



Speaker: **MISA4thePacific / Republic of the Marshall Islands**

MISA4thePacific is a student-led movement created by RMI students in Suva. This group of students strives to empower regional youths and students to voice and fight colonial injustices in the Pacific. MISA has actively advocated for nuclear justice issues as well as climate change.

I was 7 years old at that time. At the time we saw the explosion we thought the Americans were in another war, us kids. But we really didn't know anything because we were young. We saw our water had turned yellow. We didn't know anything but we drank it anyways. Our food turned yellow. We saw powder substances, but we really didn't know anything because we were young. The adults probably understood, but I'm not sure we didn't know anything about poison (contamination). We cried. I was terrified.

Hours later a plane came, they took the pregnant mothers and elders. Then they said there was one more space left on the plane. I jumped to my grandparents and said "Me!" So we flew to Kwajalein, but the rest of the people stayed. They were waiting for the warship that was coming from somewhere near America. But we flew to Kwajalein.

I had no idea at that time. I was probably 3 or 4 years old. But, I used to hear stories of white substances in our drinking water at Ujelang. The old men thought it was something to do with the water, but they were from the bomb testings.

What I felt that day the bomb was detonated, we were all nervous. I was very nervous.

I am actually from Bikini Atoll. I was born on Kwajalein in 19... 1968. The Americans told the Bikinians that Bikini was safe and clean for the people to get back to, so in 1974, I was actually one of those kids playing on the long white sandy beaches of Bikini Atoll. So my parents, we moved to Bikini and in 1978 they said "whoops sorry it's actually a little bit more radiated than we thought".

He's older than me. His name is Iroji Kebenli. He is gone now.

At this time you have come to hear this story

I am heartbroken because my mom has passed away, my dad has passed away, all my older sisters have passed away, all because of the nuclear testings. Throughout my life, I've had thyroid surgeries, three times. I've had a stroke. Everyday I take nine pills. One pill I've been taking for 5 years now everyday. I believe it's from the poison (radiation). But I continue to look up to God for His help.

I heard some stories about Runit. Coconuts and pandanas were abundant, But after the testings, it's been bad. It's really bad in Runit. There are pandanas trees, but now they are contaminated. We can't eat them. There are coconut trees there, but we're told not to touch them. We didn't understand anything. It was our first time seeing what was happening. We were all nervous. We were thinking we were all going to die.

After the bombs, the lives of Bikinians drastically changed. We cried. We wept. We were in despair



Why wouldn't we cry? That's all we can do. While we were there, they would come back. they would come back to Bikini and do testings to see how high the radiation was in our body. So, looking back I'd say that, you know they were doing some radiation studies, radiation effects on human beings.

So, that is where I am from, that is where my mother's from. Both my mom and dad died. They both passed away. They died of cancer.

This is a glimpse to the eyes that have witness loss, displacement, neglect and chaos. As time changed the situation remained the same. The tears that shed on the day of two suns are the same tears that surround our Lagoon, the flakes of the fallout did not only fall into our skins, put on to our destiny.

But now is the time to voice the voiceless to wipe the tears shed over the years and to shift the narrative as people of great navigation, who have been forcibly displaced, who must continue to look ahead and set sail.

Our hopes and goals for those to come in the next generation is that they stand firm and push leaders to address these issues. I think it's important to discuss it now because we are losing a lot of land and just like the Runit Dome, in Enewetak the more land we lose. The greater chance of it spilling out into our ocean and ruining our fish and ruining our fish. Not just our fish, but the Pacific.

The survivors have shared their stories of the time the bombs were dropped and the aftermath, including impacts on health, displacement and trauma. Now, as most of the survivors have passed and the very few remaining are very ill, the plights remains and is driven by Marshallese youth throughout the world determined to find justice.

Disclaimer

This transcript is at the responsibility of Peace Boat and may not be completely the same as the original testimony. The original testimony was presented online at the World Nuclear Survivors Forum 2021 on December 2-3, where over 30 nuclear survivors from five continents around the world shared their voices with more than 1000 people. The Forum was hosted by Peace Boat in partnership with the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). The stories and panel discussions are all available for viewing on demand via Youtube or on our website here: <https://nuclearsurvivors.org>

