Introduction

HOME ON THE RANGE: US EMPIRE AND INNOCENCE IN THE COLD WAR PACIFIC

“SO WE CAN’T GO WITH RIBELLES?”

Darlene Keju was born in 1951 on Ebeye Island in Kwajalein Atoll, in the Marshall Islands. Darlene was born seven years after the US military had attacked its Japanese enemy on Kwajalein, leveling it, the largest island within the atoll, during the most destructive bombing campaign of the Pacific War. She came into the world five years after the US Navy had begun testing nuclear weapons in the Northern Marshall Islands, a campaign that spanned twelve years. Radioactive fallout plagued Darlene within a few years of her birth, alongside hundreds of other Marshallese. Decades later Darlene developed breast cancer that would spread to her bones and lungs and tragically take her life at the age of forty-five.

Darlene was born during the height of the Cold War. Her life began amid the McCarthy witch hunts in the United States; one year after Paul Nitze of the State Department penned National Security Council Policy Paper 68. NSC 68 called for a tripling of US defense spending to fight global communism and became a blueprint for the massive increase in US military spending that informed the rise of the military-industrial complex in the decades that followed. Darlene’s life, like so many other
Marshallese lives, was significantly impacted by all of these events shaping the Cold War, just as the generation before them had been shaped by the battles of the Pacific War unfolding in their islands.

While historians have often turned their attention to the Pacific to examine the battle histories of World War II, this book centers the region as a lens into the Cold War and argues that the Marshall Islands are central to understanding that broader global history. *Suburban Empire* argues that global change has both shaped and been shaped by Pacific histories and specifically the consequential events taking place in the Marshall Islands and on Kwajalein Atoll following World War II. With a focus on the Cold War era, this book traces how Darlene’s homelands were transformed as they became identified by the US Navy as ideal staging grounds for US development of weapons of mass destruction, a historic and ongoing campaign that has buttressed the rise of the postwar US security state. I examine the US quest for security during the Cold War and the enormous costs paid by Marshallese colonial subjects, whose homelands were taken over to embark on that mission.

One feature of the postwar US security state was its perpetually illusive character, a state of security never fully achievable globally or locally, but something always on the horizon and thus necessitating endless investment in resources.¹ This book is centrally concerned with the costs of this continual quest for security for those coming under the realm of an expanding base empire—the relational *insecurities* produced by this security project—and the historic and ongoing US attempts to erase those costs. As US military and civilian contractors professionally and materially profited from their national security mission, Marshallese paid the ultimate price through their lives, health, lands, and sovereignty. But as this book also traces, as military and civilian personnel attempted to disavow those costs by normalizing the expansion of US bases globally while shrouding the devastating impacts of that mission in a veil of innocence, Marshallese refused to accept the erasure of their lived experiences. Instead, many challenged the colonial conditions framing their lives. Darlene Keju was among those who early on in life pulled back this veil and probed the strange phenomenon that was US military control over her homelands.

As a toddler on Ebeye, Darlene was remembered as curious, always posing questions, foreshadowing a path toward activism as an adult. Her
caregiver, Neijon, who lost her mother as US and Japanese soldiers battled in her homelands, recalled the toddler Darlene “always asking questions.”

She recounted a memory of Darlene watching Marshallese workers returning on a ship to Ebeye from Kwajalein Island, where they had been laboring in support of the US Navy. Observing the three-mile commute that bridged Kwajalein and Ebeye across the atoll, Darlene asked Neijon: ‘Why do we [Marshallese] have to wear badges to go to Kwajalein?’ ‘Ebeye it’s part of Kwajalein, isn’t it? Why can only a few people go to Kwajalein?’” Neijon recalled: “So I’d answer that it’s because it is a ribelle [American] place. ‘So we can’t go with ribelles?’ [Darlene asked.] ‘I couldn’t answer that.’

