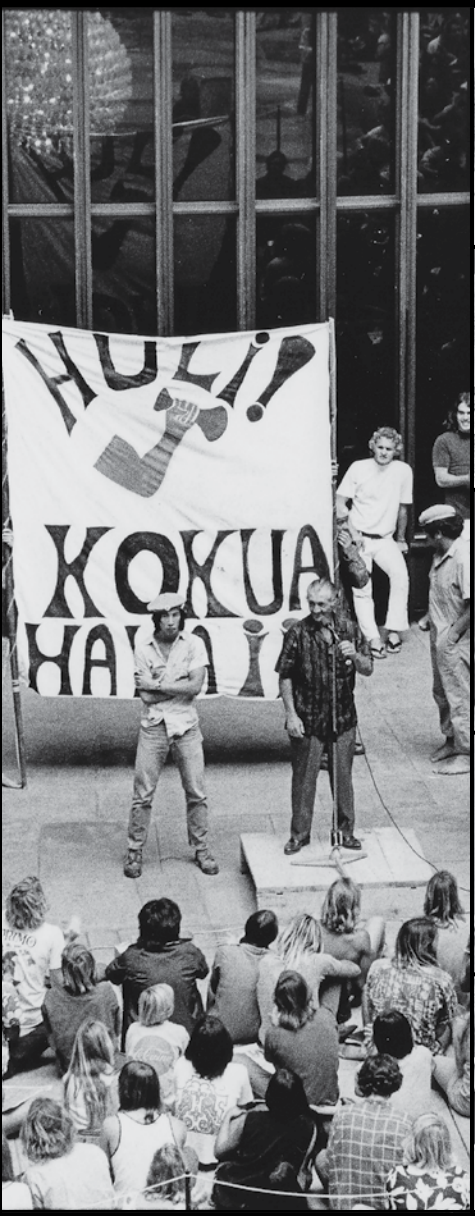
Hawaii Stories of Change

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project



Gary T. Kubota

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Cover photo: The cover photograph was taken by Ed Greevy at the Hawaii State Capitol in 1971.

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HAWAI'I COUNCIL FOR THE HUMANITIES

Hawai'i People's Fund
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Foreword

When I approached author Gary T. Kubota to create an oral history book about the activist group "Kokua Hawaii" three years ago, he was reluctant to take on the endeavor. He was in the middle of producing his national touring play ***Legend Of Koolau*** and still working as a journalist at the Honolulu Star-Advertiser. In 2008, he had sent emails to a number of Kokua Hawaii members inviting them to be interviewed by him for a book and received just one reply. I assured him that this time around, he'd get more cooperation, and he did. The collection of more than 30 interviews took place from homeless camps to hospitals to the penthouse office of a former governor during the course of three years. Hopefully, this book will help to provide an understanding about Kokua Hawaii's contribution to the Hawaiian Renaissance.

Just what makes individuals decide to put their reputation, and sometimes their bodies, on the line in an act of civil protest can vary as much as their backgrounds. At least that seems to be the case with those interviewed for the Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project. Those protesting against the eviction of farmers and Native Hawaiians in Kalama Valley in 1971 came from different parts of the economic spectrum, ranging from a public housing youth to a Honolulu socialite, from a motorcycle gang member to a former Annapolis appointee, from a waitress to a former congressional aide. Yet out of the threat of mass evictions and the anti-Vietnam protest in Hawaii in the 1970s came a Hawaii movement that changed the political landscape.

The arrests of local Hawaii people in Kalama Valley on May of 1971 marked a shift in assumptions of land ownership and began raising questions about public land policies that evicted the poor to make way for the wealthy and increase homelessness. Up until then, tenants and farmers facing eviction generally moved to the next valley. But farmers like George Santos who had moved multiple times were tired of being evicted and had run out of options in east Oahu.

Kokua Hawaii members and their supporters also began researching not only the policies of the nonprofit Bishop Estate, the landowner in Kalama Valley, but also state policies that allowed business people to lease Hawaiian Homestead lands that were supposed to go to house Native Hawaiians. Critics also began looking at the use of former Hawaiian crown and government lands, known as ceded lands, with the intent of providing some benefits to Native Hawaiians.

After the Kalama Valley conflict, the chief focus of Kokua Hawaii was to serve as organizers helping several minority communities fight mass evictions and to build a multi-ethnic coalition of supporters. The coalition was pivotal in supporting a sit-in in 1972 to preserve the then experimental Ethnic Studies Program at the University of Hawaii-Manoa. The program is now a department.

The volunteers who developed this book project apologize for the lack of diacritical markings throughout the text. They had neither the funding, nor the language expertise to embark on providing Hawaiian pronunciation markers. The volunteers are hoping to include diacritical markings in the second edition.

The legacy of Kokua Hawaii continues through its former members, supporters, associates, and their children, with the knowledge that working together in a multi-ethnic coalition has been an important part of successful political movements in Hawaii.

Our special thanks to Department of Ethnic Studies professor Davianna McGregor and department chair Monisha Das Gupta for supporting this endeavor. We also are grateful to former newspaper editor Alan Isbel and historian Gavan Daws for stepping forward as volunteers to assist in preparing this book for publication. The project would not have happened without the support of steering committee members of the Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project, including Gary and Merle Pak, Sylvia Thompson, Gwen Kim, Cindy Lance, and Claire Shimabukuro.

We hope this book encourages others to share their personal stories about pivotal turning points in Hawaii history. There are no doubt a number oral histories of people who could be included in future volumes of this era.

—Larry Kamakawiwoole
Chair, Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

George Cooper

George Cooper
Photograph by Ed Greevy

George Cooper was a student at the University of Hawaii when he first met members of the island activist group Kokua Hawaii in the 1970s and eventually became involved in opposing developments at Niumalu-Nawiliwili on Kauai. He later was co-author of the landmark book* Land and Power In Hawaii *with historian Gavan Daws. Cooper, who now lives in Cambodia where he works as an attorney, was interviewed by Gary T. Kubota over a period of months through email exchanges, ending December 25, 2017.

GK: What year were you born and where were you raised? Please describe your best and worst childhood memory.

GC: I was born in 1948. I lived in southern Virginia and then New York till I was five, then my family moved to northern Virginia—the Washington, D.C. area, and I lived there till I went to college in Massachusetts in 1966. I honestly can't think of a best childhood memory. I had a pretty happy childhood, except for the fact that my father died when I was seven, which is my worst childhood memory.

GK: What is the name of your mother and father and what were their occupations?

GC: My mother was Lucy Jane Cooper. For many years she was a housewife and mother, then in about her fifties, she became a store clerk. My father's name was the same as mine. He was an Army officer.

GK: What prompted you to move to Hawaii and what were you doing—occupationally, educationally, recreationally—prior to your associations with Kokua Hawaii, and what prompted you to contact the group?

GC: I moved to Hawaii in 1970 to go to the East-West Center and University of Hawaii at Manoa. Almost immediately after arriving, I met Kokua Hawaii people. I remember meeting Kalani Ohelo and Larry Kamakawiwoole. Most likely I met them because of John Witeck. John and I grew up in the same part of the Washington, D.C. area, and we went to the same elementary and high schools. He was already in Hawaii when I arrived. He'd

gone there as an East-West Center/University of Hawaii student, just like me, though by the time I arrived he was no longer a student. John was an anti-Vietnam War activist, and I was interested in being active in that work. Somehow all of those things brought us together. I immediately liked and admired John and I still do. It must have been John who introduced me to Kokua Hawaii people.

GK: What surprised you once you met Kokua Hawaii members? Could you describe the style of leadership, your encounters with them, and where they took you? How did they help you?

GC: I was surprised by all that I learned about Hawaii and its history from them. I found them to be strong and self-confident but not arrogant. I thought they were very principled, and well-organized. I was at first afraid they wouldn't like me because I'm white, but that wasn't the case at all. I liked all of this very much. They made me feel that I could contribute to the kind of work they were doing. It was like they opened the door for me to that work. I'm still doing that work today.

GK: How did this association with Kokua Hawaii shift your life?

GC: The Kalama Valley struggle was a great personal turning point. As little involved in it as I was, it put me on a course in life that led to working in land struggles on Kauai and Oahu, to co-writing *Land and Power in Hawaii,* and to today working in land struggles in Cambodia.

GK: After The Kalama arrest, what did you do for a living?

GC: I became a teaching assistant in a University of Hawaii environmental program, then a lecturer at Kauai Community College, then a radio news person and a newspaper stringer on Kauai. In fall of 1971 when I became a teaching assistant in the UH Survival Plus Program, the students included Jimmy Nishida and Scott Steuber. Scott was in Save Our Surf. Because of him I got involved with SOS. Jimmy and I started to become friends and then he got involved with SOS, too. Jimmy was from Kauai, and he and I then went to Kauai to organize for SOS. That led to Jimmy deciding to stay on Kauai. I also decided to stay on Kauai. I think that meant my leaving Survival Plus before the semester was over. I think it also meant giving up my EWC grant.

GK: What did you both do on Kauai?

GC: On Kauai Jimmy and I talked to lots of high school and community college classes, and we looked for where we could organize. Right around the time, a large number of families in Niumalu and Nawiliwili were given eviction notices by the Kanoa Estate, which wanted to do a resort development. Stanford Achi was one of the people who got a notice, and he led a march to the Kauai County building with the people who got notices. I think it was that march that led Kokua Hawaii organizer Soli Niheu to come down to Kauai and take a look. He met Stanford. As I recall, Stanford and Soli really liked each other.

GK: How did you meet Stanford?

GC: I believe it was Soli who introduced Jimmy and me to Stanford. Jimmy and I immediately started helping Stanford and what became the Niumalu-Nawiliwili Tenants Association. Stanford's daughter, Karen, might also have had something to do with Jimmy and I meeting Stanford. She and I had first met on Oahu in probably spring 1971, and eventually we became good friends. Once Stanford met Soli, who continued to give support from Oahu, and once Jimmy and I got involved as well, things really took off, not only in Niumalu and Nawiliwili, but elsewhere on Kauai as well, including later in Mahaulepu and Kilauea. I recall in the early days of the Niumalu and Nawiliwili struggle, there was continuous, essential support coming from Soli, and probably from others as well who were involved with Kokua Hawaii organizer Joy Ahn. Joy Ahn was important in this respect. I can't recall particular visits, though, by Oahu people to Kauai or by Kauai people to Oahu. I just know we really looked to certain Oahu people for advice, in particular Soli and Save Our Surf leader John Kelly.

GK: What eventually happened at Niumalu-Nawilwili and how did that change people and how did it change yourself?

GC: To this day, some of what we considered the worst kinds of development that were planned and that we opposed in Niumalu and Nawiliwili starting in about 1970 have not taken place. A few families got to own the land they lived on or got relocation land. Some families moved away. I'm sorry I can't now remember all of this very well.

GK: How did your family and friends react?

GC: My family and friends back on the mainland generally seemed to think that what I was doing in those and other struggles was good. Most of my Hawaii friends were also involved in struggles so of course they generally liked what I was doing.

GK: How did the anti-eviction struggles align with your beliefs?

GC: At the time I started in that work my beliefs were very vague. They generally had to do with ideas of justice for the poor, for the abused, etc. I was so amazed when I first learned of the Kalama struggle that an entire valley of people was being evicted all at once, and by a trust set up to benefit Hawaiian children. I was similarly amazed as I learned the facts of other mass eviction situations in Hawaii, and of environmental destruction in such a precious place. I was stupefied that such things could happen. I felt strongly drawn to somehow help stop all this.

GK: What did you gain and what did you lose as a result of participating in the anti-eviction struggle on Kauai?

GC: I gained a sense of purpose in life. Kalama awakened me to a situation of serious

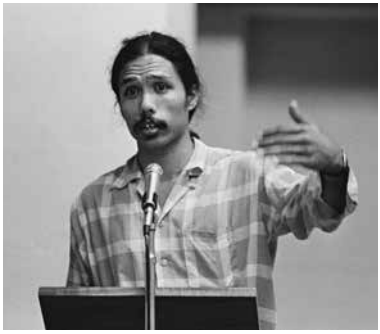
injustice, and my work on Kauai made me see I could learn to work in ways to oppose that injustice.

What I lost was some simple-mindedness about believing that all people who were being harmed by the evictions and environmentally-destructive development were honest, and that all people who came into those struggles to help had pure motives.

GK: In your opinion, what impact did the Kalama Valley struggle and Kokua Hawaii have on the social movement in the 1970s?

GC: I thought that the struggle and Kokua Hawaii were the genesis of a land movement that's still going on.

GK: How did you gain the tools to conduct the research for Land and Power In Hawaii? I've heard you talk about Pete Thompson who was associated with a number of anti-eviction land struggles including Kalama Valley and Waiahole-Waikane.



Pete Thompson
Photo by Ed Greevy

GC: Pete Thompson was one of the most dynamic people I've ever known in my life. The term "natural leader" gets applied to a lot of people whether accurately or not, but he really WAS one. People were drawn to him. I certainly was. Pete was the first person from whom I learned anything about how to research political and economic power in Hawaii. I can still remember going with him to what I guess was called "the Hawaii Room" or "the Hawaii Collection" in an old library at the University of Hawaii Manoa Campus, and watching with fascination and learning as he researched the old Hawaii upper class for a lecture he was going to give in Ethnic Studies. Pete was unique and unforgettable. I really miss him.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Governor John Waihee

John Waihee III was the fourth governor of the state of Hawaii, serving from 1986 to 1994. He was lieutenant governor under Gov. George Ariyoshi. Waihee was the first Native Hawaiian to be elected as governor since statehood in 1959 and rose to prominence during a pivotal era at the beginning of the Hawaiian Renaissance. He played a major role in the state Constitutional Convention in 1978, becoming a leader who supported the establishment of the state Office of Hawaiian Affairs and the Native Hawaiian Legal Corp. He was also friends with pivotal figures involved in the Kalama Valley eviction struggle in the early 1970s—an event that historians now mark as the start of the Hawaiian Renaissance. Waihee was interviewed by Gary T. Kubota on February 24, 2016, at his office in Honolulu.

Gov. John Waihee
Photo courtesy of The Maui News

GK: Thank you for this opportunity to interview you, Gov. Waihee. When and where were you born?

JW: In 1946 in Honokaa.

GK: What did your father do for a living?

JW: My father John was employed by Hawaiian Telephone Company, at first as a lineman, and then a repairman. But in addition to that, what he really did and liked was cattle ranching, so he raised cattle.

GK: What did your mom do?

JW: Well, she was initially a housewife, but then later on, she worked as a teacher. Her maiden was Mary Purdy. There was a school actually on the Big Island in Kohala called the "Normal School," and what it did was it took high school graduates and taught them how to be teachers. You didn't need a four-year college education to be a teacher in those

days. The same thing existed for judges. Some of our best old judges never went to law school. . . Of course, eventually, just like with the teachers and with the lawyers, the people who had the degrees made sure that you had to have a degree to do it.

GK: When you were growing up, did your parents speak Hawaiian?

JW: Oh, all the time.

GK: Did they speak it over dinner?

JW: They spoke it to each other. . . They came out of the era when they you weren't supposed to speak Hawaiian. They grew up in a time when Hawaiian was not really taught (Chuckles). It was sort of a paradoxical era because on one hand, you were supposed to speak English well in school, so they weren't pushing Hawaiian and everything, but where I lived on the Big Island, Hawaiian co-existed at the same time as an everyday language because Hawaiian was the language of the cowboys. If you didn't speak Hawaiian, you really couldn't function.

GK: Right.

JW: There was one more dimension though. My father was unique, because my father also spoke Japanese.

GK: (Chuckles)

JW: It's really interesting. He was this big Hawaiian, pure Hawaiian guy. When he was growing up, there were these plantation camps. And, somehow, he and his siblings got into a lot of fights with some of the Japanese kids. My grandfather decided that the way to solve or make the situation better was to put them all into a Japanese language school. Language school operated for a couple of hours after public school ended on the weekday. This was before World War II. My father also learned kendo (Japanese sword fighting). . . The last piece of this was—my parents wouldn't speak Hawaiian to us.

GK: Why was that?

JW: They wanted us to speak English. My mom taught English and typing.

GK: What school did you attend?

JW: Well, I went to Honokaa School until the eighth grade. After that, I went through a whole number of schools, but I graduated from the Hawaiian Mission Academy in Honolulu. I had a habit of getting kicked out of every school. . . My mom taught at Honokaa, and the one thing I didn't wanna do was go to her class.

GK: (Laughter)

JW: So that's why I never learned typing because she taught typing.

GK: Could you describe where you lived?

JW: We lived halfway between Honokaa and Waimea in a place called "Ahualoa," with mostly Portuguese ranchers and some Japanese farmers. There were ethnic zones in Hawaii, but where we lived it was all mixed. We all went to the same schools and we all stayed at each others' houses. It was different. . . It was an interesting world of separation and integration, especially on the neighbor islands. Waimea was cowboy country—the Purdys, the Lindseys. All of these people were half-breeds and they were a different breed. In Waimea, they all had Hawaiian fathers. And in Kukuihaele, which is by Waipio Valley, they all had Hawaiian mothers. A lot of my cousins were Chinese and or Filipino. In Honokaa, the store owners were mainly Japanese and Chinese.

GK: How did that shape you as far as your politics and your ability to do certain kinds of things?

JW: Well, first of all, I lived next door, grew up next door to Democrat Yoshito Takamine, and most of the Hawaiians in those days were Republicans. Jimmy Kealoha (a Republican and the first lieutenant governor after statehood) was the hero of the Big Island. If you traced it, it went all the way back to Kuhio, and the cowboys in Waimea, they were all Republicans; that's how they grew up. My dad was about the only Democrat, Hawaiian Democrat, because he developed a friendship with Takamine. My dad was also very pro-union. Takamine was a state representative and chairman of the House Labor Committee at one time, and he was the ILWU division director.

GK: Why was your father pro-union?

JW: There were a number of strikes in the early 1950s when I was growing up. I was very young. But I was growing up at the time when these major strikes were going on in Hawaii, when Hawaii was really in transition. There were about three of them, with the stevedores, the ILWU and the plantations. My father worked for a telephone company. They went on strike.

GK: How did strikes by other groups affect your father's strike?

JW: What developed was the sense of community. Whenever any one group was on strike, the whole community would band together to feed them. So, when the ILWU went on strike at the sugar plantations, we used to go down to take food down to the Honokaa gym. And the whole place would go there and have dinner at night.

GK: Wow.

JW: There would be all these kitchens. Right? And when my dad was on strike, the same thing happened. The plantation workers were bringing food. It was potluck. That's how

you learned to eat Filipino food, Japanese food.

GK: Right.

JW: My dad was pushing for the Democratic candidates. . . I grew up hearing about the necessity for change.

GK: What college did you attend?

JW: I went to Michigan.

GK: How did you end up in Michigan?

JW: I applied all over the place. Well, you know, (Chuckles) there were only two places in the nation that would accept me. One was the University of Hawaii. The other was the Andrews University in South Michigan, which was affiliated with Hawaiian Mission Academy. I had been bouncing all around in high school. I think I went to four different high schools in my sophomore year, just getting kicked out one after the other.

GK: Why?

JW: Well, I was kind of a punk, but it was a combination of things, like for smoking cigarettes. In those days, they used to call it general attitude. I used to like to challenge teachers in the 1960s. I remember this one thing really well. When we were sitting in chemistry class, we would be talking about African Americans in the cities. And the teacher would say something stupid, like, "Well, you know, we try to be friends with some in my town, but these people are blah, blah, blah, blah, blah."

GK: Mm-hmm.

JW: And you're thinking to yourself, "What the hell?" You know? I mean, "That doesn't make sense to me." So, you tell him then. And, like, you know, you get kicked out of class. . .

GK: (Laughter)

JW: I had this way of rebelling against authority. . . I spent most of my time in high school in a pool hall on Sheridan Street; that's where I lived. I eventually graduated from Hawaiian Mission Academy with something like a 1.3 GPA. Right? Which means that no university is gonna take me. But fortunately for me. . . there were these tests that you had to take for admissions to certain universities. All right. And the two universities which had tests like these were Andrews University and the University of Hawaii.

GK: Yeah.

JW: In those days, if you were born in Hawaii, uh, you had to take a test. You had to take a language proficiency. . . and intelligence tests. Fortunately, I scored really well.

GK: So what happened?

JW: So, I go to college, between 1965 and 1970, sometime around there, which is during the build-up of the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement, and of Black Power and the Black Panthers. All of these activities permeated into the politics of the country. They were really picking up steam.

GK: Where were you in this historical context?

JW: I'm in the Midwest, 90 miles north of Chicago at Andrews University. We were right in the thick of things.

GK: How so?

JW: In '67, I was into student power and at a certain point, I remember feeling dissatisfied. I decided to run as a "write-in" candidate for student body president. We formed a coalition with international students, the Hawaii students, my wife Lynne Kobashigawa Waihee, and all her friends, holding signs saying, "Waihee." In the end, we had guys who didn't know who I was but figured out, they'd just walk in there, saying I wanna vote for the guy, "Waihee! Waihee! Waihee!"

GK: (Laughs)

JW: And we won. . .

GK: Did you attend any political rallies?

JW: In fact, I went to the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago. It was very interesting to me. Being from Hawaii, I had a kind of a different perspective. . . I told myself at least I've come from a better place.

GK: Yeah?

JW: It was these kinds of activities that made me think you've got to go home. You've got to do something.

GK: Hmm.

JW: I was working on my master's degree in Urban Planning when I went into community organizing at Benton Harbor, a city next to the university, through funding from the Mott Foundation and Whirlpool. Whirlpool funded all of us to go out and make the community better. We secured grants from OEO (U.S. Office Of Economic Opportunity)

and Model Cities. I was 21 years old, you know, and my boss was 27. We were gonna change the world. We started all kinds of programs and one of the guys who used to come from Chicago was Jesse Jackson (a reverend who had worked with Civil Rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King). He was starting PUSH (People United To Serve Humanity). I took seminars from Saul Alinsky (author of ***Rules for Radicals*** and regarded as the father of community organizing).

GK: Wow. When did you return to Hawaii?

JW: I had a job offer as a systems vice president for Whirlpool to handle affirmative action. I knew if I took that job, because it was so interesting and so lucrative that we were never gonna get home. Eventually, I came home. It was in the 1970s, right about the time Kalama Valley was starting. . .

GK: What was the first job you had upon your return to Hawaii with your wife Lynn?

JW: I applied all over the place and couldn't get hired anywhere, and I thought I was so great, so smart, you know. I was completing my master's in Urban Planning. I ended up being a chef or cook for my mother-in-law at her restaurant Farrington Inn in Kalihi.

GK: I remember that place.

JW: Across the street from Farrington High school. And so, you know, I'm cooking there and one day, Model Cities people call me up and say, "Oh, if you want, you can get hired by Model Cities. Kalihi-Palama was one of the depressed neighborhoods with a Model Cities Program (a federal anti-poverty program). About that time, I ran into Hawaiian people in various groups in their mid-to-late twenties. One group was called "The Hawaiians"—Raymond Pae Galdeira and Paige Barber. There were people like Darrow Aiona, and Kokua Hawaii's Larry Kamakawiwoole. The groups were making alliances. It was sort of interesting because what we have here is the first protest movement in Hawaii which was local-based. It was not just made in Hawaii. There were a lot of made in Hawaiian overtones and leaders rising—Soli Niheu, Terrilee Kekoolani (Napua Ke), and Pete Thompson and a whole bunch of other people. Soli and Pete were associated with Model Cities. It was a beautiful time. Then a lot of us started to fall in to the Democratic Party and started to do other things. I like that time because it was a cross section of Hawaii young people. It was a local coalition. . . It's hard to describe. This movement actually influenced the 1978 Constitutional Convention. Really, the Hawaiian movement had its roots in those days, because there was a local coalition.

GK: Didn't a multi-ethnic coalition establish Ethnic Studies at the University of Hawaii?

JW: Yes. The whole system was out of whack. The university was teaching something that was alien. We needed to recognize our own contributions and do our own thing. That's why Ethnic Studies was important.

On the other hand, from the older generation, there was a desire to be, like, super American. It was assimilation plus pride in assimilation. Now, you have these young people coming out, and they're very pro-Hawaii, and at the same time, they're not so interested in assimilation. They're interested in kicking ass. They wanna know things. They wanna do things. And in some sense, Kalama Valley was an expression of their feelings. It was a generational divide among people who were totally committed.

GK: How did the Constitutional Convention figure in this?

JW: In a sense, the Con-Con was an accumulation of the whole 70s. It starts with Ethnic Studies and the people who bonded together and created all these struggles. On the Hawaiian side, you had the Hawaiian movement coming in. We had not gotten the luxury yet of being able to oppose each other. So, there was a kind of unification.

GK: (Laughter)

JW: Besides the labor unions and businesses, we were the middle force that was a mixture of voices. We were opposed to initiative and referendum. Pete Thompson (Ethnic Studies lecturer and Waiahole-Waikane activist) gave this phenomenal speech. He said the normal way of looking at progressives would be to immediately assume that if you're progressive, you would be in favor of initiatives and referendums, but Pete said, "You know what you gotta understand is that poor people vote with their bodies, not their votes. So, for us to be effective, I can bring 200 people to the state Capitol and, we'll close the place now, but I don't have the wherewithal to win an election."

GK: So how did activism play a part in the formation of the state Constitutional Convention?

JW: The majority is gonna dictate the fact that we're gonna have development. The question was how to create a Hawaiian coalition and bring it together. We had Auntie Frenchy DeSoto (a respected Waianae Coast Hawaiian activist and organizer). Basically, what she did was call every activist in to come to her committee at the Con-Con, including Larry Kamakawiwoole (former Kokua Hawaii leader and first full-time director of the University of Hawaii's Ethnic Studies Program). They all spent time there. . . developing the enabling language for the state Office of Hawaiian Affairs. If you look at that, you can trace most of the agenda of the last 30 years through that document, which is based on the agenda of the 70's. It is the most complete political agenda that you and I were involved in.

GK: Explain to me how the Office of Hawaiian Affairs came about?

JW: By the time you get to the Con-Con in 1978, Hawaiians are occupying Hilo Airport, (criticizing the lack of Hawaiian Homesteads and ceded land revenues). . . You have these melees going on. Meanwhile, there's this thing about the double-hulled sailing canoe Hokulea. Hawaiians start rediscovering themselves. It brings more people into supporting

Hawaiians. This all leads to OHA. It's a progression of things. The 1970s was an era of maximum citizen participation. What the Hawaiians did was they looked around, and they said, "You know what? We have all these resources. They belong to us." The first obvious target was Hawaiian Homes. Two big things happened. Change in the Hawaiian Homestead came about because the group "The Hawaiians" got organized by Pae Galdeira and his gang. The Hawaiians just didn't talk about it. They did it. They, including Sonny Kaniho, went up to Parker Ranch and they cut the fence, and they occupied Parker Ranch land (that was designated at one point for Hawaiian Homesteads). That was the first Hawaiians-only action. The second big thing was the appointment of Matsuo Takabuki to the Bishop Estate. Hawaiians were saying, "Why should one Japanese guy get appointed after all these years of appointing haoles? Why not appoint a Hawaiian?" So, the whole Hawaiian community erupts. Eventually, they create something called the Congress of Hawaiian People. Again, the idea was to control our resources. . . Then, some people point out, "Hey, you know what? There are these ceded lands issues. They start reading. And a lot of that starts to educate us about our heritage. We're not at the point where we can say we should have a separate Hawaiian Studies. But we do support Larry Kamakawiwoole and Ethnic Studies, where courses are taught about Native Hawaiians that start to teach students about ceded lands, the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy and the rest, and that starts to seep into the Hawaiian movement. Then the native Alaskans get reparations, and so all of a sudden, the group ALOHA (Aboriginal Lands Of Hawaiian Ancestry) starts—Charlie Maxwell and Kekoa Kaapu being among the leaders. . . And the Protect Kahoolawe Ohana adds something more to the movement that did not exist. The Ohana changed the movement from a socioeconomic issue to a spiritual one. All these things bring more people into the movement. . . This all leads to OHA, by the way.

GK: How so?

JW: We went along with the old guard on some real tight votes on initiative and referendum, then after that, we were splitting away. They didn't want to really break with us. I remember standing up and basically selling this idea of establishing the state Office of Hawaiian Affairs. The argument was, "Hey, the Hawaiians can't screw it up any more than it's already screwed up. . . So why not give it to them?"

GK: (Laughter)

JW: You know? As it turns out, maybe they could screw it up more than it's already screwed up.

GK: (Laughter)

JW: (Laughter) But that's the agony and the ecstasy of being a progressive. Right? You know, you gotta give it to the people. . . even though the people don't do exactly what you think.

GK: So how did you get the old guard to agree, who was the main player?

JW: To be really blunt, the bottom line was (U.S. Sen. Daniel) Inouye supported establishing OHA. He actually came through. Inouye had been going through his own metamorphosis. He tells a great story about how the Hawaiians took care of his mom when he was a boy and his father died. He was very active in the native Alaskan settlement. So he was on board at the time. He was on the side of reparations, which was not a bad word back then. He said in order to have reparations, Native Hawaiians needed a vehicle for reparations. We had a telephone conference call with Inouye during the Con-Con. And he basically said, "I think the Office of Hawaiian Affairs is a good thing."

GK: So that tipped it in favor of establishing OHA?

JW: Yeah! It made a difference. It was a milestone in two ways. It was the high point of the multicultural, multi-generational political movement. After that, the Hawaiian movement matured to the point where we start to have differences. Prior to that, it was all unified. Political power was not Hawaiian-based, it was Hawaiian supportive. . . We had Anthony Chang, Carol Fukunaga, Gerald Hagino, Frenchy DeSoto, and Anthony Takitani. It wasn't the Hawaiians that took it over. It was this local-based coalition. Out of the 101 delegates, less than 10 people could be considered native Hawaiian. You had people like Jeremy Harris and environmentalists and all these other guys who had an island-based philosophy voting with us.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Edwina Moanikeala Akaka

Edwina Moanikeala Akaka
Photo courtesy of Franco Salmoiraghi (c) 1972

Edwina Moanikeala Akaka, born in 1944 in Honolulu, was among the 32 persons arrested on May 11, 1971, in Kalama Valley, protesting the mass eviction of farmers and Native Hawaiians. This act of civil disobedience by the group Kokua Kalama, later known as Kokua Hawaii, has been identified by historians as the start of the Hawaiian Renaissance.[1] As a native Hawaiian, Akaka was active in a number of civil protests throughout her life, including resistance to the military bombing of Kahoolawe, to the state's uncompensated use of Hawaii Homestead land and ceded lands, and most recently, to the construction of an observatory on Mauna Kea. She was interviewed by Gary T. Kubota on October 11, 2016, at Zippy's Restaurant in Kalihi and by telephone on January 21, 2017, from her home on the Big Island. Akaka served as an Office of Hawaiian Affairs trustee from 1984 through 1996, supporting efforts to negotiate an agreement with the state for its use of native ceded lands, eventually resulting in Native Hawaiians receiving more than $15 million annually since 2006. She died of cancer in Hilo on April 5, 2017.

GK: Good morning, Moani. Let's start with your childhood. Where were you raised in Honolulu?

MA: I was raised in working-class Kaimuki across from Petrie Park in a six-bedroom house my father built with the help of friends. As we were growing up, my parents rented out some of the rooms, in order to make ends meet.

GK: What were the names of your father and mother?

MA: My mother was Rebecca Millish Mossman Akaka. She was named after her grandmother who was Rebecca Millish Mossman.

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

GK: And what's your father's name?

MA: My stepfather was Kammy Leong Akaka. He was born and raised in Waipio Valley.

GK: What was his family's work? Were they taro farmers?

MA: No. His grandfather had come here from China. Like many Chinese with Hawaiian names, they're really not Hawaiian. The names are Chinese derivative names like Akaka, Akana, Apana. One brother got off one boat and he was named Akana, and another brother got off another boat, he was named Akaka. And so, that's how some of these Hawaiian sounding names evolved.

GK: Okay, so these Chinese men married Hawaiian women?

MA: Oh, yeah, you bet.

GK: Your father was married to a Hawaiian woman?

MA: Yeah, right, my mother.

GK: How did growing up in your family influence your activism?

MA: My father brought us up to question authority. Someone reminded me, even when I was in grade school, I was standing up for kids that were being picked on. I guess I was always for the underdog. I questioned authority and was not one to conform easily.

GK: Why did your father do that?

MA: He really identified with Hawaiians. In fact, his Chinese name was Leong. Everybody in his family changed their name back to Leong, but he kept the Akaka name because he really identified with the Hawaiians.

GK: Was there any incident that affected your father?

MA: He worked for the plantation for a short time over at Kauai. His younger brother was 13 years old, like in the eighth grade. People usually quit school at that age back then. And so, my father supported his younger brother and my uncle so they could stay in school. His brother ended up with a master's degree and my uncle got a Ph.D.

The plantation would tell my family, "You know which side your bread's buttered on—vote Republican. Hawaii was a Republican stronghold. So, my father was independent, went in and voted Democrat, just to be able to, you know, counter that. So, my parents helped start the Democratic Party when I was a kid in the early 1950s.

GK: How did they do that?

MA: We eventually moved to Honolulu. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, my father ended up working in civil service in radio and electronics at Hickam Field. Throughout his life, he worked in civil service for the military.

My mother went door to door in Kaimuki with Herman Lum, who became Chief Justice of the (Hawaii) Supreme Court, knocking door to door, signing up people for the Democratic Party in the early 1950s. My parents ended up being precinct members and precinct president and vice president. My mother was the first Mossman to become a Democrat instead of a Republican. When we were kids, the Democrats had rallies at different parks here in Honolulu. Weekends, we'd go in a caravan to the plantations, set up these PA systems. It supplemented the family income. He was in electronics. So, he had all these PA systems, and he was contracted by the Democratic Party. In those days, you'd have the politicians speak, you would have the hula dancers. At least you'd get to see who the hell your politicians are. You know, I mean that was the beginning, the beginning of the Democratic Party. So, people like Patsy Mink, Daniel Inouye, Spark Matsunaga would come for coffee hours at our house. Matsunaga would play the piano. My parents were very, very, active. I mean, when we were kids, the only time we could go out to our cousins' house and spend the night was on election night when my parents would have to count votes at four in the morning.

GK: Why did they do it?

MA: They knew we needed changes. They knew the Republicans. . . My father raised us to understand that there were miscarriages of justice here in Hawaii.

GK: Did they ever talk about the overthrow as being associated with the Republican Party?

MA: Well, that's just it; we never had it in our history books in Hawaii. When we moved to California when I was in the eighth grade, the history books there had a paragraph about Hawaii.

GK: When you were growing up, was there any stereotype that you faced as a Hawaiian?

MA: They thought a Hawaiian is supposed to play the ukulele, dance the hula, and that was it. We're supposed to be appendages. We are supposed to be the entertainment. . . They wanted us to be the hospitality committee for the Hawaii Visitors Bureau. And make like everything was perfect here in paradise, especially for the Native Hawaiians. The dismal social statistics scream otherwise. Until we started the movement in Kalama Valley, social consciousness was dead.

GK: What school did you attend?

MA: I went to Waialae School. We lived right across the street near Pahoa Avenue. During that time, our family had a chicken farm. I mean Lani Moo (celebrity cow for Meadow

Gold Dairies) lived on Farmers Road. In the late 1950s, I went to Kamehameha in the seventh grade. I was in the eighth grade when we left Hawaii.

GK: How was Kamehameha back then?

MA: At Kamehameha, there was a strong military influence, of course— ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps). The guys had to shine their brass belt. Their shoes had to be all shiny. After the eighth grade, there was the separation of the boys and girls. So, it was the boys school and the girls school when I went there.

GK: Did they teach Hawaiian language?

MA: They taught very little at that time. In fact, in the old days, if you spoke Hawaiian, a generation or two ago, they would whack you if you spoke Hawaiian. You know that was common knowledge. So, now you see Kamehameha School—they're out there with the hula. They're very culturally oriented. It only happened after Kalama Valley. So, what Kalama Valley did was to instill a renaissance, a cultural renaissance, and also, a movement for justice for our people, and our aina, and that's its importance. That's the important thing of Kalama Valley.

GK: What happened when you moved to California?

I was in the eighth grade. For the first time we're on the mainland. We were a minority—brown skin, non-white. We were living near a military base, Travis Air Force Base in Fairfield, California about 50 miles from San Francisco.

GK: What was your father doing over there?

MA: He repaired flight simulators. My mother was a nurse at the Travis Air Force Base Hospital. Two of my brothers worked for the Navy at Mare Island Shipyard as apprentices. So, I'm from a, you know, Yankee-doodle family. Well, the shipyard provided some opportunities for employment.

GK: When you were arrested in Kalama Valley, what did your dad and mom tell you?

MA: I remember when my father worked for the military, he used to feel, "My country right or wrong," But then later on, I'd hear that he was telling people, "My daughter is the Angela Davis of Hawaii. (Laugh) (Davis was an African American who was briefly a member of the Black Panther Party.) I heard that through the grapevine.

GK: When did you decide to come back to Hawaii?

MA: Well, I didn't want to leave Hawaii in the first place. I mean when you're a kid you don't have any choice. I loved being able to go to Kamehameha School. I mean it was Hawaiian, and you got a good education there.

GK: So when did you come back to Hawaii?

MA: In 1967. I came home and worked and went to UH (University of Hawaii). . . I guess that living on the mainland where the people of color were a minority, unlike Hawaii, was also an awakening for me. In the eighth grade while playing ball at recess, one of classmates called me a "gook" for no reason. I was stunned by that. . .

GK: How did you support yourself in Hawaii?

MA: I worked as a waitress at Queen's Surf (in Waikiki).

GK: Could you describe Honolulu at the time?

MA: Hawaii was changing dramatically, becoming more like "Anywhere USA" with skyscrapers and desecration of our quality of life and our environment, the aina. Oahu especially was becoming the playground for the rich.

Coming back home to the islands in the late sixties, I learned that many of our Native Hawaiian people were impoverished and becoming more so—strangers in our own homeland, struggling to just get by. I knew something was desperately wrong and that our people needed help. I felt that by working together we could endeavor to create the change needed to make this a better Hawaii, and help Native Hawaiians get some of the justice we deserved for the theft of the Hawaiian nation.

GK: How did you hear about the eviction struggle in Kalama Valley?

MA: In 1970, there was an announcement on the radio: "Anyone interested in helping the Hawaiian people come to this meeting at the Off Center Coffee House near the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

GK: What happened?

MA: A handful of us showed up! This was the catalyst. . . The Kalama Valley struggle. . . was a wakeup call for the people of Hawaii. This was the beginning of us questioning the direction of Hawaii's progress, and what was in the best interest of the people living in these islands—especially Native Hawaiians whose country had been stolen by the United States—and local people, especially working people on the bottom rung of the economic ladder.

GK: Could you describe the importance of the Kalama Valley struggle?

MA: Kalama Valley was important because this was the first time that local people fought back against proposed land-use practices that were wrong-headed, if not downright evil. What was interesting was the land owner Bishop Estate and some of the core group of protesters and supporters attended or graduated from Kamehameha School. In Kalama Valley, Native Hawaiians and local people were kicked out to make way for the expansion

of Hawaii Kai and more subdivisions. Local families—the Moose Lui's family; George Santos, the pig farmer; the Richards' ohana and many others—would be forced out of Kalama Valley. Oahu was becoming more over-urbanized while farmers were being squeezed off the aina. We need farmers to feed the community because the islands have only so much carrying capacity and need to be self-sufficient.

GK: What did you do in Kalama Valley?

MA: My responsibilities in Kalama Valley were to plug in and help out wherever necessary, and to help procure supplies to keep the occupation going. For about a year leading up to the occupation, we worked to educate the community as to what was happening to the residents who resided in the valley. I remember one of our supporters had a boyfriend that was in the Army. He provided us with outdoor showers and other military issued supplies that we made good use of during the occupation. One of my old boyfriends, a certified public accountant, helped dig a trench for an outdoor lua (toilet) for us outside George Santos' house during the valley occupation.

GK: Tell me about the educational aspects of the struggle?

MA: We delivered speeches and had educational talks at (teacher) Setsu Okubo's class at Roosevelt High School and other schools, Church Of The Crossroads, UH, worked with Woody Schwartz at American Friends Service Committee and other churches. . .

GK: Kokua Hawaii leader Larry Kamakawiwoole mentioned that its leadership selected you and Kalani Ohelo to go to the mainland to some conferences in 1970?

MA: Kalani and I, along with John Witeck.

GK: How did that come about?

MA: I guess (through) John Witeck. It was Thanksgiving time. We ended up going with John Witeck. John Witeck's family (lived in the) Washington, D.C. area. His father was a bureaucrat. Nice people. . . He had brothers living around there. Kalani and I stayed at his brother's place. There happened to be—maybe John Witeck knew about it—a Black Panther's conference. . . happening in Washington, D.C. . . So we went over to check it out.

GK: How'd it go?

MA: One kid (with the Black Panthers)—we were talking in this park—said that when the Black Panthers were killed in Chicago. . . (officials) said that the Black Panthers attacked the cops but. . . This 19-year-old kid. . . he had gone there and then he had taken film. I mean, they (police) shot them in their beds. . . They (police) came after him and got that film. . . and destroyed it. So, it was interesting, you know, what (we were) exposed to. . . then we went to New York.

GK: Where'd you go?

MA: So we went out to meet some Puerto Ricans, right, the Young Lords (street gang turned into community activists).

GK: What happened?

MA: We talked story with them (to) find out what their situation was. . . So, we did get some exposure as to what was happening. . . out there in the world. . . to people of color and minorities.

GK: What was happening with the Young Lords?

MA: One of the things the Young Lords' members were doing was fighting an eviction. There was a film about them fighting an eviction. . . in New York.

GK: Where else did you go?

MA: San Francisco. I went to that International Hotel (where tenants were fighting an eviction.) . . . I met this Filipino guy from Hawaii—I know they were trying to evict him from the International Hotel.

GK: I know Kokua Hawaii was influenced by these activist groups on the mainland and at one point wore brown berets during a protest rally at the Hawaii state capitol. Did you wear a brown beret?

MA: We wore brown berets for a day and a half, including a rally (at the state Capitol on March 31, 1971) with Save Our Surf. We were not militant, even during the early days of the movement. . . Peace and aloha and sharp words of truth were, and still are, among our heaviest weaponry.

GK: Who were the supporters in Kalama Valley?

MA: There were many, many more haole supporters there in Kalama Valley than locals, yet we were calling this a "local people's struggle"—in order to activate local people and Native Hawaiians, which was necessary in 1970 Hawaii.

GK: You've mentioned an afternoon news media conference changed Kokua Hawaii's strategy?

MA: That afternoon, the press and TV news cameras were focusing on the many haoles that were there. . . We were very glad for that support. People were hiking into the valley with food, and their tents, with plans to stay until we got arrested. . . Many had come from the mainland where they had witnessed what poor planning, destruction of the

environment, and urbanization had done. They realized how important it was to help support these residents, and their local lifestyle. . .

GK: Tell me about the decision to ask white supporters to leave Kalama Valley before the arrest? I know at one point, the leadership of Kokua Hawaii was displeased with TV coverage giving the impression the protest was being caused by non-local, mainland people.

MA: This action was necessary in order to get more locals and Hawaiians involved. . . Remember, this was the beginning of a movement that continues to this day. . . There were understandably some hurt feelings because of that action, but we had no choice. The movement was at embryo stage; we knew that initially local people had to be the face of Kalama Valley. This was not a racial issue. This was a strategic political decision. We were calling this a local people's struggle—Hawaiian people struggling for justice, and I looked around and there were hundreds of other (non-locals) (chuckles). . . You know, the media. . . all the TV cameras started focusing in on. . . all the non-locals that were there. . . The core group of us made the decision. . . If this was to be a wake-up call to local people, it had to be local people arrested when police came in. We asked (non-local) people to leave. . . seeing how the media reacted and knowing that it's really important that we waked the local people about what's going on, and that they (local people) could be very confused by seeing all these others. . . So at eleven o' clock at night, we had to tell them (non-locals), "Go home.". . . I was crying. . . That was just heart-breaking, and I cried. . . I cried as we told these brothers and sisters, some of whom had supported us for months and months even before the occupation, that they had to leave.

GK: How did the core group take it?

MA: Linton (Park, the Kokua Hawaii public information officer) was there because I remember he was standing next to me. . . We felt secure, you know, we felt good about the fact that they (the news media) couldn't throw that at us. . . We occupied the valley for three weeks before the police came in.

GK: Was Larry Kamakawiwoole there?

MA: No, Larry wasn't there that night. . . He came in afterwards the next morning.

GK: What happened on the day after the decision?

MA: At dawn the next morning, though our numbers were small compared to over a hundred the night before, standing on the side of the road, on the edge of George Santos' pig farm, across from Moose Lui's home, we knew we had made the right decision. (It was) pretty lonely there but we were secure. . . in the fact that look, we're all locals. . . In spite of the fact that our numbers had dwindled, we realized, we had done the right thing. Even though it felt very lonely standing out there. . .

GK: What do you remember about the Kalama Valley arrest on May 11, 1971?
MA: We awoke that morning to hear that the police were on their way into the valley to arrest us. . . We decided we weren't going to make it easy for them and most of us decided to get a ladder and climb up on George Santos' house roof and wait for the police to come to arrest us. . . At least 20-25 cops were on the ground below us. One officer with a bull horn asked us repeatedly to "come down off the roof," which, of course, we ignored. We had a connected water hose on the roof with us (in case we were tear gassed), and a couple of bags of poi—those were our only weapons. We never resorted to using those things. I guess we tried to make light of the situation, since we weren't quite sure what was going to happen.

GK: What was the police reaction?

MA: I think the police felt a little foolish (during) those first few hours since they had no way to get to us while we ignored their order to "get off the roof." Most of the police were Hawaiians, of course, some Kamehameha School grads that a few of us on the roof had gone to school with and recognized. . . We would call out to them telling them we were doing this "for their kids. . . "

GK: What else happened?

MA: At one point, Dr. Willis Butler's wife Barbara was walking out of the valley with a case of beer over her shoulder. She later said she would be damned if she was going to let the cops get the beer. She and her husband were there to support us throughout the occupation.

GK: Anything else?

MA: I didn't know this confrontation was being covered live over the radio. We were on the roof. (Kualoa-Heeia Ecumenical Youth project organizer) Randy Kalahiki and (Kahuna Lapaau) Sam Lono—they were on the ground. At one point Sam starts speaking loudly in Hawaiian. . . "pules" (starts praying) in Hawaiian. They (the police) didn't know if he (Sam) was putting the "heebie-jeebies" on them. . . what the hell he was saying. Radio announcer Ed Michelman who was doing a live show says, "The police just stepped back one step," thinking that maybe they were "ana'ana-ed" (Hawaiian cursed) by Sam. (Laughter) Later on, I asked Sam, and he said he was saying, the Lord's Prayer in Hawaiian. However, the police didn't know that.

GK: What else?

MA: We had the only ladder in the valley. . . There was some anxiety not knowing how this incident was going to end. The police finally called the Fire Department to bring a ladder so they could get us off the roof. We thought, "Great, more Hawaiians" (are coming). I heard later that they warned the firefighters that if they saw anyone they knew

on the roof they should stay in the background. It appeared as though we embarrassed the police when we called out their names from the roof.

GK: What happened next?

MA: Placing the fireman's ladder against George Santos' house, the police climbed. . . up the roof to arrest us. We didn't resist and climbed down the ladder on our own. . . One officer offered to carry . . . (large, ex-football player) John Saxton down the ladder if he liked, but that offer was rejected. We were all in good spirits. Some of us were arrested on George's porch and front yard. Main thing is health and safety—no one got hurt! As I recall. . . (we) were driven off. They put us in several jail cells. . . The chief of police, (Francis) Keala, came by and peered in at us in our cells. He tried to make us feel as if we had done something wrong. No way he could intimidate us. Our attitude was, "Enough already!"

GK: What made you decide to run for the state Office of Hawaiian Affairs?

MA: Well, as a former leader in the Kalama Valley, it was only natural. When the Office of Hawaiian Affairs came into being, even after Kokua Hawaii, I was active in protests. One of them was at the Hilo Airport and the use of ceded lands and state Department of Hawaiian Homes Lands (DHHL) for airports.

GK: Tell me about it?

MA: The state had been using ceded lands and DHHL lands for decades without benefiting Hawaiians and providing homes for Hawaiians. Past governors of the territory scooped up DHHL lands for other purposes. I grew up across the street from Petrie Park land, confiscated from the DHHL in 1931.

GK: What happened at the Hilo Airport?

MA: When we closed down the Hilo Airport runway on Labor Day in 1978, we were the landlords who had come to collect the rent. Past governors had illegally taken DHHL lands in Waimea, Molokai and Hilo Airport. . . when Hawaii was a territory. . . without asking the DHHL Commission. As a result, over $600 million was due to the DHHL at $30 million a year for the past 20 years. Now we shouldn't have to risk our lives at the Hilo Airport runway or at anywhere else—or on. . . Mauna Kea in order to get the justice that people deserve.

GK: So, let me ask you. . . As a result of the state Constitutional Convention forming the. . . State Office of Hawaiian Affairs, you ran for an OHA seat?

MA: Yeah. I was elected in '84. I was an elected member of OHA for 12 years.

GK: Okay. So, what was your role in OHA in regards to the ceded lands issue?

MA: I was on the negotiating committee. And I negotiated the money, the ceded lands money that OHA is receiving which amounted. . . to over $100 million. . .

GK: So, that was the settlement.

MA: That was, that was yeah, 20% of the revenues in the ceded land. . . You know, you have the right combination of people at the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. Five is a magic number, majority rules. You can do all kinds of things to make the situation better for the Hawaiian people. . . including getting ceded lands, which our people rightly deserve.

GK: Were you satisfied with the settlement?

MA: No, I wanted land. I didn't just want money, I wanted land. I didn't want to have to buy our own land.

GK: So, what else have you been doing?

MA: Well, I've been consistently on the front lines. . . We stopped the bombing of our sacred island of Kahoolawe. . . However, Kalama Valley also inspired a Hawaiian Renaissance in identity and culture. Before Kalama Valley, it was not "in" to be native Hawaiian. I remember my grandmother, who was pure Hawaiian, saying she was part-haole to be acceptable to her husband, my grandfather's hapa-haole family—the Mossmans. Participation in canoe races had been declining as was the Merrie Monarch Hula Festival in Hilo. After Kalama Valley, a growing pride blossomed and a noticeable desire for the people of Hawaii to identify with and respect the first culture of the islands. Today, thousands of all nationalities in Hawaii participate and revel in canoe races, hula, language studies, and Hawaiian history. And for decades, it has been almost impossible to get tickets for the Merrie Monarch Festival unless you reserve tickets on December 26th, months before the April Hula Festival. . .

