

Article XII of the CNMI Constitution, "Restriction on Alienation of Land"— where owning land is restricted to people of Northern Marianas descent. This seems to be a frequent conversation, as there are many opinions on this topic. My belief is this: Article XII plays a vital role in the Constitution and in protecting people of Northern Marianas Descent. To put it in perspective, we are a small dot on the map, but if you look closer, you'll find culture, tradition, and a unique way of life. Article XII is not about restricting other people from owning land, but rather putting its people first. NMI descendants are a minority, and for us, this is the only place in the world that is truly ours. Shouldn't we do everything we can to defend our lands? I believe Article XII should be maintained in order for us protect our culture, live sustainably, and pass on land to future generations.

Over the course of the CNMI's history there have been several attempts of people taking over and influencing our culture and lifestyle. Now, we are a U.S. Territory and have had a lot of development more than ever before. Although development and the establishments of different businesses are a major component of our economy, we should not forget about NMI descendants. When we think through an economic lens, it's easy for us to lose sight of our origins and allow our home to get even more colonized. More colonization can set back our efforts in carrying on our culture. Article XII allows us to have a good balance of both development and the preservation of our land. I believe NMI descendants have the right to be put as a priority when it comes to land. After all, it is the very place they were born, the first place they called home.

Article XII helps NMI descendants to be self-sufficient. This could mean different things. For a lot of people, this could mean growing crops on their land for their families. It could also mean using land for business. Whatever the case may be, acquiring land is an important part of being able to provide for oneself and family. Article XII gives NMI descendants an advantage in taking ownership of land. If land on the CNMI was open to

everyone, it wouldn't be very fair for NMI descendants. When it comes to competition in ownership, I believe everyone looks for someone with the highest economic class. This could possibly mean people who are not from here who have a higher education and income are most likely going to outbid NMI descendants. If NMI descendants chose to leave the CNMI, it would not be any easier. This is why maintaining Article XII is important. This part of the Constitution allows NMI descendants to make a living and provide not just for themselves, but for their families. When we help our people, they help us in having a thriving community.

Maintaining Article XII guarantees a place for future generations. It is very common for parents to give land or pass down land to their children. Children may inherit their parent's land so that it now becomes their home. They then pass it down to their children, and so on and so forth. Through this custom, they are able to keep that close connection with their families. They get to preserve and possibly learn from the history of their land. If Article XII was not a part of our constitution, this may not be possible. With Article XII, the future generations never have to worry about not having a space on our islands. In fact, this should never be problem for NMI descendants. Along with passing down land to future generations, we ensure that children live where they were born and raised. It guarantees that they grow up in the same environment where our culture is being taught, and where they can continue to pass it down forever. I truly believe that if there is land for our people, our people will give back and serve our islands.

To abolish Article XII of the CNMI constitution would be a big misjudgment and disservice to NMI descendants. Our history shows that our ancestors have fought so hard for our people and our way of life. We have survived multiple invasions and still manage to keep our culture alive. As NMI descendants, we need to make sure that the efforts of our ancestors are not taken for granted. At the same time, we need to make sure that the youth of NMI descendants are guaranteed a space on our lands. We should never get to a place where there

is no room for our people. Maintaining Article XII makes this a very possible reality. With Article XII, we can protect our culture, live sustainably, and ensure a place for future generations.