Film Notes on “The Insular Empire: America in the Mariana Islands” (2009) 10/4/16

Where are the Mariana Islands?

What were the different historical pathways of the two parts of the Marianas into a colonial relationship with the United States, including their different stories during World War II?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Guam | Saipan/ Northern Mariana Islands |

What happened on Guam in 1949-1950?

What was Guam like and what was its legal status from 1951-1962?

What was the US presence on Saipan in the 1950s?

Since 1962, which US Department has overseen Guam?

What kind of development took place on Saipan in the 1960s?

What is “the Covenant” and under which US president was it signed?

What have been some of the consequences or sources of controversy with the Covenant?

For what purpose has Hope Cristobal petitioned the UN year after year?

What does “Liberation Day” celebrate or what does it mean for the participants?

In each of the “Insular Cases” at the start of the 20th century, the Supreme Court ruled that “the constitution does not follow the flag.” As with Puerto Rico, commonwealth status grants people of the Northern Mariana Islands US citizenship but not all of the associated rights, such as the right to vote for president/commander in chief. After viewing this film what are your thoughts on this situation?

**Some Legal Notes**

US Territories can be “incorporated” or “unincorporated” and have either “organized” or “unorganized” governments. All of the people in these territories have US citizenship.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Incorporated** | **Unincorporated** |
| **Organized (by passage of an “Organic Act”)** | Now, none. But 31 territories admitted as states had this status at one time between 1789-1959 | Guam, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands |
| **Unorganized** | Palmyra Atoll (attached to Hawaii), but has no permanent inhabitants | American Samoa – the only one in this category with permanent inhabitants. Organic Act was defeated in 1949; Samoa is self-governing since 1967.  Also Wake + Midway Islands (now wildlife refuges), Johnson Atoll and various uninhabited Pacific reefs/islands. Also 3 Caribbean islands either uninhabited or with a naval base on them. |

Although residents of territories and commonwealths cannot vote for president (only residents of states may do so), they do participate in the presidential primary voting and they send delegates to the Republican and Democratic conventions to help select the party’s nominee.

Since 2009, US immigration rules are in effect in each of these territories and commonwealths, although the CNMI has a transitional period that has been extended to December 31, 2019.