"WITH [OUR] ENTIRE BREATH":

The US Military Buildup on Guåhan (Guam) and Craig Santos Perez's Literature of Resistance

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ABSTRACT: Since 2006's bilateral US-Japan pact, the island of Guåhan (Guam) has been anticipating an unprecedented buildup of US military and civilian personnel, and a commensurate increase in anti-militarisation and decolonisation activism. This essay reviews the local resistance to the buildup, and examines how the literary strategies of Chamoru poet Craig Santos Perez aim to expand the work of local activism. Drawing on Hannah Arendt's theorisation of political speech in the public sphere and on Arturo Escobar's extension of that public space into "public cyberspheres," I argue that *[guma'],* the most recent volume of Perez's three-book project *from unincorporated territory,* extends the public space of appearance of Guåhan's anti-buildup activism to include the electronic space of online social media. By incorporating the speech emerging from that virtual community into poems, Perez structures and concretises what would otherwise be ephemeral, and invites new readers far from the island of Guåhan into the stakeholding community. Perez's poetic strategies illustrate the way literature can serve as a nexus of activism, charting a way to resist militarisation in Guåhan and beyond.

KEYWORDS: Guåhan (Guam), militarisation, poetry, activism, decolonisation

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As geographer and military historian Sasha Davis has pointed out, the modern US military may be global but it "touches the ground" across the world in places that are always local sites (2011: 215). The location of those sites depends not only on the US military's preferences and on diplomatic relationships with other governments, but also on local support of and resistance to US military presence. Because of increasing resistance in sovereign sites like the Philippines and Okinawa, US military strength has been shifting in the last decades to non-sovereign spaces, whose inhabitants have less power to say no (ibid). Those non-sovereign spaces are particularly likely to be islands and, as the US enacts its 'Pacific Pivot', most likely to be in the Pacific region. As Setsu Shigematsu and Keith L. Camacho (2012: xv) have argued, contemporary militarisation, particularly in the Pacific, is an extension of American and Japanese colonialism: it is precisely the Pacific island sites that endured 20th Century military and colonial occupation whose contemporary non-sovereign political status makes them attractive and available to the US Department of Defense (DoD) as sites for increased militarisation.

US military presence on islands and mainlands alike is usually characterised not only by service-members, munitions, and otherwise obvious military components, but also by a variety of commercial and other infrastructure, ranging from temporary construction housing and support facilities to more permanent expansions of ports, airstrips, service-

member and family housing, schools and exchange and commissary buildings. The result on the landscape is a peculiar kind of urban-, or rather, *suburbanization*; what urban design scholar Mark Gillem has called "America Towns" (2007: xv). The impact of America Town-style population and construction density is especially large in island settings, where land and public infrastructure resources are limited. On the US unincorporated territory of Guam, initial estimates of a 2006 military buildup plan included not only 8,000 marines and their family members, but also 20,000 temporary contract workers and a plan to build new housing for them in undeveloped wilderness rather than billeting them in already-built, vacant housing (Alexander, 2013: 12). In this case, the US military's plan invoked long-simmering resentment of colonial and military land use policies, so that the issue of land use has become a rallying point in Guåhan's anti-buildup resistance movement, galvanising activism among community members who might otherwise support or feel indifferent to the presence of the US military. Further, deep frustration at the fact that Guåhan's inhabitants had no say in the original plan has become a catalyst for the growth of a grass-roots decolonisation movement that the DoD certainly did not intend to spark (M. L. Bevacqua, pc 18th August 2016).

It is exactly this kind of complicated intersection of military planning policy, site-specific historical memory, activist responses, and unintended consequences that demands careful exploration if we are to understand and grapple with the changing conditions enabling contemporary militarisation and resistance to it, according to Victor Bascara, Keith L. Camacho, and Elizabeth DeLoughrey (2015). In the recent special issue of *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, they call for a critical militarisation studies that strategically centers "alternative communities and epistemologies that apprehend and engage with the legacies and currency of Pacific Island militarization" (ibid: 1). This essay seeks to answer that call by answering one of their crucial questions: how, they ask, does the experience of state violence produce and affect "new modes of expression in literature, the arts, activism and politics?" (ibid: 2). I examine militarised suburbanisation on the non-sovereign island Guåhan, and analyse a literary mode of resistance, the poetry of Craig Santos Perez. I shall argue that Perez's poetry seeks to expand the stakeholding audience of Guåhan's anti-base activism and decolonisation movements, and that Perez's particular attention to what constitutes an invested public, and how that public might be expanded, offers a model for literature to enact a discursive transformation of militarised sites, charting a way to resist militarisation in Guåhan and beyond. Perez's poetic project conceptualises a space which, I shall argue, exemplifies the "public cybersphere" of activism anticipated several years ago by Arturo Escobar, and which Judith Butler has more recently theorised in her writing on performative assembly. I shall also hope to highlight how the virtual and real political communities fostered by Perez's work may have implications for other islanded or isolated political communities. Ultimately, this essay answers Camacho, Bascara and DeLoughrey's call with an example of how, by strategically centering alternative communities, we may see new expressions of literature *as* activism and politics, not only alongside them.