At such a young age, what Darlene already intuited as she watched Marshallese people denied the opportunity to live on their own lands was the remarkable nature of the structure of segregation and surveillance imposed by the US military on Kwajalein Atoll. To Darlene, this seemed curious and required explanation. At the time, US military personnel were living on Kwajalein Island, using it primarily as a support base for nuclear testing in the Northern Marshall Islands and as a fueling station for military activities in the Korean War. In 1951, the year Darlene was born, the navy had displaced all Marshallese workers from Kwajalein to Ebeye, workers who had been living alongside US military residents helping rebuild the island following the war. After 1951, while the military continued to rely on the labor of both US and Marshallese workers to operate its ongoing mission, Kwajalein would exclusively house US workers and their family members. Ebeye became home to the military’s commuting Marshallese workforce and their dependents, as well as a growing number of Marshallese displaced within the atoll to make way for expansive US weapons testing. By the mid-1950s, Darlene moved with her parents to Wotje (a Marshallese atoll east of Kwajalein), where her family lived for several years during the peak of the nuclear-testing campaign. By the time Darlene returned to Ebeye in the 1960s to attend a Protestant mission school—her body carrying the invisible but damaging impacts of irradiation—the military had transitioned Kwajalein’s activities from supporting the testing of nuclear weapons to the vehicles for their delivery: intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

To support this transition from nuclear to ICBM testing during the 1960s, the US Army displaced more Marshallese from home islands
throughout the atoll (clearing space for a missile impact zone), while transforming Kwajalein Island into a home for US workers. As a recruitment and retention strategy to lure its most elite workforce, the army created a home away from home for these engineers, scientists, and their families, investing in domestic and consumer luxuries on Kwajalein to support a comfortable suburban family lifestyle. The military mapped a mythical landscape of small-town Americana onto Kwajalein, replete with ballparks, a golf course, the local Surfwave and island Macy’s, and palm-tree-lined row housing. The island became a space exclusively housing these US families to which Marshallese service workers would commute daily from Ebeye to cook, clean, landscape, and provide childcare and other services. As Kwajalein was restaged as a tropical-style Mayberry in the Central Pacific, Ebeye became the most densely populated space in Oceania, a racialized and impoverished home to those who had been displaced and those in Kwajalein’s segregated service sector. This dynamic that emerged during the 1960s was decried by Marshallese activists and political leaders, and by the 1970s and 1980s US and Pacific investigative journalists called it “American apartheid in the Pacific.” This segregated labor and residency structure, built to support US missile testing at Kwajalein, persists today.

Darlene Keju’s intuition as a toddler that this structure of segregation enacted costs for Marshallese likewise hinted at an awareness of relational gains enjoyed by those foreigners living an exclusionary existence in her islands. The enormous costs Marshallese have continued to pay for seven decades of uninterrupted US weapons testing in their homelands has directly informed those benefits, from the individual research careers of engineers and scientists, to the wealth gained by an array of logistics contractors, to thousands of US salaries earned by workers living subsidized lives on Marshallese lands. But the ultimate prize came through the ascendance of the United States to the position of global military hegemon. This expansion of US military power, buttressed by colonial control over the lands of Marshallese and so many others in the postwar era coming under the US base imperium, calls for an update to President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s 1961 warning about the dangers of a rising “military-industrial complex.” This book argues that when we center the history of the Marshall Islands and Kwajalein Atoll, the truth of that historic, cautionary
speech resides more accurately within the realm of a military-industrial colonial complex.

*Suburban Empire* chronicles how the postwar history of Kwajalein Atoll in the era of US colonial control offers a window into the manifestations of Cold War US expansion as what historian Patricia Nelson Limerick has called an “empire of innocence.” While Limerick’s analysis focused on disavowal of westward imperial expansion across the North American continent, here I explore how the myth of US innocence in the imperial Pacific was normalized through the physical landscape of small-town suburbia at Kwajalein and the global diplomatic framework of the United Nations. On a global scale, I examine the ways UN sanction of US colonialism in Micronesia through the 1947 Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands Agreement (hereafter the Trusteeship Agreement) enabled one of the most destructive imperial projects to be framed as a “special trust.” At the local level, this book focuses on how US military and civilian settlers migrating to support weapons testing on Kwajalein produced and reproduced the cultural façade of small-town suburbia restaged onto this Marshallese homeland.

In the era when US families began migrating to Kwajalein, James Baldwin was reflecting on the violence and destruction of slavery and its legacies alongside the nation’s enduring denial of that history. In 1963 he wrote: “One can be, indeed one must strive to become, tough and philosophical concerning destruction and death, for this is what most of mankind has been best at since we have heard of man. . . . But it is not permissible that the authors of devastation should also be innocent. *It is the innocence which constitutes the crime.*” On Kwajalein, the innocence of Cold War suburban family life mapped onto some of the most destructive and deadly weapons testing in global history, tests that irreversibly imprinted devastation onto Marshallese lands, bodies, and lives. As Marshallese strategically used the United Nations as a platform to challenge the global structure sanctioning US imperial expansion into their homelands, many also creatively engaged this suburban landscape of innocence erected atop their home islands. In doing so, they unsettled this façade of innocence and its erasure of US colonial destruction in their lands while reclaiming Kwajalein as *their* home. These protests culminated most impactfully in a 1982 movement that Marshallese activists called Operation Homecoming,
This mass sail-in built upon years of challenges to many features of US imperialism, including the structure of segregation at Kwajalein. Some Marshallese protesting against these manifestations of empire on Kwajalein linked their demands to the broader Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement rippling across Oceania during the 1970s and 1980s. In doing so they took their place within this vast coalitional movement that reshaped not only Pacific history but the broader postwar history of global decolonization.

