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Principles of Sustainability  
Professor Delgado  
March 6, 2018

Dear Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner,

I Will Tell Them

*Of calloused fingers  
Weaving baskets  
Making jewelry  
I will tell them*

*Of a proud people  
With toasted brown skin  
Descended from navigators  
I will tell them.*

*Of grandmothers, aunts and sisters  
Singing songs  
Whispering prayers  
I will tell them*

*Of the glittering sea  
Sky uncluttered  
How you feel yourselves to be  
I will tell them*

*Of the water rising  
Flooding your sacred places  
Ocean level with your land  
I will tell them*

*Of the fear  
At what you see  
In your own backyard  
I will tell them*

*Of the beauty that your islands hold  
And the culture so close to being lost  
And the pain this loss causes  
I will tell them*

I was so moved by your poem asking for the world to remember your island home and the culture being lost. I researched the Marshall Island culture and the first thing I learned was your word for hello, goodbye and love is iakwe which translates to "you are a rainbow." Such a beautiful greeting

full of positivity. I envy the relaxed view of time, that people come and go as they please and nobody is offended. Here in the United States it is the opposite in the extreme, lateness is unacceptable to most people, some business will charge you money or refuse to see you if you are late or do not show up for an appointment. Also, the weaving done by the women of the island is so beautiful and it would truly be a loss to the world to lose such wonderful craftsmanship. I know that you already know how delightful your island home is, but for me just reading about it was an emotional experience. It saddens me to read not only your words about how climate change negatively impacts your land, but to read on Marshall Island travel guides that the island will be uninhabitable by the year 2100. I hope that tragic fate never comes to pass and that we as the human species will start doing better and start doing better now.

The critic and the cynic in me looks at what happened to the Marshall Islands and can't help but wonder why any indigenous people would allow the United States to make promises regarding your land and believe them. The U.S. government did horrible things to the natives of its own land, why anybody would think that they would care more for another's land and its people is confounding. I have read many poems and heard many songs of the natives who lived in my land, of whom I am a descendent, and the parallels to your island home are many. Cultures lost to politics, greed and war is sickening to me. Nuclear bomb testing and the negative impacts on the Marshall Islands is inexcusable. The environmental aspect alone is staggering, add to that the human lives lost, and it is mind-blowing the amount of damage done by those in power. Black Hawk of the Sauk Nation said, "How smooth must be the language of the whites, when they can make right look wrong and wrong look right." These words were spoken about white settlers in North America, but so easily relatable to the problems facing those living in the Marshall Islands. The promises that the United States would take care of your people in the aftermath of the bomb testing proved to be of little value. To that end, I will seek as a citizen of this land to do what I can do, and that is what you asked in your poem, tell them. I will write letters to those in power, I will not vote for those who ignore and deny the promises made. The entire human race is accountable to each other and we should be doing everything in our power to protect those in need. Not just because it is right, although that should be enough, but also because one never knows when they will be the people in need.

In the United States one of the biggest obstacles we face regarding global climate change and environmental protection, is the fact that our President Donald Trump is a climate change denier. I am honestly not sure how a person who is privy to so much knowledge can have the audacity to deny what is right in front of his eyes. Sadly, he is not the only one in power in this country who denies that climate change is caused by mankind. As a student in environmental science one of the first things I have learned is when the major increases in greenhouse gasses was at the same time as the industrial revolution, and I am sorry but that is too large a coincidence to think that humankind has nothing to do with the climate changes we are facing. Climate change is not something that can be fixed overnight. All of us, especially in larger industrial nations such as here in the United States, need to do whatever we can to fight the common enemy of climate change on a personal level and as a nation.

The Islanders from your area have a small community in Arkansas here in the States. The cultural differences must be a challenge for them. I hope that they can hold on to their heritage and find a new place to call home. It is my sincerest hope that some of the easy-going Island vibe will rub off on us, and we can take some time to enjoy.

It is my hope that your beautiful island, with all its many inhabitants from the land to the sea and everyone who lives there will last longer than expected. I sincerely hope we can slow down the rising water. I hope my country that caused so many problems will provide the aide it promised. I will tell my friends and family about your home and the beauty we are so close to losing.

Sincerely,

