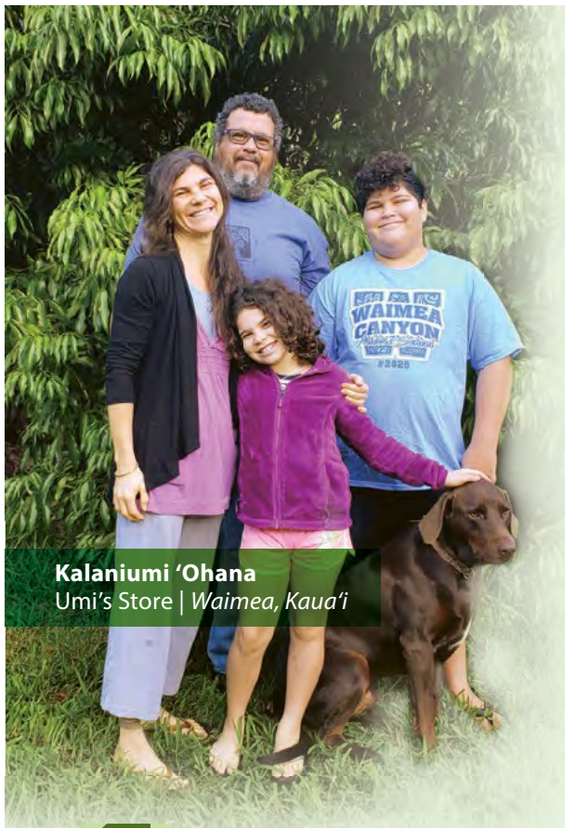
Ka Wai Ola
NEWS FOR THE LĀHUI
kawaiola.news
Ianuali (January) 2026 | Vol. 43, No. 01

50 YEARS OF ALOHA ʻĀINA

PAGES 19-22

Inspiring the revitalization of Aloha ʻĀina — to sincerely love, respect and care for the lands and oceans of our islands; revere the natural elemental life forces throughout Hawaiʻi Nei; and reclaim the sovereignty of Lāhui ʻŌiwi Hawaiʻi. Members of the Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana at Hakioawa greet the new day with *E Ala E* during the 2025 Makahiki celebration. - *Photo: Kat Ho*

Special insert ▸▸▸▸ READ THE COMPLETE FY2025 OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS ANNUAL REPORT



Kalaniumi ʻOhana
Umi's Store | *Waimea, Kauaʻi*

OHA
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Est 1989

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Whether you need a personal loan or business loan, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs can help you realize your dreams! For nearly 35 years, OHA has provided Native Hawaiians with low-interest loans for education, home improvements, debt consolidation, and their businesses.

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Hina Hawaiʻi | *Pearlridge, Oʻahu*

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Mālama Home Improvement

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5%[TO] – 6%[APR]*

Mālama Debt Consolidation

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Loan amounts:
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5%[TO] – 6%[APR]*

Mālama Business

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4%[APR]*

Hua Kanu Business

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4%[APR]*

For eligibility requirements visit our website or contact us.

loans.oha.org | 808.594.1888

Apply for an OHA Hawaiian Registry Card at:
www.oha.org/registry

*Interest rates may be subject to change.

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Planting Leadership, Harvesting Legacy: 2026 and Beyond

Aloha mai kākou,

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana, whose first landing in January 1976 was an act of courage guided not by authority or acclaim, but by conscience. They led because the ʻāina called, the lāhui mattered, and responsibility to future generations left no room for waiting.

That spirit guides OHA into 2026.

Leadership is not a title or spotlight. It is a way of moving through the world with intention, whether anyone is watching or not, whether the work is visible or quiet, whether doing what is pono is easy or uncomfortable. Often, it is lonely work, especially when integrity asks more than convenience ever could.

At its best, leadership is expansive. It does not cause others to shrink; it creates room. It uses ʻike and influence to open space for learning, confidence, and growth. True leadership leaves others stronger than it found them and takes joy in watching people grow into leaders themselves.

Indeed, leadership is always thinking about successorship – not from insecurity, but from abundance. It asks: How do I create pathways for others with talent, work ethic, integrity, values, and vision to lead? And how soon can I step aside to make room?

Answering that requires trust. It means entrusting Kānaka, especially, with large institutions, large budgets, large trust assets, and significant kuleana not someday, but now. It means believing our people are not only capable of carrying responsibility, but of transforming it.

Leadership grounded in Hawaiian values is inseparable from care for culture and ʻāina, from commitment to equity and justice, and from closing gaps rather than managing them. It favors partnership over isolation and welcomes voices that ask hard questions, offer different perspectives, and engage in honest, rigorous, but always respectful dialogue.

In those spaces, truth is surfaced, ideas are strengthened, and solutions and shared visions take shape guided not by the desire to control outcomes, but by a commitment to decisions anchored in mission and values.

Equally important, leadership holds the means with the same care as the ends. No achievement is worth celebrating if it comes at the cost of unnecessary harm. Secure leaders never hoard opportunity or close doors on rising stars. They understand leadership is not to be coveted, but shared. When another's journey is pono, their growth – even their surpassing us – is a triumph, revealing the deep well of talent and ʻike our people have carried and cultivated across generations.

That same generosity shapes how leaders hold truth. They communicate not to serve ego, but to fulfill kuleana – sharing information with care, knowing the weight of their words, speaking when it matters, and remaining open to being corrected if pono requires. Even disagreement becomes an invitation to listen more deeply and grow more honest.

Every leader's time will sunset. What matters is whether, when it does, we have sown seeds of leadership that will flourish: a rising tide of alakaʻi, prepared as their PKO forbearers were, to lead our lāhui towards horizons that call us home. ■

May this be the legacy we carry forward, together,

Summer Lee Haunani Sylva
Interim Chief Administrator | Ka Pouhana Kūikawā

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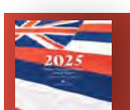


Special insert
FY2025 OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS ANNUAL REPORT

Summary of OHA's 2026 Legislative Package

2026

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

By Leināʻala Ley, OHA Chief Advocate

"Eō e nā ʻŌiwi ʻōlino.
Answer, o Natives, those who seek wisdom."

Welina! This inaugural "Nā ʻŌiwi ʻŌlino" column is designed to keep our lāhui updated on the work of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs' (OHA) Public Policy team. Mahalo to the late Aunty Mālia Craver who gifted the name to OHA in the early 2000s for its Native Rights Campaign. She shared that the intention behind the name was "to have the [lāhui] be people with knowledge and wisdom in everything they do."

In this spirit, we will spotlight advocacy issues that OHA is currently working on and invite you to join us in taking collective action for our lāhui.

Our team advocates year-round at the county, state, and federal levels, in both agency and legislative forums, to ensure Native Hawaiian perspectives and rights inform important policy decisions.

The state legislative session that opens on the third Wednesday in January is particularly important for advancing policies that improve the conditions of Native Hawaiians and defending against attacks on Native Hawaiian rights.

For the 2026 legislative session, OHA's trustees have approved the following six bills for our team to champion. We hope the lāhui will join us in supporting these bills.

1. Relating to Island Burial Councils

The five Island Burial Councils (IBCs) play an integral role in implementing the state's Historic Preservation Law (HRS Chapter 6E) and protecting iwi kūpuna, including by approving burial treatment plans and recognizing lineal and cultural descendants. Currently, several IBCs have been limited in their ability to carry out these essential functions due, in part, to difficulties recruiting candidates and meeting quorum requirements for voting. This bill proposes reducing static quorum requirements, authorizing OHA to provide per diem stipends for regional members, and extending the timeline for filling mid-term vacancies from 30 to 75 days.

The statue of Queen Liliʻuokalani at the Hawaiʻi State Capitol building in downtown Honolulu. - *Photo: Joshua Koh*

2. Relating to Historic Preservation

Act 293 (signed in July 2025) expanded an existing loophole in the state's Historic Preservation Law by exempting projects on residential properties in so-called "nominally sensitive areas" from review. This new category of properties could be interpreted to cover large developments in areas known to contain a high concentration of iwi. The term "nominally sensitive" could be interpreted to include construction sites where work commenced prior to the enactment of legal mandates to survey or inventory properties for burials. This bill would close this loophole by removing the "nominally sensitive" language and limiting the residential exemption to projects without a ground-disturbing impact.

3. Relating to the Land Use Commission

The Land Use Commission (LUC) is responsible for placing all land in Hawaiʻi in one of four categories (conservation, rural, agricultural, urban), and ruling on petitions to reclassify land, usually from a lower to higher classifications to enable development. This bill would mandate that at least one LUC member have expertise in water resource management and empower OHA to recommend candidates for the existing Hawaiian land use and cultural practice expertise seat. This would ensure critical water expertise informs land use decisions early in the planning process and give OHA – and beneficiaries – a role in nominating candidates to the Hawaiian expert seat.

4. Protect Reef Fishes from Commercial Aquarium Collection

This bill would permanently prohibit extraction of Hawaiʻi's nearshore marine life for commercial sale as aquarium pets and ornamental aquarium displays, with exceptions for scientific and educational institutions. The proposed ban is consistent with OHA's existing duties to advance Native Hawaiian traditional and customary rights under Article XII, section 7 of the Hawaiʻi State Constitution as aquarium collection is associated with the decline of targeted fish species, including those used by Native Hawaiians for cultural and subsistence purposes.

5. Amend the Hawaiʻi State Constitution to Prohibit Live-Fire Military Training

The public land trust is comprised primarily of former crown and government lands of the Hawaiian Kingdom. This proposed constitutional amendment gives the people of Hawaiʻi the opportunity to protect public trust land from further harm through a question on the 2026 ballot asking: "Shall the Constitution of the State of Hawaiʻi be amended to prohibit destructive live fire military training - defined as the discharge of large caliber munitions employing standard, incendiary, high explosive or inert rounds, whether portable, crew-served, or vehicle-mounted - from occurring on the public trust lands identified in Article XII, section 4?"

Because Hawaiʻi does not have a citizen-initiated ballot process, the only way to place the live fire issue before the electorate is by passing a bill through a two-thirds supermajority of House and Senate members. If this bill passes the legislature, this question will go before voters next November.

6. Relating to Rent Stabilization

Median rents in Hawaiʻi increased by approximately 80% between 2019 and 2023, contributing to Hawaiʻi's affordability crisis. Unaffordable housing is a primary driver for the out-migration of residents and decreases the quality of life for the 52.5% of Native Hawaiian families in Hawaiʻi that spend more than 30% of their income on housing. This bill will establish a 3% cap on rent increases, consistent with the average annual cost of living increase received by wageworkers but provides exemptions for owner-occupied properties. ■

To learn more and sign up for updates on OHA's legislative package and other important measures this 2026 session, visit oha.org/advocacy.

OHA Launches New CIP Grant Program

By Chantelle Kapua Belay, OHA Grants Manager

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) announces the launch of its new Capital Improvement Project (CIP) grant program, a strategic investment approach designed to strengthen Native Hawaiian wellbeing through investments in long-term, community-serving infrastructure.

CIP grants support Hawai'i-based organizations and government agencies for the design and construction of projects approved for CIP funding by the Hawai'i State Legislature.

These projects are intentionally designed to meet the needs of the Native Hawaiian community and align with OHA's Mana i Mauli Ola (MiMO) Strategic Plan, balancing immediate community benefit with enduring, systemic impact.

As part of OHA's commitment to responsible resource stewardship, CIP grants prioritize long-lived physical assets that create lasting benefits for Native Hawaiian communities. Unlike programmatic grants that focus on short-term services, CIPs emphasize infrastructure and capital assets that will support community wellbeing for generations.

This approach reflects MiMO's guiding principle of pairing near-term support with long-term, sustainable change – ensuring that today's investments continue to serve the lāhui well into the future.

The CIP grant solicitation will be released on Jan. 1, 2026, and will be available at oha.org/economic-self-sufficiency/grants. ■

Recognitions, Awards and an 'OHAna Holiday Celebration

By Kelli Meskin Soileau

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs' (OHA) Board of Trustees and administration celebrated staff who met service milestones, honored two end-of-the-year retirees, and recognized outstanding employees at its Christmas Pā'ina on December 19 at Nā Lama Kukui, its headquarters in Honolulu.

Beneficiary Services Agent Kauikeaolani Wailehua was honored for her 25 years of service to the organization. She was the longest serving among the staff who were recognized this year.

Two OHA staff retiring on December 31 were also recognized.

Beneficiary Services Agent Roy Newton has been the backbone of OHA's Maui office for 28 years. He has devoted countless hours to community outreach, talking with people, listening to their needs and offering support with genuine care and humility. He is also an ordained kahu and serves at Maluhia Church, continuing his lifelong commitment to uplifting others.

Compliance Manager Kai Markell has worked in various positions at OHA over the past 21 years. His expertise has shaped decisions on hundreds of projects, court cases, repatriations, iwi kūpuna protections, and preservation efforts. Outside of work, Markell is known for his captivating online storytelling and photography.

Newton and Markell are both bearers of valuable institutional knowledge and experience which they have shared with those who will carry on their work going forward.

OHA's 2025 fourth quarter (October, November, and December) Alaka'i Awards were also presented that evening. Each quarter, Alaka'i Awards are presented to an employee and a supervisor who embody the organization's values through their actions, leadership and decision-making. A peer-nominated award, it recognizes individuals who demonstrate commitment to OHA's mission and who consistently go "above and beyond."

Fourth quarter Alaka'i Award recipients were Director of Economic and Business Resilience Poni Askew who received the supervisor award, and *Ka Wai Ola News* Publications Editor Puanani Fernandez-Akamine, who received the employee award.

Fernandez-Akamine was also named the 2025 Alaka'i Award Outstanding Employee of the Year. Colleagues say she inspires excellence, pono living, and ethical integrity. Her writing and editing skills have established an enduring legacy of outstanding journalism and storytelling for OHA, exemplified by *Ka Wai Ola's* numerous awards from the Indigenous Journalists Association.

Interim Director of Land and Integrated Assets Lori Walker was named 2025 Alaka'i Award Outstanding Supervisor of the Year. Described as an accessible leader who models excellence and humility, under her leadership OHA has secured millions in project funding, and she has boosted lease revenues to advance land acquisition and development initiatives.

All awardees recognized on December 19 were noted by their nominators as being inspirational and dedicated employees.

The end-of-year holiday gathering celebrated the 'OHAna with aloha, music, pilina, and a donation drive to support two Hawaiian-serving nonprofit organizations: Pū'ā Foundation and Makana o Ke Akua. ■

Alaka'i Awardees (center) with (l-r) Trustees Kaialiʻi Kahele, Dan Ahuna, Luana Alapa, Keliʻi Akina and Keoni Souza. Top to bottom: Poni Askew, Puanani Fernandez-Akamine, and Lori Walker. - *Photos: Nelson Gaspar*

Hoʻākea Source Grant
Nov. 28, 2025 - Jan. 18, 2026
Open Cycle Period
Jan. 10, 10:00 a.m. - Noon
Online Info Session

Hoʻākea Source will award grants of $2,000 to $10,000, to selected projects by visual artists, cultural practitioners, collaboratives, and collectives living and working in Hawaiʻi. hoakeasource.org

The Eddie Aikau Invitational
Dec. 7, 2025 - March 6, 2026
Waimea Bay, Oʻahu

The contest will run if wave face heights consistently reach 40 feet. Watch the livestream of the contest at KHON2.com or YouTube @khonnewshawaii. theeddieaikau.com

Kalaupapa Remembrance Day
Jan. 6, 2026

On this day in 1866 the first 12 people affected by leprosy were sent to Kalaupapa. Nearly 8,000 would follow. For more info and events throughout January go to: kalaupapaohana.org.

Ka ʻAha Hula at Waimea
The Gathering of Hula at Waimea
Jan. 10, 11, 17, 31
11:00 a.m. & 1:00 p.m.
Waimea, Oʻahu

Enjoy hula presentations by different hālau. waimeavalley.net

Kamaʻāina Sunday
Jan. 11, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Honolulu, Oʻahu

Enjoy audio tours of ʻIolani Palace, ʻono food, lively entertainment, and local vendors. iolanipalace.org

Makahiki Ea: Cultural Practices Restoring Sovereignty
Jan. 14, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
Kapālama, Oʻahu

A presentation on Makahiki and its significance in restoring the Ea of Kahoʻolawe, and the impact of Makahiki ceremonies on cultural practices in our communities today. Speakers include Kaliko Baker, Davianna Pomaikaʻi McGregor, and Michael Nahoʻopiʻi at Kaʻiwakīlomoku, Kamehameha School Kapālama. IG @kahoolawe

ʻOnipaʻa Peace March
Jan. 16, 8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Honolulu, Oʻahu

March from Maunaʻala to ʻIolani Palace in observance of the overthrow. Rally at ʻIolani Palace will include speeches and entertainment. Bring a hāliʻi or chair and a water flask. Shuttles from ʻIolani Palace (across from the YMCA on Richards Street) to Maunaʻala will run from 7:30 - 9:10 a.m. Maunaʻala gates open at 8:00 a.m. and ʻIolani Palace gates at 6:00 a.m. kalahuihawaii.net

ʻOnipaʻa Lōkahi March
Jan. 17, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Honolulu, Oʻahu

Protocol begins at Maunaʻala, then march to ʻIolani Palace in observance of the overthrow. Rally will include remarks, food, hula, music, and culture and education booths. Shuttle service to Maunaʻala and a kūpuna trolley (limited space) will depart from Maunaʻala. mutualaidlahui.com

Kaiwiʻula Night Market & Grow Aloha Native Hawaiian Plant Giveaway
Jan. 21, 5:00 - 9:00 p.m.
Kapālama, Oʻahu

Explore exhibits, see the planetarium show, family activities, ʻono food and shopping. Take home a native plant. Bishopmuseum.org

Make Music Jamms
Jan. 21, Noon - 1:00 p.m.
Honolulu, Oʻahu

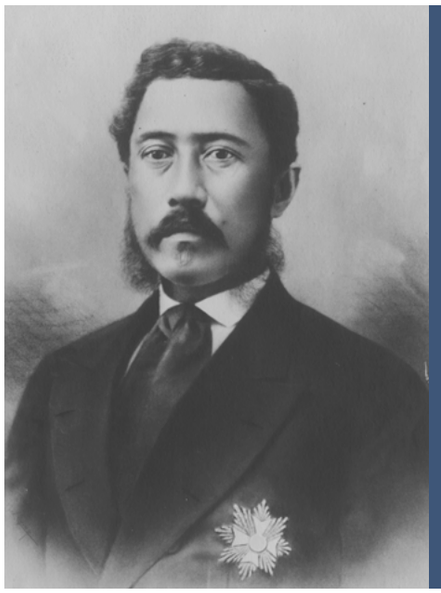
On the 21st of each month the Hawaiian Music Hall of Fame hosts a concert at the second-floor stage at Nā Lama Kukui. IG @nalamakukui

Kā Molokaʻi Makahiki
Jan. 22, 23, 5:00 p.m.
Jan. 24, 4:00 p.m.
Kaunakakai, Molokaʻi

Adult, teen and keiki competitions, plus a hoʻolauleʻa to celebrate Makahiki traditions. Enjoy games, food and craft booths. kamolokaimakahiki.org

Puʻuhonua Mākeke
Jan. 24, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Waimānalo, Oʻahu

Products, services, and businesses from Puʻuhonua across Hawaiʻi. Puʻuhonua o Waimānalo in the Pavilion. FB/IG @puuhonuamakeke



William Charles Lunalilo
January 31, 1835

Lunalilo was born to Chiefess Miriam Kekāuluohi and Chief Charles Kanaʻina at Pohukaina, where the grounds of ʻIolani Palace are today. In 1873, he became Hawaiʻi's first elected king by an overwhelming majority in an unofficial popular election. A week later the Hawaiian legislature unanimously voted for him to be King of Hawaiʻi. Some speculate legislators were afraid to go against the people. He was known as "The People's King."

Jan. 26, 9:30 a.m
Kawaiahaʻo Church
Aliʻi Sunday Worship Service

Waipā Community Workday
Jan. 24, 9:00 a.m. - Noon
Waipā, Kauaʻi

On the 4th Saturday each month check in at the old Waipā poi garage by 9:00 a.m. Bring closed-toe shoes, a water bottle, gloves, hat, rain gear, a towel, a change of clothes, snacks and/or lunch. Lunch is provided if you rsvp in advance. waipafoundation.org

Learn Kōnane
Jan. 24, 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Honolulu, Oʻahu

Kōnane teaches ahonui (patience), haʻahaʻa (humility) and ʻike loa (to seek wisdom). Free classes and on-going games on the last Saturday each month at Nā Lama Kukui with Uncle John Kaohelaulii. IG @nalamakukui

Hot Kūpuna Nights
Jan. 25, 3:00 - 5:00 p.m.
Honolulu, Oʻahu

Every 4th Sunday of the month bring your ʻukulele to the second floor of Nā Lama Kukui and join the kanikapila. Food will be available for purchase. IG @nalamakukui

2026 Makahiki ma Kapolei
Jan. 31, 3:30 - 6:30 p.m.
Puʻukapolei, Oʻahu

A cultural celebration filled with mele and traditional games like ulu maika, moa pāheʻe, hukihuki, kūkini, ʻōʻō ʻihe, and hāpai pōhaku. uluae.org

2026 Lā Kalo Event
Jan. 31, 7:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Honokaʻa, Hawaiʻi Island

A community gathering to huki kalo and kanu huli while listening to music and moʻolelo (stories). For more info visit kohalacenter.org.

ON EXHIBIT

Wayfinders: He Waʻa He Moku, He Moku He Waʻa, We Are One and the Same

Celebrate wayfinding across Hawaiʻi and Moananuiākea with an exhibit showcasing the growing family of voyaging canoes and crew members reflecting on environmental and cultural stewardship. Meet inspirational leaders in the Hall of Teachers interactive by Arizona State University, and practice navigating using kūkuluokalani, the Hawaiian star compass, and Nā Lālani Hōkū, the four Hawaiian star lines. bishopmuseum.org

Lele o Nā Manu: The Splendor and Loss of Hawaiʻi's Birds

Featuring 47 exquisite carvings of endemic manu nahele (forest birds) by master craftsman, Haruo Uchiyama. The complete set of historically known Hawaiian honeycreepers are displayed atop an original mural painted by local artist, Patrick Ching. The exhibit also includes a mural by Dr. Julian Hume depicting prehistoric Kīpahulu Valley, Maui; fossils of extinct Hawaiian bird species; and an interactive game. bishopmuseum.org

Hoʻākoakoa Lābui Events are sponsored by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs to support nonprofit organization events that offer significant benefit to the Native Hawaiian community. For more information visit OHA.org.

"A Worthy Opponent and a Good Friend"

Rowena Noelani Akana

Jan. 15, 1943 – Nov. 6, 2025

By Puanani Fernandez-Akamine

"We cannot continue to let others decide our future," wrote longtime Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) trustee, Rowena Akana. "We will be one nation and one people. Let us embrace each other's views no matter how different they are from our own."

Known as a passionate, strong-willed and outspoken advocate for Native Hawaiian rights, Akana came from humble beginnings. Born during World War II, she grew up in Pālolo Valley on Oʻahu.

A proud Roosevelt High School "Rough Rider," upon graduation, Akana moved to the continent, enrolling at New York University. A haumana of nā kumu hula Puanani and Leilani Alama from Kaimukī, she had the opportunity, while living in New York, to perform at the 1964 World's Fair. She later continued her formal education at Kapiʻolani Community College and UH Mānoa.

In the late 60s Akana got married and started a family. Her husband, an air traffic controller, was later relocated to Guam and the family lived there for two years.

They returned to Hawaiʻi in the aftermath of the 1978 Constitutional Convention. It was 1979 and more than a hundred candidates were vying for one of the nine trustee seats for the newly created Office of Hawaiian Affairs. Akana's friend, Rodney Burgess, was one of them. He asked Akana to be his campaign coordinator.

This was the catalyst for Akana's political awakening. In a 2018 interview on *ThinkTech Hawaiʻi*, Akana recalled first learning about Hawaiʻi's political history through workshops provided to educate the community by attorneys John Waiheʻe, Sr., John Van Dyke and Judge William Richardson – information she described as "eye opening."

As she came to understand the hope for change that OHA represented, she increasingly focused on the fact that, since its establishment, OHA has been under-funded by the State of Hawaiʻi.

"OHA had a difficult time with the mandate to 'better conditions for Native Hawaiians' [because] they had no money. The state was just giving them peanuts and Hawaiians began to get disenchanted with OHA thinking, 'well this is our great hope and nothing is happening,'" Akana said in the 2018 interview.

This, along with her growing activism, prompted Akana to run for OHA herself in 1990. She won an At-Large trustee seat, eventually serving for nearly three decades (from 1990 through 2018). She was re-elected seven times and during her tenure she twice served as both board chair and vice-chair.