This book chronicles this complex history with a focus on how US imperialism took shape locally in the Marshall Islands in the specific moment of the Cold War. This is a story that centers place—tracing the historic transformations of Kwajalein and Ebeye—as these island changes offer a lens on the broader story of how Marshallese navigated the impacts of US military imperialism in their homelands following World War II. US disavowal of empire alongside its vast and destructive expansion is not a new phenomenon, as scholars of US empire and American exceptionalism have revealed. This book turns to the particular Cold War iterations of that imperial formation in the Marshall Islands—a history of *suburban empire*—and how Marshallese navigated its terrain in their homelands.

**MARSHALLESE GEOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY, AND GENEALOGY:**
**KWAJALEIN AND EBEYE IN A “SEA OF ISLANDS”**

As Darlene Keju watched Marshallese workers commute across the lagoon from Kwajalein in 1951, pondering the segregation structure separating these two islands, she did so while standing on Ebeye’s coral’s sediment, which rests atop a massive sunken volcano, the geology that created the atoll. Kwajalein Atoll is the largest of the twenty-nine atolls and five islands that make up the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI). The atoll resides just above the surface of the perimeter of a collapsed volcano. Ninety-three islets form this single atoll, which follows the coral crest piercing the water. While a deep ocean resides along the outside of the atoll, a shallow lagoon—between approximately 197 and 262 feet deep—forms the interior. From the oceanside, the depth of the atoll rises more than 1.3 miles above the sea floor. Spanning more than 1,000 square
miles—nearly 81 miles tip to tip—Kwajalein is one of the largest atolls in the world. While the watery distance is expansive, the coral islets comprise little more than 6 miles of land mass altogether as each islet pokes just above the water’s surface. Kwajalein islet comprises about 900 acres of land and sits at the southernmost tip of the atoll, approximately 3 miles across the lagoon from the roughly 80 acres that make up Ebeye islet. Kwajalein Atoll resides within the western (Ralik) chain of the RMI, which has a population of about seventy-three thousand. This republic stretches about 772,000 square miles across the Central Pacific and resides approximately 2,300–2,500 miles southwest of Hawai‘i. It is some 4,200 miles from Vandenberg Airforce Base in Santa Barbara County, California, the site from which the military has been launching ICBMs at Kwajalein for nearly six decades.6
Long before US workers and their families migrated to live in Marshallese homelands to support US weapons testing, Kwajalein Atoll and the broader region were for centuries home to indigenous peoples. Ri-Kuwajleen (the islanders who first settled Kwajalein Atoll) were part of waves of migration into Micronesia that linguists and archaeologists have identified as responsible for the vast peopling of the Pacific over time. This research has found the first people of Oceania settling the islands thousands of years ago as part of the Austronesian migrations, the earliest of these migrations moving from what is now identified as Southeast Asia. Archaeologists have located the earliest settlements on Kwajalein Atoll at least two thousand years ago. 

In his research on Marshallese genealogical tradition, Pacific scholar Greg Dvorak identified Marshallese accounts of deep connections to their homelands as rooted in what he called “(hi)storytelling (bwebwenato)” or origin stories encoded in chants and oral traditions “transmitted by Marshall Islander knowledge over thousands of years.” Drawing on the ethno-graphic work of anthropologist Jack Tobin, Dvorak traced the Marshallese world beginning with “four skies of east, west, north, and south formed from four posts, after which two men—Łowa and Łōŋtal—appeared. Łowa created the rocks and the reefs and the islands, Łōŋtal made the sea, making it flow in all directions and bringing the first fish, as well as the sky and the birds that flew through it.” The origins story also identifies the coming of humans, the beginnings of Marshallese culture and the spiritual world, the organization of communities of men and women into different clans, and their movements to different parts of the islands.

