

# 琉球大学学術リポジトリ

沖縄・ハワイにおける女性と生活改善活動の一樣相：  
ジェネヴィーブ・フィーガンの軌跡

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# Transforming Women and the Home in Hawaii and Okinawa: Gender and Empire in Genevieve Feagin's Trans-Pacific Trajectory

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## 1. Introduction

On February 12, 1951, the inaugural ceremony of the University of the Ryukyus (UR) took place on the historic ground of Shuri Castle in Naha, Okinawa. On an island devastated by the Battle of Okinawa, the first-ever university in Okinawa was established under the auspices of the American occupiers, creating a space of higher learning and publicizing the “beneficent” nature of the postwar U. S. rule (Yamazato, 2010; Ogawa, 2012). To mark the auspicious occasion, the UR invited a number of foreign dignitaries, including an American home economist named Genevieve Feagin, who represented the University of Hawaii (UH) on behalf of its president, Gregg Sinclair. In her letter to Sinclair, Feagin recounted how the ceremony unfolded on that memorable day. Among the guests at the event were administrators of the United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR), high-ranking officials of the U. S. military, mayors of various cities across Okinawa, representatives of universities in the U. S., as well as administrators of the UR. While the “two and a half hours of speeches” left Feagin “nearly freezing to death in a cold wind that swept in from the China Sea,” she enjoyed the reception held afterwards at the U. S. military officers’ club. Various entertainments were featured, including “Hawaiian songs and dances put on by six pretty girls from Hawaii who were working on Okinawa” (Feagin, 1951b, no page number).

It was almost by accident that Feagin attended the event, as the original reason for her trip to Okinawa had nothing to do with the opening of a new university. A veteran home demonstration agent in the agricultural extension service in the Territory of Hawaii,<sup>1)</sup> she was visiting Okinawa as a home economics consultant, whose mission was to provide guidance on how to improve the living conditions in Okinawa (Sinclair, 1951, no page number). From February 12 to May 1, 1951, she toured Okinawa, inspecting local homes, consulting with representatives of various organizations, and offering lectures and work-

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shops on homemaking and community rebuilding. In “Proposed Plan for a Home Living Improvement Research and Extension Program for the Ryukyus Islands,” a report she submitted to the USCAR on June 28, 1951, Feagin documented her observations of grassroots conditions in Okinawa and offered a series of recommendations to improve the islanders’ daily lives (Feagin, 1951a). Feagin’s involvement in domestic reform in Okinawa—especially her 1951 report that defined the home as a chief site of postwar recovery and reconstruction—highlights the two elements salient in the U.S. occupation of Okinawa: the centrality of domesticity in U.S. rule on the islands, and the significance of Hawaii in U.S. empire-building in Cold War Asia and the Pacific in which Okinawa constituted a key location.

This essay focuses on Genevieve Feagin, an American home economist whose domestic reform illuminates a number of issues central to our understandings of postwar U.S. domination in Okinawa. In existing studies of the occupation, references to Feagin are few. On rare occasions where her name is mentioned, Feagin is portrayed as an educator-reformer who left an indelible mark in the history of Okinawa as her 1951 report instigated a resurgence of the life improvement movement (*seikatsu kaizen undō*) on the postwar islands.<sup>2</sup> Witnessing the impoverished conditions of rural communities in Okinawa, Feagin advocated the modernization of farming families, which led to a series of measures including the renovation of homes and the transformation of diets during and after the occupation (Yakabi, 2009, p. 339). In the official history of the Okinawa Prefectural Office of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishery (Okinawa-ken Nōrinsuisanbu Einō Shidōka), Feagin’s 1951 visit is identified as a starting point of postwar rural development, a crucial moment in the narrative of Okinawa’s progress and modernization the prefecture’s official account intends to highlight (Okinawa-ken Nōrinsuisanbu Einō Shidōka, 1991, p. 238). In the narrative, Genevieve Feagin stands as a beneficent reformer, whose contributions to domestic improvement would justify, however subtly, postwar U.S. rule on the islands.

However, a closer examination of Feagin offers a far more complex picture of women, homes, and empire. First, Feagin’s biography illuminates a crucial link between gender and empire that animated her life as a domestic reformer before, during, and after her visit to Okinawa. Staring her career as a home economics educator in charge of Native Americans in Texas during the 1930s, she ventured to the U.S. colony of Hawaii in 1944 to assume a position in the territory’s agricultural extension system. Once WWII was over, she extended her reformist zeal beyond U.S. borders, disseminating American-style domestic education in Okinawa, Saipan, and Greece, all of which constituted significant sites in U.S. Cold War strategies. As Feagin moved from one colonial site to another, she joined other European and American women who pursued domestic reform to uplift and civilize the colonized others, articulating gendered and gendering dynamics of empire building. As scholars on gender and empire frequently point out, Western women’s involvement in domestic reformism constituted a crucial element in the imperial projects of conquest, assimilation, and acculturation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,

where “domestication” of the colored and colonized was hailed as a sign of their progress and civilization and provided justification for Western white domination (Hunt, 1990; Grimshaw, 1985; Kaplan, 2005; Rafael, 2009; Simonsen, 2002). Retracing Feagin’s footsteps as a domestic educator provides an opportunity to analyze how the intertwined dynamics of women, homes, and empire originating from North America traversed the Pacific to reach Okinawa in the early postwar context.