Rowena Akana - *Photo: Sandra Hiraoka*

Throughout her political career, Akana was a vocal advocate for Native Hawaiians. She was an early critic of Maunakea's mismanagement; was involved in a kūpuna health care task force; and advocated to exempt Kuleana Lands from property taxes – as a result, the maximum property tax on Kuleana Lands is $100 per year.

In 2007, her advocacy for Hawaiian soldiers wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan influenced the creation of the Army's Warrior Transition Units to coordinate care for soldiers with serious physical or mental conditions.

Akana was known as a formidable opponent who did not shy away from controversy.

"Rowena lived her life as a voice for Hawaiian people. She was strong but always open to hearing positions contrary to her own. A worthy opponent and good friend," said attorney Mililani Trask who served as an OHA trustee with Akana in the late 1990s.

Beyond politics, Akana worked as a federal grants reviewer, a substance abuse counselor, a radio newscaster and a substitute teacher. She also served for a time as the Pacific Region representative of AIANTA (American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association).

While serving on AIANTA's board, Akana got to know Pohai Ryan, a tourism executive with the Native Hawaiian Hospitality Association (NaHHA). Ryan convinced Akana to travel with NaHHA to the Internationale Tourismus-Börse (ITB) Berlin, the world's largest annual tourism expo.

"She was very committed to economic development for Native Hawaiians," Ryan recalled. Akana and Ryan later traveled together to AIANTA conventions held on tribal lands.

"Unforgettable. That is how I would describe former OHA Trustee Rowena Akana," said Ryan. "She was very strong willed, and she enjoyed representing the Hawaiian people."

As a resident of East Oʻahu, Akana was active with the Niu Valley Community Association and the Hawaiʻi Kai Bobby Sox Softball League. She also belonged to the Musicians Association of Hawaiʻi, the Society of Hawaiʻi Entertainers, and performed as a singer and emcee for the Tavana Polynesian Show in Waikīkī.

"Mom was a force," said daughter Toni Nickens. "She was a straight shooter and wore her heart on her sleeve. Her methods were not embraced by everyone, but you knew exactly where she stood. You could criticize her approach, but never her heart for our lāhui."

Akana's heart for the lāhui is best understood through manaʻo she shared in a September 2017 *Ka Wai Ola* column:

"What we face today as Hawaiians, the Indigenous people of our lands, is no different than what occurred over 100 years ago. We are still fighting to protect our culture, rights to our lands, and our entitlements. Times may have changed but people are still the same. Greed is still the motivation behind efforts to relieve us of whatever entitlements we have left. The fight is even more difficult now that our enemies have become more sophisticated in ways to manipulate us and the law.

"We are one people. We cannot afford to be divided, not when so much work remains to be done. The struggle to regain our sovereign rights requires unity and the strength of numbers. Let us work together for the cause of nationhood. Let us agree on the things that we can agree to and set aside the things we differ on and move forward together for the future generations of Hawaiians yet to come." ■

Rowena Akana is survived by her daughters Toni Akana Nickens and Ann-Marie Tomisato, and her three grandchildren, Cheyenne Noʻeauonalani Nickens, Nathaniel Tomisato and Micah Tomisato. A hoʻolewa and celebration of life will be held at Kawaiahaʻo Church on Thursday, January 15 (her birthday). Visitation at 10:00 a.m. and services to follow at 11:00 a.m.

A Brilliant and Fearless Hawaiian Leader
Clarence Fook Tam Kukauakahi "Ku" Ching

June 27, 1936 – Sept. 16, 2025

By Donalyn Dela Cruz

Lawyer, plaintiff, activist, teacher, businessman, father, grandfather, and friend, Clarence Ching was affectionately known as Uncle Ku. He was also sometimes known as "Goat."

"The kids used to call him goat, not just because they thought he was the 'greatest of all time,' but because he was like a billy goat," laughed Ching's oldest daughter, Christi Maumau.

Born on June 27, 1936, in Pauoa, Oʻahu, Ching passed on Sept. 16, 2025, at the age of 89. He was a father of four, grandfather of seven, and great-grandfather of one.

In his later years, Ching spent most of his time walking Maunakea, tracing the traditional trails on the mauna and leading huakaʻi for his friends and family – earning him the nickname "goat" from his grandchildren.

He also acknowledged that he was referred to by some as "Ku: the old man of the mountain."

"All the native trails are actually part of the highway system," said Maumau, recalling the lessons her father taught her. "He felt that, as long as he could keep walking on those native trails, he could prove that people were still using them and that they couldn't be taken away. He was trying to preserve the trails."

Ching once wrote about his given name, Kukauakahi. "My DNA ascends through all islands, principally Liloa and ʻUmi on Hawaiʻi; Manokalanipō on Kauaʻi; and Kakuhihewa and Kualiʻi on Oʻahu. Also, Lonoikahaupu (one of Liliʻuokalani's ancestors). I took the name of another of [my] ancestors, Kukauakahi."

Prior to enrolling at Kamehameha Schools and graduating in 1954, Ching had attended Pauoa Elementary School. It was there that he first met Mary Maxine Kahaulelio.

"He was quite a guy, yeah. Very, very warm-hearted and yet kolohe," said Kahaulelio of her friend of 75 years. "He was brilliant."

After high school, Ching attended Brigham Young University in Utah, where he studied chemistry, and later earned his juris doctorate from the University of Idaho. Before becoming a private attorney in Honolulu from 1976 to 1992, he worked as a stockbroker, a radiochemist, a clerk, and a lifeguard.

His steadfast advocacy for the protection of the ʻāina and Native Hawaiian culture dates to the 1980s, eventually bringing him to serve as a trustee of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) for one term, from 1986 to 1990.

Reflecting on his time at OHA, Ching wrote on his website: "Before I ran for OHA, I had already dedicated myself to the restoration of the Kingdom. When I was elected, I hoped to assist in the restoration of the Kingdom and continued revival of our culture and spirituality. As a trustee, I worked on the 'OHA Blueprint' to connect Hawaiian issues with global issues and helped negotiate with the state for back rent on ceded lands."

Throughout his life, Ku Ching defended the lands and waters of Maunakea, Pōhakuloa, and so many other wahi kapu in Hawaiʻi. He was the aloha ʻāina who made sure that the Hae Hawaiʻi was raised on Maunakea for Lā Hoʻihoʻi Ea, no matter what. For years he was also the alakaʻi for Huakaʻi i nā ʻĀina Mauna, monitoring and guarding the cultural sites of Maunakea.- *Courtesy Photos*

Ku Ching celebrates Lā Hoʻihoʻi Ea on Maunakea with Michael Manuel, Jr. and Momi Greene in July 2022.

Ching was involved in many cultural organizations over the years and was also part of the construction crew for the voyaging canoe *Hawaiʻi Loa* from 1990 to 1993.

He also served on the Cultural Advisory Committee for the Pōhakuloa Training Area from 2000 to 2013. In 2002, he led Huakaʻi i nā ʻĀina Mauna, which focused on learning about Maunakea landscapes by hiking from the Hāmākua Coast, starting at sea level, to Maunakea's summit, then back down to swim in Luahinewai at Kīholo on the Kona coast.

Maumau recalled joining one of the huakaʻi and having difficulty with the altitude. "He came over, he goes, 'can you make it to the road?' I said, 'yeah, I think I can make it to the road.' He goes, 'okay, I'm going to go up and get the truck, and I'm going to meet you right there. Just go right there.' He took off. He was so much older than me, but he was so much more fit than me."

Ching hiked those trails well into his mid-80s, until his body could go no longer. "I feel that when he's not checking on us, then he's definitely there," Maumau added.

Kahaulelio moved to Waimea in 1999 where she crossed paths again with her childhood friend and became active as a kiaʻi ʻāina alongside Ching.

"We were getting involved with a lot of struggles here, like Pōhakuloa, Maunakea, other things pertaining to real bad things happening in Waimea - let's put it that way," said Kahaulelio. "But 2014 is the time we went to court."

In 2014, Ching and Kahaulelio filed a lawsuit against the State of Hawaiʻi and the Department of Land and Natural Resources over the state's mismanagement of public trust lands at the Pōhakuloa Training Area. The land, part of the ceded lands trust, has been leased to the U.S. military for training purposes since 1964.

As trust beneficiaries and cultural practitioners, they argued that the state failed its constitutional duty as trustee by not adequately monitoring, inspecting, or enforcing lease conditions, instead relying on the military to self-report compliance.

The lawsuit, *Ching v. Case*, resulted in a 2019 Hawaiʻi Supreme Court decision affirming the state's obligation to actively oversee third-party use of public trust lands.

"Malama ʻāina became codified as a legal argument and [that] set a kind of legal precedent," said Candace Fujikane, of the landmark case.

Fujikane, a University of Hawaiʻi English professor and author of *Mapping Abundance for a Planetary Future: Kanaka Maoli and Critical Settler Cartographies in Hawaiʻi* first met Ching in 2012 and became a part of Huakaʻi i nā ʻĀina Mauna.

She reflected on the lessons learned along the way - from the beauty of the landscapes and their historical and scientific significance – to moments of stillness and kilo (observation) as Uncle Ku shared moʻolelo.

"He was my alakaʻi," Fujikane said. "He was our fearless leader. He was the one who would plot out our course." ■

The Arrival

By Kirby M. Wright

"The Arrival" is a work of creative nonfiction by Kirby M. Wright, an award-winning ʻŌiwi poet, novelist and playwright.

A kahuna prophecy claimed a god would arrive during Makahiki, the time we celebrate the harvest. In our village, kalo is pulled from the loʻi and pounded into poi. Weke and pāpio from the nearshore reef are captured in a hukilau net. Hogs bake in the imu.

Makaʻāinana wonder at what floats offshore. It sits high in the water and has white wings. The wings disappear to reveal wood beams rising. Some say a giant tree has fallen into our bay. Many believe Lono has arrived to fulfill the prophecy.

I know this is no sacred visit. This is a schooner from overseas, one flying a red flag. A man chants, "O Kahiki, moku kai a loa." I know this chant. It is a story of fog dwelling people living far east of Hawaiʻi Nei. They were a race of small people living where the sun fell outside a land as wide as the ocean dividing us. Their skin was white. They suffered from a cold northern wind, thick fog, and freezing rain.

Villagers paddle out in outriggers. My warriors join me, and we launch a war canoe. The schooner shrinks the man in me because of its size. I hear outrigger people calling up to Blue Coats gazing down from above. Wāhine sing meles.

The schooner's belly wood glistens like koa. The deck is five-men tall above the sea. Cord ropes stretch from deck to mast. What keeps it from tipping over? A cloud moves over the sun. The sea cliffs darken. I smell sweet fern from the valley.

We reach a dangling ladder. I grip the cord and pull myself up and out of the canoe. Kekūhaupiʻo, my guardian, follows. I climb above the cannons, swing, and land on the top deck. The wood beneath me creaks.

The cornered heads of Blue Coats surround me. Eyes flash. Their foreheads are as white as the tender haohao meat of young coconuts. Narrow shoulders. Little muscle over bones. Short. Tongues snap leo pāhaʻohaʻo, a strange language. Kekūhaupiʻo says they are women. They seem more wāhine than kāne – except for the tattooed cook standing in the galley doorway. My warriors tour the schooner, one brushing a hand over the gleaming surface of a cannon.

An engraving made from a drawing by John Webber (1751-1793) depicting Cook's ships, the *HMS Resolution* and the *HMS Discovery* at Kealakekua Bay in 1779.

Blue Coats with spears surround a white hair in a

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THE ARRIVAL

Continued from page 10

yellow uniform. He is "Cook." I bow when our eyes lock. A pū waikaua (conch) blows on deck. The spears of the Blue Coats shimmer. A Tahitian among us says these are not spears, they are "muskets" with the power to spit death. Big shiny mouths gleam from pukas cut in the schooner's sides. The Tahitian says these mouths hurl black balls harder than stone that can kill at great distances.

An aliʻi tells me Cook dropped anchor at Kauaʻi and slept with Lelemahoalani, daughter of High Chiefess Kamakahelei. The women and girls lay with Blue Coats for nails, metal buttons, and scraps of iron. Cook is no god. He wants fresh water, meat, fish, taro, and poi.

Cook beckons forward High Chief Kalaniʻōpuʻu. Blue Coats part to let our king through. Cook will not be the last. More fog dwellers will come.

E nā Kānaka e noho aku ka ʻāina – we must claim our land. I see greed in haole eyes, a craving only satisfied by the taking of everything. Haoles will take our land, our food, and our wāhine. They can only be stopped when the aliʻi on all islands unite against them.

But the kings are too busy making war among themselves to see the danger.

For now, it is best to give. Taking makes Cook feel powerful. Steam more hogs. Bring kālua meat and gourds of water. Fill the canoes with bananas, ʻulu, weke, kalo, sweet potatoes, sugar cane and poi. Gift capes and helmets. Give and give more.

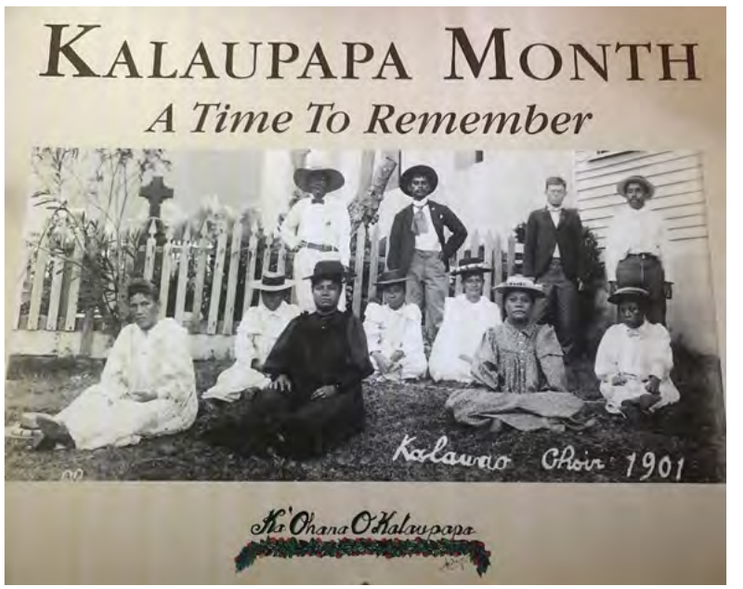
If Cook wants one wahine give him two. Let him believe there is no end to our giving. Give until Cook is drunk with the power of taking. This haole fills the makaʻāinana with wonder. The conch blows. Nā wāhine sing mele.

Know this to be true: Cook has no mana. I will take his weapons of smoke, fire, and death. I will strip him of his uniform. Cook will crawl the sand on feeble legs, begging like a beached crab. ■

Postscript: Captain James Cook first arrived in Hawaiʻi on Jan. 18, 1778, sighting Oʻahu and landing two days later at Waimea, Kauaʻi. After continuing on to North America, Cook returned to Hawaiʻi in late November, spending two months sailing around the pae ʻāina and stopping at Hawaiʻi Island in January 1779. Cook and his crew overstayed their welcome resulting in increasingly tense relations, quarrels, and acts of petty theft. This escalated when Cook attempted to recover a stolen cutter (boat) by kidnapping and ransoming King Kalaniʻōpuʻu. On Feb. 14, 1779, fierce fighting broke out and 17 ʻŌiwi were killed, as was Cook and four of his crewmen.

Remembering Kalaupapa

Submitted by Ka ʻOhana o Kalaupapa



January is Kalaupapa Month, a time to shine a light on the lives of the nearly 8,000 men, women and children who were taken from their families and sent to Kalaupapa because of government policies regarding leprosy, also called Hansen's disease.

Most never saw their loved ones again; 90% were Native Hawaiian.

"Kalaupapa Month is a time to think about our kūpuna, how they were forced to leave their ʻohana when they needed them most – and how so many of them overcame those circumstances," said Charmaine Kahaunani Woodward, president of Ka ʻOhana o Kalaupapa (Ka ʻOhana), the nonprofit organization behind the establishment of Kalaupapa Month and a descendant of Kalaupapa.

Leaders of Ka ʻOhana wanted to find a permanent way for the public to focus on the people and history of Kalaupapa. It is hoped that January will be a time for families to talk about their Kalaupapa ancestors with younger generations, when teachers will include chapters of Kalaupapa history in their classrooms, and when churches will pay tribute to the congregations of Kalaupapa where so many residents found hope and fellowship.

Ka ʻOhana selected January because of the many significant dates in history that took place at Kalaupapa during that month.

"January 6 is the day in 1866 when the first 12 people affected by leprosy arrived at Kalaupapa," said Executive Director Valerie Monson. "We quickly realized that January had many other dates that were inclusive in this history, events that not only recognized the people of Kalaupapa, but the aliʻi who are often forgotten for their efforts to help and the religious leaders who served the community."

To help the public better understand Kalaupapa's history and people, Ka ʻOhana will present two free webinars in January (registration information below):

January 10 - "Kalaupapa Month: A Deeper Look at Why January is So Significant," a narrated slide show about key events in history that occurred in January with stories of the people who made these dates important (10:00-11:30 a.m.).

January 24 – "Bernard K. Punikaiʻa, Kalaupapa Warrior," a presentation about the amazing life of one of Kalaupapa's greatest leaders and defenders (10:00-11:30 a.m.).

Additionally, essays about historic January events - and the people who made them significant - are available on our website. Because 2026 marks noteworthy anniversaries of key historical events, Ka ʻOhana will be issuing essays on those dates throughout the year.

An ongoing photo exhibit featuring the people, family members and landscapes of Kalaupapa is on display at the Molokaʻi Museum & Cultural Center in Kalaʻe. The museum is open Tuesday-Saturday, from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Text 808-349-2236 for more information. ■

To register for the free January webinars, or to receive Kalaupapa essays via email, sign-up at info.kalaupapa@gmail.com. For more information about Kalaupapa, visit Ka ʻOhana's website at kalaupapaohana.org.

A Retelling of the Battle of Kuamoʻo

By Gene Kaleo Parola


"Kekuaokalani & Manono" - *Original artwork by Brook Kapūkuniahi Parker 2014*

She was not asked to make the trip. But if she were to go, there would be no doubt about its outcome, nor the official nature of that result.

She was Queen Keōpūlani, a sacred chiefess of such high stature that the departure of the huge kaulua (double-hulled canoe) had been delayed until twilight so that her shadow would not fall accidentally on some unfortunate.

The death that she was about to cause would not be accidental.

"She does not trust us to bring Kekuaokalani to Kailua," Chief Nāihe whispered.

"We are his ʻohana," Chief Ulumāheihei responded.

"We are all ʻohana!" came the retort.

"Yes, but now we must all be an ʻohana of the haole god."

When the canoe's hulls slid silently ashore at Kaʻawaloa, Keōpūolani remained behind as the two uncles of the rebel chief met with him and tearfully begged him to return with them to the royal councils at Kailua.

"You are my sister's son, and the chiefs are blaming you for the uprising because you remain aloof," Ulumāheihei said. "Come to Kailua and talk the matter over with King Liholiho. And practice free eating or not, as you please."

Chief Kekuaokalani was silent a long moment and then replied. "I will go to Kailua, but I will go tomorrow." He paused and then: "But I will never practice free eating."

Some said the free eating of kāne with wāhine was the most flagrant part of the lifting of the kapu; that Keōpūolani and Queen Regent Kaʻahumanu had forced young King Liholiho to practice it, then proclaim it. It was a tangible departure from the many sacred laws that governed Kānaka life for centuries, and the sides were clearly drawn.

When the Kekuaokalani's answer was conveyed to Keōpūolani, she was not relieved as the uncles expected her to be. Instead she said, "He is an uku (deep sea snapper). He must be drawn in quickly, else he will spit out the hook."

"It is a trick," Manono said to Kekuaokalani with the firmness of a wife who sees beyond the emotional argument.

"They will kill you. If you go to Kailua, go as the warrior that you are. But you know that Kaʻahumanu has brought 300 muskets from Oʻahu to use against you."

"We fight in the name of our gods, Kū, Lono, and Kāne. They will not abandon us," Kekuaokalani argued. "The royals fight for a haole god."

"They fight with the haole's muskets. Just as the great king fought for all the islands. He built a great war heiau to the god Kū, but the haole red-mouthed guns killed Kānaka who stood against him with wooden spears," Manono argued. "Which were more powerful - the gods or the guns?"

"I, too, have muskets," Kekuaokalani insisted.

"But, we have too few and too few warriors who will stand up to the sacred chiefs."

"How can chiefs who love the haole god still be sacred?"

It was not a question Manono could answer, nor could the best Kānaka minds. In the faint morning light, the kaulua was ready to leave. Kekuaokalani stood resolutely on the shore. His warriors, alerted by night-long runners, stood behind him, torches, spears, and sandals proclaiming their readiness for war.

"You cut the navel cord, my brother, by this act," Keōpūolani said. "There is nothing left but war."

Upon returning to Kailua, Keōpūolani, with Kaʻahumanu at her side, rallied those reluctant chiefs who knew the terrible ramifications of a war pitting family against family.

And while the two queens railed against the weak at heart, Liholiho wondered silently, "Is this the way of the new religion? That I kill my cousin who does not pray as I do?"

But he knew the answer, for both the Protestants and Catholics had expressed their particular hatreds and prejudices prior to the queens' conversions.

It was a short war. The two armies met at Kuamoʻo on the Kona Coast of Hawai'i Island as Kekuaokalani marched north from Kaʻawaloa and the royal army, led by Kalanimoku, prime minister for King Liholiho, marched south from Kailua.

A final attempt was made to prevent battle as the advance scouts exchanged fire, but the rebel threat posed by Kekuaokalani was too great to be tolerated by the Christian converts whose influence was comparatively fragile.

Kekuaokalani fought bravely, continuing even after being wounded several times. Manono fought beside him until he could not rise again. Then, wounded herself, she asked the advancing chief for mercy since he and she had the same father. He denied her plea, and she fell under a volley of fire.

This particular act of cruelty made it clear that there would be no mercy for any who dared deny the Prince of Peace. ■

This incident and these quoted utterances are based on "Ruling Chiefs of Hawai'i," rev. ed., by S. M. Kamakau, Kamehameha Schools Press, 1961, pp 226-228.

Keiki to Kūpuna Learn at ʻĀina University

The waterfall at ʻĀina University. - *Photos: Courtesy of ʻĀina University*


Keiki from Nā Wai Ola Public Charter School learn how to plant ginger at ʻĀina University.


Kaipuaʻala and Kāwika Lewis at ʻĀina University in Pāhoehoe.

By Hannah Kaʻiulani Coburn

Nestled in the ahupuaʻa of Paukaʻa, in the ʻili of Pāhoehoe on Hawaiʻi Island, are 9 acres of land that Kāwika Lewis and his ʻohana steward called ʻĀina University – a place where visitors from keiki to kūpuna can learn about the ahupuaʻa system, food security, Native Hawaiian plants and crops, and more.

Lewis, a kanaka mahiʻai (farmer), said that ʻĀina University is about more than learning how to plant and farm.

"I believe everybody needs to get reconnected again to something that's greater than themselves, which is our culture," Lewis said. "I'm not just going to show you how to plant vegetables. You learn the work ethic, the culture, the language, the protocols, to be hardworking, respectful, to work as a team, a hui, a people. It's not just planting and farming, it's about life."

Grow

Lewis has worked for Kamehameha Schools Hawaiʻi for 18 years. Shortly after he started working there, he requested to see their available land leases. He said that the site in Paukaʻa caught his attention because it had a waterfall.

"When I got to the location with the manager, I stepped out of the car and I could hear water in the background," Lewis said. "As soon as she stepped out of her car, I told her I'd take it."

The site was overgrown and unused for over 15 years before the Lewis ʻohana became the land stewards. He explained that once he heard the water, he knew he wanted to invest the time into it because other places he had in the past didn't have water available.

"My family was never trying to be commercial farmers, it was more for the lifestyle of sustainability and growing food for sustenance," Lewis said. "The 9 acres seemed like a lot already, especially when you don't work with any funding and all you initially start off with is a shovel and a dream."

Lewis recalled first becoming fascinated with the ancient Hawaiian ahupuaʻa system back in kindergarten. This traditional land management system was designed to maintain balance in life by sustainably using resources to support both the land and the people.

"Even as a little youth I was intrigued looking at the poster that we all grew up seeing in classrooms," Lewis said. "And I was just like where is this place, I want to find it. I want to do the things that I see everybody doing in the poster."

Lewis later moved to Hawaiʻi Island to attend UH Hilo, where he met many kūpuna who continued to spark his interest in farming practices by sharing their ancestral knowledge with him.

