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QUEEN LILIUOKALANI: THE ENDURING ALII

We gather here today where the remains of the royal dead of 19th century Hawaii have been deposited. We gather here in this serene, rather austere setting to pay homage to a great woman, . . . a great human being. A person of heart, . . . of good sense, and . . . a person of great courage.

It took courage to look into the jaws of the lion; to storm its lair; . . . and this Her Majesty, Queen Liliuokalani, did when she went to Washington, D. C.: first, to give her living presence to a demand for restoration of Hawaiian monarchy, and, when this failed, . . . to make the demand for return of the Crown Lands to the native owners of the soil.

In neither effort was she successful. Hawaiian monarchy ended conclusively . . . up to these times. The Crown Lands became incorporated into what was called Government Lands . . . upon which many tons of sugar and pineapple were grown; . . . and more recently, these hereditary acres of the native owners of the soil have become known as State Lands. Since they gained this august designation, all manner of things have happened with respect to these lands.

The Hawaiian people -- the descendants of Queen Liliuokalani's native subjects -- have benefited little from the use of what were formerly the Crown Lands for which Queen Liliuokalani fought courageously to get back from a people who had appropriated the Hawaiian kingdom with the help of U.S.A. military force.

The rule of might makes right . . . seems through all history the deciding factor in settling disputes seriously impinging on wealth and power. The Queen's plea was on behalf of a minority, . . . a minority only when seen in relation to the whole of the United States of America, . . . but a plea on behalf of a majority of native Polynesian or part-Polynesian owners of the soil, who were in numbers the majority of the population of Hawaii in 1898.

We honor today a woman who looked defeat in the eye, who stood up to cruel and continued criticism of her politics, . . . her character, . . . and her private life . . . Here was an enduring human being -- a person of strong instincts -- who gave purpose and meaning to existence through all the years of her long life. My theme for this address is Queen Liliuokalani's ability to persevere; to live down great losses; to survive the maelstrom of tragedies which haunted the alii during all the 19th century; . . . and to live down the final embarrassment of loss of Hawaiian sovereignty.

She had to hear continually, unimaginative and crude insults spewed to discredit her as a public figure. She read the cruel, hateful letters invented by a Congregational minister and published in mainland newspapers labelling her "barbaric," "lascivious," "avaricious," and the like. She read hysterical attacks on her person, . . . her people, . . . her views appearing with monotonous regularity in at least one of the local newspapers. She stood up to the loss of Hawaiian monarchy and the loss of the Crown Lands.

Queen Liliuokalani lived to see the alienation of native Polynesians from

their hereditary lands. She saw, all around her, the collapse of a majority of Hawaiians in their attempts to adjust to the white man's way of living. From childhood on to her last years, she experienced the gruesome reality of seeing her own people die like flies in epidemics of disease -- both organic and psychological -- brought upon by foreign invasions of both persons and their ideas. In 1900, seventeen years before her death, there were less than 30,000 pure Hawaiians. When the explorer, Captain Cook, arrived there were upwards of 300,000 natives living superbly in these islands.

There is no telling to what extent the reality of such loss and destruction haunted the Queen's thoughts or ate away at her insides. She was a person of culture, intelligence, and sensitivity. Her response to political, ecological, and social phenomena exploding all around her must certainly have been considerable. She was a thoughtful human being -- one whose response to life was constant and depthful. The shock of response to incalculable and devastating changes had killed off most chiefs of the 19th century. Death at an early age among these alii had become something to accept as commonplace. It happened time and time again.

Iolani Liholiho and his queen, Kamamalu, died in London before they were 25. Most of their generation of chiefs were dead before the 1830's. Kinau, mother of Alexander Liholiho, Lot Kamehameha, and Victoria Kamamalu, died in her thirties. Liliha died before she was 40. Nahienacna died at the age of 22. Perhaps she had simply had enough of the holocaust at that tender age and decided to give up. Alexander Liholiho died at 29, heartsick and debilitated in body and spirit. His sister Victoria died at the age of 26 in 1866. Again, a disheartened, defeated human being. King Kamehameha V died at 42. Lunalilo was the same age at his death. Queen Emma and Bernice Pauahi were in their early fifties when death struck. The Queen's sister Likelike was 37 when she died; her brother Prince Leleiohoku was in his late twenties. Princess Kaiulani was 23 when she was struck down by pneumonia, and perhaps by heartache as well.

