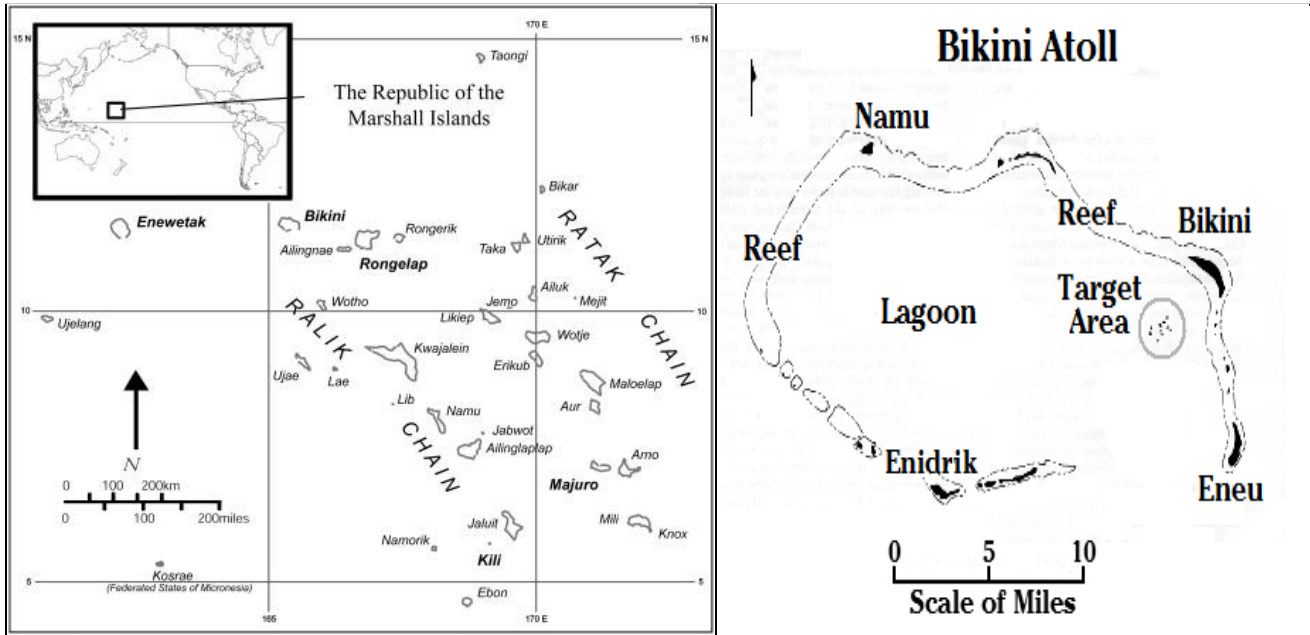


Figure 1a. Map of Marshall Islands

Figure 1b. Map of Bikini Atoll

For hundreds of years, Bikinians were self-sufficient and proud of their maritime lifestyle, including the amount of leisure time that comes with a non-agriculture based society. They had full control over their marine environment and sustained themselves on fishing, small fauna, and local vegetation. Land was extremely important for social organization and kinship, as it was for other Marshallese, but the Bikinians had a stricter separation of land control and lineage leadership. The population of 170 members contained three distinct clans, Ijjirik, Makaoliej, and Rinamu, and each clan had one large *bwij*, unilinear matrilineal descent units, which contained separate heads of land and heads of lineage. Each sub-clan of a *bwij* was a landholding corporation, ranked by chronological age and generational seniority. Clans would often clash and argue over leadership of the atoll, but usually the head of lineage of the largest clan claimed true chieftdom over the community. (Kiste 1974; 37-59)

Land tenure on the atoll was intricately organized and heavily intertwined with their social and political organization of the community. Bikinians had a clear idea of their social

organization and leadership and, unlike other Marshallese communities, had no regional chief to pay tribute to. Paramount chiefs reigned over particular regions of the Marshall Islands and their power was determined by the number of atolls and islands under their control. However, no paramount chief ever ruled over Bikini Atoll because the Bikinians had no resources to give him. This lack of regional chiefdom allowed the Bikinians to not only sustain their lives with minimal obligations to authority but also develop a more complex and autonomous political organization absent from other islands and atolls. They were able to maintain their own resources at their own discretion and determine their own leadership with no interference from those outside the community for hundreds of years until European colonization (Kiste 1974; 17-20).

The first Europeans to encounter the Marshallese were German missionaries driven by the European colonial era of trade in the mid-1800s. Germany would later claim the islands under the German Protectorate in 1885, establishing a colonial government on Jaluit in the Ralik Chain. Germany would hold explicit ownership over the Marshall Islands until 1920 when the League of Nations created a mandate for Japanese occupation and control of islands. On Bikini Atoll, five soldiers would establish a Japanese weather station. Life on Bikini Atoll was generally unhindered, unlike many of the other more populous Marshallese islands who were greatly affected by Japanese occupation until the American military invaded in 1944. (Kiste 1974; 20-26)

In 1945, several weeks after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, the American military began its search for a nuclear testing site. They agreed that the location must be (a) under U.S. control and domain, (b) uninhabited or having a small population that can be easily relocated, (c) have a calm and warm climate, (d) have a sheltered area for navigation and fleet storage, and (e) be at least 800 km from large populations that could be affected by nuclear radiation. The American military agreed that Bikini was the most ideal location for nuclear testing and named the removal Operation Crossroads. In 1946, U.S. officials arrived on Bikini atoll and convinced the residents that their relocation was necessary to promote peace and the end of all the world's wars (Kiste 1974; 27-28).

The American military and the community agreed on a new home on Rongerik Island in 1946. After two months on Rongerik, the Bikinians were not adapting well with the environment and started requesting to return home to Bikini. By Winter, massive food shortages started to occur on the island and the community began to suffer more than ever. They were never properly

trained in farming or copra production which prevented them from sustaining themselves in the new environment. Many suffered from malnutrition, starvation, and even death. An evacuation plan for a temporary home on the military island of Kwajalein after the Bikinians suffered on Rongerik for two years and one week. In March of 1948, the Bikinians arrived in Kwajalein to a new sub-housing community designed to hold them until another island was found for them. After seven months on Kwajalein, the Bikinians democratically voted on Kili in the southern populous chain in the Marshall Islands. In order to adapt to Kili, they would have to be taught an entirely new trade system, agricultural skills, work ethic, as well as a new social environment of interacting with other southern islanders and military traders (Kiste 1974; 77-81).

In the 1970s, 134 Bikinians were allowed to return to Bikini, but they became contaminated with radiation as they consumed vegetation there and were immediately evacuated from Bikini yet again (Royle 1999). Scientists agreed that residents could survive on Bikini Atoll as long as all of the food was imported due to the radiation in the vegetation. However, this would require a complete reliance on foreign imports and high tourism or trade to fund the imports. There was hope of return after the Republic of the Marshall Islands gained independence in 1986 under a Compact of Free Association with the U.S. administration. However, a major agreement under the Compact was the settlement of all legal claims arising from the Bikini and Enewetak Atolls nuclear testing from 1946 to 1958 (Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs 2018). This hindered not only further compensation by those affected by radiation, displacement, and loss of culture, but also hopes for legal claims for the right to return. The governments of the United States and the Marshall Islands continue to be intertwined, especially with regards to security with special permissions given to the U.S. to utilize the Kwajalein military base for missile testing until 2066 (Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs 2018).

Although claims were supposedly “settled” by the Compact, nuclear issues are still the center of the complex relationship between the two governments (Brown 2015: 44). The Marshallese community has been quoted as being “conflicted” about their feelings over the situation: on one hand they are thankful for the opportunities provided by the United States, but on the other, the negative effects of nuclear testing still remain a prominent issue for the culture, economy, and health for their island communities (Brown 2015: 44). In 2015, a petition for relocation was submitted to the U.S. government due to the increased flooding and storm surges

on Kili Island, according to a 2019 interview with Bikini liaison officer Jack Niedenthal. Niedenthal went on to say that for half the year the Bikinians cannot fish, tides have only gotten higher and erosion more extreme, so the Bikinians have not only become victims of nuclear displacement but also climate refugees (Meyer 2019). In 2020, a grant of \$425,000 was awarded to the Kili Health Clinic to purchase medical equipment and expand the clinic which supports more than 500 inhabitants of the island (Joshua 2020). As of 2021, it has been 75 years since the Bikinians were exiled from their home and there is still no sign of return for the displaced community.