GK: What do you think should happen at this particular juncture in terms of the Native Hawaiians? What should the government be doing and what should the Native Hawaiians be doing?

MA: I think we should have hundreds of thousands of acres of the 1.6 million acres of ceded lands set aside. For the whole Native Hawaiian people. Not OHA.

GK: Okay.

MA: Like the creation of the Kahoolawe Island Reserve Commission, we need a grass-root entity coming from the community—coming from the bottom up, not from the top down. . . I was and yet am proud to be part of an effort to create needed change to work for pono (the righteous way). As one kupuna from Milolii stated before the first OHA election—"If not for Kalama Valley, there would be no Alu Like and no OHA."

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.

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?

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

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

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?

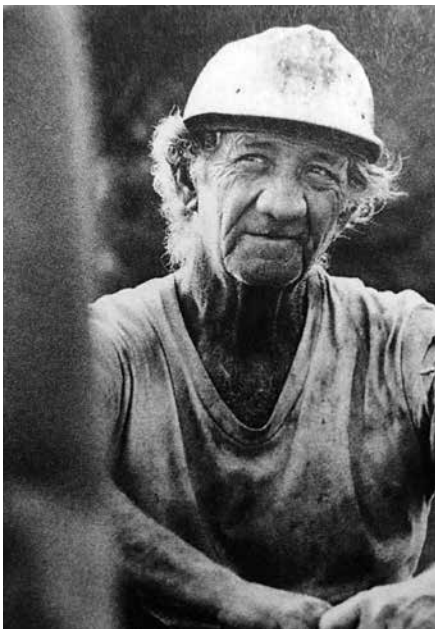
RC: George was right. The thing is that we were romanticizing and fantasizing. I think using guns is insane. Look what happened to the Panthers. They got wiped out. Anyway, the right decision was made.

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

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.

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

RC: Critical times.

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

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

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 Rolaids.

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.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Lori Treschuk

Lori Treschuk
Photo courtesy of the Treschuk family

Lori Treschuk, also known as Lorayne Miyabara and Lori Hayashi, was one of three arrested in Kalama Valley July 2, 1970, protesting the eviction of tenants. The incident was the first of three arrests to take place in the valley within a year. She was involved in anti-Vietnam War protests as a student. Treschuk later worked for UPW, organizing nurses into a bargaining unit at Queens Medical Center. Treschuk was interviewed at a friend's home in Honolulu by Gary T. Kubota on October 1, 2016.

GK: When and where were you born?

LT: In 1947 in Honolulu.

GK: Where were your parents living at the time and what were they doing?

LT: We lived in Pauoa Valley. My mom was a registered nurse at Kuakini Hospital. She was actually going through nursing school at Kuakini when the Pearl Harbor attack occurred in 1941. She said out of the top window she could see the attack and hear the bombs.

GK: What was your dad doing?

LT: When I was born, my dad Sunao was the executive director of the Young Buddhist Association (YBA) on Oahu.

GK: What school did you go to?

LT: I went to Pauoa Elementary. Then, when we moved to Moanalua when I was 12, I went to Kalakaua Intermediate, then to Farrington High School and graduated in 1965.

GK: Did you go college?

LT: I went to the University of Hawaii in 1965.

GK: Did you know what you wanted as a career?

LT: At that point, I already knew that I wanted to be in the healthcare field and primarily a nurse, because my mom was a nurse. I was looking at medicine and nursing. I was counseled when I was at Farrington High School. My counselor was very chauvinistic. He said, "You don't want to be a doctor. You know, you're not going to have time with your family . . . yada, yada, yada."

At the time, I thought, "Oh well, okay." I went to the University of Hawaii at Manoa in pre-nursing. But I really, really wanted to go to the U.S. mainland, but my parents resisted saying, " You're a girl. You're gonna stay here," and so forth.

GK: What did you do besides your studies at the university?

LT: While I was in college, I was doing library work part time at Farrington High School.

GK: How'd that go?

LT: I decided that I would apply to schools anyway on the mainland. I really wanted to go to the University of California at San Francisco. I applied and got in. Two years had passed and at that point, my parents were really good about supporting me. So I went there. That was in '67.

GK: How'd that go?

LT: I really loved it there. It was a great school. It was right in the middle of what was Haight-Ashbury. There was beginning to be more and more political action. But I was able to get through nursing school. I worked as a volunteer in the Filmore District with African American and Hispanic kids in Head Start programs.

GK: Why were you doing that?

LT: I wanted to do something community oriented, although I was very, very much focused on my schoolwork. I really learned a lot about what people's lives were about. It was a Head Start program with free daycare and childcare. A lot of the parents had two, three jobs. Some of the kids and their parents were facing really hard times. . . The kids were coming from a lot of working-class homes. The Black Panther Party had been formed in Oakland. They had a free breakfast program. I thought that was really good. As much as there was all this negative stuff coming out about the Panthers, I thought, "Hey, you know they got good hearts. . . They really want just to make it better for the African American people there."

My girlfriend and I went with her boyfriend, who had a car, and we would just go over to Berkeley, or whatever. And there was just a lot more political ferment, and it was exciting but scary. But I thought, people are fighting against injustice, and that's right.

I completed my one year at UCSF, came back in the summer of '68. My girlfriend had read this article about draft resistance, burning draft cards and so forth and there was a mention of one of the participants, Wayne Hayashi. I had met him before at the university, and I met him again and I fell madly in love. So rather than go back to UCSF, I stayed here, much to the disappointment of my parents. Then I got more and more politicized. We got married in September 1968.

GK: How did you become involved in the protest in Kalama Valley?

LT: I was involved only on the periphery. I knew Kalani Ohelo through Ko (Wayne Hayashi) and John and Lucy Witeck through Youth Action. . . It was July 1970 when I was seven months pregnant with Sasha. And John got a call in the morning, and I had just come back from taking a ceramics course at Farrington High. John got a call saying that it looked like there were bulldozers there, and it looked like they were going to start bulldozing. So he asked me, "Do you want to go?"

GK: (Laughter).

LT: I said, "Oh, okay." I knew that people were being evicted, and I thought that was wrong. And Lucy was days out of the hospital after having Matthew, and we were all living together. There were just the three of us—John, Linton Park, and I. That was in early July 1970. When we got there, we saw a bulldozer starting to go towards a house, and we went to that house. It was a Quonset hut. And I remember going up onto the porch. I sat in a chair, with John and Linton standing up beside me. I remember this big Hawaiian guy was sitting in the bulldozer—he was working it. And I thought, holy-----, because he started the bulldozer . . . There was nobody in the house. There were still things in it. People were clearly still living in that house.

GK: Was there still a refrigerator and food?

LT: Yeah. So, anyway, we're sitting there, and the bulldozer started up, and I recall the bulldozer operator Tiny started going, and this Bishop Estate official Ed Michaels just egging him on. . . Tiny was very reluctant, very slow, slow, slow, and then he stopped. He basically got off of the bulldozer, threw down the keys and said, "If you want this bulldozer to move and bulldoze that house down, you do it." And he walked off. Thank goodness, because I wasn't sure what we were gonna do. . .

GK: So what happened after that?

LT: Then the cops got called. We were arrested.

GK: What happened?

LT: So we were put in cars. We were taken off the property, processed and booked at the old police station on Beretania.

GK: What were you booked for?

LT: Trespassing, and we were bailed out.

GK. What went through your mind?

LT: I thought, "Holy cow, what am I getting myself into?" At the same time, I thought maybe, these people should not be evicted at all. I wondered how this development by Bishop Estate was for the Hawaiian people. I remember my dad telling me way back when my grandfather came from Japan, he worked at a dairy farm in Waialae and the whole area had been agricultural before it was developed. It was beautiful.

GK: Okay, so you were pregnant seven months when you got arrested. What happened after that? What was your parents' reaction to this?

LT: They were not happy, of course. My mother said we didn't raise you to be somebody like that. I was always supposed to be a good Japanese girl, right? Study hard, make good grades? You know, with the Japanese, it was like you gotta be more American in America, right? Assimilation was so important. I told my mother these people shouldn't be able to push people out of their homes. It was very, very difficult 'cause they were very upset. I was trying to explain to them that basically the same thing that is happening in Vietnam is happening here in Hawaii. . . The U.S. has invaded another country. This is their land, this is their livelihood, their people and they're doing it, as far as I understood, for strategic geopolitical purposes. And then I said, same thing is happening in Kalama Valley.

GK: How did your dad take it?

LT: There's a lot of paranoia in my family, and I mean for good reason. My mother's father was interned during World War II. He was very nationalistic.

GK: Did he do anything to cast suspicion?

LT: No. . . but he wrote prolifically in Japanese. He had diaries that he would write. Anybody who wrote a lot in Japanese, the government officials considered, could be a spy.

GK: How did anyone know he wrote diaries?

LT: There were people in the Japanese community who said, you know, this guy he writes a lot. I remember my mom saying that once my grandfather was taken away, family members gathered some of his belongings. He had volumes of diaries. They buried it. . . Later, they couldn't find it. I think they probably didn't want to find it either.

GK: What happened to him?

LT: He was sent to the internment camp at Honouliuli in Waipahu, then to an internment

camp in New Mexico and later to Jerome, Arkansas. I don't know why.

GK: How long did he spend interned?

LT: I don't know, but I remembered my uncle, my mother's youngest brother, joined the U.S. Army, and he wanted to visit my grandfather when he was in the Army. So, of course, he had to go to the concentration camp, and here he was in his military garb—there was a lot of that happening, right? Anyway, my grandfather came back and nobody said anything.

GK: Nobody talked about it?

LT: No, no, no.

GK: Why do you think they didn't talk about it? Was it a shame? Was it a fear?

LT: I think they're both of those things—paranoia and a lot of shame.

GK: What about your father?

LT: These military guys recruited him after he graduated from college in Indiana. They were looking for people who were bilingual. What happened is that they assigned him to British Intelligence in the India-Burma Theater.

GK: How did that turn out?

LT: As far as military veterans benefits, he never got any. The U.S. said, "He's not ours." The British said, "Yeah, but he's a U.S. citizen"—and so he really never got any benefits.

GK: What did your father do after World War II?

LT: He went to graduate school and earned a master's degree in business and worked at Liberty Bank. He became a senior vice president when he was in his sixties.

GK: So, he had a high profile?

LT: He helped to found the World Fellowship of Buddhists. People in the Japanese community knew him.

GK: Were you ever able to reach some kind of resolution with your parents?

LT: They were not as angry about the Kalama Valley arrest as with my anti-Vietnam War activity. I think they were really upset about anti-war activities because we, as part of the Resistance movement, were just always in the newspaper. When I had Sasha in September of 1970, the prosecutor's office kind of dismissed me from the trespass case, because I was

in the hospital. My parents took a trip to Bangkok, Thailand and told Ko and I that we could stay at their house in Moanalua.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project

Interview About Mary Choy with daughters Patti and Shelley

Mary Whang Choy
Photo courtesy of the Choy family

Mary Whang Choy, the wife of prominent Korean-American physician Duke Choy, was a Honolulu socialite actively involved in her church, who became a community activist. She was arrested in Kalama Valley on May 11, 1971, protesting the eviction of farmers and Native Hawaiians. Her arrest in Kalama Valley raised eyebrows, but lent dignity and legitimacy to a group of young Kokua Hawaii activists struggling to bring attention to social injustices. She served on the steering committee of Kokua Hawaii. She was an organizer of the 1993 Kanaka Maoli Tribunal, established to pass judgment on participants of the 1893 overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy. Choy was born on September 20, 1918, and died on March 14, 1997, of cancer. She was survived by her husband, Duke, and their five children, Diane, Peggy, Glenn, Patrice (Patti) and Shelley. In August 1998, Mary Choy was honored as a "Fallen Warrior" at a Kanaka Maoli commemoration on the Iolani Palace grounds along with other deceased native and non-native activists. Two of her daughters, Patti and Shelley, who often accompanied Mary in her work as an activist, were interviewed by Gary Kubota on November 30, 2016, at Zippy's Restaurant in Kalihi.

GK: Good morning, Patti and Shelley. Many thanks for granting this interview about your mother, Mary Choy. Where was Mary born and who were her parents?

SC: She was born in San Francisco. Her parents fled their hometown of Sinuiju, at the northern border of Korea and China during the Japanese occupation. The Japanese police were looking to kill her father, Whang Sa-sun, because he was part of the underground independence movement. At the time of their escape, Mary's mother, Chang Tae-sun, was pregnant with Mary's older brother Paul. They disguised themselves as Chinese to get over the border into China, walking across the half-frozen Yalu River, then took a train to Shanghai, and then sailed to San Francisco.

PC: When they arrived in California in 1913, my grandfather was not able to work as a schoolteacher as in Sinuiju. He took whatever work he could find—as a houseboy, picking tomatoes, eventually opening a laundry and cleaning service on Polk Street in

San Francisco. By night, he continued to organize for Korea's independence, as a member of the Sinminhoe, also known as the "New People's Society," one of the first nationalist organizations in the U.S., along with patriot Ahn Chang-ho and his own brother, Whang Sa-yong.

SC: Then he eventually became a reverend in the Korean Methodist Church in San Francisco. Chang Tae-sun also worked in the laundry, and she would tirelessly cook for the congregation, and host many a visitor and new immigrant families. My grandmother died when my mom was five. My mom said, "She died of exhaustion." My mom had two siblings—her sister, Elizabeth (El) was three years older and her brother, Paul, the eldest. When their mother died, her father was so grief-stricken that he asked his younger sister, Whang Hae-soo, to bring the two girls to Honolulu where she was already working as a social worker. The plan was that once he was over with his grief, he would send for the girls. She took the girls in as her own. They never returned to their father in San Francisco.

PC: So we grew up calling Whang Hae-soo, our great-aunt, "Tutu." My mother called her "gomo." That means "aunt" in Korean. "She was both our mother and father," as my mom would say.

GK: What kind of education did your mom receive?

SC: Mom graduated from Roosevelt High School, then known as the "standard English high school," then eventually went to the University of California-Berkeley where she majored in music—studying piano, conducting, and learning how to play all kinds of band instruments. She taught music to high school students in Hawaii. She was the type who could sit down at the piano, see the music, and play it.

PC: She had a sensitive touch and had a musical flow to her playing. We grew up listening to her play classical composers like Bach, Chopin, and Mendelssohn. She particularly loved records by Russian pianists, especially Vladimir Horowitz playing Chopin and Sviatoslav Richter playing Rachmaninoff, and would listen with her eyes closed. She could sight-read well, and had musicality. She was choir director at the Korean Methodist Church for many years, and often played the organ as well. She also directed our children's

Daughters Patti and Shelley Choy

choir. When she stood before us holding our attention right before we began to sing, she would look at us and always break out into this wonderful smile, showing she believed in us. She sometimes chose unusual music for our children's choir. I remember that some of the pieces had unconventional harmonies. She showed independence in her choices, exposing us to new sounds without our being conscious of this. She was well-loved by the adult choir—I remember her joking with the members like Stan Kim, who had a great sense of humor. There was a mutual warmth and respect among them all. She was always prepared, organized, and clearly showed leadership with a light touch.

She was really versatile in many ways. She loved the arts, theater performance, music, dance and Korean culture. She not only played classical music records, but introduced us to Broadway musical recordings as well.

I believe she was one of the first non-Korean nationals in Honolulu to discover Korean dramas on TV in the early 1980s. Mom always tried to get me to watch a drama with her. She kept telling me she didn't understand a word of the dialog, no English subtitles at the time, but through the grainy black-and-white film, with very little sense of cinematography, she discovered what she thought was superb acting and the expression of deep feelings and emotions. She was right! I sat next to her in raptured silence, as we soaked in our own interpretations of what was being acted. She got me hooked. Her flexibility and openness could take her from watching a Korean drama to then leaving to attend a Hawaii socialist meeting.

GK: (Laughter) It seemed that whenever I saw her at events, I frequently saw both of you. I thought that was really cool in terms of exposing her children to a broad range of ideas.

SC: She constantly exposed us to the arts. She had been exposed to the performing arts through Tutu. At the YWCA on Richards Street, Tutu produced and directed large public Korean cultural pageants and plays involving both youth and adults. Mary and El were always involved, gaining exposure to their heritage.

PC: Mom was always quietly proud and enthusiastic about her Korean roots. She absorbed this pride from Tutu, and I think she passed this sense of pride down to us. Tutu would costume everyone in the YWCA productions in traditional dress, employ Korean musicians and teach dances, while informing the Honolulu community about Korean cultural traditions and celebrations, such as the Korean lunar celebration, Dano.

While she loved culture, she would express her love of nature as well. I remember in high school, mom was in bed reading the morning paper about a big winter storm coming with huge surf forecasted to roll in. She announced, "Let's go see!" So, instead of going to school, she took us out to Waimea Bay in the early morning. The waves got bigger as the day went on. We stayed there into the late afternoon to see 35-foot waves pounding the shoreline. The next morning we read in the paper that the waves crashed across the highway. An unforgettable experience. That's how her mind worked. She really loved the

aina. Wherever she drove us, she was always pointing out the beautiful sky, a great tree, a wonderful cloud, or the mountains. I thought she was pretty well-rounded.

SC: One thing about mom is that she was always so interesting to listen to. She was always delving into some new topic of interest or world event. I would just relish listening to her. She was so excited about joining the women in Halawa Valley and hiking to the water source in the mountains with Marion Kelly. I also remember her recounting the story of having to make her own rakusu, the Zen Buddhist vestment that students had to hand-sew when they took jukai, the Buddhist vows. She had a difficult time with it, but finally succeeded with the help of her hairdresser. We, her kids, were incredulous when she told us how our neighbor's pit bull dog, Sinbad, viciously attacked our sweet dog Halla. Mom ran out and put herself between Halla and Sinbad and miraculously was able to single-handedly pull the big bad dog off of Halla. What an image!

Mom had a joie de vivre (joy of life) and could be very spontaneous. Like how she was dancing and grooving at the Maple Leaf Bar in New Orleans, trying to egg on her lumps-on-a-log kids to join in. We didn't. We always talk about that because it was a good example of how she was always in the lead.

PC: She loved to read, reading voraciously and widely. She enjoyed light and entertaining novels and howled with Glenn over Art Buchwald cartoons in the *Saturday Review.* She got absorbed in Martin Buber, Norman Cousins, Paul Tillich and existentialism. Later she studied political history and ideologies, reading Marx, Mao Zedong, and many books on Buddhist thought including books by Yamada Koun, Robert Aitken, Thich Nhat Hanh, and the Dalai Lama. Her last area of study was learning the Hawaiian language. She was truly curious, always digesting, questioning and analyzing what she read, like she was trying to understand the truths of the world politically, culturally, and emotionally.

An example of how she worked to expose us to different things is when we were really young, a Danish gymnastics team came from Denmark to do an exhibition at Punahou Gym. And she said, "Oh, we must go." She said we had to take advantage of a unique opportunity.

GK: What prompted Mary to become a social activist?

PC: We all think growing up with Tutu as her strong role model, an independent female head-of-household, and along with mom's innate sense of empathy and principles made it pretty easy for her to evolve into working on social justice issues.

Tutu was the first Korean to graduate from Athens Female College (now Athens State University) in Alabama. She never married, never wanted to marry, and was the sole breadwinner for her little family by working as a social worker. We think Tutu's activities were linked to why my mom got involved with what she did. Tutu worked in the Korean community and conducted house visits to Korean immigrant families with domestic problems. From a young age, my mom was exposed to people and their social issues and

she remembered these visits with emotion. When Tutu made house calls, our mom and her older sister Elizabeth, as little children, would go with her, because no one was around to take care of them at home. My mom and El would wait in the car and sometimes witnessed violent domestic disputes inside the homes, or if they didn't go on a house call, they would wait at home for hours, worrying about where Tutu was.

SC: One of Tutu's important thrusts was working with picture brides.

PC: She worked with not only Korean picture brides; there were Filipino and Japanese picture brides as well. Because of being exposed to many ethnic groups and their social issues through Tutu's work, it was easy for her to meet new people and she had so much compassion for most of the people she met! I think she developed that sensitivity as a child when she and her sister had to go on late night house calls with Tutu, who would mediate domestic issues in immigrant families. Through Tutu's work, mom was exposed to not only culture and the arts, but to the social and economic issues faced by immigrants from diverse ethnic groups.

SC: Another unique quality my mom had, that might be related to Tutu's social work influence and her spiritual evolution, was the ability to concern herself outside of the family. I think sometimes in our culture, maybe particularly in our island Asian culture, oftentimes we tend to be very family-oriented, we do everything for the family, the family is paramount. While our mom was a fantastic mother and role model, she didn't fit the mold in that she was also very much engaged in actions and causes outside of the insular family. She could see and act beyond the family.

PC: In fact, she would get irritated and say the strong focus on family-first within our own extended family was "too much," and we had to consider people beyond blood relations.

GK: How did Mary get involved in Kokua Hawaii?

SC: We really think there was a progression of her self-awareness, her continual spiritual searching, alongside her deepening involvement in radical activism. She was raised a Christian. The Whang family had converted to being Methodists before leaving Korea. We were brought up going to the Korean Methodist Church on Keeaumoku Street every Sunday, under the leadership of Korean ministers Samuel Lee and then Harry Pak.

We would attend Sunday school before service. The adults would have study groups after church and that's where she read Tillich, Cousins and Buber. The first thing I think she publicly did was when Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated.

GK: What happened?

SC: That was in April 1968. She took me to the candle light vigil at Thomas Square for Martin Luther King, Jr. That was like a really big deal for me too.

PC: Before then, there were many photographs in the newspapers of mom as a socialite. She really played the doctor's wife role, and my parents hung out in that doctors' society. They entertained a lot of visitors, friends and family. There would be big dinner parties, and we were required to come out and greet all the guests.

SC: She would always go to balls, lunches, fashion shows. (Shelley shows a newspaper story.) I remember this one.

GK: (Gary reads) "500 guests attended the gala party Friday evening. More than 700 on a sellout evening. Holiday Tiara Ball."

SC: Almost as many as your play *Legend of Koolau*. (Laughs)

GK: Yeah. (Laughter)

SC: She was the chairwoman of a fashion show.

PC: That was her life. She dressed up a lot for formal events.

GK: That sounds like an extreme change in lifestyle.

PC: Sure was! Big change, and it affected the immediate family in a positive way. I wonder if our dad had some anxieties, but in the end he would follow her lead! It also affected her sister and our dad's siblings. They were critical and afraid of her evolution as a radical. There were heated fights with her sister.

GK: Did you ever ask her what her friends thought?

PC: We didn't need to! But, yeah. She lost a lot of friends. The invitation to most events and parties stopped. People didn't contact her. It was really easy to see what was happening. Aside from friends disappearing, I remember some phone calls started coming in with people saying, "Communist. . . go back to where you came from. . . " And there were a few anonymous letters they received in the mail telling them off.

SC: Yeah.

GK: Of course, we were more fun.

SC: Yeah. (Laughs) She loved the young people. She would come home from meetings marveling about you guys! She told us about the discussions, the disagreements and the funny stuff that came up in the meetings. Then, my father and my mother left the Korean Methodist Church. They were like pillars in the church. I'm sure there was a lot of talk when they left.

GK: Why did they leave?

SC: They eventually left because Harry Pak had departed, and the church pastor who followed, as well as the congregation, refused to become involved or take a stand against the Vietnam War. They attended Church of the Crossroads instead where Del Rayson was pastor. We remember people like Stokely Carmichael came to speak there. The Church also served as the AWOL sanctuary for soldiers. Both my mom and dad did draft counseling.

GK: What happened?

PC: Through the draft resistance and the anti-war movements, Mom met the Johnson's—Bette and Walter (a University of Hawaii history professor). She became really close to Bette. They would talk on the phone all the time. They shared a lot of time together working on benefit events and the newsletters that Bette wrote. I remember working with them to mail out the newsletter to quite a large anti-war mailing list. I think mom found Bette so refreshing and kind of exhilarating because she was direct, frank, funny, and, of course, knew the issues. Bette mesmerized me— that is for sure.

GK: The Johnsons were big supporters of Kokua Hawaii.

PC: Yeah. That's how her friendships evolved. She lost her old friends but gained new, cool friends! I even learned so much listening to the new conversations swirling around us. My parents formed life-long friendships with other radicals and activists—the Johnsons, Marion and John Kelly, Kekuni Blaisdell, Maivan Lam, Setsu Okubo, and Robert Aitken, who was a liberal Buddhist priest. The family was exposed to significant artists and activists like Phil Ochs, Pete Seeger, the Black Panthers and Angela Davis.

SC: I remember when I was in sixth grade, my parents decided not to pay their telephone tax, because the tax went to fund the war and all that. That was the first stand that she took. I think being Asian, she really resonated with the Vietnam War and the Vietnamese fight for self-determination.

GK: There were parallels between Vietnam and Korea?

SC: Right.

GK: Did she ever talk about the parallels?

SC: Oh, yeah, because her uncle, Whang Sa-yong, was a radical revolutionary, and she was proud of him. He was all about Korean independence. He, as well as her own father, Whang Sa-sun, were working for Korean independence while living in California. It was sad, though, that in his later years, Whang Sa-yong, came to Honolulu, and lived in Chinatown. We would visit him maybe once in a year. With awareness, she became proud of him, but only after his death. When he was still alive, there was a sense of shame about his radical life.

GK: Although Kokua Hawaii was community-based, helping to organize against evictions, one of the things we also did was support demonstrations against the Vietnam War. We supported expatriates like Maivan Lam who supported self-determination for Vietnamese people. It provided cross-education to community members. . . If community members listened to 50% of what we said, or read our newspaper ***the Huli,*** that was good enough for me. So tell me, why did Mary decide to take part in the arrest and become a member of Kokua Hawaii?

SC: Patti remembers mom saying that she had to take a stand with the young people and for self-determination for the Hawaiian people. She was very clear about that. Mom single-mindedly acted on her convictions. She was constantly going to meetings, standing on picket lines, marching, protesting, showing up to support this group or that event. I got the feeling that just her presence at these events or even simply in the meetings was meaningful and inspiring to her fellow warriors. But, going back in time, she began to work at the University of Hawaii International Student Office, and a co-worker who was into Zen Buddhism introduced her to Kokua Hawaii. We had been to Kalama Valley and she was one of the supporters. She would take us to the valley. We would go out to the valley almost every day after school three weeks before the arrest. I think with that background, together with all her social-political concerns, she could see what was happening. She saw what was happening and she acted.

PC: We would hang out in the valley. She would bring food stuff. It's not like I had friends there. The Kokua Hawaii guys were older, but, again, through mom's work and exposing us to new stuff, we were able to be around new thoughts, new people, and hear stimulating conversations.

SC: We'd work in the garden with Kokua Hawaii member Al Abreu.

PC: I remember one day, we went to University High School, across UH campus in Manoa, like early afternoon, I was just wandering around near the cafeteria and suddenly, I see mom! (Laughter) I couldn't believe my eyes. She was dressed for a day out on a farm and she was looking for us!

GK: What was she doing?

PC: She came looking for us to take us out to Kalama Valley.

SC: (Laughs)

PC: So, she took Shelley and me and a bunch of our friends who could fit in our car. I'll never forget that. She took us out of school, off campus, without permission, and drove us out to the valley.

SC: I can't remember exactly what she did out in the valley. But I think just her presence there was enough actually to inspire the young people and to inspire her, because she

was this establishment Asian woman. People would always say that, "Oh, your mom is so serene, so calm." When we did go out to the valley, she liked to talk to people.

PC: It was a learning experience for her. She didn't go and feed the pigs and move slop pans or anything, I know that for sure. But that's what I thought was good about her. She remained true to herself and really practiced what she preached to us, which was, "Just be natural. Be yourself." Once she got involved in all of these causes, she didn't try to be a Vietnamese or even a Korean. She didn't try to be Hawaiian. She didn't try to be local. She didn't try to be a Young Lord. She didn't take on a Hawaiian or even a Korean name! She was just herself.

SC: Kalama Valley was a landmark beginning in so many ways for so many people. For the Hawaiian people it was the beginning of emboldened self-determination. For our mother, it was also a bold step in her continual evolution.

GK: What happened on the day of the arrest in Kalama Valley?

PC: I remember we drove out because she said, "Okay, let's go." Word finally came, "The bust is gonna happen." So, she used a side entrance to get into the valley, because the main road to the valley was closed to everyone.

SC: And our dad went, too. He drove us out to the valley.

PC: He drove out early in the morning to drop her off for the bust. With our dad, we stood out on the roadside. We didn't know what was happening to you guys. But we saw the cop cars going in. And then before you know it, the cars were coming out with all of you.

GK: What about Mary?

PC: We saw our mom in one of the cars in the back seat. And she just waved. We waved. And then dad took us to school. And that was that. We didn't even think of going down to the police station or anything. No thought of bail money. One year ago, Annie Worth, a dear family friend, told us how she got the call that mom needed to be bailed out of jail! Annie got a parking ticket while she bailed Mary out of jail! It never ever dawned on me to think of how she got out of jail.

SC: (Laughs)

PC: It was just school as usual and I don't think I even talked about what happened when I went to school. (Laughter)

SC: You recall her waving. I remember she also put her fist up in the cop car.

PC: Yes, she put her fist up, too, because I remember seeing the flash of a handcuff through the car window. Kinda thrilling to think about!

SC: Yeah, in the cop car. That's what I remember.

PC: The entire occupation was such a huge learning experience for me! And, the trial!! That's where I really learned to not trust the system. Mom was given the biggest fine because the judge said she was the oldest person arrested and should have known better, or something close to those words. But you know what's kind of sad, too?

GK: What's that?

PC: I'm just thinking. We really lived untouched lives. We didn't live pig farmer George Santos' life. We had the luxury of being a supporter and going back to our cushy life.

GK: That's part of being a larger part of a social movement where you have all kinds of people from different social classes and ethnicities supporting a cause. I myself was living in a one-room boarding house and working as a busboy/waiter in Waikiki. That's why it's called a movement. She really never stopped fighting against injustices, participating in demonstrations against the eviction of Filipino residents at Ota Camp, the closure of Hale Mohalu for leprosy patients, Chinatown evictions, Waiahole-Waikane, and the H-3 freeway through Hawaiian sites in Halawa.

PC: Yeah, true.

SC: True.

GK: How was it at home?

SC: She would have yelling fights with not only her sister about the war, but even with our father. They were both hawks. Then, my father eventually changed.

PC: I remember telling my friends about my mom and dads' arguments at breakfast in the morning. And, they'd go, "About what?" I replied, "The war. My mom's so against it and my dad is for it." Then my friends said, "At least it's only that. Not like my parents. You're lucky. It's not like divorcing and being physically abused or something."

GK: Do you know what turned your father against the Vietnam War?

PC: We started going to the lectures. A lot of people were flying into Hawaii to talk about things. Movies were being shown. He started playing tennis with Walter Johnson, so maybe he had no choice, but to change after hanging with Bette and Walter. Of course, news reports were filled with pictures of GI body bags and mutilated Vietnamese bodies. Something clicked. He got it.

SC: He got into COR (Committee Of Responsibility), looking at the Vietnam War from a medical point of view and the effect of napalm on children. He assisted with forming a Hawaii chapter.

PC: So, this committee of doctors from the mainland brought out Vietnamese children who were injured, but strong enough to travel to get medical help. . .

SC: . . . to Hawaii.

PC: I remember it was so hard to get local doctors to volunteer their services. But, Fred Dodge came forward. So, he and other doctors volunteered to work with the Vietnamese kids once they arrived in Hawaii. Man, it was such a shock to see these little kids in our house who were injured and had napalm burns. Up until then, we only saw photos in the newspapers and on the TV news of war-injured people. But, it was his first big commitment. He really had the guts to evolve, too.

SC: He quit the local chapter of the American Medical Association because its members would not come out against the war. He said as medical people, we have a responsibility. He worked to set up a free clinic in Chinatown.

GK: I know he had a free clinic in Ota Camp. What made him donate his services?

PC: That was because our oldest sister Diane asked him to do that.

GK: I remember Diane was a part of a radical group, Third Arm, helping tenants in Chinatown fight evictions as a result of urban redevelopment.

PC: Yes.

GK: Were Mary and Duke involved in any other activities?

PC: Both my mom and dad supported the Bachman Hall sit-in and the tenure fight of Oliver Lee who opposed the Vietnam War, and supported Maivan Lam throughout her UH discrimination case. They supported the setting up of the Ethnic Studies program at UH. Mom was active with the American Friends Service Committee, and worked on other international radical causes. She worked with Ron Fujiyoshi on the issue of fingerprinting of Koreans in Japan. She was active in the nuclear-free Pacific movement. She supported revolutionary struggles in Nicaragua and Peru.

I think through it all, the common thread for my mom was that she loved people and had so much compassion for the disenfranchised. As we were growing up, mom would invite international students to our house from countries such as Mexico and India. We remember Thanksgiving dinners, Christmas dinners where there'd be 30 people, almost all strangers. I remember asking, "Can't we have a dinner just with people we know, our family?" Up to the last minute, she would still be welcoming people to come over. I remember Rodney Morales, who associated with Kokua Hawaii and later became an English professor, spent many hours talking with my mother in our home. She and my dad were constantly inviting people over to the house. She loved meeting people. Her friends widely ranged in age, from different countries and cultures. I think her sense

of humanity showed through her support of the issues. She never wanted attention on herself; she was really humble. She would be curious and ask questions about others' lives.

When she worked with the committee that organized the Kanaka Maoli Tribunal, she volunteered to head-up the kitchen to provide what she hoped would be "nutritious, organic food for the participants." She was happy to be in the background and not be acknowledged. Yet, when she knew there was a demonstration for a cause she believed in, even if there were only a few people who showed up, she was unafraid to wave her sign and shout for justice.

GK: It seemed like she had a lot of empathy for people who were disenfranchised. How much of that might have been a personal reflection on her own life?

PC: Losing her mother at an early age probably had an impact and, again, growing up around struggling people of color and immigrants through Tutu's work.

SC: When she was sick with her cancer, I think that did come out. You know I'm thinking, she never talked about losing her friends, but I'm sure that really impacted her. She kept a lot in. She was not a complainer.

PC: She felt abandoned by her father, because he never called them back to the mainland.

SC: He didn't keep in touch with Mary and El. They grew up without their own father, not knowing him. So, I know that impacted her. And through her cancer, I think a lot came out for her to think about the past.

SC: I think another turning point in her evolution was the University of Hawaii's Ethnic Studies conference. Organizers brought in Juan Gonzales of the Young Lords, Carmen Chow of I Wor Kuen, and Kalani Ohelo of Kokua Hawaii.

PC: That was a landmark event for everyone. Mom realized how colonized she was. Even though that was a radical change of thought for her, she still maintained herself. She didn't try to be a super Korean and take on a Korean name.

GK: I remember Juan Gonzalez and Carmen Chow who also spoke at the conference. Juan is now on that national radio program *Democracy Now!* hosted with Amy Goodman. They spoke about the importance of developing educational programs that presented history from a minority point of view.

PC: Hearing Juan and Carmen radicalized mom and dad's views on education so that they were willing to take a stand with Ethnic Studies at the University of Hawaii. It was inspiring for the whole family when Juan and Carmen came to our house and met with Diane and the rest of our family in our living room.

GK: Was there ever a time that she disagreed with the direction of Kokua Hawaii?

PC: I remember, one evening mom came home from a meeting and she was so upset! The big issue at the Kokua Hawaii meeting was (Chuckles),"Should we wear berets?"

GK: Berets?

PC: You know, berets like the Young Lords and the Black Panthers. And she and Soli were against it, but everyone else wanted the berets. It was so funny.

GK: That happened before my time with the group. So what happened?

PC: She said, "OK, if they get them, I'm not going to wear one." And we said, "You don't have to".

SC: They did get them.

PC: The beige ones. She didn't wear it. Our parents got involved in all this stuff, and we followed along. Whereas you guys, right, you young people had to chart the course, and battle with your parents. We had it so easy because they were on the cutting edge and all we did was follow.

GK: Well, everybody has their own path. Frankly, your path is not finished yet.

SC: It's true.

GK: I was always amazed at the calm demeanor of your mother and her ability to take action.

PC: I think her Zen meditation helped her to kind of find a place where she didn't care what people thought. She was just gonna do her thing.

SC: Right.

PC: And heck with all those criticisms and whatever.

SC: Yeah. I think the Zen training prepared her or developed her so that she could act. She converted to Buddhism in the early 1970s after leaving Church of the Crossroads. My father followed her to the Diamond Sangha in Manoa where Robert Aitken was roshi. But she already had a rather calm and graceful demeanor before this time. I think she was this way from childhood—calm and strong. She had her close friends and mentors from the time of her involvement with the Methodist church through her radical years. Those who seemed to be mutually supportive in a spiritual sense included Francis Lee, Tutu Ossipoff (mother of the Honolulu architect Vladimir Ossipoff), Harry Pak, and Robert Aitken. She was deeply inspired by the Dalai Lama. It's hard to know where she got her strength and

fearlessness, her curiosity and openness to the new, but as we've said, Tutu was a strong presence in her life.

I think the overriding qualities mom had were empathy and humility. I think that's what, in large part, drove her actions. For example, during the Vietnam War, we would be sitting next to each other watching the news on TV, seeing all the body bags coming home, hearing the latest death counts, seeing the war images and video. It would make her cry, and I could just feel her anguish. It seems she was really identifying with the Vietnamese people and would often say, "They need their self-determination." She really felt for other people. In hindsight, she perhaps had too much empathy, took everything too much to heart, which may have not been the best for her health.

GK: Can you share some thoughts about her last phase of life?

SC: In later years, she said she was working on her "colonized mind." I remember driving with her somewhere, and too bad I don't remember the exact incident she told me about, but she said the incident made her realize what a colonized mentality she had. I paused and thought about what she said, and I thought, "Yeah, she's right!" So here was yet another way that she was educating me, while taking another step forward in her evolution.

Her death was as remarkable as her life. She was suddenly diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer and died 10 months later in our home. The whole time she only used Tylenol, even in the last, final stages. The night before she died, she asked us to call her Zen teacher, Aitken Roshi, on the Big Island. We dialed his number and held the phone to her ear. She asked him, "How do I let go??" He answered to go back to "Mu" (the mantra meaning nothingness.) She said, "OK!" and slammed down the phone, and went to it, her practice!

That same last night, I was sleeping on my massage table in the hallway outside her room, sliding doors open. She became extremely restless. I went to her and before I could say anything, she asked me, "Are you ok? Do you need anything?"

PC: She gave us all a huge gift to be with her as she confronted her cancer. At the time, she took us all on a new road, and, again exposed us to a new world. She and dad were into "alternative" health things like reiki, hypnosis, and acupuncture. She decided she was not going to go the traditional route and do chemo or radiation. No surgery. The doctors said that she could try chemo and radiation but it was probably too late anyway. She took a stand and accepted this. She was open to trying a different way. We met healer Ansara and other Kanaka Maoli healers during this time. Her death and dying process was relatively pain-free and she said the nightly hypnosis from dad was the reason.

SC: Yes, it was probably the combination of hypnosis from our dad, Reiki by Glenn, Biomagnetics and Healing Touch by Diane and me, and her Zen practice that helped her to cope with the disease and the pain.

Her memorial was held at Church of the Crossroads. As I arrived at the church, parking in the adjacent lot, I noticed a SWAT team parked at the far end of the lot, along University Avenue—large black armored vehicles with large letters "SWAT" and more than several men dressed to the hilt in their black gear. They were kinda just standing there, waiting. Their presence was disturbing, menacing, shocking, funny, and sad, all at the same time. We didn't know of any threats at the time, who knows why they were there. We thought, maybe it was because Bumpy Kanahele, whose group mom supported. He came early to pay his respects before the service started. Maybe, the authorities thought there would be unrest? Emotions were high? Who knows. But I thought mom would never believe that a SWAT team appeared at her funeral!

PC: Mom carved out her own way, like she did throughout her life, for her transition. She led the family on a new path to discover that death and dying is a natural process. She was in the lead from the start of her diagnosis. Two days before she passed away she announced that she was going to stop eating "as part of my transition." On her last day, she announced she was "ready to take off" and gave away her last possessions, including dad's old car! She refused the use of oxygen because "it is not natural." She gave me a last instruction on how to take care of dad. She explained to her doctor, who stopped into visit, "Mentally I am fine, but physically my body is deteriorating." So, we all got to say full words and good-byes to her. Peggy had a final telephone call from Wisconsin. She told Noa, her grandson, "I hope by tomorrow I will be liberated." Early, the next morning, she told Shelley she was ready to go and to call Jennie and Annie. So, we all gathered with her and then she slipped onto a new life. Diane told her, "Go to the light." About a week before she passed away, Glenn said to her, "So many people are telling me you are an inspiration to them," and she said to our brother in a soft voice, "Inspire yourself."

Mom agreed to begin hospice services the day before she passed away. The first visit by a nurse was scheduled for the next morning. She died about one hour before the nurse arrived. But, we thought, "That's Mom! She had to do it her way!"

GK: Final thoughts on your mom and Kalama Valley?

SC: The occupation of Kalama Valley was a watershed moment, and she took that stand to support these young Hawaiian people as they said, "No more! This is our land, our livelihood, this is our way."

PC: In committing to defending Kalama Valley, she stayed true to the values and beliefs she independently sought out and developed when she made a break from her old life 30 years before. She was always our teacher.

(Note: Mary's daughter Peggy Choy helped to edit this interview.)

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Clyde Maurice Kalani Ohelo

Kalani Ohelo
Photo by Ed Greevy

Clyde Maurice Kalani Ohelo was among the 32 people arrested in Kalama Valley on May 11, 1971, for resisting the eviction of farmers and Hawaiians. At age 20, Ohelo served as a leader and dynamic speaker of the group Kokua Hawaii whose members led the eviction resistance and subsequently were involved as community organizers and supporters in battling other evictions statewide, as well as promoting a multi-ethnic coalition of poor and working-class people in several communities. He was featured in a* New Yorker Magazine *article, "Hawaii: The Sugar-Coated Fortress," as a new type of restless Hawaiian youth critical of Hawaii's economic and social direction. The article, written by Pulitzer Prize-nominated writer Francine du Plessix Gray, was later published by Random House in 1972 as a nonfiction book. Mr. Ohelo was interviewed by Gary T. Kubota from May 19, 2015, through October 3, 2016, at his home in Waimanalo and also at Queens Medical Center. At the time, Mr. Ohelo was suffering from acute diabetes, had lost a leg to the disease, and was undergoing dialysis. He died on April 7, 2018, from diabetic-related illnesses.

GK: Good morning, Kalani. Please tell me when and where you were born and something about your childhood?

KO: I was born in 1950 at Ewa Plantation Hospital. I was born blind. I was born with spinal meningitis. I was also born with club feet and a severe speech impediment. I also had bilateral neuropathy because of the forceps used on my head, pulling me out of my mom's womb. It killed all my nerves. So, I cannot show any expression. My muscles don't work in my face. That was pretty difficult. I could not speak a sentence of English until I was 11 years old.

GK: Wow. How did you overcome these physical challenges?

KO: Well, prior to becoming 11 years old, I went religiously to speech therapy. I went to different schools. I went to Pohukaina School, uh, for the severely retarded and

less fortunate children. I also went to Sultan School of Speech Therapy, which was in Honolulu. All my speech teachers at the Sultan School were Japanese who graduated from the University of Hawaii. I cannot thank them enough. And I was living in Kalihi. I learned how to catch the bus. I learned how to get transportation or how to get around in Honolulu.

GK: Did you require operations for your sight?

KO: No. My eyesight came back when I was five years old. It just. . . came back after we went to church where they had hands-on healing from priest, ministers and reverends from 15 denominations. They would say prayers and all that, anoint me and others who wished to be healed. Then afterwards, we always had a paina (meal). We would eat, and then everybody went their separate ways home. So, I was with my grandparents and I was living with them in Ewa Plantation. So, we were on our way to Ewa Plantation, and we caught a stoplight in Pearl City right across the Pearl City Tavern.

GK: What happened?

KO: I was leaning back on the car seat, my eyes were open, and it was raining outside. I didn't know that. Anyway, when I closed my eyes and I opened my eyes, I saw all these raindrops hitting the window. And every time it hit the window, it burst into rainbows.

GK: Wow.

KO: And so that was the first thing I saw in my life.

GK: Amazing.

KO: Yeah, it is. So, my grandparents stepped out of the car and they gave praise and glory to God and saying, "Thank you."

GK: Right in the middle of the Kamehameha Highway?

KO: Right in the middle of the highway.

GK: (Laughter)

KO: We stayed there 20 minutes, I swear. At least 20 minutes.

GK: (Laughter) So your car was blocking traffic for 20 minutes?

KO: Small kind. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. But nobody yelled. Those days, nobody yelled at each other. They never know what was going on. They'd drive on the side and say, "You okay, kupuna?"

GK: What did your grandparents say?

KO: They explain the miracle. Some people got out and praised God, too. Anyway, when we got home, my grandparents called all my relatives—my cousins, my first cousins, my second cousins. My grandparents said, "You gotta come. A miracle has happened to our baby, Kalani." So, the next day, there was a luau in my grandparents' yard.

GK: Wow.

KO: Everybody was helping to prepare the kalua pig dinner and brought stuff over. It was a celebration to celebrate the beginnings of a new birth in life. "Now, he can see. We pray hard that he can talk. We pray hard that he will walk." So, that's how it all started.

GK: You were raised in what religion?

KO: My grandparents were Protestant. . . My father's side was Catholic.

GK: What did your grandfather do at Ewa Sugar Plantation?

KO: My grandfather was a luna (supervisor). He was a supervisor of welders.

GK: How was it on the plantation? Did you like it?

KO: Oh, yeah. My grandfather got along with other races. So during World War II, he helped other Japanese who were welders. . . He told them, "Go to Pearl Harbor, get a job, because right after the war, they're gonna be hiring. That way, you'll be working there already. . . They don't have to hire you. So, they all went. They were grateful. The local culture over there is that if you're grateful, you give something. My grandfather always got fish from them, cigars.

GK: Tell me about your grandfather?

KO: His name was Thomas Kaimuloa. My grandfather was a tall, handsome, middle-aged Kanaka Maoli. I'm Hawaiian-Spanish, going back to the early paniolo days. My grandfather and great-grandfather were paniolos at Kealakekua Ranch in Kona. They made their own saddles. That's one of the prerequisites of being a paniolo. You got to be good with your hands.

He also was a luna for the plantations in a good way. His privileges that were given to him because he was a luna, was he had an eight-bedroom house. So, he put all his family in there, and in the big lanai with screen. He had a Filipino yardman and a Portuguese cook. My grandparents spoke minimal Hawaiian language at home. They kind of discourage the younger ones from speaking Hawaiian.

GK: What about his education?

KO: He graduated from Kamehameha Schools and went back to the Big Island, where

he and his brothers became deputy sheriffs of Waimea. . . He told me that those days he never had a car or a jeep. He had to go everyplace on a horse. He was a staunch Republican supporter. All the brothers, the whole family—they were close friends with the Campbells and other people who had big trust relationships with the banks. I was only six years old when he died.

I have good memories of him. Every time he would go to work, he would take a shower, light up his cigar, put me on his shoulder. We would walk two blocks to Ewa Shopping Basket. . . and he would tell me, "get whatever you like."

GK: Where did you go to school?

KO: The first school I went to was the Salvation Army Preschool in Halawa Housing. I went to that school because my parents worked in Aiea. My mom worked as a taxi dispatcher, and my dad was a taxi driver for the same company. (Laughter)

GK: Where did you go to high school?

KO: I went to Kaimuki High School. That's when I was living in Palolo Housing. We moved from Ewa Plantation, when my grandfather died. We moved to Kalihi and lived in Kam Housing near Farrington High School. Then from there, we moved to Palolo Housing where I went to intermediate and high school in Kaimuki.

GK: How was it?

KO: It affected my life to the point where it made me very angry. It affected my life to the point where I always wanted to hit someone. It affected my life to the point where if you even looked at me slightly, I would walk up to you and punch you in the eye. (Laughter)

GK: (Laughter)

KO: I couldn't communicate because of my speech impediment. Everybody used to think of me as a retarded and all of that. To get my point across, I'd say, "Eh, no stare at me. I'm not bothering you. Don't bother me." I got to fight for my right to exist, when somebody makes comments.

GK: What did you do?

KO: I started lifting weights. I started taking martial arts. I took judo when I was six years old. When I was eight years old, I took boxing. I worked on my club feet footwork (laugh). It was kind of awkward, but they taught me how to achieve balance. I got my club feet corrected when I was nine years old at Shriners Hospital in Honolulu.

GK: How did you deal with it mentally?

KO: I used to say to myself, "I'm not retarded. I can do math. (Chuckles) I can read." You know, I can read. I'm a great reader. I spent a lot of time at home because of my health. My dad bought me a full set of Encyclopedia Britannica. I educated myself.

GK: How did you go from reading to speaking?

KO: I studied cultures, different races, ethnicities, World War I, the Spanish-American War, World War II, the Korean War and all of that. I read all of it—A to Z. I was grateful for the encyclopedia because I could relate to the phonetics, and when I went to speech therapy, the therapist taught me how to enunciate the words by alphabet, then by syllables, then how to spell in syllables and put words together, then add another few words, and that's a sentence. That's how it all began in speech therapy.

GK: What did you think of your education in school?

KO: When I was in the first grade, I could understand right from wrong. I could understand that things were not right in terms of, why do I have to say, "I pledge allegiance to the flag. . . " or sing, "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty. . . " when I wasn't feeling it?

I would ask myself, "How come? I live over there where they're mostly Hawaiians in public housings, but across the street are kids with nice clothes, nice toys, nice everything, shoes, everything." I gotta go to Salvation Army or get my clothes, hand-me-downs, from my cousins. I never complained, you know. I just wore it because I thought that was my clothes to wear. But everybody else knew that it was hand-me-downs.

GK: Were you aware of the differences when you moved into public housing in the city?

KO: When we moved into Kamehameha Housing in Kalihi, I knew where I lived the majority were Native Hawaiians, mostly locals who just moved out of the plantations. Outside the public housings, there were higher income and class categories the higher you go up in the mountains toward Alewa Heights.

GK: How was it?

KO: We found camaraderie among us. We were poor, and everything we did was without money. The children who lived across the housing projects had shiny bicycles. Their parents had two cars, nice shiny cars. My parents caught the bus. When I was five, I remember we had boxes made out of wood for furniture. To make it look nice, my dad painted it. When I went to visit my friends who lived outside the housing projects, they had rattan furniture or koa furniture. Nice stuff. I went home, asked my dad, "Dad, how come we have no more furniture?"