Alii and makaainana alike were wiped out by the most innocuous attacks of disease. But perhaps the most powerful enemy to life was the rapid ecological and social changes that were taking place. These storms of human invention imposed helter-skelter on an ancient culture could not easily be survived by people who had, for centuries, lived in peace, harmony, and productively with their environment.

After the coming of foreigners, wholesale death struck like a playful breeze, ruthlessly eliminating native Hawaiians from their beautiful island home; and destruction fell upon native plants and birds, as well. It was as though people, plants, and birds had earned a hard, ironic warrant of extinction from Providence, or the old gods of Hawaii-iki, with the arrival of strangers.

One is driven to ask why! Why this massive decimation of a healthy people? A good people! A strong people! They say that sudden change -- now being called "future shock" -- is a powerful killer, . . . one with which the Hawaiians have had a long, two century acquaintance. Was this the reason the old culture and its human participants fell to ruins in so short a span of time? Nonetheless, not all the people, nor every single aspect of their lives vanished. Some of the old virtues of living and thinking endured in some of the people.

Queen Liliuokalani endured. She lived; she thought; she felt; she

sorrowed; she fought; . . . and she held on. Oni pa'a became her motto. Oni pa'a -- pull together and hold intact the shifting of time! Oni pa'a! A beautiful motto she chose for herself! She felt it, she thought it, and she lived it! For the Queen lived to do, and to act.

She was highly in tune with the present day concept of relevance. Relevance meant salvaging from the losses of a government, a culture, a self-image. Salvage and reconstruction of human lives. From the moment she returned from Washington, D. C., Queen Liliuokalani went to work pulling together her remaining personal assets for the purpose of establishing a legacy of her own for her people. She put what was left of her house in order.

She had learned early in life to treasure the substance of the human experience. And there is much evidence at hand to support the opinion that she knew very well how to use living time for pleasure, for work, for heavy responsibilities, for gaiety and fun! She learned well at the Kula Keiki Alii, the little school created for educating chiefly children in the mid-19th century. She used purposefully the private tutoring received after she left the school.

She treasured the idea of being the hanai of the High Chief Paki and the High Chiefess Konia. So strong was her identity as their hanai, Her Majesty became known to her circle as "Hanai." The older generation of my childhood days always referred to the Queen as Hanai. She treasured her hanai relationship to Bernice Pauahi Bishop, daughter of Paki and Konia, the great Maui chief and his wife of and I and Keawe lineage. This "hanai-ship" verified her rank, and from this she took strength -- not a snobbish and banal sense of superiority.

She flourished as a young person in the lovely home of Paki and Konia which was called Haleakala. There she was to become a young lady of considerable tenu and grace, accomplished in music and conversation. At Haleakala she lived as a younger sister to Bernice Pauahi Bishop, and at Haleakala she was married to John Dominis. Even if Pauahi's widowed husband Charles Bishop was to write of Her Majesty, Queen Liliuokalani -- in his dotage, perhaps, and certainly with shocking bad taste and incredible disloyalty -- of her being "treacherous" and "of low morals" in the time of her reign, Liliuokalani and Bernice Pauahi enjoyed a comfortable relationship as hanai sisters until Pauahi's death in 1884. (Kuykenrall, Vol III, p. 631)

Although she was not always on the best terms with her mother-in-law, the Boston bluestocking, Mary Dominis, Queen Liliuokalani treasured Washington Place, the Dominis mansion built in 1846. It was kept intact during the Queen's lifetime as the home pumehana, the beloved home, which she inherited from her husband, John Owen Dominis. The Queen treasured her smaller homes in Palama and Waialua. She frequently retired to rest or to compose music, or to just have fun at her cottage in Waikiki. It had gained a particular distinction after serving as the residence at which she and Governor Dominis gave a memorable feast and entertainment for the Duke of Edinburgh during his visit to Hawaii in 1869.

Queen Liliuokalani fully related herself to time and place, to the land and people around her. She had a strong sense of location, of being, of connection with roots going down to the aboriginal substratum. She was a chiefess of distinction, bred in the mold of ancestresses nobly related to their magical world of lehua forests, seacoasts of matchless beauty, and land abundant with crops and other resources useful to the daily flow of life in

those remarkable times before the coming of Captain Cook.