## The Chagossians and Diego Garcia Military Base

The Chagos Archipelago is located in the middle of the Indian Ocean, about 1,600 km south of the Indian subcontinent. The island group itself doesn't have a known history of permanent occupation until the sixteenth century. The Chagos Archipelago would later be formally grouped with Mauritius although it was located nearly 2,115 km away off the coast of Madagascar. In 1498 Mauritius was rediscovered by Portuguese traders after the success of explorer Vasco De Gama and proved a useful anchor between Europe and East Asia during the spice trade. The Chagos Islands were visited by these traders, but proved difficult for plantation farming and settling (Jeffery 2016:2-10).

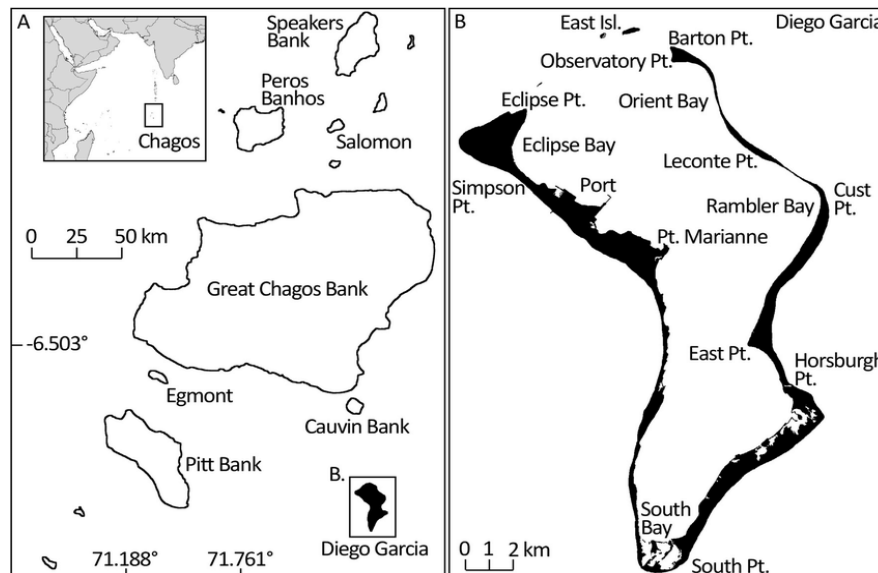


Figure 2. Map of Chagos Archipelago and Diego Garcia Atoll

The islands of Mauritius and the Chagos Archipelago passed the hands of the Dutch, French, and finally the British in 1814. At this time, the Chagos islands would be under Mauritius governance and officially considered a British colony. The islands themselves were occupied by copra plantations, including landowners and their imported enslaved Africans, since the 16th century. Although the United Kingdom abolished the slave trade in 1807, it would not be until the 1835 that they would emancipate all Mauritian laborers, including the enslaved Chagossian islanders. During the 1830s, sugarcane made up 85% of Mauritian exports and the conditions of such plantations were intensive and inhumane, requiring a constant import of labor due to desertion and death. The Chagos Islanders did not experience any intensive labor, social

hierarchy, or migrant labor, due to their use of copra instead of sugarcane. They were a completely distinct community from other Mauritians which would cause problems with their eventual exile to the island (Jeffery 2016:25-35).

The Chagossians shared a leisurely lifestyle, similar to the Bikinians. They were self-sufficient as a community and were quite different from other communities in their island complex. However, while the Bikinians only engaged with military personnel and other Marshallese in exile, encountering social marginalization, the Chagossians would encounter a social and economic hierarchy of international origins and face more extreme social and economic marginalization in their exile society. This was not only due to their community differences, like the Bikinians, but also because of their history as enslaved people and their integration into a multi-ethnic society. On the Chagos islands, the international copra companies owned all of the infrastructure on the island but allowed African laborers to own crops and animals to instill a self-interest in the land. The proprietors believed that if they allowed the enslaved people to build homes, farms, cemeteries, and other self-sustaining constructions on the land, the enslaved people would take care about the land and continue working for the companies even after the 1807 abolition of the slave trade (Jeffery 2016:25).

They were correct in their assumption. After the 1835 emancipation, many African descendants accepted apprenticeships and reportedly enjoyed their time on the plantations, unlike Mauritians, because their labor was less intensive than sugar farming. The Chagos islanders also didn't experience unemployment on their islands, unlike Mauritians, and proprietors of the copra companies were required to provide housing materials, land plots, basic healthcare, and primary education. Chagos islanders look back positively on these times because they had plenty of leisure time, a relatively light workload, extra provisions, animal and land ownership, as well as the option to volunteer for work rather than being under slave labor. They were, however, still under indentured labor which meant they had little to no money, but they never felt the need to attain financial gain because of their self-sufficiency on the islands (Jeffery 2016:35-38).

After World War II and in the wake of Cold War conflicts, the British government desired an outpost in the Indian Ocean that would provide a strategically located military outpost. In 1964, the United States would join these efforts and desired Diego Garcia, the largest and most populated island within the archipelago. The island was not only under their ally's control, but was centrally located and isolated in the Indian Ocean and had natural harbors for ships and

potential for a runway for aircraft. They also noted that the population of the island was small and politically insignificant, which would make removing the natives easy and out of the public eye (Jeffery 2016:27).

In 1965, an agreement was made with Mauritius leaders, not Chagos islanders, to give up the Chagos Archipelago in exchange for the independence of Mauritius scheduled for 1968. This agreement was known as the Lancaster House Agreement. The United Kingdom not only obtained ownership of the Chagos Islands, renamed the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT), but also received a discount on the United States's Polaris missile system in exchange for U.S. military use of the island of Diego Garcia. By 1973, 2,000 Chagossians were displaced, with 1,500 moved to Mauritius and 500 to Seychelles. Military personnel would often tell the natives that the move was temporary in order to encourage them to leave their homes and depart to the other colonies (Jeffery 2016:58-66). Modern Chagossians call the removal *dérasiné*, which roughly translates as “to uproot” or “to tear from one’s native land” (Vine, et. al. 2005:2).

Those arriving in Mauritius were greeted with dilapidated housing and lack of work. On the penultimate boat arriving in Mauritius, many Chagos islanders refused to leave and demanded return home or compensation and housing. However, none of the incentives offered by the military would be met as was once promised. The ongoing issues with unemployment, combined with their lack of proper housing and social integration, cause negative effects on Chagossian self-identity. They were marginalized not only due to their outsider status and different ways of living on the copra island plantations, but also because of their history as enslaved peoples. Chagossians lacked education, local social networks, and social integrations, restricting their work to dangerous and low-paying jobs at the bottom of the societal ladder (Jeffery 2016: 143-167).

In 2002, Mauritian Chagossians were granted citizenship under the British Overseas Territories Act (BOT) that inspired hundreds of islanders to emigrate to the United Kingdom, specifically through Gatwick Airport. These migrants wanted to escape the Mauritian inequitable education system, high unemployment and unattractive employment opportunities, as well as the perceived low wages and high living costs of the island politico-economic system. A total of 115 Chagossians moved to the U.K. during this time. The council was pushed to organize housing in Crawley, a “new town” created after World War II aimed at moving people out of central London, as well as £30 a week for six months. By 2007, one thousand members of the extended



Chagossian community moved to Crawley and half of them were employed at the Gatwick Airport where they had arrived. They all reside in the poor sections of Crawley's neighborhoods which suffer from poor health, high crime, drug abuse, poor housing, and lack of adequate education. However, those who live in Crawley claim they face much less discrimination than they did in Mauritius and their jobs are mainly retail or airport-related, compared to hard labor performed on the island (Jeffery 2016:150-158).