"If you look at the poster, the biggest thing on the poster is the water going through the land division," he said. "That's the richness and the wealth of water, so today at our place that's what I have, I have a water source coming through the middle of our place that's very similar to the poster."

Gather

Lewis said there have been times when he's questioned why he's doing this work, but he believes ʻĀina University is a kuleana given to him by his ancestors.

"Even though they're long gone, they're like, 'Here Kāwika, you're going to be the one to carry this torch for others to know about,' and it became my kuleana and I take it very seriously," he said.

On any given day, ʻĀina University hosts groups from kindergarteners to 11th graders, as well as athletes and business professionals. While there is no set curriculum, visits can be customized to meet varying needs.

"A lot of blood, sweat and tears have been poured upon the soil, and there's something that tells me this is the right thing to do," Lewis said. "Everybody who leaves after a visit with us is just blown away. Some people cry because they're just so touched about how we open their eyes about how we look at the land."

He shared that seeing people have such emotional reactions to the visits is like getting paid $1 million in a spiritual paycheck.

"Sometimes funders don't understand the narrative, they just want to see the numbers, but they don't see all those moments [like]when a second-grade girl hugs you and says, 'Uncle, I'm gonna be a farmer when I grow up.' Those kinds of things are why this is so worth it."

Grind

Kāwika and his wife, Kaipuaʻala, have been involved with their community for almost 40 years. He believes their success comes from establishing dedicated relationships, building trust, and working with the keiki.

One of their main highlights is called mālanary, a play on the Hawaiian word māla (garden) combined with culinary. Lewis demonstrates different culinary skills, dishes, and then the groups grind (eat).

He also grows many of the crops pictured in the 1975 ahupuaʻa poster, such as kalo, ʻuala, maiʻa and ʻulu, and often collaborates with the community to help provide food for various events.

"I've always been interested in that, and I've always liked the idea of growing food, and giving food to others, sharing."

While ʻĀina University started with a focus on Lewis' family, he said that he wants people to know that they're sharing that focus outward now. He added that his ʻohana has received so much love, respect and aloha from the community because of what they give.

"We're so fortunate to live in a cycle of sharing food and reconnecting, but it comes at a price and with responsibility," Lewis said. "But by helping in the way that we do, by giving our heart and soul to a program that we believe in, our lives have changed so much, and it has been nothing but amazing." ■

For more information about Āina University email ainauniversity808@gmail.com or search @ainauniversity on Instagram and YouTube.

This article was originally published on October 14, 2025, by Hawaiʻi Public Radio under the title "Keiki to kūpuna gain generational knowledge at this Hawaiʻi Island ahupuaʻa."

Faces of the Diaspora

Finding Her Niche in Repatriation

By Megan Ulu-Lani Boyanton

Sarah Leilani Sissum's earliest memory is the sound of her mom's soothing voice during bathtime as she sang *Tiny Bubbles* by Don Ho. Later, young Sissum came across her mother's ʻulīʻulī, tucked away in their Illinois home.

Growing up in the Hawaiian diaspora, these snippets of Hawaiʻi were Sissum's introduction to her Kānaka Maoli roots. "Culture in my family is very specifically passed through the women," she said.

Today, Sissum, 27, is the woman passing tangible pieces of culture back to their rightful stewards. She serves as the repatriation fellow at the Field Museum's Center for Repatriation, Tribal Relations, and Provenance Research in Chicago. There, she helps facilitate the return of human remains and sacred objects to their respective Indigenous communities.

When the position was extended to her, Sissum felt the call to accept. She regularly works with Native American tribal nations.

"It helps us move more pono on the Native lands we visit," she said, "and it helps us better understand what our kuleana for our ʻāina can look like while in diaspora."

Sissum was born in San Diego. Kānaka Maoli on her maternal side, her ʻohana originally hails from Hawaiʻi Island then later, Oʻahu. After World War II, her great-grandfather moved the family to California. His daughter – Sissum's grandmother – married an American Navy sailor of European ancestry and had Sissum's mother, Lori Luana Anderson.

Her father, Dan Sissum, also claims European genealogy – though Sissum definitively describes him as "very Midwestern."

Her family moved from San Diego to Loves Park, Illinois, soon after Sissum's birth. Her childhood revolved around academia. While Sissum's older half-brother was an athlete, she was academically inclined, absorbing page after page of *Magic Tree House* and *Percy Jackson & the Olympians* books at the library. Sissum thrived in the classroom and gravitated toward English, history and math.

She dreamed of becoming a movie director because she and her father connected through film.

One Disney animated movie was played on repeat: *Lilo & Stitch*. It was one of Sissum's only ties to Hawaiʻi at that time.

Her mother yearned to dance hula but couldn't find a hālau to join in Illinois. Regardless, her graceful hula hands made an everlasting impression on Sissum's developing mind – though she had no desire to learn to dance.

Sarah Leilani Sissum was raised in Illinois and Oregon. Today she serves as the repatriation fellow at Chicago's Field Museum. - *Photo: Trisha Villagomez*

Western caricatures of hula dancers made her uncomfortable.

"Now, obviously, I see it with such different eyes, through such a different lens," Sissum said.

Her world turned upside down at age 11 when her parents divorced. Sissum resettled in Jacksonville, Oregon, with her mom, moving in with her maternal grandparents. She spent summers with her dad. Both of her parents eventually remarried: Lori to Ron and Dan to Debi. Her stepparents played significant roles in Sissum's life.

Her time in Oregon elicits complicated emotions. There, she finally crossed paths with other Pasifika kids. While her home life could feel heavy, she had a normal high school experience, taking advanced placement courses and performing theatre. Sissum graduated from South Medford High School in Medford, Oregon, in 2016.

It was at Southern Oregon University that she blossomed. Sissum joined the honors college, double majoring in English and history.

She began working as a writing tutor in 2019. Later that year, she became an undergraduate research assistant, diving into the lives of European immigrants in Oregon and handling artifacts. In 2020, Sissum spent six months as a program assistant for the university's history department. She also served as an audio producer at the Southeastern Council of Latin American Studies.

All the while, she was building her foundation in critical race theory, which would later help her unpack Hawaiian history. Despite her full plate, Sissum managed to write two capstone papers and graduate amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

After taking time off, she decided to pursue a master's degree in museology/museum studies at the University of Florida. "I've always been a fan of museums and heritage work," Sissum said. She sought to find her niche.

In 2022, she left Oregon for Gainesville, Florida. Sissum looks back on this chapter as transformative. "I was breathing in so much life," she said. She accepted a research assistant role with the Digital Humanities Project, learning restorative justice as she worked to honor Black heritage in Alachua County.

That same year, Sissum became the public relations and communications associate at the University of Florida College of the Arts. In 2023, she started as the programming and event coordinator at the Cotton Club Museum and Cultural Center, a museum focused on African-derived history.

She ultimately felt pulled to research her own culture, looking into figures leading the charge in Hawaiian historic preservation. "That's where I was like, 'Okay, I'm seeing kuleana here. I'm seeing myself more here. And I'm seeing just the fullness of our culture,'" Sissum said.

Her thesis, "Aloha Away from the ʻĀina: Diasporic Kānaka-Informed Considerations for Museal Praxis in the Continental United States," reflects her passion and contributes to a small but growing body of research from Native Hawaiians in the diaspora speaking to their own lived experiences and desires for themselves and for the lāhui. She graduated in 2024.

This year saw another chapter unfold: a move to Chicago. Sissum accepted the anthropology alliance registration internship at the Field Museum, where she handled donated Native Hawaiian objects and sought to preserve their mana. She's continued at the museum in her current role as repatriation fellow.

She also joined the team at Hawaiian Diaspora as a community knowledge and stewardship strategist, contributing to research. Sissum believes now is an exciting time to be Kanaka Maoli.

Looking forward she said, "I do deeply long to, at some point, live on the island that my family comes from. I also very much believe that the time will come when it's supposed to come." ■

Loyal to the Crown

Many non-Hawaiian royalists stood alongside Kānaka Maoli to support Queen Lili'uokalani after the overthrow

By Adam Keawe Manalo-Camp

Paul Nuemann. - *Photos: Hawai'i State Archives*

Charles Creighton

Charles Gulick

The Hawaiian Kingdom that Queen Lili'uokalani inherited was a constitutional monarchy grounded in centuries of Indigenous governance and hybridized with the political vocabulary of the 19-century world.

It operated with kuleana as a governing ethic, alongside treaties, constitutions, and the law of nations. It was multilingual, multiracial, and globally engaged. Political belonging was defined by allegiance rather than exclusively by race.

When this constitutional order came under sustained attack, those who stood with the Queen were not only Kānaka Maoli. Some were kupa Hawai'i, Hawaiian citizens or nationals who were not Indigenous, but who understood themselves as belonging to the Kingdom and loyal to its sovereign.

Like their Kānaka Maoli counterparts, these royalists were subjected to the Republic of Hawai'i's surveillance apparatus, including a network of spies known as the "specials," overseen by Marshall Edward Griffin Hitchcock. Loyalty, in this moment, carried real consequences.

One of the most prominent non-Kānaka Maoli royalists was Paul Neumann. A German Jewish attorney, Neumann served as attorney general under King Kalākaua and later became Queen Lili'uokalani's legal counsel and confidant.

He assisted the Queen in drafting the proposed 1893 Constitution and, following the overthrow, traveled to Washington, D.C., to argue for her restoration at a time when the United States was moving decisively toward overseas empire.

When those efforts failed and the Queen was placed on trial by the Republic's military tribunal in 1895, it was Neumann who stood beside her as her attorney. He was publicly mocked in the press and subjected to personal attacks, yet he remained loyal out of deep respect for the Queen and his adopted country.

This photo is believed to have been taken at the lū'au given for Mr. W.H. Rickard (seated in the middle) when he was released from prison. - *Photo: Hawai'i State Archives*

Royalist resistance also took place beyond courtrooms and legislatures. George Lycurgus, a Greek immigrant and hotelier, ran the Sans Souci Hotel at Waikīkī, which became known as a gathering place for royalists opposed to the Republic.

After the 1895 uprising, Lycurgus was arrested and jailed for treason. Rather than retreat into silence, he later embraced the label "Jailbird of 1895" and organized reunions among former prisoners as a public reminder that imprisonment had not broken their political convictions.

While the 1895 uprising was led by Kānaka Maoli, non-Hawaiians also participated and were captured and jailed. William H. Rickard, a planter of British parentage, assisted with logistics and planning. Charles Creighton, an Irish lawyer born in New Zealand who had served under Queen Lili'uokalani, also took part. After his arrest, Creighton was placed in isolated confinement. He and 11 other non-Hawaiians were ultimately deported by the Republic of Hawai'i, a reminder that dissent was treated as a crime regardless of origin.

People were guided by different motivations. Some royalists held paternalistic views toward Kānaka Maoli. Some had benefited from land or capital during the time of the Monarchy but found themselves excluded from the new Republic's elite. Yet, when silence would have preserved comfort and status, many chose to stand with the Kingdom out of a sense of duty and moral obligation.

Resistance also unfolded through the press. Journalists who supported the monarchy faced harassment, interrogation, censorship, fines, deportation, and imprisonment.

Editors and writers, both Kānaka Maoli and non-Kānaka Maoli, at pro-royalist papers such as the *Hawai'i Holomua*, *Ka Maka'āinana*, and *Ke Aloha 'Āina* quickly learned the limits of press freedom under the regime.

Even journalists who were not royalists were targeted. American writers J. A. Cranston and J. B. Johnson were banished without trial for publishing critical reporting about the regime.

The overthrow also divided missionary families. Some descendants, such as Lorrin Thurston, became central figures in the Republic's oligarchy. Others took more complicated positions. Rufus Lyman supported annexation but opposed the Republic itself. Still others remained loyal to the Kingdom.

Charles T. Gulick, born in Massachusetts and descended from a missionary family, had served as a cabinet minister under the Monarchy. In 1895, he helped lead the uprising and coordinated arms landings. He was captured, imprisoned, and sentenced to death. He was ultimately pardoned alongside Robert William Kalanihiapo Wilcox in 1896.

There were also royalists whose names were never recorded. Chinese and Japanese immigrants, many of them plantation workers, secretly donated money, arms, and logistical support to royalist efforts in 1889 and 1895.

Anonymity was a form of survival. Sugar oligarchs had the power to fire, jail, or deport royalists along with their families. Unlike figures such as Neumann or Gulick, they lacked protection due to their race, class, and citizenship. Yet some still chose to act, and some were brave enough to sign their names to the Kū'ē petitions in 1897.

These accounts force us to confront the illegal overthrow, the 1895 uprising, and the purported annexation not as distant or misunderstood events, but as sustained processes of pressure, coercion, and choice.

They challenge the claim that non-Hawaiians were unaware of what was unfolding. Many understood clearly.

Kānaka Maoli loyalty to the Kingdom was persistent, organized, and principled, sustained through petitions, resistance networks, and profound personal sacrifice despite overwhelming force.

Alongside them, some non-Hawaiian subjects of the Kingdom chose fidelity to Queen Lili'uokalani and paid through their imprisonment, exile, surveillance, or banishment, while those who aligned with the Republic were rewarded with land, office, and protection.

For non-Hawaiians today, these histories offer concrete examples of justice-centered allyship. They show that solidarity is neither symbolic nor self-congratulatory. It is collective work that confronts unequal power, redistributes risk, and commits to sharing political and material burdens alongside Kānaka Maoli in the ongoing struggle to reclaim ea (sovereignty). ■

Caring for Koholā-Kanaloa as Living Ancestors

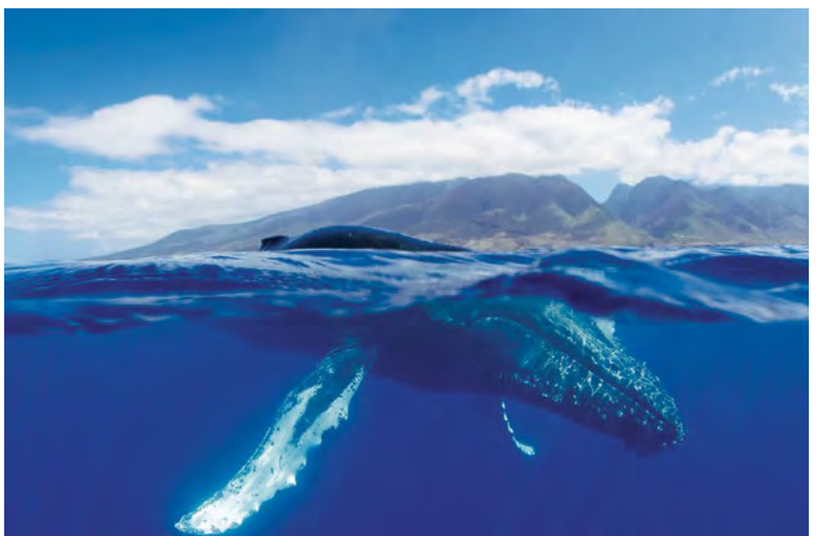
By Lisa Huynh Eller

The annual return of koholā (humpback whales) to Hawaiian waters during the fall and winter is one of the visible signs of seasonal change.

Traditionally, koholā are acknowledged as ancient beings and considered to be a kinolau (manifestation) of Kanaloa, the god of the ocean – which is why they may be referred to as "Kanaloa" by cultural practitioners. Honored by some ʻohana as ʻaumākua, they are said to have helped the ancestors navigate the Pacific.

Although many residents give their arrival little thought – or relegate it to commercial whale watching opportunities – for those who respond to distressed or stranded Kanaloa, it represents a period of increased risk.

In this period following Ke Ala Polohiwa a Kanaloa (the winter solstice), those tasked with this kuleana are preparing for what may lie ahead.



Every fall and winter season, koholā return to Hawai'i waters to breed and care for their yong. - *Photo: Jason Moore/Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary*

On Hawai'i Island, a designated marine mammal response group using a cultural approach is bringing forth a cooperative model of response in a space where cultural practices and Western governance have frequently clashed.

"Our vision is a future Hawai'i where communities on every mokupuni (island) are well equipped with the connection, knowledge, skills, experience and authority to properly care for distressed and stranded Kanaloa," said Roxane Keli'ikipikāneokolohaka, co-founder, executive director and lead kia'i of Kia'i Kanaloa, a statewide marine mammal response network comprised of Hawaiian cultural practitioners.

She added that developing community-led approaches is becoming more critical as federal laws created to protect marine mammals are in jeopardy under the current administration.

The emergence of a community-led response model was born from more than a decade of conflict, during which cultural practices and community preferences were often disregarded and sometimes criminalized in favor of federal decision-making and laws.

A significant point of conflict is the practice of euthanasia by the federal government when Kanaloa are severely injured or dying.

"Once the Kanaloa is euthanized, it cannot go back into the ocean unless it's in ash form. The burial of ashes is not our practice, nor does it provide the means for the Kanaloa to feed Moananuiākea as it was intended," said Keli'ikipikāneokolohaka.

Two incidents, about 10 years apart, illustrate the shift from conflict toward a more cooperative model of responding to strandings.

In 2015, NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) issued citations to Keli'ikipikāneokolohaka (then Stewart) and Kealoha Pisciotta for violating federal law after they responded to the June 2014 stranding of Wānanalua (a melon-headed whale) in Kawaihae on Hawai'i Island.

The two performed a Hawaiian sea burial after NOAA left the scene, according to an *NBC News* report. In 2018, NOAA ended up dropping the charges against the women after legal challenges and negative public attention.

In Native Hawaiian culture, Kanaloa are viewed as living ancestors, having appeared before kānaka in the Hawaiian origin chant, the *Kumulipo*.

Thus, Keli'ikipikāneokolohaka said responders view their work to care for Kanaloa no differently than they view the care of kūpuna in an emergency room or hospice-type situation except that "we are dealing with an entity that is a living ancestor, one who embodies both a familial and akua form at the same time.

"We facilitate the transition of Kanaloa according to their directive. They may choose to re-enter Moananuiākea, have a bit of a respite, or they may choose to transition from the physical realm to the spiritual realm."

In 2023, NOAA approached the Hawai'i Island-based Kia'i Kanaloa about becoming a formal stranding response partner, giving them the authority to respond to all strandings on the island.

After consultation with family, elders and community leaders, the group decided to accept the role and now has a formal agreement with the NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service Pacific Islands Regional Office.

The new agreement was put to its first test in July 2024 when Kia'i Kanaloa was called by the Leleiwi community in Hilo to respond to a distressed whale. Kia'i Kanaloa worked with the community and the Division of Aquatic Resources in coordinating a community-led response.

"The community had full advocacy in handling the response from start to finish, with three generations of one ʻohana involved in the ceremonial preparation and the kanu kai (ocean burial)," said Keli'ikipikāneokolohaka. "That kind of response epitomizes how we think these events should be handled in Hawai'i."

In November 2025, Keli'ikipikāneokolohaka traveled to Aotearoa (New Zealand) for the World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education to speak about Kanaloa response work in Hawai'i and Aotearoa. There, she co-facilitated a workshop called "Kanaloa Cognizance: Countering the Criminalization of Ancestral Duty and Ritual" with Bonita Bigham, a Māori affiliate of Kia'i Kanaloa,

About 100 people participated in the workshop, which culminated in a written statement calling for changes to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

"We call on CITES to enable Indigenous people to travel freely with sacred cultural items of a personal nature, to use them in culturally relevant contexts and ceremonies (including gifting), and to recognise the ancestral relationships and connections that exist between marine mammals and Indigenous peoples worldwide," the statement read.

In addition to training and advocacy, Kia'i Kanaloa is in the process of developing a predictive framework for when communities need to be on high alert for strandings. Through the process of kilo malama, they are studying historical stranding records and cross referencing them with significant earth and kānaka events, such as or natural disasters or deaths, to identify patterns.

According to NOAA, about 20 whale and dolphin strandings occur in the Hawaiian Islands in an average year. Strandings happen year-round, with dolphin strandings typically peaking in the summer, and large whale strandings in the winter during migration season. The University of Hawai'i Hilo Marine Mammal Lab has collected 30,000 observations and identified more than 5,000 individual whales over the past three decades during migration.

Illness, injury and disease have all been tied to the obvious causes of Kanaloa in distress.

In June 2025, three dolphins stranded on east Oʻahu shorelines over a 7-day period tested positive for *Brucella ceti*, a bacterial infection that can transfer from animals to humans. In all cases, cultural practitioners were present to advise the UH Mānoa first response team.

Keli'ikipikāneokolohaka said preparations continue to be made on all fronts to increase communities' ability to meet their cultural responsibility to care for Kanaloa as our living ancestors. ■

To report a marine mammal stranding, call the Kia'i Kanaloa response hotline at 808-987-0453, or the NOAA Fisheries hotline at 888-256-9840.

What is Driving the Military Expansion in Hawai‘i?

By Kyle Kajihiro and Neta C. Crawford

In recent statements to the media, Gov. Josh Green has repeatedly asserted that unless he can negotiate a favorable deal, the U.S. Army may condemn Hawaiian trust lands for training it deems vital to U.S. "national security." However, this assumes that he has the authority to negotiate away the state's fiduciary duties over trust lands and implies that the national security interests of the United States should trump all other considerations, including the rights and security of the people of Hawai'i.

It is already clear that U.S. military bases cause significant negative environmental, social, and economic impacts and thus, endanger the long-term health and welfare of the residents of Hawai'i.

The U.S. military currently uses more than 250,000 acres of Hawai'i's land and waters for housing and stationing troops and equipment, training and testing, supporting recreation such as golf and tourism, and conducting multilateral exercises, such as RIMPAC.

Most of this activity occurs on the so-called "ceded lands" – government and crown lands of the Hawaiian Kingdom that were seized by the U.S. military as a consequence of the overthrow. Of these lands, the military has access to more than 46,000 acres through leases and easements that expire between 2029 and 2030. For most of these leases, the military paid $1 to use these trust lands for 65 years.

And as these leases are set to expire, the military is intensifying and expanding training activities in Hawai'i.

The Navy has proposed an increase in bombing of Ka'ula (an island and seabird sanctuary off Ni'ihau). It recently issued a record of decision on its Hawai'i-California Training and Testing Overseas Environmental Impact Statement. The Navy proposes an increase in training at sea around Hawai'i and California, an increase in the use of underwater explosives, and a higher authorized "take" of marine species.

Meanwhile, the Army has expanded its training with other countries in the region through the Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center.

What is driving these developments? The U.S. military in the Pacific is preoccupied with deterring Chinese aggression, and if necessary, fighting to win a war with China.

Indeed, the U.S. national security establishment — under both Biden and Trump — has often said that China will, if left unchecked, invade Taiwan.

So, for more than a decade, the U.S. has bolstered its military presence in the Pacific and increased military cooperation and joint exercises with regional allies and friends, including Australia, Japan, New Zealand and Taiwan.

In fact, there are 220 other sites under Indo-Pacific Command having at least 10 acres and $10 million Plant Replacement Value located in American Samoa, Australia, Diego Garcia, Guam, Japan, Johnston Atoll, Marshall Islands, Northern Mariana Islands, Singapore, South Korea, and Wake Island.

A U.S. Navy wasp-class amphibious assault ship leads a formation of vessels in Hawaiian waters during the 2022 RIMPAC military exercises. - *Photo: U.S. Navy*

Then there are another 43 smaller sites located in Japan, the Northern Mariana Islands, Cambodia, the Marshall Islands, Singapore and South Korea in the INDOPACOM area of responsibility.

Of course, there are valid criticisms of China. Its human rights record is terrible. The government has squashed pro-democracy movements in the mainland and Hong Kong. It has imprisoned and killed dissidents and ethnic minorities and continues its long occupation of Tibet. China's leaders have long asserted an interest in "reunification" with Taiwan.

The U.S. also fears China's rising economic power and accuses it of unfair trade practices.

While China's military has some access to ports in the region, it has just one overseas base in Djibouti (the horn of Africa) and may soon acquire a naval base in Cambodia.

From China's perspective, it might seem like they are surrounded. In fact, that's the point.

U.S. military bases encircle China, while U.S.-led multinational military training events send a message that the United States and its allies will respond if China attacks Taiwan or is too assertive in the South China Sea.

The U.S. military strategy against China – a deterrence by threat of punishment for aggression – includes launching deep conventional strikes into mainland China should China blockade or invade Taiwan.

If this strategy fails to deter, the strikes could escalate to the use of tactical nuclear weapons.

As the current U.S. Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Elbridge Colby has said, "if you want peace, prepare for nuclear war." In fact, Colby has said the U.S. should not only threaten nuclear war but develop the "right strategy and weapons to fight a limited nuclear war and come out on top."

However, if the United States uses nuclear weapons against China or strikes China's nuclear sites with conventional weapons, a localized conflict could quickly escalate into a full-scale conventional and even nuclear war.