He goes, "Right now, we can't afford it." He ain't getting work. He was looking for a steady job, because he used to drive the bus in rural areas but then it shut down. He worked as a painter, carpenter, but it was all short-term work, because he had spinal problems.

He finally got a job as a bus driver with HRT (Honolulu Rapid Transit) owned by Harry Weinberg.

GK: What about your mom?

KO: My mom stayed home, I guess, because my dad was possessive, old-style, old school. . . My dad demanded his clothes was starched and ironed. I hated starched clothes. It was uncomfortable.

GK: How many brothers and sisters did you have and did you bring home lunch or pay for lunch?

KO: I had five brothers and two sisters. I made my own bread and butter, and my mother would give me milk money if we could afford it. But when I went to school, the teachers saw what students weren't eating right. So, out of the teachers' pocket, she got me lunch sometimes. She was a Japanese teacher, she was young, different generation than my other Japanese teachers.

GK: How were you and other Hawaiians treated in school in the 1950s and 1960s?

KO: Elementary school was the first place where I experienced racism. During those days, to be a Hawaiian meant you were in the lowest class of people, primarily because we were construction workers, service workers. Everything that the Filipinos do today, we used to do then. Everything the Koreans and other immigrants did now, we did. The stereotype kept us at the bottom.

GK: What was the stereotype?

KO: One day, my first grade teacher—she was Japanese—said, "Kenji and Nakamura-san, when you boys grow up, you boys will be good students and you boys will become lawyers and doctors. Kalani, when you grow up, you will be. . . one great truck driver."

I didn't want to be a truck driver because of my physical condition. I looked at her and I said, "I don't wanna be a truck driver." "What do you wanna be then?" she asked. "I wanna be a lawyer too," I said. She goes, "No, no, no, no, no. You cannot be a lawyer because Hawaiians are not lawyers. They're truck drivers." After that day, I hated her. She just wanted to put her foot on me and think that I was gonna let it go.

GK: Did you let it go?

KO: No. Every day, I had a question for her. "How come the rich. . . these people gotta be considered to be richer than our people because we lived in different locations even though it's only right across the street? My mom works. My dad works. How come they cannot have enough income to live across the street." So, I asked her, "How come?" She said, "I told you. Because you folks are Hawaiians."

I was getting angry at my parents. I used to go home and ask my mom questions. My mom used to say, "Look. We have what we have because that's the kinda jobs that we have. So, I want you to be patient because one day, you will get the things that you want in life. We're not the enemy. We're your parents." (Laughter)

So, uh, and all my life, I had Japanese teachers. Some were very good. Some were terrible. But, you know, they're all different. And that's what I noticed. Because I cannot blame my fourth, fifth grade teachers for what my first-grade teacher said to me. And I didn't. That's the way it goes.

GK: That's tough.

KO: And all my vice principals and principals were Japanese.

GK: (Laughter) Do you feel like as a Hawaiian in Hawaii, you're a victim of the tracking system?

KO: All the time. We all are. Whether we're working, whether we're going to schools, whether we're uh in the unions, or whether we're in the non-unions, the tracking system affects you throughout your whole life, sometimes without even your knowledge that it exists.

GK: How was it structured?

KO: Kaimuki was a different kind of school because most Hawaiians and Filipinos were in the same class. . . (Laughs) and Samoans. We're all in the same class, whether it would be math, science, history, English, P.E. The majority of the teachers that they had in the mid 50s were totally biased and were totally racist towards Hawaiians, Filipinos and whatever.

Even though I was just a kid, I understood what they said. I understood the segregation of each race and the purpose of it. The development of the tracking system is very important to the colonizers, very important to the school system because that's how they keep us in place. Yeah, by categorizing us, Section 1 to Section Y.

GK: (Laughter) What section were you in?

KO: I moved from Section 1 to Section 4 by the time I became senior in high school

GK: Section 4. And how many sections were there?

KO: Five. The top section was Section 5. I loved math and I loved science.

GK: That's good. I don't think I ever saw an "A" when I was going to school.

KO: (Laughter) Well, you see, in high school, I had teachers who looked at me as a human

being. They knew that I had problems with speech and stuff like that. But they said, "You know, English is not the only language, even though it is a standard for American schools." My teacher said, "It's not the only language. Learn other languages. Become a linguist. Because that way, you can share with people. You can multiply the audience that you speak to by learning, by becoming a linguist, you know. You cannot do that when you only speak English.". . . I never became a linguist. I had a hard time just learning one language. (Laughter)

GK: How was your home life while you were in the housing?

KO: I became a problem with my father. He used to beat me up with a barber shop strap with the metal on the edge. I used to be black and blue from here way down to my ankles. I wore a long sleeve shirt and jacket to school. The teachers couldn't understand why and would ask, "Isn't it freaking hot? So when they told me to take off my jacket, I never like.

GK: So what happened?

KO: So one day, I took it off. The abuse wasn't handled well as it is today. Our days was, "Okay. The kid's beaten up. Maybe it's good for the kid." That was the cops' point of view. But I was loved by my maternal and paternal families. They each took turns in taking me in and raising me.

GK: Where did they live?

KO: Nanakuli, Waianae, Alewa Heights, Hawaii Kai before it was Hawaii Kai. My auntie from Nanakuli was like my second mom. She was my father's older sister. Every time she'd go to my house, she'd see me black and blue. She would start yelling at my father (laughter) and scolding him. And she told him, "What's wrong with you? You're not supposed to hit this boy. You may never know when he grows up, he might be gifted. You may never know. He's not failing you. You're failing him as a father." When I was eight years old and ten years old, I tried to stab my father with a tailor's scissors.

GK: Wow. . . What was your happiest moment as a child?

KO: Being with my cousins and family on their Hawaiian Homestead. My auntie's family had pigs, ducks, chickens. My auntie used to make her own beer.

GK: Who were your friends when you were growing up?

KO: All my friends. . . at the beginning of high school came from the housing. We grew up together. We knew each other's good habits, bad habits, religion, churches. We'd all go to the same churches. Then, the criminal elements slowly seeped into the group. And then, one by one, we had all these Johnny Mahoes in our group— that's the song that Brother Iz sang about.

GK: Tell me about it?

KO: That song was about Hawaiians who cannot find their way out of the criminal element or the environment where they come from. And it's very hard, especially if you're making good money, or what appeared to be good money to us.

GK: What was good money?

KO: Good money was anything made over $100.

GK: Yeah.

KO: So friends ended up stealing cars, taking them to the chop shop, selling auto parts, selling the engines, selling the tires, the stereos.

GK: What about you? What did you do for money as a teenager?

KO: Sometimes on weekends, my friends and I would walk from Palolo down to Waikiki in the morning. We'd open the newspaper vending machines and take the newspapers and sell them.

GK: On the streets?

KO: Mainly, we'd go up to the hotel rooms and sell them to visitors. You know, I'd say, "Good morning, sir. Would you like to buy the *Honolulu Advertiser.* It's full of information about the weather, entertainment, sales, real estate." We didn't have change so we got dollars in tip.

GK: What did you do with the money?

KO: Oh we'd buy lunch and pay for a cab to go back home.

GK: How was your high school social life?

KO: My problem was that my life was unbalanced because I couldn't get a girlfriend because of how I looked. (Laughter) So every day, I look at the mirror. I'd go, "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the best looking of them all?" The damn mirror never gave the answer. (Laughter)

GK: (Laughter) How did you make the transition?

KO: A good friend in my group—she went to St. Francis school—set me up for the prom with this beautiful Hawaiian girl. When I looked at her, I really felt insecure. You know what I'm saying?

GK: Oh, yeah.

KO: I went into my boyish bullshit stuff. So anyway, the girl asked me, "Are you uncomfortable?" I told her, "Yeah," and she goes, "Why?" I told her, "Because this is the first time in my whole life that I had an opportunity to sit close to a woman, to a young woman." And she goes, "And? What do you think?" I said, "I think it's wonderful. But right now, I wanna act like Jerry Lewis (laughter) and just get all googly-eyed and act nuts."

GK: Yeah.

KO: I told her how I felt in general in terms, of how important it was for me to have a relationship, whether it's holding hands, talking story, and all of that. I never did use the phone. I just felt like we shouldn't waste time on the phone, so I would take her hiking in the mountains. So, relationships were very important to me because instead of growing outward in having these relationships, I was growing inward. I felt like something was really wrong with me.

GK: How did you get involved in activism? How did that happen?

KO: Remember I shared with you earlier that I knew the difference between right and wrong?

GK: Yes.

KO: I knew that there was something wrong with how Hawaiians were treated, why we were being treated in such a way, in such a manner. How come I couldn't speak my own language? I used to ask my elementary school teachers then, from elementary, intermediate, all the way to high school. They had no answer because they didn't know the history. And because they didn't know the history, we were deprived of the truth. When you're deprived of your history, you really don't know what the hell is going on. And that's why the history is so important to me. I had an "A" in history, even though it wasn't our history. But I also had an A—believe it or not—I had an A in English. . . I had a B in Math.

GK: Were you involved in youth leadership activities in high school?

KO: You know, (sighs) again, it always falls back to being Hawaiian. They weren't ready to accept us as leaders. They were not ready to accept us as youth leaders. I applied to the YMCA. I applied to go to the YMCA Youth Legislature (chuckles). Rejected. So I went through this whole list of rejections, and I said, "Ah, what the hell. Maybe it's not my time yet." But I always knew that, there were ongoing things in the community and right outside the community.

GK: So what happened?

KO: When I was in high school, I met these two Vista (Volunteers In Service To America) workers who came from the mainland—one from New York and one from Oregon.

GK: How did you get to know the Vista workers?

KO: They asked youths in the housing, "Who's the leader over here?" And somehow, my name always got mentioned to them. So, they came to my house. They asked for Maurice. That's my school name.

KO: So I said, "I'm Maurice." And they go, "Hi. My name is Mark Bauer. And my name is Ted Height, and we work for Vista. And I asked, "Isn't that a color TV?" (Laughter)

GK: (Laughter)

KO: They go, "No, no, no. It's a social program to provide social services for poverty areas, such as Palolo Housing, KPT, Mayor Wright, et cetera, et cetera." So, I said, "Okay, come, come inside." So, my mom was cooking pork chops. And so I said, "Sit down. We'll go make a plate for you folks." So, my mom, she made pork chops and, you know, whatever.

GK: Yeah.

KO: They were surprised because they worked in Appalachia in Virginia. They said that the generosity and lifestyle there is very similar to Hawaii—they give you what they have to eat.

So, I said, "So, what else. . . are you folks connected with?" So, they said, "Do you know the name John Witeck?" I said, "Never heard of him." They said, "Well, John Witeck—he belongs to a small youth group called Youth Action. And he wanted to give you a job that would pay you only a stipend at first." I asked, "What's a stipend?" They said, "Well, a stipend is something like they give you $60 to $80 a month to go into the community, to learn how to do community organizing. Have you heard of Saul Alinsky?" I said, "Never heard of him." (Laughter)

GK: (Laughter)

KO: "Well, they're gonna train you how to become a community organizer by reading Saul Alinsky's books." I said, "Really? Is that how you become a community organizer? You read a book? I thought community organizers come from the community and they go and do whatever they need to do." And they go, "Oh, this kid is a little bit smarter than we thought." (Laughter)

GK: So what did you think of the Vista workers?

KO: Well, what I thought about at that time, when I first met them was that, "Why are these Caucasians so interested in our lifestyle, how we live?" I didn't wanna talk to them because I didn't wanna play somebody else's game. So I asked them point blank, "What is it that you see about my community that is so interesting to you, being that you're from Oregon, you're from New York?"

GK: So what was their point?

KO: They needed help because they wanted to start an alternative learning center because there were a lot of DOs—school dropouts in Palolo Housing—16 of them.

The Vista workers had no other person to go and talk to them. I said, "I can talk to them. But you gotta also give them stipends. And every month, you gotta have some place where they can all go to." Well, the principal of this new school was good friends with the music group SOS—Society of Seven.

GK: Oh?

KO: (Laughter) So every month, we went to see the SOS at the Waikiki Outrigger Hotel, and the band members recognized us from Palolo Housing and stuff like that.

GK: Cool.

KO: And, so, they asked us, "Who's got talent from Palolo Housing?" Everybody looked at me, and I'd go, "Come on. Come on, you guys. Don't look at me." (Laughter)

GK: (Laughter)

KO: My friends said, "This guy can sing." So, I sang a Tom Jones song with them.

GK: Cool. What song?

KO: "Green Grass of Home."

GK: Oh. That's a beautiful song. So what happened to you and your Palolo friends?

KO: So I gathered all my friends because they're dropouts from school. And the Vista workers and I wanted them to finish school, to get a degree. And to our surprise, it took them only a year and a half to get a GED (General Education Diploma, the equivalent of a high school degree). And when they got the GED, they were 16 years old, some 15 and 14.

GK: Wow.

KO: They got their GED. So, they didn't have to go to high school. That helped some of

my friends a lot. Some of them went to HCC (Honolulu Community College) and KCC (Kapiolani Community College) and all that. And I was happy.

GK: What about you?

KO: I graduated from Kaimuki High.

GK: So did you meet other people than the Vista workers?

KO: They took me around with them. . . They introduced me to activists—anti-war, land activist, environmental activists. That's how I met Save Our Surf leader John Kelly. That's how John Kelly introduced me to ocean scientist Jacques Cousteau and Philippe, Jacques' son.

GK: Wow.

KO: They helped to enlighten me. John Kelly, Youth Action John Witeck, and Bishop Museum archaeologist Marion Kelly were some of my mentors. I had no experience. They explained to me about the environmental impact that's happening in this world because of the corporate structure not heeding its responsibilities to keep the earth clean, to keep this planet clean.

GK: Were there any other mentors?

KO: There were other women in our movement who were mentors to me—Setsu Okubo, who used to teach at Roosevelt, and her friends, her cohorts.

GK: How would they mentor you?

KO: They would share their history with me in terms of Ethnic Studies history, the experiences they went through on the plantations.

GK: Did your associations with them lead you to anything else?

KO: At one point, John Witeck with Youth Action said, "Look. I don't have money to pay you a regular salary, but I can give you a stipend every month to do community organizing for me." And I said to him, "I don't know nothing about community organizing." John said, "Look! What you've been doing working with the Vista workers, that's community organizing."

GK: How did you reconcile this whole thing with pacifism and what was happening?

KO: There are a lot of Hawaiian families who have become rednecks, and their children just followed their father. I wasn't a redneck, but I talked like one because my dad did, being close to my dad, my uncles, and my older male siblings. I could see John Witeck's

point of view. I could see where he was coming from. He introduced me to the American Friends Service Committee. We became good friends. And I found out their values and my values were almost the same. So, I liked what they were doing.

GK: Did that change your feelings about issues?

KO: After I found out what war was all about, I became anti-war. For us guys from the ghetto, war was about going and participating and being a patriot for our country and to fight for our freedoms and all that. But there just was no connection between us and freedom. . . These wars are created through all these big corporations having conflicts in their interest in gas, oil, lumber, rubber and all of that. That was why Vietnam was important to the corporate structure.

GK: What was your feeling about what was going on?

KO: Well, there was a greater sense in me that wanted to see a political base here in Hawaii that could address the needs of the poor, that could address the needs of all ethnicities, and basically, poverty-driven type of communities. What that meant to me was that we needed social change, political change, economic change.

GK: There's a lot of land ownership concentration in Hawaii. Back in 1969, a book called *Public Land Policy in Hawaii* was published disclosing that about 93 percent of the land in Hawaii was owned by 100 or less individuals, corporations, trusts, and government entities. How do you feel about that?

KO: Everybody knows about that elephant in the room. But they refuse to change the status quo for whatever reason—social norms, financial advancement. . . Everybody has their own reason why they're doing what they're doing in this system. And this is the only system that they know of. . . There cannot be equality when there are two classes of people—the rich and the poor.

GK: What about the state Legislature and those elected to office?

KO: At the state Legislature, you have all these senators and representatives who are associated with businesses, interlocking directorates. What that means is that they will spend more time working for their business interest than the interest of the people who voted them in. So, what that means is that all of us who organized to hold campaign signs for them, all we got was a case of beer, hotdogs and chili. I don't care where you go in this world, they can call it a democracy, they can call it whatever, but there can be no democracy when there are two classes of people: the rich and the poor. If there is two classes, such as that in any country, then it'll always favor the rich and never the poor. So that is why we have all these conflicts today.

GK: Tell me about the geo-political tours you conducted while a member of Kokua Hawaii in the 1970s?

KO: I would start basically in Kalama Valley. I'd take them through the valley. This is what the nursery man does. This is what people who worked in the nurseries do. This is what people who take care of horses do. This is what the pig farmers do. This is what the other nursery flower man do. They sell flowers. And their lifestyle depends on how much they put out in volume, and how open the market is to them. . . I would take them to where all the important and unimportant decisions were made, state Legislature. Give them a brief history of the United States Congress and DHHL (Department of Hawaiian Home Lands). Then, I'd talk about Aloha Aina, and what we mean by Aloha Aina. I'd also talk about the U.S. Congress who create and passed racially biased policies to oppress people of color, in this case, Native Hawaiians.

GK: How did you and Larry arrange to speak in Oahu Prison?

KO: I called up Larry, and I said, Larry I met this guy from Waimanalo, and he's a social worker and been working with the prisoners for the last 10 years, and he's got a club inside of the prison called the Blue Moon Jaycees. All the fund-raising from them every year went to the school kids or the students at Waimanalo Elementary and Intermediate. The social worker was looking for someone outside the prison community who could think, interpret, talk like them. . . We met them. I talked to them about Kalama Valley. I knew some of them, the younger ones that were from Palolo Housing. I'm talking about 20 brothers and sisters. Like me, they hated the system, but we did different things to try to resolve the problems. . .They were all hyped. They never like us to go home. They were telling the guards, "I think these guys should stay here for a couple of weeks."

GK: What percentage of the prison population were native Hawaiian? Fifty percent?

KO: More than that.

GK: As a member of Kokua Hawaii, you and Edwina Moanikeala Akaka went to conferences on the U.S. continent. How did that happen?

KO: There was an Asian conference going on there and also a meeting with the Young Lords. I don't know why. And I said, who do you most want to go represent Hawaii? And the Kokua Hawaii group said, "You're one of them." I don't know what to say. That was the first time I've been off of this island.

GK: So, Kalani, when did you go to New York to visit the Young Lords?

KO: It was in November 1970. Kokua Hawaii also wanted two people to represent them at the Black Panthers' conference in D.C. in late October. So, we got on a train from New York to Washington, DC. That was the first time I've been on a train.

GK: So what happened?

KO: So, I was up there with shorts and T-shirt, and it was winter in New York.

GK: (Laughs)

KO: (Laughs) And I go, "It's cold over here."

GK: (Chuckles)

KO: So they rode with somebody to go get some winter clothes. They dressed me up, with the sunglasses. . . I looked exactly like Malcolm X.

GK: (Laughs) So, what did you learn?

KO: Through visiting all of these small political groups, I learned how people of color dealt with oppression, that programs need to exist to fight the oppression. . . Slowly, things gradually began to sink into me. I started to feel the militancy that the Young Lords and the Black Panther Party had.

GK: The Young Lords (Puerto Ricans, formerly a street gang) were involved in fighting evictions from buildings?

KO: Yes. I was there at that time. The buildings that they were protesting against the evictions were actually abandoned buildings in East Harlem. Families who couldn't afford rent or even electricity or heat during the winter time moved into these buildings.

GK: Tell me about these buildings?

KO: There was no running water, electricity, so and so forth. So, a lot of people provided their own generators, enough for three apartments, and they shared the cost of the generator—the maintenance, the gasoline, everything.

GK: You stayed there?

KO: I stayed with a family. The rats were half feet long and were in the same room the children were in. I cannot go sleep when the rats are running around. One morning, I started chasing them and whacking them (laughs). I'm not used to that. So, the ones living in the room said, "Relax. They're not gonna harm us, they know us." "Oh, really?" I said.

GK: Despite the cold, they still got evicted from the buildings?

KO: They still got evicted from abandoned buildings. Correct.

GK: What happened after the evictions?

KO: They went back about two or three times. The Young Lords had a base that they were working out of—a Catholic church.

GK: Right. They had a breakfast program for children before they went to school?

KO: Their programs were similar to the Black Panthers. . . I found out that the social services that the Young Lords Party was providing was replicated through what the Black Panthers did.

GK: Where else did you go?

KO: We went to Chicago for a couple of days with the Young Lords, Oakland with the Black Panthers, UC Berkeley, San Francisco. I had about six speaking engagements.

GK: What did you talk about?

KO: Kalama Valley. I gave a historical overview about the haole oligarchy going against King Kalakaua prior to 1890, the marines and the Queen's abdication, not a surrender, saying she conceded to the U.S.

GK: Who did you meet in San Francisco?

KO: I met Carmen Chow. She was with I Wor Kuen (a group helping to fight against an eviction at the International Hotel in San Francisco.)

GK: What did you learn on these trips?

KO: I learned about the importance of building social-political consciousness and how important it was as a tool for minorities, as a tool for Native Americans, as a tool for Native Hawaiians. These Puerto Rican and African American leaders were saying, "Look. We are the same no matter what color we are. But the thing is that we are not treated the same. We are treated so differently and so oppressively that we need to find other avenues and to get our expressions out in terms of how we feel, how we think, how we write, our art, our culture."

GK: What did you think about that?

KO: These leaders—Bobby Seale, Angela Davis—were great. They themselves were prolific writers and they were terrific speakers. Bobby Seal became the mayor of Oakland. He was teaching in Berkeley, and he was teaching a seminar that Larry Kamakawiwoole attended as a student.(Laugh) Larry at first got cultural shock when he went into the class, but he said it made sense and it all started coming together. And I said I know that. I used to be like that. Larry, he sort of sounded like Martin Luther King, and I told myself I'm going to follow this guy. When we ended up in the same organization I was so happy. At the same time, I didn't know that Larry was going through some emotional change in the 1970s, especially when his name came up to be the Ethnic Studies director at University of Hawaii–Manoa campus.

GK: Okay. So you were influenced by the Black Panthers, Young Lords, and Martin Luther King. Who else?

KO: Malcolm X. I read all his books. He helped me.

GK: In what way?

KO: He helped me to become more analytical in politics, in economics, and in things that are not happening that should have been happening. . . I was able to dream if these things did happen, these would be the possible changes that would take place.

GK: How did that help you? I know there was talk among Kokua Hawaii members about physically resisting the eviction, rather than passive resistance.

KO: I think it's very, very important to ponder as a circle of leaders in terms of, "What do we do now? What should we do now? Is this more of a right avenue to go? Let's choose and make our own roads." Leaders have to take responsibility for every death, every injury that occurs in the group. This resistance was against the policies of the United States and the state and corporations, not against just a police department. We're not going to fight the Army, the Marines, the Navy, the Air Force, the Coast Guard with rifles and your bullets. . . The thing is that we wanted to create something that would catch on, like a fire, just (whooshing sound) right through the islands. Civil disobedience, non-cooperation was the way.

GK: Who were people you thought were successful in doing this?

KO: Well, Mahatma Gandhi (leader of the independence movement in India) and Phil and Daniel Berrigan (brothers who were Catholic and protested against the Vietnam War by burning draft card records). In Hawaii, we had many— John Witeck, the American Friends Service Committee, and John and Aiko Reinecke.

GK: How did you meet Larry Kamakawiwoole?

KO: I met him at the Youth Congress in 1969 on the University of Hawaii campus. I stayed in a dormitory. I think I might have met him also a few times before through John Witeck, and Mervyn Chang, and Van Kralingen who ran the ***Hawaii Free Press*** on School Street.

GK: How was the Youth Congress?

KO: It was totally interesting. We had the pro-war guys, the anti-war guys, then thrown into the debate were land troubles, and the things that were happening on the land like evictions of Hawaiians. . . The relationship between Larry and I started when I met him at the Kokua Kalama Valley meetings with the residents. What drew me closer to him was his speaking abilities, and how he speaks to students, how he speaks to Native Hawaiians,

how he speaks for Native Hawaiians. He was always astute about being definitive about history. History is like a weapon to us because we have the ability to make an analysis. . . to bring out the truth. When he has an open forum, an open door to speak his mind, he does it very eloquently like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

GK: What did you think about the discussions about evictions?

KO: I don't know if you can call it ethnogenocide, or whatever, but that's what it looks like. When you go through an eviction, bulldozers come. The families are outside of the house. All of their belongings are inside of the house. And the trauma and the terror continues on to the point of impact where everybody either get arrested or they walk away. And it's hard to walk away, especially if you are indigenous to this island, to this land. It's hard to walk away from that. It's hard to walk away from your memories. It's hard to walk away from your relationships from that community. Because you take it with you wherever you go for the rest of your life.

GK: How was the state Capitol demonstration organized in November 1970?

KO: Before the rally, we had a big meeting at John Kelly's house. Kelly said he was going to represent the environmental side. I know Save Our Surf was involved in protecting the environment and opposed to the development of Magic Island. I said I would be coming from what I've been saying at all of the high schools, encouraging youths to focus on their vision. I talked about Kalama Valley. I talked about the plantation system. I talked about the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy. I talked about the misuse of Hawaiian Homes lands. Lo and behold, the crowd understood that.

GK: Who were some of the students?

KO: At Setsu Okubo's class at Roosevelt, there was Eric Gill (a future labor leader), Roland Kotani (a future legislator), and Sylvia Thompson (a future activist and restaurateur).

GK: Where else did you speak?

KO: I spoke at Kamehameha Schools several times. Each time, there were Bishop Estate trustees. . . I'm not against educating Hawaiians. It's the other part of what they're doing. It's the intent of Bishop Estate as a real estate business.

GK: How did you meet Soli (Henry Soli Niheu)?

KO: We met at the Youth Congress. He was the recreation director at Palama Settlement.

GK: Who arranged the interview with Francine du Plessix Gray who wrote about Kokua Kalama and you in the book, *Hawaii: The Sugar-Coated Fortress*?

KO: She found me through John Witeck. For some reason, she was directed to the

American Friends Service Committee who called John, who told John what this lady was in Hawaii for. She was a writer for the *New Yorker,* the magazine. And she wanted to speak to a Native Hawaiian, and she heard about me. So, she asked to meet with me.

GK: Where did you meet?

KO: I met her up in the Nuuanu Pali area, sitting amongst the gingers and awapuhi in the bamboo forest. That's where I held the first interview with her.

GK: What was your impression of her?

KO: I'd never met a French lady before. (Laughs) She was very tall, very pretty, very slim, but aristocratic. Her husband was a master artist and well-known. She's a very complete person.

GK: Do you remember what she asked?

KO: She went through this whole clinical thing about Hawaiians being overthrown, about asking me who I was, where I was born, what kind of education background I had, uh, my involvement in the movement, what's so important about being involved in the movement? Then the discussion just snow-balled. Then it became something good for her, because it helped her write the book, *Sugar-Coated Fortress.*

GK: How did it snow-ball?

KO: I introduced a lot of other people to her—Pete Thompson (University of Hawaii Ethnic Studies instructor), John Kelly (Save Our Surf founder). She met George Cooper (later co-author of *Land and Power In Hawaii)*. She interviewed them also, and then her story got better and better. Everything started to expand, in terms of what is interlocking with the legislative connection, what is interlocking with the financial systems, with the corporate structure here and the Pacific Basin, and the importance of the Pacific Basin. . . Everything revolved around the sugar plantation system, the Big Five.

GK: What was the reasoning behind having Kokua Hawaii as a multi-ethnic group?

KO: In one of our critical and important meetings at Kokua Hawaii, we discussed the multi-national question, specifically what do we think about foreigners on this island and how do we treat them. There were many, you know we had something like 28 Kokua Hawaii members and associates at that meeting. It ended up like 18 different versions. Most of them were for getting rid of the foreigners. I spoke last. I always speak last because I want to hear what everybody has to say. I said, after hearing everyone, that number one—we cannot disregard or dismiss any other race from these islands.

The more ethnicities we have involved, the more numbers we gain. Numbers create the majority. Majority is what changes the situation. Collectively, we can change that. And

collectively we can become the majority. We need to focus and concentrate on creating a majority. I'm talking about majority vote in the Democratic Party, majority vote in the Republican Party, majority vote in any political party. But we need the majority.

GK: What do you think of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement?

KO: The Native Hawaiians are still struggling. We have 20, 30 plus sovereignty groups who have different political and social consciousness on how to resolve the problems of land ownership, land leases, taxes. How can we become self-sufficient and have self-determination when we don't even have a tax system that would take care of our needs?

GK: Tell me about some programs developed for Native Hawaiians in the early 1970s?

KO: I was a part of the first Native Hawaiian language preschool. It was in Waimanalo. The first person to help us with developing this program was kupuna Lilia Hale.

GK: Tell me about Kahuna Sammy Lono who supported Kokua Hawaii?

KO: I was very close with uncle Sam Lono. I always used to go to his place up in Haiku at least two to three times a week.

GK: Why did you go there?

KO: He wanted me to become an assistant to him. I told him I got a growing family. I've got to work. I was also attending Hawaii Loa College at the time.

GK: I know you've spoken with Kalama Valley residents after the eviction. Have they shared their feelings with you about the eviction?

KO: When I meet these people, even until today, they talk about it. So that indicates to me that, you know, they're still hurt a little bit. . . the anger of being defeated by something that you cannot see is very traumatic for all people.

GK: How did you feel about the Kokua Hawaii leadership's decision in Kalama Valley to ask non-locals to leave the valley before the arrest?

KO: Larry and I went that night to a meeting outside the valley with Bishop Estate trustees. That meeting in Kalama Valley should have included Larry and I, and not excluded us. It was a major decision. . . I was very concerned about how the news media would take this. . .

GK: I know that in Kokua Hawaii, people came from different backgrounds and beliefs. Some were Marxist, Maoist, peace activists, and people in favor of farmers' rights and Native Hawaiian rights. Where were you in this?

KO: I was never anti-Christian.

GK: So how did you resolve these conflicting interests?

KO: It was never a conflict because, to me, our practice of Aloha Aina is part of the culture. To respect an indigenous culture is the highest respect any indigenous people can receive. The truth is there is no contradiction or conflict in Aloha Aina.

GK: What about the Kokua Hawaii studying Maxist-Leninism?

KO: We had to read all that stuff to understand what social consciousness meant globally, and what it meant at home.

GK: How did Kokua Hawaii manage to grow in membership into dozens of organizers and associates?

KO: It grew because of the political education, internal political education that we were having because it stirred up a lot of people. . . especially in its multi-ethnic concept of leadership. If you looked around the room at our meetings, we were not all Native Hawaiians. So, we weren't talking about one thing; we talked about everything.

GK: So what happened?

KO: It got to the point where a big coalition protested at the state Capitol in 1970-71. Thousands of people—Kokua Hawaii, environmentalists, social action groups, social justice groups, Save Our Surf, American Friends Service Committee. We also had teachers in high schools who supported us—Setsu Okubo from Roosevelt, Aiea High School teacher Glenn Oshiro.

GK: What was happening in the year before the arrest and during the protest against the eviction?

KO: The Bishop Estate said no matter if they had to breach the leases, they would compensate for that breach to the lessees. George refused. . . All of the residents that were left refused. . . But at the same time, Hawaiian Homes intervened and offered some Native Hawaiian residents who were on its waiting list homes in Waimanalo. So, that's how the migration from Kalama Valley to Waimanalo took place. My family lives right around the block from some Kalama Valley residents.

GK: So, that's why by the time of the arrest of 32 people in Kalama Valley, most of the residents had moved or were getting ready to move?

KO: Yeah.

GK: Well, you can't really blame them?

KO: We didn't. We didn't. In fact, we were happy for them. At the same time, Kokua Hawaii was working to develop an alternative proposal for housing. Larry and I never had the chance to follow through with the plans that we had. We had John Waihee, who was a planner for Model Cities (later to become governor). We asked him to make our plans for low-income, middle-income and high-income in that valley.

GK: What were your hopes when you were in the movement?

KO: My hopes and aspirations while in the movement was to do my job. My job was to raise social and political consciousness. And to raise social and political consciousness, you would have to do tons and tons of research. And those days, we used to put all our research into our heads. We didn't have computers. We didn't have all the high-tech things we have today. I just spoke about colonialism and how it affects us in so many diverse ways and how it's responsible for our behaviors, how it affects our jobs.

GK: What do you think about the current sovereignty movement and the dozens of sovereignty groups?

KO: I have a lot of thoughts and emotions. First of all, I think that there are a lot of people who are self-proclaimed Hawaiian leaders and stuff like that. And, in actuality, they steer away from what makes them accountable, makes them responsible for the things that they say. Especially if they start talking negatively against other Hawaiian indigenous people and organizations, because once they do that, they're mocking the whole movement.

GK: What do you think of the leaders in social movements in Hawaii?

KO: We need to take a stronger look and a better look at the Hawaiian leadership as well as the local leadership of the movement. Leadership in the movement is very. . . indecisive in terms of what they're trying to say. They seem to conflict with each other. That's not good. The main thing is lokahi, unity. We need to stress lokahi and how important that is as a virtue for not just Native Hawaiians, but all people in the movement.

GK: What do you think about the current leadership or the people who are connected to academia? Do you have any opinions at this point?

KO: It has changed. More Hawaiians have more opportunities now to attend college and to get a college degree. My wife is an example of that and other Hawaiians are examples of that. You and I know in terms of the colonial process, this is an example of colonization at its highest. So, where do we go from here? Do we say that universities are no good? Do we say that college is no good? No. We don't say that. We cannot say that because it has its plus and minuses. Well, you're a graduate yourself.

GK: In journalism (Laughs)

KO: That's a Cross (reference to Christian cross and bearing witness and responsibility). I call it a cross. I think it's how it's applied.

GK: So how do you feel now, looking back at what you've done in the movement?

KO: I've never given up on the movement. In fact, before 1985, we got involved in the Makapuu occupation standoff, we got involved in the Waimanalo Beach Park beach arrest. Our thing was to teach the Native Hawaiians on the beach that you must remember that we are all on the waiting list for Hawaiian homestead lands. The lands that we are camping on at Waimanalo Beach Park is our lands, Hawaiian Homes lands. But they want to say that it is public lands. It is not public lands. It is land illegally given to the City and County.

The majority of the people who were living on the beach didn't know how to research issues. We helped to teach them how to research issues. We taught them what to read. We sent them to the Legislative Reference Bureau and other places, not just to gather information on Hawaiian Homestead but also on public ceded lands.

So, in that meantime while we were organizing on Waimanalo Beach, the Native Hawaiians grew in terms of political and social consciousness. They grew in terms of having more self-respect for who they are and what they are. . .

GK: Do you regret anything as far as being an activist?

KO: I don't regret anything that I have done in the past in serving our people, because that's what it's all about, to serve the people. I have no regrets at all, and I love each one who participated in our organization. We all learned and became better people.

God has blessed me in meeting the right people at the right time. Because I had other ideas and concepts of Caucasians until I met John and Mark and all these other haoles. They were very smart, very intelligent. . . not on all or everything, but a lot of the things that they shared with me made sense. . . As a Kokua Hawaii leader, I always sought a second opinion, (laughs) I always came back to Pete Thompson, Larry Kamakawiwoole, and Joy Ahn (Kokua Hawaii member who was a former aide to Congresswoman Patsy Mink).

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Wallace Fukunaga

Wallace Fukunaga
Photo courtesy of the Fukunaga family

The Rev. Wallace Fukunaga served as the campus minister of the United Church of Christ, overseeing the ministry of the Off Center Coffeehouse on Seaview Avenue near the University of Hawaii-Manoa from 1965 to 1972—a period marked by the emergence of the peace movement in Hawaii, an exploration of lifestyles among youths, and the start of the Hawaiian Renaissance.[1] The red brick building housing Off Center Coffee House became a major center for debates and meetings of groups, including gatherings by Kokua Hawaii members. In an admission of wrongdoing for complicities in the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy, the United Church of Christ in 1993 issued a formal apology to Native Hawaiians.[2] The former coffee house is now the site of a Hawaiian language immersion preschool. The Rev. Fukunaga was serving as a member of the state Hawaii Civil Rights Commission at the time of the interview in November 15, 2015. He was interviewed at his home in Makiki by Gary T. Kubota.

GK: Good morning, Reverend Fukunaga. Could you tell me where you were raised?

WF: I grew up in the Pawaa-Sheridan area of Honolulu. Back then, there were a lot of little homes and it was somewhat rural. Across the street from my home was a fairly large size farm, with water buffaloes, taken care of by these Chinese men. It was a wonderful place to grow up. We lived in a lane that had all relatives. My immediate cousin and our family would share a furo (Japanese bathtub) that my grandfather had made. When I was in the eighth grade, then we moved to Manoa.

GK: What did your dad do for a living?

WF: He started work at Dairymen's as a teenager at about 15 and worked his way up the ranks. By the time I was in the eighth grade, he had become a production manager of the

1. "The Birth of the Modern Hawaiian Movement: Kalama Valley, Oahu;" Haunani Kay-Trask; Hawaiian Historical Society, 1987.
2. United Church of Christ apology to Native Hawaiians. Leaders speeches, 1993.

ice-cream division. He worked there when it turned to Meadow Gold for 50 to 60 years. It was a real long time.

GK: How did you get accepted to Harvard University?

WF: I don't know. All I know is that apparently, I did well enough at McKinley High School, not only academically but also in terms of extracurricular activities. In my junior year at McKinley, I wrote an essay about the United Nations that won a contest and a trip to Washington, D.C. The contest was called a "Pilgrimage For Youth."

GK: Wow.

WF: There were 50 to 60 of us. Then from there, McKinley High School arranged for me to go to the encampment for citizenship in Filson, New York. The visit was for about a month. With me were all kinds of people in all fields—labor, newspapers, universities. We went to the home of Eleanor Roosevelt (wife of the late President Theodore Roosevelt), and met with her. To make a long story short, at one of our events, I met a professor from Harvard, who mentioned to me I might want to consider applying to Harvard. When I came back to Hawaii, my high school advisor Mary Sutherland encouraged me to do so, so I did.

GK: What happened?

WF: (Laughs) I ended up not only getting admitted, but also was offered what was then known as a national scholarship. The next day, I received a letter from Yale University, and I was admitted to Yale.

GK: When was that?

WF: 1956. Back then, a school like Harvard attempted to—and it was good public relations—to put itself forward as a school of diversity, of being somewhat inclusive, of having public school students, not only from the East Coast but also from the whole United States. I think at some point, I just fitted within that profile, of Harvard wanting perhaps to have an Asian. There were other Asians. We were small in number. But at least the school could say it had a real cross section of students.

GK: What did you do after graduating from Harvard?

WF: I went from Harvard to Stanford Law School. But I realized at Stanford, that law school was not suited to my DNA, because the pursuit of law is so linear and adversarial. I was more interested in that which was more universal and spiritual, or if you will, theological.

GK: How did that choice tie into your past?

WF: In high school at McKinley, I sort of became converted to Christianity by going to a youth camp sponsored by Makiki Christian Church. As I was growing up, there was a group that played basketball at the church. Gene Tanabe was a youth leader and he invited us to go to a camp "for free." When the word free came up, eh, man, we would jump. The speaker at the camp was Paul Nagano, a very charismatic kind of guy from California. . . He just gave the altar call at the camp one night and several of us came forward to say, "Yes," and the rest is history. I started becoming more involved.

GK: Were you involved as a Christian while attending college?

WF: I was active at the Park Street Church in Boston. It's the one that sent the first missionaries to Hawaii in 1820. In college, I was already asking—or being more concerned with—theological questions. I took a course from George Buttrick, a preacher and professor of ethics at Harvard. It was very exciting. He opened my mind to a new way of perceiving or understanding the Christian faith in a much more open and inclusive way. He had gone to Princeton Theological Seminary as a visiting professor, and I had been corresponding with him, and I said, "You know what Dr. Buttrick. . . Law is not sitting well with me." So, he said, "Well, why don't you consider going to seminary if you will? I'm going to be at Princeton. Do you want to go to Princeton?" (Laughs) So I did. I just transferred from law school to seminary, and that's it. I received a Master of Divinity. Much later, I received my doctorate in divinity from Pacific University.

GK: So how did you make the transition from Boston to the University of Hawaii campus ministry in Manoa?

WF: It was a time when all the churches felt the need to strengthen its presence on the university campus, because they realized that a lot of students in that age group were beginning to leave churches. When I was a student at Princeton, Joe Bevilacqua who was the conference minister of United Church Of Christ in Hawaii flew over and wanted to interview me to see if I was interested in becoming the campus minister. He also knew I had done one year of a Danforth Fellowship at Berkeley when I was in seminary. The Danforth Foundation was encouraging people to consider the university ministry. They were offering these wonderful fellowships for a whole year. You can live on the campus for a whole year and be with the campus ministry. I did it at Berkeley and I found it very gratifying. I was finishing seminary at the conference here at the United Church of Christ, when the church called me and hired me to be the University of Hawaii minister. I started there about 1965 and ended there in 1972.

GK: So how did you come up with the idea of a coffee house ministry?

WF: Having just come from the East Coast, I had this idea—"Why not change the student center into a coffee house, because the coffee house is more inviting, more open? You know students, instead of saying, I'm going to church, would rather say, "I'm going to Off Center." We made our program a lot more inviting. We had open mic one night. We included a lot of political conversations. We had an open forum on the Vietnam War, on

gay rights, gay liberation that was just beginning, civil rights, tent city, free university—all kinds of stuff that was happening at the university.

GK: How did activism such as groups like Kokua Hawaii fit into your ministry?

WF: The question might be better asked, "How does it fit within your Christian faith?" The ministry is a bit too static or organized. It speaks of an organizational thing, whereas the Christian faith is in and of itself more open and vital and vibrant. Let's speak about the word, "Off Center." The word was purposefully selected to convey the notion or the thought that we wanted to deal with life's ambiguities as well as that which is always at the margin of our society, not necessarily within the center. We wanted to deal with that which raises questions, more than giving answers. It fits really within the context of the Christian faith, because the Christian faith is born out of acknowledging that we don't have the answers altogether. The Christian faith is not a matter of certainty. Otherwise, it's not faith; it's certainty. It wants to be more open again and about wanting to be inclusive. The other part of the faith is it's always concerned about justice. It's always concerned about whether the dignity of a human being and the person's freedom, and the person's God-given spirit, is being duly acknowledged. That's the essence.

When Jesus said, "I'm calling you to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and visit the imprisoned," the Christian faith acknowledges that if you're going to deal with issues of human dignity and freedom, then at some point you've got to deal with the practical needs of people, with the practical aspirations of people, and the actual struggles of people.

Before Kalama Valley and Kokua Hawaii, the Off Center was the place where the burning of a draft card took place.

GK: Oh really?

WF: Yes, it was done by Wayne Hayashi and Stan Masui. These were early founders of the (Vietnam War) Resistance movement at the University of Hawaii. One night there was a gathering of the Resistance. I happened to be in the office in the back, when all of sudden, somebody came in and said, "Guess what? They're burning their draft cards." We were very frankly involved in events at the cutting edge of a number of movements. The first impulse for a free university started among people gathering at the Off Center. The first impulse for a Tent City and Bachman Hall sit-in started at the Off Center. I guess leaders of movements—Noel Kent and John Warner—were all coming to the Off Center to discuss, mobilize, and plot, and so forth.

My role as campus minister was to not just open our doors, but also to listen and engage and then really, frankly, to connect with these movements with the church, with society, so that they are not in isolation, they are not there to remain on the fringe all together. That's the context in which Off Center then became a place where the issue of Kalama Valley erupted.

GK: Tell me about Kokua Hawaii leader Lawrence Kamakawiwoole?

WF: I happened to be a close friend with Larry. He was helping us at the Off Center. He, in fact, took over one summer when I was on leave. He already had his Master of Divinity. He was getting his Master of Education. At the same time, he was hired by the University of Hawaii to become one of the early movers of Ethnic Studies. Larry and I would often sit down and talk story. Off Center was not only a place that allowed human aspirations of people for justice to take place and for dignity and freedom, but also went beyond that to a place where dialogue—critical, critical, critical thinking which includes criticism—can occur. I want to make that clear. As a pastor at the Off Center, I didn't want to just open my doors. I tried my best to be there all the time and to sit in on meetings and to lend my voice and, when needed, to raise some critical questions.

GK: How did that translate in terms of helping Kalama Valley residents and Kokua Hawaii?

WF: I saw our role as helpers—feed the hungry and clothe the naked. We did a lot of social outreach. When the Kalama Valley struggle occurred, I had already begun to be in close communication with not only Larry, but also other Kokua Hawaii leaders Kalani Ohelo and Soli Niheu. One of our roles was to bring food. So, I solicited the churches like Crossroads church. Some of the ladies still remember and tell me, "Oh honey, you remember when we used to go over there, bring the pot of stew?" (Laughs)

GK: You took church members to Kalama Valley?

WF: I said, "Look, if you guys are going to make the stew and rice, you got to come with me so you can meet them and get to know what the issues are and what's going on." Our association with Kalama Valley was educational too.

GK: What was the point?

WF: To open their hearts and minds. My point is that there are so many different facets for what we're doing. Much of them arose not only out of the Christian faith, but also out of a quest to make our faith become alive. How do we make such an event become a learning instrument for the larger community? That's what happened.

GK: Did you run into opposition?

WF: Of course, yes. We became controversial. There was a fairly significant segment of the institution of the church that found what we were doing rather unsettling—threatening, really. There is a segment of Christianity that had become and had for a long time been organized for the rich, the established and powerful. Kalama Valley, the Resistance movement, free university, the anti-war movement—all of that was viewed as un-American or perhaps trouble-making, irresponsible and so forth. So, here we were at the university campus ministry at Off Center, and we're embracing all of it. (Laughs)

GK: What was your response?

WF: Well, at an annual event of United Church Of Christ, there were questions raised. By that point, we were fortunate because we were able to raise money from other sources—the Episcopal Church and other denominations that liked what we were doing and may have not had the same kind of program or presence as we had started. They would give certain kind of funding support to us. Of course, that meant I had to apply. I knew I needed to use whatever gift I had in terms of writing and speaking, so that's what I did. I wrote articles. I got interviewed, and I would go to any church that wanted me to talk to them.

So, while we were still dependent on the United Church of Christ for our funding, we were also able to get funding from other sources. We saw ourselves as servants, and we do it out of the spirit acknowledging we're simply a vessel, and instrument.

GK: So the support from within the Christian community never waned?

WF: While there was criticism, there was support from the same people as well—people saying, "We're not sure what you're doing completely, but it's okay. We're going to vote 'yes,' when it comes to continuing support of the ministry." (Laughs) So there was always enough support.

GK: (Laughs)

WF: It's a learning curve. Everything is a learning curve. Instead of becoming reactionary myself or adversarial, I used that all as a way to affirm our common humanity. That's the kind of stuff I wanted, for us to become an expression or manifestation more real than all the politics.

GK: What's your sense of what happened?

WF: Look at Kalama Valley today. The developer did exactly what they wanted. It's a place for all these fairly high-priced homes. Nonetheless, the movement was very important and valid for the protest to be made because it was such a historical moment. It became in the eyes and minds of a lot of people a kind of a turning point in the Hawaiian movement in Hawaii.

GK: So, how do you feel about it?

WF: What's interesting is, when I left the campus ministry and started working at the Community Church in Honolulu, there was Kokua Hawaii member Soli Niheu attending church on one of my early Sundays. He came for several Sundays. Soli came with the idea that, he said, "Hey, Wallace, I want to give you support." Kokua Hawaii's whole thing was about support, and I'm always ever grateful for that.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

John Witeck

John Witeck
Photo courtesy of the Witeck family

John Witeck, born in 1945 in Washington, D.C., was a founder of Students for a Democratic Society at the University of Hawaii-Manoa in the late 1960s, a national student activist group known for its opposition to the Vietnam War. He also was a part of the activist community that supported the anti-eviction struggle in Kalama Valley. Witeck was a founder of Youth Action and later a founder and executive director of the nonprofit Hawaii People's Fund, providing grants and supporting the application for grants to various groups seeking social change. In 1972 he started working for the United Public Workers and was employed there (despite two firings) until 1998 —for 26 years total— where he worked as an editor of the union newspaper, a union representative, and the Assistant Oahu Division Director. He continues to work as a part-time instructor/lecturer at Honolulu Community College. He was interviewed by Gary T. Kubota at his home in Kalihi on October 7, 2016.

GK: Good morning, John. Tell me about your parents?

JW: My father started his career as a teacher in Wisconsin. He taught in a Catholic school with class from first through eighth grade. He eventually moved to Washington, D.C. from Wisconsin and took up a job with the Commerce Department, so he was a government worker. My mother did the same thing from Kansas. They met in Washington, DC. She converted to Catholicism to marry my father. My father later earned a law degree. I don't think he practiced law. Eventually, he worked for the Senate Appropriations Committee.

GK: Some people might think that Virginia is very conservative? It's the home state of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee.

JW: We lived in Arlington, which had government people there. It was sort of a different type of Virginia. My father was more a progressive labor Democrat. He was always a Democrat farmer/labor supporter. It was a part of the history of Wisconsin. You had the people from Norway and Sweden, et cetera who settled there. . . who had some very progressive AFL, IWW labor politics. I think he was Bohemian German; he was second

generation and knew some German. My mother was Scotch-Irish and related to people like the Byrds.

GK: The explorer or the senator?

JW: Oh, both. They're both related.

GK: Did you come from a large family?

JW: I was the second oldest of seven children—two brothers and four sisters.

GK: Did you go to public schools?

JW: I went to a Catholic school. Sisters of Notre Dame. They had some lady teachers but it was all white. Arlington was mainly white, and Washington, D.C. was 90 percent African American. The whites would go and take the good jobs, the government jobs. The African Americans from Southern Virginia or Maryland or from the district would come to the suburbs, the white suburbs, to work as maids or in other jobs. If you took a bus going into Washington, you'd see the African Americans in buses going the other way.

GK: When you were going to high school, did you have to work?

JW: I was a newspaper boy in Arlington for probably five or six years.

In the summer, because of my father's Senate Appropriations Committee job, I could get summer jobs with various government departments. So, for a couple of years, I worked for the U.S. Senate in the warehouse.

GK: What did you think about the atmosphere of your upbringing?

JW: By the time I got to University of Virginia, the civil rights movement was beginning. Virginia schools were still segregated until the late sixties. Martin Luther King Jr. and a few other ministers made me reflect back on what I grew up in.

GK: Please explain what brought you to Hawaii?