Guåhan has been a colony for the past 350 years, since Spain officially occupied the island in the 1660s. In 1898, Spain ceded Guåhan to the US at the close of the Spanish-American War, along with the Philippine Islands, Cuba and Puerto Rico. Until the Spanish-American War, new US territories, such as the Northwest Territory and the Louisiana Purchase, were annexed with the purpose of eventually becoming states, so that the US Constitution "followed the flag" in William Jennings Bryant's famous phrasing (Sparrow, 2006: 2). But the new, noncontiguous territories were far enough away, and culturally distinct enough, to raise questions about the potential relationships between the United States and its

territorial possessions. Beginning in 1901, the Supreme Court *Insular Cases* established an entirely new political status: the "unincorporated territory." The 1901 Downes v. Bidwell decision concluded that "unincorporated territories" were "foreign to the United States in a domestic sense." Inhabitants were neither aliens nor citizens, and the protections of the Constitution could be unevenly applied. As Amy Kaplan, among other scholars, has pointed out, the "designation of territory as neither quite foreign nor domestic was inseparable from a view of its inhabitants as neither capable of self-government nor civilised enough for U.S citizenship" (2005: 842).

Figure 1 - Current military installations on Guåhan and land of interest to the US Department of Defense (Source: Guam and CNMI Military Relocation Final Environmental Impact Statement vii: 111)

Guåhan's inhabitants themselves did not share this view; the island's ambiguous legal status was contested by its inhabitants as far back as 1901 when a delegation from Guåhan petitioned Congress "asking relief from a system of government that subjects a thoroughly loyal people to the absolute rule of a single person" (Herman, 2008: 636). That "single person," from 1898-1941, was the governor of Guåhan, usually a captain and always in the US Navy, who presided over a population of 20,000 islanders with absolute authority (Maga, 1984: 60). Similar petitions were filed throughout the years leading up to WWII, when Guåhan was occupied by Japanese forces from December 10, 1941 until July 22, 1945. When the US military retook the island, Guåhan saw two years of martial law and then returned to Naval dictatorship. Finally, in 1950, Truman signed into law the Organic Act of Guam, which established American citizenship for Guåhan's residents. Under the Organic Act, though, not all of the Constitution's guarantees extended; Guåhan's representative in Congress is non-voting, and residents of Guåhan cannot vote in elections for the president.

In 1987 Guåhan residents approved a Guam Commonwealth Act to become a Commonwealth like the Northern Mariana Islands. The Act was submitted to the US Congress in 1988 and to six subsequent congresses but always failed to pass (Na'puti and Hahn: 2013, 2). Today, Guåhan is one of only 17 non-self-governing territories according to the UN, whose decolonisation process activists have sought to implement in recent years. A provision was passed into law in 1997 for a new plebiscite to vote on the three UN-recognised options, independence, free association, or statehood, but a plebiscite has yet to happen. After a years-long press by the Decolonization Commission for funding to educate the public about the three options, Guåhan Governor Eddie Calvo, in his March 2016 State of the Island address, announced new funding and expressed his hope of scheduling the plebiscite for November 2016 (Calvo, 2016: np). Members of the Decolonization Commission, while glad for the funding allocation, suggested that four months was not a realistic timetable for educating the public (V. Leon Guerrero, pc 19th August 2016). As of early 2017, there are legal challenges about who is eligible to participate in the vote, and while the Independence Task Force has begun using the education funding, the Free Association and Statehood Task Forces have not (V. Leon Guerrero, pc 23rd February 2017). The plebiscite has not yet been scheduled.

