

KOKUA HAWAII ORAL HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEW WITH
Raymond Catania



Raymond Catania
Photo courtesy of Catania family

Raymond Catania was among the 32 people arrested in Kalama Valley on May 11, 1971, to protest the eviction of farmers and Native Hawaiians—an event identified by historians as the start of the Hawaiian Renaissance.¹

Catania, born in 1950 in Honolulu, was a leader in Kokua Hawaii in charge of education. He operated its printing press on Palama Street in Kalihi, publishing brochures and protest posters. At the request of Kokua Hawaii, he moved into Hikina Lane in Kalihi, a few blocks from the print shop, to help hundreds of residents in low-rent apartments in 1972-74 successfully resist an eviction.

Residents had received eviction notices, as part of the expansion of Honolulu Community College. Catania was interviewed by Gary T. Kubota on May 27, 2016, at Zippy's in Kalihi.

GK: Good afternoon, Ray. Tell me where were you raised?

RC: I was raised in Damon Tract where the Honolulu International Airport is today.

GK: What did your dad do for a living?

RC: Dad was a musician. At night he played jazz music, and during the day, he worked at Pearl Harbor.

GK: What did he play?

RC: He played the drums.

GK: What did he do at Pearl Harbor?

RC: He was a shipyard worker.

GK: What did your mom do for a living?

RC: She was a waitress at the airport and at Kelly's Restaurant.

1. "The Birth of the Modern Hawaiian Movement: Kalama Valley, Oahu," Haunani Kay-Trask; Hawaiian Historical Society, 1987.

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GK: What were their ethnicities?

RC: My mom was Filipino, and my dad was Sicilian (region in Italy).

GK: Tell me about your childhood?

RC: Well, my heart still cries every time I'm in a plane landing at the Honolulu airport. Damon Tract was eventually developed as an airport right after statehood. That concrete we land on at the airport was used to fill up all the fish ponds in the communities that we lived in. . . It was a working-class community, multi-cultural. There were also some farmers over there, some fishermen. Damon Tract was part of what is now known as the Keehi Lagoon park system. There were all kinds of fish inside there.

GK: Was it was rural?

RC: It was part of rural Honolulu. . . Eventually we got kicked out, and thousands of people moved out. Many of them went to Central Oahu and places like the Waianae coast.

GK: When were you evicted?

RC: We got kicked out around 1958-59. There was no relocation plan. Everybody was on their own to find their own housing. Everybody was kind of angry. The whole family lived there on the chicken farm. . . We had a whole number of family members who were part of our extended family. My uncles and cousins were there. And then after the eviction, the eviction broke up that whole family compound. My grandfather was a chicken farmer, one of the few Filipino farmers at that time. He got kicked out and moved his farm to Maili, next to Maili Elementary School.

GK: What happened to your family?

RC: We moved to Wahiawa because of the housing development, Waipio Acres. Some of the people that lived in Damon Tract moved there. All families had to go find other places to live. . . A good bunch of them moved to Waianae like my grandfather.

GK: I guess before your arrest in Kalama Valley, you'd experienced being dislocated yourself and had some empathy?

RC: Oh, definitely.

GK: What schools did you attend?

RC: The first school I went to was in Damon Tract, then after that, I went to Kipapa Elementary in Waipio. That school was primarily a plantation school comprised of working-class people from my neighborhood, pineapple plantation workers.

GK: What did you do as a teenager in the summers?

RC: I used to get dropped off by my stepfather in Whitmore Village. Everybody in Whitmore Village worked for the plantation. You had basically only two ethnic groups over there—Filipinos and Japanese. They all worked at the plantation. We would be working on the plantation, picking pineapple. I started picking pineapples when I was 15, 16 years old, working for Dole pineapple.

GK: That work is hard work?

RC: (Laughs). . . Working in pineapple was good, because it taught me how to work, yeah. It taught me about physical labor. (Laughs) I remember the first day I was working, I came home so wiped out, and all scratched up and everything. My mother was laughing at me, and my stepfather was laughing. And he said, “Good you’re learning how to work. And now you can make money and help us.” And he took every penny I had. (Laughter)

GK: Every penny?

RC: To help the family. I never see nothing. I was only given like 40 bucks you know, at the end of summer so I could go out and buy clothes for myself. I would go to catch the bus, and I would go to Liberty House to buy myself bell-bottom pants. The thing is we all learned how to work.