JW: At the University of Virginia, I had done my final paper for a bachelor's degree about the Chinese student movement of 1919 and 1925, but I had never met a Chinese person, and, so, when I worked summers at the U.S. State Department, I learned about a program in Hawaii called the East-West Center. I applied and got accepted. I wanted to study Chinese language and Asian studies.

GK: How did that help you to get here?

JW: The scholarship paid for the room, travel and tuition. I stayed at the university's

Hale Manoa. I started summer school learning Chinese language. I was working toward a master's degree in Asian History.

GK: What year was that?

JW: This would have been 1967. I did the first summer intensive Chinese every day three to six hours a day, and then, of course, I met Asian students at the East-West Center, met Chinese from Taiwan and Filipinos, but not People's Republic Of China Chinese from mainland China. I met other Asians as well—Thais, Vietnamese.

GK: What kind of degree did you have at that time?

JW: I had a bachelor's degree with high honors in Government and Foreign Affairs from the University of Virginia.

GK: How did you get involved in activism?

JW: When I got to the East-West Center, the university had a controversy involving Noel Kent protesting President Lyndon Johnson's visit, and there were East-West Center students who had raised some issues or challenged the Vietnam War. . . Because of my State Department experience, I learned things about the war that made me oppose it.

I was active in the Newman Association on the mainland, a Catholic student group. I thought I would form a Newman Club here. But then I decided to cut to the quick and form a Students for Democratic Society chapter.

GK: What happened?

JW: We handed out fliers for the meeting. We had a meeting at a first floor classroom in Webster Hall. I was surprised. We had more than 80 people. It was overflowing.

GK: Wow.

JW: I remember at the first meeting, I was made president. The students couldn't decide on their position—Was the war in Vietnam a mistake? (chuckles) Was it a result of the capitalist system? We would have debates, and finally, we began holding protests against military recruiters, CIA recruiters coming on campus. And then, we organized around the Oliver Lee case (an anti-Vietnam War teacher who was being denied tenure).

GK: What happened?

JW: We did a sit-in at the university administration building for about 11 days in May. It went quite a while, and I lost my East-West Center grant. They wouldn't even pay for my way back to Virginia. So my parents sent me money. I got pretty much locked out of my dorm room.

GK: Locked out?

JW: I couldn't keep up with my studies. . . There were five graduate courses. At the same time, I sort of lost interest somewhat in the degree. The only recruitment bulletin notices for graduate students in Asian Studies were from the CIA. I didn't take the exams because we were doing a sit-in (laughter) and I met (my future wife) Lucy there.

GK: Only CIA? That's kind of a sobering job-listing reality.

JW: My real interest in Asian studies was student movements. . . Rather than studying about them, I got involved in being part of one and founding one.

GK: That's quite a turn of events?

JW: My activism in Hawaii really influenced my life after that. I had met Lucy through my anti-war draft resistance and draft card burning.

GK: So, you burned your draft card too?

JW: I burned it at least a few times. I went home after I lost my grant. . . and I came back to Hawaii after being drafted.

GK: How did that happen?

JW: I got drafted because I would write my draft board and tell them I no longer wanted a student deferment. That was because so many non-college students were getting drafted from Hawaii especially from Waianae, Kalihi, and Waipahu, and we had a high casualty rate in Hawaii. So, I just felt having a deferment was really a way of avoiding and not taking a stand. So, I burned my draft card, I wrote my draft board, they made me I-A.

GK: What happened?

JW: I was ordered to be drafted in 1968 and to be inducted at Fort DeRussy on Oahu. I refused the induction.

GK: What happened after that?

JW: I was indicted, and I had to face federal trial.

GK: Wow.

JW: I was acquitted. The charges were thrown out because there was a U.S. Supreme Court ruling in a case that when a person burns a draft card, a draft board cannot subject him to the draft. So the court ruled that the draft was not meant to be an instrument of punishment for burning a draft card. There were other criminal penalties that could have

been applied. . . so my case was thrown out.

GK: How did your father react to your activism?

JW: I think he was more worried about the anti-war activities and draft, and the draft resistance, 'cause he worked for the federal government. He had a brother who had a defense department contract, and this brother would call him and say, "You know, your damn son could make trouble for my company because of this anti-war. . . (Laughter) Luckily, my father was not on great terms with his brother, and my mother was supportive. The brother's company made caskets, I think aluminum caskets, to bring home war dead from Vietnam.

GK: Oh.

JW: I think at first, they were thinking I was throwing away my life, throwing away an educational opportunity. They were very worried, but later in life, my mother gave me copies of letters she sent to Congressional people, to the editor of the *Honolulu Advertiser*. . . supporting me in my anti-war stances and the draft resistance. So, I think my mother actually became fairly politicized by it. Later, she supported Jesse Jackson.

GK: So, you were no longer a graduate student on scholarship but you're in Hawaii. What did you do?

JW: I was fortunate to meet people in Hawaii—church people, who had this joint strategy action committee funding available who invited me to apply for a church grant to form a youth movement or some kind of organization. So, that's how in 1969 I formed the group Youth Action which raised money to help youth projects for social change. I worked as Youth Action's $200-a-month coordinator.

GK: Who approached you to form this group?

JW: Larry Jones and the Rev. Wally Fukunaga, and a couple of other progressive people. (Jones was a Honolulu newspaper columnist, and Fukunaga was based at Off Center Coffeehouse as the campus minister for United Church of Christ.)

GK: What happened?

JW: So, we set up the office at the Church of the Crossroads. It eventually led to establishing Hawaii People's Fund, which was founded in 1971. We thought the fund was good for youth groups and would be good for other general community groups. And I'm glad that organization has lasted about 45 years now.

GK: Forty-five years?

JW: Yes, we supported draft counseling, draft resistance, community struggles, Hawaiian struggles, and actually sponsored the first Diamond Head Crater Festival in 1970.

GK: What happened then?

JW. Youth Action received money to conduct a Youth Congress. It wasn't that much money, probably $1,000. We rented one of the University of Hawaii dormitories. We invited many, about 100 youth groups.

GK: So this happened during the summer?

JW: Yeah, it was in June 1970. The news of Bishop Estate's activities in Kalama Valley reached us. Word came back to me at Youth Action. The Youth Congress had passed resolutions on sovereignty and crass development of the islands for tourism and high-priced housing, including Kalama Valley. We had people from that Congress who were willing to take action.

GK: Hmm.

JW: So a few of us went out after I got word of it. Lori Hayashi (now Treschuk), Linton Park and I went out there. I knew Lori through her anti-war work and Linton, through his draft resistance work. Linton's brother Dana was one of the early draft resisters who actually went to jail. . . On a last-minute notice, we got a call. We heard the developer was demolishing houses. . . My wife Lucy had just given birth to Matthew and stayed home. I think I picked up Lori and Linton. This would have been in July 1970.

GK: How did the valley look?

JW: It looked like fairly rough terrain, unpaved dirt roads. We saw a house toward the front of the valley, and we met Moose Lui, who was native Hawaiian, and his wife, and I think they had a grandchild.

GK: What did Moose say?

JW: He said they're starting to tear down houses and people wanted to stay. He said he was sort of the mayor of the valley. He told me he and the residents still there had no place to relocate to. We met George Santos, a pig farmer, and Black Richards and his family who ran a junkyard in the valley. All these residents said they were not going to comply with the eviction notices and wanted to resist.

We heard a bulldozer farther back in the valley and so. . . we drove to the back of the valley, and we actually saw a bulldozer near a house.

GK: What happened next?

JW: We walked up. It was a Quonset hut I believe. It had a front porch built onto it, and Linton, Lori—Lori was like seven months pregnant—and I went in and we looked around and saw that the people still had their stuff, belongings in the house. So, they obviously were just out looking for housing. The bulldozer operator brought the bulldozer fairly close and got out. . . We asked the driver what he was going to do. His name was Tiny and he said he had orders to bulldoze the house. We pointed out that it still had the residents' property inside. Ed Michaels, who was a Bishop Estate official, came up and said that we were trespassing and needed to get out, and we said no, we're not leaving.

GK: Then what happened?

JW: We went onto the porch of the house and sat down and said we would not move. Then Michaels ordered the bulldozer operator to go ahead and knock it down, and Tiny—we found later that Tiny was the name of the bulldozer equipment operator—starts driving right up to the house maybe few feet away and then he turns off the engine, and, of course, we're breathing sighs of relief and he gets out and he throws the keys out into the grass and he said if you wanna do it, you do it, and he walked away (chuckles), and Ed Michaels left, and I guess he called the police 'cause within 10 to 20 minutes, police came and we were arrested.

GK: What were your thoughts?

JW: It was surprising that Bishop Estate had already sent a bulldozer operator into the valley to demolish homes while some residents were still living in the valley and looking for relocation housing. Some houses looked empty but some clearly had residents. Bishop Estate, a large landowner allegedly with the mission of helping Hawaiian keiki have educational opportunities, was rushing to evict Hawaiians like Moose Lui and Black Richards and their families and other local people, pig-raisers, and farmers like George Santos.

GK: How did this incident influence you?

JW: The incident with the bulldozer and Ed Michaels' attitude and arrogance made us more determined to organize opposition to the evictions and so we alerted our movement friends like John Kelly (Save Our Surf founder), Sam Lono (kahuna lapaau), and Youth Congress delegates like Kalani Ohelo. Also, our arrest further convinced us to continue and build the struggle. Over the next few days, others went to Kalama Valley to support residents and oppose the evictions and there were other arrests; Linton Park got arrested a second time. This struggle became the pioneer struggle in a long series of ensuing land struggles against rapacious, profit-driven development that caused evictions of Hawaiian and other local families. I became a strong supporter of Hawaiian land struggles, and Youth Action and People's Fund, two organizations I founded, also devoted resources to such struggles and efforts, including the sovereignty movement. Kokua Kalama, and later Kokua Hawaii which developed from this struggle, became a major movement organization throughout the islands and influenced subsequent struggles on Kauai,

in Waipahu, Waimanalo, Waiahole-Waikane, and Chinatown, and in Kona—and the forming of alliances among these groups, and the large "End All Evictions" demonstration in Honolulu. When the police ended the Kalama Valley occupation with a massive assault in 1971, a few dozen folks were arrested.

GK: How was news coverage? Were there a lot of Hawaiians protesting at that time?

JW: There was really nothing that was covered in the news or very visible. At the university, students hardly saw any Hawaiian students. I'm sure there were some. Among the workforce, some of the janitors were Hawaiian, but very few faculty members. You had to go out into the community to meet the indigenous people of the islands. Fortunately, before I came from Virginia, I did some reading and found out that Liliuokalani had been overthrown and that the U.S. merchants and plantation owners had overthrown the government. And pretty much established martial law, and that Hawaii was annexed to the U.S. without really much say from the indigenous or other people who lived there.

GK: After the Kalama arrest, how did people treat you?

JW: My friends and family were very supportive, and I felt the occupation of the valley had broad support and that Bishop Estate had won a "pyrrhic victory" in that the long-term costs to its reputation would be great and the example provided by the resisters and Kokua Hawaii would rebound and take root in other communities—which did in fact happen. I could be proud of my part in the Kalama Valley struggle. Lucy became an active member of Kokua Hawaii, a cadre organization.

GK: Right.

JW: My feeling about myself was I was a guest of this people who had lost so much. You hardly heard Hawaiian spoken. You might have some Hawaiian music. I noticed later when I worked for the union, there was a song that some of the older Hawaiians would sing or told me about, and occasionally at their union parties, they would sing it. It was. . .

GK: Was that "Kaulana Na Pua" by Queen Liliuokalani?

JW: Yes. . . That song always brings tears to my eyes because when I first heard it, the musicians playing it were crying. I was lucky. I worked in Waimanalo for the summer and helped out a Vista worker who worked there and got to know Hawaiian kids. Fortunately, I met people who did work for Vista in Waimanalo. One was a white woman Kate Stanley who was later a state representative. (Laughter) She introduced me to some families there. And on weekends away from my summer classes, I would take the bus out and visit with them and spend the weekend with them. I had some exposure to grassroots culture.

GK: What was the situation?

JW: People just felt more inadequate in a way and that they couldn't have all these things that these more wealthy people had. Hawaii was being developed for people who did not even live here. I noticed that many Hawaiian youths and many of the kids from Waimanalo ended up in Oahu prison, mainly for small crimes—stealing, sometimes fighting with haoles on their beach. The police would always pick them up. The police would pick on these Hawaiian youths even if the police were Hawaiians.

GK: Tell me about the demonstration at the state capitol in 1970?

JW: Our Youth Congress was involved. So was John Kelly and his Save Our Surf group and some residents from Waimanalo and some environmentalists and university supporters. Kokua Kalama led to the core group Kokua Hawaii and the occupation of Kalama Valley. There were maybe 1,500, up to 2,000 people at the state capitol. You had all people on all levels above the courtyard. When they stomped their feet, they shook the building.

GK: At a certain point, the steering committee of Kokua Hawaii asked the haole supporters to leave the valley? What happened?

JW: Around that time, the media was covering this Kalama Valley issue, focusing on the long-haired haoles, who would come in and support people. They were called "hippies." Some were just activists. . . Perhaps the news media bought into this myth that it must be a white person behind it because white people have controlled Hawaii for so long in Hawaii history. At one point, the Kokua Hawaii people said we need a meeting to decide, practically, whether this is good because the point of the occupation was to save local land for local people. If you have 20, 30, 40 percent of the people occupying the valley comprised of newly arrived haoles, it sort of blurred that message. So I supported the tactical separation that was decided. The haoles could support the Kalama Valley residents in other ways. We didn't have to stay in the valley or occupy the valley. It made sense and it didn't diminish their support. To me, it was self-empowering to see. Here were non-white local people, the residents and their supporters, struggling for return of land or just to protect the land from high-priced development for people who don't even live here.

There were two white people, Gene Parker and Moira Foley, who did stay in the valley and were the exceptions. Moira was a nurse, and Gene had worked with some of the Kalama Valley people for a long time. He had actually been in the valley before the Kokua Hawaii occupation and was trusted by the group.

There are other people who I know who opposed that decision and felt it was racist or divisive.

GK: What did you do?

JW: We did a lot of work in town publicizing the occupation. . . I would do a lot of work from our Church of Crossroads spreading the word. My wife Lucy got involved later.

GK: Did you get to know other residents besides Moose Lui?

JW: One of the most fascinating people in Kalama Valley besides Moose Lui was George Santos. He was a pig farmer. So, we got to know his pigs. One of the duties—I think it was nearly daily if not every day—was going to the hotels with George. He had some hotels who had put aside garbage for the farmers and so we would go with George and bring it to his farm. We'd pick up the garbage maybe around three, four or five in the morning. I remember it smelled. We'd take it there and we would help George dump it into the feeding trough.

GK: How did you feel about that?

JW: (Chuckles) I learned more about the food I ate. You know we eat food and we don't think of where it comes from or how much labor goes into producing something like the bacon I ate today. George probably couldn't afford buying pig feed, and gathering the hotel garbage really helped him to make money. You could make several hundred dollars on a pig in those days.

But the other thing I learned is you getting to know your food as a creature. Each pig had a name and. . . a personality, and they're smart. . . They're more intelligent than dogs. I don't think I could ever take them to a slaughterhouse (laughter). I think for a while I didn't wanna eat any pork (laughter) and I probably shouldn't but I'd never been really exposed to a farm or to a livestock type of place. Santos was just down to earth. He would talk to the pigs. He would train us in how to do aspects of the job. He was a great guy. I enjoyed that part of the Kalama experience.

GK: How did the struggle in Kalama change you and your beliefs?

JW: It reinforced my beliefs and strengthened the efforts my wife Lucy and I jointly undertook in support of working people and communities under attack.

GK: Many of the Kalama Valley members and Kokua Hawaii members were Hawaiian? How did that affect you?

JW: I have a deep admiration of Hawaiians among the activists and the residents—their culture, songs, food and language, and their acceptance of me, a haole. I have read a good deal on the Kanaka Maoli, and I know I was moved by Marion Kelly's essay on the alienation of land from the Hawaiian people, and also her article on South Point and the decimation of the Hawaiian population. Later, other Hawaiians such as Dr. Kekuni Blaisdell had a huge impact on me, as well as Kalani Ohelo, Pete Thompson, Haunani Trask and others.

GK: What did you gain and what did you lose as a result of participating in the Kalama Valley struggle?

JW: I mainly gained insights about the situation Hawaiians and local folks were in, the steps for organizing the resistance, lessons on handling the legal system after arrest and during trials, and developed friendships with many Hawaiian and local activists and residents. Hawaii became more of a home for my family and me.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Dancette Yockman

Dancette Yockman
Photo courtesy of Gary Kubota

Dancette Leiluana Kan Ling Yockman was a teenager when her parents were evicted from their family farm in Kalama Valley to make way for Bishop Estate's residential housing subdivisions. As a teenager, Yockman herself joined in a protest at the state capitol, and she shared her recollections of the impact of the eviction on her family. For a time before her family members found a permanent home on Hawaiian Homestead land in Waimanalo, they were homeless. As an adult, Yockman was homeless herself for years before she participated in a self-help housing project and built her house in Kalihi. She was interviewed by Gary T. Kubota at a park in Kalihi on September 4, 2017.

GK: Aloha, Dancette. When and where were you born?

DY: I was born in 1953 in Honolulu. It was then the Territory of Hawaii.

GK: Who were your parents?

DY: My father's name was William Keanuenue Yockman, Sr., the oldest son of grandfather William Chang who was half Hawaiian and Chinese, and of paternal grandmother Lanae Kapiko who was a full Hawaiian. My mother's name was Grace Momi Lee, whose step-father was Yau Lee who was Chinese, and maternal grandmother Lila Haupu Lee who was Hawaiian.

GK: Who were your brothers and sisters?

DY: My siblings were William K. Yockman, Jr., Grace Iwalani, Robert Kamakaokalani, Donna Mae Eanae Puana Kam Oe; and Ford Lee Pononui. Our ohana also included Uncle Wilbur and Uncle Albert Apuakehau, Uncle Ronald Lee, and Grandpa William Chang Yockman.

GK: Were they living with you?

DY: We all lived in Kalama Valley. We had a two-bedroom home. Dad built and attached a third bedroom to the back of our home. It was big enough to fit 15 persons with room to spare. Mom and dad had one bedroom, my three sisters had the second bedroom, and the new third bedroom was for the guys.

GK: How did they get the land?

DY: My parents leased the property we lived on for $75 a month. The property was huge, from the road in front of our home and up to the mountain ridge, sometimes over to the next valley or so. We lived on a farm.

GK: What kind of a farm?

DY: We had various animals we raised for food. There were pigs, cows, goats, laying hens, ducks, geese, gooses, turkeys, and rabbits. For pets we had several dogs, cats, and countless pigeons.

GK: And this was in Kalama Valley?

DY: We didn't know the area was "Kalama Valley" until we received the eviction notice. Kalama Valley was always known to all in the valley as Ehukai Street Valley, maybe because the valley next door was named after its road, Lunalilo Home Road Valley before it was called Hawaii Kai. Kalama Valley is part of Waimanalo ahupuaa (Hawaiian land division that extends from the mountain to the sea).

GK: Can you describe the valley?

DY: The entrance of Kalama Valley was located near the middle of Sandy Beach, a little closer to the second bathroom. Ehukai Street was the valley's main road in and out of Kalama Valley. At the beginning of our valley from Kalanianaole Highway, the Kaiwi ohana lived on the Blow Hole side of the road and across Ehukai Street was the Buddy Silva ohana. They lived on Makapuu side of the road.

GK: How was the wildlife in the area?

DY: We did have a path about the midway on our road right after the Koko Head Crater entrance. It gave us a shortcut to the next valley, Lunalilo Home Road. This path was known as the Path of the Owls—"Ke ala Pueo." There used to be hundreds of various kinds of owls, all kinds of colors: white, black and different shades of browns.

GK: What kind of physical features were in the valley?

DY: As you look into the valley, on the right side, there was a crater smaller than Koko Head Crater. It was alive with the smell of sulphur. We called it "the Cinder Pit." It was almost as tall as the valley's walls. The cinder pit would burn all day and night. The valley got very hot during the summer, and the sulphur smell was stronger. That's where we and many others threw our trash. Even big businesses would use it for the same reason, to take care of their trash. After the cinder pit were three cinder cones. Each were taller than the cinder pit and of different colors—brown, red, and black.

GK: Sounds interesting?

DY: The cinder pit was one of our favorite places to play. We played on top the rim of the crater, inside of the crater and around. We had so much space for adventure.

GK: Tell me about the farms and residences.

DY: Most of the families in Kalama Valley lived a simple life. Our water came from a water catchment system. We had an outhouse toilet outside. No indoor plumbing. Our shower was outside near to the washroom and the outhouse toilet. Everyone had cesspools. Later, most homes in the valley got indoor plumbing.

GK: Tell me about the location of the houses.

DY: Right before and after the cinder pit road there were two bridges that were too weak for any heavy truck. The trash truck and the fire truck would not cross the bridge. One bridge was near the Kaneshiro ohana and the Sampaio ohana (Patrica/Patty). The second bridge was near the Rezentes ohana.

The back of the valley had a gradual slope, where the Kay ohana lived at the end of our street, also the Tabayoyan ohana. Mr. & Mrs. Frances, Alan and Wendy Tabayoyan, the Roque ohana.

The Kaiwi ohana and Buddy Silva ohana lived at the beginning of our street.

GK: What did your parents do for a living?

DY: Mom worked as a waitress and could speak English, Hawaiian, Chinese, and Latin. She went to Sacred Hearts Academy (a private high school). Dad quit school when he was a teenager and got a job to help his family. Dad was a heavy equipment operator. But before that, he worked as a mechanic, carpenter, electrician and plumber.

My dad enjoyed farming but most of all, he enjoyed fishing. My grandpa, brothers and uncles help take care of the farm.

GK: So you had an extended family on your farm? How was life as a child?

DY: Actually, everyone took care of everybody's kids, like a big ohana.

We had relatives living next to each other. The first home after the weak bridge there was the Jeremiah ohana, then the Richards, and then our home.

Next to us lived my Uncle Henry and Aunty Phoebe Kaholi. Phoebe was dad's sister. They had three sons: Henry, Seriaco, and Abraham. Next to uncle Henry was my grandma's house. She was my dad's mother. Living in her home was her second husband, Seriaco Pasco and her sons: Daniel Kapika, Thomas "Boney" Handler, and Edward K. Pasco. Her daughters were Julia, Betsy, and Henrietta "Lani."

Across the street was the home of Uncle Ben, and Aunty Jennie Kaholi. They had seven children, including William, Richard, Ben, Francis, Dolinda, Pohai, and Olinda.

GK: How old were you when you received the eviction?

DY: I was 16 years old, a Kalani High School student, when the letter of eviction notices arrived. It spoke clearly to my mom and dad, that we had to move from "Kalama Valley."

GK: What did you think about the protest being organized against the evictions?

DY: I totally supported it. But my parents didn't want "any trouble." When a few cousins, friends and I found out that there was going to be a gathering at the state capitol building in protest of the Kalama Valley evictions, we cut school and caught the bus to join it. (Laugh) We held signs, waved at those passing by and beeping their horns and we chanted, "Stop it, stop it. . . enough is enough!

That day mom was watching the news and saw me protesting the evictions. She asked me if I went to school. I told her, "Yes, I went on an excursion with other classmates to the State Capitol." She told me that she did not want any trouble. So I did nothing more. The subject was closed. (Laugh)

GK: What happened after receiving the eviction notice?

DY: Grandpa died and also uncles Wilbur and Albert died before we were evicted. Dad had to sell everything, because we were unable to find a place to move our farm—animals, boat, trailer, all kinds of tools for the imu, auto repair, welding torch and tank, and so much more. What he could not take, he gave away or just left it behind.

GK: How did that affect your lifestyle?

DY: We lost everything—the valley, the farm with food and our houses. We lost our simple, carefree lifestyle. We lost the lease of the land—mom and dad paid $75 per month for around 16 years. There were no more ohana parties. Gatherings were just a few and limited to a few major holidays. My whole family suffered while struggling to change.

GK: Where did you move?

DY: Mom found a home for us on the Heeia Kea side of Kahaluu—just before the old pineapple hut and St. John's By the Sea Church. We lived across the street on the mountain side of Kamehameha Highway.

Mom and dad thought they could handle the enormous rent for a three-bedroom, one-bath home. The rent was $1,500. I didn't think the home was worth the rent.

Although we lived in Kahaluu, I still was attending Kalani High School. I graduated in the summer of 1972. I was 18 years old. At that time, my two older brothers—William and Robert—had enlisted in the Navy. There was mom and dad, my sisters Grace, Donna Mae, and myself, one son Ford Lee, and uncle Ronald. We only lived in Kahaluu for a few months.

GK: Where did you move next?

DY: Mom found a cheaper home and we moved to 22nd Avenue in Kaimuki. It was a larger home: three bedrooms, two baths and patio. The rent was $800 a month.

We stayed about two years, then mom and dad were notified of a home in Waimanalo on Hawaiian Homestead. The following month, we packed and were ready to move to Waimanalo. We had to wait for a few more months for our home to be built, so we camped at Baby Makapuu for about four months. We were homeless, and there was no problem about camping or fishing like there is now. And we did that because we needed to save some money and prepare ourselves for new things and new bills. So when we moved in, we were ready. Mom and dad got furniture and appliances for the home and it was a struggle, but oh, they were happy to have their home.

GK: You mentioned that as an adult, you were homeless for a time?

DY: I was homeless again after my mom passed away, and my dad wanted me to remove myself from the home. That meant my whole family, and it happened at night, and I had no place to go. I prayed, and we sought shelter underneath the bridge at Waimanalo pier.

GK: How many children did you have?

DY: There was five children and two adults, including myself and my boyfriend. He's still my boyfriend 38 years later. I was homeless at that time, so after a couple of nights, some police officers came and told us we needed to vacate the spot. Otherwise tomorrow, if we are still there, they will arrest us, confiscate everything, and take the children to child authorities. That night I prayed and asked God and the next morning, I walked toward Waimanalo and I found this blessed place and it was just God-made. There were two balconies, all pushed up. The land was rock solid and as you walked up the trail, there were two big trees. It was all designed—there was a flat area, where I could put

up the main tent. And past that toward the highway, there was a barricade—a barricade so the cars don't come through and hurt anyone of us. Anyway, we ended up having a playground next to the camp area and across from it there was a garden.

GK: How was it to live on the beach?

DY: I had battles with cockroaches. I mean swarms of them. Bees. Centipedes, scorpions—oh my God. They came in packs, and I had to deal with them. Each one. One day, I got stung by a centipede, stung by a bee and later that afternoon, I had a Portuguese man of war right around my body from swimming—and I didn't even feel it. I guess I had so much venom in me. (Laughter) So, it didn't faze me.

GK: How long did you stay there?

DY: I stayed there for about five to seven years.

GK: How did you get your current house?

DY: I was very close to a pastor. He would come and visit us, bring us blankets when it's raining, bring us food and other items that we were so happy to receive. This gentleman—he was Japanese—before he died, he asked one of his people who come to his church—he asked her to come check on us. So she did, and through her, I got an application from Habitat for Humanity in 1989. I signed it in March, and I was told in April I was going to be the next homeowner and they were busy building the first (self-help) home, which is the Kaneakua's home; they had 10 in their family. I helped build their home, and our home was built two houses away. Through the Habitat program, I was able to help to build four houses and was happy to do so.

GK: How did it make you feel?

DY: It really felt very good to help others. It was a gift to see their hearts smile.

GK: People have told me that those who are evicted from their homes with seemingly no place to go have talked about the trauma sometimes, the stigma and shame. How did that eviction affect the way you looked at yourself?

DY: To me it was devastating. We were lost. My whole family was devastated because we enjoyed living on a farm. Getting rid of everything we owned because we had no place to take everything was stressful. We barely could find a home that we could afford. Our first house was $1,500, and it was only a three-bedroom, one-bath home in Kahaluu. It was really hard to put food on the table, because there was electric and water bills and normal bills for the home. We cut back on all our wants and desires, in terms of clothing and spending and joy. We just cut back on it. We had emotional stress. We were lost. The occasions we would celebrate normally, we were not celebrating. It took a toll a lot, financially, physically. We were lost. We were losing our lifestyle and culture. We were

losing our home.

GK: When you were going to school, did you talk about it?

DY: I chose to hide it from other people because I wanted them to know the joy in me, not the sadness.

GK: Was it hard to cope with it? You were going to Kalani High School. That was a fairly upper-middle class neighborhood.

DY: A lot of them were very friendly, and they were so very helpful and kind. There weren't any mean people in that school. At an elementary school, there were a lot of mean people, telling us we Hawaiians were lazy and dumb.

GK: What do you think society should be doing to reduce the homeless problem in general?

DY: Give us back our Hawaiian Homestead lands. It is ours. It was never the state of Hawaii's. The ceded land is ours. Don't they know they are stealing? Somebody should put the law against them. . . I've waited for 40 years for Hawaiian Homestead farmland, and they tell me no more land. There's plenty of land. They've given outsiders the farmland. That's not right. They're treating us Hawaiians like second-class citizens when they should be taking care of us. They should make life affordable. Period.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Liko Martin

Liko Martin
Photo courtesy Ed Greevy © 1973

Liko Martin has been described as the "Hawaiian Bob Dylan," writing Hawaiian protest songs, including "All Hawaii Stand Together" and "Waimanalo Blues," a song that* Honolulu *magazine ranks as among the top 50 Hawaii songs of all time. Martin was 25 years old when he was arrested with 31 other people protesting the eviction of Native Hawaiians and farmers in Kalama Valley on May 11, 1971. Martin was interviewed on July 17, 2017, at his home in Pauoa by journalist Gary T. Kubota.

GK: Good evening, Liko. Could you please describe your childhood and years during your youth?

LM: I grew up in Waikiki and spent a lot of time at the beach. Later, as a teenager, I sometimes performed with bands in Waikiki. So, I got to know the nightlife.

GK: Where were you staying?

LM: My parents stayed at my grandfather's place on Diamond Head Road. My grandfather was one of the sons of merchant Chung Mook Heen who financially supported Sun Yat-sen (father of the Chinese Republic who overthrew the Ching Dynasty in 1911).

GK: Oh, so you're related to the Heen family?

LM: Right. I learned to be humble and respectful, do yard work. I remember going with my grandfather to Honolulu City Hall, watching the organizing of campaigns. Politics was a part of my childhood.

GK: That was during the rise of the Democratic Party in Hawaii?

LM: Right. In those days, the candidates had music groups singing for them in caravans touring around the island. The house was full of family on election night. Everybody came over there waiting for the returns. We waited for the election returns to come from the outer islands.

GK: Did anybody discuss sovereignty and the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy?

LM: Nobody knew about Hawaiian issues. When I grew up I wasn't allowed to eat Hawaiian food.

GK: Why was that?

LM: To be Hawaiian when I was born was not cool. I was told you ain't going to get anywhere with a Hawaiian name. I didn't know my genealogy. I didn't even have a Hawaiian name. Liko is my nickname from Spanish. I was Frederico. So, my nickname was "Liko."

GK: I understand you went to Kamehameha School?

LM: I hated Kamehameha School. It had mandatory ROTC for the boys. In seventh grade you had to have starched shirts, starch khaki pants, shined shoes and brass buckles—everything. I wasn't into it at all. I was a free thinker. My parents eventually bought a house in Foster Village, and then I ended up going to Radford High School. Radford was good. There were a lot of girls in the typing class, so I took typing. I learned English. I got out of that whole regimentation of Kamehameha School.

GK: How'd your experience at Radford go?

LM: I just connected with a speech teacher. Every week, I had to do a spot, speaking extemporaneously or preparing a Hawaiian chant. I excelled. I loved it. I also took up writing. I experimented. That experience has prepared me to do presentations and speak, and not be afraid to speak.

GK: Radford High? Wasn't that entertainer Bette Midler's school?

LM: Bette Midler and I were classmates. Bette was from Halawa Housing. She was our class president. She was awesome. She was into acting and stuff. You know at Radford, there were all the students from Halawa. We had the whole mixed ethnic thing of people. It wasn't just a "whites" only or "Hawaiians" only kind of deal. To this day, Bette calls me by an old dear name. I was the lead singer in the band called, "The Twilights."

GK: How'd that singing go?

LM: The first time I went to play music, I had to hide in the back of the old Manoa Elementary. I was afraid to come out after playing. You see all these movies of the Beatles and Elvis Presley and the girls? That's what kind of happened to me.

GK: (Laughter) How was living in Foster Village? Isn't that where a lot of military personnel and retired military live?

LM: At that time, it was almost like moving to Alabama. I couldn't go to the park. We couldn't go into the swimming pool. At night, there were vigilantes trying to chase us out.

GK: So what happened?

LM: Well, what happened was I had friends who joined the Air Force, and I joined the Air Force in 1963. I was just floundering. I was pretty much oblivious about what was happening in Vietnam. The Air Force needed typists, and I could type well. I went to Texas for training and got the highest marks in my class. So I figured, "Oh, I'm going to Europe; they're going to ship me to Europe." Well, they shipped me to Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho. I worked in the headquarters of the Strategic Air Command. They shipped me back to Hawaii after two years, and I worked in headquarters in the message center. Six months or more passed, and here I was in the message center and reading a coded secret message telling the pilot of these missions that you can't fire back, they can't shoot. If they get downed, that's too bad for them. And I said, "What kind of war is this? The gun pilots can't even shoot back?"

The master sergeant walked out of his office and said, "Who said that?" I was removed from the message center. I was nearly out of the Air Force anyway.

GK: Hmmm.

LM: There was something weird going on.

GK: So what happened?

LM: So after the Air Force, I ended up taking and passing the exam for the University of Hawaii. I went in as an unclassified student. My mom was happy and everything. . . I took classes in geology, geography, oceanography. I mean I loved it. They gave me the foundation to understand the physical sciences.

GK: Did you graduate? How far did you get?

LM: I was living in Hauula with my uncle, and I would drive to school.

GK: Hauula? That's like more than an hour drive and more than a two-hour bus ride.

LM: Yes. But it was cool with my car even though she had no roof or windshield wipers. On the drive, I'd have time to look for glass balls washed up on the beach.

One day, I was going up a hill, and I got into a mechanical problem. . . Well, that was the end of my University of Hawaii days, 'cause I had no way for me to go to school, and I wasn't gonna catch the bus.

GK: So what happened?

LM: I became a professional glass ball hunter after that. . . I was also writing songs, went to the Big Island and Kauai.

GK: So, what made you decide to go to Kalama Valley and get arrested with other protesters?

LM: Well, I'm not sure. Maybe, it was my experience on Kwajalein and my grandfather. He was truly a public servant and delivered speeches before the Honolulu City Council. Also, after getting out of the Air Force, I went to work with some Radford High friends on Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands for a private contractor. That was in 1968.

GK: That's where the U.S. conducted nuclear and missile tests?

LM: My work was clerical. My experience in the Marshall Islands was the most ugliest thing I've ever seen—the way the U.S. treated the native islanders. It was a total mess. On Ebeye Atoll, I've never seen people treated like that. They just pissed and crapped off a raised building. The only house of any significance that you could call a house was a hollow tile house that the chief lived in. The rest of the people lived in structures made out of plywood. It was disease-ridden. It was just an ugly, ugly, ugly scene.

GK: What happened?

LM: It caused me to write a letter to Congresswoman Patsy Mink. Eight months into my stay, I got a knock on the door—"Mr. Martin, you gotta leave."

GK: Really?

LM: The contracting officials said I couldn't stay on the island anymore, and they escorted me to the plane. I came back to Hawaii with a beard. I looked like Fidel Castro, and I felt like I was just like that. Something didn't seem right. When I came back from that experience, I began to see the poverty in Hawaii.

GK: How did you get involved in the anti-eviction fight in Kalama Valley?

LM: I forgot where I heard about Kalama Valley, maybe at the University of Hawaii. I went to check it out. It was toward the end of the occupation that I got involved. . . I didn't know anybody there, and I used to come in from the Hawaii Kai side over the trail to avoid the barricades and cops. . . Somehow, I ended at George Santos' house and got arrested. I didn't know the supporters. I didn't know if I wanted to know them or whatever. I just hung around. . . I remember the one biggest issues being discussed by the supporters, which to this day is still the question and still the paramount issue, was, "Is this a Hawaiian issue or is this a people's issue?" And that's exactly where it's at today. It has not changed.

GK: What are your thoughts on the subject?

LM: I grew up in Waikiki, a beach boy. In Waikiki, a beach boy is not into a racism. Forget it. You treat people respectfully. You treat no more nothing like that. The beach-boy thing is, make sure all the girls are covered and all the guys are covered. And everybody's having a good time. That's what it was about. Safety. You don't leave anybody behind. Everybody's included. That how we grew up.

GK: Did the arrest change your life?

LM: That was just the beginning of a walk for me. Kalama Valley was for me the introduction into what I was to become. A reporter came up to me and said, "Well, yeah, what do you have to say." The only thing I said was, "Time will tell."

GK: Your song "Nanakuli Blues" became very popular when it was released by the group Country Comfort as "Waimanalo Blues." How did the creation of the song come about?

LM: One day, Thor Wold, who wrote poems, and I were going out to Nanakuli heading to Kaena Point. He's taking notes all along the way. I wasn't really a poet back then. I played guitar, sang songs about this and that. Thor lived on the Big Island and knew all about trees and Hawaiian stuff. His father was a forester. When he went back to the Big Island, he sends me the words. He says the lyrics should be sung with "love" and "soul." I didn't know quite what he meant. So, that's why the song has two music versions—one country and the other is blues. He and I have had a long relationship. He's the mountain, and I'm the river.

GK: After the arrest in Kalama Valley, you seemed to be involved in quite a few concerts and gigs?

LM: I was writing songs for Country Comfort and had a band. The seven-piece band played at the first Diamond Head Crater Festival. We played just before Santana went on stage.

I knew the ups and downs of Waikiki, and kind of got scared of the scene with drugs and stuff in the early 1970s and moved to Kauai.

GK: I know you support the concept of sovereignty in Hawaii. What's your approach to the issue?

LM: Like Kalama Valley, this is just the beginning. No one had all the answers. Everybody had their own take depending on where they came from. How do we take the yoke off? You know? How do you cut the fish out without making it bleed? Like a friend said. . . hmm. . . that's the thing. But from then 'til now, one thing I'm sure is the underlying foundation—this is Hawaii. Since then, I've been involved in so many things. Kahoolawe, Honaunau, Hokulea. I took the permit out for the first Sovereign Sunday.

I traveled throughout the western part of America "on safari" until 1987, when in a dream I was taken under the ocean from the van I was sleeping in at a Chumash village.

When I awoke, I went down to the beach, picked up two abalone shells, left all my belongings, went straight to the airport and came home. I knew I had to come home, because something was not right when that hand came to get me. I returned home to live in nature, along the Kauai coast in a van with my wife Mariah and two children—a third would be born later.

We followed the rainbow—always the rainbow. We moved with the seasons, the fruits, the fish, limu. From Makahuena Point, went to Opihikao and Onekahakaha, Moku o Keawe, and also returned to Honaunau, to the Hale o Hooponopono. I also lived on Maui, stayed on Molokai, and then returned to Kauai, to the village of Anahola where Michael and Sandra Grace were asserting their sovereignty. From there, I was called to Washington, D.C. with Kawaipuna Prejean and Aunty Peggy Hao Ross, and then on to the United Nations, to work on our self-determination and political independence together with Alaskan natives who were assessing their inherent sovereignty. In the following years, I witnessed the increasing abuse, dispossession and removal of the people from the places where I lived. On the night of the 100-year flood, at which I was playing a concert with Willie Nelson in Lihue, we got back on the road again. I came back to Oahu, to Kaala, to be with my dear friends, Kalanipau and Loke.

GK: What else has been happening that's important in your life? I know in 2016 you and Laulani Teale went on a "Red Ribbons Tour" across the United States helping to raise awareness of Hawaiian history, focusing on the Hawaiian Queen Liliuokalani's protest of the annexation of Hawaii.

LM: Well, in the 1970s, I got married to my first wife Georgine Moore, and we were together five years and had two beautiful children, Mililani and Rudyard. I got to see my daughter in 2016 during the "Red Ribbons Tour." She came to Washington, D.C. She came with red ribbons.

GK: That must have been a sweet moment?

LM: She's a luthier, plays a beautiful violin, bass, everything. She really takes after me, loves to work with her hands. She's almost got the same kind of hands as me.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Edyson Ching

Edyson Ching
Photo courtesy of Ching family

Edyson Quangchong Ching was a U.S. Army veteran of the Vietnam War who chose to side with Kalama Valley residents and their supporters in opposing their eviction. He was arrested in the valley along with 31 other people on May 11, 1971. Ching, a retired firefighter who now lives on the East Coast, was interviewed by Gary T. Kubota by telephone on February 25, 2017.

GK: Good morning, Edyson. When and where were you born?

EC: I was born in 1947 in Honolulu.

GK: Okay, who were your parents?

EC: My father was Edward Quangchong Ching. My mother was Betty Quanlong Chi. So, it's Ching versus the Chi. That's a powerful Chinese name, Ching and Chi. (Chuckles)

GK: Are you part Hawaiian too?

EC: Yeah. My mother side of the family was Chinese, Hawaiian, and English. And my dad was basically pure Chinese.

GK: Where did you go to high school?

EC: I graduated from Saint Louis High School in 1965.

GK: Where were you raised? What area?

EC: I was raised in Kapahulu, Waikiki, and the Kaimuki area. My stomping grounds were the Waikiki wall, the Honolulu Zoo and Kapiolani Park. I lived in the back of Kaimuki High School in the area of Date Street and Winam Avenue near the Ala Wai Canal.

GK: Did your parents own the land over there?

EC: We owned a small house and land over there. They bought it after the war, maybe like in the 1940s. I don't know exactly, but that's where I grew up. We lived in a two-bedroom house first, and then my dad in 1959-60, sold the house and my family built a two-story structure there. We had the bottom floor, three bedrooms and a patio, and a two-car garage, where we lived. The upstairs was a two-bedroom rental, and next to it was a one-bedroom rental.

GK: Did you have brothers, sisters?

EC: I was the oldest brother. My brother was five years younger. My sister was seven years younger.

GK: So, how did you get involved with the group Kokua Kalama, later known as Kokua Hawaii?

EC: Well, I had just come back from Vietnam. I was drafted after high school, I graduated in '65. I attended the University of Hawaii Manoa for a while.

There were about 20 of us guys who came out of high school and went to Manoa. We just partied and we joined this fraternity. We were just trying to have a good time. We were hanging out at the Catholic Newman Center. . . with the Catholic clubs. Saint Louis was all boys and very conservative and restrictive. And when I went to UH Manoa, there were girls, and the social thing. . . I wasn't focusing on grades. I just did a lot of partying and drinking and. . . the next thing you know, I wasn't passing classes. The university gave me a suspension, saying you can't come back for six months. Then you can come back on probation. You got to keep up two-point something grade-point average. I failed miserably in all the courses I took.

GK: So what happened?

EC: When I found myself not able to go back from June 1965 through September 1966, I had to get a job. So, I was working. . . I think I was working at Liberty House in Ala Moana Shopping Center. And then by October I got a Selective Service induction notice, telling me to report for the physical. So, I scrambled to try join the Army Reserves. . . Then, finally, I just figured if I just go for two years, you know, what the hell? . . . My father was a veteran too. He worked in Pearl Harbor. He said, "You got to do your duty, son." So, I said to myself, "Okay I'm just going to do my duty. I'm just trying to do the minimum of 24 months. It will qualify me for a GI bill that would give me the opportunity to go back to school, and the government would pay for it. So that was my attitude. I'd just get drafted, and when I come back from 'Nam, I could go back to school. That was an 18-year-old thinking.

GK: Yeah, so what year was that?

EC: I got inducted in February of 1967. I just turned 19. I was on my way to basic

training. At that time, I had a girlfriend, and she was my first love. And I was totally romantic, in a dream bubble—I will do my duty, and I'll come back, not thinking what Vietnam represented. I was so naïve. You know, I was taking ROTC in high school, and I thought it was about marching and being an orderly, which I liked. You know, I never thought about the killing phase. You know, but then I figured out, I think I can do this.

But basic training was very brutal. It was very harsh, and very racist. They didn't call us "n------," but they called us "pineapples." And it almost meant, a nice way to call us, instead of calling us "n------." Because the term "pineapple" was referred to what the Japanese Americans did for the Army in World War II. And all those basic training guys, all those guys in the Army just took it for granted, that "Oh, you guys from Hawaii, you guys are the best fighters we ever had in the Army." So, you're going to do well. And in basic we did. You know, we're gung ho and then I thought for sure I was gonna be an infantryman. I was gonna go train and become a rifleman and go to Vietnam. But instead at the end of my eight to nine weeks of basic training, I get assigned to be a cook and I was really disappointed.

However, when I went to cook school, I kind of enjoyed it. After I got out of that, I was assigned to another unit. I was preparing to go to Vietnam. Long story short, I get a "Dear John" letter. Heartbroken, I wanted to come home and see if I could regain the love of my life. But she was already pregnant by somebody else. And, I had no idea. I had no idea what she was up to. So, with all that shock and disappointment, I said, ". . . I'm just going to volunteer for Vietnam." So, I did. Then I got a 40, I got a six-week leave, forty-five days before I went to 'Nam. So, I came home and tried to talk to her, but she already got married. And she was going to have a baby. I was in shock. Total shock. So, here it was, late October, almost Halloween. I wound up in Vietnam. And yeah, after the service, I came out, I got hurt in Vietnam. I had to go to Japan in October 1968 for surgical repair.

GK: So how did you get hurt in Vietnam? What was it?

EC: I was working as a cook, yeah. At our compound at night, we always got rocketed. There's always like firefights going on. There are things that happened that I still can't talk about. So, I was walking to work, and they had dug a ditch without putting any barriers around it. And I fell in this ditch. At night, the whole compound was blacked out. In other words, it's very dark. And, they didn't let you use lights, because of incoming firefights going on. So, I got hurt and I tore my left knee—medial meniscus. So, I had to wobble around in a cast for a while. And then, during the Tet Offensive Team in '68, we got attacked. We got ripped. I got assigned to be a cook for a one-star general, and then the war went into a totally different direction. For me, I was lucky. . . Because I had this big cast in my leg, while I was recovering, I got assigned to be a general's cook. The general was born and raised in Hawaii, was a haole guy. And his aide was retiring, moving on. The aide was a Japanese guy from Palolo and Kaimuki High School, a couple of years older than me.

The aide who recruited me asked, "You can cook?"

I said, "Yeah."

"Okay, make something for the general."

I think I made him teriyaki steak or something. You know, that's how I got the position. So, I worked for the general, maybe from February 'til October. And in the meantime, my knee came out of the cast. . . I don't know what happened but the partial tear became into almost like a full-blown tear, so I was hobbling most of the time, you know, after that.

So, at the end of my October duty, I was excited to go back home. I was done. I was going to get out of the Army, but I said, I need to go do the surgery. So, the general made arrangements for me to go to Japan. I get to Japan, and it's the first time I see these demonstrators. They're holding a big sign outside of Tachikawa Airbase (near Tokyo). They're holding these big signs saying, "Kick the imperialist, get out of Vietnam." And they're just screaming and rioting right on the edge of the airbase and we're coming in on a big hospital ship you know, C -141.

GK: What was your reaction?

EC: I had no idea what was going on in the outside world, you know. No idea, except I knew that Martin Luther King got assassinated in February. Bobby Kennedy went down. But news back home just didn't mean anything while you were in the war.. . . in a way all you do is count the time before you come home. So that's what I was doing in 1967-68. So, when I got home in 1969, I finally got discharged, I was like. . . I was pretty straight when I went in. I drank a little bit, but I never smoked pot. When I came home and I hung out with my high school friends, college buddies. . . I got turned on. . . When I got back into UH, everybody was protesting. I thought, what the hell is this?

I kind of sat in on some anti-war protest. It started to make sense. When I met this guy, John Witeck. He was part of this group called Youth Action. So, I was doing some kind of paper on "Why are we in Vietnam." I thought, I was over that, and I could talk about my experience, and what happened, what I felt. But I really couldn't talk to anybody about what happened to me in Vietnam, because it was so hard for me to. I could never talk to anybody as to what happened to me, and the atrocity and then the cover ups that I saw and the racism that I experienced. So, I just stuffed it. The more I got stoned, the better I felt. Drunk and stoned, chase women. Hey, you know, cope, cope with the war.

GK: What happened?

EC: I just joined Youth Action, and then I met Kalani, and then I went to a couple of meetings up at the UH. People really helped. I started smoking more pot than before and while I was stoned, I was talking. I went to a couple of American Friends Service Committee meetings with Quakers.

GK: Yeah.

EC: And I met Wally Fukunaga at Off Center Coffee House

GK: What happened?

EC: There were some really interesting dialogues. I never really told people I was a veteran. I was ashamed I was a veteran because people were spitting at veterans. Veterans were not being well received, especially us Vietnam veterans. I just kind of hid it. I started growing my hair longer. And started trying to integrate into what I thought was the hip scene, you know, of the '70s.

GK: All right.

EC: So that's how I got involved. John gave me some books to read. And you know, Kalani and I were talking a lot. I had no idea what these guys are talking about. But they all seemed pretty interesting. I never knew my history at all. That really interested me, and I wanted to know. I came back not knowing who I was. I mean, I thought I was an American. But when I get ordered to Vietnam, I'm the. . . enemy because I looked like a Vietnamese. When I was in the war, you know, I was weighing like 145 pounds, with a size 30 waist. I was really thin, and really young looking. Uh, when I got back, even though I was 21, I'd go into the bars and you know, the discos, they were always looking at me like, "Let me see your ID. You look like you're only in high school." I looked young and skinny. And so, I was always getting carded. And when I went back to UH, I still looked like I was just a freshman.

GK: What made you go into Kalama Valley?

EC: Hanging out with Youth Action got me involved in Kalama Valley.

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

EC: I was involved about a year before the arrests (May 11, 1971).

GK: What led to the arrests?

EC: I started going to all these anti-war rallies, environmental stuff. John Kelly was a big organizer. He was a good speaker. There were some really cool people—surfers. I used to surf. All these surfers were getting politicized and talking. Unlike the surfers that I knew when I was growing up, these guys were educated.

GK: Let's get back to Kalama Valley. What was happening as far as activities?

EC: Kokua Kalama member Linton Park was interviewing people in Kalama Valley, and he was writing articles, passing out flyers, leaflets, doing rallies. We were mainly passing them out at UH because that's where our base was for our outreach into the community. We're just a bunch of students.

GK: Yeah.