## METHODOLOGY AND APPLICATION

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### Matrix of Common Cultural Experiences

By comparing the cases of the Bikinians and the Chagossians, we can identify at least eight common cultural experiences of displacement. These experiences show us how military forced displacement of islands results in persistent cultural shifts present in both cultures. In order to derive each common experience, I made a list of “key markers,” which are specific source materials that exhibit the common experience, found in particular source materials that suggest the presence of the common experience. For example, for the common experience of *Marginalization in Society*, one key marker would be lack of unemployment or poor unemployment opportunities. To find this key marker, I would look towards source materials such as national demographic data. For each common experience discussed, there are a few key markers that helped me identify the experience as well as a short list of source materials (See Table 1).

Common Cultural Experience	Key Markers	Source Material
Shifts in Self-Perception and Identity	Dependency on the government, marginalization, feelings of helplessness, and loss of cultural identity	Oral histories, artistic forms of catharsis, ethnographic reports, and other resources that provide an <i>emic</i> perspective of the residents
Marginalization in Society	Racial and social discrimination, low employment, poor health, neglect by the government, feelings of isolation, and presence of stereotypes	Oral histories, government reports, demographic data reports, lack of social services, lack of media representation, lack of political representation, and negative media reports
Idealization of Homeland	Artistic catharsis, songs of lamentation, feelings of loss, idealizations of homeland, homeland as “paradise”	Art, songs, chants, poems, stories, prayers, personal narratives, oral histories, and interviews
Desire for Reparations	Legal pursuits for compensation, advocacy groups, trust funds, government action/supervision of needs, specialized social services	Interviews, advocacy group platforms, government records, government programs/trust funds/etc., political platforms, United Nations committees
Suffering and Neglect	Artistic catharsis, feelings of loss/distress/sufferings, physical or	Art, songs, chants, stories, poems, historical reports, government

	emotional trauma, abandonment, government’s ignorance of their needs in exile	records (ex. Expenditure reports, petitions, etc.), anthropological or scientific reports on conditions
Lack of Sovereignty	False promises of temporary removal, undisclosed information, immediate removal, latent realization of exile permanency, lack of representation	Historical records, personal narratives, interview, national and international public media, legal documents
Issues with Right to Return	Legal pursuits for right to return, desire for return, struggle for ownership or return, lack of sovereignty over lands, legal restrictions on habitation of lands	Legal documents of land ownership, pacts/agreements/treaties, media/news of pursuits, petitions to international organizations
Pursuit of Legal Resolution	Legal pursuits, monetary compensation, advocacy groups, active legal cases, legal representation, social services, trust funds	Active and historic legal cases, historical documents, government reports

Table 1. Key Markers and Source Materials for Common Cultural Experiences

*Shifts in Self-Perception and Identity*

Both the Bikinians and Chagossians show clear shifts in self-perception as result of their removals. Like the Chagossians, Bikinians identified themselves as distinct from other Marshallese long before their exile. Both groups were isolated from other native islanders and had different accents, dress, and lifestyles. For the Bikinians, they were spiritually connected to their land and their identity was defined by the land they lived on. Their land was where they grew their food, built their houses, raised their families, and buried their dead (Sutoris 2010). So, when they had to give up their land, they also gave up their spiritual, cultural, and personal identity (Sutoris 2010). Once they encountered other Marshallese and military men on Kwajalein, their distinction from the others was amplified. They were noted as being “backwards” and “lazy” by the other groups and often blamed for their lack of success on Rongerik and Kili. These attitudes reinforced their negative self-identity which was only reinforced as they became more dependent on the U.S. navy for assistance.

Before exile, both groups identified themselves as a unique community whose self-sufficiency was something to be proud of. Their connection to their land defined them and their sovereignty was intact. After exile, they lost this connection to their land and, therefore,

their sovereignty, causing many in the communities to have a negative self-perception. The Chagossians were constantly seeking assistance from both the U.K. and Mauritian government when housing and unemployment was lacking which removed their proud characteristic of self-sufficiency. The Bikinians also grew heavily reliant on the U.S. Navy for monetary compensation, training, imported goods, and general supervision, which is in stark contrast to their previous identity as a self-sufficient community. The negative self-perception both groups attained during exile was reinforced by the social hierarchies of the groups around them and their dependency on the military. Both the Mauritians and the Marshallese reinforced their negative self-perceptions with the social and economic marginalization imposed upon the island communities.

However, it is important to note that a gradual reclamation of identity did occur later in both communities. As the Bikinians gained more recognition in the international system and the Chagossians gained support from refugee groups, community-led cultural reinvigoration centers, language and art camps, as well as education programs developed to combat the assimilation and loss of culture as result of their exile. When addressing other cases, we will have to look at not only their personal perceptions of self, including loss of land and cultural identifiers, but also the racism and marginalization enforced by the surrounding social groups, native or otherwise. It is important to recognize their movements towards cultural reinvigoration that encourage a return to traditional identity and positive self-perception of identity for the community.

### *Marginalization in Society*

The common experience of societal marginalization focuses much less on the community's perceptions of self and more on society's perceptions of them. I focused on the new society's efforts at marginalizing the groups with racial stereotyping and socioeconomic categorization of the indigenous peoples. Both the Chagossians and Bikinians were geographically and socially marginalized from their isolation in their native homes to their social isolations in society in exile (Davis 2005: 614). Many indigenous groups are often marginalized in society and experience discrimination in the economic, social, and political systems of most countries (Amnesty International 2019). They face workplace discrimination due to racial prejudice and lack of skills relevant to the work as well as social discrimination due to racial stereotyping base on their history of isolation from urban society or their history, whether it be

clashes with culture, class, or enslavement. Discrimination is the main cause of why indigenous people compose 15% of the world's most impoverished peoples (Amnesty International 2019).

The Bikinians faced social and economic marginalization especially after their eleven months on Kwajalein, where they interacted not only with other Marshallese groups who saw them as uneducated and uncultured (Kiste) but also with the American military who appeared far superior in their technology than they were. They were portrayed as “primitive” and “simple” in the American media, as seen in Lt. E. J. Rooney's 1946 New York Times article “The Strangle People from Bikini; Primitive they are, but they love one another and the American visitors who took their home.” The American media is powerful, especially during the early twentieth century, and their portrayals of Bikinian intelligence and culture further defined how others would treat the indigenous peoples. The Chagossians would face this same marginalization, but even more intensely as they were forced to integrate into a modern world and urban society.

Not only did the Chagossians have to integrate into an already established society, but they had to start at the bottom with nothing but their history to define them. They came with no money, no relevant skills, no education, and a history of enslavement, which was already a heritage looked down upon by other social groups like the Indian and Chinese immigrants who ran the plantations on Mauritius. Their treatment by the United States and United Kingdom further pushed them into social isolation. Their social and economic marginalization is especially evident in their efforts to establish themselves in Crawley, England, where they had few assets, little grasp of language, and no social respect from their white neighbors. Their political marginalization is even more evident as they don't have proper representation outside of refugee and legal groups and their sovereignty is still questionable and argued over by Mauritian and British governments (Allen 2017).

To identify the experience of marginalization in other cases of indigenous displacements, it is important for us to look at historical and modern perceptions of the indigenous people and how they have been discriminated against and pushed to the boundaries of urban society. Lack of representation in the political sphere is a key starting place as well as active efforts and propaganda generated by their respective governments to silence their outcries for representation, compensation, and equal treatment. Much of this evidence can be found in national and international media, but, if not that, then community group and political platforms can also show

us historical and academic evidence for societal discrimination and the effects it has had on their existence and survival as a cultural entity.

### *Idealization of the Homeland*

Idealization of the homeland, represented through idealization of their native lands and lament for their loss of cultural traditions, can especially be found in the forms of artistic catharsis. For the Chagossians, we have documented oral histories, poems, and *sega/segoae rap* music that display their idyllic homeland and reminisce of island paradise. As the Chagossians unite in exile, they produce communal artistic efforts to share those emotions of loss and remember the lives they or their parents once had on the island. Much of Laura Jeffery's work explores these avenues of catharsis and community with her 2007 publication "How a plantation became paradise: changing representations of the homeland among displaced Chagos Islanders."

The Bikinians also practice oral history, songs, and stories, especially those passed onto generations as it has by nearly seven decades since their removal. Modern oral history projects aim to archive these stories, such as the Marshallese Oral History Project (MOHP) founded by the Marshallese Educational Initiative in 2013 (Schwartz 2016). Not only do we have documented oral recollections of Bikinian life on their native atoll, but we also have digitally archived music, poems, and stories written in Marshallese and translated into English for public record. Many of the songs of the Bikinians are lamenting the losses of island life as well as describing the effects that nuclear radiation had on their environment and their health (Schwartz 2016).