GK: Just how did things work?

RC: This is pretty interesting because it stuck with me. We were about to board the trucks and go to the fields when some of the workers who were driving us told us, “Don’t board. They’re going to refuse to drive the trucks.” The men all sat down, were complaining. They were saying, “How come you guys. . . (talking to the management) bringing these young kids over here for work when our wives and relatives can be working over here. You know what I mean. You’re supposed to be hiring them because they’re permanent part-time.” I later learned we were getting paid less than the permanent part-time workers. The union ILWU was complaining.

I was 16. I didn’t know what was going on. But this was my first introduction to unionism. . . So, what happened was that most of us young guys didn’t come back to work. They told us that, “Okay, we will call you guys.” What happened was that, their wives and their relatives, who were working in the fields before us, were able to go back to work.

GK: What happened to you?

RC: I was called to go back. And this is what I was told: I was lucky They told me that I was a good enough worker. You know, believe it or not. (Laughter)

GK: And what did you think about that?

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RC: I thought it was pretty cool, you know. There were adults that needed to go back to work. I think that was pretty cool.

GK: So, let's fast backward to maybe a few years before you got involved in Kalama Valley. What were you doing back then?

RC: I started speaking out against the war in Vietnam when I was in high school in 1966-67.

GK: What prompted you to speak out against it?

RC: My stepfather was an anti-war activist himself. He was going to the University of Hawaii on the GI Bill, and he educated me and my brother about the war in Vietnam, and he educated us about imperialism, where America rules, and it takes over and it kills people, steals their land. And they did that to the Hawaiians, to the Filipinos.

GK: Who was your stepfather?

RC: My real dad Catania died when I was three. . . My mom remarried when I was eight years old. My stepfather was in the U.S. Marines, and he was able to go to school under the GI bill. He's Italian. He was from Brooklyn, and he left home when he was 17 years old, and he joined the Marines. But when he joined the military, he learned to hate the military.

GK: Where was he deployed?

RC: He wasn't. He rigged it up so much that he didn't have to go to Vietnam. He stayed here in Hawaii, and he got arrested several times for demonstrating against the war in Vietnam.

GK: He was a soldier, and he was demonstrating against the war in Vietnam?

RC: Yeah. He was a sergeant, and he got a demotion to corporal. He was a member of the Peace and Freedom Party.

GK: (Laughter) Tell me more?

RC: So here I am in 11th grade, and I'm getting brochures at home about (University of Hawaii professor/activist) Oliver Lee, Peace and Freedom Party, Students for the Democratic Society. . . I got books at home by Che Guevara, Marx and Lenin and Mao Zedong. So, I got all these Communist books at home, because my stepfather was studying Marxism. Those were exciting times, the 1960s and 1970s. So, I was getting politicized.

GK: In what way?

RC: (Laughter) My stepfather would tell us about these places in San Francisco—about signs saying, “Japanese and Filipinos and dogs are not allowed.” We got exposure to all this.

GK: So what happened?

RC: What happened was that my brother and I made a leaflet. He was in the 10th grade, I was in the 11th grade. What prompted us to do that was the ministers or the priests would always talk about the communists and the domino theory. . . . And I used to sit down in those services, and I said, “This is a crock of” You know what I mean? I decided Mackey and I would make our own leaflet, mimeograph them with a dove on top. And we went to a church we attended. We passed out this leaflet against the war in Vietnam.

GK: Then what happened?

RC: We were kicked out of the church, and we never went back. (Laughter) That was my first protest. That was in '67 or so. I didn't expect to get thrown out, because I thought we're talking about peace, and they believed in peace. (Laughter)

GK: So how did you feel after that?

RC: You know what? That steeled me. I was really following what was going on. I would read books about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. I was following Mario Savio, the free speech movement in San Francisco. At home, we had magazines like *Ramparts*. I was exposed to that kind of stuff. So, by the time I was a 12th grader, I was getting politicized.

GK: What about your post-high school education?

RC: I was able to go to Leeward Community College because of affirmative action. Anybody of Filipino, Hawaiian, Samoan, or Puerto Rican ancestry who historically came from families who didn't go to college was able to go to the community college. . . . My brother and I were able to get National Defense student loans.

