

A very warm Hafa Adai and good morning to our distinguished guests and to the people of Guam. Buenas! As we embark on a new chapter for our island, I want to take this opportunity to thank our people for placing their trust in the current crop of elected leaders island-wide and for allowing us to serve for the next several years. I am humbled to serve as your Speaker and I consider it a great privilege and an honor to uphold the trust and confidence of the people who elected us.

My grandson will be four years old this July and I was just thinking to myself the other day that this is such a wonderful age for kids. Their personalities are developing and blossoming everyday and the best part is that they just love to talk. My grandson is probably dying to tell me something really important right now because asking a 3-year old to sit quietly through a boring inaugural address is just cruel and unusual punishment. That being said, I will do my best to keep this brief. I bring up my grandson's new found love of language for two reasons: first, it is my right as a grandmother to gloat about how cute and smart he is, but more importantly, this is about the value of dialogue. I am so enamored that my grandson can hold a conversation with me because it means that we are truly beginning to understand each other; it means he is learning to love me not just because I'm his grandma and he has to, but because our communication allows him to really get to know me, and I get to know him better too. It is such a simple human interaction, stripped of all the social and political pressure, just a conversation between two people. It is sad that we forget how important these simple things really are.

In my family, communication is king. When my kids were growing up, we always had dinner together as a family. The dinner table was more than just a place to share a meal it was a place to share our lives. It was our way of making sure that the lines of communication were always open in our home. And we were not perfect, we didn't always talk when we should and when we did talk, we didn't always do it the right way, but we were committed to doing it. As a family, we understood that as long as we could sit down and have a conversation, there was no issue that we couldn't work through.

The last time I gave one of these speeches, I said that as a government, we are a family and that we needed to respect each other and work together in order to move our island forward. Today I stand by that statement. I still believe that we are a family. Though at times we may seem like a semi-dysfunctional family, we are still family and no family is perfect. We may bicker and fight and say things that hurt each other, but when it all boils down, we have to love and accept each other and allow ourselves to see the best in each other. Often times it is only our families who can see the good in us. Only those who understand us the most, can see the sunshine hidden beneath the rain. They have the capacity to see the potential of who we could be tomorrow despite our actions today. Sometimes that's all it takes to get through the adversity. Sometimes all we need is someone to believe that we could be better.

Last term, my challenge was to embrace my colleagues in all branches of our government as family. To respect and accept them, to work together, always keeping the people of Guåhan in our hearts and minds. I remain committed to that challenge, so to the newly elected senators: welcome to the family. We've got a lot of problems to work out and surviving as a member of this family will not be easy. You will experience sibling rivalry and you may get hurt along the way, but remember that no matter what happens in this house, we only move forward when we move together. This sort of thing takes work. Good families don't just happen, they require extra effort, sincere compassion, and most importantly they require good communication.

I've noticed that our governmental family has been experiencing a classic break down in communication and this needs to be addressed. It was brought to my attention that there is noticeable conflict between the legislature and our administration. Though tension between the branches is nothing new, what troubles me is that this conflict seems to be most influenced by Governor Calvo and myself. Being an effective communicator is understanding that a good conversation goes two ways and so I acknowledge my role in this situation and I am determined to remedy it. I believe that the only way for us to do so is by repairing the lines of communication. So Governor Calvo, this is your sister asking if we can put our sibling rivalry aside and talk. I am not asking you to agree with me on everything and I am not saying that I will agree with you on everything, but I AM saying that we need to talk; we need to communicate and

find ways to make this relationship work. Let us begin this year the right way leading by example, by swinging the doors of dialogue wide open. Let us begin an open door policy: let us remain open to new ideas and new possibilities. We will do this by never closing a conversation. Let us remain steadfast and determined; let us not be discouraged by disagreement. Instead, let us be motivated and let our discussions blossom and grow, let them evolve and let our understanding evolve with them. If we can remain committed to constant communication, remain interested in each other's ideas and perspectives, loyalties and desires, responsibilities and apprehension; we can truly learn to work together through shared empathy and compassion. We are all here for the same reason, we are all fighting for the same island and the same people, we just have different ways of seeing things. I believe that through dialogue we can learn to understand each other, then we can find a way to create harmony and unity in our government. Dialogue will allow us to find a shared vision for Guåhan that will move us into the next millennium.

These conversations must begin now. There is much to discuss and there is a ton of work to do. The past few years have been difficult and our island has been faced with multiple challenges. We have fallen on hard times when our people are faced with tough decisions, seeing their quality of life depreciate as the cost of living rises. We are getting to a point where our people can no longer afford to live here and we cannot turn a deaf ear to these conversations. We must find creative ways to make our government more efficient and effective in providing for our community's critical needs like health care, education, and social services. Money will always be an issue, and there are no magic beans that will cure our government's financial woes. We need to be proactive in finding ways to stimulate our economy and create jobs for our people, however we must be conscious of how our actions will affect future generations and we must make responsible decisions. These challenges put our people in difficult positions, forcing us into opposing corners, making us forget that we are in this together and the adversity has caused us to turn against each other. We have drawn a line in the sand and we have engaged each other in a war of words, talking AT each other instead of TO each other. Everything from the Fiscal Cliff and Tax Returns to the Military Buildup, has us up in arms talking about each other from a distance, making media statements instead of dialoging face-to-face. Many people have accused me of being anti-buildup or anti-business, when in reality I am just pro-Guåhan and pro-people. The truth is that I am not here to make deals or do favors and I've never been the type to buy into the hype of a goose that lays golden eggs. This is not to say that I am not open to the conversation, I am always willing to listen and willing to seek mutual understanding, but let me be clear in saying that when it comes to the welfare of our island, our community, our families, this leader does not have a price and we will not be bullied into a compromise. I did not seek office for fame and fortune or for power and respect. I do this work because I believe that it is my responsibility to fight for the defenseless and give a voice to the voiceless. So my message to the business community and the federal government is simple: We welcome you to be a part of our Guåhan family, but remember that to be a member of this family, you must love us wholeheartedly. We ask that you treat us like we are your family and that this is your home too. We ask that you remember that we are names and faces, not just numbers and figures.

It is my commitment this term to be a good listener. I pledge to listen with an open mind and heart to all who are willing to vocalize their concerns. I challenge all of my colleagues to do the same: open your doors, your minds, and your hearts. I challenge you to listen. And to the people of Guåhan: I challenge you to speak. Do not wait until the next Election Day to be heard. There are issues to be discussed and action to be taken. Do not be discouraged by the adversity that plagues us; do not be defeated by the obstacles in our path. We do not need a miracle, what we need are ideas. As a community we must find creative solutions to the problems we face. We must find new and innovative ways of doing things. We must adapt to this changing world or we will be left behind, but we must take control of these changes so as not to lose the things that make us who we are. This is your island and your government. This is your children's future. What will your contribution be? Let us work together and be accountable to each other. The voices of 15 senators pale in comparison to the voices of 186,000 strong. Rest assured that you can always count on me to listen.

Saina Ma'ase.