Second, Feagin’s involvement in Okinawa highlights the centrality of Hawaii in the postwar history of Okinawa, a point rarely acknowledged in existing studies of the U.S. occupation of Okinawa. By now, a number of scholars have examined the project of “Michigan Mission,” illuminating the contours and contents of an international project of educational interchange in which Michigan State University (MSU) played a crucial role in disseminating knowledge and technologies of agriculture, engineering, public administration, home economics, and so on in U.S.-occupied Okinawa (Yamazato, 2010; Ogawa, 2012; Koikari, 2012). In contrast, the connection between Hawaii and Okinawa during the same period has received far less attention, creating a lacuna in occupation scholarship. In the early postwar decades, however, Hawaii constituted an exceptionally significant site in U.S. expansionism in Asia and the Pacific. While the establishment of the East-West Center in 1961 formalized Hawaii’s role in the Cold War project of international technical education (Smedley, 1970), the territory was already exerting significant influence as a leading hub of transnational technical exchange in the 1950s. In it, Hawaii’s agricultural extension service, of which Feagin was part, played a crucial role, sending American educators and technicians overseas while also inviting foreigners to the islands for training and education. Okinawa constituted an integral part in this emerging network of international exchange, dispatching a large number of men and women to Hawaii to obtain up-to-date knowledge, information, and technology (Koikari, 2015, Chapter 4). Feagin’s 1951 trip to Okinawa was an earlier instance of this postwar interchange between Hawaii and Okinawa in which transmission of knowledge and technologies of domestic science constituted a salient element.

Third, Feagin’s domestic reform illuminates the heterogeneous nature of postwar U.S. domination of Okinawa. Her discourses and practices significantly differed from those of MSU home economists, a group of domestic reformers who, following Feagin’s visit, came to dominate the field of women’s education in Okinawa. MSU home economists made conscious efforts to keep their racism in check and present themselves as collaborators and even friends with Okinawans (Koikari, 2012, Chapter 3). Such sensitivity regarding race and racism exhibited by MSU home economists reflected certain shifts occurring in the U.S. at the time. With decolonization movements abroad and civil rights mobilization at home, the U.S. began to de-emphasize pre-existing expressions of racism and imperialism that insisted on the superiority of the self and the inferiority of the others. “Cold War Orientalism” began to emerge, highlighting instead “mutual affinity” and “multicultural friendship” among different races and nations. Such insistence on “affinity” and “affiliation” with peoples and nations of color was part of American discursive

strategies, however, whose ultimate aim was to facilitate alliance building and U. S. hegemony in the world (Klein, 2003).

Despite an emergence of new discourse regarding race and empire, old habits would die hard, especially in the colonized, militarized space of Okinawa, where the hierarchy between the victor/occupiers and the defeated/occupied remained more than obvious. In Okinawa, new and old discourses on race and empire existed side by side, with the pre-existing understanding of American superiority frequently leading to explicitly racist and imperialist pronouncements and behaviors by the occupiers (Miyagi, 1982). As analyzed below, Feagin's involvement in Okinawa was informed by the older idioms of race and empire, where she constructed Okinawans as primitive and inferior as made evident by their slovenly manners, disorderly homes, and dysfunctional communities. Read together, the domestic reformism of Feagin and that of the MSU home economists present a stark contrast, illuminating how the occupiers' gaze—"senryōsha no me" (Miyagi, 1982) or "senryōsha no manazashi" (Tanaka, 2013)—was far from singular or stable but rather heterogeneous and shifting, highlighting the less than uniform nature of postwar U. S. rule on the islands.<sup>3)</sup>

To illuminate the varied implications of Feagin's involvement in the U. S. occupation of Okinawa, I will retrace the intertwined dynamics of U. S. empire building, agricultural science, and domestic reformism, which first emerged on the U. S. continent, then traveled to Hawaii, and finally reached Okinawa. As U. S. expansionism—or "manifest destiny"—extended its reach from North America across the Pacific to Asia, Feagin's trajectory followed the same route, articulating an unlikely yet crucial link among women, homes, and empire. Re-examined within these analytical and historical contexts, Feagin's 1951 report ceases to be a piece of policy intervention exemplifying the occupiers' beneficent intentions, but rather re-emerges as a political artifact deeply enmeshed with the history of gender and empire in Asia and the Pacific.

A brief note on historical sources is useful here. In analyzing Feagin's trans-Pacific trajectory as a domestic reformer, this article draws on archival resources available at the University of Hawaii Hamilton Library. Named after Thomas Hamilton, who, as Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs at MSU and later president at the UH, played an instrumental role in mobilizing higher education during the Cold War,<sup>4)</sup> the library holds large quantities of archival records that illuminate the history of agricultural and domestic education in Hawaii. A rich source of historical reflections, the library's historical collections also reveal various links between Okinawa and Hawaii in the early postwar decades, illuminating geopolitical dynamics that brought the two island communities together and mobilized men and women of diverse backgrounds to Cold War transnationalism.