Some allude to people of legend and spiritual ancestors who protected the lands they once lived on and how they too are separated from their homes due to the nuclear experiments (Schwartz 2016). Other songs strictly celebrate Bikinian paradise and the freedom of the island, such as "I jab ber emol, aet, I jab ber ainmon" or "no longer can I stay--it's true. No longer can I live in peace and harmony," written by Bikinian Lore Kessibuki in 1946, which has become an anthem for many Bikinian descendants (Gross 2017). Songs like these remember the paradise of the island and emit emotions from the deep sadness to leave it, but don't dwell on the reasons why they had to escape the paradise. Songs and stories of lamentation and reminiscing instill many emotions for the listener or reader, but all aim to show the loss of a life once held sacred and the severing of the spiritual connections that indigenous peoples have to their homelands.

To identify this common cultural experience, we need to look at the artistic expressions that the indigenous in exile create after displacement. Art has always been a cathartic expression and uniting force for humans and is a key marker in identifying their suffering and loss. Just as those who lose loved ones write poems for their funeral, those who lose their homes also express these emotions and pass them down for generations. They idealize the homeland as an ideal paradise, just as we traditionally don't speak ill of the dead. The trials and tribulations of the homeland are rarely mentioned, but, instead, the pleasant, dream-like qualities of the homeland are praised and even fictionalized to represent the idyllic homes they once held as a part of their identity.

### *Desire for Reparations*

After they come to terms with the permanency of their situations, both the Bikinians and the Chagossians would seek compensation for their loss of homeland as well as assistance in adapting to their new home. These issues that come with reparations are quantifying a monetary value on the loss of native home and whether money can truly satisfy or even mend the suffering the indigenous endure as a result. Not only have these communities lost their homelands that they have resided on for hundreds if not thousands of years, but they also lost cultural traditions, spiritual connections, and even lives during the removal. Their true desire is a return to life before, whether or not the lands are still the idyllic homeland of their dreams. However, more often than not, monetary compensation is the simplest way that governments choose to "repair" the damages they have caused to the people they have permanently harmed.

Ten years after exile, the Bikinians received their first monetary compensation from the United States in the form of a \$25,000 grant in November of 1956. Throughout the 1960s, after the typhoon disaster of 1958 which destroyed their allocated lands on Jaluit, they received news of massive technological movements in the space and missile industry in America. This was a sign to the Bikinians that not only were they owed compensation for their suffering and loss, but the American government was perfectly capable of providing assistance for the long term. (Kiste VI). They began to seek official legal counsel in Guam in the 1970s, although unsuccessful, and the Micronesian Legal Services Corporation in 1973 who did petition the U.S. government on their behalf.

In 1986, under the Compact of Free Association, Section 177 guaranteed reparations to the Bikinians an amount of \$75 million to be paid over a fifteen year period (Nuclear Claims Tribunal 2001). Nearly half of each year's allocated \$5 million was entrusted to The Bikini Claims Trust Fund designed to continue to allocate payments past the fifteen year period (Nuclear Claims Tribunal 2001). However, in 2007, the Nuclear Claims Tribunal concluded a seven year lawsuit and awarded an averaged total of \$563 million, divided into sections for restoration costs, suffering and hardships, and loss of value, which is the official amount awarded by the United States government after deducting past monetary reparations (*People of Bikini v. U.S.* 2009). The Bikinians have to petition the U.S. Congress to fulfill this award, as the Nuclear Claims Tribunal has been notoriously underfunded since its initiation in 1987, which would most likely take several years and no promises of award fulfillment. Issues arose with this award in 2018 when distribution of the funds were limited to 5% each year and the Department of the Interior set more restrictions on the acquisition of the funds (Domenech 2018).

The Chagossians have sought more assistance in resettlement than monetary reparations, which they have received but in significantly lower amounts than the Bikinians. Their assistance needs consist of housing, employment, and monthly allowances in resettlement, especially in Crawley, but other legal claims for grand amounts have been fulfilled through the Mauritian government. The Mauritian government was initially given £650,000 by the United Kingdom to resettle the Chagossians, but even U.K. officials knew this amount was nowhere near enough to get the job done (Vine, et. al. 2012:9). Almost none of the money was ever seen by the Chagossians due to poor attempts at distribution in an organized fashion. The only monetary compensations awarded to the Chagossians were in 1978-1979 and 1982-1985; as of 2012, no other monetary reparations have been awarded, let alone seen by the community (Vine, et. al. 2012: 32). Although monetary compensation does help them survive in the short-term, what Chagossians really wanted was structural sound and sanctuary housing, well-paying jobs, and land to call their own and help rebuild their community.

Indigenous desire for reparations is discerned by reviewing legal action pursued by the indigenous communities, as well as reviewing government treasury documents. Large amounts of monetary compensation are almost always available in public records and often noted in public news media. What form of reparations the community desires may be a little more difficult to discern without proper ethnographic study, interviewing, and legal advocacy. Through



these avenues, we can obtain a realistic understanding of what the communities want and need apart from monetary compensation and what levels of assistance they need and expect from their respective governments.

### *Suffering and Neglect*

Suffering often comes hand in hand with loss of homelands. Anytime a group of indigenous people is removed from their homeland, especially by a military or colonial force, anxiety, depression, PTSD, health effects, and death follow (ISTSS 2016). In the removal of the Chagossians, passengers on the boats died, miscarried, or committed suicide and their bodies were thrown into the ocean; the sanitary conditions were deplorable and caused some to be sick upon arrival in Mauritius (Jeffery 2016:84-89). Some Chagossian women were raped by Mauritian public officers upon arrival and the men beaten and incarcerated for unknown reasons, as reported by Shenaz Patel in her 2019 book *Silence of the Chagos* (Saramundi 2019). Not only were the Chagossians suffering from the conditions of their removal and exile, but by the hands of their own government. They were neglected by the Mauritian and U.K. governments and often ignored when seeking assistance for housing, employment, and monetary compensation.

The Bikinians mostly suffered in their isolation on Rongerik and Kili as they faced starvation and neglect on the unforgiving lands they were left on. As previously addressed, the Bikinians faced massive food shortages on Rongerik and resulted in eating toxic fish when even flora resources were scarce. After two years on Rongerik, anthropologists reported malnutrition, near starvation, and waves of death as no one came to relieve them of their suffering (Niedenthal 2001). The military ignored their complaints of starvation by claiming that the Bikinians weren't trying hard enough to farm local foods and were too lazy to take care of themselves (Kiste 1974: 56). They would come to realize the truth of their suffering when they emergency evacuated the community to the military base in Kwajalein. Even on Kili, where half the year Bikinians weren't able to fish and faced constant storms that destroyed vegetation, emergency food supplies would have to be airdropped on the island to prevent another Rongerik-like disaster (Niedenthal 2001). The small island of Kili was often referred to as a "prison" by islanders as they became almost totally reliant on imported goods to sustain themselves, especially after Typhoon Lola in 1957 and Typhoon Ophelia in 1958 destroyed their allocated lands on Jaluit (Niedenthal 2001).

Both communities developed self-sustainability to a minor degree, whether by learning agricultural techniques and trade on Kili or moving to Crawley for better economic opportunities, but neither group was able to become self-sufficient without government assistance. Not only did the government make false promises of return, fail to award monetary compensation, neglect islanders and leave them in deplorable conditions, and ignore their pleas for assistance, but they also actively worked against the communities to create light on the situations through national and international media. By using their cultural influence on the global scale, the American and British governments were able to alter the narrative and hide the suffering of the indigenous by exaggerating their successes (Belsie 2011), restricting government documents (Jeffery 2016:162), lying in court (Allen 2017:34), and otherwise ignoring the damages and human rights violations they committed against the indigenous islanders.