This could result in the annihilation of Okinawa, Guam, and Hawai'i, where U.S. military assets are concentrated.

The current U.S. strategy envisions U.S. military engagement and the U.S. is bolstering its offensive military capabilities against China.

More than $1 trillion in annual U.S. military spending — about three times what China spends each year — detracts from investments that could increase U.S. economic competitiveness.

U.S. strategies to contain China intensify a security dilemma which fuels the military expansion underway in Hawai'i and the Pacific and risks escalating into a catastrophic nuclear war.

There are alternatives that are less risky, including deterrence by denying China its military objectives through a determined defense. If China could not achieve its objectives because it is too costly and unlikely to succeed, it would likely not start a war.

Specifically, the scenarios the U.S. imagines for a Chinese invasion of Taiwan tend to ignore the fact that such an invasion would face significant obstacles due to Taiwan's mountainous topography and the configuration of its coastline, which make it very defensible.

In other words, even if the U.S. does not get involved, Taiwan's defensive capacity alone means that it would be folly to invade. Taiwan has invested heavily in bolstering its natural geographic advantages with a defensive strategy — "a thousand small things" — of denial that would delay, frustrate, and halt a successful Chinese invasion.

If China tried to occupy Taiwan, they would face a formidable challenge — one that is costly in blood and treasure. If China did make the attempt, the fighting would risk destroying the island and its people — a pyrrhic victory won at too great a cost to be worthwhile.

Instead of boosting its military presence in the Pacific, the U.S. could work with its allies to invest in military denial doctrines — defense to deter by denial of Chinese objectives rather than deep strikes.

In sum, although the military behaves as if there was only one way to deter a war with China, the current military doctrine of offensive deep strikes is not the only option.

A deterrence by denial doctrine poses less risk of escalation and is less expensive. It also allows the U.S. to reduce its military footprint in Hawai'i and elsewhere in the Pacific.

Moreover, investing in diplomacy and cooperative strategies to address common security concerns, including the global climate crisis, is an offramp from this dangerous path. ■

Dr. Kyle Kajihiro is an assistant professor of ethnic studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Dr. Neta C. Crawford is a professor of international relations at St. Andrews University in Scotland.

Sharing Kahoʻolawe's Story With a New Generation of Readers

Book illustrations by Harinani Orme, "illustration © Harinani Orme for Kahoʻolawe, written by Kamalani Hurley, published by Carolrhoda Books

By Hannah Kaʻiulani Coburn

A collaboration between ʻŌiwi author Kamalani Hurley and ʻŌiwi illustrator Harinani Orme resulted in an illustrated children's book, *Kahoʻolawe: The True Story of an Island and Her People*.

The nonfiction story traces the island's birth, unique ecosystem, and voyaging history before explaining how the U.S Navy used the island for target practice and highlighting the first successful landing of kiaʻi to protest its destruction

"The book [is] my first project," Hurley said. "I knew that I wanted to tell stories, but I wanted them to be real, true, especially about our people."

Hurley spent 37 years working as a writing and linguistics professor at Leeward Community College. After retiring, she finally had time to write.

"There are so many books out there supposedly telling our stories but are not by us. So that's what I wanted to do. And because Kahoʻolawe had been on my mind, I decided to go for it."


Kamalani Hurley
- Photo: Rokki Midro

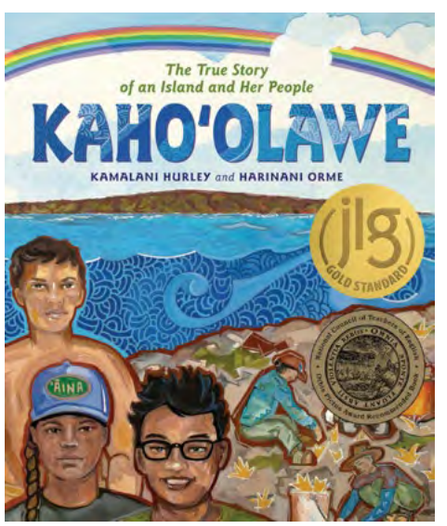
Hurley grew up in Honolulu and, like many others, was taught that Kahoʻolawe was a barren rock. It wasn't until she ventured off to the continent for college and returned home during the Hawaiian Renaissance of the 1970s, that she began to understand Kahoʻolawe was much, much more.

"Suddenly we were learning our history. Living on Oʻahu my whole life I didn't hear the booms and window shaking that people on Maui and Molokaʻi could hear. They knew what was happening on Kahoʻolawe. But me, living near Chinatown on Oʻahu, I didn't know any of this," Hurley explained.

"A lot of us in my generation did not grow up with the language, did not understand the culture, did not really know our history," she said, adding that her generation has evolved because of what they learned during – and since – the renaissance.

One of Hurley's favorite things about Kahoʻolawe's story is the leadership shown by the Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana (PKO).

On Jan. 4, 1976, nine individuals (the "Kahoʻolawe Nine") traveled to the island to protest the U.S Navy's continued use of the island for bombing practice. The PKO later filed a federal lawsuit charging the Navy with violating environmental, historical, and religious freedom laws. The case was partially settled in 1980, with a Consent Decree which granted the PKO access to the island for religious, cultural, educational, and scientific activities.



In 1994, the Navy formally transferred Kahoʻolawe to the State of Hawaiʻi, marking an end to the military's use of the island – an outcome that was only possible through the persistent, decades-long efforts of PKO.

This year, PKO will celebrate its 50th anniversary of aloha ʻāina.

For Hurley, in writing this story it was important to be respectful and pono. That is why both she and artist Orme give 100% of their proceeds to PKO.

"It's not right to make money off this story, it's not right to make money off the Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana," Hurley said.

It was also important to Hurley to have a Native Hawaiian illustrator work with her on the project. "For a topic like Kahoʻolawe, it just seemed pono," said Hurley. "There are two Hawaiians [working on] this book and we're coming from a different place. You can tell by Hari's art."

Orme's appealing illustrations include myriad details - from footprints in the sand of the Kahoʻolawe Nine and the sprouting coconut they planted when they landed to bring life to the island, to the crater formed by "Operation Sailor Hat" that cracked the island's water table – a permanent reminder of the way that the island has been wounded.

Although the island's remarkable story is shared as a children's book, it didn't start off as one.

Hurley initially planned to write a book for older keiki without pictures, but after finishing the first chapter, she was advised to make it a picture book.

Despite this, Hurley said that the book is meant for everyone.

"The book is layered, meaning there's language intended for the youngest readers [whose] teachers, or parents would read those words," Hurley said. "But then there are sidebars meant for parents, teachers, and older readers that explain more."

Since its publication, *Kahoʻolawe: The True Story of an Island and Her People* has received multiple awards including the Center for the Study of Multicultural Children's Literature Best Books of 2025 and Junior Library Guild Gold Standard.

Hurley hopes that for anyone who reads the book will come away feeling her deep love and appreciation she has for Kahoʻolawe and its courageous protectors. ■

LAʻA, MAʻA, PAʻA SANCTIFY, SUSTAIN, SOLIDIFY

THE PROTECT KAHOʻOLAWE ʻOHANA CELEBRATES 50 YEARS OF ALOHA ʻĀINA

BY KAIPU KEALA, HINA KEALA, AND DAVIANNA PŌMAIKAʻI McGREGOR

In an act of bold defiance against U.S. military might, on Jan. 4, 1976, nine aloha ʻāina evaded a U.S. Coast Guard blockade in the ʻAlalākeiki Channel to make landfall on the ravaged island of Kahoʻolawe.

Determined to support an Aboriginal Lands of Hawaiian Ancestry (ALOHA) bill demanding U.S. reparations to Kanaka ʻŌiwi, they wanted to draw national attention to the illegal role that the U.S. played in the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaiʻi and protest ongoing U.S. military control and destruction of Hawaiian national lands.

George Helm, Emmett Aluli, Kimo Aluli, Kawaipuna Prejean, Walter Ritte, Ian Lind, Ellen Miles, Steve Morse, and Karla Villalba were later dubbed the "Kahoʻolawe Nine," becoming contemporary folk heroes.

Their courage in risking not only arrest but death to stand in opposition to the desecration of Hawaiian land was the catalyst for the formation of the Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana (ʻOhana) and the birth of the modern Aloha ʻĀina Movement that celebrates its 50th anniversary this year.

Historic landing of the "Kahoʻolawe Nine" at Kūheia on Jan. 4, 1976. - *Photo: Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana*

After witnessing firsthand Kahoʻolawe's ruined landscape, feeling the island's pain, and sensing a powerful underlying spiritual force on the ʻāina, ʻOhana leaders sought guidance from kūpuna such as Kahuna Sam Lono, Aunty Emma Defries, Aunty Edith Kanakaʻole and others known to them from Molokaʻi and Hāna.

A STORIED HISTORY AND SANCTIFICATION

Through these kūpuna, the ʻOhana learned that, traditionally, Kahoʻolawe was honored as Kohemālamalama Kanaloa.

Named for the god Kanaloa, the island played an important role in the art of wayfinding; a wahi kapu where both navigators and kahuna were trained. The island's westernmost point is called Kealaikahiki (the path to Tahiti), as is the channel between Kahoʻolawe and Lānaʻi. This channel was known as a "sea road" that connected Hawaiʻi to Kahiki – the ancestral homeland.

In addition to being a navigational center for voyaging, Kahoʻolawe was an agricultural center and a site for religious ceremonies. There are some 600 cultural sites and 3,000 physical features on the island, including heiau, koʻa (fishing shrines), small fishing villages along the coast, inland settlements, and an adze quarry.

The kūpuna advised the ʻOhana to negotiate with the U.S. Navy for special access to the island to con-

SEE **PROTECT KAHOʻOLAWE ʻOHANA** ON **PAGE 20**

To date, more than 50,000 people have been engaged through huakaʻi to the island resulting in transformational life experiences. Volunteers help clear invasives, grow native plants, open access trails, establish base camps, monitor cultural sites, conduct spiritual ceremonies, and learn the importance of kilo (observation) – all fundamental to becoming cultural practitioners. In this photo, ʻOhana members depart from Hakioawa on Nov. 30, 2025. - *Photo: Kat Ho*

PROTECT KAHOʻOLAWE ʻOHANA

Continued from page 19

Respite following the first ceremony conducted on the island asking permission to protect Kahoʻolawe. - *Photo: Franco Salmoiraghi*

duct a spiritual ceremony.

George Helm led the negotiations and on February 13, a month after the landing of the Kahoʻolawe Nine, the kūpuna conducted a ceremony at Hakioawa, Kahoʻolawe. The purpose of the ceremony was to laʻa – sanctify and cleanse the land from the military's abuse, to reconnect with the spirits of the land, and to ask their permission to open the way for the ʻOhana to protect the island from the military and heal her wounds – the ʻŌiwi way to ethically engage the kuleana to aloha ʻāina.

Following the sanctification ceremony, the ʻOhana began to actively organize a grassroots Aloha ʻĀina movement on each island, guided spiritually by the Edith Kanakaʻole Foundation.

THE HAWAIIAN RENAISSANCE AND A TRAGEDY

Awareness and understanding of aloha ʻāina became a core tenet of the Hawaiian Renaissance along with the resurgence in ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi, navigation and wayfinding, traditional art and music, and cultural pride.

As ʻŌiwi across the pae ʻāina learned the history that had been suppressed for decades, and began to reclaim their historical narrative, the Aloha ʻĀina movement thrived, gaining widespread support – support that remains strong and steadfast today.

But a year after the historic landing of the Kahoʻolawe Nine, the unthinkable happened.

In 1977, sometime between March 7 and 9, George Helm and Kimo Mitchell were lost in the ocean off Kahoʻolawe. They departed from Maui and were headed to Kahoʻolawe to bring home two ʻOhana members who were occupying the island and had become stranded. It was an act of heroism that abruptly cut short the lives of two gifted young ʻŌiwi leaders.

In the wake of this tragedy, the ʻOhana regrouped and persevered, carrying the weight of Helm's and Mitchell's sacrifice as they continued moving forward.

It would take another 13 years, but the ʻOhana overcame every obstacle in its path, standing up to the world's largest and most powerful military-industrial complex. On Oct. 22, 1990, the U.S. military agreed to stop the bombing and its military use of Kahoʻolawe – an unprecedented victory for Native Hawaiians.

A NEW STRATEGY SECURES STEWARDSHIP

After the loss of Helm and Mitchell, occupation of Kahoʻolawe as a strategy to stop the bombing had become too costly. Instead, the ʻOhana put their efforts into a pursuing a civil suit, *Aluli v. Brown*, that had been filed by Helm before his passing.

By 1980, the lawsuit had resulted in a court-mandated Consent Decree that recognized the Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana as the kahuʻāina (steward) of Kahoʻolawe, marking the beginning of a 10-year period of expanded legal access to, and joint governance of, the island.

Since then, the ʻOhana has conducted monthly access to Kahoʻolawe for cultural, religious, subsistence, and educational purposes, setting a precedent for ʻOiwi access to government and private lands for traditional and customary practices.

But for the handful of members seeking an "all or nothing" outcome, the Consent Decree was not acceptable, and they chose to part ways with the ʻOhana.

Ironically, it was their kūpuna advisors who counseled the ʻOhana's leadership that taking the path of the Consent Decree would allow them – and eventually thousands of others – to become maʻa, more familiar and connected with the island, which would grow the support for, and commitment to, ending military use of the island.

The kūpuna were right.

In 1993, three years after the bombing was stopped, the Kahoʻolawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC) was established to assume management of the island, working to restore it as a cultural and natural reserve in cooperation with the ʻOhana under a stewardship agreement known as the Palapala ʻAelike Kahuʻāina.

The ʻOhana's continued advocacy, legitimized by the Consent Decree and their status as kahuʻāina for the island, ultimately resulted in the return of Kahoʻolawe to the State of Hawaiʻi by the U.S. military in a formal transfer ceremony at Palauea, Maui, on May 7, 1994.

Under Hawaiʻi state law, Kahoʻolawe is now held in trust for a future "sovereign Native Hawaiian entity." The historic return of Kahoʻolawe set a precedent for the return of other federally controlled lands to the State of Hawaiʻi in accordance with the 1959 Admission Act.

But more substantially, it made Kahoʻolawe the first Hawaiian land to be held in trust for sovereign Hawaiian governance since the 1893 overthrow.

Signing the deed of transfer from the U.S. Navy to the State of Hawaiʻi on May 7, 1994 at Palauea, Maui are (L-R): Rear Admiral William Retz, Navy Undersecretary William Cassidy, Jr., Gov. John Waiheʻe, III, and Dr. Noa Emmett Aluli. - *Photo: KIRC*

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF ALOHA ʻĀINA

"Laʻa, Maʻa, Paʻa; Sanctify, Sustain, Solidify," is an ʻōlelo noʻeau from Aunty Alice Kuloloio of Maui that has been adopted as the ʻOhana's 50th Anniversary slogan.

It provides a guiding vision for the aloha ʻāina work of the ʻOhana, teaching us that to engage in our kuleana we must first sanctify, make "laʻa" – both ourselves and that to which we are committing – as was done with the first ceremony in February 1976.

Only then can we become familiar, "maʻa" and able to expand and sustain our aloha ʻāina work through direct hands-on experiences involving kilo (observation), clearing the land, restoring the natural landscape, and monitoring and stabilizing cultural sites while engaging in ʻaha (ceremonies) that deepen our connection to the land. This characterized the period from the 1980 Consent Decree through the ordnance clean up (1994-2004).

The ʻOhana showed the world that it is possible to hold the U.S. military accountable to clean up ʻāina ravaged by decades of military training. Under Title X, Congress appropriated $400 million to remove ordnance from Kahoʻolawe.

The military cleared 9% of the island to a depth of 4 feet and an additional 68% of the island's surface – although none of the surrounding waters were cleared. Some $44 million (of the $400 million) was given directly to KIRC to begin its restoration of the island.

The final step is to solidify and make "paʻa" our pilina (relationships), respect, and reverence for our ancestral ʻāina as the aliʻi to which we are merely kauwā (servants).

The ceremonies conducted on the island and the I Ola Kanaloa! I Ola Kākou! Strategic Plan have now been elevated. Kahoʻolawe is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and recognized within Hawaiʻi, the U.S., and internationally, as a sacred place where Kānaka ʻŌiwi practices are mastered and uplifted.

A vintage Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana "Stop the Bombing" t-shirt circa 1980. This iconic design became a symbol of resistance and aloha ʻāina in the early years of the Hawaiian Renaissance. - *Photo: Craig Neff*

For the past 50 years, the ʻOhana has been steadfast in its aloha kūpaʻa i ka ʻāina ʻo Kohemālamalama, making great strides built upon the sacrifices and commitment of the kūpuna who believed in its mission of aloha ʻāina.

Throughout 2026, the ʻOhana's 50th anniversary will be a time of celebration and activation for all who live in Hawaiʻi to recommit and rededicate themselves to Aloha ʻĀina, to ea (sovereignty) and to the protection of Hawaiian lands from the devastation of military training. ■

ALOHA ʻĀINA INSPIRED MUSIC

The Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana is producing a musical album to commemorate half a century of Aloha ʻĀina. It honors five decades of the movement sparked by the historic landing on the island in January 1976. Created through aloha ʻāina music camps and writing sessions, the project features artists such as Keahi Piʻiʻōhiʻa, Pōkiʻi Seto, Moku Young, Kaʻikena Scanlan, Kimié Miner, Ikaakamai, Kekuhi Kanahele and Kaumakaiwa Kanakaʻole. The first single, a reinvigorated *"Mele o Kahoʻolawe,"* (written by Harry Kunihi Mitchell) debuts on January 2, with the full album release planned for fall 2026. The project aims to reconnect Kānaka and the global community to Kahoʻolawe and support future programs that cultivate aloha ʻaina.

Keahi Piʻiʻōhiʻa, Kimié Miner, Ikaaka Nāhuewai, Kaʻikena Scanlan, Kaipu Keala, Craig Neff, Brutus La Benz, and Moku Young sing "Mele o Kahoʻolawe" on Moaʻulanui overlooking the ʻOhana basecamp at Hakioawa. - *Photo: Shannon Wianecki*

KANALOA KAHOʻOLAWE TIMELINE

1976
- January 4: First Landing at Kūheia, Kanaloa
- February 13: First sanctification ceremony conducted on the island
- Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana (PKO) formed; Kohemālamalama o Kanaloa incorporated
- *Aluli vs. Brown* civil suit

1977
- George Helm travels to Washington, D.C.
- March 9: George Helm and Kimo Mitchell disappear
- Occupations continue; 27 arrested, 4 are jailed
- Navy required to furnish an environmental impact statement

1978
- Hawaiʻi Constitutional Convention; Hawaiian language, culture, access and gathering rights recognized
- Hoʻoʻuluʻulu Lāhui in Keʻanae, Maui

1979
- Negotiations begin with the U.S. Navy
- First Legal Access
- Kealaikahiki Ceremony

1980
- Consent Decree between U.S. Navy and the PKO approved, beginning a period of joint governance/use of the island

1981
- Kahoʻolawe listed on the National Register of Historic Places
- Construction of the first traditional hale at Hakioawa begins

1982 - 1990
- Monthly access to Kahoʻolawe and annual Makahiki
- First public religious Makahiki ceremony to honor Lono since 1819
- Negotiations with the Navy every six months

1986
- Opened ceremonies for Kanaloa

1987
- George Helm and Kimo Mitchell officially declared deceased; Plaques placed in their honor at Hakioawa
- Dedication of pā hula, Ka ʻIeʻie

1990
- October 22: Bombings stopped
- Congress appoints KICC (Kahoʻolawe Island Conveyance Commission)
- KICC conducts 21 studies

1991
- KICC conducts studies and holds public meetings on all islands to receive input for the future use of the island

1992
- August 16: Healing Ceremony with kūpuna and decision makers
- Dedication of Mua Haʻi Kūpuna Kahualele at Hakioawa
- KICC Final Report recommends that the island be returned to the people as a Cultural Reserve

1993
- Kahoʻolawe Island Reserve (KIR) and Kahoʻolawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC) established to manage the island as a trust for eventual transfer to a sovereign Hawaiian governing entity
- Congress sets the island aside for cultural, historical, archaeological and educational purposes and approves $400 million for ordnance clearance
- First *Hōkūleʻa* navigators visit to affirm island as a good place for navigation training

1994
- May 6: Memorandum of Understanding with Navy to clear ordnance from the island
- May 7: Kahoʻolawe is transferred from the Navy to the State of Hawaiʻi
- Cleanup of ordnance begins and continues through 2004

1995
- *ʻAha Pōwalu*, a protocol book written by the Edith Kanakaʻole Foundation, introduces additional protocols for stewardship of cultural sites

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

1997
- Rain koʻa for Kāne built at Moaʻulanui with its counterpart built at ʻUlupalakua, Maui

The ‘Ohana did not work in a silo and their efforts were not limited to Kanaloa. Rather, the Aloha ‘Āina movement connected and supported ‘Ōiwi throughout the pae ‘āina, revitalizing the ea (sovereignty) of Lāhui Hawai‘i and serving as a symbol of resistance. In this photo, ‘Ōiwi led by Pualani Kanaka‘ole Kanahele oli as they enter Wao Kele o Puna on Hawai‘i Island. This act of resistance was organized by the Pele Defense Fund to oppose a planned geothermal power plant. - *Photo: Franco Salmoiraghi*

The ‘Ohana has established residence on Kohemālamalama with this traditional hale hālāwai Nāmakapili at Hakioawa. Other construction projects include the Hāweoikeaopili pavilion, the pā hula Ka ‘Ie‘ie, and two additional base camps at Kūheia and Ahupū. - *Photo: Momi Wheeler*

The revival of annual Makahiki ceremonies on Kaho‘olawe has reawakened Kānaka ‘Ōiwi spiritual beliefs, customs and practices, and rekindled the relationship between Kānaka and our ancestral akua – Lono, Kū‘ula, Kāne, Kanaloa, Laka and Haumea – reconnecting the soul and ea of our Lāhui Hawai‘i. Today, Makahiki ceremonies are conducted throughout Hawai‘i. Here, Lono practitioners gather for a photo on Moa‘ulaiki in November 2025 following the opening of the 44th annual Makahiki season on Kaho‘olawe. - *Photo: Kat Ho*

Five generations of kahu‘āina have been trained by the ‘Ohana to restore and care for Kaho‘olawe - and then return to their home islands with the skills they have learned. In this photo, members from the fifth generation of the Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana offer a mele to honor George Helm and Kimo Mitchell at the site of their memorial plaques. - *Photo: Kat Ho*

2026 EVENTS CALENDAR

January 4
50 Years of Aloha ‘Āina Exhibit Launch
Bailey House | Wailuku, Maui

April 11
Aloha ‘Āina March
Merrie Monarch Festival | Hilo, Hawai‘i

August 9
Kama‘āina Sunday Celebrating
50 Years of Aloha ‘Āina
‘Iolani Palace | Honolulu, O‘ahu

September 4 – October 31
50 Years of Aloha ‘Āina Art Exhibit
Honolulu Hale | Honolulu, O‘ahu

September 22
La‘a Consecration of Aloha ‘Āina in ‘Aha
Bishop Museum | Kaiwi‘ula, O‘ahu

October 24
Ma‘a: Establishing our Pilina to Kanaloa
Bishop Museum | Kaiwi‘ula, O‘ahu

November 12
Pa‘a: Kanaloa Kānaka i
Kanaloa: Ea a‘e ka ‘Ohana
Bishop Museum | Kaiwi‘ula, O‘ahu

November 13
5:00 - 9:00 p.m.
La‘a, Ma‘a, Pa‘a! Concert and Festival
Bishop Museum | Kaiwi‘ula, O‘ahu

For the full calendar of events go to:
protectkahoolaweohana.org

KANALOA KAHO‘OLAWE TIMELINE CONT.