## 2. Gender, Empire, and Science—Historical Background

In the history of U. S. nation- and empire-building, agricultural science, research, and education played a central, though often unacknowledged, role. At the turn of the century,

amidst a rising tide of U.S. expansionism, several legislative measures were passed—the First and Second Morrill Acts (1862; 1890), the Hatch Act (1887), the Smith-Lever Act (1914)—which in turn led to the establishment of three major institutions central in the development of American agriculture. Land-grant colleges and universities, established as a result of the Morrill Acts, focused on agricultural science and technical education. Agricultural experiment stations, created as a result of the Hatch Act, pursued cultivation of agricultural knowledge through research and experimentation. Finally, the agricultural extension service, emerging as a result of the Smith-Lever Act, disseminated knowledge thus created to the larger public. Established in each state across the U.S. continent, these institutions collaborated with each other as well as with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, or USDA, generating new knowledge of science-based agriculture and initiating modernization of rural communities via grassroots education (Brunner and Yang, 1949; Kerr, 1987; Rasmussen, 1989). Home economics, or domestic science, constituted a feminized component in this nation-wide movement of science, technology, and education, whose proliferation was considered crucial in the improvement of rural homes and communities.

Emerging in the age of empire, land-grant colleges and universities, agricultural experiment stations, and the agricultural extension service soon began to proliferate beyond U.S. borders. As Richard Overfield points out, American scientists, especially those in the field of agriculture, were enthusiastic supporters of empire (Overfield, 1990, p. 31). As Alaska, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Guam, and the Philippines came under U.S. control, the USDA began to send its personnel to these far-flung territories to establish agricultural experiment stations and agricultural extension services (Overfield, 1986, p. 259). National expansion was an exciting event for agricultural scientists, as it provided new access to vast and heterogeneous territories “ranging from the tropics to the Arctic,” where they could pursue research, experiments, and instruction (Overfield, 1990, p. 35). As “[t]he science follows the flag” into new territories, the project of national expansion went hand-in-hand with that of agricultural experimentation and extension, articulating the intertwined dynamics of empire, science, and agriculture (*ibid.*, p. 31).

It is important to note, however, that it was not only scientific concerns that drove these expansionist dynamics; “a strong set of social and political values” also followed the flag as U.S. agriculture and its practitioners extended their reach abroad (Overfield, 1986, p. 256). Americanization of new territories and new peoples was an equally important agenda, making it imperative to (re)organize newly-acquired territories “along American lines” and disseminate the “American way of life,” with the “Iowa family farm” providing an ideal model (*ibid.*, p. 258). (Re)creating an American land in strange, far-away places, where not only American agricultural practices but also American values of progress, modernity, rationality, efficiency, and so on would proliferate, constituted a central objective. Gender was a key element in this process, as the discipline of home economics, or domestic science, which came into existence in the early twentieth century, was expected to play a leading role in the project of colonial acculturation. The home was

considered a main site of transformation of indigenous populations, where American home economists would exert their influence in facilitating Americanization of local habits, customs, and practices.

In the early twentieth century, home economics constituted an emerging, vibrant field of women's scientific pursuit. At one level, home economists were pioneers of the day with strong feminist dispositions. They not only created and sustained a women-centered space in research and education within male-dominant colleges and universities. Pursuing public careers, they also challenged the patriarchal assumption of women's place in society, where they were expected to stay home and fulfill their duties as mothers and wives. These dynamics were especially salient among those who pursued professional careers at land-grant colleges and universities and in agricultural extension services. Stepping into the fields of science, education, and grassroots outreach predominated by men, they faced constant struggles to prove their worth and gain legitimacy as scientists, educators, and reformers (Elias, 2010).

While challenging patriarchal societal dynamics, American home economists reinforced other dynamics of power, as seen in their involvement in agricultural extension education, where they worked as home demonstration agents. Pursuing the transformation of rural homes and women, these home economists' discourses and practices were informed by, and in turn informed, class and regional hierarchies of the day, with urban, college-educated women instructing rural and thus presumably uneducated and ignorant women. Transforming those who were deemed inferior and backward according to the scientific notions and practices of nutrition, clothes construction, and home management and thereby uplifting them from drudgery, inefficiency, and irrationality constituted the ultimate objective (Adams, 1993, 2004; Sturgis, 1986; Schwieder, 1990; Babbitt, 1993). These dynamics were soon exported abroad, as American home economists began to participate in the project of Americanization in newly-acquired territories. Assuming the position of female agents of empire, they focused on transmitting American-style scientific homemaking as a way of uplifting and civilizing the strange, unfamiliar, and inferior others. With their knowledge of domestic science, they were expected to eradicate the customs and habits of homemaking of the others that were perceived as inferior and transform local homes and women according to what in their eyes was the superior and more civilized standard of their own.

Hawaii—a U.S. colony following the kingdom's overthrow in 1893 and annexation in 1898—became one of the places where these dynamics of gender, race, and nation reached in the early twentieth century. Science followed the flag into the island colony located in the middle of the Pacific, institutionalizing agricultural research, experiment, and extension. The agricultural experiment station was established in 1901, and the cooperative extension service the year after. The College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, which was renamed the College of Hawaii in 1911 and then the University of Hawaii in 1920, was founded in 1907 to create a space for agricultural and technical education. Initially under the control of the U.S. federal government, agricultural extension service

came under the joint management of the UH and the USDA in 1929, becoming a leading agent in agricultural development in the territory (Brennan and Hollyer, 2008; Overfield, 1990; Cartwright, 2009). To ensure an effective transmission of American values and practices among the population in the new colony comprised mainly of indigenous and immigrant communities, the 4-H club program was established in 1918 as an important educational tool of acculturation targeting local youths who were expected to learn about agriculture, home economics, and other aspects of American culture (Zeug, 2008, pp. 150–153).