The source material of suffering and neglect comes hand in hand with displaced island communities and can easily be expressed within the personal, historical, academic accounts of the events. The extent of the suffering and neglect will require more thorough assessment of short-term and long-term effects through oral history interviews, story narratives, artistic catharsis, case studies, demographic reports, journalistic publications, and other sources that display the effects of suffering in qualitative and quantitative forms. The dynamic of being both reliant on the government which actively neglects them also serves as a key marker for recognizing suffering and neglect in communities. By reviewing communities under Compacts of Free Association, refugees, or other forms of government exceptions for assistance may allow us to discover other indigenous communities previously left out of anthropological research that suffer in silence.

### *Lack of Sovereignty*

For all forcibly displaced communities, the option of leaving is not offered. They are presented with an ultimatum that results in exile or death. Although this ultimatum is not always obvious, as sometimes it is veiled in false promises of returns, false hopes of a better future, or disguised as a service for the greater good of humanity, the ultimatum is recognized soon after the removal. For the Bikinians, they were sure that the removal was temporary and were convinced under guise of Christianity and service to the global community that their sacrifice would “end all wars” (Kiste P16). They decided to move on Rongerik, although the island was

significantly smaller and unfamiliar, *because* they believed the move would be temporary. After two years on the island, their move to Kawajalein, and their eventual exile on Kili, they understood that temporary removal was a lie. Although some parts of their removal was democratic, such as the decision-making process for finding a new home, the military was in complete control of their removal and would not take no for an answer. The military believed they could simply remove the community, place them on a new island, and forget about them. Obviously, this wasn't as easy as it seemed and they would soon face those consequences monetarily, although the Bikinians suffered much worse.

The Chagossians faced even harsher conditions as their removal was swift and forceful and their community did not receive the same amount of respect as the Bikinians. The Bikinians had a representative, Chief Juda, who argued on their behalf in meetings with American and Marshallese officials. Although the Bikinians did not choose Chief Juda as their leader, as he was chosen by the U.S. Navy upon arrival at the atoll, at least they had someone who understood their culture and spoke on their behalf. The Chagossians had no such representation and were left at the whim of the Mauritian, American, and British governments and militaries. They were quietly and quickly removed from the island with intimidation tactics, including the systematic murdering of their animals and pet dogs, and split between Seychelles and Mauritius (Jeffery 2016: P25).

The Chagossians in Seychelles were left in the prison system for months until subpar housing was found for them. They didn't receive the benefits of compensation and citizenship from the United Kingdom that the Mauritian refugees received and wouldn't be represented by advocacy groups until a decade or two later when Mauritian groups reached out to them (Jeffery 2016: P84). They still don't receive any political recognition and their sovereignty is questioned by both the Mauritian and U.K. governments. Thankfully for the Bikinians, they have been able to create active representation in the Marshallese and American governments and make great strides in participating in the UN General Assembly Human Rights Council discussion on nuclear radiation damage (OHCHR 2012).

Lack of autonomy over the decision of removal and the fates of the community in exile comes with cases of forced displacement. We can identify this source material by isolating key markers in the initial phases of removal and the purposes of said removal. We can analyze the different tactics that militaries and governments use to convince the community to depart and the

reasons they give to the community on why they have to abandon their homes. By analyzing their lives in exile, we can see the amount of control they have over their situation and what avenues they have to pursue to acquire adequate resources for survival and representation. If a community has to pursue legal representation to acquire resolution to their situation, it is a clear sign that there is debate over how little control they had in their “decision” to leave their home and that there are certain violations to their freedom of movement committed by the military power.

### *Issues with Right to Return*

Once removed from their homeland, both the Chagossians and Bikinians sought to return at some point. They both were told their removals were temporary and that they would eventually have the right to return at some point. Bikinians did receive hope for return in the 1970s when 134 Bikinians were allowed to return to Bikini, but they became contaminated with radiation as they consumed vegetation and were immediately evacuated yet again (Royle 1999). Hopes for return for the Bikinians are slim as radiation still persists on the island. As of 2019, soil samples measured at eleven islands in the Marshall Islands were as high as 648 milirems per year--548 milirems above the safe level environmental radiation (Maveric et. al. 2019). The Bikinians still have hope for return through the use of monetary awards granted in 2007 which are dedicated toward restoring the atoll (*People of Bikini v. U.S.* 2009), although issues arose yet again in 2018 with further restrictions imposed on access of the funds were set by the Department of the Interior (Domenech 2018). Until full-scale actions are taken to rehabilitate the island and restore it for human habitation, there is no foreseeable return date for the Bikinians and the atoll is still restricted in occupation with only 4 to 6 caretakers living in the atoll at any given time (Borett 2013).

The Chagos Archipelago is also restricted for human occupation without the explicit permission of the United States military. Currently, only the 4,000 military personnel and scientific researchers stationed at Diego Garcia are allowed to live there for short amounts of time (Britannica 2019) and Chagossians have been explicitly banned from living there since 1966 (Valenzuela-Bock 2016). The International Court of Justice under the UN General Assembly reviewed the expulsion of the Chagossians in 2017 and ruled that the displacement was illegal and the United Kingdom should be required to return the islands to Mauritius

(Britannica 2019). However, international advisories are not legally binding and previous cases in the London High Courts exemplified the United Kingdom's stance on the matter. The latest court case, *Bancoult v. Secretary State of Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*, concluded in 2016 with the dismissal of a 2008 challenge for review of the expulsion (Valenzuela-Bock 2016). This news was a disappointment for the Chagossian Refugee Group, the group that Olivier Bancoult leads and represents. As of 2021, the Prime Minister of Mauritius urged the U.K. to abandon its claims that it has jurisdiction over the Chagos Islands; the United Nations supports him and reiterates the U.K.'s illegal acquisition of Diego Garcia (Wintour 2021). The U.K. still holds that Mauritius has never held sovereignty over the islands and will not overturn their ownership anytime soon (Wintour 2021).

It is safe to assume that all displaced indigenous people want to reclaim their homelands in one way or another. Some want to return to it and continue habitation of their lands or culturally reclaim it for future generations. It is understandable that in some cases they do not want to actually return to their homelands, whether it is because they have acclimated to their new environments, established cultural ties to their new lands, or their homelands are too badly damaged to sustain life. However, much of the debate is less over the possibility of return and more on the right to do so. Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to leave and return to their own country--an inalienable right to all humans that morally cannot be revoked (United Nations 1948). The violation of the basic human rights of freedom of movement is the concern for many indigenous communities and their *right* to return at their own will is one that they fight for. Some, like the Bikinians, do want to return to the land and reclaim it for themselves, but others may not want to actually live there but simply have the legal ability to if they so choose, like the Chagossians. Finding out if an indigenous community seeks a right to return can be identified through their legal pursuits or advocacy groups that speak on their behalf. Success in rights for return, however, is rarely achieved.

### *Pursuit of Legal Resolution*

Although legal disputes over reparations, compensation, assistance, right to return, human rights violations, and other key aspects of rectification of removal have been discussed throughout this research, it is still important to note that the pursuit of legal resolution is a common cultural source material for displaced indigenous communities. Whether it is immediate

or much later on after removal, both the Chagossians and Bikinians sought legal resolution of the wrongs perpetrated against them. Through advocacy groups and communal efforts, they have been successful in receiving monetary compensation and less so in achieving rights to return. Other indigenous communities also appear to utilize legal avenues for resolution, however successful or unsuccessful. To identify this source material, we can observe public government documents and current legal cases in the court systems that show active legal pursuits by these communities, either by members within or advocacy groups on their behalf.