2001
- Joint 25th Anniversary of the PKO and Polynesian Voyaging Society celebrated at Honokanai‘a
- First gathering of wa‘a kaulua at Kealaikahiki

2003
- November 11: Ceremonies to formalize the transfer of access control for Kaho‘olawe from the Navy to the state are held at Hakioawa and at ‘Iolani Palace
- He ‘Ula Hou o Kaho‘olawe; Rebirth of a Sacred Island

2004
- April: Ordnance clearance ends and Navy departs the island
- October: Ho‘i Hou gathering of early island warriors and navigation schools.
- Dedication of Kuhike‘e navigational observation platform at Kealaikahiki

2008
- Training of Mo‘opapa to open ceremonies for Papa

2009
- February: Kūkulu ke Ea a Kanaloa Cultural Plan for Kaho‘olawe
- November 11: Dedication of Nāmakapili Hale Hālāwai at Hakioawa

2011
- Launching of *Fa‘afaite* from Kealaikahiki for her return voyage to Tahiti. The first launch of a wa‘a kaulua from Kealaikahiki in modern history

2013
- Base camp at Kūheia Established

2013-2016
- I Ola Kanaloa: A Plan for Kanaloa Kaho‘olawe created and enacted

2019
- Base camp at Ahupū established

2022
- Solar system at Hāweoikeaopili established

2026
- Dedication of Mua Ha‘i Kūpuna at Honokanai‘a

Native Hawaiian Health
SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Scholarship Recipients 2025 – 2026

Cade Akamu
Mililani, HI

1st Year
Doctor of Nursing Practice
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
Kamehameha Kapālama '17

Alexandra "Kau'i" Aplaca
Hale'iwa, HI

1st Year
Physician Assistant
Hawai'i Pacific University
Kahuku High School '17

Leilani Auld
Kapolei, HI

2nd Year
Doctor of Nursing Practice
University of Hawai'i at Hilo
Waipahu Adult School '08

Catherine Jara
Ewa Beach, HI

2nd Year
Master of Social Work
University of Southern California
Kamehameha Kapālama '18

Chloe Keli'ipio
Kailua-Kona, HI

2nd Year
Doctor of Nursing Practice
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
Kamehameha Kapālama '20

Umikoa Kealoha
Kailua-Kona, HI

2nd Year
Doctor of Clinical Psychology
Chaminade University Honolulu
Hawai'i Preparatory Academy '20

Chianti "Kiki" Motta
Hilo, HI

1st Year
Physician Assistant
Midwestern University
Kamehameha Schools Hawai'i '19

Manuha'aipo Noa
Kuli'ou'ou, HI

1st Year
Doctor of Nursing Practice
Chaminade University Honolulu
Kamehameha Kapālama '11

Luana "Biggie" Sepulvida
Kailua-Kona, HI

1st Year
Dental Hygiene
UH Maui College
Honoka'a High School '07

Kobe Young
Honolulu, HI

1st Year
Osteopathic Physician
A.T. Still University
Kamehameha Kapālama '18

The Native Hawaiian Health Scholarship Program
is administered by Papa Ola Lōkahi
Learn more at polhi.org/NHHSP

Time for a Review

By Bobby Camara

Kēhau-bedecked lehua with buds. - *Photos: Bobby Camara*

Plants. Plant parts. Kumulāʻau. Laʻalāʻau. Lāʻau hihi. Lau. Pua. ʻAnoʻano. Meakanu. ʻĀpaʻakuma.

Meakanu; a thing growing, a plant. ʻĀpaʻa, "land one has lived on for a long time." Meakanu ʻāpaʻakuma: a plant that has lived in a place for a long time. Of course "long time" is relative. Some say "Oh, I'm from here. I've lived here a long time." But, how long is "long"? Ten years? Twenty-five? A lifetime? Generations? Millennia?

The science of molecular biology is relatively young, but entirely fascinating, at least to some. Genetic studies help us understand relationships. Like the popular "Ancestry DNA" tests. Who are we? Where did we come from?

Increasingly, delving into those molecules – infinitesimally tiny building blocks of life – can inform us: From here, or from there? And, excitingly, when?

When did ʻōhiʻa lehua, our iconic species, arrive in our pae ʻāina? Where did it come from? Some researchers tell us that ʻōhiʻa has been in Hawaiʻi for perhaps 3.9 million years. Most recently it came on the winds from Te Henua Enana (Marquesas), and apparently originated on Lord Howe Island, between Australia and Aotearoa. Many millions of years ago. Simply mind-boggling.

Endemic plants are indeed those that have been here a long time. Those that are not found anywhere else in the world, and evolved here into unique species.

Native (or Indigenous) are plants that got here by themselves, but are found in other places. They have not evolved into different species.

Polynesian introductions (canoe plants) are the 25 or so useful species brought by those who became Native Hawaiians.

Alien plants are those introduced with or after the arrival of Cook. Many are invasive, spreading and wreaking havoc on native ecosystems.

So much must be done to ensure survival of our meakanu ʻāpaʻakuma. Do what you can. Learn about them. Plant them. Share them. Pull invasives. Above all, cherish them! ■

ʻAnoʻano ʻōhiʻa with quarter for scale.

A Vision to Restore Wailuanuiahoʻano

By KipuKai Kualiʻi

I'm dedicating this month's column to the vision of I Ola Wailuanui for a very special place: Wailuanuiahoʻano – which includes the lands where the former Coco Palms Hotel once stood.

The district is a unique and sacred area that represents an important part of Kauaʻi's history and was once the island's social, political and religious center. I Ola Wailuanui is a nonprofit community-based organization formed and managed by Kauaʻi residents for the purpose of preserving, protecting and restoring Wailuanuiahoʻano and the environmental, historical, and cultural treasures located therein.

They strongly oppose the development of any hotel and aim to develop a plan and partnership to acquire and manage the site. Their vision is to restore Wailuanuiahoʻano to a flourishing space for cultural enrichment, education, conservation and food production; to develop a thriving Hawaiian cultural and education center, agricultural park, and resource for generations to come. They propose a community process that honors the deep history of this place, both ancient and modern, led by individuals with ancestral ties and roots.

The site was surrounded by ancient heiau, the birthing place for royalty, the site of astronomical tracking of the rising heavens; and a gathering place and social headquarters in ancient Hawaiʻi. It was said to be King Kaumualiʻi's favorite place to live.

Māhele records show that the seaward portion of the former Coco Palms resort encompasses the Mahunapuʻuone burial grounds. There are heiau and sacred temples starting from the mouth of the Wailua river all the way to the summit of Waiʻaleʻale.

Ancient loko iʻa (fishponds) – Loko Puʻuone (also Loko Hakuone) and inland fishponds Weuweu and Kaiwiʻiki (also Kawaiʻiki) – are still present on the property.

In old Hawaiʻi, these fishponds were used for fish caught in the ocean. The captured fish were placed in saltwater ponds then slowly moved to freshwater ponds for fattening. The ponds are estimated to be between 600 and 800 years old.

I Ola Wailuanui's goal is to create a public place of cultural enrichment, historic preservation, land conservation and spiritual nourishment; an educational and interpretive gathering place, a center for Hawaiian cultural stewardship on Kauaʻi, and a hub for learning.

They want to provide a place for Hawaiians and locals of all backgrounds and ages to reconnect with this sacred and culturally significant space. Through outreach, ʻāina-based land restoration projects and an established educational center they want to inspire, reconnect, educate, empower and employ those closest to this ʻāina.

Their broader vision includes: 1) A piko for Hawaiian cultural advancement; 2) A gathering place and community space; 3) Agricultural restoration and local food production; 4) Lāʻau lapaʻau medicinal and Native Hawaiian gardens; 5) Loko iʻa restoration and food production; 6) A place for the arts (i.e., a musical amphitheater and hula mound) and; 7) A place for learning (i.e., a museum, language, history, legends, crafts and games). If you would like to kōkua, email: IOlaWailuanui@gmail.com. ■

What to Know About Cooking With Seed Oils

By Jodi Leslie Matsuo, DrPH, RDN

If you've eaten fried chicken, grabbed plate lunch, or just sautéed vegetables at home this week, you've probably eaten seed oils.

These common cooking oils are now being blamed for everything from inflammation to chronic disease, while others argue they're misunderstood. How did such an everyday ingredient become one of the most controversial topics in nutrition?

The debate over seed oils is rooted in a handful of concerns that deserve closer examination.

The most cited is that seed oils promote inflammation. Oils, such as soybean, corn, sunflower, and safflower, are high in omega-6 fats, a type of fat known to cause inflammatory processes in the body. This has led to the belief that seed oils automatically cause inflammation.

Studies have shown that, when used in moderation, seed oils alone do not cause inflammation. However, when eaten frequently, these oils may help sustain inflammation, especially in people with inflammatory metabolic conditions such as insulin resistance, diabetes, and heart disease.

Or they could contribute to an already inflammatory diet that is high in processed meats, added sugars, and fried foods. In other words, they are unlikely to cause inflammation on their own, but in these settings, they can help fan the flames.

The issue becomes more serious when it comes to how oils are used. When seed oils are exposed to very high heat, especially during deep frying or when used repeatedly, they break down and form harmful chemicals.

Frequent exposure to these chemicals can damage cells and contribute to inflammation, aging, and chronic disease. Using gentler cooking methods, such as steaming, baking, or light sautéing – and avoiding the reuse of cooking oils – can help reduce this risk.

Another concern relates to seed oil production. When seeds are processed to make oil, chemical solvents, like hexane, are used to extract more oil from the seed. Bleaching and deodorizing the oil is also done to make it a clearer and more neutral tasting product. In addition to removing natural antioxidants and flavors, this process may leave trace chemical residues in the final product.

For this reason, it is best to choose organic, cold-pressed, or expeller-pressed oils whenever possible. Oils labeled "organic" are made from seeds grown without synthetic pesticides, while cold-pressed and expeller-pressed oils are extracted mechanically, without chemical solvents and with less heat.

This gentler processing helps preserve natural antioxidants and reduces unwanted product breakdown. For everyday use, better choices include cold-pressed or extra-virgin olive oil for light sautéing and other low heat cooking methods. Avocado oil is best for high heat cooking, like baking and grilling.

The push to limit seed oils is not only tied to these valid considerations but also to a broader effort to reduce fried and highly processed foods and return to more whole, fresh foods.

For many people, cutting back on seed oils automatically means eating fewer foods that are processed, foods that contain added sugar, and fast foods. Instead, eat more fruits, vegetables, and minimally processed ingredients.

Those shifts matter for your health and help explain why the seed oil debate isn't as simple as it seems. ■

Follow Dr. Matsuo on: Facebook (@DrJodiLeslieMatsuo), Instagram (@foodrxblueprint), and on Twitter/X (@foodrxblueprint).

Hawai'i's Economic Health
An NHCC Snapshot

By Andrew Rosen

Hawai'i's economy has technically recovered from the 2020 collapse, but growth remains uneven and fragile. Headline indicators such as GDP (gross domestic product) growth and low unemployment obscure sector imbalances, wage stagnation, and persistent disparities impacting Native Hawaiians.

In response, the Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce (NHCC) is actively investing in programs designed to strengthen earning power, business resilience, and long-term economic security.

The GDP trend for Hawai'i (from 2015–2025 YTD), showed steady growth through 2019, a historic contraction in 2020, and a gradual recovery beginning in 2021. By 2024–2025, real GDP modestly exceeded pre-pandemic levels. However, the recovery curve has flattened, signaling slow growth driven by a narrow set of sectors, rather than broad-based expansion. This suggests that while recovery exists, momentum is weak and unevenly distributed.

Tourism remains Hawai'i's primary economic engine, but its composition has shifted significantly. Visitor arrival trends by market show that U.S. visitor arrivals have largely returned to near pre-pandemic levels, but that Japan visitor arrivals remain approximately 45–55% below pre-pandemic levels, driven largely by the yen's weakness against the U.S. dollar.

Historically, Japanese visitors stayed longer, spent more per day, and supported local retail, dining, and cultural businesses. Their continued absence explains why many small businesses feel pressure even when total visitor numbers appear stable. This indicates that visitor mix matters more than visitor count.

Sectors performing relatively well include:

- Construction & Infrastructure: Supported by federal and public investment.
- Healthcare & Social Services: Sustained demand due to demographic trends.
- Professional & Financial Services: Growth tied to national and global clients.

Sectors under pressure are:

- Small Businesses, Retail, and Food Service: Rising rents, taxes, labor costs, and thin margins.
- Hospitality-dependent local enterprises: Shifts in visitor spending patterns.
- Creative and Cultural Businesses: Growing, but undercapitalized and vulnerable to volatility.

While Hawai'i's statewide unemployment rate remains low (~2.8%), the unemployment comparison trend shows Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander unemployment near 8.9%.

Native Hawaiians remain overrepresented in lower-wage and more volatile sectors, meaning statewide employment statistics do not reflect lived economic conditions.

Wage growth vs. cost-of-living trend shows a widening gap since 2015. Wages have risen modestly, while housing, food, energy, and childcare costs have grown far faster. This mismatch contributes to workforce instability, multiple-job households, and out-migration.

In direct response to these challenges, NHCC launched Project Hoʻomana, a comprehensive workforce and business-development initiative designed to increase earning potential, business resilience, and long-term success for Native Hawaiian entrepreneurs and professionals.

Project Hoʻomana provides practical training in business fundamentals, branding, marketing, and emerging tools such as AI; cohort-based learning, mentoring, and peer networks and; access to resources that help Native Hawaiian businesses scale, diversify revenue, and compete effectively.

By equipping our members and community with real-world skills and support, Project Hoʻomana is focused on a clear outcome: empowering Native Hawaiians to earn more, to build sustainable businesses while incorporating cultural values, and remain home.

A healthy economy must be measured not only by growth, but by who benefits from that growth. NHCC remains committed to ensuring Native Hawaiians are positioned to lead Hawai'i's economic future. ■

To learn more, please join us on January 14 for our Economic Conference. Visit www.nativehawaiianchamberofcommerce.org for details.

Wā Noho o nā Manu Kahakai

By Lisa Kapono Mason

Usually in small flocks, ʻakekeke are most easily identified by their bright orange legs and pied brown, white, and gray plumage. - *Photos: Bret N. Mossman*

Every winter in Hawaiʻi we anticipate the return of three particularly industrious manu friends: ʻakekeke (ruddy turnstones), hunakai (sanderlings), and ʻūlili (wandering tattlers). Along Hawaiʻi's sandy and intertidal shorelines, these small shorebirds hurry through estuaries and salty whitewash, probing, flipping stones, and chasing receding waves in a tireless search for food.

This mighty trifecta arrives only after completing one of the most astonishing feats in the animal kingdom – transpacific migration. Upon the close of the Arctic breeding season, they launch southward over thousands of miles of continent and ocean.

How do they know their way? Long-distance migrations require using the sun, stars, and polarized light as compasses on their journey. But current research also suggests birds can "smell" their way towards land, as well as "see" Earth's magnetic field through a light-sensitive protein in their eyes' retinas called cryptochrome-4.

In the presence of short-wave light, this protein reacts to magnetic forces at the molecular level creating a superimposed magnetic mind map in the visual system. It's an elegant, yet still unfolding, explanation for how these navigators cross with such extraordinary precision to find sanctuary and rest every year in Hawaiʻi. ■

Lisa Kapono Mason was raised in Hilo and happily resides in Keaʻau on the island of Hawaiʻi. She is a community educator, conservation researcher, and native bird enthusiast with a passion to help strengthen relationships between our manu and lāhui.

Named after the seafoam brought by the rolling surf, hunakai spend many of their days digging for crabs and mollusks along sandy beaches.

The long sleek bill of ʻūlili is ideal for dipping into shallow tidepools for crustaceans.

Nā Pūpū o Nihoa

By Kaci Stokes

Though the sky was just beginning to soften in the light of dawn, the thousands of birds soaring overhead were well awake. As we turned slowly in the gentle rocking of the sea, Nihoa appeared in full view. With the sun low behind the island, Nihoa was illuminated with the pale yellow-gray of vegetation and rocks. As stunning as it was to see our kupuna island with a swirling atmosphere of seabirds, the excitement left me and was quickly replaced with a chilling fear.

Part of our huakaʻiʻs mission was to bring back 40 individuals of *Endodonta christenseni*. This snail is endemic to Nihoa and the last surviving species of its genus in the world. Sadly, they are threatened by the non-native ants that have made their way to the island.

Endodonta christenseni with an egg on its shell, crawling on supplementary calcium underneath kāwelu grass blades in the captive-rearing facility on Oʻahu. - *Photo courtesy: Riley Nakasone, SEPP*

While we set our intentions and grounded ourselves in oli, I worried that the oli and hoʻokupu we offered were not enough. It seemed incredulous to ask from an island to take some of the rarest animals in the world to raise them in captivity elsewhere.

For the first three days we couldn't locate any of the *E. christenseni*. Then we got notice that our huakaʻi was being cut short due to an incoming hurricane.

One crew member searched for two hours in a known population area and could not locate any. I remember hearing the exasperated radio call and my head dropping in defeat while tears ran down my cheeks. I was trying to suppress the fear that maybe we were already too late.

At that moment, the reality of extinction consumed me.

The conditions on the island didn't exactly help morale either. The deep-cut valleys and rough ridges fit the name of Nihoa. There was no escaping the blistering heat, and there were very few substantial pools where freshwater could collect. Shrubs and grasses were the dominant vegetation, apart from the couple of valleys with loulu (*Pritchardia remota*), which provided little relief.

While Nihoa does not foster comfortable living conditions, the island was teeming with life. From the numerous heiau and structural evidence of our kūpunaʻs residence to the sheer number of birds in the sky and on the ground, it was as if every inch of Nihoa was alive.

With a nesting bird at each step and sprawling vegetation in every direction, just getting to a site to search was a feat.

On the second-to-last day, the pūpū of Nihoa, at last, revealed themselves. Up on the highest peak of the island, there they were – hidden in the decaying blades of kāwelu (*Eragrostis variabilis*).

They had found refuge from the unwavering heat in these dense grass clumps. I sat there and cried again – in relief – and within minutes, it began to rain. I smiled up at the clouds and, with this affirming hōʻailona, we collected 27 individuals.

This huakaʻi took place in September 2025, and as of December 2025, they have had hundreds of keiki. They will soon be given an inoa Hawaiʻi, a recognition they and Nihoa quite deserve. E ola nā pūpū o Nihoa! ■

Kaci Stokes was born and raised on Oʻahu. She works as a field technician with the Snail Extinction Prevention Program. Her first huakaʻi to Papahānaumokuākea was in September 2025 to Nihoa.

Growing the Lāhui in the Diaspora

By Pa'ahana Bissen

Aloha mai kākou a Hauʻoli Makahiki Hou. The Mainland Council of the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs – also known as Nā Lei Makalapua (NLM) – begins it new year with petitions to charter two new Hawaiian Civic Clubs: Arizona (Phoenix) and Kansas (Topeka).

Inquires began in early October, seeking guidance of Membership Chairs Pōmaikaʻi Gaui (Tennessee) and Philip Swain (Colorado) in preparing the applications. The requirements for membership of the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs (AHCC) lay plainly in Article IV of its constitution:

Section 1 Membership in this Association shall consist of Hawaiian Civic Clubs (HCC) duly organized and chartered under the provisions of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Association.

Section 2 Civic Clubs that are formed must initially be comprised of a minimum of twenty-five (25) Kanaka Hawaiʻi, ages sixteen (16) and older. Keiki (child) under sixteen (16) may also join a Civic Club but shall not be voting members of the House of Delegates.

Section 3 All Hawaiian Civic Clubs now in existence and any new clubs which may be formed and chartered hereafter by the Association shall be known as "Hawaiian Civic Clubs" or their Hawaiian translation.

Section 4 While each club is autonomous, the acceptance of the charter by a club shall be a ratification and agreement on the part of the club to be bound by the Constitution and Bylaws of the Association.

Section 5 All clubs so organized shall be under the jurisdiction of the council for the district in which they are chartered.

The kūleana of NLM is to review and make recommendations to the AHCC for Chartering. If accepted, the clubs will formally receive their charters at the next AHCC Convention of Delegates; NLM will be the hosting Council for 2026 Convention in Portland, Oregon.

Growing the lāhui in the diaspora, NLM stands with its Constitutional purpose: Support and promote the principles of the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs; Provide guidance and assist in the activities of the chartered Hawaiian Civic Clubs of the Council; Represent and advocate for Kānaka Hawaiʻi not living in the pae āina; and Protect and advance Kānaka Hawaiʻi rights holding the U.S. federal government and the State of Hawaiʻi to fulfill their trust responsibilities to all Kānaka Hawaiʻi.

Located in 11 states, each HCC holds political presence and, in several metropolitan areas, are also influential in state policy making: California Native Hawaiian health initiatives; Utah Pacific Islander educational initiatives for Public School curriculum; Nevada Hawaiian small business growth; Oregon ʻOpio Educational influence in Public Education; Alaska and Washington recognition and preservation of historical sites for Alaskan Natives; Native Americans and Native Hawaiians; and in San Diego, the HCC maintains annual youth presence at its California State Capital.

Every member club of Nā Lei Makalapua has hosted a festival in their resident state including Alaska, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Missouri, Tennessee, Virginia, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Washington, Oregon and California.

All clubs foster a strong sense of community, promote cultural exchange, and preserve and perpetuate our Native Hawaiian culture and traditions with the aloha spirit.

We will continue to pūpūkahi i holomua (unite in order to progress) across the continent. ■

For more information go to naleimakalapua.org.

Pa'ahana Bissen served as the third pelekikena (president) of the Mainland Council of the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs from 1995-1998 and the first female elected. She also served as the second vice president of the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs from 2000-2004 – the first non-Hawai'i resident elected to the AHCC. She currently serves as a board member of the Las Vegas Hawaiian Civic Club.

175 Years of Kuleana at HFD

By Poʻokela Hanson

NaHHA is proud to share an article from one of our Lamakū Hoʻokipa who exemplify the value of mālama and are making meaningful impact as contributing members of the Native Hawaiian community.

"I Ka Wā Ma Mua,
I Ka Wā Ma Hope"

Poʻokela Hansen with his father, Barney Hanson III on Barney's last shift before retiring.

January 11 marks the 175th anniversary of the Honolulu Fire Department (HFD). Established by King Kamehameha III, HFD was the first fire department west of the Mississippi River and the first founded by a ruling monarch. Its creation reflected the deep sense of kuleana our aliʻi had to protect the people, the ʻāina, and the future of Hawaiʻi.

L-R Poʻokela Hansen, Nathan Utu, Curtis Armstrong, Michael Webster, William Kapua, Jr.

For more than seven generations, the HFD has been grounded in Hawaiian leadership and values. Members of the aliʻi class did not stand apart from the work, they immersed themselves in it.

King David Kalākaua proudly served with Engine Company No. 4. Prince Albert Edward Kauikeaouli Kaleiopapa, "Ka Haku o Hawaiʻi," was named an honorary member. HFD has continuously perpetuated leadership in action, reflecting the significant role of fire service within the Hawaiian Kingdom.

Since its founding, HFD has evolved from hand-pulled carts and bucket brigades to advanced rescue teams and specialized response units. Beyond emergencies, firefighters serve in the community as mentors, teachers, and community partners strengthening community resilience across Oʻahu.

As a second-generation firefighter with the HFD, I am proud to be part of this legacy. I grew up watching my father and his fellow firefighters dedicate themselves to this work as a calling. Their lessons taught me that being a firefighter isn't just about putting out flames, it's about actively supporting and advocating for your community, being dependable, and caring for others with aloha.

Those same values of ʻauamo kuleana, hoʻihoʻi hou, and laulima guide us today. Through emergency response, prevention, and outreach, we honor our responsibility to protect people, place, and future generations.

When we visit schools and mentor youth, we perpetuate the spirit of the department and pass on the discipline, teamwork, and service that defines our profession. Through our prevention and outreach efforts, the next generation learns not just how to serve, but why we serve.

As the HFD looks ahead to the next seven generations of service, the foundation remains the same: courage rooted in compassion and service grounded in aloha ʻāina. The 175th anniversary is more than a celebration of history, it is a living reminder that we are part of a lineage of protectors bound by kuleana, inspired by aloha, and dedicated to the safety and wellbeing of our lāhui. ■

Poʻokela Hanson is a 17-year firefighter and currently serves as fire captain at Waipahu, Station 12. He is involved in the Honolulu Fire Department (HFD) Explorer Program, supporting youth development and career pathways, and serves on Ka Manai Ahonui, HFD's cultural advisory group. For more information about HFD's 175th Anniversary and related events, follow HFD on Instagram or go to fire.honolulu.gov.

Enroll Now for Spring Programs

By Bryan Esmeralda

Liliʻuokalani Trust (LT) is excited to share that registration for our Spring Term and Spring Break programs is now open! Your kamaliʻi can thrive in one of these programs which are designed to provide safe, enriching experiences for keiki and ʻōpio while supporting families throughout the season.

Spring Term Programs: Offered primarily after school from January 20 through May 8 (specific dates and times vary by island and program).

Spring Break Programs: Available with extended hours from March 16-20, to ensure your child has a fun and supportive place to be while school is out. Please note that Spring Term programming will pause during this break.

Programs will be offered at all LT service locations across the pae ʻāina, serving youth from birth through age 26. You can explore full program details in our Spring Program catalog on our website.

To get started, please complete LT's General Interest Form. This helps our team understand your family's needs and guides you through the next steps for enrollment.