Consistently, Guåhan's changes in legal status have been prompted by, and have then affected, the ways land has been distributed and used. As many Chamoru historians have pointed out, land use became a flashpoint after WWII in the push for self-government (Diaz, 2004; M. Perez, 2002; Hattori, 1995). The Land Acquisition Act of 1946 allowed the US military to condemn private land, and by 1947 an estimated 1350 families had lost their homes not to destruction by the Japanese occupation, but to the US Navy's land seizures (Maga, 1984: 71). Guåhan's Congress, still a mostly nominal body in 1947, delivered a formal petition to the Governor calling the Navy's land policy "a refugee-making policy" similar to Japanese occupation policy (ibid). The resulting bad press motivated the Acting Secretary of the Navy to grant limited home rule, which in turn motivated Guåhan's Congress to visit Washington and press the case. Their influence led to the Organic Act, July 21, 1950. At the time of the Organic Act's passing, the US Navy and Air Force controlled about 50,000 acres or over 36% of the island (Rogers, 1995: 230).

In the wake of the Land Acquisition and Organic Acts, Guåhan's pre-WWII villages were reorganised around the confiscated land (Herman, 2008: 638). Gridded streets were given American family names and names related to battle sites and schools were named for presidents (ibid: 640). In 1962, Typhoon Karen leveled the island, and the US sent millions

of dollars to rebuild. Those building projects, combined with the Guåhan government's new emphasis on attracting tourism, created what Valerie Solar-Woodward has called "an economic euphoria" and a further reorganisation of traditional village patterns into American-style subdivisions (2013: 36). As Japanese capital investments began to outweigh the US's in the 1970s, Guåhan became "a consumer society marked by urbanisation" (M. Perez, 2002: 461). 2008's global financial crisis, alongside Japan's own economic downturn in recent decades, has left Guåhan largely dependent on the US military economy. At present, about half of the island's 544 km^2 is taken by bases and other facilities that are inaccessible to non-military, locals and visitors both (Alexander, 2013: 11). Again and still, Guåhan is the US's longest-standing, most permanent "America Town."

In 2006, The United States and Japan agreed to a plan to increase the US military presence on Guåhan by moving soldiers and their families from Okinawa, a concession to anti-base protests there. The 2006 'US-Japan Roadmap for Realignment Implementation' originally alloted an increase of 55,000 people for deployment and construction, including 8000 marines and families, and 20,000 laborers, mostly from the Philippines (Alexander, 2013: 12). The most recent estimates, from August 2015, provide for a buildup stretched out over 13 years, beginning in 2015, with a much smaller population increase: 5000 marines rather than 8000, and fewer than 10,000 new or temporary residents planned at the peak of buildup construction (Dumat-ol Daleno, 2015: np).[1] Those estimates are lower for several reasons, including US Congressional hesitance to sign off on funding, but a primary one is the resistance mounted by Chamoru people themselves, both on and off of the island.[2] Longstanding activist groups like the Organization of People for Indigenous Rights and i nasion chamoru have been joined by new groups formed in order to resist the Realignment Roadmap, such as We Are Guåhan and the Chamoru diaspora-focused Famoksaiyan, and further groups focused primarily on decolonisation, like Our Islands Are Sacred. In various coalitions, these groups have successfully pressed the Department of Defense to relocate planned military housing developments to already-developed base land, rather than leveling new wilderness acreage, and have forced the DoD to consider and choose alternative locations for a planned live firing range that had been slated for a registered archaeological site in the Guåhan National Register of Historic Places (Na'puti and Bevacqua, 2015: 851).

Beyond resisting this most recent encroachment, representatives of these organisations also testified at the UN Committee on Decolonization from 2005 to 2010, urging the Committee to support Guåhan's case for sovereignty and self-determination. As Chamoru rhetoric studies scholar Tiara R. Na'puti points out, the repeated naming of Guåhan as a "colony" in the space of the United Nations "discursively transforms the island from a marginal U.S. territory into a geographic space that merits urgency in both the international and U.S. political arenas" (Na'puti, 2014: 306). It is this "discursive

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[1] For a detailed, if DoD-centered, account of these plans and their 2006-2014 development, see Kan, S. A (2014) 'Guam: U.S. Defense Deployments,' *Congressional Research Service* 26 Nov.