This geography, geology, and genealogy of the Marshallese homelands is part of a vast network of Pacific Islands connected through what Tongan scholar Epeli Hau'ofa identified as a “sea of islands” in a paradigm-shifting essay in 1994. In “Our Sea of Islands,” Hau'ofa introduced this framing of the region with the aim to challenge academic imperialism that had historically framed Pacific Islands as isolated and disconnected from the rest of the world. Hau'ofa critiqued what he saw as belittling frameworks that had narrated Oceania as “tiny islands in a far sea,” arguing instead for a vision of the Pacific—a geographic feature covering one-third of the earth’s surface—as a space of enlargement, where waterways between islands can be understood as oceanic highways of intersecting communities.
The rich historical, cultural, human, and environmental geography of Oceania celebrated by Hau’ofa was seen through a very different lens when encountered by the US military during the 1940s. Hovering over the Marshall Islands in the wake of global war, the US Navy’s gaze would instead see a site of military strategy. Naval commanders saw a geography ideally situated to enable them to test the most destructive weapons in the world. They saw a small population that could be easily displaced. They saw a region located far enough from larger population centers in the United States to make testing these deadly weapons a safe endeavor, at least for US residents.\(^{13}\) As the region quickly came under formal US control through the UN-sanctioned Trusteeship Agreement in 1947, which would entitle the United States to use the region for global security, these military leaders further saw an opportunity to turn these islands—home

for centuries to Marshallese peoples—into ground zero for a Cold War weapons-testing campaign. Since 1946, when the United States began nuclear testing in the Northern Marshall Islands, Marshallese have lived with the hot impacts of this “Cold” War mission. During the twelve-year campaign, the United States detonated sixty-seven atmospheric nuclear tests in the Northern Marshall Islands, which included the 1954 Castle Bravo test, a hydrogen bomb equivalent to the size of one thousand Hiroshima bombs. In addition to this fifteen-megaton detonation that irradiated nearby inhabited Marshallese islands, US weather station servicemen, and Japanese fishers, the United States conducted seventeen other tests in the Marshall Islands in the megaton range, with a total yield comprising 80 percent of all US atmospheric detonations.¹⁴

Nuclear testing in the Northern Marshall Islands ended in 1958 with a moratorium that led to the Limited Test Ban Treaty in 1963. But the conclusion of one weapons-testing campaign would seamlessly merge into the next, as the navy shifted its sights toward ICBMs. Again, the geography and geology of the Marshall Islands proved a central factor in the military’s strategic calculations. In their selection of Kwajalein Atoll as home to this new mission, the navy once more remarked upon the advantageous distance from large population centers alongside the lagoon size and depth, which enabled easier retrieval of missile materials. From the 1960s onward, as missiles were launched toward Kwajalein’s lagoon from California’s Vandenberg Air Force Base, the atoll became central to Cold War weapons buildup. As Marshallese have borne the enormous costs of this military mission through their increasing insecurity, the atoll has historically and continually buttressed the US security state.

UP AGAINST THE NATIONAL SECURITY STATE AND CIVILIAN DEFENSE

During the 1970s, Ebeye reached a population of about eight thousand and was identified as the most densely populated space in the Pacific. With nearly twice that many residents in recent years, the challenges of poverty and infrastructural capacity amid extreme density persist.¹⁵ By 2010, with approximately twelve hundred US residents living on Kwajalein’s
nine-hundred-acre setting, Ebeye’s eighty acres housed more than eleven thousand people.16 That was the year I first traveled to the RMI and visited both islands. In May 2010 I found myself taking a ferry from Kwajalein to Ebeye, embarking on the three-mile commute Darlene Keju had watched Marshallese workers take nearly six decades earlier. Illustrating the persistence of the military’s segregation structure between these two islands, I turned to my US friend Rachel, who spoke Marshallese and would act as my translator for interviews on Ebeye, to ask how our Ebeye host, Deo Keju (Darlene’s brother), would be able to find us when we disembarked from the ferry. We had never met Deo before, and neither he nor we had cell phones. Rachel and I looked around the ferry and laughed at the ridiculous nature of my question. We were the only White people on a boat transporting hundreds of Marshallese workers home. Upon arriving at Ebeye, we learned that with such a small number of White Americans visiting the island, most Marshallese on the ferry likely assumed we were missionaries or volunteer teachers. Rachel and I stayed on Ebeye, moving through a landscape I had only known through archival research in Honolulu.