EC: And I just followed along. I didn't do any talking in the beginning.

GK: So how did you feel?

EC: I felt a bit weird. The Asians in school were always at the top of the class. They assimilated really well into the American system. I kind of associated myself with that mentality. That class in the structure. I was Asian, I was gonna succeed. So, when I saw the Hawaiian side of my ethnicity in Hawaii and the way they were being treated, I thought, "Man, this is terrible. This is really like putting down my own blood." So, I felt an empathy, and when Kalani and I talked—he was from Kaimuki, and he knew my brother, we had a common bond.

He was just always joking, and so was I. So, we got along great that way. But then he was radicalizing me at the same time he was getting radicalized. I think he got sent to New York to some kind of big convention there. He was speaking with Moani Akaka. They went away to represent the Hawaiian movement and the fight in Kalama Valley and came back with those big words like "self-determination" and "sovereignty." I spoke them but I had no idea what that meant. You know what I mean?

GK: Yes.

EC: There was talk about having a revolution, picking up the gun, we're gonna fight America. That's basically how we were thinking. But really, I'm only 20 years old.

GK: How real was that? You've been to Vietnam.

EC: How real was that for me?

GK: Yeah. The gun?

EC: I said, this is. . . ridiculous, man. I mean, what are you going to do, shoot the. . . feds with a couple rifles. You got to be kidding me. But I guess we're idealistic, and we're talking and protesting and caught up in the moment.

GK: I understand most of the people were talking that way hadn't really shot a gun in their life.

EC: Right. And I had, but I didn't have to shoot people. I said to myself, this sounds like everybody is cheering, "Ra-ra-ra." But when you get into the real battle and bullets start flying, you're not gonna be saying, "Ra-ra-ra." You're gonna be running, and you realize, you're fighting these guys with a slingshot.

GK: On the day of the arrest, a couple of Hawaiian leaders came to support us, including Kahuna Sammy Lono?

EC: I really respected uncle Lono. Before the arrest, he said a pule for us when the helicopter was flying high behind us. I saw all the Hawaiian cops back away.

GK: You've indicated your experience in Vietnam was not a good one, obviously. Could you give me an example of how bad it got and how that influenced your decision to get involved in Kokua Hawaii?

EC: I worked with a bunch of civilians who were all Vietnamese workers. And all the white guys in my unit are looking at me and calling me a "gook lover." They called me "gook" at night, because during the daytime it's business as usual.

At night, that's when the war was being fought. That's when we were getting rocketed. That's when you know, you were on alert, even though we're in base camp. We're in a big Army headquarters. We were surrounded by a huge perimeter, and the fighting was going on outside of the base. They couldn't attack our base because we're so fortified, I guess.

But you could always hear it. Once in a while, a rocket would come in, and we'd have to take cover. . . You could hear pop-pop-pop all night and see flares, and then felt the ground rumbling. You knew they were shooting out there, but you just didn't know where. People used to say, when you hear a whistle coming in, you better take cover. "Incoming!" They would shout, "Incoming!" And you got to hit the ground because you never know where that rocket was gonna land. . . You could die. . . if you weren't paying attention.

GK: Right, so let me ask you. In terms of the people. I mean, you were thinking you were an American. You were going to do your two years of duty. You get there, and they were calling you a "gook?" So how did that make you feel? I mean, suddenly they were disassociating you from what you thought you were.

EC: I only knew a couple of African American soldiers. We were in base camp. We weren't soldiers, we weren't carrying guns, we weren't going out there. However, I met some guys who were real soldiers who would come in out there and get drunk. They'd tell us these stories to base camp guys. In the military at that time, the racism was so blatant. They were pulling all these African Americans into the military, with the choice of going to jail or into the military. Guys were killing (fragging, tossing a hand grenade at) their superiors.

During the Tet Offensive, just the concussion from a bomb blew off the roof of our living quarters. It was just like a hurricane. The adrenaline kept us going for days. The Army issued me a rifle. There was a hospital near a heliport where I and others brought in the wounded for days.

GK: What motivated you to join a group like Kokua Hawaii or Kokua Kalama?

EC: I was really angry at the way the people in power, the country club people, and their attitude toward the regular people. My dad was a working-class guy, a blue collar worker at Pearl Harbor. He was treated like that his whole life. Through on the job training he did the job of a mechanical engineer, but he couldn't pass a written test. . . Finally, when I got back from Vietnam, the Naval Shipyard promoted him on merit. They jumped him from a GS7 to a GS12. And he started going around the world teaching guys how to repair stuff on the submarines.

GK: Yeah.

EC: He wanted me to go to school and get an office job, could be something professional like my uncle, maybe an attorney. So that's what he was hoping I would do. But when I came back from the war, I couldn't do it.

GK: You did help with the organizing of Kokua Hawaii's first concert, the one at Andrew's Amphitheater at the University of Hawaii. How was that?

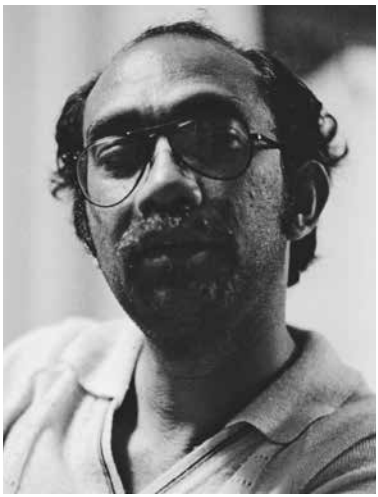
EC: I felt comfortable doing fundraising, helping to put together the concert. It was a learning curve, but we did it with a committee with Soli and Gwen at committee meetings. Edwina Akaka's cousin Doug Mossman who was a KCCN deejay and had acted in the TV series *Hawaiian Eye*. He helped to organize the talent.

GK: Looking back at the Kalama Valley anti-eviction struggle, what are your thoughts?

EC: With the perspective I have now, the struggle was not so much about race. It was about class consciousness and against the ruling class.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Lawrence (Larry) "Harbottle" Kamakawiwoole



Lawrence Kamakawiwoole
Photo courtesy Ed Greevy

Lawrence (Larry) "Harbottle" Kamakawiwoole had a Master of Divinity degree from the Pacific School of Religion (PSR) in Berkeley, California, and, at 27 years old in 1970, was a teaching assistant in the Department of Religion at the University of Hawaii at Manoa when he was asked to look into the plight of Kalama Valley residents and farmers facing eviction at the hands of the Bishop Estate, the largest private landowner in Hawaii. This community land struggle has been considered as the precursor of the Hawaiian Renaissance. While a graduate student at PSR, Larry was a member of the Third World Liberation Front at PSR and had the opportunity to meet Afro-American leaders, such as Bobby Seale, a Black Panther Party leader, and Hazaiah Williams, who formed the Center for Urban-Black Studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. Working with various ethnic groups, such as Asians, African Americans and Hispanics, Kamakawiwoole gained organizational skills which helped him to bring together various groups to support the residents and farmers of Kalama Valley, including many Native Hawaiians. Kamakawiwoole often served as the spokesperson for the Kokua Kalama Committee, which later became known as Kokua Hawaii. He served as the first full-time director of the Ethnic Studies Program. He later received a Master of Education degree from the University of Hawaii and a law degree from Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, D.C. In 2015 and 2016, Gary T. Kubota interviewed Larry on several occasions at his home in Honolulu. The edited interview below is a product of those discussions and exchanges between Kubota and Kamakawiwoole.

GK: When and where were you born and who were your parents?

LK: I was born in 1943 in Honolulu. My parents were William and Wenonah Kamakawiwoole. My father graduated from the Kamehameha School for Boys in 1931, and my mother graduated from Punahou School in 1933. My father was a bus instructor and later dispatcher for the Honolulu Rapid Transit Co., and my mother was a substitute elementary public school teacher.

GK: I know you mentioned earlier that you're connected to the John Harbottle family.

Your father was hanai (Hawaiian tradition of sharing children among family, relatives and friends) at an early age?

LK: Yes, my father's biological surname is Harbottle, not Kamakawiwoole. My father was hanai by his father's sister, Sarah Hakuole, who married William Kamakawiwoole. They hanai my father because they needed him to carry the Kamakawiwoole name. They had two daughters and no son.

GK: Who was John Harbottle?

LK: He was British and is my great, great, great grandfather. He was a mate on the *Jackall,* a British trading ship which arrived at the Honolulu Harbor in the fall of 1794. He, along with several British and American military fighters, joined Kamehameha's warriors to defeat his opponents in the crucial Battle of Nuuanu Pali in 1795. Harbottle was skilled in the use of western military weapons, including guns and cannons. John Harbottle later made his home at Kapalama near the harbor where he earned his living. He was the first pilot of Honolulu Harbor under Kamehameha's rule. He held that position until the late 1820s. On or about 1806, Harbottle took as his "bride" Papapaunauapu, the hanai daughter of Kamehameha I. This was the beginning of the Harbottle family, one of the oldest hapa haole families in the Islands.

GK: I know names are sometimes assigned to characteristics of a family. What does "Kamakawiwoole" mean?

LK: Kamakawiwoole means, "The fearless eye." Our name was originally "Kamakawiwoole O Kamehameha Ekahi," also known as "The fearless eye of Kamehameha the First." After the Christian missionaries arrived in Hawaii in 1820, the name was shortened to "Kamakawiwoole" because it was difficult for foreigners to pronounce the original family name.

GK: Please describe the community in which you were raised?

LK: I was born and raised in Palama, catty-corner to Palama Settlement. Palama was a low to middle income community. The famous singer Lena Machado lived next door to us. All ethnic/racial groups were represented. This was before the freeway was built. I, along with my parents, one sister, and two brothers—my youngest brother was not born yet—lived on my kupuna Sarah's quarter-acre lot. We lived in a large two-story house. My father's niece, her husband, and two children lived on the first floor. We lived on the second floor. We raised rabbits for food and pigeons as a hobby. My grandmother kupuna Sarah sold bags of poi to our neighbors. At one time, we had 15 dogs and a bunch of cats. And lots of fruit trees. My favorite place was a large sandbox in the yard where I spent much time everyday building sand castles. We never went to a doctor. Kupuna Sarah would use the plants and trees in our yard as medicine.

GK: Did you live there long?

LK: No. When I was in the third grade at Likelike Elementary School, the entire family had to move because of the government's use of eminent domain to buy our land. The freeway was about to be built. Kupuna Sarah moved to Wilhelmina Rise with her daughter and family. We moved to lower Alewa Heights near Natsunoya Tea House, where my father purchased a small 5,000 square feet lot with a small house on it. My father's niece and family moved to Hawaii Island.

GK: Could you describe your education?

LK: While living in Palama and then in lower Alewa Heights, I attended Likelike Elementary School and Lanakila Elementary School, respectively. Both areas were lower to middle class, multi-racial ethnic communities. I recall a lot of Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Portuguese, Puerto Ricans and Native Hawaiians. Palama Settlement was an asset because it provided recreational facilities, such as swimming, basketball, and football. There were different clubs students could join. I was a member of the basketball club. We would practice and play after school. There were also language schools in the area. I remember waiting for my team members to finish Japanese language school and then practice basketball at Palama Settlement.

GK: When did you begin attending Kamehameha Schools?

LK: When I was in the sixth grade, I applied for entrance to the Kamehameha School for Boys (KSB). After an interview by the school's staff, I got accepted to the seventh grade. I was the only student at Likelike Elementary School to be accepted. It was a big deal! My sixth-grade teacher announced the news to the class. It was like being accepted to Harvard! My classmates were so happy for me. I graduated from Kamehameha high school in 1961. At that time, there was a boys' school and a girls' school on two different campuses located at Kapalama Heights.

GK: Did Kamehameha School students speak Hawaiian?

LK: Although some of my classmates were fluent in Hawaiian, only English was spoken on campus. I recall my father telling me when he attended KSB, students were physically punished when they were caught by school personnel for speaking Hawaiian on campus. Kamehameha School focused on assimilation and acculturation. And they did a good job! The educational focus was on being Americans, not Native Hawaiians. I remember in my history class there was one page on Hawaiian history in the text book.

GK: What was the career expectation students had when they graduated from Kamehameha Schools?

LK: I'm not sure what career expectations my classmates had, but our class was divided into three sections—college prep, business, and vocational. I was in the college prep section. Most of us attended the University of Hawaii-Manoa, and some attended colleges on the mainland. Out of the approximately 125 students, there were about 25 students

in this section. I attended and graduated from UH. The vocational section had the largest number of students. After graduation, my classmates in the vocational section entered the military, police academy, fire department, auto industry, carpentry, agriculture, welding, and other career fields. In all three sections, whatever carrier paths we chose, our class did quite well.

GK: How was your effort to gain a college education viewed by your parents?

LK: I was a good student at KSB. But my father did not want me to attend college. He wanted me to get a job and help with family expenses. He told me he would not financially help me if I attended the University of Hawaii. Fortunately, for my freshman year, I got a scholarship from the Honolulu Rotary Club. To supplement my income, I worked part-time at the university bookstore and later at Hawaiian Airlines as a baggage handler.

GK: Was your career path clear in the beginning and how did your future activism tie into it?

LK: I did not seriously think about a career path until my junior year at the university. It began during my sophomore year when I enrolled in Professor Friedrich Seifert's courses offered in the Department of Religion. I was most influenced by a course listed as Religion 151, entitled, "The Meaning of Existence." Being raised in a conservative, status quo family and likewise regularly attending Kaumakapili and Kawaiahao churches in Palama and Honolulu, respectively, "The Meaning of Existence" class turned my life upside down and inside out! For the first time in my life, I was confronted with questions of my existence, such as, "Why was I put on earth? Should I question people in positions of authority? Why were Native Hawaiians ranked high in crime, unemployment, lack of education, and poor health?" I had not encountered, nor thought of these questions before. Simply put, after taking Professor Seifert's classes and listening to his lectures, I was converted. I became a born-again human being!

GK: What books influenced your thinking?

LK: The reading list in Professor Seifert's Religion 151 class opened my mind to ideas I had never thought of, nor heard of previously. They included Frantz Fanon (1925-1961), Writer born in the French colony of Martinique, Fanon was a leader and supporter of decolonization struggles that occurred after WWII. He was involved in the independence struggle of the Algerian people against the French government. I treasure his book, *The Wretched of the Earth.* Albert Camus (1913-1960), French philosopher, author, and journalist, Camus' books, *The Fall, The Stranger, The Plague, The Rebel,* and *The Myth of Sisyphus,* changed and shaped my world view. Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980) French philosopher, novelist, and political activist, Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* and *No Exit* and his political activism inspired me. Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881) Russian novelist and philosopher, Dostoevsky's works, *The Grand Inquisitor, Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov* were favorite readings of mine. Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) Danish philosopher, theologian, and poet, Kierkegaard was widely considered to be the

first existentialist philosopher. His works, "*Either/Or,*" *Fear and Trembling,* and *Attack on Christendom* were important readings.

Finally, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) German philosopher. His works, *The Anti-Christ, Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* and *Beyond Good and Evil* were important readings. Nietzsche was the leader of the "God is Dead" movement.

GK: So, your career path was?

LK: In view of Professor Seifert's courses, I wanted to teach religion on the secondary level. I consulted with Professor Seifert. He recommended I consider doing graduate studies at the Pacific School of Religion (PSR) in Berkeley, Ca. He received his Doctorate in Theology at PSR. In my senior year at the university, I applied to PSR and got accepted. I attended PSR in the fall of 1966 and graduated in the spring of 1969 with a Master of Divinity degree. During my last year at PSR, I applied to high schools on the continent and Puerto Rico. I got accepted to three—a high school in New Mexico, one in New York, and a third in Puerto Rico. Simultaneously, Professor Seifert was looking for a teaching assistant for the "Meaning of Existence" class. He contacted me at PSR to ask if I were interested in the position. I accepted. The rest is history!

GK: What happened when you went to Berkeley?

LK: When I arrived in Berkeley in the late summer of 1966, sections of the cities of San Francisco and Berkeley were on fire! And yes, Bob Dylan was correct, "The times they are a changing." In San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury, the counter-culture movement led by the love generation "hippies" held a "Love-In" festival at San Francisco State Park. The park was packed with people. To the east in Oakland, the Black Panther Party was organizing African American communities to rise up against the establishment of oppression, with Huey Newton and Bobby Seale leading the Black Power movement. The Anti-Vietnam War resistance movement was growing with young men refusing to go to war and leaving for Canada or applying for conscientious objector status. The Third World Liberation Front at the University of California at Berkeley (UCB) was a massive movement of students, among others, who marched, held rallies, had sit-ins, and some got arrested. Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and many others spoke on campus. The Hispanic, Chicano, Puerto Rican, and Asian movements demanded equal education, economic, and political opportunities. Music icons Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Pete Seeger, Jimi Hendrix, Peter, Paul, and Mary, Simon and Garfunkel, Jefferson Airplane, Bee Gees, The Kingston Trio, Everly Brothers, Harry Belafonte, and many others sang throughout the Bay area. The Peoples' Park struggle held marches and demonstrations when the Berkeley city administration wanted to demolish a park and put up a parking lot.

All across the United States, including Hawaii, people were questioning and challenging the political, economic, and social system of capitalist America. I marched and supported the various movements. My time and commitment, however, were spent as a member of The Pacific School of Religion Third World Liberation Front (PSR TWLF).

GK: How was your education at the Pacific School of Religion and your involvement with activist groups?

LK: My introduction to the PSR TWLF started during my first year at PSR. Field work was a required course for first-year students. I was assigned as a co-youth worker, along with Roberta Corson (married name), to Shattuck Avenue United Methodist Church in North Oakland, the first racially-integrated church in Oakland. The Rev. Robert Olmstead, the church's pastor and PSR graduate, had opened the church's recreational facilities to about 25 young African Americans in the predominantly African American neighborhood. Before our first meeting with the group, they had decided to invite Bobby Seale of the Black Panther Party to give a series of Sunday evening talks on the party and the African American experience in America. Seale's talks lasted for several months and focused on the political, economic, and social oppression of African American people by the white power government. The impact of Seale's talks hit home when I related them to the similar oppression of Native Hawaiians in Hawaii. I recalled my upbringing in the non-white lower-middle/middle-class neighborhood of Palama, a far cry from the upper-middle-class/upper-class neighborhoods of Manoa and Kahala, among others. I stayed with the group at the church for a year and got to know them. They taught me a lot about their life in Oakland. They tried real hard to teach me how to dance! (Laughter) They were either lousy teachers, or I just could not move like they did!

GK: How did all of this seem to you as you moved forward with your education?

LK: During my second and final year at Pacific School of Religion, I was a member of the school's Third World Liberation Front, comprised mainly of African American seminarians. We also had Chicano, Hispanic, and Asian members—and me! We confronted the administration and demanded the school admit more minority students, provide more financial aid to them, and expand its curriculum to include courses relevant to minority students. We were successful in achieving most of our demands.

GK: What did you think about Black Panther Party leader Bobby Seale?

LK: He was a smart, articulate, and charismatic speaker. He opened my eyes and ears to the African American experience in America. I liked him—his courage, bravery, and commitment in speaking out. I stopped by the Black Panther Party's office in North Oakland to say good-bye to him upon my return to Hawaii in the summer of 1969.

GK: How did his lectures go?

LK: His lectures were well received. The group of young African American people were excited to hear what he had to say. I'm not sure if any of them joined the Party. I might add here my readings continued while I was at PSR. I was most influenced by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), Hitler's German theologian, pastor, writer, and political activist, who spoke out against Hilter's Nazi regime and the persecution of the Jews. He was a leader in the resistance movement. He was imprisoned and subsequently hung in 1945.

I treasure his books, *The Cost of Disciple, Life Together,* and *Letters and Papers from Prison.* Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976), German theologian and teacher who demythologized the New Testament for me. Harvey Cox, American theologian and professor at Harvard. His book, *The Secular City,* published in 1965, gave me a good view of what was to come in American cities, including Honolulu.

Finally, my dear friend of almost a half a century, Lawrence Mamiya, a Hawaii native who received his undergraduate degree from the university. Dr. Mamiya, professor of Religion and Africana Studies at Vassar College (ret.), is also a writer and political activist. His book (co-author), *The Black Church in the African American Experience,* helped me to understand the African American experience in America. His many years of working with African American inmates and taking his students to a prison are inspiring, I relate that to taking my students to low-income Native Hawaiian communities throughout Hawaii.

GK: What happened after earning your master's degree in Berkeley?

LK: I returned to Honolulu in the summer of 1969 and looked forward to being a co-teaching assistant in Religion 151, along with David Panisnick. At the same time, I was a graduate student in the College of Education. My immediate priority was to do the best I could in both areas. I was not involved in community work. I was now a different person—challenging everything I took for granted before.

Growing up in Hawaii, I accepted the status quo. Everything was like it was because that's the way it was. I questioned no one. I accepted life. I never thought of questioning or changing what was.

That all changed 360 degrees! People who knew me before did not quite know what to make of me. This quiet, no cause waves, mind your own business boy was now the biggest troublemaker in town! Yes, my experiences in Berkeley converted me! I was indeed a born-again human being!

GK: How did you get involved in the Kalama Valley eviction struggle?

LK: During the fall of 1969, John Witeck, founder and chairperson of the board of directors of Youth Action, invited me to be a member of the board. YA, predecessor to the Hawaii People's Fund, was a non-profit agency that provided seed money to youth groups working for social change in Hawaii. The board's membership included leaders of the progressive movement, including the Rev. Larry Jones, Randy Kalahiki, Rev. John Heidel, Professor Walter Johnson, Aiko Reinecke, Wally Fukunaga, and Mary Choy.

In the spring of 1970, at a regularly-scheduled monthly YA meeting held at the Church of the Crossroads, John asked me to go to Kalama Valley that week to ask the residents if they needed assistance from YA. He mentioned SDS had scheduled a meeting with the residents the evening of my visit. As a brief background, in 1968, the Bishop Estate, landowner of the valley and largest private landowner in Hawaii, had served eviction

notices to approximately several hundred people to make way for a high-income residential resort development in Kalama Valley. Members of Students for Democratic Society (SDS) were already in the valley.

GK: What role did John Witeck play in the Kokua Hawaii struggle?

LK: If John did not ask me to go to Kalama Valley to offer YA's assistance, we would not have the KV struggle as we know it today. Witeck has been a pioneer of the progressive movements in Hawaii.

GK: What happened when you went to Kalama Valley?

LK: An SDS meeting was held outside between Moose Lui and George Santos' homes. After the meeting, I approached several residents and identified myself. I told them YA was willing to help and asked them what kind of assistance they needed. They told me they wanted to stay in their homes and community. They did not want to move! I replied, "No promises, I'll see what I can do and will get back to you shortly." I took down their names and contact information. There were about a half-dozen residents present. In all, roughly about 35 families still living in the valley.

GK: What did you do?

LK: The following morning I contacted Witeck to relay what occurred the prior evening. I asked him if he could give me contact information on community organizers who might be interested in helping the residents remain in the valley. He gave me twelve names and their phone numbers. They were: Kalani Ohelo, Pete Thompson, Soli Niheu, Claire Shimabukuro, Ray Catania, Linton Park, Dana Park, Gene Parker, Kehaulani Lee, Joey Ibarra, Randy Suzuki, and Rene Kajikawa. I did not know any of them. I called each one and asked if he or she was interested in helping the residents. I asked them to attend a meeting with me that week at the Off Center Coffeehouse located adjacent to the university. Everyone showed up!

GK: What did you tell them?

LK: I told the group the residents wanted to remain in the valley and not move. I also told them we should occupy Kalama Valley 24/7, organize the families to fight for their homes and community, set up facilities and other necessities to live in the valley, get as many individuals and community organizations to support the struggle, use the media and public speaking engagements to keep the public informed and educated about why we are present in the valley, how the KV struggle impacted many communities on all islands, and plan for a long fight against the Bishop Estate.

GK: What was their reaction?

LK: Everyone was in agreement. We scheduled a date and time within a week of our meeting

to enter the valley from the entrance on Kalanianaole Highway. We called ourselves the Kokua Kalama Committee (KKC). We entered the valley, and the first thing I did was to introduce KKC members to the residents by knocking on their doors. That day, in the late spring of 1970, was the beginning of the Kalama Valley struggle. May I add here, early in the struggle, the "Kalama 3"—John Witeck, Linton Park (KKC) and Lori Hayashi—and the "Kalama 7"—Gregory Hasbouck, Wayne Hayashi, Richard King (Kalama resident), Kehaulani Lee (KKC), Stanford Masui, Linton Park (KKC) and James Wallrabenstein, were arrested July 2 and July 9, 1970, respectively. I considered these courageous and brave warriors to be a part of the Kalama Valley struggle. What distinguished the Kokua Kalama Committee, later renamed "Kokua Hawaii" from other groups is we entered the valley as an organization, and not as individuals, to occupy it, to keep the residents in their homes and community, and to stop the development of the valley for the wealthy at the expense of hard-working middle- and lower-middle class local families.

GK: In your mind, how far were you willing to take the protest?

LK: I knew we entered the valley eviction struggle late. Knowing that, I still believed there had to be a Kalama Valley struggle. We had to stop housing developments for the wealthy at the expense of lower-middle and middle-class local people. Before the Kalama Valley struggle, families got evicted and left. I believe we had to change the "no cause waves, just leave your homes" attitude. It's what people served with eviction notices are supposed to do, like the sun rises every morning. It's a part of living in Hawaii. This mindset had to change.

GK: When did Kokua Kalama Committee change its name to Kokua Hawaii?

LK: A couple of months into the struggle, my friend the Rev. Wally Fukunaga approached me at the Off Center Coffeehouse and suggested the name of the Kokua Kalama Committee be changed to Kokua Hawaii because other communities across the Hawaiian Islands were faced with the same issues as Kalama Valley. At the next Kokua Hawaii meeting, I made the recommendation. It was accepted unanimously.

GK: What was Fukunaga's role in Kokua Hawaii?

LK: I met Wally while I was doing graduate work at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. We became good friends. At the outset of the Kalama Valley struggle, Wally offered the Off Center Coffeehouse's facilities as a meeting place as well as the use of the telephone and copy machine. He never charged us a cent! The Off Center Coffeehouse became Kokua Hawaii's main office. I always considered Wally as our advisor.

GK: What did Kokua Hawaii do once it was in the valley?

LK: Well, we tried to empower the families by standing in solidarity with them to remain in their homes and community in the face of threats of eviction. We invited the families to meetings and to participate in decision-making. Basically by staying there we got to know

the families—their children, background, livelihood, housing problems, and personal history, and they got to know us. By our presence and talks with them, we tried to instill hope and faith in the families never to be afraid of confronting people in power.

On a very practical level, we also established ground rules for the occupation of the valley, including basic sanitation and communications. We had meetings at an abandoned house. Volunteers built latrines and constructed outdoor showers and a kitchen. Volunteers also set up a telephone system when the telephone lines were cut. We had a security guard shack located at the entrance to the valley. We also devised a plan for Kokua Hawaii and the residents in the event of an arrest.

GK: All of this seems like a big undertaking?

LK: Well, we recruited hundreds of volunteers to help. Randy Kalahiki of the Kualoa-Heeia Ecumenical Youth (KEY) Canteen, and Kahuna Lapaau Sam Lono were invaluable to the struggle. We also had help from the Church of the Crossroads with the Rev. Arlie Porter; the American Friends Service Committee (Quakers); Save Our Surf with John Kelly; The Hawaiians with Pae Galdeira and Paige Barber; Ian Lind; University of Hawaii Professor Walter Johnson and his wife Bette; the Rev. Wally Fukunaga, youth minister of the Off Center Coffeehouse; Life of the Land; Bishop Museum researcher Marion Kelly, Tom Gladwin, Anson Chong, University of Hawaii student organizations, and many others. Many individuals and organizations provided food and supplies throughout the struggle.

GK: How did you enlist their support?

LK: Communication was important. Through public speaking engagements, rallies, public meetings, and the media, we educated the public about why we were present in the valley, what the issues were, and development of land in Hawaii for the wealthy and its impact on the majority of the population. Certain residents, including pig farmer George Santos, talked about his pig farm, prior evictions, and living in the valley. We held, or were invited to, meetings and forums with groups, organizations, and schools on all islands, except Niihau. We were even invited to speak at Oahu Community Correctional Center.

GK: What else did you do?

LK: We held an open house for the public to come to the valley and many people came. Kokua Hawaii members organized supporters into work groups.

GK: What about news coverage?

LK: We maintained good relationships with the news media and various organizations. The media—radio, television, and daily newspapers—gave us continuous coverage throughout the struggle. Reporters who followed the struggle included Linda Coble, Bambi Weil, and Pierre Bowman. The KV struggle was in the local and national news.

There were articles in *Time, Newsweek,* and the *Rolling Stone* magazine. There were articles in journals, books, and doctoral dissertations. Local residents on the mainland heard about the struggle from California to New York.

GK: Who handled the news media?

LK: Linton Park, an Annapolis appointee who opposed the Vietnam War, was in charge of communications. Each member of Kokua Hawaii had responsibilities. Printer Merv Chang worked with newspaper press production, Vietnam veteran Ed Ching and others were responsible for security, other members helped the residents, such as working on George Santos' pig farm. The organizational structure changed after Kokua Hawaii members Kalani Ohelo and Edwina Akaka returned from the mainland. They met with leaders of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California and the Young Lords in New York City. We formed ministries, such as ministers of education, defense, finance, security, and communication. At one point, Kokua Hawaii did wear brown berets, similar to the Black Panthers and Young Lords. The Kokua Kalama Committee started with 13 members and eventually grew to about 38.

GK: What made the gathering different?

LK: The gathering consisted of persons of all racial, ethnic, economic and social backgrounds. What we had in common was to fight the profit motive capitalistic system which favored the wealthy at the expense of the overwhelming majority of Hawaii's population. The Kalama Valley struggle gave many Kalama Valley families hope, faith, and courage to fight for their homes and community against the largest private landowner in Hawaii. Perhaps for the first time in their lives, the families saw people who did not live in the valley stand in solidarity with them. This is important because many of the families had been evicted from their homes from Waianae to Kalama Valley.

GK: Who were the members of Kokua Hawaii?

LK: Kokua Hawaii was comprised of primarily local people born and raised in Hawaii. We were not outsiders. In 1970, this was not the norm. In 1976, Skippy Kamakawiwoole, leader of the Makaha Sons of Niihau, told me during the Kalama Valley struggle he was watching the evening news on TV when he saw me being interviewed. When he saw my name on the TV screen, he called his mother and said, "Look ma, he got the same name as us." Yes, the Kalama Valley struggle was local people standing in solidarity with local people! Skippy was 13-years-young at the time! A number of members were graduates of Kamehameha School—Joy Ahn, Soli Niheu, Pete Thompson, John Fuhrman, and myself. We confronted and fought the Bishop Estate for the first time in the over one-hundred year history over its land development.

GK: There were certainly a lot of Native Hawaiians involved in the struggle, including Native Hawaiians serving as leaders. I know I'd never seen anything like that before, and out of it sprung a lot of native Hawaiian-related issues?

LK: I know people talk of Kokua Hawaii and Kalama Valley as the start of the Hawaiian Renaissance. In so many ways, it really did broaden the field for Native Hawaiian leadership. It is important to me and Kokua Hawaii members that the Kalama Valley struggle be remembered as a local peoples' community struggle to reverse the pattern of developing land for the wealthy, many of whom are outsiders, at the expense of local people. We were a coalition of local people who became community organizers fighting against evictions of poor and working people in Hawaii.

GK: How did you manage to do what you did while working at the university?

LK: I didn't sleep much. The responsibilities of graduate school, teaching, and Kalama Valley were overwhelming. It was like having three full-time jobs. I discovered when one is committed to a cause, the energy level heightens. Less sleep is not a problem.

GK: What made the residents step forward?

LK: People involved in other eviction struggles began calling us because Kokua Hawaii gave the residents hope and courage in light of evictions from their homes and community. Kokua Hawaii empowered the families in the valley and families across the Hawaiian Islands, to stand together in unity and solidarity! George Santos spoke for many families who had been evicted in the past.

GK: What about Black Richards?

LK: Black, like George Santos, was another resident who stepped forward. He became a member of Kokua Hawaii. Black was soft-spoken and effective. He was an inspiration to local people throughout Hawaii.

GK: During the eviction struggle, what was your role?

LK: I think my role developed out of the needs of the Kalama Valley struggle. Early in the struggle, I maintained a close relationship with George Santos and other residents by informing them of daily events and how they could help. I had George's trust. When Kokua Hawaii members approached George with an idea, George's response was usually "check with Larry." I gave residents support to let them know they were not alone in their decision to remain in their homes and community. I really didn't have a title, although I was the chair of most of the meetings. I tried to make my actions define my role. Regretfully, later in the struggle, my responsibilities removed me from maintaining that relationship. I spent more time at Kokua Hawaii's office at the Off Center Coffeehouse and traveling to the neighbor islands and across Oahu for speaking engagements with Kalani Ohelo. That might be the reason why some residents eventually moved out of the valley. They probably felt disconnected with the struggle and left out of what was happening in the valley.

GK: What kind of demand was there for public appearances back then?

LK: Kalani and I traveled to all the islands, except Niihau. We spoke at public intermediate and high schools, at the University of Hawaii-Manoa and community colleges, at the East-West Center and various communities.

GK: How were you received?

LK: I recall the welcome we got from Milolii on Hawaii Island. The fishing village held a luau for us. And Dixon Enos and Joe Tassill welcomed us to Hoonaunau on Hawaii Island and showed us the work they were doing with young people. We also had a big crowd when we spoke at Oahu Community Correctional Center in Kalihi. Kalani and I were away from the valley weeks at a time.

GK: What was the point of these appearances?

LK: Our objective in our public engagements was to raise the consciousness of people about the capitalist profit motive economic, political and social systems and their impact on Hawaii. We did this by telling them about the Kalama Valley struggle.

GK: How did you handle the news media?

LK: At the Off Center Coffee house, I received lots of calls from the public inquiring about Kalama Valley. I also spoke on radio stations to recruit people to the valley to help the residents. That's how I met Edwina Akaka in 1970. She responded by attending a Kokua Hawaii meeting. At the time, she was a student at the University of Hawaii and a waitress in Waikiki. She was not involved in community work. I encouraged her to join Kokua Hawaii and help the residents in the valley. She did and it was the start of her political involvement in land struggles, which lasted until she passed away in April 2017.

I also spent time meeting with organizations and individuals to inform them of the struggle, such as The Hawaiians led by Pae Galdeira, Revs., Darrow Aiona and Tuck Wah Lee, Paige Barber of the Congress of Hawaiian People, Kahuna Lapaau Sammy Lono, Randy Kalahiki of the KEY Canteen Project, Marie Stires of Kuhio Park Terrace, Rosemond Victorino of Mayor Wright Housing, Nelson Ho of Kahaluu, Rev. Bob Nakata, Rev. Arlie Porter of Church of the Crossroads, Rev. Frank Chong and his sister Ellie Chong, the American Friends Service Committee, Life of the Land, Larry Jones, John Witeck, and Carl Young, among others.

GK: How were decisions generally made?

LK: During the Kalama Valley struggle, I often helped to set the agenda for the meetings. But the decisions were made by consensus.

GK: What were some of the major decisions?

LK: One was that the Kalama Valley struggle be non-violent. I recommended to Kokua Hawaii that the struggle be non-violent. Beyond religious or spiritual beliefs, on a very practical level, very few members were familiar with firearms, and we would be killed by the police powers on the side of the Bishop Estate. Additionally, it would have alienated us from the communities we wanted to reach. Ironically, the ones most against the use of firearms were Vietnam veterans in our group. Similarly, although we received offers, we turned down getting help from the syndicate.

To enforce this policy, Kokua Hawaii built a guard house to be used as a check point for individuals and vehicles entering the valley. A major Kokua Hawaii policy was no alcohol, drugs, and weapons allowed in the valley.

GK: What else were you involved in during the struggle?

LK: I was also the chief negotiator for Kokua Hawaii and the residents. I met with the Bishop Estate trustees at their Halekauwila Street office about three times during the struggle. I always took one or two Kokua Hawaii members with me. I recall asking Kalani and Soli Niheu to join me at the meetings.

GK: What did you discuss?

LK: During one of the meetings with the trustees, I proposed the valley be developed to accommodate high-income, middle-income and low-income residents. The trustees replied they had to develop a high-income development to support the Kamehameha Schools. A half-century later, the government and developers are catching on to the idea. (Laughter) The government, of course, has given the developers incentives, such as additional floors for their projects.

GK: What were some of your other tasks?

LK: Sometimes, I acted as an intermediary or peace maker. Midway in the struggle a Kokua Hawaii member approached me to tell me there were several local guys in front of Moose Lui's home who wanted to pick a fight with Kokua Hawaii members. I went to the scene and I recall Kokua Hawaii members Kalani Ohelo, John Saxton and Ed Ching standing in front of Moose Lui's home along with three local dudes about to fight. I intervened. I asked the three men to sit down at a table and I educated them as to why Kokua Hawaii was in the valley, the history of evictions impacting local families in Hawaii, and the western divide-and-conquer rule. I concluded by telling them they could remain in the valley if they wanted to help the families. Otherwise, they had to leave. They left peacefully.

GK: That's an interesting approach, taking the high road in activism.

LK: I believe when you educate people about evictions in Hawaii, they will understand because almost everyone brought up in Hawaii has been impacted by evictions—either personally, or by a family member, a relative, or a friend.

GK: Kalani, Saxton and Ching were pretty big guys. I don't think I'd want to cross them.

LK: To avoid what might have been physical confrontations, I personally had conversations with Homer Hayes of Hayes Guard Service. I think Homer understood there was a difference when dealing with local people who were activists. Family ties can make a difference. At one point, the guards tried to block the road, but after a talk with Homer, the road remained open by the guards. Hayes also gave up a guard shack that they had built in the valley and the guards moved their security closer to the main highway, so our members occupied the guard shack.

GK: I know the local syndicate in Hawaii was also following the anti-eviction struggle and their sympathies were with Kokua Hawaii and the Kalama Valley residents?

LK: Late in the struggle before the arrests, Kalani and I met with the local syndicate. The purpose of the meeting was the syndicate's offer to provide Kokua Hawaii with armed men in Kalama Valley. The meeting was held in the early evening. There were about 20 members of the syndicate present. Kalani and I spoke about our purpose for being in the valley. At the conclusion of the meeting, I thanked them for the support and told them Kokua Hawaii did not need their help because the struggle was non-violent. They accepted the decision and the meeting ended.

GK: I know that support was growing to oppose the eviction but there was also concern about the growing number of non-local supporters who were viewed as "outsiders" by the news media and public? Can you explain the reasoning behind why non-local supporters were asked to leave?

LK: Kalani and I were at a meeting outside Kalama Valley, when the decision by the steering committee was made to ask the non-local supporters to leave the valley. It came as a surprise. A plan I had suggested was to have valley supporters leave at a later date—closer to the date of arrests. The May 11 arrests did not occur until at least two months later. Still, I was left the task to announce the decision of the steering committee. I went on stage to thank the supporters for assisting the residents. I explained to them why they had to leave—the importance of the struggle being a local one, and that for too long, "outsiders" were seen as leading local struggles. It was a hard pill for our supporters to swallow! I recall Noel Kent expressed disagreement with Kokua Hawaii's decision. John Kelly and John Witeck, on the other hand, supported our decision.

GK: Could you describe where you were around the period of the arrest in Kalama Valley on May 11, 1971?

LK: As you well know, I was not present in the valley on the morning of the arrest. It was early May and final examinations for the spring semester were about to start. At that time, I was an instructor in the Religion Department. We had a faculty meeting to discuss final exams the evening before the morning of the Kalama Valley arrests. I left the valley at 4 p.m. Before leaving, I spoke to Kokua Hawaii members Soli Niheu and Ed Ching. Ed was on duty at the guard house that evening. I told them I had a meeting at the University of Hawaii-Manoa, and I would spend the night at my parents' home in lower Alewa Heights, and I would return to the valley early the following morning. I gave Ed my mother's phone number and told him to call me if any problems should arise.

The faculty meeting ended about 8 p.m. I then left for my parents' home. At about 10 p.m., I was preparing to go to bed when I received a phone call from Georgiana Padeken, a social worker at Liliuokalani Trust and a friend of mine. She said the Bishop Estate trustees wanted to meet with me the following morning at 10 a.m. at their office on Halekauwila Street. They wanted to come to a settlement on the valley. I said, "That's a bunch of ------- ! They never wanted to settle. . . " Georgiana said, "No, the trustees are serious, they want to work out a plan for the valley with you." I agreed to meet the trustees the next morning.

On May 11, 1971, at 6 a.m., I got a call from Ed Ching. All Ed said was, "They're coming in." I dressed as quickly as I could and sped to the valley. It took me about a half-hour to get there. When I got to the valley, there were well over a hundred armed and unarmed police officers standing in a long line along Kalanianaole Highway fronting the valley. The gate at the entrance was closed and secured with a padlock. I drove my car up to the entrance of the valley and exited my vehicle. Ed Michaels, the Bishop Estate's East Oahu land manager, walked up to me and said, "You can't go in, it's private property." I replied, "This valley belongs to the residents. Get out of my way." He refused to move and there was an altercation. But I was too late. Police vehicles carrying arrested Kokua Hawaii members were fast approaching the highway.

The Filipino community of Ota Camp successfully resisted eviction from their Waipahu community, eventually relocating to city land and state-sponsored housing at nearby West Loch. Kokua Hawaii community organizers were invited to live and assist in the eviction fight in 1972. *Photo courtesy of Kokua Hawaii member James C.W. Young family*

Kokua Hawaii working with students and faculty brought community leaders from several areas on Oahu to support the Ethnic Studies Program through a sit-in at the University of Hawaii-Manoa in March of 1972. The Program is now a department.
Photo courtesy of James C.W. Young family

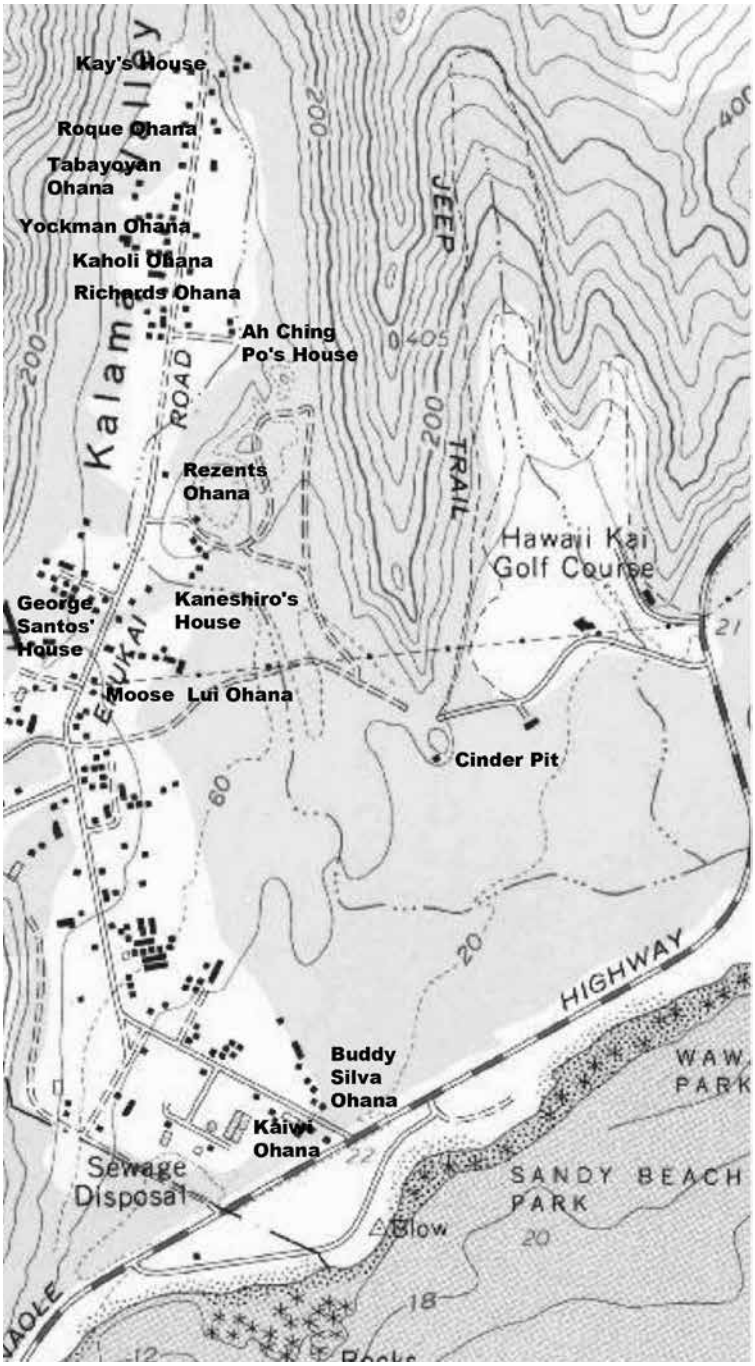
Kokua Hawaii worked with Save Our Surf and other groups to organize a demonstration at the Hawaii Capitol in Honolulu on March 31, 1971, against the eviction of Native Hawaiians and farmers at Kalama Valley and the urbanization of the nearby coastline. *Photo by Ed Greevy*

Kokua Hawaii leader Joy Ahn (front-right, in sweat shirt) was among the volunteer community organizers fighting an eviction in Heeia in the mid-1970s. Before joining Kokua Hawaii, Ahn served as a teacher at Waianae High School. She formerly worked as an aide to Congresswoman Patsy Mink in Washington, D.C. *Photo by Ed Greevy*

Kokua Hawaii members Soli Niheu and Kalani Ohelo (fourth and fifth from the left) join protesters in Chinatown fighting an eviction of tenants. Supporters also included Alan Nakasone (front-left) locked in arts with Pete Thompson, who helped to organize against the eviction in Waiahole-Waikane valleys. Circa 1970s. *Photo by Ed Greevy*

Waiahole-Waikane residents march near Honolulu city hall in 1976 to protest their pending eviction. A broad coalition of communities supported their fight. Eventually, Gov. George Ariyoshi announced the state will buy 600 acres of farm land to preserve agriculture in the Windward Oahu community. *Photo by Ed Greevy.*

Map Of Kalama Valley, circa 1969–71



This location map of Kalama Valley, with a number of families before the eviction in 1971, was developed with assistance from Francis Kaholi, who helped to deliver newspapers to valley residents. Kaholi along with another former Kalama Valley resident, Dancette Yockman, is included in this collection of interviews.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Lucy Witeck

Lucy Witeck
Photo courtesy Witeck family

Lucy Witeck was a member of Kokua Hawaii in the early 1970s, helping to form a core of locally-born leaders and participating in demonstrations as well as helping in the production of the group's newspaper, the* Huli. *Witeck was born in Waipahu and grew up in Wahiawa. She served as a VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) volunteer after high school in southwest Virginia, and was a peace activist protesting against the Vietnam War after returning to Hawaii. While working at the Hawaii Newspaper Agency, she served as international vice president of the Newspaper Guild, CWA. She was interviewed at her home in Kalihi on October 1 , 2016.

GK: Good morning, Lucy. When and where were you born?

LW: I was born in 1946 in Waipahu. The clinic was near the site of the former Ota Camp near Waipahu Depot Road. We lived in a house behind KAHU radio station until I was five years old. In the middle of kindergarten, my dad finished building a house in Wahiawa, so we moved to Wahiawa in the middle of the school year.

GK: In Waipahu, who were your friends?

LW: In Waipahu, I was very isolated because we lived across from Farrington Highway below the main town of Waipahu, and it was very rural. It was where my dad grew up. He had worked in the rice paddies with my grandpa until some disease wiped out the rice. It was a two-story house with running water. The toilet was an outhouse.

GK: What did your father do in Wahiawa?

LW: He was a carpenter, working islandwide. He built our house on Rose Street.

GK: How was your education?

LW: I graduated from Leilehua High School in 1964. I didn't want to go to college just yet, but my parents expected me to go, and I had been on a college track in high school.

GK: So, you attended the University of Hawaii?

LW: For one year, until I got kicked out for bad grades.

GK: Sorry to hear that.

LW: No. It was good.

GK: (Laughter) Tell me how it was good.

LW: It was good because I couldn't go to school for at least a semester. I applied to VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) so I could go somewhere else, and perhaps do something useful. I'd been reading books about Native American reservations and how people could be helpful there. I looked up the Peace Corps, but you needed a college degree, and it was to foreign countries. I thought I should try to be helpful to my country first. I said to myself, "Oh, okay. That'd be something different."

GK: So where did you go?

LW: They sent me to train in Eastern Kentucky, Wolfe County. I was 19.

GK: How was that?

LW: VISTA sent me to a county that, just a week before I arrived, had run out the only African American family in the whole county, with guns and everything. But I didn't know that at the time. When I went there, I had six weeks of training with another VISTA volunteer, and everybody was really nice. They were saying, "Hawayah. Hawayah. Hawayah." I couldn't tell if they're saying, "How are you?" or "Hawaii." Talk about an accent! It was very rural. I guess I got a totally different reaction than the African American family had. There was only one of me, they'd never seen anyone who looked like me, I guess. I am shorter than most people, I had long hair. Very nonthreatening, I guess. I'd be walking down a street, and I'd turn around, and there's, like, five or six kids following me, whispering, trying to figure out, "What the heck is she?" But they were really nice.

GK: So, there weren't too many Asians?

LW: None, nada, zero. It began to snow, in November. We couldn't drink the water in the well at the house I was at. The school in that community was a one-room school house. I thought they existed only in novels. I had believed there was no such thing as outhouses anymore, only in my distant memory from Waipahu. But there were both in the hills and hollows of Kentucky in 1965. The outhouse next to the school was familiar. I trained in a white community. The VISTA volunteer stationed there had this station wagon that you had to start with a screw driver. You had to open the hood, have the metal part of the screw driver connect to two parts and then run back in and start the car. And it was a manual. I didn't know how to drive a manual. It was, like, holy moly!

GK: (Laughter) So what happened?

LW: After training in a rural white community, I was placed in a small African American community in Glade Spring, southwest Virginia. Go figure. Government? Schools had just been integrated in Virginia, and the former schoolhouse for the African American students had just been purchased by the residents to be used as a community center through the federal Community Action Program.

GK: What was your job?

LW: My job was to help organize and put together a library and work with the kids there. I helped to get the community center in order.

GK: How?

LW: I went to various churches and organizations soliciting books for the library, met with kids and parents from the community to get things started. There was a toilet in the building that wasn't functioning. So, we said, "We want that toilet fixed because in the winter it's really cold to go outside. And there's no reason why we can't get this to function." We argued with my CAP (Community Action Program) supervisor, who was white, who wanted to build an outhouse rather than repair the toilet.

