

RE-MEMBERING WAIKĪKĪ

Kisha Borja-Kicho'cho'

Concrete
jungle—
This is the view I have of Waikīkī
as I look beyond the balcony
of my high-rise condo.
Lē'ahi:
severed in three
by some anonymous hotels.
Waikīkī:
place of “spouting waters”
disconnected from itself
by the Ala Wai.
Once part of a
flourishing ahupua'a,
now part of a multimillion dollar industry.
Roads have replaced streams,
concrete slabs—kalo fields
sunburnt bodies—Hawaiian royalty
and even the local Chinese farmers,
people who would brown, not red.

Staring at this concrete jungle,
my mind triggers thoughts—
of peoples once thriving but now dying,
peoples once living off the land and the sea
but now
displaced
replaced by haole tourists
wearing lei,
drinking mai tais,
tanning on the beach
in front of the Royal Hawaiian,
trying to feel like
Hawaiian royalty,
royalty who have become
pictures and paintings
hanging
on walls
and who have been remembered
by haole tourists,
not for what they did,
but for how ridiculously long
their names seem.

Borja-Kicho'cho'

Looking at this concrete jungle,
I wonder:
If people driving down below
know this place of "spouting waters."
If they remember that three years ago,
"spouting waters"
transformed into
raging waters,
flooding Kūhio and Kalākaua,
its anger spreading,
seeking revenge on those of us
who forgot
to
Remember
that before this concrete jungle lived...
That before this concrete jungle,
lived the people of this land
and of this sea.
That before concrete,
there was swamp
and water,
and people.
Real people
of this place.
People who knew Lē'ahi,
not Diamond Head.
Waikīkī as "spouting waters,"
not a tourist destination.

Wandering through this concrete jungle,
my heart breaks.
How could I forget to remember—
that roads have replaced streams
concrete slabs—kalo fields
sunburnt bodies—the bodies
of Hawaiians and even
the local Chinese farmers
People who would
brown
not
red?