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MARSHALL ISLANDS FIELD REPORT

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CULTURAL IMPACT OF THE U.S. ATOMIC TESTING PROGRAM

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by Glenn Alcalay

EBEYE ISLAND (KWAJALEIN ATOLL)

ALMIRA MATAYOSHI (Age: 44)

"I was living on Rongelap at the time of the explosion. The flash of light was very strong, and it seemed there was a strong power in that lightening which lasted for only a split-second--it came and went so fast. Then came the big sound of the explosion--it was quite awhile before the fallout came. My eyes felt like there was something in them and they became irritated. The powder was yellowish and when you walked it was all over your body. Then people got very weak and began to vomit. Most of us were weak and my son was weak and out of breath.

One of my babies was born in 1955, and it did not have any bones in its body. After that I had problems with the next pregnancy and they had to rush me to Kwajalein hospital because I was bleeding. There they gave me a **D&C** and it caused so much pain that I was temporarily blinded--they had to give me ten pints of blood. Then I continued to have problems: my oldest son was a year old at the time of 'the bomb' and he was playing outside at the time and his hair turned red from the fallout. Now he does not grow, and he is one of the two boys who Dr. Conard tested some new medicines with. It is clear to me that this is caused by the radiation because during the explosion my son did not eat while he had the powder all over him. My other son was born around the time of the fallout and he has had his thyroid removed, and I am sure this is from the bomb.

I do not want my children to go back to Rongelap, and I would like to find a place where my children can live peacefully and have a good life. They will get 'poison' if they go back to Rongelap; there is a lot there and I am afraid.

I am now married to a Hawaiian man and we lived in Rongelap for awhile. He tells me that he does not want our children to go back to Rongelap because of the 'poison.'

I have some experience from 1946, when I was ten years old at the time. The AEC brought many Navy ships into the Rongelap lagoon--I think there were about six destroyers that had been used in tests at Bikini. We kids swam out to these ships and found many cans of food, and we brought them back to our families and they ate this food. After two weeks the AEC came back for these ships and then they sunk them at the pass in Rongelap. After two weeks an airplane flew over our island and dropped a letter written in English which read: "Please don't eat the tuna fish." We now know that the food in those cans was full of 'poison.'

In 1978 I was in Japan to attend an anti-bomb conference at Nagasaki and Hiroshima hospitals and we visited the bomb victims there. The people told us of some women who had committed suicide because they felt they were in prison and could not visit their relatives. This is the same feeling we now have living on Ebeye due to our inability to visit our families on Rongelap where we refuse to live because of the 'poison.'

The number of problems are increasing with time, and now we are told that the Northern Marshalls are contaminated, and that even the northern half of Rongelap is off-limits because of the 'poison.' I miss one of our favorite foods--arrowroot--which is gone after 'the bomb.'

I have pains and much fear from 'the bomb.' At that time I wanted to die, and I have never experienced anything like it. At that time we were really suffering; our bodies ached and our feet were covered with burns, and our hair fell out. Now I see babies growing up abnormally and some are crazy, but none of these things ever happened to us before 'the bomb.' It is sad to see the babies now.

The United States tested bombs here because of the expanse of water and because our islands were suitable for testing. They did not care about the people in the Marshalls--they think they are something to use for testing. It is just like what the French are doing to the people of Tahiti, and some of those people were put into prison for protesting.

I don't want the United States to test anymore in our islands-- I do not want this experience again. We now need independent doctors to help us with our problems as the AEC doctors have not really helped us to understand our problems. It has now been twenty-seven years since 'the bomb,' and at first the people here did not really understand what was going on. But now that some concerned people are helping us I am sure that things will get better. Also, if I knew then what I know now, I never would have gone back to Rongelap when they returned us in 1957."

ETRY ENOS (Age: 42)

"I was on Rongelap in 1954 and heard the explosions and saw the sky turn red. During this time I was cooking food for the school students--it was still dark and I saw the entire sky change colors. I thought that a terrible thing was happening and I was afraid. Later something fell down on us and it caused the water in the wells to turn yellow. The next day an airplane came to check our island, and then the next day a ship arrived for our rescue.

When we arrived on Kwajalein we started getting burns all over our bodies, and people were feeling dizzy and weak. At that time we