From the beginning, gender, race, and nation informed the project of agricultural science, research, and education in Hawaii. In a context where a handful of white missionaries-turned-plantation-owners controlled the economic and political institutions on the islands and where immigrants of color from Japan, Okinawa, China, the Philippines, and so on provided cheap labor by tilling the soil to produce cash crops such as sugar and pineapples, the newly-established college, experiment stations, and extension service inevitably reflected and indeed reinforced the values and interest of the ruling oligarchs on the islands. At its foundation, the college was staffed by white American men with a handful of white women who occupied the instructional positions of domestic science, English, and extension education. The agricultural experiment stations and extension service, of which home economics was part, collaborated with dominant organizations on the islands such as the Hawaii Sugar Planters' Association and the Pineapple Research Institute (Brennan and Hollyer, 2008, pp. 4–19).

In the newly-acquired territory of Hawaii, domestic education functioned as a gendered tool of acculturation, whose chief mission was to transform the territory's inhabitants according to the dominant, i.e., American, cultural standard. At the newly-established college, Carey Miller, a nutritionist from Idaho with degrees from the University of California-Berkeley and Columbia University, reigned as the leading female scientist (Gordon, 1969). Defining home economics a machinery of Americanization in the newly-acquired territory (Miller, 1942, 1943), she dedicated herself to building the program of home economics by recruiting instructors from the continental U.S. and facilitating research and instruction on local food and diet. An avid proselytizer of American domesticity, she also helped transmit domestic science to the larger public as she established the Hawaii Dietetic Association (Kulas, 1964) and played a key role in the territory's agricultural extension service. Miller frequently collaborated with the plantation owners who controlled the islands and whose interest in maintaining efficient labor force coincided with hers in studying health, diet, and nutrition of multiethnic population of the territory. Participating in the Central Nutritional Committee of the Hawaii Sugar Planters' Association, Miller, together with the plantation owners and managers, discussed how to instill proper dietary notions and habits among plantation laborers, whose bodily maintenance was at the core of exploitative labor management practiced across the islands (Hawaii Planters' Association, 1938).

Under Miller's leadership, Hawaii's extension domestic education flourished, turning

immigrant workers—especially their bodies and homes—into the targets of surveillance, regulation, and discipline (Takaki, 1984, Chapter 3; Isaki, 2008; Okiihiro, 2009). The reports compiled by home demonstration agents, the majority of whom were white transplants from the U. S. continent, give a glimpse into grassroots domestic education in early-twentieth-century Hawaii. Dispatched to various communities across the isles, the agents worked tirelessly to transform local women and homes according to the American standard, with the plantation owners and managers frequently providing tangible support to facilitate the process (Strange, 1937–1938, p. 5). In the area of cooking, the agents taught such things as meal planning, balanced diet, and proper feeding of infants (Browning, 1935–1936, p. 6–7), and promoted Western-style recipes, such as “fish chowder,” “Swiss steak,” “mashed potatoes,” and “salads and salad dressing” (Farden, 1937–1938, p. 13). In the area of clothing, they disseminated the basic skills of sewing as well as proper understandings of color scheme, design, and fitting (Farden, 1937–1938, p. 3). Creating a well-ordered home was equally or even more important, thus the agents taught how to make curtains, bedspreads, and table covers, where sacks made available by the Hawaii Pineapple Cannery often provided necessary materials (Green, 1929, p. 21–22). Also emphasized was the significance of “proper cleaning,” “good planning of cupboard,” and “simple, attractive decoration” in kitchens, whereby women of immigrant and indigenous backgrounds would learn new notions and practices of hygiene, space, and aesthetics (Farden, 1937–1938, p. 3). In grassroots domestic education in Hawaii, acculturation and assimilation of local families clearly constituted a chief objective.

As discussed below, Genevieve Feagin stepped into this dynamic field of domestic education in 1944. Following her stint as a white female educator in Native American communities in Texas, she traveled halfway across the Pacific to find another frontier space where she would exert her influence as an agent of Americanization and proselytizer of empire. Following the end of WWII, Feagin made yet another move, first to Saipan and then to Okinawa, repeating, however fortuitously, the trajectory of Allied advance during the Pacific War. As she traveled from Texas to Hawaii and finally to Okinawa, she articulated a trans-Pacific trajectory of domesticity and empire, linking one colonial space to another and turning homes into a “relay point” of imperial invasion and expansion (Rafael, 2000, p. 62).

### **3. “Emissary of the Empire”: Genevieve Feagin’s Foray into the Pacific**

As a domestic educator-reformer, Genevieve Feagin’s profile was inseparable from American expansionist dynamics or manifest destiny. Born in Tyler, Texas in 1914, Feagin studied home economics at the Mary Harden Baylor College, and following her graduation in 1935, taught at the Cross Roads Consolidated School. Following this rather unremarkable beginning, however, her career began to take an imperial turn, inserting her ever deeply into the larger terrain of U.S. nation- and empire-building. Feagin first worked for the agricultural extension service in Texas but soon obtained a position in the

United States Indian Service, where she became in charge of domestic education of indigenous girls and women. Taking up a white woman's burden, she immersed herself in domestic education of the native population, thereby participating in the gendered project of civilization and acculturation that had emerged in the late nineteenth century amidst native displacement and dispossession in North America (Simonsen, 2002). In 1944, she made yet another life-changing decision, this time to move to a distant outpost in the Pacific to work for the agricultural extension service in the Territory of Hawaii (H. H. Warner, 1946, no page number).