[2] Many Chamorus no longer live on Guåhan; more have immigrated to the United States than remain on the island. Michael P. Perez has pointed out that because of the military's role as a "vehicle of migration," Chamoru immigrants to the US tend to settle near military installations (2002: 468); so that whereas most immigrant experiences are characterised by urban living, the Chamoru immigrant experience, like the experience of living on Guåhan itself, tends toward one of militarised suburbia.

transformation" that is at the heart of Chamoru writer Craig Santos Perez's poetry.

Perez has been a participant in the anti-buildup movement both as an activist, including testifying at the UN in 2008, and as a writer. He has said he hopes, through his poetic works, to transform Guåhan from "a strategic site of the U.S. military (the 'USS Guam').... to a site of resistance for my own voice (and other voices) to resist the reductive and destructive tendencies of America's colonial democracy" (C. Perez, 2012: np). To date, he has published three installments of his ongoing book project, *from unincorporated territory*, each of which pushes further to enact that tranformation. Throughout the books, he interweaves government and other public documents with intimate family stories and Chamoru history, beginning each poem's title with the word "from" and therefore positioning each poem as an excerpt from a longer, incomplete work. As Paul Lai has argued, the open-ended, work-in-progress quality of the project "mirrors the status of Guåhan as a place still in the midst of transformations and contestations" (2011: 7). That open-endedness also facilitates the ways in which, as Otto Heim has suggested, Perez's poetics bring into view a version of Hannah Arendt's "'space of appearance,' the condition of effective political community" (2015: 180). Perez's poetry, especially the most recent volume of the project, *[guma'],* is particularly interested in exploring how such a commmunity's participants and audience might be constituted, and might be sustained beyond the initial moment of gathering. Ultimately the book invites readers to share the work of defining and inhabiting, and one might say "appearing" in, a space of political community based not in geographical or ethnic identification, but in participatory willingness to be counted as a stakeholder, as an agent of transformation.

From its first poem, *from unincorporated territory [guma']* signals its interest in exploring the question of what "Guam" means and to whom.[3] The first poem, "*from* the legend of juan malo [a malologue]" is a series of assertions beginning with "Guam is," each attempting to map Guam's location in the American imagination: "Guam is 'Where America's Day Begins,'" "Guam is a US citizen since the 1950 Organic Act," "Guam 'reps' the '671'" (the island's area code). In the poem's penultimate line, Perez brackets the pronoun "our": "Guam is one of [our] most curious possessions." This bracketing of pronouns recurs in almost all of the following poems. Across their different iterations, the brackets foreground the multiple ways we might imagine a collective "we" that shares a certain attitude toward Guam, a "we" that has been set off, itself "islanded," suggests Hsuan L. Hsu (2012: 306), and so put forth for particular consideration. In this first instance, "we" are distinctly colonial, considering Guam only "one of" our "possessions," and a "most curious" one at at that. Without the brackets, this sentence would be a pointed ventriloquisation of US colonial attitudes. With the brackets, though, Perez calls attention to the staged quality of the statement. The joke in this first poem is not a simple jab, but a signal that what, or rather *who,* goes in those brackets warrants attention.

Over the next several poems, we encounter the brackets repeatedly, and in each case they trouble their pronouns differently. In "*ginen* tidelands," subtitled "*[for my dad],"* the plural pronouns "us" and "our" are bracketed in sentences where, bracketless, they would seem to refer to the poet and his family. Bracketed, though, the scope of who is included in these plural pronouns widens. For example, "us" in the following lines seems to be a group of people gathered for a meal:

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[3] Perez uses the term Guam (rather than Guåhan) in this poem.

his hands—
husk coconut—

cooks and
feeds [us]—

stories— (14)

In these lines, "his hands" not only feed "us" what "he" is cooking, but also "stories." Stories told by Perez's father and grandfather have appeared in all three books of *from unincorporated territory*. The bracketing in the poem nods to those previous excerpts, allowing the possibility that "we" may exceed those family members and friends Perez's father actually feeds, to include those who have been "fed" his stories on this occasion or others. In this sense, the space "we" share includes not only the imagined kitchen of the poem, but the contiguous imaginative space of the three-book project.