GK: What year was this about?

RC: 1968. I was just out of high school, and already I was against the war in Vietnam. At Leeward Community College, we had some progressive professors who taught us American history and how the United States government stole Native American lands.

At Leeward Community College, when we got to go there, I just got into it. Boom! I was able to find friends who agreed with me. See, now the thing is, the interesting thing at Leeward was that we had young guys like me, but there were also veterans who were coming back. They were under the GI Bill. You had these guys who were young, too, basically in their early 20s who came back from Vietnam. You know when they came back, they were radicalized. . . . That happened I think in the early 70s. . . . When I went to

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school, a lot of the guys who joined the anti-war movement were veterans.

GK: Were you working at the same time?

RC: Yeah. I was working at the school in the work-study program as a janitor. I would work 15 to 20 hours a week.

GK: Did you ever get into a conversation with these veterans at Leeward Community College?

RC: Yeah. They influenced us too. Young veterans who went to Vietnam—they got soured by all that.

GK: And who were these soldiers that you were meeting at Leeward Community?

RC: They were mixed breed, all different kinds. There were Hawaiians, Filipinos, Japanese, haoles. By coming to school, they got an intellectual education. It helped them put everything together. We had a demonstration at Leeward Community College where we walked from Leeward to the state Capitol—11 miles.

GK: Who organized it?

RC: Pete Thompson, a native Hawaiian, and I were the main organizers. So, Pete was part of our group at Leeward. Pete was our brain. He was our main debater. I helped to organize it, and get it going. But Pete was the kind who would push forward all the time to debate the right-wingers and the military guys. And, he was smart. He studied the war in Vietnam. Before that, too, Pete worked at Pearl Harbor, so he had exposure to arguing with military types.

GK: What did he do at Pearl Harbor?

RC: Shipyard work. Pete went to Kamehameha High School. He's a pretty educated guy. Being a Hawaiian, he had a strong feel for the Hawaiian people and the Hawaiian community. He was our intellectual bludgeon. He could argue really well. And so, we marched from Leeward Community College all the way to the state Capitol.

GK: What date was that?

RC: That must have been 1969. And it was led by all locals. Almost all people of color.

GK: And what happened once you got there?

RC: What happened when we got there, we were just overwhelmed by the haole radicals and all the other radicals running around from the University of Hawaii. And they were shocked to see us. "Oh, wow, these guys, mostly locals coming here." Much of the anti-

war movement was white. But here at Leeward Community College, there were like 55, 60 locals protesting. We had a few haoles. Ken Bailey and a few others.

GK: What about the college instructors?

RC: A college instructor who was our religion teacher, World Religion 150, introduced us to the teachings of Malcolm X. That radicalized us big time. We got to be more radical than him. He started getting scared because we started talking about overthrowing the government, burning down capitalism. He started something he couldn't control.

GK: His success overcame him?

RC: (Chuckles) His success overcame him. We also worked with Ed Casey, a college history professor and member of the Peace and Freedom Party.

GK: What did you do?

RC: We already had formed a chapter of SDS (Students for Democratic Society) at the Leeward College. We brought over people like Jerry Reuben and Abbie Hoffman (YIPPIE Leaders), Elaine Brown from the Black Panther Party. But what really changed my life politically was when we had Save Our Surf leader John Kelly come over and talk. John Kelly was this vibrant guy in his late forties. In '69 when John Kelly came to our school at the invitation of SDS, he really turned me on, because he talked about something that I could relate to—surfing. I was a young surfer. He talked about surfing and developments, and fighting to keep Hawaii and to protect our environment, and protect our surf sites, in particular. He turned me on about that kind of stuff—the politics behind surfing and the movement, and Hawaiian history, and everything.

GK: What happened next?

RC: After two years, I matriculated and went to the University of Hawaii-Manoa. I got involved in the movement. I would hang around the Off Center Coffee House. That was the place to be for young radicals.

GK: What year was this?