During our trip, we walked the streets Darlene had as a child and visited her family’s store. I thought about a letter her father, Jinna Keju, had written in 1979 protesting US colonial practices of neglect of the island’s infrastructure, neglect that had brought deadly consequences for his family and so many other Marshallese families on the island. Ebeye’s hospital was one of many facilities marked by inadequate funding and planning during the US colonial era, where frequent power outages and a lack of sufficient medical supplies and staffing spurred otherwise avoidable health emergencies and deaths. In 1979, Keju wrote to Juan Alcedo, of the Committee on Civil Rights in San Francisco, noting that he understood Alcedo’s department had jurisdiction over the Trust Territory. Keju decried US neglect of Ebeye, describing the island’s hospital, which served a population of eight thousand and had the highest disease rate in the entire Trust Territory. This was a hospital that constantly ran out of the most basic items, such as bandages and aspirin. “Every year many children die of influenza and diarrhea epidemics that sweep the island because they cannot get adequate treatment at the Ebeye Hospital,” Keju explained.17 “And the Kwajalein hospital is not open to Marshallese on
Describing his tragic connection to hospital exclusion policies, Keju told the story of his deceased daughter, Darlene’s sister. He wrote, “My 29-year-old daughter died five months ago shortly after giving birth because of problems at the Ebeye hospital and the lack of coordination to handle emergencies between the Ebeye and Kwajalein hospitals.”

Walking Ebeye’s streets nearly forty years later, I passed the Ebeye cemetery, a space I knew housed the graves of many Marshallese children and adults who had died in public health epidemics during this era of US colonial control, a period in which the United Nations had obligated the United States to support and protect the region’s inhabitants: their lands, health, and well-being. But this UN sanction also empowered the United States to use Marshallese islands for national security. These graves, many of which represented the deadly conditions of poverty fueling health epidemics, stood as tragic testimony to which of these two mandates had been taken seriously by US colonial representatives in the region. Citing what had become a dual evasion of responsibility for Ebeye by the two arms of US empire in the region (military and civilian), Jinna Keju wrote in 1979 about Marshallese being caught between Trust Territory bureaucracy and the army, where nothing got done. “It can hardly be said that the U.S. is ‘protecting the health of the inhabitants’ here—as the U.N. says it must—when one looks at the poor condition of the Ebeye hospital and the long list of epidemics that have claimed the lives of hundreds over the years.”

Keju’s letter, echoing the voices of Marshallese activists who came before him and fueling those who would come after, pointed to the contradictions foundational to the Trusteeship Agreement. He discussed segregation between Ebeye and Kwajalein: “It is ironic that we are only 3 miles from ‘Uncle Sam’ at Kwajalein, with first rate schools, excellent sports and recreational facilities and a decent hospital. But for all practical purposes we might as well be 1,000 miles away, because we have very limited use, if any, of these facilities.” By 2010, Ebeye was still home to Kwajalein’s segregated commuting workforce, their dependents, and many others who had migrated there in search of work. This was an island that still housed Marshallese and their descendants who had been displaced within the atoll to make way for missile testing, alongside many nuclear refugees and their descendants.
My journey to Kwajalein began on another island continuously impacted by a history of US imperial expansion into the Pacific: O'ahu. In the home of generations of Kanaka Maoli, who had survived the illegal overthrow of their kingdom in 1893 and its annexation in 1898, I resided in a space increasingly encroached upon by the military. By the time I was digging through archival materials in 2008, the US military controlled 22.4 percent of the land on O'ahu. But they did not do so without resistance and protest from native peoples and their allies. A historic and ongoing sovereignty movement that challenged the history and legacy of colonialism across the Hawaiian islands began in the 1970s, sparked in part by protests against US weapons testing on Kaho'olawe island and live fire training in O'ahu's Makua Valley. As land control has expanded to support space research and the expansive construction of telescopes on Mauna Kea (just as Kwajalein's activities have encompassed research in space technologies), anti-colonial protests have centered attention around reclamation of this sacred space, a movement unfolding daily.