Indigenous Community	BIKINIANS	CHAGOSSIANS
Era and Purpose of Removal	WWII, U.S. Nuclear Testing Facility	Cold War, U.S. Military Base
<i>Intermediate Negative Self-Identity</i>	Dependency on military, lack of self-sufficiency, societally reinforced stereotypes, isolation, lack of skills	Dependency on military, lack of self-sufficiency, societally reinforced stereotypes, isolation, lack of skills
<i>Marginalization in Society</i>	Social discrimination, negative media portrayal, mistreatment by military	Socio-economic and racial discrimination, perceived “burden” on Mauritian society, mistreatment by military
<i>Idealization of the Homeland</i>	Artistic catharsis through song and oral history, lamenting loss of homeland, idyllic “mythico-history” of home	Artistic catharsis through song and oral history, lamenting loss of homeland, idyllic “mythico-history” of home
<i>Desire for Reparations</i>	Monetary reparations, development and return of homeland	Social services and assistance, some monetary reparations, return of homeland
<i>Suffering and Neglect</i>	Prolonged suffering on Rongerik and Kili, lack of necessary supplies for survival, climate refugee status, radiation damage on health	Lack of provisions and assistance on Mauritius, separation of community, lack of proper housing, unemployment and undesirable work
<i>Lack of Autonomy in Decision-making</i>	Leadership chosen by military, representation not present until much later, convinced to move under veil of “preventing wars,” misled with false promises of return	Intimidation tactics, refusal of return for absent residents, swift removal by military with no options granted, issues of sovereignty and citizenship, misled with false promises of return
<i>Issues with Right to Return</i>	Permanent nuclear damage to land, radiation	Uninhabitable by law, military base still active
<i>Pursuit of Legal Resolution</i>	Current legal cases for monetary reparations as recent as 2018 (awards not yet granted), representation in national and international courts, advocacy groups	Communal refugee and advocacy groups, legal pursuit of return of land as recent as 2016 (unsuccessful), reliance on nonprofits, no legal representation in national or international courts

Table 2. Matrix for Common Cultural Experiences

## Applying the Matrix

The removals of the Bikinians and the Chagossians are events that many academics, including Kiste (1974) and Jefferey (2016), have investigated with ethnographic research. However, the cases of the Chamorros and Aleuts are not as well-documented, but historical documents and recent active efforts do provide us with a foundation. To apply the matrix to these two communities, I will briefly provide historical background information that we do have of the two communities and identify key markers that exhibit the common cultural source materials addressed previously. Much of the anthropological research on these two communities has gaps and oral histories have not all been archived for public use just yet, but we can still find these common cultural source materials by utilizing key markers identified in the matrix review.

### *Background: The Chamorro of Guåhån*

Guam, known as Guåhån by Chamorro, is the largest and most populous island in the Mariana Islands archipelago, with an estimated population of 168,801 people, including indigenous, military personnel, and a myriad of foreign immigrants (CIA 2021). The ethnic makeup of Guam contains the Chamorro (37%), Filipino (26%), White (7%), with other migrant Asian and Pacific Islanders making up the remaining diversity of the island (CIA 2021). Guam is not only strategically located in the Pacific Ocean, 2,600 km east of the Philippines, but it contains around half of all the dry land in the Marianas Islands (Farrer and Sellman 2014:129). The island has a history of habitation as early as 5,000 years ago with a cultural use of land as early as 2500 BCE, represented by *latte stones* (Carson 2012). The people to first occupy the island were nomadic peoples, connected to the land but also made use of island hopping as they traded and warred with other factions (Farrer and Sellman 2014:129). The Chamorro people were not a unified people, making them vulnerable when Europeans arrived in the sixteenth century.

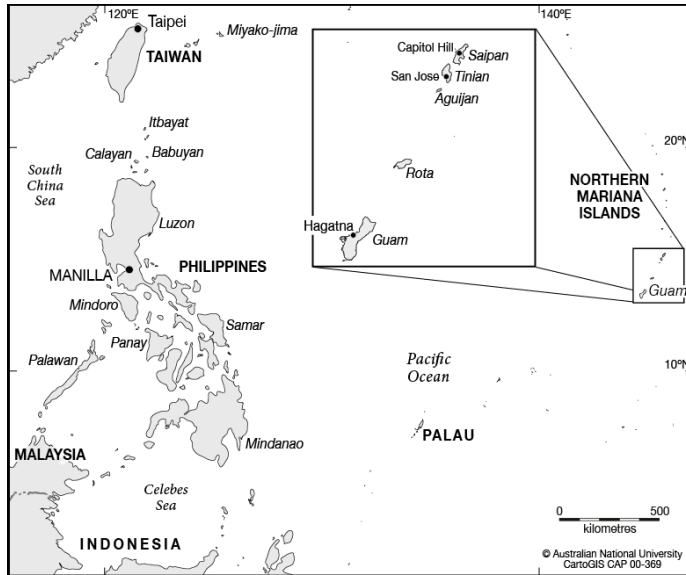


Figure 3a. Map of Marianas Islands

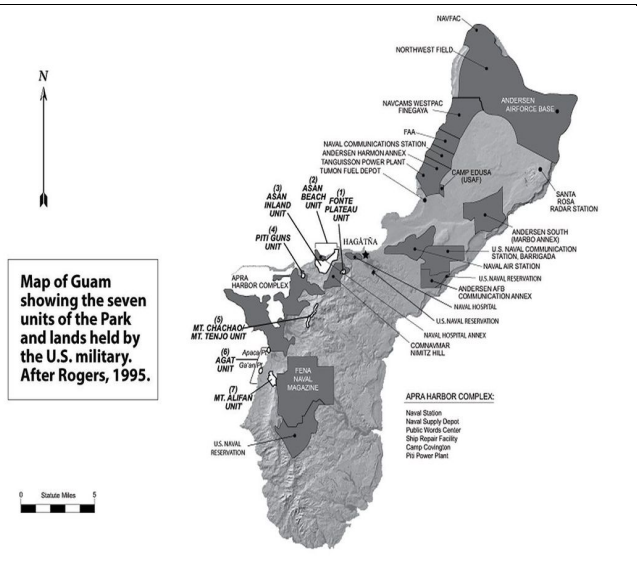


Figure 3b. Map of Guam and Military Occupation (1995)

In 1565, Spain claimed the island and colonized the lands in the late 1600s. After a bloody thirty year war between the Spanish and the Chamorro, a 1710 census reported the Chamorro population declined from an estimated 40,000 to 100,000 natives to only 3,539. After conquest, all Chamorro people were taken off the Marianas Islands and transported to Guam and settled into Spanish-style villages until the late 1700s when they were allowed to return to their home islands. They experienced 200 years of solitude until 1898 when the U.S. military purchased Guam, along with Puerto Rico and the Philippines, after the Spanish American War . The island of Guam became a protectorate of the U.S. Navy and a strategic military advantage in the upcoming wars (Farrer and Sellman 2014:131-135).

By 1940, the population of Guam rose from 9,639, as recorded in 1901, to 21,000 people, including military personnel and immigrant workers. On December 8, 1941, Guam was bombed by the Japanese military and a subsequent massacre of 578 Chamorro people occurred during Japanese-American conflicts in 1944. During the Cold War, Guam's location was strategically significant and construction of major military bases would begin. In order to build the bases, the U.S. military planned to remove all of the indigenous people from their land; although actions were never taken in full, 58% of the land on Guam would be taken for military purposes. In 1945, legislation was passed by the United States Congress to assist Guamanians, but found it difficult to allocate funds due to the losses incurred after WWII. Only \$8.3 million would be



given to 4,429 residents by 1957. As for land, Congress allowed claims over losses of lands to be submitted after 1946, but land returns had little success (Farrer and Sellman 2014:131-135).

The Chamorro in Guam made up 91% of the population in 1940 at 20,020 people, but only 55% of the population in 1980 with 57,750 natives; this put the Chamorro people at a disadvantage when seeking reparations amongst an ever growing pool of residents. Many construction projects were proposed in the 1970s and 1980s, including a national park and seashore which would be on the sacred lands of the Umatac and Merizo tribes of Chamorro. Although wary about the release of their lands, they were promised that these projects would preserve the *latte stones* built by their ancestors as well as the environment they sustained themselves; it would also prevent urbanization of their traditional villages. There are still active legal claims over lands that remain in courts today, but also a resurgence in Chamorro cultural pride that has strengthened the passion for reparations for the community (Farrer and Sellman 2014: 130-142).

#### *Background: The Aleuts of the Aleutian Islands*

The Aleutian archipelago is made up of 55 small islands and 14 larger volcanic islands, colloquially known as the Ring of Fire, extends out 1,900 km from the Alaskan peninsula (West et. al. 2010:482). The date of initial human occupation of Beringia, the area that connects Siberia to Alaska, has long been debated by archaeologists; however, we can safely say that archaeological evidence does suggest human activity at least 9,000 years ago (West. et. al. 2010:482). Before European contact in the 1700s, the Aleutian Islands held an impressive array of floral and faunal biodiversity until very recently (West et. al. 2010:482). We also know, by archaeological comparison to other Arctic peoples, that natives in this environment lived by hunting seals and other marine life and most likely trading tools and other goods with other island peoples (West et. al. 2010:482). The Aleuts themselves are actually three distinct groups of native islanders: the Alutiiq speakers, the Central Yupik speakers, and the Unanga speakers or *Unanga*/*Unangam Tunuu* (Carlson 1995). Each group has traditional dances, music, and art unique to them and dates back thousands of years (Carlson 1995).