RC: 1970. This was before Kalama Valley. At Off Center Coffee House, I met guys like John Witeck; his girlfriend at that time and now his wife Lucy; Wayne "Ko" Hayashi; and Gary Kubota, who worked as a draft counselor at Off Center. I met Mervyn Chang and Anthony Van Kralingen—they introduced me to printing and I eventually became a pressman. They printed the *Roach* magazines. It was an anti-war, anti-establishment magazine. The first time I saw the *Roach Magazine* was when my father brought them home. (GK chuckles). So, anyway, in-short, I got introduced to Van and those guys—Stan Masui, Kehau Lee. There were two other arrests in Kalama Valley before the 32 people were arrested on May 11, 1971. . . I met Larry Kamakawiwoole at a meeting at Off Center

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that he called to organize a resistance to the evictions in Kalama Valley. The third arrest involved 32 people, including me.

GK: What attracted you to the Kalama Valley struggle?

RC: You could see the contradictions. You could see working-class people, Hawaiians and poor people, getting kicked out to make way for an expensive development by Bishop Estate who was supposed to be serving the Hawaiian communities. So, instead of serving the Hawaiian communities, Bishop Estate who runs Kamehameha Schools was kicking Hawaiians out of the valley, to build homes, building these expensive homes.

GK: When was the first time you entered Kalama Valley?

RC: 1970. It was right after the second group of people got arrested in Kalama Valley. I was there with Mervyn Chang, and we were selling *Hawaii Free People's Press* newspapers.

GK: Who did you meet?

RC: We met Soli Niheu. (Chuckles) We didn't know where Soli was coming from. He worked as an executive for a nonprofit in Kalihi, wore an aloha shirt and long pants with hush puppy shoes and drove a black Buick. And so, Mervyn goes, ". . . I bet that bugger's a narc. So, Soli came up and he started looking at us, and Mervyn went, "Hey, you sure you're not a narc? (Laughs) You sure that you're not a narcotics agent?"

And Soli said, "— you guys. I'm a Hawaiian. I'm over here supporting my people, you know." But then we got to know him really well. We found out from talking to him that he had spent time at San Jose university, or one of those schools, and he got radicalized when he was on the mainland. He was active against the war in Vietnam, and he had supported the Black Panther movement and all these other Third World liberation movements, and that it was time for him to come back home because he wanted to organize the Hawaiians. Soli was a big influence on me, too. Soli was a real leader. He was able to inspire a lot of people about Kalama Valley.

GK: What did you think about the second arrest?

RC: I thought it was pretty cool, but I wasn't able to go because I was going to school, and I was working.

GK: Where were you working?

RC: I was working at Sinclair Library at the University of Hawaii as a student clerk processing borrowed books. I had an income because my late first father, my biological dad, left me and my brother Social Security benefits. It wasn't much, but I was able to live off of that for a while. Then Kalama Valley came up. I stopped working at the school.

GK: How long were you in Kalama Valley before the arrest on May 11, 1971?

RC: I was in there for over a month. From what I could understand, this struggle was about the first time since statehood that people in Hawaii were actually fighting against an eviction. I've never heard of anybody fighting against an eviction. We knew a lot of Hawaiians and farmers were getting kicked off their land because they were ending up in places like Waianae.

GK: When you say we went there to occupy, who else went with you?

RC: There was John Saxton, Ed Ching, Kalani Ohelo.

GK: How did you get to know these guys?

RC: I met Kalani Ohelo at the Youth Congress. . . I went to the Youth Congress that was organized by John Witeck.

GK: Tell me about the Youth Congress?

RC: At the Youth Congress, John said he had a special guest speaker for us, and it was Kalani Ohelo. I was quite impressed with Kalani. He was funny. He was very political. (Chuckles) He talked about the Hawaiians getting their land taken away. And that they (the Hawaiians) discovered Captain Cook, Captain Cook never discovered them. . . That was the first time in my life I heard anybody talk about independence from America. And Kalani was talking that we should become independent from America. I went, "Wow, what a right-on idea." (Laughter) Get rid of America. The Americans are nothing but troublemakers.

GK: How many people were involved in the Youth Congress?

RC: There were several hundred. John Witeck was able to bring a lot of people together.

GK: Who else did you meet?

RC: There was Nick Goodness' group "Concerned Locals for Peace." Nick spoke. John Kelly with Save Our Surf spoke.

GK: Getting back to Kalama Valley, were you there when the steering committee decided not to include non-locals in the occupation?

RC: Yeah, I was there.

GK: What happened?