While exploring the history of US colonialism in the Pacific, informed by my studies in Pacific and metropolitan histories, my research took a turn toward Kwajalein after I stumbled across military and civilian contractor welcome manuals from the 1960s that introduced Kwajalein as a replica of small-town suburbia. Aimed at recruiting engineers and scientists to relocate their families to the Central Pacific to support missile research, these manuals showcased Kwajalein's domesticity using imagery reminiscent of US vice president Richard Nixon's and Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev's famous 1959 “kitchen debates.” Sifting through the pictures of modern kitchens and cozy living rooms that filled these manuals, I imagined these US workers and their families moving to this seemingly small-town suburban USA in the middle of the Pacific. I wondered how effective such physical and cultural markers of Cold War suburbia were at convincing those migrating from the United States that they were “at home” in the Marshall Islands, that this was in fact an American home. Prior to my second research trip to Kwajalein, I had a revealing exchange with one of the US residents on the island that suggested an answer.

After securing sponsorship to stay on base for the research trip, I arranged several interviews via email with US civilians on Kwajalein. Two weeks prior to my departure, I received an email from one explaining
he had Googled me and found that my dissertation title included the word “imperialism” to define US history in the region. He categorized my word choice as “quite provocative.”25 After reading one of my conference paper abstracts, he said I had referred to a “US ‘Colonial’ period at Kwajalein” and thus surmised “a negatively focused conclusion to [my] work appears to be established,” and said he would no longer be speaking with me.26

I was reminded of how quickly word spreads in both small-town and island communities after I received emails from several other civilians living on Kwajalein reneging on earlier commitments to speak with me. My Kwajalein sponsor also wrote, panicked about my research intentions. After I had reiterated to her my motivation to thicken analysis of the island’s history, particularly given the dearth of US civilian voices in the archives, she decided to continue her sponsorship. During that visit, I learned what a brave move this had been given the degree to which concerns about my visit had rippled through the island, placing my sponsor under intense scrutiny. For me, this experience revealed the extent of the military’s success in having transformed Kwajalein into an “American home,” a mythical space whose narrative boundaries were taken up by civilian residents and vehemently guarded.

This experience aligned with subsequent encounters in Hawai‘i with former Kwajalein residents who proved equally defensive about the island’s story. Many civilians who have raised families on the island and made lifelong friendships felt, and continue to feel, deeply connected to Kwajalein. This connection has spawned a nostalgia culture comprising annual reunions, paraphernalia, memoirs, and social networking sites of commemoration. Much of this nostalgia builds upon an understanding, interpretation, and narrative of Kwajalein as an “American home,” as residing outside any history of US colonialism and detached from related histories involving Marshallese families and their homes.

One concern this book takes up is how such compartmentalizations have been enabled in part by the historic and continuous distances maintained between American life on Kwajalein and Marshallese life on Ebeye through the military’s structure of segregation. This local iteration of a historic disavowal of US empire had its global counterpart in the structure of UN sanction of US expansion, labeling it a “special relationship” through the Trusteeship Agreement. Both structures and narratives
armed US civilian workers and family members—individuals like those antagonistic to my visit—with other ways to frame their residency and employment on the island. This disavowal of an imperial past and explanations to situate an exclusive residency on Kwajalein and the material and lifestyle benefits that accompanied that residency have persisted for more than six decades. This framing, embraced by many US residents on Kwajalein from the 1960s through today, has marked their relationship to the island as unrelated to US imperialism broadly or to Kwajalein and Ebeye’s history of segregation specifically.

Tracing the reproduction and protection of a mythical portrait of Kwajalein as a US home, *Suburban Empire* reveals how Cold War exceptionalism initially produced under military policies became appropriated by Kwajalein’s civilian community over time. Kwajalein’s civilian residents did not create the conditions of colonial power they entered into when arriving on the island. But many took up their privileged positions with ease and helped to reproduce that power over time. Because, thankfully, several of those residents and Marshallese living on Ebeye did allow interviews for this project, I have been able to highlight the complexity of these dynamics. And while many seemed to happily embrace their status within this segregated colonial structure, others challenged discriminatory policies toward Marshallese through creative means and distinctive positions of influence on Kwajalein.

Histories of US empire are deeply continuous, geographically broad, and historically and locally specific. The context situating US imperial expansion into Micronesia following World War II is no different. Thus, while this book traces Kwajalein’s Cold War transformation within broader and deeper histories of US base expansion and imperialism throughout the Pacific alongside connections and continuities with postwar suburban structures of segregation in the United States, it is centered in local Marshallese history shaping how this military imperial project would unfold over time. Likewise, this book peels back the layers on what US expansion looked like during an era of global decolonization and Cold War competition. What were the global and local manifestations of this imperial expansion amid its simultaneous disavowal? How did Marshallese workers, activists, and politicians creatively navigate, accommodate, and challenge that distinctive political, social, and cultural terrain? To