Once in Hawaii, Feagin experienced a meteoric rise within the territory's agricultural extension service. Starting as a home demonstration agent in a remote community on the Island of Hawaii, she was soon promoted to the position of county agent at large in 1946, and then to assistant specialist in clothing at the territorial level in 1950. In 1954, she gained yet another promotion to become associate specialist in clothing and in the same year also assumed responsibilities as home demonstration supervisor, which put her in charge of home demonstration agents across the territory. Feagin's exceptional rise as an educational leader in Hawaii was partly attributable to her racial/national status as a white American woman in a colony whose population was overwhelmingly immigrants of color. It is also important to note, however, that she was an aggressive self-promotor with a strong feminist bent. Dissatisfied with a lack of promotion and low salary, Feagin threatened to quit her position, challenging the male-dominant administration of the territory's agricultural extension system and its sexist practices and successfully negotiating for better working conditions for herself (Shellhorn, 1946b, no page number).

Feagin's demand for promotion was not too unreasonable, as she was a dedicated agent committed to her work and "liked" by the people she served (Shellhorn, 1946a, no page number). She was well versed in varieties of subjects and also willing to travel far and wide to disseminate the gospel of modern domesticity across the territory. Among the subject matter she taught were home management, consumer education, clothing construction, and family relations. Understanding agricultural extension education as an instance of grassroots mobilization, she also helped establish adult extension clubs and 4-H clubs and organized sewing schools, fashion shows, cooking contests, and home exhibits. Eager to reach even more people, she generated leaflets, pamphlets, and circulars and also participated in local civic organizations. Once promoted to territorial-level supervisor, she took on the additional duties of recruiting and training home demonstration agents, hosting foreign visitors, and organizing events such as National Home Demonstration Week (Feagin, 1949; 1952a, 1952b, 1953a; 1953b, 1953c, 1953d, 1956a, 1956b, 1956 c).

While challenging sexist dynamics of the territory's agricultural extension service, Feagin also participated in and reinforced the dominant workings of power. Her chief mission was Americanization of Hawaii, where her instructions on the techniques and technologies of homemaking were complemented by her emphasis on proper values, morals, and bodily disposition. Transforming local residents, who were predominantly

immigrant and of color, was at the core of her reform endeavors. Examples are numerous. As part of consumer education, Feagin made sure that local homemakers would understand and practice economic rationality, especially thrift. This entailed not only taking “an over-all look at the entire family’s wardrobe, locating extravagances and making plans so that all the family could be well-dressed on the money available” (Feagin, 1953a, pp. 6–7). It also meant that local people were instructed to give up the custom of “lavish giving” and opt for more “useful, inexpensive accessories and gifts” (ibid, p. 9). The subject of “personal grooming” was no less important. Feagin attempted to inculcate among local women proper bodily dispositions such as “good posture,” “personal cleanliness,” “weight control,” and “the correct use of cosmetics,” which would lead to not only better health and beauty but also “obvious gains in self-confidence” (ibid, p. 10). No less important in Feagin’s domestic education was an instruction on proper aesthetic. Thus, local women were trained how to purchase ready-made wardrobes, where they “[p]lan and select a harmonious wardrobe in color and styles” and seek for items “from incoming fashions rather than those already popular” (Feagin, 1952b, p. 3). There were also fashion shows and clothing exhibits, where local women and girls learned not only correct methods of sewing but also proper poise and posture. Learning these and other techniques was tantamount to acquiring “the art of living,” according to Feagin, where the ideas of hospitality, citizenship, and family ties would help “enrich family life and rear worthy citizens” (Feagin, 1953d, p. 1). Transforming the local—overwhelmingly foreign and alien—population into proper American citizens via domestic education and bodily discipline constituted a central aim in Feagin’s domestic reform in Hawaii.

Well versed in the gendered logic and logistics of empire-building, where homemaking constituted a crucial site of expansionism, Feagin soon emerged as a leading reformer in the territory, whose expertise was in demand as a female agent of U. S. expansionism. She was dispatched to Saipan in 1948, to Okinawa in 1951, and to Greece from 1951 to 1952, all of which constituted central sites in U. S. Cold War strategies. In Feagin’s overseas assignments, the U. S. military played a conspicuous role. Her trip to Saipan was requested by the U. S. Navy. Her visit to Okinawa was organized by the U. S. Department of the Army. Her one-year stint in Greece was supported by a Fulbright Award, an international educational exchange program started by Senator J. William Fulbright in 1946 (Boyd, 1951, no page number), another Cold War cultural initiative whose chief aim was to facilitate U. S. hegemony building, military or otherwise. Repeatedly, Feagin articulated the connection between women, homes, and empire.

Feagin’s trip to Saipan, once the site of a violent clash between the American and Japanese militaries and then under U. S. control, is important to observe, as it was her successful completion of the mission there that led to her assignment in Okinawa. The request for Feagin’s assistance as a domestic educator-reformer first came from G. L. Compo, Captain of the U. S. Navy and Governor of the Northern Marianas. In his letter to Gregg Sinclair on March 9, 1948, the governor explained his need for a home economist who would “visit our native farm families, observe their problems, make recommenda-

tions to us, and most important, select a Chamorro girl for work with AES [Agricultural Extension Service]” and provide assistance in “setting up a Home Economics Department in our native school.” “The family life and conditions of our rural Chamorro people have been neglected to date,” and the governor was keen to amend the situation. Since the UH had already released one employee for an educational project in Saipan that had resulted in the establishment of the first 4-H club for boys, the governor hoped that Sinclair was willing to make a similar arrangement, this time for women and girls (Compo, 1948a, no page number). Feagin, a veteran home economics educator whose success in Americanizing the immigrant population in Hawaii was evident, was a natural choice for the assignment.