RC: Some of us felt that if the haoles—the SDS (Students for Democratic Society) types

and radicals from the University of Hawaii—stayed, they would take over. I was one of those who felt they were going to be outspoken, so maybe we should not let them stay. We had haoles who were for kicking them out too—John Witeck and John Kelly. Kelly was saying, “I think it’s really important that you local people, Hawaiians and locals, be empowered. . . You guys gonna be empowered, and one of the ways you can do that, not because you’re anti-haole or anything, ask the haoles to leave.”. . . That night, I remember John talking to all the haoles, that they had to leave. And they were really angry. . . I was elected to talk to the local guys why the haoles got to leave. The locals never buy it either. Kalani never liked that idea. Larry K never liked that idea. You know, there was a lot of them that didn’t like that idea. But Soli really liked that idea. And Soli was highly influential. And you know, he was being supported by John. I think, looking back, that was a wrong decision. I don’t think you do stuff like that. But that’s what we had done at the time, and I don’t think that was the correct decision to do. And I think that was wrong. And I think we would have been able to give leadership to the struggle, to the locals and the Hawaiians and still have other nationalities like the haoles come. But, it was a decision that we made that is kind of a historical one. I’ve never heard of anything like that before. I don’t think there was any decision that was made like that before in Hawaii.

GK: What else was a big decision?

RC: Well, we talked about using guns and using violence.

GK: What brought that up?

RC: At that time, Wounded Knee led by Native Americans was going on. At Wounded Knee, the Native Americans were using guns. And the Black Panthers were talking about picking up the gun, right? So, guns were seen as a revolutionary weapon. But as time went on, we eventually realized how stupid that would be. George Santos who was against it would tell us, “How can you guys get guns when the cops stay on both sides of the mountain ridge behind the house. They’re just going to take potshots at us guys. That’s really dumb. Because the only guy who should use his own gun is me, and I’m not going to use one.” (Laughs)

GK: Is that what Santos said?

RC: Yes. And he said, “I ain’t going to use it, because as soon as you carry it, you guys don’t know nothing. When I was growing up on Bethel Street in Chinatown, you pick one gun up, the cops they go after you.” George was right. He said you guys are going to get shot. He said, “Shut up, I don’t even want to hear you talk about that. You don’t even know how to use a gun.”

(Laughter) So, George Santos put some common sense into us, telling us that it was the wrong thing to do so. There was a lot of discussion, Larry K., Soli, everybody. It was decided we were going to go peacefully, but we were going to give them some work.

GK: What did you think about the decision?

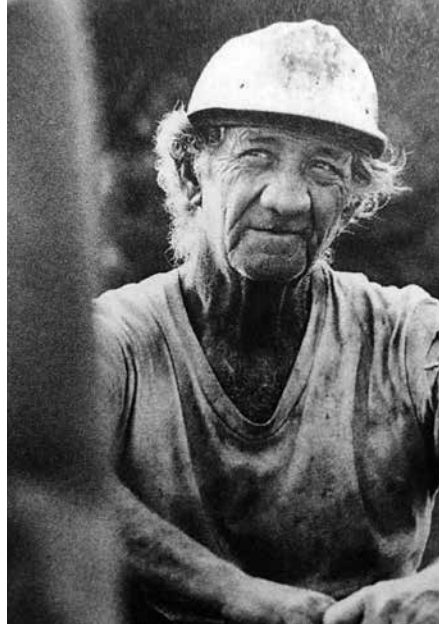
RC: George was right. The thing is that we were romanticizing and fantasizing. I think using guns is insane. Look what happened to the Panthers. They got wiped out. Anyway, the right decision was made.

GK: What happened on the day of the arrest?

RC: You were with us. We were on top of the roof. There were snipers on the ridges—you could see the glint. We were surrounded by cops. They had helicopters and this and that.

GK: What impact did the arrest of 32 local people have in the community?

RC: The word spread about Kalama. And right after that, we had a lot of other struggles—Waiahole-Waikane, Heeia-Kea, Ota Camp, Hikina Lane.



Pig farmer George Santos spoke out against his eviction from Kalama Valley. Photo by Ed Greevy

GK: Let's talk about one in particular—Hikina Lane in Kalihi. You were the Kokua Hawaii organizer for Hikina Lane?