GK: What happened?

LW: We got our indoor toilet.

GK: Mm-hmm.

LW: I ended up in more ditches, driving my car in the snow, than I care to remember. But people were always nice. They pulled me out of the snow. (Chuckles)

GK: Oh, that's good. The white people gave you books and things like that?

LW: Yes. But not all of them were as friendly as you would hope. Some things stick out in my memory. I spent most of my time with the African American kids. This is coal mining territory. So, we'd be walking. . . and I was with these kids who were 9, 10, 11 years old. There are poor whites in the area, just down the road from the African American community. We passed this one house, and there was this little girl. She must have been about two years old. Dirty face, raggedy clothes, standing on the porch. And she's smiling and waving, and saying, "Hi, n------! Hi, n------!" And the kids with me wanted to go up and bust her up. I'm going, "Wait a minute. She doesn't know any better. . . You're just gonna reinforce her negative opinion of African American people." But that's where it starts.

GK: How long did you stay?

LW: I was there a year, and I worked also with white kids from Emory and Henry Colleges. . . The white kids were volunteers and would come and work with the kids and community center.

GK: What did VISTA volunteers get at that time in terms of money and housing?

LW: (Chuckles) Oh, God! They helped find housing. I think I got $85 a month.

GK: How was living there?

LW: I was comfortable in the community. Not so much at the college. The college kids invited me to a dance once. I went, but felt so out of place. I felt so alienated from that culture. Yet it wasn't so different from my life in Wahiawa. I just remember feeling like, "I don't really want to be here." So then I didn't go over there. I mostly hung out with the African American kids.

GK: How was it hanging with the African American kids?

LW: They ranged in ages from maybe 10 to 16 years old at the center. We would just sit there, sit around and just yak. I remember one time, they asked, "How come you hang out with us?" They wanted to know why I didn't hang out with the college kids more. The college kids were more my age. And because I was neither African American, nor white, I could be in either community because nobody could categorize me. I think they thought surely, if I had a choice, I would hang out at the "better" place.

GK: What did you tell the African American kids?

LW: I had to think about that. I told them, "Because I like you guys better." (Laughter) You could see my response register on their faces, in terms of what they thought of themselves—"She likes us better. . . "

GK: I guess living there was different than living in Hawaii. Any more examples?

LW: After going to a carnival with one of the college kids and three or four of the community kids, I was driving us home and it was pretty cold. So I said, "Oh, I want hot cocoa." They said, "Yeah. We want hot cocoa." So I pulled into this restaurant that was open. And the minute I pulled into this restaurant, the kids said, "Oh, we don't want any hot cocoa." (Laughter) They also said, "No. No. We're not cold. We don't want hot cocoa. . . " I said, "What do you mean? Two minutes ago, you said you were cold. Let's go." None of them said anything. I dragged everybody out. We went into the restaurant. I'm ushering everybody in. We looked, and the only table big enough to accommodate us was at the very end of the restaurant. So we had to walk past all the other customers. We sat down, I turned around, and every single head in that restaurant was, like, looking at us. (Chuckles) I just chalked it up to them staring at me because I looked different. I was so used to it by then. We wait. I tell the kids after a while, "Gee. Their service is so terrible.

They're so slow." The waitress finally comes, and we order hot cocoa. We drank the hot cocoa. We paid our bill.

On our way home, one of the kids finally told me that they don't serve African American people in there. I said, "What? What do you mean? We're customers." They said, "But they don't serve African American people there." Then, I realized, "Oh, that's why they took so long."

GK: So, they were staring at you not because you were Asian, but because they don't serve African American people. I guess the restaurant made an exception with these kids?

LW: (Laughs) Well, we got our cocoa. Now that I think about it, hope they didn't spit in it. In any case, we survived my ignorance.

GK: What was your sense of what was happening in the community?

LW: The interesting thing about working in Glade Spring was the absence of young men. It kind of hit you when you looked at the community. There were school-age kids, then older married men in their twenties, thirties. Between 18 and 28, there are no young single men. There were minimal job opportunities. Either you left or joined the military.

While I was there, there was one African American soldier from the community who had been killed in Vietnam. The war was just starting to heat up.

GK: Did that experience change your perception of the world?

LW: I'd been taught that people should be able to pull themselves up by their bootstraps, work hard and you'll be successful. But I remember thinking at the time, "What if you didn't have any bootstraps? What do you pull yourself up by? These guys had literally nothing.

GK: How was the white community?

LW: I was briefly assigned to, and stayed with a poor white family, where, honestly, I did not feel safe. I was really, "Oh my God." I was really scared. They looked at me as if I were an alien. It was a bit disturbing. I was soon reassigned back to Glade Spring. Anyway, this family had a puppy that was in bad shape. He couldn't stand up, was very weak, and flea infested. Obviously, they didn't know how to take care of him. So, I asked if I could have him. I don't remember if I paid anything for him, but I think they thought he was dying anyway. I took him to the vet, took all my money to pay the vet. He got dewormed. He got medication, I got up to feed him baby food through the night. He survived. He was about four months old when he was hit and killed by a truck. I had left him at home while I went to the park with some of the kids. A witness said my dog and another dog were on the shoulder of the road, when a guy in a truck veered off the road, aiming for both dogs. One got out of the way, mine did not.

GK: Wow.

LW: Everybody in the community knew that was my dog. He wasn't that old, so he wasn't as street smart as the other dog.

GK: Wow.

LW: The witness said it was a white guy in a truck who deliberately killed my dog. So, I'm thinking, well they couldn't kill me, or maybe they would have. But they were not happy with what I was doing there. So, their way of getting back would be to get my dog.

GK: Wow. So, you spent a year there, and then what happened? You flew back to Hawaii?

LW: I came home.

GK: How did that experience inform you about your experience here in Hawaii?

LW: I was totally disoriented. It made me re-examine what I had grown up thinking—this whole idea of a melting pot, everybody equal and, yada, yada. It was like, "Okay, now let me look at this." You have different eyeballs on it. I had come back from Virginia looking at the war very differently. When you see a disproportionate number of a certain group of people being negatively affected, then you kind of like look at war differently.

GK: What did you do?

LW: Okay. So, I came home and had a hard time readjusting, because after being out on my own, making decisions that affected my life, and taking care of myself for a whole year, coming home—and having my mom say, "Well you have a midnight curfew. . . "— did not go over well. I re-enrolled at the University of Hawaii-Manoa, on academic probation.

GK: So, how'd it go?

LW: All right. I was going to school full time. Home was a bit tense, so I moved out and got a job at Flamingo Cafe working 48 hours a week. My dad co-signed for a car loan. I barely passed that semester, had like straight Cs. I didn't get my degree until nine years after I started school.

GK: How did you get involved in activism at the University of Hawaii?

LW: Actually, I was dating Wayne "Ko" Hayashi who got involved in the draft resistance movement in its early days, and he introduced me to John Witeck, who was attending the East-West Center. That was in 1968. Because of my experiences in Virginia, I was looking at the Vietnam War differently, and what the Resistance members were saying resonated with me.

GK: What activities were you involved in at the university?

LW: I was involved in the Bachman Hall sit-in in 1968 involving Oliver Lee.

GK: He was the one who was denied tenure because of his anti-Vietnam War activities. What happened?

LW. I got arrested at Bachman Hall.

GK: What did your parents have to say?

LW: Oh, let's see: "What was I doing? I was causing my father's heart condition." It was all these terrible things that I was doing. I was jeopardizing my brother's career in the military. My family members said that people were calling them up saying, "What's wrong with your daughter?"

GK: What was your brother doing in the military?

LW: He was actually at that point becoming a career military person. He was a captain in the Army, and he flew helicopters. Family members said I was threatening his security clearance. And, I said, well they should judge him on his actions, not on anybody related to him.

GK: Where did you get this kind of resolve?

LW: From my father. He was very down to earth and very logical. If he couldn't find a tool to do a particular task, he'd make one. So, you know, you look for solutions, rather than sit there and whine about what you can or can't do.

GK: So, did you find applications of that in say, your early activism?

LW: Well, if I didn't like what the group was doing, I wouldn't participate. Like Kokua Hawaii did tons and tons of meetings. So did the Resistance. So, did the RCP (Revolutionary Communist Party). So did all these groups. I mean, they'd have all these meetings. I'm not against meetings per se, I just don't like to sit forever just to hear people say the same things over and over. I told them to, "Call me when you want me to paint the sign, or bake something or whatever. But I'm not coming to meetings, unless you're going to do something constructive."

GK: Did you find any support in your activism from your father's generation?

LW: The one person who helped was state Sen. Nadao Yoshinaga.

GK: How did that happen?

LW: My dad used to go fishing at Ewa Beach all the time with his throw net. He ran into Nadao at the beach one day and they got to talking. My dad grew up in Waipahu so I

guess they knew each other. Of course, he was complaining about me. And then Najo was complaining about his daughter, and yet he was saying, "But you know what? They're right." He came out in support of anti-war protesters. He was the first, what some might regard as, legitimate person, or a person of my father's generation who was respected and who was supportive. And so, my dad was, "Oh, wait a minute." So, he stopped and he kind of thought about what Najo said, and said that what Najo said was always very helpful.

GK: How did you get involved in supporting the anti-eviction struggle in Kalama Valley?

LW: It was sort of a progression. It began at the Youth Congress, with talks about seceding from the U.S. and all of these different ideas that the delegates were coming up with. John was very involved in local struggles, including Kalama Valley. I got more involved after the haoles were kicked out. Remember, we had a baby to care for as well.

GK: I know it was a controversial decision. Did you agree with it?

LW: The thinking behind it made sense because during earlier anti-war and resistance protests, the charge was that outside haole agitators were coming in and stirring up our good local kids to break the law and protest. It was as if local kids did not have a brain of their own. For Kokua Kalama, that strategic kind of decision said, "Okay. This is a locally run organization, and yes, we have supporters who are not local. Many are haoles. But we're not blaming them for anything that we say, think or do."

One of the good things that came from the Kokua Kalama struggle was this whole idea of localism. It spawned a whole lot of ideas and shifts in perception of the protest movement. . . It said, "Yes, we're local people, and we're not placid, compliant, obedient, colonized people."

GK: What kind of things did you do to help out in Kokua Hawaii?

LW: We worked on the newspaper, the *Huli.* I used to do typesetting. I helped with disseminating information.

GK: What other things happened within Kokua Hawaii?

LW: There's a lot of things that went on in Kokua Kalama, like the blatant chauvinism, which the women addressed time and time again.

GK: And which I learned a lot about.

LW: Yes, the struggle continues.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Gary T. Kubota

Gary T. Kubota
Photograph courtesy of Dennis Oda

Gary T. Kubota, born in Honolulu in 1949, was arrested with 31 other people in Kalama Valley on May 11, 1971, in an act of civil disobedience to protest the mass eviction of farmers and Native Hawaiians. As a member of the activist group Kokua Hawaii, Kubota served for a brief time as a writer and editor of Kokua Hawaii's newspaper* Huli. *He later became a Kokua Hawaii community organizer helping to fight the eviction of the Filipino community of Ota Camp in Waipahu in 1971-73, and was a leader in a sit-in to preserve Ethnic Studies at the University of Hawaii-Manoa in 1972. He later became a journalist, working for several Pacific newspapers, receiving national awards for his work including recognition from the National Press Club and National Newspaper Association. His play* The Legend Of Koolau, *which received a National Performance Network grant, is touring nationally. He's also serving as volunteer researcher and liaison for tenants fighting an eviction from Front Street Apartments in Lahaina. He was interviewed by Kawena Kubota on April 10, 2018.

KK: Tell us about yourself. Where were you raised?

GK: For the first seven years of my life, I was raised in veterans' housing called "Kalihi War Homes," with my three sisters, my mother and father. My father was a World War II veteran. Our rented home now is the site of the public housing project Kuhio Park Terrace. I attended Kalihi Waena Elementary School until second grade, then my family moved to a new housing subdivision in Pearl City, closer to my father's work at Pearl Harbor.

KK: Who were your parents?

GK: Both of my parents—Takao Kubota and Yoshie Inouye—were raised in large families in west Kauai. They were children of Japanese immigrants who came to Hawaii in the early 1900s. My grandfather on my mother's side was a stevedore. My grandmother on my mother's side was a picture bride from the farm country of Kumamoto. My grandparents on my father side were Japanese language school teachers from Hiroshima.

KK: What did your father do for a living?

GK: He was an electrician at Pearl Harbor. After World War II, a lot of veterans had the opportunity to learn a trade and work at Pearl Harbor. We moved to upper Pearl City so that he'd be closer to work. That section of Pearl City had been sugarcane fields and was among the first suburbs on the Leeward Coast.

KK: Did your mom work?

GK: She was a housewife when we were children but later worked as a licensed practical nurse at Leeward Oahu Hospital during our teen- age years. It was a lucky thing she had a job, because when I was about 12 or 13, my father became ill.

KK: What happened?

GK: He had what was then called a "nervous breakdown." He would suddenly get angry at my mother and accuse her of things like infidelity, and sometimes talk to dead members in his old WWII combat unit. His breathing would suddenly change and he would stare out our picture window at night for what seemed an eternity. He had schizophrenia and also what I understood decades later was post-traumatic stress disorder from World War II.

KK: That must have been rough?

GK: The rough part was getting help for him, because most of the time he seemed normal. U.S. Army physicians were no help in the beginning. There was very little understanding of post-traumatic stress disorder. It took a few years before the sickness became apparent to everyone and he was institutionalized and treated at Tripler Army Hospital.

KK: How long?

GK: For most of the time I was in high school. Then, he got better.

KK: How much better?

GK: Good enough so he could go back to work but not really good enough so we could invite friends and relatives into our home for any length of time. We never knew when his schizophrenia would return. When it did, he would go from being a friendly, gentle man to an angry, paranoid, accusatory person. It was the family's secret long into my adulthood. Both my parents have passed, and I'm sharing this story because I hope it might bring some understanding to other veterans' families who might be going through a similar experience.

KK: Was it prevalent among his soldier friends?

GK: I came to understand it was. But it wasn't something, and it's still not something, men

in his 100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry Regimental Combat Team talked about outside of their families.

KK: Do you think your father's mental illness shaped you as an anti-war activist?

GK: It had a profound effect. As a teen-ager, I felt like I was living with a ticking bomb in the family house long after the war had ended and no one knew how to disarm it. Government officials seem more into military parades and perpetuating the image of Japanese Americans as warriors. My father and other Japanese Americans fought and helped to win World War II. But in American history books, there was little or no acknowledgment of Japanese Americans' contribution. I felt because of this kind of institutionalized racism, guys in my generation were going to face the same racist thing again by fighting in Vietnam. I wasn't going to do it.

KK: Did any of the other 442nd Regimental Combat children become anti-war activist?

GK: I didn't know of any. There were news reports about a couple of Japanese American youths at the University of Hawaii participating in protests. But I didn't know their background, and I wasn't sure I wanted to attach myself to any group. I wasn't asking for anyone's acceptance to do what I was going to do.

KK: What do you want to see happen in terms of the treatment of mental illness and PTSD?

GK: I think every soldier before being discharged should undergo a mental health assessment and undergo an assessment every five to 10 years. Thing is, PTSD can rear up 10, 20, 30 years after military service. A reason why there are so many soldiers who are homeless and encountering social problems is there's no preventative mechanism for these assessments and the triggering of their treatment.

At the base of it all is the racism allowed in the U.S. military, which has its own schizophrenia of supposedly helping and hating foreigners, including sons and daughters of immigrants. It's gone from calling Vietnamese "gooks" to calling Iraqis "towel heads." It's gone from the My Lai Massacre to Abu Ghraib. There's a whole ignorant, sick subculture that needs to be rooted out of the military. Americans need to remember that the destabilization of the Middle East started with unfounded fears of Iraq having "weapons of mass destruction." No one in the U.S. was ever held accountable for this mistake.

KK: It sounds like that would definitely have an impact on anyone. How did that experience inform you about your life?

GK: It made me angry at the quiet acquiescence of some educated Japanese Americans who were aware of the illness but did nothing to help their own group of warriors. They preferred to perpetuate the warrior image. There were the parades and medals, but no concerted effort to treat PTSD. I found support in individuals who were of different ethnicities. When I couldn't find any summer work in high school, my mom's friend

Holsum Bakery supervisor Jimmy Pahukoa hired me for two summers as a mechanic's helper; it enabled me to buy my first surfboard and save to go to college. Jessie Pang Lum hired me as a pot washer at Bob's Bakery in Pearl City during my junior and senior year in high school. I've tried to pay their kindness forward in my own way.

KK: How do you pay it forward?

GK: As a journalist, I've tried to reach out and write about Hawaiians and other minorities facing their own social and economic problems and tried make sure their issues had a place in the newspaper, like the farmers in Keanae on Maui who complained for decades about the lack of water flow into their taro patches and like writing about the Chinese contributions to Hawaiian history, such as the Hawaii education of Sun Yat-sen; he's known as the father of the Chinese republic in his country. I also did investigative news stories that no one had an inclination to do.

KK: What kind of investigative stories?

GK: Oh, I conducted an investigation into illegal sand mining on Molokai, after hearing complaints from Native Hawaiian Walter Ritte. After my investigation, the county shut down the sand mining operation in the early 1980s, and the area later became part of the state Natural Area Reserve. As a consumer columnist for several years, I worked with the late state Sen. Anthony Chang to pass a law requiring a "New Car Lemon Law" booklet to be placed in every new car in Hawaii. I had found out from consumers that car dealers weren't informing consumers about the state's Lemon Law and their rights to a full refund. I did an expose' on how county, state and federal officials were accepting complimentary rooms and food at the Kaluakoi Resort, while conducting inspections there; a county public works director was censored by the Board of Ethics and had to pay back his per diem to the county. I did an expose on a Reagan-appointed Native Hawaiian Studies Commission that determined that Native Hawaiians should not receive reparations for the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy and that the U.S. wasn't involved in the overthrow; some of the commissioners had previously represented corporations against Native Americans, and I interviewed experts who said the Commission's study was shoddy. After six people died in Hawaii in three separate ultralight crashes in a year and a half, I did an investigation on how operators were violating federal rules through operating them as thrill rides. After the story broke, the Federal Aviation Administration flew into Honolulu from Los Angeles to announce it was cracking down on ultra light operators. Just this year, a bill was passed by the state Legislature requiring the courts to notify the family or guardian when a mental health patient has a hearing. The law was prompted by an investigation I did into a tragic murder of an elderly woman on Kauai by a young man who was released from a psychiatric ward by the courts, without consulting his family. A relative of the young man told me the family had called police to have him placed in the ward and wanted him to remain confined but were not notified of the court hearing and his release. The measure advises the courts to notify a family member, relative, guardian or friend about the hearing.

KK: What were you doing prior to entering Kalama Valley?

GK: I was working as a draft counselor/cook/janitor at the Off Center Coffeehouse near the university. It was operated by the Rev. Wallace Fukunaga and United Church of Christ.

KK: What does a draft counselor do?

GK: He basically informs youths about their legal rights to refuse induction into military service if they believe they are conscientious objectors. A conscientious objector is a person who for religious or spiritual reasons opposes the use of violence and associated activities and resists military service. I'd learned draft counseling earlier from the American Friends Service Committee. College youths would visit the Coffeehouse to get brochures and other information about being a conscientious objector. Sometimes, I'd ride on my motorcycle with a backpack of printed information to high schools that had invited me to be a guest speaker. A couple of times, I'd be going into the classroom as the Marine recruiter was walking out. I'd stick a map on the blackboard showing the location of multinational corporations' offshore oil drilling concessions around Southeast Asia and say, "Let me tell you why we're really fighting in Vietnam." (Laughter)

KK: How did that go?

GK: I thought it went well. I remember returning to my alma mater, Waipahu High School and some students were interested in pursuing anti-Vietnam War activities, including Mary Brogan and Gail Hamasu. Gail and Brian Taniguchi, who later became a state senator, were volunteers helping to fight the eviction of the Filipino community in Ota Camp in Waipahu.

KK: How did your draft counseling activities dovetail into getting arrested in Kalama Valley?

GK: Well, my conscientious objector status put me on a path of questioning the politics and institutions in the United States. When I was attending the University of Hawaii in 1967, I remember standing for 30 minutes by a tree-lined concourse and watching students go by and maybe just seeing a few Hawaiian and Filipino faces and a fair number of Japanese faces out of hundreds of white students, then later reading the newspapers about mainly Hawaiians and Filipinos and some Japanese from Hawaii dying while fighting in Vietnam. Hawaii high schools, especially those with ROTC, were channeling minorities such as Hawaiians and Filipinos in disproportionate numbers into the military, while they were somehow restricted from entering colleges, where they could have received a student deferment from the draft. The practice is called "institutionalized racism."

I'd dropped out of the University of Hawaii after completing my sophomore year. I was waiting to be assigned to some kind of alternative draft service and thinking I might resist and spend time in jail, when Kalama Valley came up. Well, it seemed like if I was going to jail for resisting alternative service in a war that was thousands of miles away, I might as well get arrested for an injustice occurring in my own back yard.

KK: Did you know anyone in Kalama Valley?

GK: I knew members of Kokua Hawaii were meeting at the Off Center Coffeehouse, and I had met one of its leaders, Larry Kamakawiwoole, who was teaching religion at the university. It seemed that if he was a leader in the group, it was solid enough for me to check out and go to Kalama Valley. I think it was about May 4 or 5, 1971 when I rode with a student named Ralph and went into the valley.

KK: How was it?

GK: It was a bit unsettling and exciting at the same time to see the number of police involved in the operation. I knew about the shooting deaths of the Black Panther Party members by Chicago police in the late 1960s—incidents that cast a cloud on trusting authorities to follow the law. The Honolulu police had blocked the main road into Kalama Valley, and there were Kokua Hawaii supporters outside holding protest signs. One of them heard that Ralph and I wanted to go in, so he told us if we drove a half mile down the highway toward Waimanalo, there was a break in the bushes and people waiting to pick up supporters to go inside.

KK: So what did you do?

GK: We did what he said, and sure enough, after going through the bushes, there were two people like ourselves waiting to be picked up. In a matter of a few minutes, a Hawaiian guy wearing just shorts and slippers drove up in a Volkswagen and gave us a ride. It was a crazy kind of a ride on dusty dirt roads and dry brush. Soon thereafter, a police helicopter began following us, and I guess the driver whose name was Red didn't want to reveal his route so he drove around and around mounds of dirt for a while, then he parked among high mounds of construction dirt where the helicopter couldn't land. He got out of the car and laughed at the police. There was no place for the helicopter to land safely. Red, who I later learned was related to Kalama Valley resident Moose Lui, waited for the helicopter to run out of fuel and fly away, before continuing to Kokua Hawaii's headquarters.

KK: How was it once you got to the headquarters?

GK: The headquarters was a shack near George Santos' house. Kokua Hawaii seemed fairly organized. What impressed me was that some Hawaiians were taking the lead in this eviction struggle, and there were a good number of local people including older adults involved in it. The process was fairly democratic. Kokua Hawaii had a steering committee that made decisions and generally sought consensus from the larger group of supporters. I'd been on the periphery of protests against the Vietnam War at the University of Hawaii but couldn't support it because of the style of leadership. It seemed that decisions were made off-the-cuff by individuals vying for attention and the group had no control over their membership.

KK: What style of leadership were you referring to?

GK: There were mainly white students from the U.S. mainland who attacked the U.S. military and seemed okay with burning the American flag. From where I was coming from back then, I was opposed to the war, not the U.S. military which served at the will of U.S. political decisionmakers, and I couldn't see myself supporting activists who burned the American flag. My uncles and my father had served in the U.S. Army. One of my uncles died in Okinawa fighting in World War II against Imperial Japan. My father was a sergeant in the 100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry who received a Silver Star rescuing Texans in the Vosges Forest. On the other hand, the Kalama Valley struggle involved fighting an eviction of local people, including Hawaiians. To me, it was an opportunity to point out that while Hawaiians were dying on the battlefields in Vietnam, they were being evicted from lands in Hawaii. That was a huge contradiction and an injustice. I wasn't alone in that feeling. In Kalama Valley, there were Hawaiians who were Vietnam veterans who had joined the struggle against the eviction.

KK: What attracted you to Kokua Hawaii?

GK: Sincerity. If I was going to put myself on the line, I wanted to make sure the group was led by solid people. Besides Larry, there were people who had a lot on the line and were committed to change—Joy Ahn, a Waianae High School teacher and former aide to Congresswoman Patsy Mink; Honolulu socialite Mary Choy; former Annapolis appointee Linton Park; Soli Niheu, administrator with Kalihi-Palama recreation; KEY Canteen official Randy Kalahiki; and Kahuna Sammy Lono. Then, there was Carl Young, who went down to Mississippi in 1964 to support the civil rights movement, later joined the Peace Corps. He became a Kokua Hawaii member and later supported the Hawaiian sovereignty movement. They added a level of credibility to the struggle. Their presence could not be ignored. There was a fair amount of news coverage about Joy and Mary.

KK: What about Lono?

GK: It was the first time I had ever seen a kahuna priest make such a public appearance. Usually, I heard whispers among adults about kahuna priests cursing or curing someone. For the most part, they were part of an underground of Hawaiian knowledge. Apparently, the police, many of them Hawaiian, were familiar with Lono and also Randy. Neither of the two were arrested, although they were at George's house on May 11, 1971. Matter of fact, I remember Lono offering his wrists for the police to handcuff, shouting, "Arrest me. Arrest me." The police just backed off and moved even further away from Lono, when he began chanting. Of course, they had no problem arresting me.

KK: Was there any incident that changed the way you looked at the Vietnam War?

GK: The experience didn't strike me as significant at the time, but it was kind of hard to forget as time went by. When I was 19, I saved three Marines caught in high storm surf off Fort DeRussy. They'd paddled out and got caught in the sets about 8-feet high, lost their surfboards, and were screaming for help. They were about three-quarters of a mile offshore, and with storm surf waves roaring, no one on the beach could see or hear them.

Actually, there were very few people out there. There was a Native Hawaiian surfer out there, but he had caught a wave in. I waited for a set to finish, caught the last wave in the set, kicked out near them and gave them my board, and told them to kick to a channel as hard as they could. I told them to wrap their arms and legs around the board when a wave came and not to let go, and not to talk, just kick hard. It was their last chance.

KK: What did you do?

GK: I knew I could catch a wave and body surf in, but I stayed with them. I dove down about 10 to 12 feet and hung onto rocks when the sets came. I watched them flailing on the surface. Occasionally, I came up for air. I swam in beside them as they held onto my board and kicked to the channel where the waves weren't breaking as much. When they got on the beach about 25 minutes later, they were grateful, tired, and a little embarrassed. They asked me if I was Hawaiian, and I said I was a local Japanese, but that I'd been surfing for years. That's when one of them said, "You mean, we were rescued by a 'gook?'" I'd heard that term before used to describe Vietnamese but never people like me. The other two Marines apologized, and I shrugged it off and went back surfing, after they promised not to go back into the ocean. I began to hear that term used by local Asian veterans who complained about the racism in the U.S. military. It just made me sick. How do you expect to win a war when you cultivate a racist view of the Vietnamese? The answer was, "You can't."

KK: How did your activism affect you and your family?

GK: Emotionally, it was tough. Except for some close friends, I had no support; it wasn't something we talked about because quite a few of my Pearl City friends went into the military. I had little or no contact with my parents for years, especially my father who felt ashamed and betrayed by his own son. All my life, I had been told by my father and uncles that when your government calls, you go. That's your duty. I was channeled in that direction, joining the Boy Scouts, then taking martial arts like judo and karate in my youth. I was okay financially when I became a conscientious objector. I'd been living in shared apartments in Waikiki and near the university, since my freshman year and had been working, as well, first as a dishwasher, then later as a busboy and waiter at various restaurants and hotels.

KK: After the Kalama arrest, what happened?

GK: The police apparently couldn't identify a bunch of those arrested, including myself, so the charge of misdemeanor trespassing was dismissed.

KK: Did you continue to be involved with Kokua Hawaii?

GK: My involvement was gradual. I began writing for Kokua Hawaii's newspaper, *Huli.* Much of it was either about the Vietnam War or updates on different eviction struggles statewide. For a brief time, I was the editor. The challenge was in balancing stories about

housing and evictions and about the anti-Vietnam War and peace movement. There were quite a number of residents in communities facing evictions who were veterans, whose children were in the military, or worked for the military.

KK: How did you and the tenants reconcile these issues?

GK: I think we just had to agree to disagree about the Vietnam War. It wasn't like there were a lot of people volunteering to help the tenants fight evictions, and they were grateful for what help they could get.

KK: What kept Kokua Hawaii members together?

GK: Kokua Hawaii had a number of retreats where people had the opportunity to get to know each other and to work out a plan of action. I think what kept me attending was their collective style of leadership where everyone had the opportunity to express their views in a friendly setting. The people became my extended family by choice. Also, it broadened my experience about Hawaiian history and culture. We went on frequent visits to Kahuna Sammy Lono's place in Haiku and learned about ahupuaa and kuleana rights and his fight to maintain his culture. Sammy had been through a long successful legal battle to protect his access rights to his land and ancestral home in Haiku in the 1960s. He was also exercising his religious rights in growing and using awa, as part of a Native Hawaiian rites in defiance of federal drug laws. Native Hawaiian religious rites later played a key role in federal courts allowing Native Hawaiians access to Kahoolawe, an island then occupied and used for military purposes. I was also influenced by John and Marion Kelly. We were studying Marx, Lenin and Mao and reading the Blount Report about the illegal overthrow of the monarchy. I was also moved by reading about Japanese American labor strikes in Hawaii in 1909 and 1919-1921 as described by *Hawaii Pono* author Lawrence Fuchs. Through our readings and discussions, we became a conduit for a new way of looking at Hawaii history, one that appreciated the labor struggles.

KK: How did you become a community organizer?

GK: Kokua Hawaii had sent a couple of members to be community organizers and live in the Filipino community of Ota Camp at the request of Ota Camp president Pete Tagalog. Like Pete, they attended Leeward Community College. At some point, a television news report painted an extremely negative picture of the tenants' anti-eviction struggle. A decision was made by the leadership to send me in to help to turn around the situation. I moved in some time in early 1972. A couple of Kokua Hawaii members were already living there.

KK: Can you describe Ota Camp?

GK: The location was rural, with running water, electricity. Tenants had built their own homes or occupied homes built by other tenants. The community was connected from Kamehameha Highway to an alternative dirt road leading to the Waipahu dump. The

powdery dust from vehicles kicked up into our shack. Kokua Hawaii members Jim Young and Randy Yamaguchi had cleaned up the abandoned shack, chased out the stray dogs, and ran an electrical line from our neighbor, old man Panit's house, to power lights and a hot plate. We showered in the back yard using a garden hose. We paid $35 a month for the electricity to Panit. Randy and Jim attended Leeward Community College with Ota Camp president Pete Tagalog who was on disability from a refrigeration job. I found a job at the nearby Pearl Harbor Volkswagen as a lot attendant and brought my portable typewriter to write news releases and *Huli* newspaper stories. Jim was the photographer. As it turned out, I paid the rent and bought the food and supplies to support the Kokua Hawaii household.

KK: What was the problem with the television news broadcast?

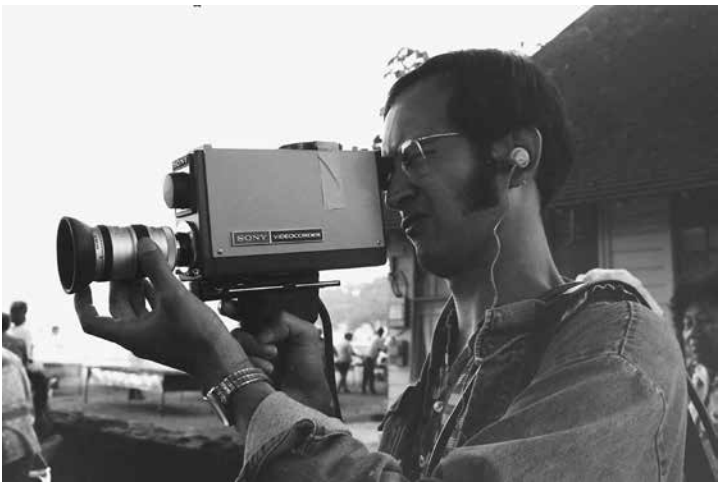
GK: It was misleading. The newsman, who spoke about the anti-eviction fight, showed a stack of junk cars piled one on top of another and people sitting on the porch steps, as if they were unemployed. Without talking to Ota Camp president Pete Tagalog, the newsman spoke to residents who either didn't know what was going on or were inarticulate and unable to express what the anti-eviction struggle was about. Pete was upset at the newscast. He told me the stack of junk cars wasn't on Ota Camp's property and were dumped there by outsiders. Most of the residents worked, and the remainder were retirees.

KK: How does one go about erasing something like that?

GK: You can't erase it. But you can educate news media people and make sure they speak to the right people. Kokua Hawaii members met with the steering committee and shared some ideas with them on how to handle publicity. At the next association meeting, Pete reminded tenants that they should refer the news media to him, if they see any news media person walking around. They should also notify him that a news media person was in the community. Within a month, the association had a cleanup in the community, then held an event day for the news media where Pete introduced newspaper and TV news persons to residents who were able to articulate their views. Pete asked that during the news media day, tenants do not sit on the steps of their porches or sit at all.

KK: What were the tenants asked to do?

GK: Well, they were told to grab a rake, hoe or sickle. But they weren't to sit down outside their house and do nothing, at least during the news media day (laughter). There was a tenant—Enrique Dela Cruz who used to be called "The Judge"—who was in his late seventies and retired. Enrique liked to invite guests to his porch to have a shot of whiskey with him. He was asked to keep his bottle inside his house during media day. But at one point, he forgot and he was on his way carrying out a tray with his shot glasses and bottle of whiskey to his porch, when Pete saw him and waved him off back into the house. (Laughter) The goal was to show that many of the tenants were working people



James C.W. Young was a Kokua Hawaii photographer documenting the eviction struggle involving Ota Camp and the Ethnic Studies Program sit-in at the University of Hawaii-Manoa. Photo courtesy of James Young family

and cultivating a Filipino lifestyle. A number worked as hotel housekeepers, as cooks, and golf course maintenance workers. I wrote a news release approved by Pete that was disseminated that day. Honolulu Star-Bulletin had a great feature story about the tenants.

KK: What else happened?

GK: Around that time, there was a really well-known poster of tenants at the International Hotel in San Francisco who were fighting an eviction, and I thought it would be a great thing to gather tenants together for a group photograph. Pete agreed and helped to gather as many of the tenants as possible. Kokua Hawaii photographer James C.W. Young took the photograph from the flatbed of a truck. Kokua Hawaii paid for the printing of more than 200 posters, and they were distributed all over Waipahu and low-income housing projects on Oahu. We also used the posters as a fund-raiser and raised $200 that we gave to the association. The poster put a face on the tenants' struggle, showing Filipino families, a bunch of children, dogs, and senior citizens united in one cause.

KK: Very cool.

GK: After a certain point, it was all about helping to build a community. Whenever Pete or someone in Ota Camp wanted to buy a pig for a party, I'd take them over to Kokua Hawaii pig farmer George Santos' piggery in Pearl City and introduce them to George who would give them a good deal. Kokua Hawaii members Jim Young and Randy Yamaguchi took the Ota Camp youths on beach outings on the weekend. Then, all of a sudden, somewhere between all this, Mayor Frank Fasi's administration called Pete by telephone one day and said they wanted to pay a visit and meet the residents.

KK: What happened?

GK: I remember Pete rushing over to our house one morning and telling me city officials who had just called would be coming in about three hours. I was usually the one who prepared the news media releases and fact sheets, and I usually ran things by Pete, but I didn't on this occasion. I called the news media by telephone and told them that Fasi officials would be touring the camp to see how they could help the tenants.

KK: Did the city officials show up?

GK: Fasi wasn't there, but it seemed like all the Fasi department heads were, including Managing Director Leo Pritchard. They were walking through the camp with Pete when the news media arrived including the TV news people. Suddenly, it was a media event, where news people were asking them what their plans were for helping the tenants. I guess Fasi was courting the Filipino vote in his run for governor and he realized helping a Filipino community wasn't a bad idea. I know one of the city officials was upset at the presence of the news media, and Pete said he hadn't called anyone. At a meeting of the steering committee later that day, I told committee members I had called the news media, and it needed to be done so that newspapers and TV stations had city officials on the record touring the community. The very fact they were there was an admission that they were aware of the problem and trying to fix it. To pull out without finding a solution would have shown a lack of leadership on their part. Basically, I told Pete he should blame me. That way the onus was off of him (Laughter).

KK: Did the city come up with a solution?

GK: On August 1, 1972, Fasi announced a partial solution developing dormitories for the displaced elderly in Ota Camp on city land at West Loch. Less than a couple of weeks later, ILWU Local 142 secretary-treasurer Newton Miyagi asked landowner Amity Waipahu Inc. to delay the eviction of Ota Camp tenants in Waipahu who received eviction notices and were told to leave on October 31. Both events provided a measure of legitimacy to Ota Camp's fight. The fight against the eviction began turning in favor of tenants. The steering committee's position was that all the residents in Ota Camp should be moved to West Loch. There were months of talks back and forth. Pete managed to keep the community together, holding weekly meetings and occasional protests in front of City Hall, seeking various individuals and groups support.

KK: What happened?

GK: Kokua Hawaii and other Ota Camp supporters, like Johnny Verzon and Leon Dagdagan who were associated with a Filipino group, kept helping to build support for the tenants. When Pete decided to participate in the 75th anniversary of Waipahu Town—the Diamond Jubilee on November 11, 1972—and needed coconut fronds to build a nipa hut float, I gathered up his son Darrell and his cousins in a truck and we went looking for coconut trees and knocked on neighbor's doors to see if they wanted their

coconut trees trimmed for free. I remember this happened on a weekday after my work as a lot attendant, when most people were home and before the Saturday parade. Most tenants were either at school or at work or too old, so I was the one who climbed about seven coconut trees and cut the fronds. I also ended up driving the flatbed truck carrying the float. It was all part of being a community organizer.

KK: What was the reaction of the parade crowd?

GK: The crowd was cheering as Ota Camp float and residents marched past them. They were clapping and some shouted, "Makibaka!", which means struggle in the Tagalog dialect. It told me Ota Camp tenants had won the hearts and minds of the public.

KK: So what happened?

GK: Gov. Ariyoshi who was running for gubernatorial election against Fasi eventually proposed that the state build houses on city land at West Loch for the tenants, with an option of applying their rental payments toward the purchase of their homes. Apparently, the Ota Camp Makibaka Association approached Ariyoshi for help in December 1973.

KK: Wow.

GK: The backstory was even more interesting. Quite often, visitors would attend the weekly meetings of Ota Camp Makibaka Association. One of them was Hideo "Major" Okada, one of the chief organizers of the ILWU at sugar plantations on Oahu and a very influential person in the Democratic Party. In an interview with Major in the late 1970s, I found out that his Japanese parents had been kicked out of their plantation home by plantation bosses during the 1919-1920 strike when his mother and his younger brother had influenza. He told me how he never forgot that act of cruelty. It was one reason why he became a union organizer. It also was one reason why he attended the meetings to fight the eviction. Apparently, Major advised Ariyoshi to help the Ota Camp tenants, and Ariyoshi did. In an exchange of emails with me in 2017, Ariyoshi confirmed that Okada was a major influence in his decision to help Ota Camp tenants.

KK: That's awesome.

GK: Yes. A lot of communities facing evictions began calling up Pete to come to their meetings and speak about his eviction fight. I remember Kokua Hawaii member Ray Catania was organizing against the eviction of tenants at Hikina Lane in Kalihi due to a planned expansion of Honolulu Community College. A lot of residents came out to hear Pete. We met at a corner apartment unit that had been damaged in a fire. There was no roof and only remnants of a hollow tile wall. Residents brought their own chairs. Pete knew these types of people and knew what to say to motivate them. His wife Sally actually worked in an aloha wear sweat shop on the same street. Pete was a great speaker and could hold people's attention, make them laugh, then give them the straight talk as a working man. Ray said Pete's speech gave the tenants hope. Pete also spoke at Waiahole-

Waikane, Nukolii on Kauai, and tenants facing eviction in Chinatown.

KK: What made Kokua Hawaii decide to get involved in helping to preserve the Ethnic Studies Program at the University of Hawaii?

GK: It was a joint effort of Ethnic Studies students and faculty and Kokua Hawaii and its supporters. I think there were many individuals and groups who helped to start and develop the Ethnic Studies Program in its formative years, including UH American Studies Prof. Dennis Ogawa, anthropology instructor and religion instructor Larry Kamakawiwoole, and other Ethnic Studies academic supporters Pete Thompson, Kehau Lee, Kay Brundage, Ross McCloud, Pua Anthony, Marion Kelly, and Agnes Nakahawa-Howard, and Noel Kent, Kathryn Takara, James Anthony, Mel Chang, and Guy Fujimura. Fujimura is now secretary-treasurer of ILWU Local 142. Kokua Hawaii's participation in the sit-in happened at the end of Ethnic Studies' two-year experimental period in the spring of 1972. We had heard rumors about plans to kill Ethnic Studies during the summer and merge the courses into other academic disciplines. A four-person advisory committee, professors from other disciplines, were chosen by the UH administration to provide recommendations. In Kokua Hawaii's opinion, the selection of the committee—none from Ethnic Studies itself—was a clear indication which way the administration leaned. Kokua Hawaii couldn't let that happen. You have to understand that Ethnic Studies arose because there was no UH institution charged with the responsibility of providing narratives about Hawaii minorities and serving as the intellectual voice advocating for minorities. At that time, the School of Hawaiian Knowledge did not exist. Pete Thompson, Larry Kamakawiwoole, Marion Kelly and others teaching in the program provided not only that perspective but also helped to develop the arguments to sustain various struggles. Many of those who were involved in Hawaiian Studies took Ethnic Studies courses.

KK: What happened?

GK: The sit-in was different than the typical sit-in at the university. We brought several ethnic communities threatened with eviction and other minority groups who were our allies together to retain the Ethnic Studies Program at the University of Hawaii. They included residents from Ota Camp in Waipahu, Heeia-Kea, Kahaluu, Halawa Housing, Census Tract 57 People's Movement in Kalihi, along with the Hawaiians led by Paige Barber. Supporters understood that some in Ethnic Studies helped to provide the research for these minority communities fighting eviction. John Kelly brought members from Save Our Surf to support the occupation as well.

KK: Wow.

GK: We had several hundred people on the first day occupying the university administration building at Bachman Hall and continued to occupy it, until the administrators provided some measure of fairness in its review of the Ethnic Studies Program. At one point during the first day of the sit-in, I remember University of Hawaii President Harlan Cleveland

coming down from his office and standing on the stairs, threatening to have everyone arrested for trespassing.

KK: What happened?

GK: I looked around at Soli, Kalani, and Joy, and they looked at me as if to say, "You're up." I knew to keep the crowd we had to achieve the moral high ground. I stood up and told Cleveland the crowd would not be here if he had done his job, and his job was to make sure the Ethnic Studies Program remained at the university. I pointed out that this was not just a student protest and that people who were here were taxpayers who paid for his salary and were leaders of a number of community organizations, and I went through the list of leaders.

KK: What did he do?

GK: He went back upstairs and sent down Acting Manoa Chancellor Richard Takasaki to negotiate with us. There was a lot of obfuscation in the beginning.

KK: How so?

GK: At one point, the administration officials were denying there was any problem with the Ethnic Studies Program and saying they didn't understand why we were holding the sit-in. As one of the designated spokespersons for Kokua Hawaii, I stood up and told them that our group would be willing to leave if the administration was to put into writing that the Ethnic Studies Program was a permanent part of the university. Well, the administrators were really quiet and none of them said anything. I kind of smiled and sat down.

KK: Then what happened?

GK: We continued negotiating. There was a student faction that opposed the sit-in and a teacher who wanted to gather students to support his tenure. But Kokua Hawaii was able to keep its focus on saving Ethnic Studies. After a day, it boiled down to the composition of an advisory group that would recommend the future of the Ethnic Studies Program. Takasaki had wanted the committee to be comprised of five UH administrators, five faculty and five from Kokua Hawaii who could be either student or community representatives. Kokua Hawaii countered that offer by saying we wanted the committee to be comprised of five students, five community representatives and the administration could pick their five out of faculty and administrators. Clearly, Takasaki's proposal was a move to co-opt Kokua Hawaii into a process in which the administration had the votes, and we weren't going to buy it. Our group stood firm, and Takasaki eventually agreed to the composition of Kokua Hawaii's proposed committee.

KK: Really?

GK: Yes. The administration signed the agreement about the composition of the advisory committee, and community representatives and students also signed it. We felt minority communities had a stake in Ethnic Studies and should have a say about its importance in presenting a multiethnic approach to issues. The agreement also opened the door for a review of the academic process involving Ethnic Studies by minority communities. There was a paradigm shift, and it's still happening today. Make no mistake. There continues to be a battle going on at the University of Hawaii between those who support presenting a western view of history, a tale of manifest destiny, versus a more pluralistic view of society that includes minorities and new immigrants in the dynamics.

KK: When you did these things like the Ethnic Studies struggle, did you ever get the feeling it would be successful? Or was it a surprise?

GK: I don't think we felt we had a choice. The Ethnic Studies Program was the wellspring for research and looking at the world through the eyes of Hawaii minorities. Ethnic Studies instructors were valuable to the movement and spawned new ways of looking at Hawaii's history. We knew with the ethnic communities supporting Ethnic Studies, the sit-in could grow from hundreds to thousands.

KK: What other groups helped?

GK: I later learned that besides communities bringing food during the sit-in to keep the crowd there, anthropologist Tom Gladwin made a significant contribution to provide food for the sit-in. Historian Walter Johnson and his wife Bette had great hearts. After the 1971 arrest at Kalama Valley, they allowed Kokua Hawaii to hold several retreats at their home in Punaluu.

KK: What is your view of LGBT activism?

GK: We had all kinds of people opposing the Vietnam War and fighting evictions in communities. Frankly, we didn't care as long as they supported us. The culture of our organization was very Hawaiian and very inclusive.

KK: What do you think about the outgrowth of the Kalama Valley struggle?

GK: I see a lot of projects happening today and just smile. To me, it's all about empowering and restoring pride in minority communities and working-class groups and respecting lifestyles in Hawaii. Ota Camp residents had an option to buy their land and house and did. I visited a few residents a few months ago, and they were grateful. Some of their children and grandchildren live with them. They can slaughter a pig or chicken and continue to live in their lifestyle. At the University of Hawaii, the threatened Ethnic Studies Program is now a department. Davianna McGregor who was a student became an Ethnic Studies professor and helps to organize educational ocean accesses to restore the former bombed island Kahoolawe. Lili Dorton, also known as Lilikala Kameeleihiwa, was a student during the Ethnic Studies struggle and later became the professor and director

of the UH Center for Hawaiian Studies. Kokua Hawaii member Claire Shimabukuro who was once a van driver for a Kalihi co-op that sold discounted milk, bread and eggs to public housing residents became an executive director for many years for Meals On Wheels on Oahu. Another member Edwina Akaka later helped to organize a sit-in at the Hilo Airport, pointing out that the state wasn't paying Native Hawaiians for the use of ceded and Hawaiian Homestead lands. Edwina eventually became a state Office of Hawaiian Affairs trustee and helped to initiate talks with the state for redress—a move that eventually led in part to the Legislature agreeing to pay $15.1 million annually to Native Hawaiians. Kokua Hawaii members Soli Niheu, Joy Ahn, and Gwen Kim were involved in helping to stop the urbanization of farm areas in Waiahole-Waikane and Heeia-Kea.

KK: What about associates?

GK: George Cooper was working as a radio announcer on Kauai and came to Oahu to meet with Kokua Hawaii in 1971 to find out about how to go about organizing. There was a Save Nukolii group opposing a resort development. Years later, George stayed at my place on Maui for a week while he did some research for the book he co-authored with historian Gavan Daws—*Land and Power in Hawaii*, exposing the relationship between developers and political leaders. George eventually became an attorney. He's in Cambodia working as an attorney helping to rebuild the country and recently has been part of a litigation team seeking justice for 3,000 people allegedly displaced by sugar producer Mitr Phol in 2008-2009.

Maivan Lam, a Vietnamese academic who had just moved to Hawaii, was drawn to Kokua Hawaii initially because our group organized a protest march at Hickam Air Force Base against the Vietnam War. She later supported Waimanalo residents facing eviction, earned a law degree, and has spoken before the United Nations about international law and indigenous rights.

KK: How did the Kalama Valley struggle affect you?

GK: It put me in a situation where I had to sometimes take steps outside my comfort zone for the sake of helping others and in so doing, I've learned to take chances and follow my passion. I had climbed all kinds of trees to pick fruit but never seven coconut trees in one day to help decorate a parade float. I'd never helped to lead a protest sit-in or expected to go toe-to-toe in a quick public debate with a university president. I found out I could think on my feet and I had a knack for writing, and there was a real shortage of minorities in the news business when I started writing as a journalist in the mid-1970s, especially investigative journalists. So I decided to go back to the University of Hawaii and get a journalism degree, which I did in 1975. It's been a great career. I've crewed as a journalist on the Hokulea through Micronesia, produced a couple of independent TV documentaries aired on public television, and written the national touring play *Legend Of Koolau* that's been to Los Angeles, Berkeley and Sacramento. Now, I'm working on another play.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Alfred G. Abreu

Alfred Abreu
Photo courtesy Gary T. Kubota

Alfred G. Abreu was 20 and a University of Hawaii student, when he was arrested in Kalama Valley with 31 other people on May 11, 1971, protesting the eviction of farmers and Native Hawaiians. As a member of Kokua Hawaii, Abreu helped to organize Hawaiian concerts to benefit Kalama Valley residents—events that helped to introduce Hawaiian music to a younger generation of listeners. He also was the narrator and interviewer of the award-winning independent documentary* TH-3: A Question Of Direction, *which aired in prime time on Hawaii Public Television in 1975. He later became a radio announcer on the Big Island promoting Hawaiian music on a program known as* Alapai's Porch.*He was interviewed at his home in Kona by telephone by Gary T. Kubota on March 12, 2017.

GK: Good morning, Alfred. When were you born and where were you raised?

AA: I was born in 1950 and raised in Kalihi Valley. I was probably about 12-13 years old when my dad died, and my mom shortly thereafter bought us a place in Kalihi Valley.

GK: Where were you educated?

AA: I attended Kapalama Elementary, Dole Intermediate, and Farrington High School, then the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

GK: How did you find out about Kalama Valley and what made you go to the valley?