Russian sea otter hunters were the first non-natives to interact with the Aleuts followed by Russian Orthodox missionaries who had a dramatic influence on the culture and socio-economic system of native islanders (West et. al. 2010:482). Surveys in 1831 recorded a

total population of around 2,000 people, although this is just an estimate (West et. al. 2010:482).

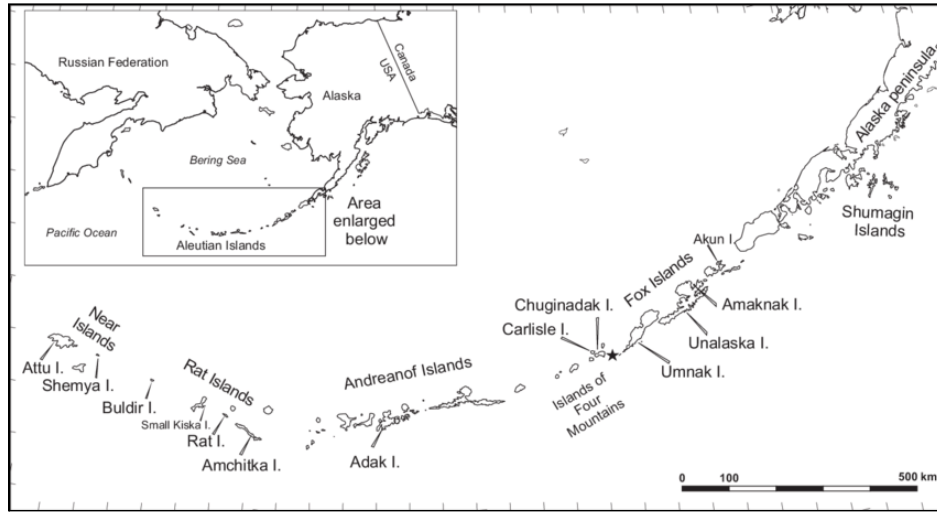


Figure 4.. Map of Aleutian Islands

Other than the Russian, the Aleuts remained relatively untouched by modern society until the United States purchased Alaska from Russia in 1867 (West et. al. 2010:482). American canneries and fisheries opened in the eastern islands and U.S. naval bases speckled the islands (Mobley 2015). Over time, the Aleuts adapted to a sedentary lifestyle while still embracing their traditional roots in their maritime environment. Some archaeological research even began in 1873 and continued until 1945 to discover more about indigenous population of the islands (west).

However, everything changed when the Japanese Navy attacked Dutch Harbor in the eastern Aleutians in June of 1943 (West et. al. 2010:482). The Japanese military started capturing the far western Aleutian Islands of Kiska first, where the U.S. naval weather station was located (Mobley 2015). They captured and relocated Aleut natives to prisoner-of-war camps in Hokkaido, Japan, where only half of those imprisoned survived (West et. al. 2010:482). Almost immediately after the attacks, the American military emergency evacuated 900 Unanga from nine villages on six eastern islands to internment camps, also called “evacuation camps” or “duration villages” by the American government, hundreds of kilometers away in Southeastern Alaska (West et. al. 2010:482). To prevent Japanese occupations of the abandoned villages, the United States military burned some of the Aleut villages which remain uninhabited today (Kohlhoff 1995). In 1943, the United States would take advantage of the free islands to build

more military bases, including the Eareckson Air Station on Shemya Island used strategically during the Cold War against the Russians (Harris 2009).

Japanese occupation lasted for several years after the initial attacks, and so the Aleuts were also kept living in poor makeshift shelters and banned from returning to their former villages (NPS 2015c). In Burnett Inlet and Funter Bay, Aleut refugees lived in a disused cannery and faced starvation and deplorable conditions where running water, heat, electricity, and even doors were absent (NPS 2015c). In Killisnoo, villagers of an open, marine environment found themselves interned in a dark rainforest, completely unaccustomed to native flora and fauna and struggling to survive (NPS 2015c). Many experienced disease and illness, but medical care was not available, leading to the death of 74 Aleut refugees; the elders of the community were amongst those deceased, carrying Aleut history and traditions with them (NPS 2015a). By 1945, some Aleuts were able to return to resettle their villages, but the structures weren't as intact as they were three years before and many had to be built from scratch (NPS 2015c). Many remain fiercely patriotic and loyal to the United States, but a few others have pursued legal reparations for their treatment and the selling of their land after removal (NPS 2015a).

### *Shifts in Self-Perception*

It is difficult to discern this source material without access to oral history interviews and personal narratives of the events. However, we can find a shift in self-perception, specifically the intermediate negative identity after exile, by observing the later cultural renaissance to recover damaged or lost traditions of culture. Observing the change of their role in society since displacement as well as their loss of cultural traditions can also give us clues on what parts of their identity has been damaged and how they respond to the loss. Through oral history interviews, ethnographic studies, and psychological evaluations, we can investigate further into the perceptions of these cultures after their exile into urban society and how they have grown to reclaim that identity since then.

Chamorro psychologists on Guam reported that a loss of power and traditions of Chamorro culture were the most destructive effects of American occupation of Guam (Taimanglo 2010). Their loss of language, along with the progressive loss of traditional dances, chants, and songs, altered the way that Chamorro people view themselves within the anglicized society where the American military and English language dominates (Taimanglo 2010). It is

also reported that speaking out against their oppression was viewed as negative behavior within Chamorro culture, although this has changed in recent years (Taimanglo 2010). We can assume this means that a negative perception of self persisted in Chamorro communities for a long time after colonization, but more interviews and oral history archives can provide us with a better understanding of the extent of these views. Thankfully, in recent years there has been a cultural resurgence on the island to teach the Chamorro language and traditions in schools across Guam as well as the incorporation of traditional art forms that express their distinct identity in a new light (Taimanglo 2010).

For Aleuts, their marine lifestyle has been an integral part of their culture since their habitation of the islands and has been constantly threatened with displacement, environmental damage, and political strife that restricts their traditional marine hunting (Reedy-Maschner 2010b:241-250). Anthropologists have reported that the contemporary commercial fishing industry has threatened their cultural continuity and traditional lifestyles that not only provide for the community but identify them as a people (Reedy-Maschner 2010:167-205). Not only are their traditional subsistence strategies being threatened by modernity, but also the loss of their language, songs, dances and prayers (Project 562). The internment camps organized by the American government had a lasting impact on Aleut people, causing some villagers to stop speaking their language and even refer to themselves as no longer natives, but opting to be “white” because “there is no history, there is no future,” as reported by Ethan Petticrew, Executive Director of Cook Inlet Native Head Start (Project 562). This initial reaction to displacement and the effects thereafter show us that a negative impact on self-identity was present in the displaced communities as a result of the camps. However, through community education and cultural initiatives such as Project 562 and Aleut Corp Culture Camps, the language and traditions of the Aleuts, specifically the *Unangax* people, are being revived for the younger generations after the elders and homeland were lost during the war (Project 562).

### *Marginalization in Society*

Both the Chamorro and Aleut people are victims of ethnic discrimination and economic and political marginalization with American society in Guam and Alaska, respectively. Although the Chamorro are a large ethnic population on the island at around 37% of the total, they face the poverty and lack of opportunities that marginalized indigenous peoples face as minorities in

other countries (Bosqui et. al. 2019). The psychological distress, cultural oppression, forced assimilation, and historical trauma faced by Chamorro people for hundreds of years under colonial rule have caused impoverishment, lack of economic opportunity, and social exclusion in the community (Bosqui et. al. 2019). They also lack proper access to mental and general health services, proper political representation, and neighborhood deprivation as result of their marginalization (Bosqui et. al. 2019). Other groups on the island and their interactions with the Chamorro are reportedly negative, especially with respect to their native traditions, mutual respect in social groups, and lack of control over political funding of traditional services (Cagurangan 2014).

