



Marshallese Educational Initiative

NEWS RELEASE

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Maddison Speaks at Yale Club; Addresses Nuclear Justice, Urges Youth to Raise Awareness

Quoting from RMI President, H.E. David Kabua's 2021 Nuclear Victims' Remembrance Day address about how the Marshallese people were alone during the nuclear testing period, Marshallese youth Benetick Maddison urged Marshallese, particularly youth, and their allies to continue to raise awareness to achieve nuclear justice.

Maddison spoke at the event, "Youth Initiative to Reverse The Trend of Existential Threats" at the Yale Club in New York City on Nov. 2. He was joined by H.E. Ambassador Amatlain Kabua, Permanent Representative of the R.M.I. to the United Nations, H.E. Ambassador Maritza Chan, Deputy Permanent Representative of Costa Rica, and H.E. Ambassador Alexander Marschik, Permanent Representative of Austria, and other diplomats and activists. The event was coordinated by Christian Ciobanu with Reverse The Trend (RTT) and Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, and focused on disarmament and nonproliferation education, particularly the importance of providing avenues for young people from affected communities to express themselves in the policy arena.

Maddison said that unlike the older generation during the testing period, the Marshallese people now have "allies worldwide who share the same aspirations for nuclear justice and a nuclear-free world." He stressed how important it has been that Marshallese elders shared their firsthand accounts of the testing and how doing so had won over allies. Now, he stressed, it is important for Marshallese youth to learn about the nuclear legacy, work together, and continue to raise awareness about the ongoing consequences of U.S. nuclear testing on Marshallese lands and bodies.

Maddison shared how, as a youth growing up in the United States, he was not taught about the nuclear testing history in public school; it is still not covered in U.S. history textbooks. He described how many Marshallese youth living outside the Marshall Islands do not have the opportunity to learn from their grandparents as he did.

Maddison also spoke about his work at the nonprofit Marshallese Educational Initiative (MEI) and the organization's efforts to educate the non-Marshallese and Marshallese communities,

particularly Marshallese youth, about the ongoing biological and ecological effects from nuclear testing. He also credited joint work done with RTT and Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, which has led to opportunities to reach a broader, global audience about the nuclear legacy and climate change's impact on frontline communities. RTT and MEI collaborated on a workshop earlier this year, which produced a community poem, "A Journey Home," written by Marshallese youth and edited by Lovely Umayam. The poem was published by Outrider.

"The Marshallese people have yet to achieve nuclear justice," Maddison said, "so the fight must continue...with the younger generation through raising awareness and working together. After 75 years since the first nuclear test in the Marshall Islands, there is still more work to do to prevent the use of and abolish nuclear weapons for good."

The event was hosted by RTT, MEI, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, the Prospect Hill Foundation, and the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies.

Maddison, the son of Monica Kabua and Edison Maddison, moved to the United States with his family at the age of six. He is currently the Project Specialist for Youth, Nuclear and Climate Issues at MEI, a Springdale, Arkansas-based nonprofit. MEI offers educational programming and has hosted nuclear remembrance and climate change awareness events in the past, most recently Our Shared Nuclear Legacy, a three-day event to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the first nuclear test on Bikini Atoll.

"A Journey Home" – <https://outrider.org/nuclear-weapons/articles/journey-home/>
Marshallese Educational Initiative – www.mei.ngo
Reverse The Trend – <https://www.rttreversingthetrend.com/docuseries>