

Agueda Iglesias Johnston

Chamorro Teacher and Leader



LIBERATION — Guam Remembers: A Golden Salute for the 50th anniversary of the Liberation of Guam at NPS.gov

The U.S. Census Bureau continually strives to ensure an accurate count of the people of the United States. For this reason, it has always embraced the hiring of a diverse workforce that is representative of the local communities. In the middle of the 19th century, the United States expanded west into areas formerly governed by Spain and Mexico. Since many of the citizens and local officials only spoke Spanish, the Census Office quickly realized that it needed to employ workers fluent in the language. The establishment of a permanent Census Bureau in 1903 and increased immigration from Cuba and Central and South America expanded the need for Spanish-speaking employees, both in the field and at headquarters.

Agueda Iglesias Johnston was born on December 12, 1892, in Hagåtña, Guam. Agueda grew up on her parents'—Juan Acosta Dela Torre and Maria Lujan Iglesias—farm in Finaguayog-Machamano, Agaña. Many of her days were spent working on the farm and in the corn fields but she remembered always being happiest in school. Excelling at academics, Agueda first started teaching while in the eighth grade as a temporary teacher of the seventh grade, and, after graduating high school early, received a full time teaching appointment at the age of 16. In 1911, Agueda married her English tutor, Marine Lieutenant William G. Johnston, who would join his wife on Guam as a government employee in public works and as a businessman. Agueda continued her education at the Guam Normal School for Teachers, and completed correspondence courses with the American Correspondence School in Chicago. In 1925, Agueda received the appointment as principal of Guam's first junior high school and in 1930 she began serving as principal of the high school.

Historic census records are maintained and released by the National Archives and Records Administration, not the U.S. Census Bureau.

Visit <http://www.archives.gov> for more information about publicly available records like the one shown here.

Johnston family's 1940 Census.



In 1945, the George Washington High School was located in Sinajana. Members of the school's faculty included: front row from left, Agustín S. T. Duenas, Fred Gutierrez, Joaquin F. Sablan and James T. Sablan. Back row, Carmen O. Herrero, Eugenia D. Wirrick, Agueda I. Johnston (principal), unidentified sports director, Lagrimas I. G. Untalan, Ana F. Duenas and Rosa C. Sablan.

Agueda (back row, third from left) with the staff of George Washington High School in 1945. Pacific Daily News (accessed 27 July 2017) Agaña, Guam

Between 1710 and 1897, the Spanish conducted approximately 20 censuses of Guam. In 1898, following the Spanish-American War, Guam moved to U.S. jurisdiction. The second naval governor of Guam, Commander Seaton Schroeder, conducted a census in 1901. However, the results were merely aggregate population numbers divided by gender and race. In 1920, the Census Bureau administered the first official U.S. census of Guam and, in search of enumerators that were both competent and connected to the people, Census Bureau leadership chose local teachers for all positions. They did the same in 1930.

GUAM HEROINE HONORED AT FETE



MRS. AGUEDA I. JOHNSTON (center), 62, who became known as "the First Lady of Guam" during World War II, arrives in Los Angeles for a dinner in her honor at which the 11th anniversary of the liberation of Guam was observed. Mrs. Johnston, for 46 years a school teacher on the Pacific outpost, retired May 1. She served with an underground movement after the Japanese captured Guam in 1941. At left is her daughter, Mrs. Margaret Goetz, and at right, Eloise Johnston. Chris Gugas, ex-Marine, is in the background.

Agueda, center, with two of her daughters on a victory and reunion tour of the US.

The Danville Morning News (July 25, 1955) Danville, PA

Japanese language and culture classes in the curriculum. Although she catered to the Japanese troops through her curriculum and businesses, Agueda was also secretly running a resistance movement. Taking full control of the family businesses after the loss of her husband, Agueda continued to illegally accept U.S. dollars in order to keep faith in the return of American troops, and her family encoded hidden messages on the labels of the soap they made and distributed which shared news of Japanese defeats gained from illegal radios. All of these acts could have led to serious punishment and execution, but Agueda's most daring acts lay in her role in hiding and supplying US Navy Lieutenant George Ray Tweed, who was the only US servicemember to survive the entire occupation of Guam. Despite being suspected, imprisoned and tortured, Agueda refused to divulge any information. After the American landings on July 21, 1944, Agueda immediately began providing refreshment and entertainment for the troops, hundreds of whom later met and hosted her on her during several victory, reunion, and educational tours she took to the U.S. throughout the rest of the 1940s and early 1950s.



WASHINGTON VISITOR—Mrs. Agueda I. Johnston is shown visiting with Orme Lewis, assistant Secretary of the Interior, who she called at the Interior Department last week. Mrs. Johnston left Guam several weeks ago for the mainland.

Agueda visiting with the Assistant Secretary of the Interior in Washington, D.C., 1953.

Guam Daily News (August 19, 1953) Agana, Guam

her husband in the Agatna Naval Cemetery. The U.S. Census Bureau is grateful for Agueda's contributions to our mission, Guam, and the United States.

In 1940, with Guam now firmly a part of the regular decennial enumeration, teachers once again answered the call. This time Agueda, now a veteran educator, joined the enumerators' ranks and began enumeration on Census Day, April 1, 1940. The 1940 census included an agricultural census which focused mostly on copra (coconut meal) production, other tree nuts and fruits, taro, limited grains and vegetables, and some livestock such as poultry (although enumerators were not supposed to list anything under 5 birds), pigs, horses, goats, cattle and carabao. The population schedule resembled the stateside questionnaire with questions on race, age, school attendance, illiteracy, nativity, family relationships, home tenure, occupation, and employment.

On December 8, 1941, just two days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the forces of Imperial Japan invaded and captured Guam. Agueda's husband, William, was taken to a prisoner of war camp in Kobe, Japan, where he died in 1943. Agueda was allowed to continue teaching, although the original buildings were commandeered as barracks, and she was forced to include

Guamanians in U. S. Happy to Learn Of House Action

WASHINGTON, D. C. — Mrs. Agueda I. Johnston, assistant superintendent of Guam schools, was probably the first Guamanian to learn that the house public lands committee on September 30 reported favorably a bill which would give organic law and citizenship to Guam.

"Informed of the committee's action when she called at the Institute of Ethnic Affairs, she said: "This will be great news on Guam. I am very honored to be the first Guamanian to know."

Any step toward self-government is enthusiastically received on Guam, she continued, expressing the hope that the bill would be passed by both the house and the senate before congress adjourns.

"I don't see why there should be any opposition to it," she commented. "People have heard so much about the need of organic legislation for Guam in recent years."

Honolulu Star Bulletin (October 3, 1949) Honolulu, HI

Following the war, Agueda continued her service to Guam as an educator and advocated for Guam self-governance as opposed to the rule of an American naval governor. This goal was realized with passing of the Guam Organic Act of 1950, which provided for elections and self-governance of the island, while still remaining a U.S. territory. Agueda also was a founding member or major contributor to the Guamanian chapters of the Red Cross, Girl Scouts, Women's Club, Association of Retired Persons and the Fine Arts and Historical Society. In 1932, when the Guam Museum was established, she took control of the archives and collections and remained devoted to the preservation and education of Chamorro culture throughout her whole life. As tribute to her decades of service, a school was named after Agueda in 1974, today known as the Agueda I. Johnston Middle School, and she was elected to the Guam Educator's Hall of Fame in 1982. Agueda passed away on December 30, 1977 after a lifetime of dedicated service, and is buried next to