The Aleuts face similar effects of displacement within American society through modernization of their culture, commercialization and restriction on their subsistence strategies, and lack of political representation. Until efforts of the National Park Service and recent resurgence in cultural revitalization efforts, the Aleut peoples succumbed to the anglicisation of their people as modern society required them to adapt to survive in the harsh Arctic environment. The American “rationalization” of fisheries in Alaska along with economic development efforts threatened the social institutions and organization of the Aleuts (Mack 2019). By participating in modern society, they lost the close connections they had with their lands and marine environment that previously defined every part of their identity (Mack 2019). They have been generally overlooked by Americans and feel as if they are not a part of American society (Mack 2019).

### *Desire for Reparations*

After nearly 76 years, 16 survivors of WWII are finally receiving reparations for their suffering on Guam, distributed in 2020 (Gilbert 2020). More than 3,000 other Guam residents will also receive monetary compensation after their suffering under Imperial Japan, but still await payment (Hofschneider 2020). For Aleuts, the government did pass the Aleut Restitution Act of 1988 which was a monetary \$6.4 million trust fund settlement passed by Congress in response to their neglect and suffering in the internment camps (Civil Liberties Act of 1988). Each of the survivors also received \$12,000 for their suffering (Civil Liberties Act of 1988). Recently there have been movements to reclaim lost land, especially those sold out from under their noses to canneries and fisheries, but no resolution has been made on the matter.

### *Suffering and Neglect*

The extent of the suffering from displacement varies for each community. For the Chamorro, much of their suffering and neglect at the hands of the United States military was during WWII when thousands of Chamorro were under duress during Japanese occupation of the island (Gilbert 2020). Some were kept in concentration camps where hundreds died due to the neglect and lack of protection from the American military. The Aleuts faced similar physical and emotional trauma in the internment camps that housed them from the Japanese, but this time under direct supervision and neglect by the American government. Both communities had similar experiences during WWII that would show the direct trauma of war that the previously discussed Bikinians and Chagossians did not experience.

### *Lack of Sovereignty*

Neither group was directly involved in their exiles. The Chamorros have been colonially occupied for nearly 300 years and that colonization continued when the American military occupied their lands in the early twentieth century. This time around they lost nearly half their land and ancient *latte stone* sites to military occupation with no decision to do so. They were able to have some representation in the construction of the national monuments and parks on Guam, but the decision was ultimately left up to the local government who had other interests in mind. The Aleuts' removal was more sudden and direct as they were emergency evacuated from their lands. They were told it was temporary, like the Bikinians and Chagossians, and that they could return eventually if the Japanese halted attacks.

Due to the close connection between indigenous peoples and their land, their identity and sovereignty is directly connected to their ownership and use of that land. What makes the Chamorros and Aleuts different is that they do still have access to some of their land, but the land itself isn't the same as it once was. The native land on Guam is being used for military purposes or preserved on parks. The Aleutian islands are more greatly available to the Aleuts, but the once bountiful ecosystem has been damaged by war and climate change over the years, making the traditional ways of life unfeasible. So, although the land is more available to the latter two groups than the former two, the sovereignty over the land and the use of it is just as affected by the exile. This comparison shows us that even if indigenous groups are given some native land

access back, their sovereignty is still compromised due to the lack of autonomy in determining the use and preservation of their lands.

### *Issues with Right to Return*

After two years, the Aleuts did return to their native lands, but to burned villages and a whole new array of military bases on their native lands. Although some were allowed to return, unlike the other three communities discussed, their native lands were damaged by military use, churches were burned, villages were looted, so many opted to build settlements elsewhere (NPS 2015a). Not to mention the environmental damage that would ensue from modernization that would cause permanent degradation of the one rich and biodiverse marine environment they were accustomed to (NPS 2015a). The Chamorros have some access to ancient *latte stones*, but only within national parks and traditional boundaries or with explicit permission from military personnel. At this point, the Chamorro simply want more political representation and control over the funds of Guam to care for their lands and be able to preserve their culture and traditional environment (Farrer and Sellman 2014).

### *Pursuit of Legal Resolution*

Both the Chamorro and Aleuts have sought monetary compensation for the crimes committed against them, although decades after the harm was done. Active cases in Congress include *Guam v. The United States*, alleging that the navy is responsible for the degradation and pollution of their environment and are, therefore, responsible for the costs to restore the land (*Guam v. The United States* 2021). There was also a case put forth in 2017 and resolved in 2020 over the 99-year leasing agreements over one-acre land plots reserved for native Chamorro that were put in place to amend the loss of land during military occupation (*United States v. Government of Guam* 2020). This case resulted in an amendment of the Chamorro Land Trust Act to not base land grants purely on race or nationality, but instead whether the applicant is a native Chamorro (*United States v. Government of Guam* 2020).

## CONCLUSIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

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### *Further Application: Identifying Potential Cases*

Immediate future research involves the identification of similar cases by utilizing the Matrix of Common Cultural Experiences. Although some cases may satisfy the restrictions placed in this study pertaining to twentieth century displacements of indigenous islanders for military strategic advantage, others do not. For example, a potential case has recently arisen on Ascension Island where the British military is slowly removing islanders in order to open space for military occupation (Pearce 2013). However, this case does not involve indigenous communities and it is currently happening outside of wartime. Other cases do show potential, such as the displacement of the Carib and Galibi people of the Caribbean, but these cases are before the twentieth century which might display source materials quite differently due to the differences and lack of political and human rights or international organization. A more likely case of twentieth century displacement to review is the Reunion islanders under French control in the Indian Ocean who show a lot of similarities in their treatment as the Chagossians (Doshi 2016). Future research would have to either expand the parameters of what communities, timeframes, and contexts can be included in the compendium, or create a separate collection for historic and recent cases of expulsion separate from those committed during the twentieth century.

### *Future Research and Active Anthropology*

Many facets of culture are affected by exile, but especially the identity and sovereignty of the indigenous groups. In recent years, particularly alongside the movements against climate change and neocolonialism, indigenous social movements have gained popularity for their causes. Cultural revitalization movements, including culture camps, national awareness campaigns, indigenous language schools, and indigenous political representation, have developed rapidly in the past two decades and have brought out many of the issues previously swept under the rug after exile. The 2007 publication of the UN Declaration on the Rights of indigenous Peoples brought about even more support for indigenous reclamation of culture, sovereignty, and land rights as well as international recognition of their modern status and need for basic requirements of survival, dignity, and well-being. As these movements grow and make bigger



waves of change, anthropologists need to do their part in properly documenting the effects of colonialism on indigenous peoples and what can be done to mitigate the effects or at least compensate the mistreated groups.

Each group discussed in this study has a distinct culturally-situated experience of displacement, but all share common experiences amongst them. Using these common experiences, we can investigate the experience of other types of displaced indigenous peoples, including climate refugees and political refugees, as well as how their distinct experiences bring them together. Community leaders and legal representatives can use this information to put together successful court cases to win reparations, rights to return, etc. by clearly defining the systematic suffering, neglect, disruption of land sovereignty, etc. experienced by displaced indigenous. We can also use the common experience to understand what types of opportunities and social programs would be helpful to displaced peoples in order for them to adapt and flourish in their new homes and mitigate the trauma experienced by displaced peoples. For example, this study notices how artistic catharsis of suffering and neglect was important in every culture after exile, especially with regard to preserving their communal bonds and identity. I also noted the importance of the connection to the land that continues even after exile, as the land and their stewardship is integral to their identity as a community and as individuals.

Benedict Anderson discusses the “imagined community out of shared suffering” in “Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.” Although the contexts of the quote are different, I believe that this concept of shared community out of a communal suffering amongst a group of peoples also applies to the displaced indigenous peoples in exile. For groups such as the Chagossians, a unified community does not exist as many sub-groups exist in Seychelles, Mauritius, and Crawley. However, all members have suffered a communal experience and remain bonded through that shared suffering, although living apart over the past half-century, and all still identify as Chagossians rather than an identity in their new home in exile. When the land cannot bring them together, their experiences of being away from that land do, which shows how important the land itself is to their identity as a people. It is our duty to continue this research into their shared experience in order to provide them with organized data to help them further their cause for indigenous representation and recognition within the international community.

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