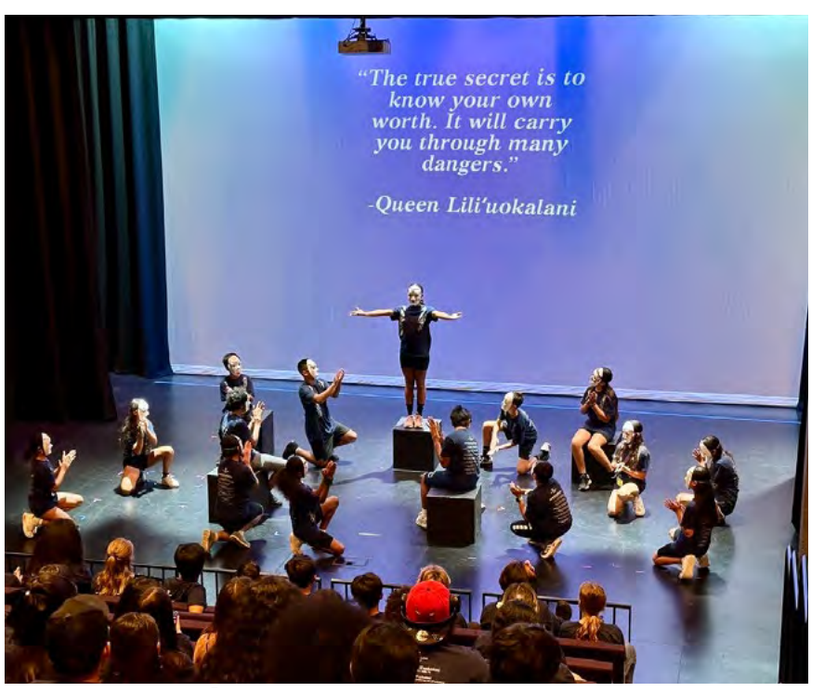
The Spring Program Catalog and General Interest Form can be found at: onipaa.org/browse-programs-and-services.

We look forward to helping your keiki thrive through our many program offerings! ■

Bryan Esmeralda serves as director of external relations at Liliʻuokalani Trust (LT).

LT is a private foundation established in 1909 for the benefit of orphan and destitute children, with preference given to Native Hawaiians. LT serves thousands of kamaliʻi through a combination of direct services and collaborations with community partners.

LT's team of over 200 professionals is united by a passion to continue the Queen's legacy by providing opportunities for Native Hawaiian youth to realize their greatest potential: living healthy, joyful, and prosperous lives, while contributing positively to their families, communities, and the world.



Kamaliʻi participate in LT's ʻŌlino Summer theater program at Liliʻuokalani Center. - *Courtesy Photo*

Meheu Kalaima a nā Kipi

Na Kalani Akana, Ph.D.

ʻOka lā 17 o Ianuali, 1893, ka lā hōʻehaʻeha no nā Hawaiʻi no ka mea ua hoʻokāhuli ʻia ke Aupuni Hawaiʻi e kekahi mau kipi, mau paokeʻe o ke aupuni.

Ua kapa lākou iā lākou iho ʻo lākou ke Kōmike o Ka Palekana akā inā hahai kākou i nā meheu kalaima, a he kalaima nō ke kipi, ʻo ka "palekana" a lākou i ʻimi ai ʻo ia ka hoʻopalekana ʻana i kā lākou waiwai. He kālai ʻino naʻe kā lākou hana. He kīmopō nō hoʻi ka hana a ka paokeʻe (traitor).

Ua ea mai kekahi mau meheu o ke kalaima a nā paokeʻe, he 20 mau makahiki ma mope o ke kāhuli aupuni ponoʻī. Ua huʻe ʻia kekahi mau pōkā ma kahi o ka hale kahiko o Mika W. J. Morgan ma ke alanui 1319 Mōʻīwahine ʻEma. ʻO Morgan kekahi luna komikiona o ua "Kōmike o ka Palekana." Aia kona hale ma kahi o ka Hale Pule ʻEpekopala ʻo Kana Pekelo o kēia wā. Ma ka ʻaoʻao aʻe, aia ke kahua kahiko ʻo Keōua Hale Aliʻi, ka home a Keʻelikōlani i kūkulu ai.

Ua huʻe ʻia nā pōkā, no lākou ka loloa he 20, ʻeono, me ka ʻekolu ʻiniha. Ua loaʻa i ka manawa o ka ʻeli ʻana i ka lepo no ke kāmoe paipu lawe mea ʻino. Wahi a nā kamaʻāina e ola ana i kēlā wā, ua lawe malū ʻia mai ka moku manuwā ʻAmelika ʻo *Bosetona* a hūnā ʻia ma ko Morgan hale. Inā pono, hiki iā Morgan me kāna poʻe kipi ke kōkua i ka hoʻouka kaua a nā koa ʻAmelika. He mea hōʻike kēia hana hūnā pōkā o ke kalaima o ke kipi. ʻO ia ke kumu a Morgan i ʻeli a hūnā i nā mea kaua ma kona ʻāina.

Eia kekahi moʻolelo kolokolo kalaima ʻē aʻe. Ma ka lā 17 o Ianuali, 1893 ua hoʻokū kalaka ʻia kekahi kaʻa lio ma ka hale kūʻai a Mika Holo i piha me nā mea kaua. Ua ʻike ʻia kēia kaʻa e kekahi māka'i o ke aupuni e hoʻokō ana i kona ʻoihana o ke aupuni. ʻO Leialoha kona inoa. Ua holo auheʻe ke kaʻa a alualu ʻo ia ʻo Leialoha i ke kanaka hewa. Wahi a kekahi, ua huli ke kanaka o ke kaʻa lio a kī pū iā Leialoha. ʻO Ioane Maikaʻi (John Good) ka inoa o ka haole nāna i hoʻomake i ka māka'i.

Ua hiki naʻe ke kaʻa lio me kāna mau mea kaua i kekahi hale ma Manamana. Ma ka hola ʻehā o ka ʻauinalā, ua paikau nā kipi me ko lākou pū mai Manamana a i ka Hale Aupuni. ʻO kēia mau kipi hoʻohaunaele ke "Kōmite no ka Maluhia o ka Lehulehu." He inoa kūʻakū nō hoʻi ia no ka mea ʻo ka maluhia a lākou i kīmopō ai ʻo ia ka maluhia o ka waiwai a ka haole.

Ma muli naʻe o kēia kālai loko ʻino, ua kūʻē ʻo Liliʻuokalani me kēia mau ʻōlelo:

"'O wau, LILIUOKALANI, ma ka lokomaikai o ke Akua, malalo o ke Kumukanawai o ke Aupuni Hawaii, MOIWAHINE, ma keia ke hoike pau nei i Koʻu kue i kekahi hana a mau hana paha a pau i lawelawe ia e kue ana Iaʻu iho a me ke Aupuni Kumukanawai o ke Aupuni Hawaii e kekahi poe e koi ana ua kukulalakou he Aupuni Kuikawa no ka manawa no keia Aupuni.

American marines from the USS Boston prepare to march to ʻIolani Palace in 1893. - *Photo: Hawaiʻi State Archives*

The USS Boston circa 1891. - *Photo: Wikimedia*

"Ke ae wale nei no Au mamuli o ka mana oi ikaika o Amelika Huipuia nona hoi ke Kuhina Elele Nui, ka Meamahaloia John L. Stevens, ua kauoha aku i na koa o Amelika Huipuia e hoopaa ia mai ma Honolulu, a ua kukala ae e kokua no oia i ua Aupuni Kuikawa la no ka Manawa i oleloia." (*Hawaii Holomua*, Ianuali 18, 1893). ■

Kalani Akana, Ph.D., is a kumu of hula, oli and ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi. He has authored numerous articles on Indigenous ways of knowing and doing.

To read this in English go to kawaiola.news

Hawaiians Well-Represented at WIPCE

By Kuuleianuhea Awo-Chun

In November, I had the privilege of joining thousands of Indigenous educators, leaders, and community members at the World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education (WIPCE) in Tāmaki Makaurau, Aotearoa.

Being surrounded by so many who are building futures grounded in ancestral knowledge reminded me that Indigenous education is not only alive but actively leading efforts for systemic change.

I traveled to WIPCE to present alongside an inspiring group of Hawai'i school leaders who have dedicated years to developing culturally responsive assessments grounded in Hawaiian epistemologies. These leaders included Denise Espania of Mālama Honua PCS, Paul Kepka and Jamie Cruz of Kamaile Academy, Meahilahila Kelling of Ke Kula o Samuel M. Kamakau, Kanoe Ahuna of Kanuikapono – all from our Hawaiian-focused charter and immersion schools.

The presentation also included Buffy Cushman Patz of SEEQS, a Hawai'i charter school on O'ahu. Together, we shared "Manifesting the Mana of Culturally Responsive Assessments," a presentation highlighting work across Hawai'i to design rigorous, culturally aligned tools such as the HFCS Process Rubric, the Hō'ike Capstone Project Continuum, and the Kupukupu Framework of Cultural Competencies.

These tools were co-designed with community, reviewed through Indigenous and Western lenses, and built to hold equal or greater value than traditional standardized tests. Their purpose is simple but profound: to measure what we value as Hawaiian educators and communities.

WIPCE's plenary sessions further affirmed the importance of this work. Dr. Jon Osorio, dean of Hawai'inuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge urged Indigenous peoples to take bold steps in education and governance, reminding us that strengthening our educational systems is political, generational, and essential for ea (sovereignty). He affirmed that "Native people everywhere, who have managed to remember how to live with others on the land. . .we are the antidote."

His message was both a challenge and an affirmation. Not only do we have the right to determine our educational futures, we also carry knowledge, practices, and values that the world urgently needs. Osorio honored the long arc of Hawaiian resilience, noting that "the most powerful and potent political and social force" in the last 50 years has been our lāhui and the many community leaders who have restored our language, revitalized our arts and sciences, reopened lo'i and loko i'a, protected sacred places, and prepared to confront ongoing military occupation of our crown and government lands.

The lessons of WIPCE strongly align with OHA's Mana i Mauli Ola (MiMO) education outcomes. MiMO emphasizes strengthening culture-based learning systems, expanding Hawaiian medium and Hawaiian-focused charter schools, and ensuring these schools are adequately resourced.

The assessments developed by the aforementioned leaders directly support these goals. They cultivate cultural identity, deepen relationships to 'āina, and prepare students for college, career, and community through measures rooted in Hawaiian worldviews and collective wellbeing. The work of OHA supports our lāhui by ensuring continued advocacy and engagement through education to continue our legacy of aloha 'āina. ■

Honors, Awards and Accolades

By Kamakana Aquino

As we begin this new year, let us take a moment to reflect on 2025. During the 2024-2025 academic year, the University of Hawai'i awarded 2,086 degrees and certificates to Native Hawaiians. As of Fall 2025, there are 12,618 Native Hawaiians enrolled.

There are so many accomplishments by students, faculty, staff, and administrators, to programs, community outreach, and engagement to highlight. Here are a few:

- Hear personal testimonies on *YouTube* from Native Hawaiian community college students fulfilling their kuleana: Cathryn Krueger, Hawai'i CC; Kamananui Anderson, Honolulu CC; Melanie Camat, Kapi'olani CC; Hi'ilani Cremer, Kaua'i CC; Stevie Puna, Leeward CC; 'Ale'a Kimokeo, UH Maui College; Kauakaweli Haili-Nakamoto, Windward CC.
- UH Hilo honored Mary Kawena Pukui with a panel that coincided with Women's History Month and her posthumous selection as a 2025 honoree for the U.S. Mint's Native American $1 coin.
- The Hawaiian collection at the UH Hilo Edwin H. Mo'okini Library was named the Edith Kanaka'ole Hawaiian Collection.
- UH West O'ahu hosted a two-day 'Aha Ho'oponopono with 300 haku ho'oponopono, social sector professionals, aloha 'āina practitioners, and community members.
- UH Mānoa's Hawaiian Theatre program celebrated its 10th anniversary with its latest Hawaiian language production *Puana*, and an invitation to perform at the Kia Mau international Indigenous-led performing arts festival in Aotearoa
- Windward CC extended its Hawaiian studies program to pa'ahao incarcerated at the Saguaro Correctional Center in Arizona, with 25 students enrolled in their first course.
- *Ha'ina Ko Wehi: Celebrating West Maui in Mele* a project by students from UH Maui College's Institute of Hawaiian Music was named Compilation Album of the Year at the 2025 Nā Hōkū Hanohano Awards.
- Honolulu Community College hosted a two-day Indigenous education symposium 'Aha Kūkalahale 2025, uplifting Hawaiian knowledge funded by the Kūkalahale Title III Grant and in partnership with Kanaeokana and Pacific Rim Concepts.
- UH Mānoa Native Hawaiian Student Services' Hawaiian Youths Abroad program Japan took a cohort of 13 students and 6 faculty/staff to explore Tokyo, Kyoto, and Osaka, while retracing connections between the Hawaiian Kingdom and Japan.
- Kuiokalani L. Gapero succeeded Ernie Ka'aumoana Wilson Jr. to the UH Board of Regents for a 5-year term.
- Winners of the Board of Regents Medal for Excellence in Teaching included: Mapuana Antonio (public health associate professor, UH Mānoa); Ashlee Kalauli (math instructor, Hawai'i CC); Tracie Ku'uipo Losch (Hawaiian studies professor, Leeward CC); Mehana Ka'iama Maka'ina'i (Hawaiian studies instructor, UH Mānoa); Peter Kalawai'a Moore (Hawaiian studies professor, Windward CC); and Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio (political science associate professor, UH Mānoa).
- Kenny Ka'aiakamanu-Quibilan received the UH Mānoa Pākela Award for being an outstanding academic advisor.
- Shayla Spotkaeff, a business management major and undergraduate research assistant at the Center for Oral History received the UH Mānoa Student Employee of the Year Award.
- Ka Huli Ao Center for Excellence in Native Hawaiian Law at UH Mānoa William S. Richardson School of Law celebrated 20 years. ■

Kamakanaokealoha "Kamakana" M. Aquino is from Waimānalo, O'ahu, and leads Hui 'Āina Pilipili, the Native Hawaiian Initiative in the College of Social Sciences at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

Pilina Mālama Kaiāulu

By Kaimookalani Muhlestein, OHA Beneficiary Services Agent

Serving one's community is a Hawaiian traditional practice that is evident in our next generation of upcoming doctors. Pilina mālama kaiāulu, the commitment to serving others as demonstrated by our Native Hawaiian medical doctors is significant and inspirational. Dr. Andie Conching is one such doctor, rooted in her community, who is preparing to care for our community.

Dr. Andie Conching - *Courtesy Photo*

Conching is a 2025 graduate of the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM), who earned a Bachelor of Science degree in neuroscience from Dartmouth College in New Hampshire before returning home to pursue her medical degree.

This summer, she took a historic step forward in her medical career when she began a neurosurgery residency at UC Davis in Sacramento.

Conching is the first Native Hawaiian female physician to enter a neurosurgery residency program. This achievement reflects years of intense dedication, academic excellence, and deep cultural grounding. Her fascination with the brain grew over years of study and training, but she credits her upbringing and her education at Kamehameha Schools for nurturing her passion and commitment to serving others - pilina mālama kaiāulu.

As she begins the first year of her residency, Conching says that despite being far from home, her motivation remains rooted in her cultural identity and community.

"Giving back to Hawai'i is a kuleana," she shared. "I look forward to coming back and improving neurosurgical care in my home community. It is a kuleana to be entrusted with that responsibility."

Conching's journey marks a significant milestone for ʻŌiwi – and wahine – representation in medicine and will serve as inspiration for future generations of Native Hawaiian students pursuing careers in highly specialized fields. ■

Our Kuleana: Restoring Democracy

By Mokihana Maldonado

Long before the U.S. Constitution, Native Hawaiians lived under a system of governance rooted in kuleana: responsibility, balance, and respect.

Ali'i, entrusted with the wellbeing of the lāhui and the ʻāina, were guided by the kapu system which protected resources and upheld social order. Through the ahupuaʻa system, communities shared resources ma uka to ma kai.

Centuries later, we have the same responsibility to uphold these values and steward the land and its resources for our future generations.

Today we must ask: Is that same kuleana honored in America's democracy?

America's Constitution was built to last, and with time comes change. The framers included Article V, the Constitution's built-in mechanism for evolution.

Amendments are not just legal text; they are the people's voice carved into history. As legal scholar John Malcolm recently pointed out, judicial interpretation alone cannot substitute for democratic amendment. Courts can clarify, but only the people can transform.

But there are flaws in the very heart of the system that require urgent change: the electoral college, gerrymandering and lifetime Supreme Court appointments.

Twice in two decades – Bush in 2000, Trump in 2016 – the presidency was won without the popular vote because the electoral college functions as voter suppression cloaked in tradition.

Meanwhile, redrawing maps to enhance political power has fractured communities and diluted votes – particularly those of Indigenous and other peoples of color.

Lifetime appointments for Supreme Court justices allow politically appointed individuals to serve for decades, shaping society long after the presidents who appointed them leave office. Term limits are required restore accountability and reflect the people's will.

But reform requires boldness. Amending the Constitution to address these issues would move America toward a truly representative democracy. Though a strenuous task, history proves that the united will of the people can prevail. The question is not whether change is possible, but whether we dare to demand it. We need to ask ourselves, does the two-party system truly represent us?

Change begins with action. It is time to call upon the state to lead constitutional reform through Article V: changes for the people, sanctioned by the people, with the resolute backing of the people. We must strengthen civic education so every generation of our community going forward understands the power of their voice in this powerful, yet fragile, democracy.

As a Native Hawaiian, I was raised with the value of kuleana – a duty of both privilege and burden. True leadership requires courage to confront injustice and humility to act in the interests of the people.

Constitutional amendments are made because we believe in a better future, in a nation where democracy triumphs. Just as Prince Kūhiō lobbied Congress to secure Hawaiian homelands we, too, must be courageous in protecting democracy for all.

A better future begins with us raising our voices, voting with purpose, and uplifting leaders committed to ensuring equity and fairness. We can shape a constitution that speaks to today's challenges and tomorrow's hopes and dreams.

Change is not only possible – it is our kuleana. And the time for it is now. ■

Mokihana Maldonado, born and raised in Hawai'i, is committed to democratic values and education. She is an aspiring constitutional law attorney.

Three Practical Fixes to Jumpstart Honolulu's Housing Supply

By Dr. Inam Rahman, MD

Hawai'i's housing crisis isn't unsolvable, it's stuck in slow motion.

Every month, local families leave for the continent – not because they want to, but because housing costs have made staying home impossible. This is both an economic and moral failure.

The good news is that Honolulu doesn't need miracles or mega-projects. We can take three steps right now to expand supply, cut costs, and keep housing rooted in local ownership.

1. Permitting delays kill housing.

The average building permit in Honolulu can take 12 to 18 months — sometimes longer. Each delay adds tens of thousands of dollars to construction costs, pushing homes further out of reach for local families.

The city's new online permitting platform is a good start, but deeper reform is needed:

1) Approve housing "by right" when it meets objective zoning and affordability standards; 2) Add plan reviewers and modernize workflows to clear the backlog; 3) Create a Fast-Track Lane for affordable and workforce housing near rail and major bus corridors.

Speeding up approvals by even 50% could bring homes to market faster and lower per-unit costs by up to $50,000.

2. We don't allow enough homes where people already live and work.

We need to allow duplexes, townhomes, and small multifamily buildings on lots currently zoned for single-family use, especially within a half mile of rail stations. These neighborhoods already have infrastructure, schools, and jobs in place.

We can also empower residents to help. Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) – small rental cottages or ʻohana units – can provide both homeowner stability and new long-term rentals.

By removing parking minimums and streamlining ADU permitting, Honolulu could see 8,000 to 10,000 new homes built quietly within existing communities – housing that fits the local scale and spirit of place.

3. Use Public Land for Public Good

The biggest driver of Hawai'i's unaffordable housing is land cost. The state and city already own thousands of acres of underused land – especially near rail.

Through an approach inspired by the ALOHA Homes model, government can lease public land long-term while selling or renting homes at cost to local residents. The state keeps the land in public trust, preventing speculation, while families gain stable, affordable homeownership.

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HA‘I MANA‘O

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Imagine 5,000 new mid-rise apartments and townhomes near rail stations — walkable, transit-friendly, reserved for residents, and permanently affordable because the land never enters the speculative market.

This isn’t theory. It’s happening successfully in Singapore and parts of Europe — and Hawai‘i already has draft legislation to pilot it. All it needs now is leadership and urgency.

The Path Forward

Together, these could unlock more than 15,000 new homes for local families in less than a decade.

These aren’t partisan ideas; they’re practical solutions rooted in fairness and sustainability. Every month of inaction adds cost, displaces families, and chips away at our sense of belonging.

Hawai‘i’s housing shortage is solvable if we act with courage, coordination, and urgency. We owe that to our keiki and to the next generation who deserve a future – and a home – here in the islands. ■

Dr. Inam U. Rahman, MD, is a Honolulu-based community advocate, physician, and policy contributor in Hawai‘i. This ha‘i mana‘o was also published in Civil Beat in October 2025.

Our Kuleana to Buy Local

By Robert Block

What I am proposing may be the easiest, most fulfilling, and possibly the most rewarding endeavor of your entire life. It can and will be fun, delicious, and nutritious.

We probably can’t fix the debacle happening within our federal government, but we can address our island state’s most pressing and real problem – food security – easily, with your help.

You may have noticed that much of the continent, and indeed the entire world, is suffering from climate change and other difficulties.

For decades we have depended on outside sources for almost all our food. Over 90% of every morsel we consume is imported. If the ships stopped sailing due to an unforeseen natural or man-made calamity, we would be woefully unprepared. At best, we would have enough food to feed fewer than 10% of our residents.

And most of our sustenance originates in regions facing weather-related difficulties due to the current climate crisis. Add to this the increasing risks of labor disputes. For Hawai‘i to remain dependent on these potentially unreliable food sources is both unwise and dangerous.

This is especially concerning because we live on islands blessed with ideal growing conditions. Our various elevations and exposures, coupled with ample sun and water, allow us to grow food year-round. We are abundantly blessed. Should we ignore this gift?

Historically, Hawai‘i was a nation of plantations. Nearly all arable land was clear-cut and bulldozed for cash crops (primarily sugar) cultivated, harvested, and exported by the megaton across the seas.

As much as I love pipe dreams, this is not one of them. With your participation, we can grow enormous amounts of food here once again – enough to feed both ourselves and many others overseas. I can only imagine the benefits resulting from this effort, and virtually no detriments.

Perhaps even having a governor with medical expertise will help, as all doctors know that good health begins with good, fresh nutrition.

Our islands have nearly all the climates of the world, which means we can grow almost anything here.

This is where you, the people, come in. Getting a million-plus residents to agree on anything may seem improbable, but that means it is possible. Let us embrace that possibility, express our kuleana, and make this vision a reality for the sake of our keiki and kūpuna.

Depending solely on tourism – a fickle mistress – is shortsighted. Relying on the military as a source of income has already proven costly to our environment. Billions of dollars could instead be made (and kept) here at home, rather than be sent to the mainland.

Your kuleana is to buy local first. Only import food when no local options remain. Honor our farmers who work daily with aloha and diligence. This movement will create countless noble jobs on small farms for our local families and friends.

Please roll up your sleeves and get on board for the ride of our lives.

Aloha nui, and once again – mālama pono. ■

Robert Block lives in Captain Cook, Kona, Hawai‘i Island.

E kala mai...

In the article “Who Decides What is Historic?” on page 13 of the December issue of *Ka Wai Ola*, we reported that Hawai‘i Historic Places Review Board cultural seat remained unfilled as of press time. That is incorrect. The seat has been filled.

Kalima Lawsuit Update: Probate Process

By Thomas Grande, Esq. and Carl Varady, Esq.

The focus of the Kalima class-action claims payment process at this point is to identify the correct heirs and devisees of all Deceased Class Members, so that payments can be made to them under the court-approved Probate Plan.

Probate Special Master Emily Kawashima and Probate Special Counsel Scott Suzuki have completed 25 petitions that distributed the claims payments of nearly 700 Deceased Class Members in the Kalima lawsuit settlement. Nearly $48 million has been distributed to the survivors of the Deceased Class Members identified as heirs and devisees in these 24 petitions.

Lengthy Probate Process

Under the court-approved Probate Plan, the court has ordered the probate special master and probate special counsel to evaluate the estates of every Deceased Class Member. Many of the Deceased Class Members passed away years ago and records of estate plans and the whereabouts of their heirs are difficult to determine because of the passage of time.

The estates of all the Deceased Class Members who have not been included in a petition yet have complicated or no data that requires additional time to address.

Family Information Forms

If you have information regarding a Deceased Class Member and/or their family members, please fill out two forms: the Deceased Class Member Information Form and the Detailed Family Information Form that can be downloaded from the kalima-lawsuit.com website. The Deceased Class Member information form can also be filled in online.