In Saipan, Feagin was extraordinarily successful. In another letter sent to Sinclair, Compo enthusiastically reported on the excellent work Feagin had accomplished among indigenous Chamorros. He could not give a high enough praise for Feagin: “Your highly competent emissary, Miss Feagin, has just completed a very beneficial tour of the temporary duty with us.” During her one-month stay on the islands, Compo reported, Feagin had “founded Saipan’s first 4-H Girls’ Club, and started the remodeling of a quonset hut, including a modern kitchen, for their club house.” Domestic reform Feagin had initiated “will be of a lasting nature,” the governor stated. He hoped that the success of Feagin’s mission would be “a start of a long series of cooperative efforts between the University of Hawaii and the Trust Territory of the Pacific” (Compo, 1948b, no page number). Following her success as an envoy of U.S. imperial expansionism in Saipan, Feagin’s reformist gaze turned on the condition of women and homes in Okinawa, another island community under U.S. rule.

#### **4. Transforming “Primitive Homemaking”: Feagin’s Domestic Reform in U.S.-Occupied Okinawa**

Similar to her assignment in Saipan, Feagin’s trip to Okinawa was initiated by the U.S. military. In 1950, a request came from Major John Keough at the Office for Occupied Areas in the Department of the Army for an American home economist who would serve in U.S.-occupied Okinawa. Baron Goto, a leading agricultural educator in Hawaii who would soon become an influential figure in the international technical exchange program at the East-West Center, recommended Feagin. His endorsement was based on her success in her previous assignment. He was confident that she was “well qualified for the position as a result of her assignment on Saipan in 1948.” Granting another leave to Feagin, soon after her stint in Saipan, was not easy for Goto, as the territory’s extension service was facing a shortage of home economists. Nevertheless, Goto thought that she should go to Okinawa since it was the mission of agricultural extension education to “cooperate as closely as possible on the program of agricultural aid to foreign and occupied areas” (Goto, 1950, no page number).

Arriving in Okinawa in 1951, Feagin toured the islands, driven by the same kind of

energy and commitment that had informed her work in Hawaii and Saipan. In the 1951 report "Proposed Plan for a Home Living Improvement Research and Extension Program for the Ryukyu Islands," she documented the deplorable conditions of local families and communities, providing explanations for those conditions and suggesting various measures to ameliorate them. Traversing the islands where the devastating consequences of the Battle of Okinawa were still visible and the presence of the U. S. military was hard to ignore, Feagin gave only a cursory nod to these dynamics as a cause of the disruptions in postwar Okinawa. Disregarding imperial-military violence that had contributed to chaos and disorder on the islands, she instead focused on what she perceived as Okinawans' personal deficiencies as the main causes of their misery and suffering. Expressing a barely concealed sense of contempt toward Okinawans, whom she perceived as primitive, unsanitary, lazy, and thus inferior, Feagin's report reveals the workings of racism and imperialism that had long shaped U. S. relations with nations and peoples of color and that were now re-articulated in U. S.-occupied Okinawa.

According to Feagin, postwar Okinawa was full of social, economic, and cultural problems. On the islands, where agriculture had long been the backbone of the economy, many farming families "lack a cash crop which will enable them to pay for children's education, equipment and improvements to land and home." "At times of peak production," she observed, "local markets will not absorb surplus vegetables" and a lack of transportation means to urban centers resulted in high prices of produce which consumers could not easily afford. The situations among those who relied on small plots of land were particularly dire, as they could not "purchase sufficient food from the open market, much less essential clothing and household needs" (Feagin, 1951a, p. 1). To supplement their meager incomes, farmers produced such items as sandals, baskets, mats, textiles, and food items at home. However, these products held little value in the market, as they were "prepared by inefficient methods in irregular quality and unreliable quantity" (*ibid.*, p. 2). The conditions at home further compounded the problems. The low- and middle-income families could not sustain a living since "they lack knowledge and have not developed the judgment to plan spending to meet the daily living essentials." Furthermore, they were "inclined to have large families without regard to their ability to support them" and to spend too much money "on celebrations, ceremonies, and parties" (*ibid.*, p. 3). Clearly, Okinawans were unable to govern themselves without some external guidance.