Some have said that Her Majesty had too much pride; that she was willful and stubborn; that she was perhaps anachronistically too much a chief of the olden type to function successfully in the times she lived. All this might be true. Chiefs of the blood, steeped in traditional ways, are haughty, and perhaps they are stubborn and willful. But they were not, in her time, phonies. The Queen, that is, was not a phony. She lived the role of a great ali'i. For this, her people loved and respected her. She stood ten feet tall. Even in her defeat, she lived on at Washington Place a living symbol to her people and the world of a person who could stand up to adversity and endure!

And, like their Queen, the Hawaiian people have endured. We have remained -- some of us, at any rate, -- walking the ancestral earth of these islands in spite of the large scourge of trouble that became commonplace among us since the coming of the British explorer and subsequent waves of foreigners bringing with them gifts of disease and polluted ideas and customs inimical to the native Hawaiian ideal of life. But we have endured. We of Hawaiian ancestry, Hawaiian in ethos and esthetics, Hawaiian in name and in genealogy, still keep a place in the ancestral land.

Queen Liliuokalani has become a symbol for me of the persevering and enduring capacities of the Hawaiian people. Her capacity for endurance serves as an example for all of us to treasure. Her endurance was not of an idle sort in which a person smolders away for years, riddled in mind and spirit with resentments. Queen Liliuokalani endured and continued to develop to the last years of her life.

In the period of imprisonment in a single small room at Iolani Palace, after the abortive attempt to oust the hated P.G.'s (Provisional Government) the recently widowed Queen wrote down from memory the music and words of some of her compositions. These were published after her release from imprisonment in the little upstairs room at Iolani Palace. During the agonizing months spent in Washington, D. C., she began the difficult task of writing down the Kumulipo, the Hawaiian chant of creation. Her translation of the Kumulipo is considered by some scholars to be the best version in the English language.

These are not the acts of a snivelling malcontent, a neurotic sob sister. These are not the acts of a power mad politician. These were the creative expressions of a person of heart and of poetic gifts. These were the product of a person of guts, talent, and good breeding.

She lived down embarrassment and the humiliation of seeing her people's independence go down the drain. She survived the cruel loss of hereditary native lands. And everyday the familiar faces of forked tongued do-gooders passed Washington Place, pointing thin fingers at the woman who ruled all too briefly a kingdom not designed as a natural evolutionary result from the ancient way of life of her ancestors. Some of these good citizens called at Washington Place; left their neat, white cards in the calabash of the entrance hall. The Queen endured their petty smirks of triumph; their uninspired gushings of cant regarding how good they had been to the Hawaiian people, and how right it was for their kind to be the new rulers of Hawaii.

The Queen lived on. She lived to shame them; to bore into their steely hearts the truth of their ruthless plunder of a people and their way of life. The Queen lived and serenely pulled her assets together. She was mistress in

a fine home. She had a contented household. She was unchallenged in her last years as the reigning lady of the land. She was respected and loved as "Queen Lil" clear across the United States of America.

No one could forget her as the composer of Aloha Oe. No one ever will so long as that hauntingly beautiful song of farewell is performed. No one can forget Queen Liliuokalani as the great lady who was once mistress of Iolani Palace and who was also held prisoner there. And no one can forget the imposing Hawaiian chiefess who became the aging chatelaine of stately Washington Palace. Occasionally she gave wonderful parties there which the newspapers gleefully reported as memorable social events. Lists of blue-blooded Hawaiian and part-Hawaiian families filled columns of newsprint otherwise cluttered with dull reports of births and deaths or various money grubbing schemes.

She died there. She wrote a will there creating a trust estate which today supports the excellent efforts of the trustees and staff of the Queen Liliuokalani Child Care Center. A living memorial to a great lady, a great chiefess, a person of talent and good sense, to whom I shall forever be proud to be linked by marriage and by relationship through two of my great-grandmothers.

We honor the memory of Her Majesty, Queen Liliuokalani; we treasure the memory of her courage and generosity. The Queen is dead, but long may we remember her capacity to endure and her greatness of spirit and heart.

Piha loa, no kuu pu'u wai o ke aloha na wahine alii pololei, Lydia Kamakaeha Liliuokalani.

Mahalo e pumehana a pau.