The book's third poem, "*ginen* (sub)aerial roots *[13° 28' 0"N / 144° 46' 59" E]*," expands the brackets' work by layering two languages into them. The poem's final stanza describes how traditional Chamoru houses were built on pillars called *latte* stones. Interwoven into those sentences are Chamoru translations for different grammatical possessives:

> *Timbers and coconut fiber* first-person singular [gumå'-hu: my house] *were used to create a floor* first-person plural [guma'-måmi] *and A-frame dwelling structure atop the latte stones* second-person singular [gumå'-mu]....
>
> > *Archaeologists have found an estimated 270 latte sites* third-person singular [gumå'-ña: her/his house].... (18)

Paul Lai has discussed the way Perez's bracketing of Chamoru words in his previous book, *[saina],* works to "suggest a volatile relationship between colonial and Indigenous languages," sometimes isolating or imprisoning Chamoru words, and sometimes marking them as separate from the English text in order to define them or draw attention to their subsequent bracketed absence (2011: 9-10). Here in "*ginen* (sub)aerial roots," the bracketing isolates a syntactical space that understands ownership as unstable, temporary; the Chamoru construction in any given bracketing may be one possibility in a set of interchangeable possessive pronouns. [4] Ownership, here, is cumulative: the poem progresses through *my, your, hers, his, their house*, to arrive at the line "sheltered space of the raised house *with [our] entire breath*". The chain of Chamoru possessives unfolds, allowing the poem to arrive at a bracketed space filled with the the broadest and most inclusive possessive pronoun—first-person plural—and resting here in English, the language that requires no translation by Perez to be understood by the reader. The modifier "entire" in "[our] entire breath" reiterates that inclusivity: "entire" breath is the breath of all of us.

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[4] Also relevant is the convention of using brackets to signal a modification in a quotation, and the practice in translated works of using brackets to indicate alternative translations. In both cases, the brackets encourage us to think about the alternatives to the selected pronouns: why "we/us" instead of "they/them" or "you"?

If "our" breath might be said to be coming together, coalescing, becoming apparent as a shape, then how and to what end? As I noted above, Perez explicitly wants to transform Guåhan from a site of US military strategy into a site of resistance, for his own and other voices, against American colonial and military power. Those "other voices" are key: it is important to Perez that this discursive site of resistance be available to more people than those who already care about Guåhan's decolonisation struggles. It is useful here to revisit Arturo Escobar's 1999 explanation of how activists might build bridges between local sites of activism and expanding global networks of contact. Escobar draws on Paul Virilio, Manuel Castells, Gustavo Ribeiro, and Arif Dirlik to chart how local places are increasingly dominated by the globalising networks of capital, and how such local places may reclaim some of that public sphere by "project[ing] themselves into the spaces that are presently the domains of capital and modernity" as Dirlik has put it (1997: 40, quoted in Escobar 1999: 49). Escobar emphasises that activists must maintain a connection to their local place of action, careful not to become disengaged and dislocated from the local as they build virtual networks of support, and suggests the term "place-based activism" to describe such an activism, and the term "public cyberspheres" to describe the kinds of space such an activism seeks to create and expand. Importantly, he points out that the mere fact of activists using online platforms does not mean that those activists are successfully balancing their locatedness with their virtual reach; rather, activists seeking to appropriate online networking technologies "for social transformation must build bridges between place and cyberspace—between activity and interactivity," Escobar explains. Such "balancing acts" must be "politically constructed" (1999: 47).

I would like to suggest that Perez's work is precisely such a politically constructed balancing act. Perez creates a gathering space that is contained by neither the real nor the virtual. Rather, it blurs the border between the virtual and physical from both directions, becoming a space that gathers far-flung stakeholders who already consider themselves part of an effective real-world political community, and that also gathers new potential stakeholders, inviting them to join that offline community. And here is where Perez's example may offer a model to participants in other political communities in island settings, who may be isolated geographically, but are frequently connected across oceans to diasporic populations, as to how to navigate the difficulties of being heard and found relevant by distant ears. As Escobar points out, the crucial feature is movement, a "tacking back and forth" between the local site of activism and the broader networks made possible by cyberspace (1999: 32). This oscillatory movement also echoes recent responses to global/local binarism in island studies as a field, resembling what James Clifford has identified as a necessary "jagged path" between local "notions of indigenous or native affiliations" and "generalized 'postcolonial' discourses of displacement".[5] The space Perez's work creates is particularly invested in such an oscillation, moving back and forth between Guåhan and a broader activist and reading community.