AA: I was attending the University of Hawaii-Manoa at the time and there was a lot of talk on the news about it. I was kind of involved with people with leftist politics and my sympathies were with local working-class people. So I decided to go to the valley and check it out a couple of months before the arrest in May 1971.

GK: What do you recall?

AA: I remember going in and out, spending nights there, bringing in supplies, and coming in through various trails through the bushes because the guard service was blocking the

road. I still attended classes. When it got closer to the arrest, I spent most of my time in the valley.

GK: What were you studying?

AA: Ah, what was I studying? Wahines and partying.

GK: (Laughter)

AA: I would say, um, Liberal Studies with an emphasis on Broadcasting and Sociology.

GK: Okay. Were you working at the University of Hawaii radio station KTUH FM?

AA: Yeah. Sometimes, Kokua Hawaii members Kalani Ohelo and Ed Ching would accompany me to my once-a-week, four-hour radio program.

GK: So what did. . . what did you play there, usually?

AA: When I first started, I wasn't Hawaiianized yet, so when I first started, I was playing rock 'n roll—Hendrix and the Doors. I think after a year of being at KTUH, I initiated what became weekly Hawaiian programs on Saturday and Sunday.

GK: Why?

AA: Well. There wasn't any Hawaiian music program. More importantly, I found Hawaiian music spoke to my soul.

GK: How'd you start building the Hawaiian programs?

AA: I contacted the distributors of Hawaiian music and got a sampling of their catalog. In those days, there weren't cassettes or CDs. Everything was on vinyl. I had a collection of Hawaiian material on vinyl and played Hawaiian music Sunday or Monday mornings from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m.

GK: Can you describe the valley?

AA: It reminded me of my community. There weren't any high-end residences. People lived in basic homes. It was pretty well-kept. Everybody had pretty much well-kept yards and a lot of space in between homes. I guess at that time, a lot of people had moved out already because of the threat of eviction, so there weren't that many families.

GK: How were the residents who were there?

AA: As far as the vibe, it was very welcoming. You felt where you were someplace where you belonged. You were accepted, and you were needed.

GK: Do you remember any residents?

AA: Oh, the Richards family, and George Santos and his wife. I remember her being a very strong woman. Sometimes, they seemed to be butting heads, but in a kind, not a serious manner. That was part of their dynamics as a married couple. I primarily stayed at George's place or adjacent to his place in tents or whatever we erected for shelter and food.

GK: Right.

AA: I just remember George pretty much because I was Portuguese, and George was Portuguese. We kind of bonded in that way. We're just two Portuguese fighting the system?

GK: So what kind of guy was George?

AA: George was strong, opinionated, and a hard worker. He's the kind of guy who will "give you the shirt off his back." That's how George was. He wasn't afraid to speak his mind even if it would offend somebody.

GK: What did you and other supporters do while you were in Kalama Valley?

AA: We'd go help him slop his pigs. We'd pick up the slop at the University of Hawaii-Manoa dormitories and the restaurants. Even after the eviction, Kokua Hawaii members helped out with his route early in the morning. I remember working at about 3 a.m. and going to his piggery up Waimanu Home Road in Pearl City. It's way way early for someone who is used to partying until 2 a.m. or 3 a.m. in the morning.

GK: (Laughter) Do you recall any conversations with the Richards family?

AA: With the Richards family, my communication was primarily with Black. He appeared to me to be a person that was really deep. He presented himself as being calm, cool, and collected. He would sit down and express himself very deliberately. He wasn't one for fits of rage.

GK: Now that you mention it, I never recalled him bursting out in anger about the eviction.

AA: Well, it was like this. Back then, evictions were a part of history in our community, especially the farmers and pig farmers. The Richards salvaged automobiles, and they along with farmers just kept on being pushed out of one neighborhood to another neighborhood as Honolulu expanded. Riches and wealth and power rule. There was no consideration for the Hawaiian lifestyle or any tenant's life.

GK: How did you feel about that?
AA: Coming from a working-class community, I understand their predicament. It affected me. I felt like I had to do something, maybe in some kind of small way.

GK: Was there any talk about Hawaiian sovereignty?

AA: I don't remember any conversations of that nature. What I remember is the steering committee of Kokua Hawaii was predominantly Hawaiian, and I felt that was right. That it was a Hawaiian issue, and Hawaiians should be in the forefront.

GK: What do you recall about the arrest on the morning of May 11, 1971?

AA: I remember when the police came in, they had the whole bullet-proof vest thing. We used a ladder to climb up on the roof of George's house and we pulled the ladder up behind us. Some said they saw snipers on the ridges. Somebody suggested we should take off our shirts so that nobody would think we had weapons. So some of us took off our shirts. When the cops came, I noticed many of them were Hawaiians and part Hawaiians.

GK: What happened then?

AA: I forget who the individual from Bishop Estate was, but he made an announcement that he was giving us our last notice to leave. Otherwise, we'd be charged with trespassing and arrested, blah, blah, blah. I don't think anybody left. The cops brought their ladders, and they went up on the roof. They took us two or three to a squad car and later booked us, put us in a cell. . . I guess everybody's bail was met. There was already some kind of fund for bail. It was a beautiful sunny day in Kalama Valley—a good day to get arrested for the cause.

GK: Did you know the leaders organizing against the eviction?

AA: A group of us weren't really in the steering committee. I was a political neophyte. I didn't know Karl Marx from Groucho Marx. There was some lack of respect going on by certain individuals who told us, "Hey, go get this. Go get that. Go bring this. Go fetch that." It wasn't from everybody. I think even amongst the core group of individuals who were leading the struggle, I think they were learning as they were going along. We had strong, dynamic personalities who were at the forefront. And it wasn't for me at that time to question what was going on.

GK: After the Kalama Valley arrests, you remained a member of Kokua Hawaii and continued your studies at the University of Hawaii. Do you recall participating with Kokua Hawaii in the sit-in at the university to keep the Ethnic Studies Program in 1972?

AA: The organizers wanted someone from Kokua Hawaii who was a student to speak at the gathering. They picked me. I don't recall what I said. But I recall it was some kind of joint effort between Kokua Hawaii and student activists living at a house in Kaimuki. . . When it came to the occupation of the University of Hawaii administration building, Kokua Hawaii was the primary moving force because members of the house in Kaimuki didn't want to move in that direction. Our position was let's march into the administration office and occupy it.

GK: You were part of the Kokua Hawaii leadership, when it came to Hawaiian music and helping to organize benefit Hawaiian concerts. You were one of the organizers of Kokua Hawaii's Huli Kakou concerts at the University of Hawaii's Andrews Amphitheater and the next year, at the Waikiki Shell?

AA: Right.

GK: How was the music changing back then?

AA: Let me preface my remarks by saying what really enticed me to immerse myself in Hawaiian music and get to know as much as I could happened when I was in Kalama Valley. I was listening to Liko Martin pick up his guitar and sing his mele in the valley. I was just captivated by the guy's mana, his poetry and what he was saying through his music. At that particular point in time, I was just getting started with immersing myself in Hawaiian music.

GK: What was the creative atmosphere at the time?

AA: Hawaiian music was different. I think at that time, there was a lot of originality. Sunday Manoa was different from Hui Ohana, and Hui Ohana was different from Genoa Keawe. And Genoa Keawe was different from the Kahauanu Lake Trio. And there were the traditionalists, and there were people like Sunday Manoa breaking new ground and adding different rhythms and different instruments or something. The traditionalists didn't pretty much particularly care for it, but I've always felt that if you don't add new blood to traditional music, then you don't attract the younger people to experience it, and then, that's an avenue for them to experience the traditional.

But if they're not attracted by new blood, they don't have anything from their generation to get themselves into the music, then you kinda lose them. . . Certain people set the mold, like Peter Moon and Gabby Pahinui and other individuals, like Palani Vaughan. . . Forty, 50 years later, people are still playing music the way these individuals did. There are certain individuals that are doing new and interesting things, but actually, a lot of it is just a rehash of what happened 30, 40 years ago.

GK: Yeah. How were the concerts?

AA: I think one of the best trios I've ever heard performing Hawaiian music was at the concert at the university's Andrews Amphitheater. It was Moe Keale, Manu Kahaialii, who is Willie K's dad, and Palani Vaughan. The trio and the blend of their instruments and the blend of their voices was just magic, man. They were just singing all these traditional, long-time Hawaiian music. They did a half an hour or 20 minutes or whatever they were allotted.

GK: What were the sentiments of the entertainers and musicians who volunteered to participate in the concerts?

AA: I think a segment of the Hawaiian musicians that came up to support us weren't really aware of the details of our politics. They were supporting the families of Kalama Valley and what they heard on the news.

GK: Right. What other benefit concerts did you help to organize?

AA: Prior to me leaving Oahu and moving to Kona, I was working at KCCN, and they (Kokua Hawaii and other supporters) had a Waiahole-Waikane benefit concert for residents facing eviction. I coordinated the music and emceed the event.

I remember the traffic was backed up through the tunnel coming down the Windward side. I think there was some kind of activity also happening down in Haleiwa and then our concert up in Waiahole-Waikane.

GK: I guess no one expected such a large turnout?

AA: They're thinking of a mini event.

GK: So how many people came to the Waiahole-Waikane concert?

AA: Thousands.

GK: Wow. So, they made a chunk of change to support the struggle there, huh?

AA: I think the number of supporters at that time following Kalama Valley and then the fight for Sandy Beach and Waiahole-Waikane had grown. These were local people who were political, who were realizing that, the Hawaii they grew up with was slipping away.

GK: While a student, you also were the narrator and interviewer for the documentary *TH-3: A Question Of Direction* about the H-3 freeway through Moanalua Valley and proposed urban development in Windward Oahu. It aired on prime time on Hawaii Public Television. What were your thoughts at that time about the work?

AA: The documentary was important because it dealt with uncontrolled growth on Oahu and, of course, the need to preserve historic sites along the Moanalua corridor. I've always had an interest in following politics and the money involved with it.

GK: What did you do when you moved to Kona?

AA: I worked at KKON in Kealakekua from 1977 through 1991. At one point, I was the station manager. When I first got there, there was Jonathan Twidwell whose on-air name was "Billy Bulla" and had a persona kind of like a Hawaiian Wolfman Jack. Then there was Miles Takaaze, who went by the radio name "Shaka Taka." I had a Hawaiian music program called *Alapai's Porch.* It was quite enjoyable. All of us had come from radio station

in a larger market, so we all pulled our manao and our talents together. We were the only radio station in Kona at the time and didn't have our FM until the early 1980s.

GK: How did your Hawaiian music program develop?

AA: I did four hours of Hawaiian music every day. It was the only Hawaiian music in the region. It was an opportune monopoly. The local talent came in that was presenting Hawaiian music to only one program. And that was mine.

GK: (Laughter) Did you host concerts in Kona?

AA: I was attending a benefit concert at the King Kamehameha Hotel in Kona. I remember Ernie Cruz, Sr. was performing. There was someone who was supposed to be the emcee who didn't show up. So the concert organizers pulled me from the audience to go up and welcome people to the event and speak.

GK: Wow. That was nice of you. How'd it go?

AA: With all the public speaking experience, I was a little more fluid and sure of myself at that time. . . Eventually, I emceed dozens of concerts, served as host/emcee for various community and nonprofit events, and, of course, represented the radio stations at our clients' events.

GK: What's your best memory?

AA: One of my fondest musical memories is spending a weekend with Gabby Pahinui, Atta Isaacs, Joe "Gana" Kupahu, and Peter Moon in Hilo as they were promoting a recent CD release. I got to hang out with the musicians in their hotel rooms as they would jam lots of old jazz tunes. Boy, Gabby and Atta could jam and not just only in Hawaiian. Thinking about those times still gives me chicken skin. Sadly, they're all gone. But these guys set the mold. Musical geniuses.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with
Darrell Tagalog

Darrell Tagalog
Photo courtesy Tagalog family

Darrell Tagalog was in his early teens when his family was served with an eviction notice and his father Pete Tagalog as president of the Ota Camp Makibaka Association successfully led the more than 130 residents in an eviction fight in Waipahu. Darrell, now a Big Island resident, was interviewed on March 12, 2017, by telephone by Gary T. Kubota who lives on Maui.

GK: Good morning, Darrell Tagalog. Please tell me where you were raised?

DT: I was born in 1958 and raised on the North Shore with my grandparents, then moved to Waipahu with my parents Pete and Sally Tagalog. But I spent my holidays and summers with my grandparents and cousins on the North Shore.

GK: What do you recall was the reaction to the notice of eviction in Ota Camp?

DT: It was like an abrupt thing. All of a sudden, everybody was talking in panic. They didn't know what was happening. A lot of elders were all worried. We didn't know too much about what was happening. All we knew was that somebody was kicking us out. We were living in this rural lifestyle, and then, all of a sudden we had to move. It was like that for a few weeks.

GK: Then what happened?

DT: Then all the neighbors came together, and they kept on talking and wondering what was happening and if the land owner really could do that? The guy we paid our rent to every month said another guy bought the property and the other guy's gonna break everything down and build expensive homes. A lot of the elders never know where to go.

Then, all of a sudden, my dad took action, trying to figure out how we can all come together and fight the eviction. He went around the neighborhood, and we, as children, sometimes had to go with him.

GK: Was there a lot of work for him in organizing?

DT: I remember going with him day and night and just going to each neighbor and talking to them individually. My dad was always reaching out to get support also from lawyers, politicians, labor leaders like Major Okada (ILWU leader), and groups at the University of Hawaii.

GK: How was it for you?

DT: As a young kid, it was fun because we got to go to the neighbors' houses. We didn't know exactly what they were talking about. For us, it was like an activity. We were just getting out of the house and going to the neighbor's house and visiting, and we were having dinners and talking. A little later, my dad talked with us about what was happening. Then, we found ourselves going around the island, house to house, having people sign our support petition.

GK: How was it?

DT: My dad would say somehow, we should all fight and do something. At that point, he didn't know what to do, but he just needed to do something.

GK: It was your dad who invited us to come live in the camp. In the beginning, Kokua Hawaii members Jim Young and Randy Yamaguchi moved in. Later, Kokua Hawaii leaders said I should move in to help.

DT: Yeah, when Kokua Hawaii moved in and other supporters helped with research, he got little bit more information to see what he could do. He read books and learned from the civil rights movement, the Native American movement. He liked Martin Luther King. He said he learned from all these guys, and he's gonna use what he learned from these people to fight all of this.

GK: Right. Jim Young and Randy Yamaguchi were attending Leeward Community College.

DT: That's where my dad met them. He was attending college, too. Jim was the photographer. Randy took us around a lot.

GK: Who were the other supporters?

DT: Gail Hamasu (Waipahu High School graduate) made the programs for the youths, to kind of like educate us about what's happening and to take pictures and to remind us that this was something that was very historical. I thought the youths were very fortunate to be there and to grow up fast, learning about politics. It made us a little more ahead of our time. My dad made us look at life in a way that avoided pettiness. The experience made us hang around with you folks, more hip, long hair, all that stuff. There was something that my dad never did teach us, but you folks did: surfing, going out, music, the quality of life and cooking.

GK: Right. I myself remember Kokua Hawaii member Jo Ibarra organizing and dressing the kids to put on a skit about the landlord and Ota Camp, during one of the parties held at Ota Camp. The kids and the parents enjoyed it. It happened midway through the music and some dancing.

DT: Actually, it was the socializing that came with the supporters. I mean, it was more like a breath of fresh air to have you guys there because it changed our lives. We got along with you folks, and you guys took an interest in our well-being.

GK: Well, we did what we could to make things easier. I remember when you and Glenn went with me to gather coconut fronds for decorating the Nipa Hut float for the Waipahu Diamond Jubilee. The adults were either too old and the rest were working that day. I climbed seven to eight trees and cut the fronds and some coconuts. That was a lot of work.

DT: Yeah. I remember supporters started a free clinic too with Dr. Duke Choy (the husband of Kokua Hawaii member Mary Choy).

GK: You know when you talk about the fighters, let me tell you. You know where they got the pig? They got it from George Santos, the Kalama Valley farmer who got evicted.

DT: That's where it came from?

GK: Yeah. George would sell it to them at a discount. Johnny would negotiate with George up at George's farm in Pearl City. We brought the pig to Johnny Dombrique, and his family and relatives would butcher the pig and cook it for Ota Camp celebrations.

DT: What you guys did, actually was bring different people together. This struggle brought everybody together and made it more solid. Because when we were living there in the beginning, the community wasn't as solid. Nobody was really close. We had two different dialects. Living in the same place when this thing happened, everything mixed together. We had to interact with each other.

GK: Was there anything you learned from this?

DT: From watching that thing happen, I saw how my father tried to be cool, and I know sometimes he just wanted to smack them in the head. But he had to keep his cool, because he was the leader and set the example. Us guys as kids, we just ask him, "Why don't you just go over and just straighten them out or something like that?" But it wasn't that way. We learned how to be patient. You have to work together.

GK: Right.

DT: And you folks enforced it with us, trying to look at different views of how everything is handled. Yeah?

GK: Yeah. And also, we supported your father. You know, Kokua Hawaii and most people in Ota Camp understood that they needed to respect him for what he was doing.

Pete Tagalog
Photo © Ed Greevy

DT: Yes, exactly. He really spent a lot of time thinking, and he spent a lot of time figuring out what is the right way.

GK: I know it wasn't easy. That's why we sometimes took some of the youths on outings to the beach on weekends.

DT: I actually got close to my dad and worked with him to expand the meeting area. I learned carpentry from my dad because he had to build our house bigger, so we could hold the meetings.

GK: Oh. (Laughing). It was amazing that Pete found time to expand his house, when he had a lot of other responsibilities.

DT: I know the struggle put a lot of pressure on him. He was gone all of the time, and he was in school and he was in meetings. Sometimes, when he was in a meeting, it seemed like free time for us. We got along with other kids in the village. When we started to grow up and be in the meetings, and listen, we learned exactly what this struggle was about. And how important it was. It made me interested in life to know that kind of stuff.

GK: How so?

DT: It made me see I had different options, but I started studying political science at Leeward Community College, but then decided to take a different route. I ended going into communication, electronics, then I got my electrician's license and moved to the Big Island to be with kumu hula and song writer Pua Case, an activist eventually involved in the protest against the building of a new telescope on Mauna Kea. She wrote lot of songs about the *Hokulea.*

By that time about 1999, the Ota Camp struggle was finished. I helped as a volunteer working on the double-hulled canoe *Makalii* on the Big Island and worked as an electrician on the Big Island and Oahu. I then went into becoming an acupuncturist and massage therapist at a resort.

GK: Wow. I didn't know that. Congratulations.

DT: Thank you.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with
Dwight Yoshimoto

Dwight Yoshimoto
Photo courtesy Gary Kubota

Dwight Yoshimoto supported anti-eviction efforts in Kalama Valley and was a member of a Kokua Hawaii team who helped with marketing and finance. One of the major fund-raising activities included Kokua Hawaii's annual Huli Kakou concerts featuring Hawaiian music at the University of Hawaii-Manoa Andrews Amphitheater and later at the Waikiki Shell. Yoshimoto, who received a bachelor's degree in marketing at the University of Hawaii, eventually became an assistant vice president at Bank of Hawaii. He was interviewed in a car parked near Restaurant Row in Honolulu on March 22, 2017, by Gary T. Kubota.

GK: Good morning, Dwight. When and where were you born?

DY: I was born in 1950 in Honolulu and raised in Damon Tract, which was mainly a farm area.

GK: Where was that?

DY: Damon Tract bordered Nimitz Highway from Lagoon Drive all the way to John Rodgers Airport. It included the whole industrial area and the Honolulu International Airport.

GK: How was living in Damon Tract?

DY: It was an experience that made me want to get involved with Kokua Hawaii. I was raised on an egg farm with my paternal grandparents in the 1950s. There were people who were truck farmers, very working class, from the plantations. They were from low to not even middle class. I have a lot of fun memories. It was a very safe place. Then we got evicted about 1959-60.

GK: What happened?

DY: Damon Estate, a major landowner, sold the land. The area was subdivided. My grandfather and father Yasuhide looked at relocating the egg farm. The only other place was Waianae. It wasn't practical. So, my grandfather Kame Yoshimoto retired, and my

father picked up some trades as an occupation, first was an electrician, and then he became an elevator mechanic.

GK: What do you remember about the eviction?

DY: It was funny because, actually, my grandfather was a caretaker or head gardener for Damon Estate, so we were the last family to leave Damon Tract. I remember being all alone. Nobody else was around. Just us.

GK: So at that time, you lived in an extended family?

DY: Yes, along with my grandmother Uto. I had a brother and two sisters. My grandparents were from Okinawa. My grandfather had worked as a pineapple farmer in Paia, Maui, then the Yoshimoto clan moved to Oahu.

GK: After the eviction from Damon Tract, where did you move?

DY: We moved to Kalihi, which was a major shock because we had a half-acre egg farm and two-story farmhouse, then we moved to a real termite-eaten, dilapidated old three-bedroom house in Owene Lane in Kalihi. So that was a shock.

GK: Where'd you go to school?

DY: Fern Elementary in Kalihi.

GK: How was it attending Fern?

DY: The first day of school was a culture shock. That was third grade for me. I got beaten up by the class bully and his tomboy friend. In Damon Tract, we used to fool around but never really had fights. . . Well, I can't say I got into a fight. I did not know how to fight. I got false cracked (chuckles). So that was a learning experience.

GK: So what happened?

DY: My father enrolled my older brother, Milton and I in judo at the Kalihi YMCA, so we could defend ourselves. It proved very handy living in Kalihi.

GK: (Laughter) I took judo too.

DY: Yep. Yep. Yep. That was a good eye-opener.

GK: So, when the Kalama Valley struggle happened, were you at the University of Hawaii?

DY: Yeah, I was a sophomore or junior in 1970. I paid my way through college. So, starting my sophomore year, I went to school part time, and working full time.

GK: What were you doing working full time?

DY: I was a janitor at the Hawaii Newspaper Agency. Graveyard shift.

GK: So, how did you get involved in Kalama Valley?

DY I had been following the issue in the news media. Again, I got involved because I had the experience of getting evicted as a farm family from Damon Tract. I could definitely empathize with the farmers in Kalama Valley. I wanted to do something about it. . . The deal at Damon Tract has been called one of the greatest land sale coups in Hawaii's history. Like Kalama, it was all about kala, the money.

GK: So, you felt it was an injustice, basically.

DY: Oh, definitely.

GK: Did you go by yourself?

DY: I went with my friend Al Abreu. I went to Farrington High School with Abreu. He and I were always political.

GK: What was your impression, when you went into the valley?

DY: At that time, Kalama Valley was very barren. It was very arid. It was hot. I remember the kiawe trees and the wind being very hot and dusty. So, it was amazing that the farmers could make the valley productive.

I remember small kid time, we used to have family friends who were pig farmers in Kalama Valley. At that time, when we got involved in 1971, I think most of the pig farms were moved out already. Our focus was obviously doing whatever we could to help pig farmer George Santos.

GK: What happened?

DY: We had a lot of meetings involving strategy. . . I remember one of the things we had to truly work out was defining what was local or being Hawaiian. I'm Okinawan, and Al's Portuguese. I know in the beginning, there were some people involved that said it should only be Hawaiian or Native Hawaiians. We had to struggle through that issue. Fortunately, we figured out that it's not the blood. It's the heart that makes you Hawaiian.

GK: How many months were you there before the eviction on May 11, 1971?

DY: I can't remember. Probably February or March. I was going to school part time, and I was in the valley part time.

GK: What happened on the day of the eviction?

DY: On the day of the eviction, I was actually in school. So, I missed out in getting arrested. (Laughter) It was pretty sad for me not to be involved. I remember, when I heard it over the radio, I drove to Kalama Valley and tried to sneak back into the valley through the back roads. But everything was blocked. I couldn't get in past the barricades even through the back doorways through Hahaione Valley. I remember watching from the barricades, the whole event—all you guys being up on the roof. (Chuckle)

GK: (Chuckles)

DY: A week or two before the arrest, I had a big family meeting with my father and mother and my grandparents about the possibility of getting arrested. My parents were very resistant about me getting arrested. So, I said, you know, "Let's, let's leave it up to grandma and grandpa. And then you interpret properly," because my grandparents couldn't speak English. I couldn't speak Japanese or Okinawan. I believe my father interpreted my words right, my emotions right because at the end of the meeting, my grandfather and grandmother gave their approval. Should I get arrested, no problem, no family shame. Stand up for what you believe is right.

GK: Wow.

DY: They actually believed in what I did. Having been evicted themselves, they understood my position. Unfortunately, I didn't get arrested. (Laughter) All of the supporters were upset about the sheer arrogance of Bishop Estate. . . just because they were the landlords. . . That's what infuriated a lot of us.

GK: Okay. So, let's fast-forward. After the eviction, you stayed with Kokua Hawaii and worked with Soli Niheu on the financial end?

DY: Right. I had saved money working for the Hawaii Newspaper Agency. I helped initially put the down payment on the first month's deposit for Kokua Hawaii's office on Palama Street.

GK: Then there was the first Huli Kakou concert at Andrews Amphitheater?

DY: Yes. I helped with the deposit for the first Huli Kakou concert.

GK: How much was that anyway?

DY: I think I put up either $2,000 to $3,000 for the office and the show. Al Abreu and I were very involved with Huli Kakou. After the concert, Kokua Hawaii gave me back my money. (Laughter)

GK: Well, I remember seeing a full house at Andrews Amphitheater and thousands at the Waikiki Shell and thinking, Holy smokes! There are some people in Kokua Hawaii with some business organizing tools.

DY: Right. Well, I think it helped that Al Abreu and I were on the UH Campus Board concert committee as freshmen. We helped to bring the Steve Miller Band to perform in 1968 and 1969. We knew what to do for the most part.

GK: How did the idea for the Huli Kakou concert evolve?

DY: I'm not sure whose bright idea it was, but it did make sense. We figured we could get entertainers to donate their talents. At that time, Al "Alapai" Abreu was a disc jockey for University of Hawaii radio station KTUH. Even though KTUH was kind of a rock station, he had contacts with the Hawaiian entertainers. So, I believe for the most part, Al and I were the lead recruiters. Our primary function was to recruit entertainers.

GK: Were the Huli Kakou concerts different than other concerts?

DY: Huli Kakou was more of a political awareness thing, a fundraiser for Kokua Hawaii. But, again, we had all these speakers obviously from Kokua Hawaii primarily educating the audience.

GK: Which entertainers did you approach?

DY: I know we talked to Auntie Genoa Keawe when she was playing a gig in Waikiki on Kalakaua. We talked to Hui Ohana and Dennis Pavao. The Hui's manager Gordon Helm was one year older than us from Farrington High. I grew up with the Cazimeros. That's how we got Peter Moon and the Cazimeros—Sunday Manoa. It wasn't easy because at that time, Bishop Estate had a reputation. Not everybody jumped on board at our first meeting. It took us some time to persuade them because essentially we were fighting Bishop Estate. At that time, nobody really wanted to fight Bishop Estate. We had Palani Vaughan, Moe Keale (member of Sons of Hawaii) was definitely involved. One of my fondest memories of that time, was when Auntie Genoa blessed Abreu and me as "Hawaiians"—not just Portuguese and Okinawan. As she said, it was the heart, not the blood.

GK: How many attended the events?

DY: It's hard to remember. It was a full house at Andrews and a full house at the Shell. Tickets were $2. We made money. It was enough to economically support our work in the communities.

GK: When did you stop your activities with Kokua Hawaii?

DY: I think it was in 1973. It was just time for me to graduate (laughter). I just got mentally and physically exhausted because I was still working full-time, midnight to

8 a.m., went to UH part-time, then did Kokua Hawaii stuff. Something had to give. I lost 15, 20 pounds because of these activities.

GK: What did you do once you graduated from the University of Hawaii?

DY: After graduating, I was a sales representative at Sea Life Park, then at Gray Line, then I went into banking. I was a junior vice president of marketing at Central Pacific Bank. I did CPB's annual report. Then Clarence Lee who did the annual reports for Bank of Hawaii recommended me for a job at Bank of Hawaii. I became the corporate director of public relations for Bank of Hawaii, an assistant vice president.

GK: How was it?

DY: It was a good move because BanKoH, obviously, is a lot bigger than CPB and a lot more diversified. So, I got to do a lot more things. Bank of Hawaii was great because I got involved with the Aloha Bowl, got to meet Mackey Yanigasawa (sports promoter and manager of Aloha Stadium). State legislator Milton Holt, who was at that time BanKoH's director of community relations, and I did the BanKoH Slack Key concert, organized by the City & County of Honolulu. We did the Bank of Hawaii Molokai Hoe canoe race. I used to paddle canoe for Waikiki Surf Club. Our crew was famously known as "The Banzai Crew" as we were all local Asians—very unusual in Hawaiian canoe paddling..

GK: You were involved in the beginning of BankoH's sponsorship of the Molokai-Oahu canoe race?

DY: Actually, all the funds for the slack key concert and the Molokai Canoe Race in the 1980s came out of my public relations budget. I was the one who pitched the bank and I was the one who helped to persuade bank officials to sponsor the events.

GK: How did the sponsorship for the Molokai-Oahu canoe race come about?

DY: Racing committee officials, specifically Mike Tongg as well as Hannie Anderson, knew I was at Bank of Hawaii. They approached me because at that point in time, the race was in danger of being dropped. They needed some money. They knew I'd be sympathetic.

GK: Tell me about the slack key concert?

DY: I had done the Huli Kakou concerts and helped Peter Moon with his Kanikapila concerts, so I was always involved in helping. Milton Holt didn't have the money for the slack key concert, so I managed to come up with the funds for BanKoH to sponsor the slack key concert. It was held at the McCoy Pavilion. I guess it was all a part of the Hawaiian Renaissance. . . Eventually, we got to the point where we were able to get both events televised.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Kehau Lee Jackson

Kehau Lee Jackson
Photo courtesy of Jackson family

Kehau Lee Jackson was arrested on July 9, 1970 as one of several persons protesting the eviction of Kalama Valley residents, prior to the formation of Kokua Hawaii. She was among minorities who helped to shape the curriculum of the University of Hawaii's Ethnic Studies Program when it was in its initial stages of development in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Jackson works as a comedienne in Australia and New Zealand. She was interviewed by Gary T. Kubota at Zippy's Restaurant in Kalihi, while visiting Honolulu on December 13, 2016.

GK: When and where were you born?

KJ: I was born in 1950, and I grew up in Papakolea on the slopes of Punchbowl.

GK: Was that Hawaiian Homestead land?

KJ: Yes, that's Hawaiian Homestead. It was a great place to grow up. I grew up in a very stable Hawaiian community, where all your neighbors knew you your whole life. It was very safe, very comfortable. And beautiful. Before the condo building boom of the 1960s you could see all the way to Waikiki and Diamond Head from the road in front of our house.

GK: Mm-hmm.

KJ: Around the time I was born, Papakolea had a reputation of being a bit rough. People usually told me, "Oh God, that's rough, what a tough neighborhood," and I thought, "Really?". . . I never remembered it that way. I know there were a lot of kids who were labeled "juvenile delinquents." But most of them became just regular working people, and it was a really lovely place to grow up. Even my older sister once told me, "I made it out of there and you can too." I didn't get it. I loved my neighborhood, the people. When I grew up, you could go anywhere safely. People looked out for you, fed you along with the rest of the family if you were there at meal times. The Hawaiians totally understood, "It takes a village to raise a child," long before it became a buzz word and fashionable statement.

GK: What did your father do for a living?

KJ: My dad was primarily a Hawaiian musician. He played the guitar and sang falsetto. But he worked at a variety of day jobs. His main job was as a projectionist at Hawaii Theatre. He ran the film projector for many years, and I spent many hours in the theater when he took me to work with him. I grew up in that theater; it was like my second home. He loved movies, entertainment, he respected talent in all forms. I think that's where I get my love of entertaining from. He was an excellent entertainer.

GK: What was your dad's name?

KJ: It was Edward Kauaowaiakea Lee.

GK: And your mom?

KJ: She was a housewife for a while and then she worked as a barmaid and then a cook. She was an excellent cook. Her father was German-Jewish. He came from Chicago to Hawaii. He was stationed in the cavalry at Schofield. My grandmother was from Maui, and they had 10 kids. (Chuckles)

GK: Was your grandmother Hawaiian?

KJ: Yes, she was Hawaiian. Her name was Mary Kepaa.

GK: What schools did you go to?

KJ: Well, I went to St. Theresa, which is a Catholic school on School Street, from kindergarten to the eighth grade, then I went to Stevenson Intermediate, and then to Roosevelt High School. I graduated from Roosevelt.

GK: Did you attend the University of Hawaii?

KJ: Yes. Right after high school, I got a summer job in the city's parks and recreation, and then I paid for my first year at the University of Hawaii. . . I only did, like, two years and then I thought well this is not really for me, I didn't really want to go through the whole thing. So, I left the university. But by that time, the whole struggle to establish the Ethnic Studies program at the University of Hawaii had started and I got involved in that. And the war in Vietnam was still raging, and there was a lot of protest and activity around that. Activism was at its height—you were surrounded, you couldn't ignore it.

GK: What did you do after that?

KJ: By that time I was really active. I started being active in high school because my social studies teacher at Roosevelt was Setsu Okubo. She influenced generations of students who became more active and aware of politics and their civic duty.

GK: What was Setsu Okubo teaching?

KJ: She taught seniors in what they called "American Problems," which was more like a history, and social history, government and democratic practice. A lot of people, parents

and conservatives—even among the faculty—didn't like her style, her encouragement to "open our eyes," her unapologetic style. She was a force, at barely 5 feet, both fiery and kind.

GK: Right.

KJ: She would bring in people like (anti-Vietnam War activists) John Witeck and Ko Hayashi to speak to the students about what's going on in the world around them—the war, the resistance, and major issues of the day.

GK: How was it?

KJ: There was sort of a gap in people's social education, especially at a school like Roosevelt. Half of the school was from Papakolea and the other half was from middle-class neighborhoods of Makiki and Manoa. She was really key in providing social education for a lot of kids. She was very radical compared to all the other teachers because she talked about Vietnam and raised social issues, challenging us to think for ourselves and act. She expected the kids to sort of stand up and say something, be something.

GK: It sounds like she wanted students to develop independent thinking?

KJ: Setsu was a great influence on a lot of the activists, both at school and at large. Setsu really opened the door. She didn't want you to be something, in terms of getting a good job. She wanted you to be something in terms of being a good citizen, in the sense of being aware of what's going on politically, socially, and making a stand of some kind. . . She wanted you to be able to argue for your side, not accept the "norms" without questioning.

GK: How did that go with your parents?

KJ: My dad was liberal in his thinking, more so than a lot of people. He would never say don't do that. He would just express his concern about it, especially if he thought I might get hurt in some way, like most parents. He didn't tell me not to do anything. But he was worried about it.

GK: When was the first time you heard about the Kalama Valley eviction?

KJ: Um, I think probably as a freshman in 1969-1970.

GK: What was happening with you then?

KJ: I was very active in the anti-Vietnam War movement, and out of that came a lot of those issues. I got to meet activists—both local like John Witeck and Ko Hayashi, Stan Masui—and national figures who came to speak at the university. It was quite easy from there to get involved in a lot of issues.

I think the Vietnam War movement gave rise toward activism and the consciousness of people. It also gave rise to leadership on issues. These young men who were going to have to lay down their lives provided the leadership. The intellectuals who were educating

people, cutting through the prejudiced "news" about it provided the leadership.

In the early days, a lot of church people and students and some GIs were against the war. There were some supporters from the ILWU who had a long history of working-class struggle. On the U.S. mainland at the time, the whole Third World movement was heating up at college campuses. Young people were coming of age in a storm of issues, and beginning to take them on.

Out of that, the Hawaiian movement began to develop, then it became strong on its own. It took its cue from a lot of those kinds of movements and we got support from a lot of that not only in terms of education, but also people, coming and lending their physical support.

GK: How did Ethnic Studies figure in all this?

KJ: We were busy trying to get the university to develop the Ethnic Studies Program, and so, Kalama Valley was a big issue for us because of the Hawaiian studies in the Ethnic Studies Program and the loss of Hawaiian rights regarding land and water use. While we're trying to rewrite the history or reproduce Hawaii history our way, issues like the Kalama Valley situation showed really clearly what had happened to the Hawaiians and so we encouraged our students to wake up to what was going on.

GK: What individuals from the mainland influenced you?

KJ: The Berrigan brothers, both Catholic priests, regarding Vietnam. I admired their courage in speaking out and acting against the prevailing conservatism. I can't remember some of the names of countless speakers and activists who came to Hawaii, but I remember sitting at the old Kuhio Grill over beer and really talking about the world. Having a Catholic background and from Papakolea, it was really an eye-opener for me. It opened up the world.

GK: Was your father a Catholic?

KJ: Yes, very much so. . . I mean we went to church every Sunday, and he sent three out of four of his kids to Catholic schools.

GK: And that's why you went to St. Theresa?

KJ: Yes. My uncle convinced my dad to send my sisters and me to Catholic school. He was working three jobs to support his family. It was going to cost him more, but he valued a good education so he made the sacrifice. My older sister and I—she went to St. Francis—we just thank God that he did because in those days, we had all nuns as teachers, and boy, you did not leave that school without knowing what you were doing. I mean they were tough broads. We received a high level of education because of them. When I got to public school, I was shocked. I had culture shock. I was, like, "Oh! I read this in the sixth grade. Why are you doing this now?" So, the nuns had high level of expectation for our education, but they also had a high level of social responsibility not

necessarily in activism, but in knowing right from wrong.

GK: Right.

KJ: Oddly enough, John Witeck came from a very strong Catholic background as well. I think that kind of drumming home the idea of right and wrong definitely influenced my ability to say something or do something when it came to social issues because you just think, "Well, this is wrong, it needs to be made right."

GK: I know there seemed to be a disproportionate number of Native Hawaiians and other Hawaii minorities dying as soldiers fighting in Vietnam. How did that affect you?

KJ: Some of my classmates died in the war. I think people sometimes talk about the Vietnam War as an intellectual exercise. They don't realize how much emotion there was. . . I even had a hard time sitting through the movie that was made from the stage musical *Hair,* because it brought back so many heart-wrenching feelings watching young men sent to Vietnam. Although I might not have known that person really well, I kind of felt that my generation was being attacked and led to slaughter. You feel a bit responsible for what's going on here. I remember when we had our first high school reunion, the organizers put the names of all the classmates that had passed away on an "In memoriam" slide and many of the young men who had passed away, a good percentage of them, had died in Vietnam. So, it became a personal thing.

GK: Why were you arrested in Kalama Valley?

KJ: In the early days of Kalama Valley, when we did the first sit-in, there was no real big movement around it. It wasn't getting enough press. I mean, it involved Bishop Estate. What newspaper is going to criticize the biggest private landowner in the state? Sometimes, you have to do something shocking; that's what you have to do to get noticed and get a wider attention to the issue. For me, it was a no brainer. It was like yeah, "I'll do it. . . " Sometimes, it's the ignorance of youth. You think, "Well, that's gonna solve things or that's gonna do something." It did, but to be honest, I don't think I really thought it through. It was a gut reaction to what I felt was happening—another stolen piece of Hawaii, another slap at the Hawaiian people.

When you see it, you realize this is life and death for people. This is not something to just write a paper on, to study dispassionately. People are going to lose their livelihoods, their homes. They will get evicted. They're not going to be able to farm. There was just no plan for taking care of these people, and it becomes a thing of, well, this is like the slippery slope now. This is where it starts, and you have to kind of do something.

GK: While you were involved in working on the curriculum and lecturing in the Ethnic Studies Program, did you make presentations about Kalama Valley to students?

KJ: Oh yeah. We encouraged our students to get involved in those issues not only to learn, but also to empathize, take part, change our history. People, especially a lot of Hawaiian students who were going to the university, had no idea what it was about. I mean our

farmers are in threat, our land is being urbanized. Where's our food going to come from? Where are these people going to go?

GK: What was the general sentiment at the time?

KJ: I think most people at that time were feeling, "Well, what can we do? I mean there was no outlet really, other than protesting at the Legislature."

I had been to the valley just to see it and all that. . . When the call came that the bulldozers are coming, you kind of feel like, "Oh crap, you know, this is like 'crunch time'. . . Are we going to let them do it? Are we going to at least delay it, and by that delay, raise the issue because no one was talking about it?"

GK: What were you feeling?

KJ: All the way through it, I just kind of felt like, "Well, I have to do something." And there was an opportunity to do something and to get the issue out and to bring it into the public forum, to educate people, and let people discuss it, you know.

GK: Where did you get the idea for a sit-in protest?

KJ: It happened at the GI sanctuary at Church of the Crossroads (on Oahu). My boyfriend at the time was the leader of that.

GK: Who was that?

KJ: Buff Parry. He was in the Air Force at the time. He was an activist against the Vietnam War, and he organized within. He was based at Hickam. . . He was an intellectual and strong organizer. Eventually, he had to flee to Canada. A lot of guys left for Canada.

GK: What other movements influenced the protest in Kalama Valley?

KJ: When the Hawaiian movement started in Kalama Valley. . . you had the Third World movements, activists like the Black Panthers or activists like the Young Lords Party. . . The Puerto Rican movement was very, very influential. Young Hawaiians took a lot of cues from that—power to the people, freedom of the people, preserving their land and housing, caring for the communities with food programs, health programs. The Young Lords were based in New York but their slogan, "Tengo Puerto Rico en mi Corazon" (I have Puerto Rico in my heart) was strong, and they got involved with issues in their home land. Like the Hawaiians, they had a native island being used for military training as well. It matched our feelings as well.

GK: There were similarities in history?

KJ: Yeah. Exactly. Puerto Rico and Hawaii were taken at the same time. We're on the same latitude. Puerto Rico could have easily become the 51st state. . .

GK: Can you take me back to the day of your arrest in 1970?

KJ: I remember I wasn't frightened of the bulldozers. We sat down, and we just wouldn't move. It was kind of touch and go in terms of whether they were going to physically come and just yank us. The workers were kind of ambivalent. Many of the construction workers were Hawaiian. They kind of hesitated because they didn't want to hurt us. . . Then Bishop Estate called the cops and then the cops were there and after asking us to leave twice and us refusing, they arrested us. You could tell that even among the cops, the Hawaiians understood the issue but they had to do their job. We got put in the cells for a little while. The other Hawaiian prisoners were there for other things, but even they were sympathetic. They were like, "Yeah okay." They got it. This was kind of a little glimmer of hope, like, "Oh, somebody is doing something." They understood the reason pretty well. And, that was encouraging. Even the female cop who was doing the paperwork was like, "Why are you doing this?" We had a good chat while she was filling out the paperwork.

GK: Then what happened?

KJ: The case finally went to court and got thrown out.

GK: Why did it get thrown out?

KJ: I don't know the legal reasons, but in the grand scale of things, trespass was a minor issue, and I'm not sure they wanted to provide a public trial and forum for us to discuss the issue, Bishop Estates' dealings, etc.

GK: Was there news coverage?

KJ: Yes, there was news coverage, but not a lot of news coverage, and there was very little follow up at that time until the movement got big enough and you had a much larger number of people. Then they couldn't really ignore it at that point.

GK: So the numbers made a difference?

KJ: I think the movement started to shift. . . People could ignore the anti-Vietnam War movement or the Ethnic Studies or Hawaiian movement when it was just students, but when unions got involved and the working people got involved and the parents got involved, that's when people in power decided we have to deal with it. . . As more people got involved, it got the attention.

GK: How did your father feel?

KJ: He wasn't happy exactly, but to his credit, I remember he told me I don't agree with what you're doing but I'm proud that you stood up.

GK: Wow. Chokes me up.

KJ: Me too, still does. He was a musician his whole life and he was just a lovely, lovely guy. But he was Hawaiian first. He understood.

GK: Did he ever talk about the overthrow of the monarchy or statehood?

KJ: Yeah. When I was about 10 years old, I remember hearing the song "Kaulana Na Pua" for the first time, and he told me what it meant; he called it the stone eating song. When we were growing up, his generation knew we were heading toward being a state so they tried to prepare us—get a good education, you have to learn to live in the new regime while knowing your Hawaiian roots. . . My dad could speak and understand Hawaiian because my grandmother was blind and as a child he had to translate and read her all her letters that came from their family on Maui.

GK: Did he teach you Hawaiian?

KJ: We were never taught to speak Hawaiian at home. It's not that he discouraged us from doing anything Hawaiian. It's just that he felt that for his children to survive, they needed to get a good education in the haole way.

GK: Why?

KJ: Around us, people were drinking and getting in trouble and whatever they did in those days. Hawaiians were in prisons, disenfranchised, always at the bottom. He wanted something better for us. It meant being prepared to live in what's coming. You know, we're going to be a state. We were never even allowed to speak Pidgin English at home. Not that it was looked down upon, or discouraged, but we were expected to be "proper."

GK: Mm-hmm.

KJ: Dad was always well-spoken, and he was self-educated because he started supporting his family when he was six years old and left school early. He was one of the younger ones in the family but they were dirt poor. They all worked 'cause they needed to survive. He was an entertainer from childhood, working with my uncles who were musicians as well. He cleaned yards for the rich haole families in Nuuanu as a boy. He was a survivor. When I was born, he was working at Hawaii Theatre as a projectionist full time; he also had a part-time job working with one of my uncles in a little shop that repaired electronic equipment. Then off and on, he would pick up other side jobs. . . He had four kids to support.

GK: Were you at the state Capitol demonstration attended by several hundreds, some say up to 2,000 people? How was it?

KJ: Yes. When you're at something like that, it makes you realize how powerful it is to be able to get your message out to reach people. They internalize it. It can be powerful. I've been at demonstrations where the energy is so palpable that you just go, "Oh my God." It's a wave of consciousness and quite something to be involved in.

GK: If you had to do it again, would you have gotten arrested at that particular time?

KJ: Probably. There was really no other way to get the issue dealt with. In order for it to actually become something that was brought to the table to discuss, you had to take some kind of radical action. There was really no other way. I don't think just more talking

about it would have gotten us anywhere. You had to kind of make that radical move to jolt people.

GK: After the arrest, what did you do?

KJ: I wanted to explain the reasons for the arrest because in Hawaii at the time, that was a really radical way to behave. It just wasn't done by local kids. People were blaming the haole students for stirring up trouble. It was important to know it was locals who were there. I went to Roosevelt High School to talk, because I was from Roosevelt. Setsu was wide open to having people discuss these issues. God bless her. She was really a catalyst for a lot of people waking up. I tried to make sure everybody understood that we were not just some students who were disgruntled but that there's an issue there and it's an issue for all Hawaiians, for all of Hawaii.

GK: So, there's a level of commitment that you had after being arrested?

KJ: Yeah. Once your consciousness is awakened, you look at everything differently. A lot of us who were involved in Kalama Valley were involved in the struggle to establish Ethnic Studies and then the anti-eviction at Waiahole-Waikane. Once you start, it's kinda hard to go, "Okay, well I've done my bit. I'm out of here." You realize how much everything is interconnected and how much the same people are pulling the strings. Luckily, you have a segment of the movement that can deal with the facts and figures and you have a segment of the movement that can provide that information to people. It's not just facts and figures. It's reality.

GK: Right.

KJ: Waiahole-Waikane activist Pete Thompson, God rest his soul, in his speeches, he used say, "You know why people don't have a stake in the system? It's because they don't have a steak in the icebox."

GK: I guess a good organizer can help people see they have steak in their icebox?

KJ: Pete would be able to put it in those kinds of terms. You have to have people who know how to present the information and to have that charisma if you want people to pay attention and understand. Pete had charisma and was an intellectual. Yet he was a Hawaiian that grew up in Kalihi and all that. He was very down home and so he was like the perfect person because he was able to relate to everybody and yet he had the intellectual capacity, that curiosity and that ability to know what to research. . . He was really quite key in bridging that gap. . . When the Hawaiians began to organize on their own, people like Pete were important.

GK: Who else?

KJ: Kalani Ohelo was important because he spoke for the really disenfranchised and he was a very powerful speaker. . . It was his truth that he was talking about. He touched a lot of people and was charismatic in that respect.

GK: Did you know Larry Kamakawiwoole, a director of Ethnic Studies, who had been a leader of Kokua Hawaii in Kalama Valley?

Marion Kelly
Photo by Ed Greevy

KJ: I met him when I started working in Ethnic Studies. He was our lecturer in the Hawaiian studies course. Larry was an educator but he had a very sort of gentle way of doing it, and that was good because you had people who were kind of, you know, a bit more fiery. He was able to sort of translate—I don't know how to put it. He provided a calming influence. That was good for us. And he was very supportive of his staff, Pete, Terry Kekoolani, me, and later also Davianna McGregor, leading discussions, researching, giving lectures, being lab instructors. Larry provided a stable influence. At that time at the university, he was primarily an educator. Around him were buzzing all the people but he was able to kind of stay the course for what we needed to do.

GK: You taught Ethnic Studies for a number of years?

KJ: When I got involved in Ethnic Studies, I became a lecturer first with Marion Kelly (Bishop Museum archaeologist). She was just beautiful. I miss her. I was a lecturer in the Hawaiian course for five years. In order for me to stay there, I would have to go back to school and get a bachelor's. I elected not to go back to school. And that point in 1975, my interests were shifting. I was doing more stuff with unions and other things. And then I got married and then other activities kind of took off.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Maivan Clech Lam

Maivan Clech Lam
Photo courtesy of the Lam family

Maivan Clech Lam is a professor emerita at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York where she served as the associate director of its Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies. Maivan has taught and written extensively on the rights of indigenous peoples under U.S. and international law. Her article "The Kuleana Act Revisited," and book* At the Edge of the State: Indigenous Peoples and Self-Determination*, are widely read in the field. She was invited by Dr. Kekuni Blaisdell in 1984 to participate in the Kanaka Maoli movement for independence. After moving to New York in 1992, she volunteered as academic advisor to the American Indian Law Alliance, an NGO that played an important role at the United Nations as it moved to adopt the historic 2007 "Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples." Born in Vietnam and now a U.S. citizen, Maivan and Kokua Hawaii met soon after her arrival in the islands in 1971. Gary T. Kubota interviewed Maivan at her home in Waimanalo on June 30, 2016.

GK: Good afternoon, Maivan. Do you recall your first contact with Kokua Hawaii?

ML: I believe that occurred in the fall of 1971.

GK: What were the circumstances and how did that happen?

