

Revised Nov. 2022

Transcript of 2014 gubernatorial inaugural speech by Governor David Y. Ige, delivered on December 1, 2014. Transcribed from the Honolulu Civil Beat (12/01/2014) by Perry Arrasmith, 2022, under the auspices of the School of Communication & Information, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

The 2014 Inaugural Address of David Y. Ige December 1, 2014

Aloha.

Before I begin my formal remarks, I want to acknowledge the one person who has been with me every day during the past 29 years.

My wife Dawn has been my greatest supporter. She has been a trusted advisor for the most difficult decisions. She has encouraged me to continue through the toughest times, and has picked me up after every disaster. She has sacrificed many personal opportunities to support me and our family.

I know that I would not be standing here today without her help and support. Thank you, Dawn.

Let me begin this morning with an introduction.

My name is David Ige.

You laugh, or at least smile, at that introduction. I think because some of you may find the gesture unnecessary. But I find it quite appropriate. After all an inauguration is really an introduction of a new governor, a new administration, a new beginning.

And so I begin with an introduction of myself and the path ahead filled with hopes and dreams—that are not new but go back generations. To truly understand why we stand at this point in history, and more importantly, to determine where it is we want to go, we must first remember where we came from.

For me it has been an incredible journey—a collective one, not by one man, but by generations.

I am a son of immigrants like most of us here in Hawaii. And whether we are the first generation or a dozen generations removed, we are forever marked by that immigrant experience—by that voyaging. Locally and nationally, it is in our DNA.

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So what does that mean?

For me, it means remembering the hopes and dreams of those who came to these islands looking for a better life, a better place to raise their families and a place where individual dreams, whatever they may be, can be realized.

The first generation from Japan, my grandparents, had a saying:

Kodomo no tame ni. For the sake of the children.

All that they suffered and all that they endured, they did so willingly for the sake of their children and the future.

Their children, my father's generation, had an equally strong sense of history and of things bigger and more important than themselves. Their sacrifices during World War II, including those of the 100th Battalion and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, are legendary.

I stand here today—in the shadow of my parents' and grandparents' accomplishments—because of their willingness to sacrifice and look to my future.

And so I say to them, and to my mother who is watching us from the hospital today, with the greatest humility:

Okage sama de. All that I am, I am because of you.

All of us, no matter where we came from, walk today with one foot stepping out of the past and the other about to step into a future of endless possibilities. All of us, as children of immigrants, share the same broad experience no matter the particulars. Consequently, we all have a deep and abiding obligation to both our parents and to our children.

Contrary to what some may believe, we do not stand at a turning point just because we have a new governor or a new administration. We stand at this point in history, with an opportunity to transform it into a turning point.

We have an opportunity to chart a new tomorrow.

We have an opportunity to fulfill longstanding hopes and dreams.

We have an opportunity to make Hawaii a place we are proud to call home because it is OUR home.

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But for now that's all it is: an opportunity. Before us are the challenges that those opportunities present. We still have to do the hard work to reach our goals and realize our dreams.

For government that means nurturing a sustainable economy that will allow us to put a roof over our heads, feed our families and take care of our basic necessities.

It means taking a more active role in growing small business and diversifying our economic engine, as well as in supporting our larger and more established industries.

When our economy is truly healthy and everyone rises with the tide of prosperity, then issues such as the lack of affordable housing, homelessness and hunger are greatly diminished.

Doing the hard work means collaborating with business, labor, community groups, our civil servants and all stakeholders. There should be no "special" interest. The only interest that matters is the public's interest.

It means holding education, at all levels, up to a different light and looking at new ways to empower schools and to help our children grow and prepare for life. As someone who came out of our public schools and who graduated from the University of Hawaii, I am a firm believer that a strong public education system unlocks the dreams to our children's future.

Doing the hard work means taking our pioneering experience in pre-paid health care to the next level and not letting bureaucracy get in the way of completing the job of providing affordable health care to all of our people.

For our kupuna, it means helping them live out their golden years with independence, dignity, and the love and support of their families.

It means respecting the aina and preserving and protecting it for future generations.

Being responsible stewards of the environment doesn't have to force us to choose between that crucial role and economic growth or any other conflicting interest.

Doing the hard work means harnessing our natural resources to reduce our dependence on expensive imported energy.

Self sufficiency also extends to agriculture through the diversification of local crops and support of our farmers, big and small, so that we can grow more of our own foods.

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It means doing the people's business in a business-like way; being honest and transparent; watching closely how we spend the people's money and being accountable for all that we do.

But to realize that kind of transformation, to walk down that path and fulfill those dreams, we will need to do some heavy lifting—not just by me, not just by government, but by all of us together.

In the last several years, we have had to deal with some of the most divisive issues we've faced as a community, including GMOs, same-sex marriage, and others that go to the heart of what many of us believe.

But that's the thing, you see. As important as those issues are, they really don't define us as a community or as a people.

Outside money that seeks to divide us on passing issues; hurtful and personal attacks that have nothing to do with the issues themselves; emotional appeals that feed on prejudices and stereotypes... they all have nothing to do with who we are.

What has always defined us is our aloha—for each other and for others. That's truly who we are. That is the ultimate gift from our host culture and one that we give to each other each and every day.

Hawaii has never been about "I". Rather it has always been about "us"—all of us.

Yet this past November, we saw our participation in elections tumble once again. That is not only alarming; it is terrifying. That's why I believe our job as leaders is so much more.

As leaders, our job is to engage people so that they will want to participate in this grand experience in self governance. Our job is to help people take ownership of the process of electing their government. As leaders, our job is to inspire others and not discourage them.

I will be asking every member of my administration, from clerk to department head, to keep this in mind as they meet with all who come to our door, and to always remember: This is not their house; this is not my house; and to, e komo mai, welcome home all who come.

When people take ownership of their government;

When they are engaged in governance;

When they thoughtfully and honestly discuss issues—good things happen.

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As I prepare to take over the reigns of your government, I ask each of you to join me in the process of governing. I ask you to find your voice and use it to not only choose your elected officials but to shape the issues that will shape our lives.

I ask you to help me with the heavy lifting that I cannot do alone.

Join me in dreaming the dreams, setting the path and doing the hard work necessary for the sake of all of us in Hawaii.

And so I say to you, my friends, I look forward to working with all of you—to make good things happen.

Thank you for this wonderful opportunity and my sincerest aloha to all.

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