RC: I organized Hikina Lane at the same time you were organizing in Ota Camp in Waipahu. I got the idea from Soli who used to work at Palama Settlement. He knew a lot of the people—the Hawaiians, the Filipinos, the Samoans. And he introduced me to all these guys. He got John Kelly involved. John taught music at Palama Settlement. He and John were the ones educating me how to organize in Kalihi-Palama, in Hikina Lane. And I learned basic organizing skills from Soli and John. And Soli was telling me, don't be scared. Just do 'em, you know. We called the struggle, "Census Tract 57 People's Movement."

GK: What happened?

RC: We had some university students helping us with research and stuff. We developed a map of the proposed expansion of Honolulu Community College and who was going to be evicted and began talking to residents in different apartments, including Akepo Lane.

At one of the meetings, Soli used chop sticks to demonstrate unity. Soli asked kids to come up and break one chop stick, then he asked one of the bigger kids to break a whole bunch wrapped together and the kid couldn't. Soli said when we're together, nobody can

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break us, and this is our unity. We got the movement going that night.

Guys like John Kelly and Soli really understood the community.

GK: Who else spoke?

RC: I remember Ota Camp leader Pete Tagalog talking there. You brought him.

GK: Pete was invited at a time after Ota Camp had received offers of land from the city to relocate the entire community to West Loch. The state eventually offered to provide low-rent housing with an option to buy on that land. A lot of communities facing eviction wanted to hear from Pete.

RC: It was a big meeting that night, must be 50, 75 people there. They all showed up because they heard Pete was gonna talk. You and Jim Young (Kokua Hawaii organizer living with another organizer Gary Kubota in Ota Camp) were there. Pete was well received.

GK: In the Hikina Lane organizing, you initially had a paraplegic as the president?

RC: Yeah, Eddie. He was a Vietnam vet, lost his legs in Vietnam. We never know the word at the time, but he had "PTSD" (post-traumatic stress disorder). He and I really worked closely with each other. He was a very volatile character; it gave him a lot of energy to be able to fight back and organize.

GK: His support was important?

RC: Yeah. It gave the anti-eviction struggle in Kalihi-Palama a lot of street credibility because he went off to war.

GK: Other people became part of the leadership in the community?

RC: Yes, the leadership came out from Akepo Lane and Hikina Lane, and they got involved. Virgil Demain and other guys were coming forward and these women from a Hawaiian family coming out. That was a good experience. I wouldn't have gone there and organized in Kalihi if it wasn't for Kalama Valley. Kalama Valley taught me to go and organize the poor people and the people that are most affected.

GK: You were able to start it from ground zero?

RC: Ground zero. Just like you in Ota Camp. You guys lived in a bust-up house.

GK: It was okay. It was at the invitation of Ota Camp. We had to chase the dogs out to live in an abandoned shack. (Laughter) And then we paid rent to the guy next door, who didn't own the place but allowed us to hook up to an electrical plug so we had some

electricity for a light and hot plate. Did you find any similarities between Ota Camp and Hikina Lane?

RC: Well, Pete's struggle was more advanced. You guys were more advanced than a lot of us, because you guys were one solid community. A lot of it had to do with the residents being like ex-plantation workers, Filipinos. Pete was a pretty open-minded guy. He went to a lot of events. And he made alliances with a lot of communities. . . The eviction in Chinatown was happening at that time. The group Third Arm was organizing it with resident Charlie Minor.

GK: What else do you remember?

RC: We had that march against evictions from communities. There was like over 1200, 1500 people. Soli organized that march. At the same time, he was organizing against the eviction at Halawa Housing, a redevelopment that made way for the Aloha Stadium.

GK: Tell me about Soli. Didn't he have a master's degree in business and give up being an administrator at Palama Settlement?

RC: Soli decided he wanted to join the working class and become an apprentice carpenter. Soli was always a strong supporter of unions and workers' rights. My brother Mackey, who was also a carpenter, was telling me that Soli was one of the most skilled apprentices in Hawaii at that time.

You know these were pretty interesting times. We went to the communities and we organized. One thing good about Kalama—we learned that we had to go to the communities and organize. And we also had the Ethnic Studies occupation in 1972. The only reason why Ethnic Studies was able to win was guys like you were bringing guys like Randy Kalahiki and Ota Camp over to the university for community support. And that was critical in winning, because the communities came and supported the struggles. Don't you think so, too?