Perez uses Facebook, in particular, to construct this oscillatory space. In the series of poems in *[guma']* titled "*ginen* fatal impact statements," Perez incorporates public comments from the US Navy's Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The 11,000-page DEIS, detailing the myriad ways the buildup would impact Guåhan environmentally, including new land acquisition and leasing, was released November 20, 2009, and a

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[5] See the discussion of Clifford's and other scholars' theorisations of alternatives to global vs. local binaries in island studies in Goldie (2011: 1-40).

comment period of 90 days was allowed to the public. As anti-buildup activists pointed out, 90 days was not much time to read the 11,000-page statement. We Are Guåhan coordinated efforts to read sections and summarise them, taking care to identify the most problematic proposed consequences, including the lack of adequate wastewater treatment facilities and the requisitioning of new land. Over a series of public meetings, attendees contributed nearly 10,000 comments, more than any community response to a DoD EIS statement in history (Leon Guerrero, 2016: np). In July 2010, the DoD published the Final Environmental Impact Statement, including a separate volume containing the public comments. As Perez explains in one excerpt of his poem, he copied and pasted "phrases, sentences, words, passages" from that volume and posted them as his Facebook status, where other people sometimes continued commenting (2014: 44). Selected phrases and passages, along with some subsequent Facebook comments on them, have become the text of "*ginen* fatal impact statements."

The first of the series alerts us immediately to the source of its language; the first several stanzas identify themselves as excerpts, beginning "DEIS Public Comment:" and then following with quoted text. The range of comments illustrates a range of constituencies responding to the DEIS, and more broadly to the buildup's potential social and economic impact:

> DEIS Public Comment: *This is a huge document to digest*

> DEIS Public Comment: *It doesn't matter what we gain from the buildup; it's what we lose*

> DEIS Public Comment: *Buenas. First off, thank you for the false sense of participation created by the comment period. The opportunity to vent, while completely meaningless, is at least very cathartic.* (25)

Each of these comments operates in a different register; they seem to be different individual voices, though we may track patterns of concern throughout. The question of "digestion" for one—this document is a "huge" one to digest, and should we manage to digest it, what will become of the waste we produce? That question is asked literally in comment 5—how will the buildup affect the waste management infrastructure of the island—but also metaphorically, where comment 3 essentially calls b.s. on the public comment forum as a meaningless gesture. That callout continues in the lines that follow, which are indented and italicised, beginning with an m-dash, indicating a speech act much as "DEIS Public Comment:" did:

> —*Many comments address how full of _____ our colonizer is, but the real concern was where our colonizer was going to put all that _____, especially with 80,000 more _____holes coming to Guam.* (25)

Progressively, these selected comments, and this italicised response to them, are a multilayered comment on sewage: the literal kind that will stress Guåhan's available sewage system, and the metaphorical kind, which allows 90 days for people to read 11,000 pages of a report and respond to it without any guarantee that their responses will be read, much less taken into consideration. Perez's juxtaposition of these selected comments foregrounds not only the multiple types of speaking voices interested in responding to the DEIS, but also the range of listeners these voices seem to be imagining, and the degree to which they are imagining any listener at all.

The final stanza directly poses the questions the selection and juxtaposition of other comments has been suggesting:

> DEIS Public Comment: *Where are the comments to these issues sent? Who sees them? Will the public see any of these comments?* (25)

The first two of these questions ask explicitly who is listening—where are the comments sent, who sees them. But the third question asks something even more crucial: will "the public" see them as well? Such a question is not a new concern for Guåhan's activists; it was central during the earliest public meetings held in 2007 when the DoD, in preparation for the eventual DEIS, first hired contractors to assess the likely environmental impact. We Are Guåhan members LisaLinda Natividad and Victoria-Lola Leon Guerrero recall how in village meetings, public comments were collected on written slips of paper in a "trashcan-like" receptacle, with no opportunity to speak one's concerns aloud, resulting in the sense that villagers were denied "the opportunity to ascertain and convey community," instead reducing feedback to fragmented, individual responses (Natividad and Leon Guerrero: 2010, 8).

In "*ginen* fatal impact statements," the question of whether "the public" will see any of "these comments" signals the abiding scepticism of a community aware that their responses may reach no one's ears or eyes but their own, on the one hand, but even more importantly, that they may not even reach each other's. They may be a "public" contributing feedback during the "public comment period," but they are not a "polis" possessing power and agency in Arendt's sense of a gathering of individuals seeing each other as they discuss a common concern. Becoming that polis would require that each of the comments become part of a collective response, that each commenter become part of a "we" that can see itself, and can be seen by others, as a collective, delimited group with a stake in what happens to Guåhan.

