



Office of the Speaker
TINA ROSE MUNA BARNES
I Mina' Trentai Singko Na Liheslaturan Guahan



August 18, 2020

Ms. Sandra Reyes Seau
Concerned Citizen
Sandra.seau@gmail.com
671-487-0624

Re: Centennial Celebration of Women's Suffrage

Dear Ms. Seau,

Hafa Adai! Thank you for your letter on Women's Suffrage. From my reading of your letter, it brings up two points: alleged cases of violence against women and what more can the 35th Guam Legislature do to promote women empowerment.

First and foremost – I am not presenting a resolution on Women's suffrage. I defer to the Chairwoman on Committee on the Advancement of Women on this matter. As a woman, one who was born in a different era – I know first hand the struggles I faced. Growing up, I was a proud athlete, who represented Guam in the South Pacific Games. As a female national athlete – it always frustrated me when the men think we were just not good enough. It was that anger and desire to prove them wrong, that made me try harder at each practice, give it my all when we represented our island.

With regards to the statements you made regarding alleged cases of violence against women – given my decades of service as an investigator in the Public Defender's office, I have always gone on the record saying that every man is innocent until proven guilty. As the Chairwoman on Human Resources, I must ensure that both the victim and the perpetrator (both of whom are Gov Guam employees) be afforded their right to due process without any political influence. This stance I took is so that down the road, there is no lengthy Civil Service Commission process that could potentially oblige the Government of Guam to thousands of dollars in back-pay.

As a mother to two daughters, a grandmother to two granddaughters, I could not just “turn a blind-eye” to this situation. Under the guise of a budget meeting, I made sure I went to visit the Guam Customs and Quarantine Agency, to do some investigative work myself. When I went there, I saw first hand the professionalism of the men and women who put their lives on the line to keep our borders safe. Furthermore, it was inspiring for me to learn that there is a female executive-level Colonel who is also the Assistant Chief of CQA and two female supervisors who are directly responsible for personnel. In a male-dominated law enforcement



Address: 163 W. Chalan Santo Papa Hagåtña, GU 96910
Phone: (671) 477-2520/2521 / Email: speaker@guamlegislature.org / Website: www.guamlegislature.org



Office of the Speaker
TINA ROSE MUÑA BARNES
I Mina' Trentai Singko Na Liheslaturan Guahan



arena, it truly shows the close camaraderie and mutual respect within CQA when women are holding positions of leadership – and I also want to point out that unlike other areas of law-enforcement, I learned that CQA’s demographics consist of more females than any of their sister agencies. They have made strides – and we can agree that we **MUST** do better.

My concern and investigation into the alleged abuse of women within the airport also followed the same rationale. I reached out to the relevant stakeholders, who have informed me that the process is taking its course, and an investigation is being conducted. While I believe your letter to me lacks some facts – I think the point you are making is that you are frustrated that when we are told “the process is ongoing” - it takes forever. If that is your concern, let me be the first to tell you that I wholeheartedly agree with you.

If you are not aware, I made headlines a few terms ago for spearheading legislation against human trafficking. Human trafficking is an issue that is rampant within our Blue Continent, and I have been invited on countless occasions to give seminars by the United Nations Development Program (on their dime) to talk about women empowerment. Having been to the different areas within our region, I have seen firsthand, the disrespect afforded my way from regular citizens, and leaders of sovereign nations – simply because I am a woman. As much as I try, it is unfortunate that I cannot change their mindset. As I share with female leaders from around the world during these seminars, we do have the ability to change one thing: to make sure our daughters, do not have to endure what we went through.

Practicing what I preach, I have been the biggest proponent of the Public Policy Institute, an internship program here at my office which I have codified by law as well as the WICHE program, which allows attendance of local students at colleges in the mainland at in state tuition. Through that program, now in its 7th year, I have had many of our graduates, female daughter’s of Guam attending IVY league universities as well as other top-caliber institutions, reach out to me saying “Auntie Tina, thank you for the opportunity to make a difference.” For me personally, that is how I see myself making a difference to ensure that the future women leaders, doctors, professionals, law enforcement officers, can be treated with respect and dignity.

In closing, while I do not have oversight over the Airport or Customs, and as we both await the results of ongoing investigations, I urge you to join me in my initiative of mentoring our future daughters, so that we can make a change in our community. Should you want to discuss this matter further, I commit to you that I will make it happen.

Si Yu'os un binendisi,

Speaker Tina Muña Barnes

Address: 163 W. Chalan Santo Papa Hagåtña, GU 96910

Phone: (671) 477-2520/2521 / Email: speaker@guamlegislature.org / Website: www.guamlegislature.org