According to Feagin, the state of health and nutrition did not fare much better in occupied Okinawa. Focusing on Okinawan bodies, she repeatedly emphasized their unhygienic and unsanitary state. Noting "a high occurrence of malnutrition and a high degree of listlessness, low vitality, and work inefficiency," she explained how they were caused by "years of unbalanced diets and the prevalence of hookworm and other diseases related to the unsanitary living conditions." Insufficient intake of protein, vitamins, and iron resulted in "[s]tunted growth, laziness, and lack of alertness" among Okinawans, who in addition suffered from dental and vision problems (*ibid.*, p. 3). No palatable or safe method of food preservation was practiced, and the islanders' custom of drying such food

items as sweet potatoes and fish was not quite acceptable, as it was “often done beside the road, unprotected from insects and dirt.” A lack of cleanliness among the islanders indeed constituted a serious problem. “The extremely unsanitary conditions, especially poorer families who live crowded together, promote disease and defeat pride in home and community,” she observed. Equally or more importantly, such conditions posed a “menace to the health of occupation personnel” (ibid., p. 4). Many of the homes in Okinawa were “crowded and almost completely lacking in cleanliness, orderliness, convenience, and beauty,” a condition reflective of the fact that the islanders were “ignorant of and unimaginative in finding ways to make use of available resources.” While the conditions of toilets and waste disposal were despicable, those of kitchens were even worse as they were exceptionally “primitive” and “unprotected from animals, rodents, and insects.” Under such conditions, “no woman could turn out a wholesome, palatable meal without extreme efforts.” As a clothing specialist, Feagin was especially critical about the islanders’ handling of garments. In the report, she could barely hide her contempt toward Okinawans regarding this subject. Okinawans had “insufficient clothing for cleanliness, health, and comfort; much less self respect,” she declared. While many resorted to the second hand clothing, “[w]orkmanship in remodeling and repairing . . . is generally very poor.” Particularly aggravating for Feagin was the manner with which women laundered the clothing: “[m]ethods of laundry, clothing care, and storage are destructive” as they often resorted to “beat[ing] the clothes clean on a rock” (ibid., p. 7). Disorderly and unsanitary, Okinawans, whose deficiency was most visible in their primitive practices at home, were clearly inferior, she argued.

Feagin offered her own analysis of why and how these deplorable conditions prevailed in postwar Okinawa. Referring to various “disruptions” in social and economic dynamics that led to “a disintegration of family life and morale and a loss of pride in home, family and community,” she paid only cursory attention to the U.S. military occupation and its violent impacts on the islands. Noting how “[s]hanty towns have grown up around (U.S.) military installations and how “[s]anitation and housing facilities in these areas are completely overtaxed,” she provided no further discussions on this and other negative consequences of U.S. military domination. Instead, she attributed the causes of problems to the failure of Japanese colonial governance and, more importantly, to the islanders’ deficiencies. Treated as “the lowest social class” under Japanese rule and discouraged from “taking initiatives that might result in bettering their positions in life,” the islanders’ “leadership and initiative in solving their own problems is underdeveloped.” To prove her point, she related one incident she witnessed during her tour in Okinawa. A rural community encountered a problem, i.e., a lack of child care during the busy season when the demand of agricultural work left little time for mothers to attend to their children. Though members of the community proposed that they submit a request to the local government to build a day-care center, Feagin strongly disapproved of such a solution. Surprisingly, she considered it to be “evidence” of their lack of initiative. According to Feagin, they should not rely on government aid but instead “plan and set up a center them-

selves and take turns at preparing meals and caring for the children” (ibid., pp. 8–9). Far from understanding the action taken by Okinawans as evidence of their agency and even a form of subtle protest at the government’s ineptitude, she dismissed the incident as yet another instance of deficiency among the islanders.

While shedding some light on pre-1945 Japanese rule, Feagin’s report identified Okinawans themselves as the primary cause of their problems. Ironically, despite her criticism toward Japan, Feagin’s arguments were reminiscent of Japanese colonial discourse vis-à-vis Okinawans, where the islanders’ daily customs and habits at home were frequently cited as evidence of their racial inferiority. “The Oriental prejudice against and the lethargy toward anything to make women’s work more efficient, less strenuous, and more pleasant . . . has resulted in priority being given to entertainment and celebrations” and also led to neglect of “such essentials as convenient water supply, sewing machines, and sanitary waste disposal,” she observed. Male domination, which Feagin presumed inherent in Okinawan culture, compounded the problem, as men would expect subservience from women and women would “learn to accept without demur the will, command, and judgement of men.” Furthermore, poor diet and unsanitary conditions would lead to a low level of morale and pride among rural families, leaving them “unable to do much that is constructive in correcting their disrupted economic and social patterns” (ibid., p. 9). Most crucially, in Feagin’s view, the absence of proper domestic education, a condition initially generated under prewar Japanese rule and subsequently sustained by the U. S. administration’s lack of proper action, was at the center of the problem. Women and girls were deprived of access to the “modern methods and research results” of home economics and thereby fostered a “self-perpetuating” cycle of “primitive homemaking” (ibid., p. 10). “Most homemakers,” she observed, “are ignorant of what makes a balanced diet for health and vitality, of ways to plan home production to meet dietary needs and of what constitutes wholesome living conditions” (ibid., p. 11).

