

## Tell Them

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<https://jkijiner.wordpress.com/2011/04/13/tell-them/>

I prepared the package  
for my friends in the states  
the dangling earrings woven  
into half moons black pearls glinting  
like an eye in a storm of tight spirals  
the baskets  
sturdy, also woven  
brown cowry shells shiny  
intricate mandalas  
shaped by calloused fingers  
Inside the basket  
a message:

*Wear these earrings  
to parties  
to your classes and meetings  
to the grocery store, the corner store  
and while riding the bus  
Store jewellery, incense, copper coins  
and curling letters like this one  
in this basket  
and when others ask you  
where you got this  
you tell them*

*they're from the Marshall Islands*

*show them where it is on a map  
tell them we are a proud people  
toasted dark brown as the carved ribs  
of a tree stump  
tell them we are descendants  
of the finest navigators in the world  
tell them our islands were dropped  
from a basket  
carried by a giant  
tell them we are the hollow hulls  
of canoes as fast as the wind  
slicing through the pacific sea  
we are wood shavings*

and drying pandanus leaves  
and sticky bwiros at kemems  
tell them we are sweet harmonies  
of grandmothers mothers aunts and sisters  
songs late into night  
tell them we are whispered prayers  
the breath of God  
a crown of fushia flowers encircling  
aunty mary's white sea foam hair  
tell them we are styrofoam cups of koolaid red  
waiting patiently for the ilomij  
tell them we are papaya golden sunsets bleeding  
into a glittering open sea  
we are skies uncluttered  
majestic in their sweeping landscape  
we are the ocean  
terrifying and regal in its power  
tell them we are dusty rubber slippers  
swiped  
from concrete doorsteps  
we are the ripped seams  
and the broken door handles of taxis  
we are sweaty hands shaking another sweaty hand in heat  
tell them  
we are days  
and nights hotter  
than anything you can imagine  
tell them we are little girls with braids  
cartwheeling beneath the rain  
we are shards of broken beer bottles  
burrowed beneath fine white sand  
we are children flinging  
like rubber bands  
across a road clogged with chugging cars  
tell them  
we only have one road

and after all this  
tell them about the water  
how we have seen it rising  
flooding across our cemeteries  
gushing over the sea walls  
and crashing against our homes  
tell them what it's like

*to see the entire ocean level with the land  
tell them  
we are afraid  
tell them we don't know  
of the politics  
or the science  
but tell them we see  
what is in our own backyard  
tell them that some of us  
are old fishermen who believe that God  
made us a promise  
some of us  
are more sceptical of God  
but most importantly tell them  
we don't want to leave  
we've never wanted to leave  
and that we  
are nothing without our islands.*

See also the poem--and hear it--written on climate change and activism world-wide: <https://jkijiner.wordpress.com/2014/09/24/united-nations-climate-summit-opening-ceremony-my-poem-to-my-daughter/>

FROM WIKIPEDIA.ORG on the Marshall Islands: These are now the Republic of the Marshall Islands, provided independence from the United States as a "Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands" in 1979. As part of the archipelago of Micronesia, they were colonized first by Spain in 1592, then German, Japan, and the League of Nations, and finally the USA. which used its Bikini Atoll for nuclear testing. The Republic is in a "free association" with the US for some US services.