Please fill out these forms as completely and accurately as possible. Please also be sure to update the records if any information you submitted before has changed. You can also call the claims administrator at (808) 650-5551 or 1-833-639-1308 (Toll-Free), to obtain or provide information.

Attorney Talk Story Zoom

For more information, we invite you to attend a talk story with class counsel, Thomas Grande and Carl Varady, as well as Probate Special Master Emily Kawashima and Probate Special Counsel Scott Suzuki. The next talk story will take place on Tuesday, Feb. 10, at 5:00 p.m. via Zoom. Go to kalima-lawsuit.com for the Zoom link. ■

Maui County Council Passes Bill 9

On December 15, in a 5-3 vote, the Maui County Council passed Bill 9, a controversial and historic piece of legislation that will phase out thousands of vacation rentals. Maui Mayor Richard Bissen signed it into law on the same day.

Bill 9 is intended to help restore housing availability for residents and realign zoning policy with its original residential purpose.

Transient vacation rentals (TVR) make up 21% of the available housing in Maui County – more than any other county in Hawai'i. In the aftermath of the 2023 Maui wildfires, which exacerbated Maui's longstanding housing crisis, in May 2024 Bissen introduced Bill 9 hoping to restore balance and prioritize the needs of Maui County residents over investors or visitors.

"For far too long, short-term rentals, offshore investors, and private interests have overwhelmed our housing inventory," Bissen said.

Bill 9 corrects a long-standing zoning exemption that has allowed TVRs to operate in apartment-zoned districts – areas originally intended to provide long-term housing for local families. The legislation is expected to return more than 6,000 units to long-term residential use.

The legislation does not eliminate short-term rentals in Maui County. Some 6,500 TVRs outside of apartment-zoned districts along with timeshares and bed-and-breakfasts will continue to operate.

Tario Wins Hawai'i to the World Talent Competition

Classically trained pianist, cultural practitioner, artist and drag queen T.J. Keanu Tario has been named the first winner of Hawaiian Council's new talent competition, Hawai'i to the World. In the qualifying round for O'ahu Tario, who goes by the stage name Laritza, impressed judges

Ho'omaika'i to 2025's Ko'i Award Honorees

The Ko'i Awards are conferred by the Maui Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce to honor excellence in leadership and to recognize individuals and organizations who incorporate traditional knowledge and practice in business, honor and uplift Hawaiian culture, and dedicate their lives to the betterment of their community. The Ko'i Award recipients were honored at an award celebration on November 14 at the Grand Wailea Maui. The 2025 award recipients include (Top L-R; bottom L-R) Kumu Hula Hokulani Holt-Padilla; Mercer "Chubby" Vicens, president of the Living Pono Project Board of Directors; Clifford Nae'ole, cultural advisor at Ledcor Maui; Bobby Pahia, founder of Hawai'i Taro Farm; OHA Maui Trustee Emerita Carmen "Hulu" Lindsey; and Hawai'i Small Business Development Director Wayne Wong. In addition, a special award was presented to honor the late Hoapili Ane and the Living Pono Project. - *Courtesy Photos*

T.J. Keanu Tario - *Photo: Hawaiian Council*

Amy Hānaialiʻi Gilliom, Lehua Kalima, Patrick Makuakāne, and Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu with their performance of Oli Aloha followed by excerpts from Sergei Rachmanioff's *Piano Concerto No. 2 in C Minor*. In the final round, which aired on December 14, Tario performed an excerpt from the musical score of *Standing Above the Clouds*, a short film about the fight to protect Maunakea, to win the competition. Tario is a graduate of Kamehameha Schools Kapālama and the Julliard School of Music in New York City. Tario's film credits include *Jimmy Kimmel Live* and *HBO Max's Generations*. Tario has also appeared as a guest artist for the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra.

BLNR Reconsiders Aquarium Fishing

Late last year, the Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) voted to advance a petition to re-open Hawai'i's waters to the commercial extraction and export of Hawai'i's native reef wildlife as aquarium pets. This would allow hundreds of thousands of fish to be taken from Hawai'i's coral reefs over the next five years.

Commercial aquarium collection has been banned since 2017.

BLNR's decision comes despite their 2023 vote to prohibit commercial collection. Polling suggests 84% of O'ahu and Hawai'i Island residents support permanently banning the capture of reef fish for the aquarium pet trade.

The BLNR vote initiates public hearings that will provide two opportunities to comment on the proposed regulations: an in-person public hearing in West Hawai'i Island (the industry's main target area), and a virtual statewide hearing.

The proposed rules may be revised based on public testimony.

"We need the public to show up in force at these hearings and to push for better protections of our reefs," said Earthjustice attorney Mahesh Cleveland.

Healthy reef fish populations are crucial for supporting ecosystems already weakened from rising ocean temperatures, pollution, and decades of commercial extraction. Despite the 2017 ban, the species and reefs targeted by the industry have not recovered.

Collectors target juvenile native fish species, including species that local communities rely on for sustenance. The fish are bagged, shipped via air freight, and sold to pet stores around the world. Studies show that 50% or more die during capture and transport, and most of the survivors die within the first year of captivity. Left in the wild, some species, like Yellow Tang, can live for 40 years.

The public hearings will take place between January and March 2026, but specific dates have not yet been announced.

'Ōiwi Named Obama Foundation Leaders

Kepa Barrett

Ke'alohi Reppun

- *Courtesy Photos*

Kepa Barrett and Ke'alohi Reppun have both been selected as 2025-2026 Obama Foundation Leaders for the Asia-Pacific.

Leaders for the Asia-Pacific is a six-month, virtual leadership development program that brings together a small, international cohort of 35 emerging leaders. The program is designed to ground emerging leaders in a values-based leadership framework to advance inclusive and lasting change in their communities, in the Asia-Pacific region, and around the world.

Participants gain tools to advance their leadership and impact to include understanding power dynamics and communicating across differences. They are paired with a leadership coach and meet with prominent regional leaders, from activists to business executives.

Barrett is the manager of sustainability and ʻāina-based learning for Kamehameha Schools Kapālama. In this role, he helps students learn more about their

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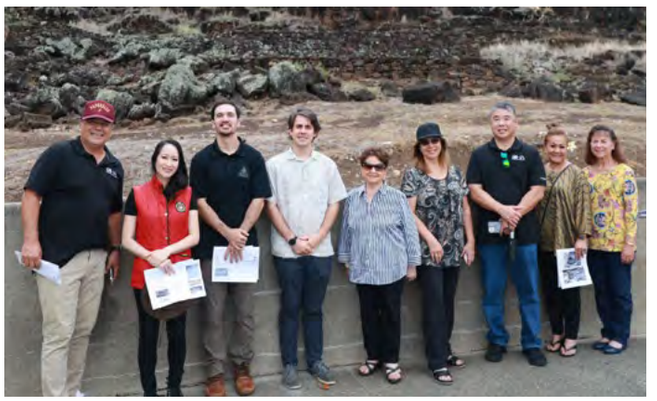
OHA Trustees Make O'ahu Site Visits



Prior to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs Board of Trustees O'ahu Community Meetings in December, trustees took the opportunity to visit several significant sites including the Hawai'i State Archives and the King Kamehameha V Judiciary History Center in downtown Honolulu; DHHL headquarters and INPEACE (Institute for Native Pacific Education and Culture), both located in Kapolei; and the Pahua Heiau in Maunalua. This 1.1-acre wahi kapu was donated to OHA in 1988 to preserve the archaeological structures and provide cultural and educational opportunities. At the heiau (l-r) are Trustees Dan Ahuna and Kalei Akaka, Legacy Land Agents La'akea Rabes and Keone Oldroyd, Trustees Hulu Lindsey and Luana Alapa, and Trustee Aides Nathan Takeuchi, Pohailani Kealoha and Kanani Iaea. - *Photo: Jason Lees*

NEWS BRIEFS

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culture through land- and sea-based learning opportunities. Prior to joining Kamehameha, Barrett was a program coordinator and external affairs officer at Kupu, a nonprofit that helps youth explore career opportunities in sustainability and environmental conservation.

Reppun is the director of the Kuaihelani Learning Center of 'Ike Hawai'i at Punahou School with kuleana to develop and deliver Hawaiian language and culture curriculum to grades K-12. Her efforts to implement Hawaiian language proficiency assessments are being adopted by immersion schools across the pae 'āina. Reppun is also the co-founder of Kauluwao, Inc., a nonprofit that supports teachers to deepen the cultural origin of their language and pedagogy.

Konanui Publishes Memoir

Hānau Hou: Rebirth is the powerful, personal story of Malulani "Uncle Malu" Konanui. Orphaned as an infant, Konanui was adopted and grew up in the small, remote fishing village of 'Opihikao in the moku of Puna on Hawai'i Island. He was raised in the old way, immersed in Hawaiian values and traditions.

Sharing family memories, anecdotes, and mo'olelo, he recounts his life as a young boy fishing off the Puna coast, as a Navy serviceman during the Vietnam War, as a dedicated police officer serving in his community, and eventually, as a master woodturner.

To overcome the hardships experienced along the way, he reflects on the Hawaiian values he has embraced – lōkahi (harmony), hō'ihi (respect), aloha, maopopo (understanding), and ha'aha'a (humility) – which have shaped both his personal journey and his contributions to his community.

Now retired, Konanui describes the joy of discovering his true calling and reviving a nearly forgotten Hawaiian tradition through his creation of pola hānau (birth bowls) – crafted to honor the birth of each keiki. For almost 30 years, he has shaped bowls from native hardwoods, reviving an ancient practice and reconnecting families to their cultural heritage.

Imbued with spiritual insight, *Hānau Hou: Rebirth* is more than a memoir, it is a legacy of light, love, and cultural renewal. *Hānau Hou: Rebirth* is available on Amazon.

Playing Pro Volleyball for Kosovo

Late last year, Chloe Paige Hoku Ka'ahanui signed on to play international professional volleyball for the nation of Kosovo in southeastern Europe, becoming one of a tiny handful of female 'Ōiwi professional volleyball players to compete at the international level. The next season begins this month and will continue through May.

After graduating from Punahou in 2020, Ka'ahanui went on to play Division 1 collegiate volleyball at Quinnipiac University in Connecticut. Since arriving in Kosovo, Ka'ahanui has competed in Super League A, the league's highest level of competition. She has expressed gratitude to her

Chloe Paige Hoku Ka'ahanui - *Courtesy Photo*

'ohana as well as to her many coaches, teachers, mentors and teammates over the years for this opportunity and for helping her to develop confidence and resilience.

"This milestone represents both an incredible challenge and a responsibility I embrace fully. I am committed to representing Hawai'i with pride, gratitude, and the same aloha spirit that has shaped me throughout my life," Ka'ahanui said.

Climate Solutions Survey

Nonprofit 'Āina Momona invites community members across the pae 'āina to participate in a public survey to help them shape a community-led framework for climate solutions.

The group is prioritizing community voices in an effort to ensure that decisions that impact Hawai'i's oceans, coastline and future are guided by the people who live here. Community feedback will directly inform the development of a locally grounded, culturally responsive framework centered on justice, transparency and long-term stewardship.

In 2025, 'Āina Momona became a partner in Carbon180's Making Waves initiative, a program that explores equitable approaches to climate action that includes ocean-based strategies such as marine carbon dioxide removal.

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Three 'Ōiwi Named PBN Power Leaders

Pacific Business News (*PBN*) has named 12 Hawai'i business leaders as its 2026 "Power Leaders." This annual award recognizes individuals who have excelled in their careers, industries and in the community – and who are likely to continue to be leaders in Hawai'i in the years to come. This year's awardees include three prominent 'Ōiwi: Michelle Kauhane, sr. vice president and chief impact officer of the Hawai'i Community Foundation; Aaron J. Sala, president & CEO of the Hawai'i Visitors and Convention Bureau; and Lance Wilhelm, president of The Wilhelm Group. In 2023, to mark its 60th anniversary, *PBN* launched the Power Leaders feature in its Book of Lists which spotlights Hawai'i's most influential executives – individuals whose visionary leadership has shaped Hawai'i's business landscape, and who will continue to drive innovation, economic growth and community impact. - *Photos: Pacific Business News*

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The community is encouraged to take a brief online survey to share their manaʻo. The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete and all responses are confidential. To take the survey, scan the QR code or go to surveymonkey.com/r/2YNK8L7. The survey is open now through January 31.

DNC Condemns SFFA Lawsuit Against KS

At its December meeting, the Democratic National Committee (DNC) passed a resolution condemning the lawsuit filed by Students for Fair Admissions against Kamehameha Schools.

In a unanimous vote, the DNC reaffirmed the unique political status and inherent sovereignty of the Hawaiian people.

Hawaiʻi DNC National Committee Member Bronson Silva introduced the resolution which was co-sponsored by the state's DNC delegation. Silva and Hawaiʻi DNC Vice Chair Mina Morita are both graduates of Kamehameha Schools.

In a Maui News article Morita is quoted as saying, "The resolution recognizes that Native Hawaiians hold a distinct political status, as consistently affirmed by federal law, and that Kamehameha Schools' admissions policy is rooted in this political classification, not race."

Last October, Students for Fair Admissions filed a lawsuit against Kamehameha Schools. The conservative organization is headed by Edward Blum whose singular mission is to dismantle school admissions policies he perceives as "race conscious." ■

BURIAL NOTICE: KAILUA, OʻAHU

A burial site comprising of fragments of human skeletal remains of two individuals (State Inventory of Historic Places #50-80-11-06916) was identified by Cultural Surveys Hawaiʻi, Inc. in the course of an archaeological inventory survey for Pali Lanes Adaptive Reuse Project, Kailua Ahupuaʻa, Koʻolaupoko District, Oʻahu, TMKs: (1) 4-2-038:020, and portions of 015, 034, 038, and 045. Per Hawaiʻi Revised Statutes §6E-43, and Hawaiʻi Administrative Rules (HAR) §13-300, these remains are considered previously identified. Based on the context, they are over 50 years old and most likely Native Hawaiian. The burial site is not within a known Land Commission Award (LCA). The project proponent is A&B Properties, Inc.: Lena Mori, 822 Bishop Street, Honolulu, Hawaiʻi, 96813, Tel: (808) 525-6611. A&B Properties, Inc., is planning for preservation in place, however, the decision to preserve in place or relocate shall be made by the Oʻahu Island Burial Council in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD) and any recognized lineal and/or cultural descendants (HAR §13-300-33). Appropriate treatment shall occur in accordance with HAR §13-300-38. All persons having knowledge of these human remains are requested to contact Traven Apiki, SHPD Burial Site Specialist, at 40 Poʻokela Street, Hilo, Hawaiʻi, Tel: (808) 829-9322, Email: Traven.Apiki@hawaii.gov.

Interested parties shall respond within 30 days of this notice and file descendancy claim forms and/or provide information to SHPD adequately demonstrating descent from this burial or ancestors buried in the same ahupuaʻa or district.

CULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND KA PAʻAKAI ANALYSIS: ʻĀINAKŌ SUBDIVISION HOUSING PROJECT

Stantec, on behalf of the County of Hawaiʻi Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD), is conducting a Cultural Impact Assessment and Ka Paʻakai Analysis for the Proposed ʻĀinakō Subdivision Housing Project, Punahoa 2, South Hilo, Hawaiʻi [TMKs: (3) 2-3-030:004, (3) 2-3-030:001 (por.), and (3) 2-3-031:001 (por.)]. OHCD is proposing a workforce housing project on a portion of this property in the ʻĀinakō neighborhood. Feasibility of this project is being developed to include a possible 144 units residential units in a mix of single and multifamily homes on approximately 38 acres of land.

Stantec seeks to consult with individuals and organizations who possess knowledge regarding:

- Cultural associations, moʻolelo, or legendary accounts associated with the ahupuaʻa of Punahoa 2.
- Family connections to past and present land use or traditional gathering practices within and near the project area.
- Cultural resources that may be impacted by the proposed project, including traditional resource gathering sites, traditional access trails, wahi pana, and/or burials.
- Any other cultural concerns related to traditional Hawaiian or other cultural practices within or near the proposed project area.
- Referrals to other knowledgeable individuals who may be willing to share their cultural knowledge of the proposed project area and surrounding lands.

Those interested in participating are invited to contact Benjamin Barna at 808-900-6403 or ben.barna@stantecgs.com.

NOTIFICATION OF KA PAʻAKAI ANALYSIS KŌLOA AHUPUAʻA, KONA MOKU, KAUAʻI

Explorations Associates Ltd. is conducting a Ka Paʻakai Analysis for a proposed subdivision located at Makaleha Street in the Kōloa Ahupuaʻa, Kona Moku, Kauaʻi [TMK: (4) 2-8-014: 038 and 042]. The project area is bounded by existing residential development and Waikomo Stream. The landowners are proposing a consolidation and resubdivision under Kauaʻi County Planning Department Subdivision Application S-2019-4. The proposed project will result in three (3) residential lots intended for future residential use.

The purpose of the Ka Paʻakai Analysis is to identify, document, and assess potential impacts of the proposed subdivision on Native Hawaiian traditional and customary rights and practices. Explorations Associates Ltd. seeks consultation with those familiar with cultural, historical, and traditional practices within the Kōloa Ahupuaʻa, including:

- Cultural associations, moʻolelo (stories), historic maps, and archaeological/cultural resource reports;
- Past and present Native Hawaiian land use or traditional gathering practices;
- Preservation and protection of cultural, historical, and natural resources;
- Known trails, access routes, sensitive areas, historic sites, cultural sites (including burials), and LCAs;
- Native Hawaiian descendants who have traditionally fished, hunted, or gathered within the project area;
- Individuals able to refer other knowledgeable cultural practitioners or descendants.

Those interested in providing cultural knowledge, historical information, or consultation regarding this Ka Paʻakai Analysis are invited to contact Leialoha Sanchez at Phone: 808-977-2127 or Email: community@leialohaliving.com by Jan. 30, 2026. ■

ʻĀina is the Classroom, Kāwika is the Teacher

Kaialiʻi Kahele

CHAIR
Trustee,
Hawaiʻi Island

As Hawaiʻi faces growing challenges around food insecurity, climate change, and the disconnection of our keiki from place, leaders like Kāwika Lewis and his wife, Kaipuaʻala, are showing us a path forward – one firmly rooted in ʻāina, Indigenous wisdom, and community leadership.

Just four miles from the hustle and bustle of Hilo, in the ahupuaʻa of Paukaʻa, Kāwika and his ʻohana steward nine acres of land known as ʻĀina University. It is a living classroom, a place for the community to grow, gather, and grind. More than a farm, ʻĀina University is an expression of aloha ʻāina in practice.

At ʻĀina University, keiki to kūpuna learn about the ahupuaʻa system, Native Hawaiian plants and crops, food security, and the responsibilities that come with caring for land and community. These lessons are not abstract, they are lived. They are hands-on, physical, and rooted in the ʻike kūpuna that allowed Hawaiians to thrive on islands with finite resources for generations.

Long before sustainability became a modern concept Hawaiians mastered regenerative systems that balanced food production, ecosystem health, and social wellbeing.

Loko iʻa, loʻi kalo, agroforestry, and dryland farming were not merely techniques, they were expressions of values: kuleana, mālama, and collective responsibility. ʻĀina University carries that knowledge forward, translating ancestral practices into contemporary solutions for today's challenges.

Kāwika, a kanaka mahiʻai (farmer), understands that working the land teaches more than how to grow food. It teaches work ethic, respect, language, culture, and protocol. It teaches people how to function as a hui – a team, a community. These are real-world life skills, learned through an Indigenous lens grounded in aloha ʻāina and service to something greater than oneself.

Food security, from an islander's perspective, is not simply about supply chains or imports. It is about relationships to ʻāina, to each other, and to future generations. When communities can feed themselves, they gain resilience, dignity, and sovereignty over their future.

This work matters most for our children. If we want a better Hawaiʻi, we must teach keiki the right values and the right vision – one that honors place, respects limits, and understands leadership as service. Indigenous wisdom does not belong in the past; it offers inspiration for the solutions our world seeks today.

If you want to find the future you seek, you must be willing to seek change. Through ʻĀina University, Kāwika and Kaipuaʻala remind us that the future of Hawaiʻi begins with the land – and with the Kānaka willing to care for it and pass that kuleana forward. ■

Trustee Kaialiʻi Kahele and Kāwika Lewis at ʻĀina University. - *Courtesy Photos*

Steady Action for a Stronger Lāhui

Keoni Souza

VICE CHAIR
Trustee,
At-Large

Hauʻoli Makahiki Hou. I hope you and your ʻohana enjoyed a meaningful holiday season filled with rest, reflection, and time together. I was grateful for the opportunity to spend time with my own family, grounding myself in the values that guide me – aloha ʻāina, kuleana, and a deep commitment to the future of our lāhui.

As vice chair of the Board of Trustees, this past year reaffirmed an important lesson for me: Vision alone is not enough. It requires steady action, transparency, accountability, and the willingness to make difficult but necessary decisions. As we enter 2026, I want to reflect on what we have accomplished together and share what we will continue to press forward in service of Native Hawaiians.

One of the most significant areas of progress has been strengthening OHA's financial foundation. Through the hard work of OHA's real estate and investment team, and the leadership of the Investment and Land Management Committee, the Board has received consistent, regular reporting on OHA legacy lands and investment lands.

This increased clarity has supported better decision-making and long-term planning. By restructuring investments, establishing clearer guidelines for the Native Hawaiian Trust Fund (NHTF), and committing to more strategic approaches, the NHTF has grown to over $662 million as of Oct. 31, 2025. This growth matters because it directly supports OHA's ability to sustain itself in the future.

Housing remains one of the most urgent challenges facing our lāhui. In February, OHA launched AHO (Access to Home Ownership) a new mortgage program designed to help break down the financial barriers that have kept too many Kānaka Maoli from owning homes in Hawaiʻi. AHO combines OHA support with loan guarantees and partnerships intended to lower down-payment requirements and expand access for first-time Native Hawaiian homebuyers.

This is an important first step; I am committed to exploring expansion of the AHO program and/or the potential introduction of additional down payment assistance options, because homeownership is foundational to economic stability and community resilience.

Land stewardship is an ongoing priority. We are currently in phase two of due diligence for land transfers involving Wailupe, Mauna'ala, Kāneiʻoloᵘma Heiau, and the Nation of Hawaiʻi.

Additionally, we have adopted several new policies to guide OHA's Real Estate Department into the future, including the Hawaiʻi Real Estate Strategic Plan, the Investment Policy for Legacy Lands, the Management Policy for Legacy Lands, and the Management Policy for Investment Lands. These policies are critical to ensuring our lands are cared for with intention, cultural respect, and long-term benefit to the lāhui.

After years of discussion, OHA has advanced negotiations and due diligence to explore residential and mixed-use possibilities in collaboration with the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands for Kakaʻako Makai. These efforts focus on responsible stewardship that can generate mission-driven housing, create job opportunities, and produce sustainable revenue to support lāhui programs.

Recent reporting highlights OHA's continued pursuit of collaborative solutions with state partners to address regulatory and infrastructure challenges that have delayed progress in the past.

Finally, the Board is looking ahead to the OHA Capital Improvement Project Grant Program. This initiative will support critical repairs to community facilities and help acquire or create new spaces where programs and services can be delivered. Strong communities need strong infrastructure, and this program is about meeting those needs where they matter most.

As we move into 2026, my commitment remains clear: steady action rooted in our values, accountability to our beneficiaries, and a relentless focus on building a stronger future for Native Hawaiians. I look forward to continuing this work together. ■

Noʻonoʻo a Naue i Mua Reflect and Move Forward

Dan Ahuna

Trustee, Kauaʻi and Niʻihau

Aloha ʻāina kākou. As we enter a new year and a new season, I am filled with gratitude and optimism for what lies ahead for the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) and for our lāhui. This is a time of reflection and renewal – a moment to honor where we have come from and to reaffirm our commitment to where we are going.

At OHA, the changing season finds us grounded in purposeful work. I want to recognize and mahalo our dedicated staff, who are diligently analyzing and engaging with our Mana i Mauli Ola Strategic Plan. Their thoughtful efforts are not just exercises in planning, but actions of kuleana.

Through this work, our team is strengthening the foundation of the agency so that OHA is better equipped to ʻauamo – to carry – our responsibilities to Kānaka, now and for generations to come.

This is not easy work. It requires care, collaboration, and courage. It requires listening intently to our beneficiaries and aligning our resources, programs, and advocacy to truly uplift the wellbeing of our people.

Our staff's commitment reflects a deep belief in the purpose of OHA and in the potential of our lāhui to thrive when guided by ʻike, values, and intention.