GK: Yes, I agree. We created a new paradigm by bringing in the communities. In the past, the University of Hawaii administrators had just called the cops to arrest students and faculty who were protesting various causes, such as the Vietnam War. But arresting taxpayers and presidents of community associations would not set well with lawmakers.

RC: Critical times.

GK: What residents did you get to know in Kalama Valley?



Robert "Moose" Lui and his nephew "Red"
Photo by Ed Greevy

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RC: I made good friends with Moose Lui. He was a construction worker. We later named the print shop in Palama after him, Moose Lui Memorial Print Shop. I became good friends with one of his grandchildren—Red. I became good friends with Black Richards.

GK: What were your impressions of them?

RC: Well, Black, he had it in his heart that the eviction was the wrong thing that was happening to the Hawaiian people. And he then joined us, Kokua Hawaii. He used to walk around with a beret like the rest of us. He was a man of few words. But he had the feelings in his heart what was happening to the Hawaiians was wrong. Red was kind of a rambunctious kid. But he knew what was going on was the wrong thing. He had reddish hair. He was a surfer and a motorcycle-riding kid. One of the characters I liked was Manny Botelho, the pig farmer. George's friend. Manny was a pretty cool guy, you know. He stuck it out with George, you know, for as long as he could. But the other one that I remember was Poe. What is his first name?

GK: I think it was Ah Ching Po.

RC: He was pig farmer himself, yeah, and a close friend to George. He spent a lot of time with George too.

GK: How did you meet them?

RC: We would be helping George in his farm, slopping pigs.

GK: How did you get selected to do that?

RC: (Chuckles) You just got to help. He just asked you, "What are you doing here? You got to work. Don't come around here if you're not going to help." That's George.

GK: So what did you do?

RC: You know, we'd go into town, get the slop for the pigs.

GK: Where?

RC: We went to the Chinese restaurants in Chinatown—Tin Tin, places like that. And we'd pick up slop, and go to Love's Bakery and get the bread; they were still in plastic bags. We'd go to the markets and get lots of the cabbages and all the vegetables and lettuce and everything.

GK: What time did you pick it up?

RC: We would pick it up really early in the morning, three or four o'clock in the morning. We got to bring it to the piggery and cook it.

GK: Was this before the arrest or after the arrest?

RC: This is before the arrest and after the arrest. When George was kicked out of Kalama Valley. His pig farm was relocated near Waimanu Home Road. I know he was there for over a year. My girlfriend, Claire Shimabukuro, and I used to go there and others used to also help George. Even my brother Mackey used to go there and help too. We used to wash down the pens, and slop the pigs, and cook the slop.

GK: I know he went to schools to pick up the slop but he didn't really like the school slop?

RC: No, he hated the school slops, because he said no more no fat there. More or less, the school slop wasn't made to get the kids fat. And he wanted stuff to get his pigs fat. (Chuckles) He said people like the fat because that's how you make kalua pig. He used to like the Chinese restaurant because the food was greasy. (Chuckles)

GK: So midway through this run in the morning like that, what café was that he used to stop and get coffee and toast?

RC: God. I kind of forget already, but he used to buy us toast and coffee every time we went.

GK: It was the best part of my day.

RC: It was a routine. It was his routine in the morning. He used to get irritated with me a lot saying that I'm not working hard enough. . . and I don't know what I'm doing. And maybe I should stay in bed and sleep and not get up. (Laughter)

GK: George had his ways.

RC: Yeah, and so, one time, you know, because I was lazy and he was making fun about Samoans and Filipinos, I refuse to work with him. (Laughter) So, I never work with him for a couple of weeks, and Soli who helped George at the farm told me to stop lying and that George is not a racist. He's making fun of people. Soli told me that I was just using that as an excuse because I didn't want to work. Soli used to work too.

GK: Soli saw beyond that?

RC: He saw beyond my ideological nonsense at a group meeting, and I went back to work.

GK: I think we all worked.