To solve the multi-layered problems in postwar Okinawa, Feagin suggested that domestic education of Okinawan women was central. Backed by her success in Texas, Hawaii, and Saipan, she was more than confident that the method of home demonstration would save people in Okinawa from their degraded state and turn the islands into a well-functioning society. “It has been shown in many parts of the world,” Feagin noted, “that primitive people make improvements more readily and voluntarily when the improvements are demonstrated in their home situations.” Converting a handful of women and girls to the proper ways of domesticity would be a good starting point, she argued, since “once a woman or girl makes an improvement in her home, that home stands as a continuing demonstration and a strong influence to neighbors and friends to do likewise” (ibid., p. 11). “An all-out campaign” of domestic education was the solution, Feagin firmly stated (ibid., p. 13). In the remainder of the report, Feagin suggested a series of reform measures that should be adopted in the proposed campaign. Simply “teaching” Okinawans the values of balanced diet, sanitary living conditions, and community leadership would not be sufficient; what was crucial was to “demonstrate” to them how to “improve

the quality of their diets” (ibid., p. 14), “build sanitary toilets” (ibid., p. 15), “save time and labor” through reorganizing storage at home (ibid., p. 17), “do a womanly-like job of mending and repairing” clothes (ibid., p. 18), “make maximum use of second-hand clothes and all available fabrics for respectable looking garments,” and “develop responsible, democratic citizenship so that they can more intelligently participate in home and communities” (ibid., p. 19).

To facilitate these reforms, Feagin suggested the establishment of a “Home Living Improvement Research and Extension Section” in the Ryukyu Food and Agriculture Organization, an entity in charge of agricultural affairs on the islands (ibid., p. 20). Modeled after the agricultural extension service and especially home demonstration in the U.S., the newly-created administrative division would surely bring multitudes of benefits to grassroots communities, she argued. Not only would farmers become “more self-sufficient” and farming “a dignified occupation, desirable and satisfying as a way of life.” Morale of the community would rise, and “pride and satisfaction in home, family and community” would be enhanced. Women would enjoy “a position of respect and dignity,” and family and community lives would “become more democratic” (ibid., p. 23). Envisioning the transformation of women, families, and communities on the occupied islands, her report erased any trace of U.S. military domination and its violent consequences on the islands. Instead Feagin recast Okinawa as a showcase of American-led domestic education and community development in which an American home economist such as herself would exert womanly influence to enlighten and civilize Okinawans who would otherwise be mired in the disorderly conditions.

## 5. Conclusion

In existing studies of the U.S. occupation of Okinawa, Genevieve Feagin is an obscure, almost forgotten, figure. As this essay has shown, however, Feagin’s involvement in postwar Okinawa constitutes a crucial moment worthy of historical analysis. As this American domestic reformer moved from one obscure corner of the American empire to another, she not only exemplified a feminist vision of women’s mobility in the public sphere but also articulated a link between women, homes, and imperial expansionism in the first half of the twentieth century. Her involvement in U.S.-occupied Okinawa was a culminating point of her cross-border journey, in which Native American communities in Texas, immigrant communities in Hawaii, and Chamorro communities in Saipan each constituted a crucial stepping stone for her to extend her reach westward as a female imperial emissary. Though Feagin’s sojourn in Okinawa was brief, her involvement in the occupation was still crucial in connecting Okinawa to the larger arch of U.S. homemaking cum empire building that stretched across the Pacific. The link between domesticity and empire thus articulated by Feagin did not disappear at her departure from the islands. Following her visit, MSU home economists began to arrive in occupied Okinawa, sustaining (and indeed expanding) domestic reform initiatives started by Feagin and articulating

their own cross-border movements across the Pacific (Koikari, 2012). The story of Genevieve Feagin and other American home economists who became involved in domestic reform in U.S.-occupied Okinawa points to the centrality of domesticity in U.S. empire building, providing a crucial opportunity to re-think and re-envision the history of occupied Okinawa from a gendered, transnational perspective.

### Notes

- 1) Statehood was granted to Hawaii in 1959.
- 2) For a general overview of life improvement movements in Japan, see, for example, Garon (1997). For information on the life improvement movements in pre-war Okinawa, see, for example, Tomiyama (1991) and Kobayashi (2010). The latter's work sheds light on a series of disciplinary attempts focused on the reform of Okinawan immigrants prior to their departure from the islands.
- 3) U.S.-occupied Okinawa constituted a dynamic site of Cold War cultural formation, where Okinawan women negotiated with domestic educators from Hawaii, Michigan, and mainland Japan to articulate a link between homemaking and empire building amidst the islands' intense militarization. For a detailed account of gender, militarization, and Cold War culture, see Mire Koikari, *Cold War Encounters in US-occupied Okinawa: Women, Militarized Domesticity, and Transnationalism in East Asia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- 4) At MSU, Thomas Hamilton worked under the leadership of its president, John Hannah, who exerted much influence as a leader of Cold War international educational aid in U.S.-occupied Okinawa.

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## 沖縄・ハワイにおける女性と生活改善活動の一様相： ジェネヴィーブ・フィーガンの軌跡

小 碓 美 玲

本稿は、米国占領初期に沖縄を訪問し戦後生活改善活動の火付け役を担った家政教育者ジェネヴィーブ・フィーガンの軌跡を追う。米国テキサス州出身の彼女は、第二次世界大戦中のハワイにてアジア系移民を対象とした生活改革に従事し「他者」のアメリカ化に貢献した人物であった。1951年、米国政府の意向を受けたフィーガンは沖縄にて女性及び家庭生活に関わる調査・教育活動を3ヶ月に亘り势力的に遂行した。島民の生活改良を主眼としたフィーガンの啓蒙活動は、しかし、帝国主義者としての眼差しにもとづいており、沖縄生活様式を西洋のそれと比べて「不衛生」「不合理」「劣性」なものとし、米国文化の「優越性」を強調するものであった。米国本土から準州ハワイ、そして占領地沖縄へと移行したフィーガンの軌跡は、女性・家庭・帝国史の複雑な絡み合いを体現したものであった。

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