As Judith Butler has pointed out in her recent *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, the street or public square cannot always be taken for granted as the ground of public space (2015, Kindle version, Chapter 4, paragraphs 4-5). Butler's examples include situations in which police or private enterprise occupy what would otherwise be public space, but her point applies equally to Guåhan's context, where that space is occupied and delimited by the US military, and where it is particularly difficult to claim the street because the public seeking to claim it is diasporic, scattered geographically and unable to meet at once in the same place and time. Butler suggests that, in such cases, the conditions of appearance include "infrastructural conditions of staging as well as technological means of capturing and conveying a gathering" (Introduction, paragraph 24). Particularly, the conditions of appearance may depend on a public space being created from the available existing infrastructure (Introduction, para. 24). Creating a public space where a polis may appear is precisely what Perez's "*ginen* fatal impact statements" accomplishes.

For Perez, there are three key available infrastructure elements: the public comment space provided by the DoD's EIS, the social media networking tool Facebook, and the conventional medium of printed poetry volumes. Having gathered comments selectively from the 10,000 included in the EIS's Volume 10, Perez moves them into a virtual community space, a forum in which interested parties can constitute a public visible to themselves. His use of Facebook confirms the existence of a listening audience, and an

audience that can do more than listen—it can contribute. In that virtual space, Perez has encouraged those conversations to continue in the public sphere, and then has worked them into a poem in a way that at once acknowledges their ephemerality and makes them permanently structured in relation to each other, rather than random or merely chronological. That poem's printing on paper, in a tangible volume that may itself be distributed geographically, extends that virtual space back into the physical world, into myriad local spaces where individual readers hold the book in hand. By creating a space of appearance from the available infrastructure, he has made the public comment process work to support and define and strengthen the "public" whose interests are at stake. Where the EIS process may be dissolving any sense of "public" it purports to respect by banishing each member of that public into an auditorless void or a thousand-page collection of unsorted comments, Perez has helped bring a form of polis into view, one that would not otherwise be recognisable as such. Throughout, Perez "tacks back and forth," as Escobar would say, maintaining a sense of groundedness in the local while always reaching beyond the geographical and temporal limits of activist events on Guåhan itself.

Since *[guma']'s* publication, Perez's poetic work has become fully oscillatory via his live reading practice, in which he not only moves the ephemeral quality of virtual community onto the page, but also invites temporary assemblages of real-world readers and audiences into his community online. When Perez gives public readings, he begins by taking a few still photos and sometimes a video of the audience, explaining that he will put the files on his Facebook page, and encouraging the audience to become friends with him there[6]. If those audiences comment on a future post, they may find themselves "appearing" in a poem in a future installment of *from unincorporated territory.* Perez's strategy of invitation works to foster a reciprocal relationship, positing the possibility of collaborative participation in a reading event as an echo and continuation of collaborative community action. Perez makes it possible for audience members to see themselves being seen, invites them to see themselves as joining what may begin in a temporary assemblage but grows into a living, lasting one.

Fundamentally, Perez is interested in expanding a stakeholding community beyond those immediately affected by what happens on and to Guåhan. Broadening the identification with this political community is necessary because the community's root space is a small island that, as Perez drily acknowledges, sometimes does not even appear on maps (2008: 7). Purposeful effort has to be made to bring Guåhan as an island, and as the rooted location of a particular decolonisation movement, into wider visibility. Following Escobar's anticipation of activist appropriation of online technologies to build broader networks of coalition and support, Perez's work invites all of us into the "we" that constitutes an already engaged, already effective political community, to supplement the work activist groups have been successful with, and to build on it. Always, the origin is *from* the *unincorporated territory,* the literal island of Guåhan, the specific site of local resistance to the locally-felt iteration of global militarisation. But the political community it gives rise to is not an island, is not isolated: it is a connected space that blends and sustains virtual and real-world sites of appearance. That space is Escobar's public cybersphere made manifest, and it is a model of a powerful synergy of literature and activism in the service of decolonisation.

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[6] For an example, see this 2010 reading at City Lights Bookstore in San Francisco (Perez begins at 2:20): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWP09v8a_1Y

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