RC: Yeah, we all worked. Everybody worked. That's one job I never liked doing. Getting up in the morning and feeding George's pigs. That's a lot of work, man. But it was kind of cute though, because the pigs they knew you were around to feed them. You put the

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slop in and they all came. (Grunts) You know. (Chuckles) They're scratching their backs all over on the pillars. George wasn't happy over there at Waimanu Home Road. He was unhappy because that wasn't his farm, right? That was part of the relocation plan. The state gave him that place to work. But if he never fight, he would have never gotten that. If we never fight, George would never have been given the Waimanu Home piggery. I wasn't in Hawaii when he passed away. I was living in Chicago. But he passed away fairly young, about 60.

GK: I was living away too at the time. He seemed to have problems with his stomach and took a lot of Roloids.

RC: That's why he always used to drink milk because he said he had ulcers. But he had the funniest stories about Bethel Street and all the criminals that he used to hang around with or run around with. George was a pretty good worker. He was a mechanic as well. . . He grew up in Kakaako. People that lived in Kakaako were like cannery workers or dock workers. George was living in the Portuguese Camp in Kakaako. He grew up in a working-class community. He worked his whole life. The first time he ever run into a bunch of intellectuals was us guys from Kokua Hawaii. (Laughter) And he had to teach us guys how to do manual work, but he picked up some ideas from us. I remember, like for example, he used to pick up on the language that we had. Right? So, we would be riding, and he would be driving in his truck and get some haole tourist would go by and he look at them, and he would say, "Bourgeoisie!" (Laughter) He'd pick up on that from us. He was kind of funny.

GK: Yeah. George was generous, too, because he used to give pigs, or like sell them at a discount to Ota Camp residents.

RC: He was a generous person, and he took a risk by working with us. You know what I mean. He was the main speaker at all the rallies. Yeah! And he got everybody all riled up. All the kids would be screaming and yelling.

GK: What about the guys like Kualoa-Heeia Ecumenical Youth (KEY) organizer Randy Kalahiki and Kahuna Sammy Lono? Did they come around earlier or did they come around kind of around the time of the arrest?

RC: Oh, they were there before the arrest. Lono came out and I think during the time we got arrested he was hexing Bishop Estate.

GK: He was shouting, "Arrest me." But nobody would arrest him. (Laughter)

RC: The police were scared he would put a hex on them.

GK: They never arrested Randy either?

RC: No. The reason why they never arrest Randy, or him, is because they were afraid that

if they arrested Randy, he would get all the Hawaiians backing him up in Kahaluu. And of course, Lono, he was a spiritual guide. The police wanted to stay away from them. Randy stuck his neck out for us guys. While he wasn't popular among the Hawaiian leaders who were getting government funds, Randy stuck it out with us. The thing about Randy, I remember, was that he had organized a group of young people from his community, from the KEY canteen in Kahaluu against the war in Vietnam. I remember he brought them to a demonstration. And then John Kelly would always bring that up too.



Andrew "Black" Richards
Photo by Ed Greevy

GK: I loved the way to Lono's home. It was along a dirt path with flowers, Hawaiian ferns, a stream, and taro. An owners association who had a guard shack was required to allow him and his relatives and friends access to his home mauka. He had a calabash bowl for donations outside his home and never asked for money for his medicines. What kind of guy was Lono?

RC: Lono was always one of our spiritual advisors, and he was pretty radical. He invited us a lot to go to his farm in Haiku. And I would go to his farm, his taro farm, and help him over there every once in a while. You know, I think I was more in the way than anything else. But I learned something from him as well, too.

GK: What did you learn?

RC: He taught me to respect the Hawaiian ancestors and cultural sites and the relationship between farming taro and the ocean, and how important it is that we protect them. He really taught us a lot about the ahupuaa rights, from the mountain to the sea. He was fighting some residents in Haiku who tried to block the access to his house and land.

GK: The lawsuit helped to establish ahupuaa rights. I guess he provided a spark in the Hawaiian movement?

RC: Yeah. He helped to also lay the spiritual foundation. But I learned from him the importance of Hawaiian people having a spiritual foundation and for those of us, like myself, to support that. He used to tell me, "There's a lot of stuff that I can't explain to you because you're not gonna understand."

But he said, "With some time, you'll learn." He was a pretty good guy. He was a good teacher. He took his time to have us come up all the time and talked story with us. You could spend hours talking to him, hours and hours. And then he, or his partner Bob, would take you up in the back in the taro patches. You could go up there and clean and learn things. Lono was pretty good guy.

