

The Republic of the Marshall Islands and the United States of America



— Marshall Islands and the U.S.A. —

Best of Both Worlds for Majuro Official

Yolanda Lodge-Ned respects the history of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. She grew up with her grandparents, and her grandfather was an informal advisor to its first President, Amata Kabua. She also respects tradition, but she took a leap of faith after attending Women in Leadership conference.

“I wanted to run for political office but never thought I could,” Yolanda said. “I met women there with similar goals. We wanted to shape the future—help lead our communities, our families, and our nation.”

One lecturer gave her hope. The presenter described being on a balcony overlooking a dance floor. She told attendees before they join those below, they must look carefully to see what is missing.

“I returned home to see what we were missing,” she explained. “We have sick people, single parents, and elderly in the margins of society who need our help.”

Yolanda ran for and won a seat in the fourth constitutional convention for Majuro. She is now Assistant Attorney General, but she insists she is not a political person. Rather, she simply believes the relationship between the RMI and U.S. government has enriched both sides. She has reaped the benefits of both worlds: her Marshallese culture plus experiencing a Western civilization.

“I attended my first year of college on scholarship from my government using COFA monies,” Yolanda said. “I also participated in the Close Up Foundation program. We went to the Lincoln Memorial, Arlington Cemetery, and other places that brought government into perspective. It taught me how democracy shapes our future in the Marshall Islands!”

Professionally, she is grateful for help making communities safer, such as funds to fight corruption and tackle human trafficking, as well as U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation assistance processing crime scene evidence. In addition to educational and economic opportunities, Yolanda appreciates visa-free travel between RMI and the U.S.A. that provides access to better medical care. She said people in the Marshall Islands are dying at a fast rate and a young age—often from cancer. Indeed, her own mother passed away from cancer.

“Growing up as a child of the COFA (Compact of Free Association), I know that the person I am now is because of the relationship I was able to have with my culture as well as having the privilege of going to another country that is a world leader in democracy,” said Yolanda.

Today, Yolanda combines respect for the history of the Marshall Islands with the new lessons she has learned through programs like the Close Up Foundation to help create a bright future for her country. That is something all Marshallese can be proud of.

For information about the Close Up Foundation, see <http://www.closeup.org/>.

To learn more about the relationship between RMI and the U.S.A. visit <https://mh.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/progress-through-partnership/>.