As trustees, we do not do this work in isolation. We stand on the shoulders of those who came before us – those whose advocacy, sacrifice, and vision shaped the very existence of this agency. We carry a powerful legacy born from the Hawaiian Renaissance of the 1970s, a period when our people reawakened language, culture, identity, and political consciousness.

That era reminds us of who we are. That era keeps us pili (connected) to the accountability we have and more importantly, what we are capable of when we stand firm in our truth.

Among the most profound expressions of that legacy is the Kahoʻolawe movement. The unwavering mana of those protectors – many of whom are our ʻohana, hoa, and meʻe (heroes) who risked everything to stop the bombing of a sacred island – continues to guide us today.

Their actions were rooted in aloha ʻāina and in the belief that justice for our people is inseparable from the health and dignity of our lands. That same spirit of advocacy lives on in OHA's work to protect resources, advance self-determination, and uplift Native Hawaiian wellbeing.

As we look forward, I am encouraged by the direction we are headed. The coming seasons hold opportunity for deeper impact, stronger partnerships, and clearer pathways toward a thriving lāhui. While challenges will remain, I have confidence in the collective strength of our trustees, staff, and beneficiaries to meet them with integrity and resolve.

Me ka haʻahaʻa, I mahalo the privilege of serving at this time in our lāhui aloha. May this new year bring clarity of purpose, unity of action, and continued commitment to the betterment of our people. Together, grounded in our history and guided by our values, we holo mua. ■

Fixing Hawaiʻi's Affordability Problem

Keliʻi Akina, Ph.D.

Trustee, At-Large

It is often said that everyone in Hawaiʻi is in the same waʻa or canoe. While that's a wonderful thing when it comes to the beauty of our people and ʻāina, it's also true of the cost it takes to live here. Whether Native Hawaiian, long-term kamaʻāina or recent arrival, more residents than ever before are finding that Hawaiʻi is a place where they simply cannot afford to live.

A new statewide survey from the Holomua Collective reveals a troubling reality: Nearly one in three respondents (29%) now expect they will relocate to a less expensive state, up from 26% last year.

At the heart of this trend is Hawaiʻi's soaring cost of living. Housing is the primary driver: 55% of respondents identified housing costs as the number one reason they feel financially strained, and 88% ranked it among their top three concerns. Two-thirds of the survey's participants reported spending more than 30% of their income on housing – a widely recognized marker of being "housing cost-burdened."

Other major financial pressures include stagnant wages, high taxes, and the ever-increasing cost of food and utilities. Even households earning more than $150,000 – traditionally considered stable middle-class – reported feeling financially squeezed. Last year, this threshold was around $100,000, signaling how quickly affordability challenges have escalated.

The impact of Hawaii's economic condition on Native Hawaiians is well known. Native Hawaiians are overrepresented among lower-income households and renters, making them especially vulnerable to rising costs. Limited access to affordable housing and the ongoing strain of meeting basic needs help explain why more than half of all Native Hawaiians now live outside Hawaiʻi.

Even non-Native Hawaiians are experiencing the same challenges. Forty-two percent of all respondents to the Holomua survey said it has become "very difficult" to save money from their paychecks, up from 34% last year. Many expressed that financial insecurity is now interfering with life decisions like starting a family, pursuing higher education, or buying a home.

So, what can be done?

During the recent federal government shutdown, public and private entities rolled out emergency programs to support vulnerable populations, including SNAP recipients. The Office of Hawaiian Affairs was among the agencies that responded. Although well-intentioned, these efforts do not tackle the long-term solutions required to make Hawaiʻi more affordable.

One of those solutions has been recently highlighted by Hawaiʻi's Sen. Brian Schatz, who directly links excessive government regulation, particularly in housing, to the high cost of living in Hawaiʻi, calling it a "tragedy of the government's own making." He argues that a "thicket of regulations and requirements, and reviews" have made it "virtually impossible to build" needed housing, thereby driving up prices.

Schatz believes that "we just need to get out of our own way and let people build." That's why he has introduced bipartisan legislation to address the lack of housing, including the Build More Housing Near Transit Act and the YIMBY (Yes in My Backyard) Act.

What I like about Schatz's approach is that it aims at a root cause of the cost-of-living problem - government over-regulation that prevents the building of houses people can afford. And solving that problem will help everyone, Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians.

I believe there are lots of other things the state can do (or stop doing) to bring Hawaiʻi's cost of living down for everyone. These include tightening its belt, cutting wasteful government spending, and reducing the tax burden on individuals and businesses like the GET.

The good thing about realizing we are all in the same waʻa is that a rising tide raises all boats. Let's pursue solutions that raise the tide!

E hana kākou! ■

Kahoʻolawe: A Sacred Island's Journey

Brickwood Galuteria

Trustee, At-Large

Kahoʻolawe, the smallest of the main Hawaiian Islands, has always carried a weight far greater than its size. For generations, it was revered as a sacred place of ceremony, a training ground for celestial navigators, and a vital fishing resource. Its name is woven into chants and stories that remind us of our kuleana – our responsibility – to care for the land and sea as living ancestors.

That sacred role was shattered in 1941, when the U.S. military seized Kahoʻolawe for bombing practice after the attack on Pearl Harbor. For nearly five decades, the island endured relentless live fire training, explosives testing, and naval bombardment. The land was scarred with craters, stripped of vegetation, and littered with unexploded ordnance. Erosion worsened, and the ecosystem collapsed.

In 1976, a group of activists known as the "Kahoʻolawe Nine" risked their lives by secretly landing on the island to protest its use as a bombing range. Many were and remain friends. Their courage ignited the Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana (PKO) movement, which united Native Hawaiians and allies in a struggle for justice.

After years of protests, lawsuits, and political pressure, bombing finally ceased in 1990, and the island was returned to the State of Hawaiʻi in 1994. Yet much of Kahoʻolawe remains unsafe, with unexploded ordnance buried beneath its soil.

I had the privilege of visiting Kahoʻolawe myself. Walking its rugged terrain, I saw firsthand the scars left by decades of military action; the barren stretches of land, the remnants of craters, and the warnings of danger.

Yet equally powerful was what I witnessed among the people working there. Individuals deeply committed to restoring life to the island, planting native species, stabilizing soil, and conducting ceremonies to heal both land and spirit. Their dedication is inspiring, and the energy of renewal palpable. That experience was not only exciting but also unforgettable – a memory etched into my heart as a reminder of resilience and hope.

Kahoʻolawe is more than an island; it is a symbol of Hawaiian unity and resistance.

The struggle to protect it became a rallying point for the Hawaiian Renaissance, fueling movements for cultural revival, land rights, and sovereignty. Kahoʻolawe embodies the principle that land is not property but a living ancestor. Protecting it ensures that future generations can reconnect with its sacred role in navigation, ceremony, and identity.

The island's restoration is not just ecological, it is cultural. Every seed planted, every ceremony conducted, every effort to heal the soil is an act of reclaiming identity. Kahoʻolawe reminds us that unity, persistence, and cultural pride can overcome destruction. It is proof that when Hawaiians stand together, even the most scarred land can begin to heal.

Kahoʻolawe stands as proof that unity, persistence, and cultural pride can overcome destruction. Safeguarding it is not only about preserving land. It is about affirming identity, sovereignty, and the right to self determination.

Its journey from sacred island to bombing range and back to a place of renewal is a story of resilience. It is a reminder that our land carries memory, and that healing is possible when we honor our ancestors and protect our sacred places.

And so, I ask you: Do you have a Kahoʻolawe in your life – a place, memory, or struggle that symbolizes resilience, unity, and renewal? ■

Christmas in Hawaiʻi 60 Years Ago

Carmen "Hulu" Lindsey

Trustee, Maui

I still remember Christmas in Hawaiʻi 60 years ago, when the season felt gentler and time itself seemed to slow down. Those days live in my memory – like a familiar song carried on the trade winds, and sometimes I wish, just for a moment, that we could turn back the clock and feel that kind of Christmas again.

Back then, Christmas wasn't something you rushed through. It unfolded naturally, like the tide. Our neighborhood came alive in simple ways.

Kids played outside until the sun dipped behind the mountains, barefoot and carefree, their laughter echoing down the street. Houses were modest, but they were full of warmth. Doors stayed open, windows let in the breeze, and neighbors came and went without knocking, carrying plates of food or branches of greenery for decorations. We didn't worry about matching themes or store-bought perfection. A Norfolk pine, a palm branch, or whatever we could find became our Christmas tree, dressed in tinsel with ornaments made by hand.

Music was everywhere. The radio played carols mixed with Hawaiian mele, and someone always had a guitar nearby. I can still hear the slack key melodies and falsetto voices, familiar and comforting. Christmas Eve at church was especially meaningful. The glow of candles, the singing – sometimes in Hawaiian – made the season feel sacred in a way that's hard to describe now. It wasn't just about faith; it was about belonging.

The food, of course, brought everyone together. Our Christmas table told the story of who we were. There might be turkey or ham, but it sat comfortably beside laulau, kalua pig, poi, lomi salmon, and haupia. From our Japanese relatives came sushi and mochi; from Portuguese friends, sweet bread and malasadas. Everyone helped prepare the meal, from the youngest keiki to the kūpuna, sharing stories and laughter along with the work. No one was in a hurry.

Gifts were simple then. I remember being just as happy with a new book or a pair of slippers as kids today are with the latest gadgets. The real gift was being together. After lunch, we'd gather at the beach or in the yard, uncles playing music, aunties talking story, cousins running free.

Those moments felt endless.

What I miss most is the sense of community. We looked out for one another, especially our elders. If someone needed help, it was given quietly, without expectation. Christmas meant making sure no one was left out.

So much has changed since then. Hawaiʻi feels faster now, louder, more crowded. But when I think of Christmas 60 years ago, I'm reminded of a time when the season truly reflected aloha. I hold onto those memories and wish, every year, that we could turn back time – if only to remember what really mattered.

You will be reading this column after Christmas, so here's hoping it was a merry one and that the new year is a Hauʻoli Makahiki Hou. ■

HALIʻA ALOHA
FOND REMEMBERANCE

To create a space for our readers to honor their loved ones, *Ka Wai Ola* will print ***Haliʻa Aloha - obituaries and mele kanikau (mourning chants)***. Haliʻa Aloha appearing in the print version of *Ka Wai Ola* should be recent (within six months of passing) and should not exceed 250 words in length. All other Haliʻa Aloha submitted will be published on kawaiola.news. Haliʻa Aloha must be submitted by the 15th of the month for publication the following month. Photos accompanying Haliʻa Aloha will only be included in the print version of the newspaper if space permits. However, all photos will be shared on kawaiola.news.

EARLINE LUCY LUUKIA PEELUA JOHNSTON
OCT. 16, 1940 – SEPT. 6, 2025

Clayton, California: It is with great love and humility we announce the passing of our mother and grandmother, Earline Lucy Luukia Peelua Johnston of Kapaʻakea, Molokaʻi. The "matriarch" of our family and a woman of unwavering faith, strength and promise, on Sept. 6, 2025, surrounded by her loved ones in California, she entered eternal rest. Earline was 84. Born and raised on the island of Molokaʻi, Earline worked for many years as a cook and baker at the Hotel Molokaʻi, Old Pau Hana Inn, and at past establishments like Hele On and Kane's Bar. She was known for her sweet but "feisty" personality and for being the aunty that you could have "good fun" around. Her love for people, especially her ʻohana, was great and one of a kind. She will be forever missed. Earline was preceded in passing by her beloved husband William Harry Johnston Sr.; parents Eva and Jesse Peelua; brother "Junior" Peelua; and sisters Kanani Negrillo, Hattie Silva, and Leilani Wallace. She is survived by her children Wayne Peelua (Iris), Tammy Manuha (Api), William "Billy" Johnston Jr. (Volsha), and Charles Johnston (Noelani); 13 grandchildren; 12 great grandchildren; 12 great-great grandchildren; and sister Lorraine Higa. A funeral service will be held on Jan. 10, 2026, at the St. Damien Catholic Church in Kaunakakai, Molokaʻi. Visitation at 8:30 a.m. Funeral service at 9:00 a.m.

GUY-GREGORY KEALAKAULA AIU
APRIL 5, 1954 – SEPT. 22, 2025

Honolulu, Oʻahu: Guy-Gregory Kealakaula Aiu was born in the Territory of Hawaiʻi on April 5, 1954 to Boniface K. Aiu, Sr., a former Honolulu Fire Department chief, and renowned Kumu Hula Maiki Aiu Lake. He attended Cathedral School and went on to attend Saint Louis School. After graduating he continued his education at Kapiʻolani Community College, graduating with honors. A talented musician, Aiu played the upright bass and was an original member of the musical group Kūlia i ka Nuʻu. During the 1980s, he also played music with a number of rock bands. Aiu was an athlete who enjoyed cycling and working out at the gym. He was also an avid surfer and waterman, who served for a time as a Waikīkī beach boy with legendary big wave rider the late Clyde Aikau. Aiu later worked in the local film industry, crewing on numerous productions for more than 20 years, specializing in lighting and rigging, as a member of IATSE Local 665 which represents Hawaiʻi's technicians, artisans and craftspeople in the entertainment industry. Aiu never married and had no children. He is predeceased by his father, Boniface K. Aiu, Sr.; his mother, Maiki Aiu Lake; and his brother, Boniface K. Aiu, Jr. He is survived by his sisters, Colette Stanczyk, Karen Costa, and Coline Ferranti; and brothers Rodney Aiu and Scott Aiu. His celebration of life was held on December 22.

WILLIAM AWEAU HOOHULI
SEPT. 9, 1941 – OCT. 24, 2025

Waipiʻo, Oʻahu: William Aweau Hoohuli was born on Sept. 9, 1941, in Nānākuli to Kulani Lima Hoohuli and Joseph Kahapea Paʻahao Hoohuli. One of 14 siblings, William was remembered by many as "a man full of aloha." All but one of his siblings preceded him into the presence of the Lord; although on Nov. 9, 2025, his brother, Josiah Lanakila Hoohuli, Sr., departed this life as well. At Mākua, Oʻahu, William met his beloved wife, Kim Suzanne Salcido, born to Ralph and Matilda Salcido of Montebello, California. She became a respected educator along the Waiʻanae Coast and in Central Oʻahu. She passed on June 16, 2025, and the family takes comfort knowing she welcomed him into the next life. The couple married on Aug. 2, 1969, at St. Joseph's Church in Waiʻanae and later made their home in Waipiʻo, where they lived for 46 years. William worked for Kaiser Cement Corporation for over 25 years. He served as maintenance superintendent with assignments across Hawaiʻi, the continental U.S., and Guam. He was a trusted resource in moʻokūʻauhau, guiding many families through genealogy and land matters. He served on the founding boards of the Waiʻanae Comprehensive Center and Hoʻāla Kanawai, and advised burial councils across the state. He is survived by daughters Suzanne Hoohuli Ely (Danny) and Deborah Hoohuli-McKinney (Sean); son Ralph "Kai" Hoohuli; hānai son Ralph "Nate" Salcido (Zillah); 12 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Funeral services were held on Dec. 30, 2025, at Resurrection of the Lord Church, Waipiʻo Gentry. Inurnment date pending. ■

HOʻOHUI ʻOHANA
FAMILY REUNIONS

E nā ʻohana Hawaiʻi: If you are planning a reunion or looking for genealogical information, *Ka Wai Ola* will print your listing at no charge on a space-available basis. Listings should not exceed 200 words. OHA reserves the right to edit all submissions for length. Listings will run for three months from submission, unless specified. Send your information by mail, or e-mail kwo@OHA.org. **E ola nā mamo a Hāloa!**

SEARCH

KEKAULA-AARONA - He kāhea to all descendants of Thomas Kahalewai Kekaula and Julia Kanohokuahiwi Aarona. They had 8 surviving children: Julia Kanohokuahiwi, Cecilia Paiaia, Samuel Nohohiaulu, Mabel Kahaleiwi, Thomas Aarona, Hansen Makahuki, Edwin Kalauoliwa, Mary Kaualoku. Hoping to reunite with Kekaula and Aarona family to have a family reunion as a granddaughter of Thomas Aarona Kekaula. Please call or email if you have any information on these topics. Mahalo, Sephra Greher Ph.718-200-7467/ hoohe-no2@gmail.com.

KELEPOLO - Calling the descendants of Maikaʻaloa and Annie (Kumulau) Kelepolo of Kainaliu, Kona, Hawaiʻi and their seven keiki: Albert, Peter, Josephine, William, Joseph, Isabella, and Lillian. We are planning an ʻohana reunion for July 17-19, 2026, in Kona, Hawaiʻi. Contact Monico Galieto (grandson of William Kelepolo) at kelepoloo-hana@gmail.com or call (808) 936-5682. When emailing, provide your name, phone number, mailing/email addresses. and how you're related, I will send an information packet.

KUPIHEA - ʻOhana of Solomon N. Kupihea and M. Hattie Kuapahi Kupihea – join us on Kauaʻi July 12-19, 2026! Daily activities to strengthen bonds and learn family faces. Let all your ʻohana know! Visit our website and complete the Interest Survey: bit.ly/Kupihea-Kuapahi-reunion-2026. Email: kupihea.reunion@gmail.com.

PIO - Descendants of Kepio and Keoahu of Kaupō, Maui, are having a family reunion on Maui, Labor Day weekend, Sept. 4-6, 2026 at Pukalani Community Center. Their six children early on used the surnames Kepio or Pio: Sampson Kahaleuahi (Anadasia Kealoha); Victoria Nakoaelua (Kahaleauki); Maria Malaea (Keahi/Adams, Sam Akahi Sr.); Samuel Kaukani (Mele Kakaio, Rebecca Malulu); Ipoaloha (Kalalani Kekiwi); and Joseph Kaleohano (Elizabeth Nakula, Minnie Aloiau). Contact: Kaʻapuni Peters-Wong 808-375-4321; Toni Kowalski-Dacquel 808-436-1845; Valda Baisa Andaya 808-572-9245; Ululani Opiana Glass 808-446-9309; Kapiolani Adams 808-778-6383; or email pioohana@gmail.com.

QUITOG - Trying to locate the descendants of Mary Kalu Quitog, born 7/31/1931 in Waiʻōhinu - deceased 5/28/2001, Honolulu. When emailing, please provide your name, phone, address, and how you are related. Send to AMartinH@Live.com. ■

Classified ads only $12.50 - Type or clearly write your ad of no more than 175 characters (including spaces and punctuation) and mail, along with a check for $12.50, to: *Ka Wai Ola* Classifieds, Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 560 N. Nimitz Hwy., Suite 200, Honolulu, HI 96817. Make check payable to OHA. (We cannot accept credit cards.) Ads and payment must be received by the 15th for the next month's edition of *Ka Wai Ola*. Send your information by mail, or e-mail **kwo@oha.org** with the subject "Makeke/Classified." OHA reserves the right to refuse any advertisement, for any reason, at our discretion.

AINA REALTOR – I specialize in helping Native Hawaiians, first-time homebuyers, and local families navigate the home buying and selling process. I currently have buyers looking in all Hawaiian Homestead neighborhoods, and if you've been thinking about selling or buying but aren't sure where to start—or need guidance through the DHHL process—I can help. Let's talk story and explore your options. I handle every step with care, experience, and local knowledge. Call or text: Jordan Aina – RS-85780 – (808) 276-0880.

HAWAIIANS LIVING ON THE MAINLAND OR OVERSEAS ALWAYS FLY HAWAIIAN FLAGS. Americans living in other countries almost never fly American flags. Why? Because Hawaiians have no fear anywhere to show their pride of being Hawaiian. Americans do. Order Hawaiian flags for yourself or your hoa at www.hawaiiansovereignty.etsy.com and you'll get the story too.

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HOMES WITH ALOHA - Kaumana/ Hilo- Single level 3bed/ 2.5 baths. Lot size 11,900. $380,000 This is a leasehold property -Charmaine I. Quilit Poki (Realtor) (808) 295-4474. RB-15998 Keller Williams Honolulu RB-21303

HOMES WITH ALOHA - Keaukaha/ Hilo- Single level 5 bedrooms/2 baths on 21,155 sq ft lot. $450,000 This is a leasehold property -Charmaine I. Quilit Poki (Realtor) (808) 295-4474. RB-15998 Keller Williams Honolulu RB-21303

HOMES WITH ALOHA - Papakolea two story home on Tantalus Dr., 3 bedrooms, 3 baths, street parking. $650,000 This is a leasehold property -Charmaine I. Quilit Poki (Realtor) (808) 295-4474. RB-15998 Keller Williams Honolulu RB-21303

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PRE-ARRANGE BURIAL PLAN; HAWAIIAN MEMORIAL, KĀNE'OHE. Meditation Garden. Double Depth capacity; $20,350 firm; price to include ALL transfer fees. Interested call (808) 353-1876.

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THINKING OF BUYING OR SELLING A HOME? CALL THE EXPERT. Call Charmaine I.Quilit Poki (R) 295- 4474 RB-15998. Keller Williams Honolulu RB-21303. To view current listings, go to my website HomeswithAloha.com. Call, Text or email Charmaine@HomeswithAloha.com to make an appointment to learn more about homeownership. Mahalo nui! Specialize in Fee Simple & Homestead Properties for over 39 years. ■

OFFICE LOCATIONS

Office hours for all locations are 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday thru Friday.

All Offices are closed on State holidays

Main Phone (all islands):
808.594.1835
Email:
info@oha.org

HONOLULU
560 N. Nimitz Hwy., Ste. 200,
Honolulu, HI 96817
Phone: 808.594.1888

EAST HAWAI'I (HILO)
2100 Kanoelehua Ave.,
Unit 9 & 10
Hilo, HI 96720
Phone: 808.204.2391

MOLOKA'I / LĀNA'I
Kūlana 'Ōiwi, P.O. Box 1717
Kaunakakai, HI 96748
Phone: 808.553.4640

KAUA'I / NI'IHAU
4405 Kukui Grove St., Ste. 103
Līhu'e, HI 96766-1601
Phone: 808.241.3390

MAUI
1887 Wili Pa Loop, Ste. 1
Wailuku, HI 96793-1400
Phone: 808.873.3364

www.oha.org/offices

EŌ Mai, e Kuleana Land Holders!

THE KULEANA LAND TAX exemption helps Native Hawaiians keep their ancestral lands by reducing the rising cost of property taxes. All four counties have ordinances in place that allow eligible kuleana land owners to pay minimal to zero property taxes. Applications are available on each county's website.

For more information on kuleana land tax ordinances go to **www.oha.org/kuleanaland** and for assistance with genealogy verification, contact the Office of Hawaiian Affairs at **808-594-1835** or **808-594-1888**.

OFFICE of HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
560 N. Nimitz Highway, Suite 200
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96817

'ONIPA'A PEACE MARCH FRIDAY JAN. 16, 2026

Enduring love for our Lāhui. **www.kalahuihawaii.net/onipaapeacemarch**

On January 16, 1893, U.S. military troops landed in Honolulu. The next day, **Queen Lili'uokalani** was illegally overthrown. She yielded under protest "to avoid any collision of armed forces, and perhaps the loss of life," holding faith the United States would restore what was stolen. Six years earlier, her hānai sister **Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop** established Kamehameha Schools, knowing our people would need places of learning to navigate the tumultuous times ahead. 133 years later, we honor Queen Lili'uokalani's call: **'Onipa'a i ka 'imi na'auao—stand firm in the pursuit of knowledge.** We honor Kamehameha Schools, which has educated generations of Hawaiians yet faces legal challenges to its sacred mission. We honor both royal hānai sisters' enduring commitment to the lāhui, to peace, to education, and to justice. This is why we march. Join us Friday, January 16, 2026 for the 'Ōnipa'a Peace March commemorating 133 years since the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy.

Join the original 'Onipa'a Peace March Presented by The Queen's Court and Ka Lāhui Hawai'i

FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 2026
9:30AM - 3PM - Peace March
From Mauna'ala to 'Iolani Palace

8:00 AM Mauna'ala gates open - Protocol by Kumu Hula **Kawaikapuokalani Hewett**

9:30 AM March departs Mauna'ala

10:30 AM Arrive **Iolani Palace** - 'Oli Komo by **Hālau Pua Ali'i 'Ilima**, Nā Kumu Hula **Victoria Holt Takamine** and **Jeffrey Takamine**

10:45 AM Pule by Kahu **Kaleo Patterson**, Food Served

11:00 AM Program: Speeches & Entertainment
Emcee: **Kaukaohu Wahilani**

Music by

• Maka Gallinger •
• Skippy Ioane •
• Pōhaku •
• Mel Amina, Moon Kauakahi, & Braddah Eric Lee •
• Sudden Rush •

Speeches by

• Kainoa Azama •
• Kaniela Ing •
• Emma Koa •
• Lanakila Mangauil •
• Healani Sonoda-Pale •
• Imaikalani Winchester •

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