ML: My husband at the time, Truong Buu Lam, was recruited to teach, beginning that fall, in the history department of the University of Hawaii at Manoa. We arrived with our baby the preceding summer from New York where we had actively participated in the anti-Vietnam War movement. As the fall began, I received a call from Alice Beechert whose husband, Ed Beechert, was a colleague of Lam's. The Beecherts were dedicated progressives in Hawaii and knew that we opposed the U.S. military intervention in Vietnam. Alice said to me: "Kokua Hawaii, a progressive organization here, is organizing a march against the war that will culminate with a rally in front of Hickam Barracks. I told them about you and they immediately asked me to invite you to speak at the rally

and explain why you oppose the war." OK, I said. She continued: "Just go to their office and they'll tell you more."

GK: So what happened?

ML: Alice spelled out "Kokua Hawaii" for me. I knew very little about Hawaii then and certainly did not know what kokua meant. I then asked her for the organization's address which it turns out she did not have. Like all Oahu old-timers, however, she assured me that it will be easy to find Kokua Hawaii's office as it was near Tamashiro's Fish Market in Kalihi-Palama. "Please spell all those names too," I asked. Soon after, baby in tow, I drove to downtown Honolulu for the first time in my life. With the help of several passersby, I finally located Tamashiro's where I parked my car and entered the shop. No, the folks inside said, we don't know of a Kokua Hawaii's office here. Stumped, I sat down on what grass I could find in the empty lot nearby to figure out what to do. Soon enough, a man poked his head out from a shack on the lot. "Do you know where I can find Kokua Hawaii's office?" I implored. "It's right here," he said pointing to the shack.

GK: (Laughter) That's right! We met there. The shed, near a friend's home in a boarding house, was across the street from our office. I remember meeting you there for the first time and leading you across the street to our office, which was a mess. We'd just moved in and we had electricity but no plumbing or telephone. The building was old, termite-eaten, and speckled with peeling paint. The floors were of concrete. We had no couch, only two chairs maybe. Friends eventually plastered the interior walls, rewired electrical circuits, and donated carpeting.

ML: I didn't care. I was just happy to find Kokua Hawaii and get to know you guys: you, Soli Niheu, Kalani Ohelo and others .

GK: That sounds about right. What was your impression of us?

ML: (Chuckles) Well, the office was ragtag. However, having worked inside the anti-war movement on the East Coast, I felt right at home in your low-end office.

GK: (Laughter)

ML: So, I certainly was not expecting carpets on the floor or a secretary to introduce me. I just felt wonderful that I got to meet an anti-war group so early in my stay in Hawaii. You all were so young that I was overcome with admiration and gratitude. None of you were Vietnamese, or had been to Vietnam, or were priests like Daniel Berrigan whom we knew on the East Coast for whom compassion is their calling. All I thought then was: "Wow! These people are acting out of a really principled concern for Vietnam."

GK: I helped to organize that march to Hickam. We had discussions within Kokua Hawaii regarding the concept of self-determination and generally supported communities as

well as countries moving in that direction. How did you become an anti-Vietnam War protester?

ML: As you might know, all who were colonized by the West were taught far more Western history than that of their own countries. You had to ferret out that information if you wanted to know it. I was raised Catholic, middle-class, and anti-Communist. As such, I was particularly ignorant of colonialism's impact on the countries I grew up in: Vietnam, Thailand, and India.

GK: What happened?

ML: I remained that way until I went to Yale for graduate studies in Southeast Asian Studies and, later, in Anthropology. Then only was I academically, and brusquely, awakened to the horrors of French colonialism and U.S. imperialism in Vietnam. The jolt I received happened in my very first semester in New Haven—fall 1965—when I attended a campus showing of a film produced by a notable Australian journalist named Wilfred Burchett who was communist and a close friend of Vietnam's President Ho Chí Minh.

GK: Hmmm.

ML: Burchett lived in Vietnam for long periods, and made several films. The one I saw dramatically showed the life of civilians under the massive, relentless, and murderous bombing that the U.S. rained on rice fields where peasants toiled everyday, and on densely populated cities like Hanoi, where non-warring civilians—mainly the young, the old, and their caretakers—remained.

GK: How did you feel about that?

ML: I was shaken to the core of my being by the sights and sounds in the film of all the mothers, old folks, and children who lived in Hanoi. As American bombers shrieked overhead, the film showed crowds of Vietnamese on Hanoi's narrow streets running helter-skelter, yelling to and yanking up little kids from the streets to dive with them into manholes. "Quick. Quick. Quick. Child, over here, over here, take cover," I heard as I understood the language of the targeted. My westernized mother and Catholic teachers had told me that communists were very bad. Period. They killed Catholics, had children spy on their parents, banned religion, and otherwise robbed you of all freedom. The film catapulted me beyond all that. I came out instead repeating to myself: "Nothing, nothing, but nothing can justify this assault, this terror, this killing." There and then, I became an anti-war partisan who read more and more of the history of Vietnam, Southeast Asia, and colonialism.

GK: Besides being against the Vietnam War, did your beliefs change as far as Vietnam being divided into North and South?

ML: I eventually developed a second reason for opposing the war, which is that I switched from the side of the privileged to that of the people who worked and fought to re-unify Vietnam and reinstate there a politics of equality, respect, and substantive justice for all.

GK: How did you become involved in the Hawaiian movement?

ML: In my first two years here, I spent a lot of time at home with our child. But I managed to combine childcare with what you might call justice-care. There was a lot of anti-war and pro-justice activities in Hawaii at the time in which we participated. They included support for union strikes, for the establishment of Ethnic Studies at the university, and for communities resisting eviction from Chinatown, Ota Camp, Waimanalo Village, and Waiahole-Waikane.

GK: What was the activist atmosphere in the early 1970s?

ML: When we arrived in 1971, the epic Kalama Valley resistance to eviction, to which Kokua Hawaii prominently contributed, had essentially ended. But the exemplary acumen and energy that marked it went on to ignite several other resistances to eviction. The message Kalama Valley sent out throughout Hawaii was: "It is not acceptable to chase people off their lands and away from their homes and livelihoods at the mere say-so of rapacious and politically connected developers."

GK: Yes, I remember. I was living in Ota Camp with two other Kokua Hawaii organizers at the invitation of the Camp's president Pete Tagalog. The residents still talk about the support they received from university students and some faculty at that time.

ML: Yes, it was a time of considerable turmoil. Within a year of our moving to Waimanalo in 1973, I became involved in the Waimanalo Village's resistance to the government's plan to demolish their old plantation homes and scatter their community.

GK: Wow. How'd that go?

ML: For about two years, the residents there would meet every evening to plan and organize their resistance. I attended the meetings and saw a very vibrant community at work. Multi-ethnic and local to the core, their ties to one another appeared to have been laid down in plantation days. Folks there variously identified themselves as Filipino, Hawaiian, Japanese, Portuguese, Chinese and, once in a while, haole, but usually also added "I also get some X (naming another ethnicity)." The Filipino contingent appeared the largest, and counted several veterans of past epic strikes against plantation owners in the outer islands. Yet, no one ethnic group claimed or exercised priority over the others. The spokespersons who emerged tended to be Hawaiian or Filipino. Disputes arose, of course, but were as often resolved. All in all, the community presented a passionate, dedicated, and united front in opposing the state's eviction plans.

GK: Who were the spokespersons?

ML: There were several, men and women. One was Tata Frank Calbone. He was a tall, thin, flinty elder who was solid as a rock. He generally was also the first to smell a fish in the government's proposals and the last to compromise. Indefatigable, he walked day after day, from house to house, explaining issues and soliciting unity. He told me a story that I cherish to this day about a historic plantation strike on Maui in which he was involved. A number of workers had up-and-walked off the plantation to protest wages and conditions. The rest all soon followed. But as wages vanished, so did food. The workers asked Tata Frank, "How we going to eat, Frank?" His answer: "You fellows go fish where it says kapu to fish. They then going throw you in the kalabus (jail in Cebuano) where you get kaukau (food) three times a day."

GK: (Laughter) There you go. So he had a plan.

ML: Yes, he always had a plan. It apparently worked beautifully in that strike. I hugely admired Tata Frank's critical mind, obstinacy, and total lack of fear. But countless others also brought unique skills to the Waimanalo resistance which eventually prevailed. The people were not evicted, and the community lives on in the village surrounded by their usual plants and animals. The old houses were demolished by the state which, however, replaced them with new ones that were designed with community input to safeguard the residents' desired life-style.

GK: That's great!

ML: These experiences to which Kokua Hawaii first introduced me shaped my later years in Hawaii. After the U.S. withdrew from Vietnam, I became more and more engaged in local struggles having to do with Kanaka Maoli rights, and environmental sustainability.

GK: As editor of Kokua Hawaii's newspaper the *Huli*, I know that we featured your speech at the anti-Vietnam war rally at Hickam, and the several anti-eviction struggles you speak of. In both cases, we felt it important to promote the international law concept of self-determination.

ML: I, too, see local and global struggles as interrelated.

GK: How did you come to concentrate on Kanaka Maoli rights?

ML: When my son turned pre-schooler, I had more time and we needed more income. So I began to teach anthropology at Hawaii Loa College in Kaneohe. While there, I inherited a course on Native Americans that an ailing professor had to drop. This forced me to give myself a crash course on Native American history, culture, and present circumstances. The course opened my eyes wide to the subject of American settler colonialism which both Native Americans and Kanaka Maoli suffer. I consequently concluded that while

anthropology offers a valuable approach to the understanding of culture, it does not directly enable the change that indigenous peoples sought. So I then chose to obtain a law degree, all the more so, as the U.S. usurped Kanaka Maoli lands through legal rather than military maneuvers.

GK: You're referring to the Bayonet Constitution, I guess?

ML: Yes, that and more. Even before Americans imposed the 1887 Bayonet Constitution on King Kalakaua, they had already dramatically disrupted Kanaka Maoli's traditional land tenure by urging two key laws on Kamehameha III: the Great Mahele and the Kuleana Act.

GK: Interesting.

ML: While in law school, I began to study how Kanaka Maoli lost their land. The first thing I did was to take a class on traditional Kanaka Maoli land tenure taught by the most knowledgeable expert on the subject: my mentor and friend Marion Kelly. My study led me to write "The Kuleana Act Revisited. . . " which concludes that every piece of land in Hawaii has a "cloud" on it inasmuch as Kamehameha III made it very clear that: 1) if collective land tenure was transformed into private property tenure, the makaainana or commoners must end up with possession of 1/3 of the land of the kingdom; 2) they must also never be deprived of their traditional rights in the land except by the express, i.e. not implied, provision of law. His two commands have been unlawfully disregarded, hence the "cloud."

GK: Very interesting. I guess the division of land under the Great Mahele wasn't that great. What is the path you see for Kanaka Maoli to arrive at self-determination?

ML: That is a huge question that needs to be discussed in its own right, however the land issue evolves. I will say only that Dr. Kekuni Blaisdell (longtime organizer of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement) discussed the matter of self-determination repeatedly with me as he wished to understand its international law contours, and that he firmly intended to honor the informed and considered decision of Kanaka Maoli on the subject, whether the decision pointed to: 1) incorporation with an existing state; b) association with such a State; 3) independence from any state beginning with the United States. He personally favored the last option.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Reverend and former State Sen. Robert Nakata

Robert Nakata
Photo courtesy Hawaii Community Foundation

The Rev. Robert Nakata has gone through a number of transformations in his career—a college physics instructor, a Methodist minister, a state senator and an executive director for the Kualoa-Heeia Ecumenical Youth Project, helping dropout youths earn their high school diplomas. Through it all, he has been devoted to opposing gentrification in Windward Oahu and to protecting farmlands—a position that aligned him with Kokua Hawaii members and their associates who assisted in anti-eviction fights in Waiahole and Waikane valleys and in the Heeia-Kea area. He has continued to be a staunch ally to the poor and homeless, attending a state Senate Committee on Housing public hearing at the State Capitol on October 30, 2018, to show his support against the eviction of Front Street Apartment tenants on Maui. He was honored by lawmakers in 2018 for his idea of putting $200 million into the Rental Housing Trust Fund called the "Bob Nakata Act." Nakata was interviewed by Gary T. Kubota at Burger King restaurant in Kaneohe on March 27, 2017.

GK: Good morning, Rev. Nakata. When and where were you born and raised?

RN: I was born in 1941. My parents lived in Niu Valley at the time. But my mother's roots are in Kahaluu. My father was a pig farmer, but when the war came, he couldn't do his normal work of picking up slop at nearby locations in the morning because of the blackout and curfew. My uncles had a big patch of leased land in Kahaluu, and my father moved the family to Kahaluu and became a taro and banana farmer.

GK: What school did you go to?

RN: I went to Waiahole School, kindergarten through ninth grade, then Castle High School, graduating in 1959.

GK: You graduated in the year Hawaii had statehood. How was it that day?

RN: I remember the school let us all out of classes, so we got into cars or whatever and

went to town to celebrate. I've always been quiet and not all that social. I was kind of a quiet student, didn't hang out with the Japanese students although I had classes with them. When everybody took off from school, I was kind of left behind, so the Hawaiian kids took me with them. I think we went to Waikiki. . . I've always been closer to Hawaiians than most of the other Japanese.

GK: How did that play out in high school?

RN: I got elected student body officer. But on a social level, I hardly dated and went to socials.

GK: Were you Buddhist?

RN: No, I'm a Christian. That's an interesting thing. We lived right next to a Methodist Church, and most of the Japanese were Christians in the Kahaluu area. I never thought about whether the minister was Okinawan or Japanese. He might have been Okinawan, because most of us were Okinawan in this area.

GK: How did that happen?

RN: The minister loved baseball. He got the Japanese kids involved in baseball and got them in the church. So almost all the Okinawans in the area were Methodists.

GK: Was your father an immigrant or was he son of an immigrant?

RN: He was an immigrant. He immigrated from Okinawa in 1913. He came from Kin Village. That's where that guy Toriyama started the migration of Okinawans to Hawaii. . . I didn't check that much into him, but I know he was a Marxist.

He started elementary school in that village. He must have been very well known, because when I would ask questions about him, people knew him. I had a suspicion that he was a Marxist.

GK: So tell me how did you get involved in the anti-eviction fight involving farmers at Waiahole-Waikane?

RN: My uncle was Sei Serakaku, a Waiahole farmer.

GK: Serakaku seemed to be well respected among farmers?

RN: Yes. By the time I came along, he was already a pillar of the Methodist church. He liked baseball. We lived within 100 yards or so of the church, so we were always the kids—the Japanese Okinawan kids—who were always at the church. My uncle Sei really liked the Old Testament prophets. They were the ones who would tell off the king when the king was not doing what God said they should be doing.

GK: Interesting.

RN: One of the Prophets was this fellow Amos. Amos described himself as a herder of sheep and a trimmer of Sycamore trees. In other words, he was a farmer.

GK: (Laughter)

RN: That's why my uncle really liked him. Amos would go tell off the King and say, "If you don't do what's right, God will take you down."

GK: I know as the son of a farmer you had quite an education. How did all that begin?

RN: I went to University of Hawaii-Manoa. I was good at mathematics. One of my professors suggested I go into physics. He worked for a time with Werner von Braun in rocket science in New Mexico. I eventually earned a bachelor's and a master's degree in physics. Around that time, I was also active as a Methodist in the student group at the university. The Methodist students hung out at the Wesley Foundation. I became one of the leaders in that group. The Foundation had a director who during the Second World War became a conscientious objector. He was from Southern California and had a strong social conscience. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Foundation brought so called "radicals" to speak to students. That's how I met Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I also met James Farmer, the founder of the Congress on Racial Equality.

GK: Wow. In Hawaii?

RN: Yes, I met them in the Wesley Foundation student center. So whenever one of these well-known guys would come over, the Foundation director would make sure that we went to hear them. . . That's what started pulling me into social activism.

GK: So what happened after you graduated?

RN: When I graduated with my master's degree, one of the other physics students who had gone to teach chemistry at the University of Hawaii-Hilo, suggested I come over to the Big Island. The college at Hilo was a two-year junior college at the time. I went to Hilo and taught for a couple of years. But I actually was interested more in social activism.

GK: What happened?

RN: I applied for seminary, and because of the social justice orientation, I wanted either to attend seminary in the Bay Area around Berkeley or in New York. The Methodist offered me a scholarship to a new seminary in Kansas City, Missouri. But, I told them I'd rather pay my way and go to Union Theological in Manhattan. It had a long-standing reputation of training social activists. That's why I wanted to go there.

GK: That was kind of gutsy of you.

RN: I thought I was saying goodbye to the scholarship. But they gave me the scholarship anyway, and I attended Union Theological.

GK: So what happened after that?

RN: When I was done with studies at Union Theological, I went to Syracuse in northern New York to teach in a state-run prep school for mainly African Americans and Puerto Ricans. They were people who had been discouraged from going to college, because they were a minority. So I did that for a couple of years.

Then Randy Kalahiki started the Kualoa-Heeia Ecumenical Youth (KEY) Project. The project took high school dropouts off the streets and provided a way to earn a high school equivalent degree—GED. I wrote to the KEY Project, and I said I'd like to come and work there. The KEY Project didn't have an opening. So I just came back and went back to my old church with my uncle.

GK: Did you gain employment at the church?

RN: It was a mixture of both. The Honolulu Council of Churches was just starting an internship at the Legislature. I applied for it and got it. I returned to Hawaii in 1972. My work at the Legislature for them was with state Sen. John Ushijima. He was working on making reforms in the state prison system. It didn't turn out well, but he had me watching prison-related legislation for him. Out of that came the Oahu Community Correction Center. At that time, it was a step forward.

GK: Then what happened?

RN: The KEY Project got a Vista grant and a position opened for me. Several Hawaiian ohanas including Randy Kalahiki's family had started community organizing work in the area several years before to look at a proposed flood control project. I received less than $200 a month and was married and had a daughter.

GK: Hmmm.

RN: I was always a strong church member. The church got me in with the Okinawan side of the community, and the Vista stuff got me in with the Hawaiian side. So, I was serving as a bridge between the two. Randy Kalahiki was smart. He knew my mother's family was related to Sei, one of the leaders of the Okinawan side of the community. So, that's why he grabbed me immediately. He knew that he had to work with the two.

GK: He was very inclusive.

RN: Yes, he was. Kalahiki and other leaders made sure the Waiahole-Waikane eviction fight was inclusive. It never became just a Hawaiian movement. There was that element

from Ethnic Studies—Pete Thompson, Kehau Lee, and Terrilee Kekoolani. The three of them were dedicated heart and soul. They were there almost a whole day every day.

GK: I know the three, along with Kokua Hawaii members Soli Niheu and Joy Ahn, held leftist beliefs. How did community leaders deal with that?

RN: It's really interesting. The leftist indoctrination might have worked with the Filipinos and Hawaiians. But Okinawans are much more conservative than the Hawaiians or the Filipinos. Because of my uncle Sei, the Okinawan part of the community stayed with it. He had a strong social justice orientation. I gathered some respect because I was viewed in the Okinawa-Japanese community as the star student. Uncle Sei had a very practical approach to those helping Waiahole-Waikane. As my uncle put it, "Well, if the Marxists are coming, and they're the only guys that are going to come help us, we're going to work with them." He was very practical.

GK: How would you describe the Okinawan-Japanese community in Kahaluu?

RN: The ones in Kahaluu retained their agricultural roots. They didn't get into the business world that much. I think that's a key difference.

GK: Did you ever get into a discussion with Soli or Joy about ideology?

RN: No. I think I was basically still socially conservative. . . I told them, "Look. I'm too steeped in Christianity to go that far." I agreed with them philosophically.

GK: You agreed with the value system?

RN: Yes.

GK: What parts of the value system?

RN: I'm very deep into this Christianity. I saw Jesus as a real revolutionary, and his immediate core of followers as his disciples. Out of them came the whole idea of "from each according to ability to each according to needs." (Karl Marx in the "Critique of the Gotha Program," also in the Bible, Acts 4:32–35: 32) That's where it came from and that's what they did.

GK: Who were the other leaders?

RN: The most central figure was Bobby Fernandez. He's about eight or 10 years younger than I am, but just a natural leader. Among the Filipinos, the leader was Hannah Salas. She was very sharp. I ended up describing her as best grassroots organizer I know. She was a strong Catholic, so that kept her from going overboard. Sorry to put it that way. Her good buddy was Patricia Royos.

GK: Besides Waiahole-Waikane residents and other activists, including Kokua Hawaii blocking Kamehameha Highway to stop the eviction, who else was involved?

RN: I was very active, especially among the Methodist ministers. As we were planning these things, I was going around to Methodists to have them sign a pledge.

GK: What was that pledge?

RN: If it came to eviction, they would come and join us.

GK: Did it work?

RN: There were about 15 of them.

GK: Fifteen ministers who signed the pledge?

RN: Yeah, including the top Methodists.

GK: Did it ever come to that?

RN: We sounded the alarm and people came. It was right around New Year's time. Through information we obtained through the courts, we knew about when the eviction might happen. So, around that New Year's weekend, we invited people to come and camp out in the valleys with us.

GK: How many came?

RN: There were about 500 people camped out in the Waihole-Waikane valleys with us.

GK: What happened?

RN: The sheriff's representative serving the eviction notice was careful when he came. He said, "I'm only delivering the writs, I'm not the guy that's going to evict you guys, so I will call you guys before I come. . . "

GK: What happened to the writs?

RN: Our plan was for people to take the writs, crush them and throw them on the road, and then burn them. We did that. The media was there and everything.

GK: So it looked like it could happen anytime?

RN: That night on January 4, 1977 (*Hon. Advertiser* January 5, 1977, Front Page), after receiving the writs, I think we had the CB radio operators and their associates keeping an eye on the police stations. The plan was when the word came that the police and sheriff

deputies were coming, the alarm would be sounded, and that's exactly how it played out. The CB guys called us and said, "Hey, there's a lot of activity around the police station." We told them, "Watch for a little while more, and if they are coming, then let us know and we'll sound the alarm."

We were having a steering committee meeting in the garage at Bobby Fernandez's house. So they said, "Hey, they're coming." Everybody jumped in their cars, went down Waiahole Valley Road and most of them went to the Kaneohe side of Kamehameha Highway because we figured that's where the police and deputies were going to come from. (The major regional police station was located in Kaneohe.)

I figured hey, we've got to have some people on the Kahuku side. I turned that way and here's this one guy, Hannah's husband, with his pickup truck blocking one lane, so I pull up with my Volkswagen square back and I pull up and I block the other lane, and a few more people came, but basically we were the blocking force. The other side had all kinds of people.

GK: I guess it was hard for even the police to get there?

RN: Yeah. Traffic was blocked up. It happened close to 11 p.m. There was more action on the Kaneohe side. . . What I heard is the top cop spent a couple of hours trying to tell Waihole-Waikane residents and supporters, "No, we're not coming, we're not." We held the blockade for a couple of hours. When no police or deputies came in force, we opened the road.

GK: What was the reaction?

RN: You would think that the drivers would be mad, even on our side there was only several of us there. The drivers were not mad, they were kind of cheering us on. Finally when our guys said, "Okay, we'll lift the blockade after a couple of hours." The police really didn't come.

On the Kaneohe side at the intersection near the poi factory, we had maybe a couple of hundred people lining the highway with arms raised and cheering. The drivers were tooting their horns.

GK: That's a demonstration.

RN: Yes, it really was.

GK: What was the impact?

RN: It was a good false alarm. It demonstrated the broad support for the Waiahole-Waikane residents. I think the CB observers saw police changing of the shift in Kaneohe

and thought the police were going to Waiahole. After the blockade, our supporters were starting to leave. They had jobs.

GK: I know the *Honolulu Advertiser* had it as its lead story on the front page. I guess it had a lot of news coverage?

RN: Oh yeah. Waiahole resident Calvin Hoe was with his wife who was visiting Minnesota for the holidays. He saw it on the news there.

GK: So, where did this all lead?

RN: Windward Oahu community leaders Randy Kalahiki and Buddy Ako met with Gov. George Ariyoshi in his office. They told him he better do something or it could get really serious. Ariyoshi had said he can't do anything. But a couple of weeks later he said the state was going to buy Waiahole Valley.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Nora Gozon Tagalog

Nora Gozon Tagalog
Photo courtesy of the Tagalog family

In the fight to stop an eviction in the Filipino community of Ota Camp in Waipahu, Nora Gozon Tagalog represented her family and relatives and attended meetings regularly, participated in numerous protests, and became a part of the community's steering committee. Gozon Tagalog, who continued to work as a nurse's aide, also became the second wife of Ota Camp Makibaka Association President Pete Tagalog. She was interviewed by Gary T. Kubota on October 24, 2017, at her home in Ota Camp in West Loch, where the Ota Camp residents moved as a community after the city and state provided land and housing respectively for them. The relocation included a rent-to-own option, in which tenants could apply their rent to owning their homes, and she now owns her house. Pete died on May 28, 2012, at age 80, but not before Hawaii legislators passed a resolution recognizing his contributions to his community.

GK: Good morning, Nora. When and where were you born?

NG (Nora): I was born August 1951 in Davao Del Norte in Mindanao, the Philippines.

GK: What did your father do for a living?

NG: My dad was a farmer.

GK: When did you arrive in Hawaii?

NG: I came to Hawaii in April, 1970.

GK: How did you get here?

NG: My mom died in the Philippines when I was 12 years old. My dad had been in Hawaii for five months and worked for the gas company. My sister, brother and I, along with two other younger children, moved to Hawaii. We mainly lived with my uncle in Hawaii who already had nine kids. My uncle's family had too much pressure because of overcrowding. So, we moved to an apartment in Pua Lane in Honolulu with another uncle. My younger sister below me, my younger brother and I found jobs. We worked at Dole Company. I was almost 19.

GK: And what did you do?

NG: I was a trimmer at the cannery. My brother was also a trimmer, and my sister was a packer.

GK: How did you get to Ota Camp eventually?

NG: In 1970 before school started, my grandfather's friend Manang Porton Manzano knew of a vacant house in Ota Camp. The house we stayed at was near Manang Porton's house. We rented it for $20 a month. We moved there almost at the end of 1970. I worked in the cannery in the summer and worked as a dishwasher at Country Inn in Waipahu and later as a dishwasher and waitress at Wailani Inn Restaurant owned by Hideo "Major" Okada's family.

GK: I remember Major Okada came to regular weekly meetings of Ota Camp to show support for residents. What kind of guy was Major Okada?

NG: He and his wife were very down to earth persons. His wife knew about me. She always set aside food at the restaurant for me to bring home for my brothers and sisters. She was very nice to me. We're just lucky we had $20 rent. Even though the house had puka puka roof, we use buckets and pots and pans to catch the rain water. It was okay. At least we had a place.

GK: When did you first learn about the eviction?

NG: I was a senior at Waipahu High School in early 1972.

GK: What was your reaction to it?

NG: It was kind of hard. You know what I mean. I really didn't know where we'd go. I was relying on my income and occasional paychecks from my sister and brother. My dad only gave me money when he remembers.

GK: What happened?

NG: When we received the eviction notice, Pete really didn't know what to do. Somehow, all of a sudden, he called for a meeting. At first, I remember Peter Thompson and other Leeward Community College political friends supported Pete to get started. Kokua Hawaii came later.

GK: How did you feel to know that outside people supported you?

NG: It felt good because we realized we were not alone in our fight against the eviction. It's normal for people to think we should abide by the law. You know what I mean? We had

a hard time to convince some residents to be open-minded and to stay and fight. Some residents took time to convince. The supporters helped to change the residents' minds.

GK: What about attorney Herb Takahashi?

NG: Herb Takahashi came in as our attorney, after Pete fired a haole attorney. Herb was a good man, very smart. He's very down to earth, sharp, sharp guy. Thank God for that. He became popular with residents of Ota Camp. After the successful grassroots struggle of Ota Camp, attorney Takahashi became a well-known attorney.

GK: Were you there when the Honolulu city administration officials came to inspect Ota Camp and meet with Pete?

NG: Yes, they went house to house meeting people. Because of that meeting, Honolulu Mayor Frank Fasi offered the city land at West Loch for relocation.

GK: What do you want people to remember about Pete Tagalog?

Nora: He was a unique leader. I remember there were lots of obstacles in the beginning. Some tried to stop him from being a leader. They would offer him relocation. But he stood for the people. I want the people to remember him as a good leader and honest and hard worker for the people. Pete's family is from Cebu. He was Visayan. So he was a Visayan trying to organize Ota Camp where most were Illocano. He didn't speak Ilocano, but somehow he understood enough.

GK: That's right. Johnny Dombrique was Ilocano, and he had many relatives and family living in his complex.

NG: I didn't know what is prejudice or discrimination among Filipinos themselves until I was in Hawaii. Where I grew up in Mindanao in the Philippines, we were surrounded by Ilocano. We also had different dialects, but the conflicts weren't the same. When I came over here, when everyone started to go to school, I saw the difference. They're trying to destroy one another. They fight each other. They no like me because I'm Visayan, and they are Ilocano.

GK: Johnny was a big supporter of the struggle, wasn't he?

NG: Yes. He was a strong supporter of Pete. One hundred percent. He was the leader of his clan, and they were good in cooking food for special Ota Camp parties. Pete never give up on explaining to Johnny about the struggle.

GK: Yes, Johnny Dombrique used to meet me sometimes, and we would get together at Waimanu Home Road, where George Santos had his pig farm, and then Johnny would pick the pig for the feast.

NG: Yes.

GK: It was a good experience for me too. Do you remember the Diamond Jubilee, the 75th anniversary of Waipahu, when Ota Camp tenants made the Nipa hut float on the flatbed truck?

NG: Yeah. That was a good time too. Everybody worked. Ota Camp residents marched in front of the float. We had good comments about the float from the Waipahu community

GK: What did the community say?

NG: The Waipahu residents could see the Ota Camp community and were cheering. Good things came out of us having the parade float. I felt they were saying, "Let's support Ota Camp in their struggle." It was an opportunity to see us, not only like hearsay, or what they read.

GK: Yeah, right. And I remember that Kokua Hawaii poster helped. Jim Young took the photograph of residents including dogs and children. I designed the poster, then we printed the poster, and distributed it all over Waipahu and all over Oahu, hundreds of them, to build awareness of the eviction fight.

NG: Yes. It helped encourage and inspire the residents to fight for the cause.

GK: How important was it to have other ethnic groups supporting this kind of struggle?

NG: It's very important. It's very important that we have the support, not just only the residents, but outside, because, to me, the struggle was dealing with evictions. I believe the fight for one community is the struggle for all. At first, we don't know what to do. We don't know how to go about it. But with the support from outside, groups of all kinds and different walks of life helped our cause. Of course, we vote too. You need the support around you in order to win for your struggle. That's what I learned from the past struggle.

GK: Do you remember that time when Kokua Hawaii asked Ota Camp to support Ethnic Studies and a number of residents went on campus at the University of Hawaii to support Ethnic Studies?

NG: Yeah. Only some can make it. They also had less knowledge to support Ethnic Studies.

GK: You're right. I asked Pete to come because Ethnic Studies instructors, such as Pete Thompson, were the ones who provided the research against the Ota Camp eviction, and Ethnic Studies needed the communitie's support. There were presidents of other community groups who also joined in the sit-in.

NG: That's true.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Sally Tagalog

Sally Tagalog
Photo courtesy Tagalog Family

Soledad "Sally" Tagalog was the first wife of the late "Pete" Peciong Jumauan Tagalog, who lived in the community of Ota Camp in Waipahu and led more than 130 tenants to successfully fight against an eviction. Sally supported Pete who was president of the Ota Camp Makibaka Association. Their patio became the meeting place for many weekly discussions and the first stop for visitors to the community. Even after their divorce, Sally remained his friend, living in the family house at Ota Camp, where they raised son Darrell and daughters Laverne, Grace, Vivian, Annette, and Abigail. His second wife Nora lived nearby in Ota Camp along with their daughters Leonette and Naomi, and son Kimo. Sally was interviewed by Gary T. Kubota on March 14, 2017, at her home in Ota Camp in West Loch, where the community was moved through financial support from the city that donated the land and the state that built the houses with an option to buy. Pete died on May 28, 2012, at age 80.

GK: Good morning, Sally. When and where were you born and raised?

ST: I was born in 1932 and raised in the sugar plantation in Waialua. My dad worked as a grader operator. He was from Pangasinan in the Philippines. My father's language is a mixture of Chinese and Polynesian.

GK: How did you meet Pete?

ST: At the baseball park. It was during the Waipahu and Waialua baseball league game. He was attending the game and was looking at me with binoculars.

GK: Oh really.

ST: Yeah, my girlfriend Jane said, "Somebody keeps on pointing at you." I said, "No, it's not me, Jane. It's you." She said, "No, it's you, Sally." Then when I look, he was waving at me. I went to the car. There was some Filipino boys in the car with Pete. Pete doesn't look Filipino, you know. He looked kind of mixed. I said, "Are you Filipino?" He said, "Yes." I

said, "Oh, how come you're so different?" I was kind of young at that time, so we talk and talk. He started writing letters to me. Pete and I eloped when we were only in the eleventh grade. Eventually, we did get married.

GK: Where did he live?

ST: Waipahu. His father worked at the sugar mill.

GK: When did you and Pete move to Ota Camp?

ST: We got married in 1950 and moved sometime in 1953. We stayed with this Filipino man in Ota Camp, then a neighbor's house. Pete was working as an air-conditioner technician.

GK: Can you describe what happened when you first received the eviction notice?

ST: Well, this guy came and gave us a month's notice and told us we had to move out. Pete stood up and said, "Where is the black and white? Show it to me." He said, "No, you have to get out." He was kind of sarcastic.

GK: Do you remember any meetings with residents?

ST: Yes.

GK: How did that go?

ST: It was hard to get the Visayans and Ilocanos together. They have different dialects. But Pete talked with them, using Pidgin English. If he had used standard English, they would never have understood Pete.

GK: Organizing the community must have taken quite a bit of time?

ST: A lot of times, Pete cannot help me around the house and with the six children—one boy and five girls. Sometimes, I had to be a father to them. I had to help them do their homework. But I didn't grumble. I just had to be understanding and patient.

GK: You also worked at a sewing factory in Kalihi?

ST: Yes, it was in Hikina Lane. The owner made aloha shirts. I was a trimmer. It was pretty hard work. I caught the bus to work. I was earning a dollar something an hour. I also worked as a telephone operator, and a paramedical teacher, doing sign language at Waimanu Homes.

GK: You were so hospitable. Every time I'd visit Pete in the morning, you'd offer me a cup of coffee. How did you feel when people from the outside came to help fight the eviction of Ota Camp?

ST: I was happy. Without the supporters, I don't know what we would have done. They provided all kinds of support and education. They gave us advice. There were ladies who came, too. Ota Camp resident Johnny Dombrique was a strong supporter of Pete and, of course, Pete's brother Candido.

GK: Right. I know that especially after the Honolulu Mayor Frank Fasi offered to give tenants the land in West Loch, Pete was invited to speak at a number of communities facing eviction. There was Census Tract 57 People's Movement in Kalihi and Third Arm in Chinatown. He even got to meet Cesar Chavez of the United Farm Workers union who was visiting Chinatown asking for people to boycott lettuce from California. I'm wondering if he ever went to Waiahole-Waikane to speak?

ST: Yes, he did.

GK: Certain kinds of things that were done in Ota Camp were replicated in other eviction struggles, and frankly, Waiahole-Waikane was another win. I know Pete had worked at Heide & Cook as a refrigeration and air conditioning mechanic.

ST: Yes. He went out to speak to a lot of communities. He retired from Catholic Charities Palama Settlement. He wanted to further his studies but never could because of his work fighting the eviction.

GK: How are your children doing?

ST: My son Darrell now lives on the Big Island. He did really well as a massage therapist. He's met a lot of celebrities and renowned business owners, such as Dell and Howard Schultz, the owner of Starbucks. Laverne earned her bachelor's degree in sociology. The rest of my children are doing well. You know Abigail's daughter, Jhanteigh Kupihea, works as a senior editor for Simon & Schuster in New York.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project

Interview About Randy Kalahiki with wife Annie Kalahiki and daughters Alicia and Rita

Randolph Kalahiki
Photo courtesy of the James Young

Anui Pua "Annie" Kalahiki was the wife of the late Randolph "Randy" Kalahiki, a Windward Oahu community leader who was the executive director of the Kualoa-Heeia Ecumenical Youth (KEY) Project. Randy Kalahiki was an advocate of Native Hawaiian rights and also a supporter of the activist group Kokua Hawaii in its struggle against the eviction of farmers and Native Hawaiians. Alicia Kalahiki Weatherington and Rita Kalahiki were his daughters who often accompanied him to numerous meetings. The interviews with them and his wife "Annie" took place on January 16 and February 17, 2016, at McDonalds and Burger King Restaurant.

GK: When and where were you born?

AnnK: I was born on Papaikou on the Big Island in March 1935.

GK: Who were your parents?

AnnK: Gregorio Edreo and Alice Kaniho. My father was from the Philippines, and my mother was pure Hawaiian and born in Papaikou.

GK: When was Randy born?

AnnK: He was born August 12, 1932.

GK: Where was he born and raised?

AnnK: He was born on Oahu, and I think he was raised in Kalihi.

GK: Where did you meet Randy?

AnnK: I met him at church. It was the Gospel of Salvation on Vineyard Street in Honolulu. He was a member of the church.

As he was working as a community organizer and promoting the preservation of farmlands and island lifestyle, Randy Kalahiki was also developing a deeper understanding of Hawaiian culture through growing taro and other truck crops. In this photograph in 1975, Kalahiki is interviewed by Gary Kubota about the impact of the H-3 Freeway on farming in windward Oahu. As a University of Hawaii student, Kubota produced the independent documentary, *TH-3: A Question Of Direction,* which aired on prime time on Hawaii Public Television. Kalahiki's second oldest daughter Aloma is to the right of the photograph.
Photo courtesy of the James Young family

GK: Where was he working?

AnnK: He was working for Honolulu Iron Works. He was a truck driver. Later, he was a meat cutter for Kahua beef sales.

GK: When did you move to the Windward Oahu side of the island?

AnnK: We moved in the early sixties. His family had property in Kahaluu within walking distance from the KEY (Kualoa-Heeia Ecumenical Youth) Project.

GK: What made him help to start the KEY project?

AliciaK: Church people found that on the Windward Oahu side, there was a lot of poverty. A lot of kids were dropping out of school in the sixties, and the drug scene was very prevalent. They were looking for a community leader to help start the KEY Project. They had interviewed dad and said, you may be the ideal person, because daddy was living on the Windward side already. He came from a family of 13. He dropped out of high school in the ninth grade during World War II and sold newspapers. Despite that, he learned a trade.

GK: He applied for the KEY Project job and got it? What was the job?

AnnK: He was to be an outreach person. He eventually ended up being the executive director for this youth center, getting the kids off of the street and keeping them safe. He did it 24/7.

AliciaK: The Project had a school for high school dropouts in the late 1960s. It was based on a similar native American school on the U.S. mainland. Daddy implemented it, because he loved how the Native American reservation school was teaching their native kids basic things like history, math, science—all to do with what they were doing on their land, like the farming. He had classes in agriculture and horticulture and tied it in with science, math, and English. Daddy felt that the youths would learn best with a hands-on approach.

GK: What other activities did it have?

AliciaK: It was a drop-in center with food tables and ping pong. My dad organized ping pong tournaments. He did camping trips. He made the kids do volunteer work. Yeah. He took the kids to concerts. He took the kids out to things that were not exposed to them, baseball games when the old stadium was around.

GK: And how did he do this?

AliciaK: You know entertainment promoter Tom Moffatt. Moffatt was a good friend of my dad.

My dad would ask uncle Tom Moffatt for concert tickets for the kids but they had to work for it. Sometimes, they had to cut all the grass on that strip of land near the Hygienic Store. The KEY Project started the planting.

GK: They planted the grass?

AliciaK: Yes. So, if you wanted to go to concerts, you signed your name on the clipboard and all those kids who volunteered to do things got to go. It was meant to give back. It was to give the kids a sense of kuleana—responsibility to their community.

GK: Right.

AliciaK: The project also had a weight lifting room. My dad hooked up with St. Francis Hospital so people could become a nurse's aide. He had a surf shop where youths could make surf boards under an instructor. We had another room called the Keyhole Store where the kids got to make their own money by making candles. My dad was able to get grants. He got people to donate money to the Key Project. One of the biggest corporations that helped him was the United Way.

He even had a summer fun program where the kids got to go on field trips, beaches and camping. I remember one summer camp we actually had a lunch truck come out with our breakfast and lunch and dinner.

GK: What else was he involved in?

AliciaK: My father was a grassroots activist, helping groups like Malama Aina O Ko'olau and against the eviction at Waiahole and Waikane. That was his passion. My dad fought for those causes. Those were good times.

GK: What other good times do you recall?

AliciaK: I spent a lot of my good childhood in the Iolekaa Valley where uncle Sammy Lono lived. He was a kahuna lapaau. We lived there. It was my best time from seventh to 11th grade. It's located above a gated Haiku subdivision. Those were fun years of growing up.

GK: That's right. Lono won a landmark case in the 1960s affirming his ahupuaa rights to have access from the mountain to the sea, and the subdivision, which had blocked traditional path, had to provide access.

AliciaK: That's right. So to get to Lono's place, you had to drive through the subdivision past a guard gate and tell the guards you were going to see Lono. I remember those days when we lived there and we would dress up and dad would drive us through guard gate. We'd catch a bus with all the kids and we'd go to school. Coming home, catch a bus, walk home with the kids, walk into the valley. My sister and I would take off our school shoes, put on our rubber boots on and trek it into the valley. Those were fun days.

GK: For a while, Randy was growing some taro over there, too?

AliciaK: Yes, and way up into the valley in the taro patches, we also grew ong choy and watercress. Each of the six kids had our own taro patch. He'd sell the produce at the farmer's market at Kaumakapili Church in Kalihi.

GK: What made him get involved with Kokua Hawaii?

AliciaK: Some Kokua Hawaii members used to come out to the valley where we were living with uncle Sammy Lono. Lono was living on kuleana land above Haiku Plantation. As an outgrowth of his community work, he began growing taro in the valley. A lot of the Kokua Hawaii members were so intrigued with daddy and Uncle Lono. During the visits, they talked about land and water issues.

GK: How did he feel about the evictions in Kalama Valley?

AliciaK: He didn't like what was happening. It had happened before in other places. He knew that if he didn't get involved, other places might be next. That's where his grassroots contact came in.

GK: In what way?

AliciaK: Dad was a very, very strong Democrat. It went all the way back to Gov. John Burns. John and daddy were very good friends. . . Daddy and George Ariyoshi, who later became governor, were childhood friends.

GK: Really?

AliciaK: George's father had a laundry business, and George used to come by to my grandmother's house and collect clothes for dry cleaning. My grandmother would send out the whites to be starched and ironed and whatnot.

GK: Interesting, because of course, when it came to the eviction of tenants at Waiahole-Waikane, someone was telling me that Randy and Buddy Ako and some other people were involved in trying to get Gov. Ariyoshi to do something. Ariyoshi eventually had the state buy the 600 acres in Waiahole Valley.

What happened on the day of the arrest of 32 people resisting the eviction of farmers and Native Hawaiian in Kalama Valley on May 11, 1971?

AliciaK: He brought uncle Lono with him to Kalama Valley.

RitaK: Dad went there because he was standing up for a cause that he believed in—issues affecting Native Hawaiians and farmers. You had George Santos who was Portuguese and wasn't Hawaiian but George was a farmer. Daddy was a farmer, a taro farmer. No matter how you look at it—a farmer is a farmer. He knew a lot of people in Kalama Valley and he wanted to show his support. He knew the Richards.

GK: As I recall, the police wouldn't arrest Randy or Lono. Lono actually offered both hands saying, "Arrest me, Arrest me!" But the police wouldn't do it. I guess they didn't want to tangle with either one. How did you feel about your father's activism?

RitaK: As children, we thought it was neat. It was interesting being involved in these land issues. It was an education, and eventually, I obtained a college degree in Hawaiian Studies, where I teach these issues to students.

GK: What's their reaction?

RitaK: I tell them, "I lived through that era." But the students today often don't believe it happened that way.

GK: (Laughter) Well, give them a copy of this interview.

GK: When you were growing up, did Randy speak Hawaiian at home?

AliciaK: Dad would tell us he grew up knowing the Hawaiian, but he was not allowed to speak it in school. You got whacked!

AnnK: I got whacked. I had to write a hundred times, "I must speak good English. I must speak good English."

GK: When was that? Where was that?

AnnK: That was on the Big Island in the 1940s after the war. I was in grade school.

AliciaK: Daddy did talk about how he was whacked with a ruler. So, when he went home and his mom would speak in Hawaiian, daddy got really angry at his mom, because he was not allowed to speak it in school, so daddy would always, not shun his mother, but say, "Speak English, because I'm not allowed to speak Hawaiian. Speak English."

GK: How did that change over time?

RitaK: When I was growing up, I wanted to learn the Hawaiian language. Daddy still had that old attitude. Daddy didn't want us to learn the Hawaiian language, because he said, "Why should you? Why should you? No. I don't want you guys learning the language." But his opinion changed over time.

AliciaK: My dad became active in the state Constitutional Convention to make Hawaiian the official language side by side with English. He was active because he realized the language had been taken away from us and had weakened our culture. When Hawaiian immersion opened up here in Kaneohe, my mother asked me a favor. She said, "I'm gonna ask you a favor," and I said, "What mama?" She said, "Would you mind enrolling Kapili," who is my oldest, "in Hawaiian immersion?" I'd contemplated putting the oldest into immersion myself. And she said, "Under one condition. You put Kapili, you make the commitment to put your other two," 'cause I was a mother of three. She said that if I put Kapili in the Hawaiian immersion program, I have to also put the other children in the same program. I put all my children in the Hawaiian immersion program.

GK: What are you doing now?

AliciaK: I'm a site coordinator for the non-profit, childcare provider Kamaaina Kids. I'm proud to have been with them for 17 years. This year makes 18 years. One of the sites is for a Hawaiian language school. My children are Hawaiian language speakers.

GK: How do you feel about this whole revival in the Hawaiian language? How do you think Randy would feel?

RitaK: I think daddy would be proud. Daddy would be proud, because there is pride restored in the culture. Alicia's three children are in the Hawaiian Immersion program. Daddy would be proud just knowing that cultural attitudes have changed.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Virgil Demain

Virgil Demain
Photo by Ed Greevy

Virgil Demain was in his late teens and early twenties and a student at Honolulu Community College, when his family members were among hundreds of tenants in Hikina and Akepo lanes in Kalihi on Oahu facing eventual eviction. The College planned to clear nearby cottages and apartments and expand its campus. Demain, who worked with Kokua Hawaii, became an active member of the community group Census Tract 57 People's Movement that successfully resisted the eviction in his community and also supported the eviction resistance of farmers and Native Hawaiians at Waiahole-Waikane in Windward Oahu. He was interviewed by Gary T. Kubota on March 28, 2017 at Jack In The Box Restaurant on Dillingham Boulevard in Palama.

GK: Good morning, Virgil. When were you born and where were you raised as a child?

Virgil: I was born in 1953 in Honolulu and raised in Palama— 926-B Akepo Lane. We were living in a rented two-bedroom, old-style, single-walled cottage built in the 1920s.

GK: What did your dad do?

Virgil: My dad worked at Pearl Harbor as a civilian worker, retiring after 33 years of service. Originally, he left the Philippines to join the United States Navy in 1914, when he was 18 or 19. Later on, he became a citizen.

GK: What were you doing when you received a notice that your family would eventually have to move because of expansion plans by Honolulu Community College?

Virgil: In 1971-72, I was attending Honolulu Community College and preparing to transfer to the University of Hawaii-Manoa.

GK: What did your family do?

Virgil: We stayed. We didn't know what to do. We figured out we'd wait until further notification and definition regarding the so-called eviction notice.

GK: How did you get to know about Kokua Hawaii?

Virgil: One of my friends in school was Mackey Catania. I mentioned to him that we were under the threat of eviction. He encouraged me to get in touch with his brother, Ray, which I did. Ray was a community organizer with Kokua Hawaii, and he invited me to a particular meeting in Hikina Lane. Apparently things were also happening on the west side of the census tract. Then things took off.

GK: How'd it go?

Virgil: See, the thing is, when the eviction notice was sent out, it wasn't clear where it was coming from. Then later on, as it progressed, as we began to get organized and pursue it, then things became clearer, that it had its origins from the administration of Honolulu Community College, in particular, the chancellor's office.

GK: What was the situation with tenants?

Virgil: Essentially, what made the Census Tract 57 organizing kind of different was that Hikina Lane was composed of apartments.

My area consisted of 1920s single dwelling homes. As soon as notices went out, some of the people in my area of Akepo Lane started to leave. Ultimately, maybe five to six families left. About four continued to live there. Strangely, the landowners were not involved and remained detached.

GK: How did that compare with Hikina Lane?

Virgil: Hikina Lane had essentially a large three-story apartment and smaller two-story apartments. These people knew each other. They had a lot more people. I would say roughly a total of 200 people. As an organizer, we did some research and uncovered future plans for the expansion of Honolulu Community College that affected businesses.

GK: You mean the expansion plans for the college would force out some small businesses?

Virgil: Yeah, small businesses, mom-and-pop stores. It was essentially affecting integrated communities between Dillingham Boulevard and King Street stretching to the Ewa end at Kokea Street. It affected not only tenants and homeowners and apartment dwellers, but small business owners as well. The mom-and-pop stores and a factory textile business eventually came out and supported us.

GK: Why?

Virgil: Many of these small businesses were dependent for their economic survival on the surrounding community. . . Palama was a very old community with many residents living there since the 1920s, the Depression of the 1930s, and the war years of World War II.

My dad was one of them. In fact, the old Oahu Railway and Land station hub was only a short distance away from where we lived. It was later to become a hub for country-bound buses.

GK: So what happened?

Virgil: We tried as best as we could to organize on that defense and gain support from a broad spectrum of people in the community.

GK: I remember that. Actually, because of the different streets and mixed composition, it was difficult to figure what to call the group fighting the eviction. Ray and I discussed it with you. Based on various maps, the location was defined as Census Tract 57, so we decided to call it, "Census Tract 57 People's Movement."

Virgil: Correct. Census Tract is referring to the federal census tract 57.

GK: How were the residents persuaded to stay? Did they have any place to go?

Virgil: Back then, we had to combat the mindset, "You can't fight city hall." The other mindset was, "Well, I got no other alternative. Let's see what you guys can do."

GK: So they did nothing?

Virgil: Yes. But there were other people who had no alternative and stayed and tried their best to organize and resist the evictions.

GK: Can you describe some people who stayed like that? Were they like big families or new families or old people?

Virgil: Most of the people involved throughout the census tract were essentially working class and blue collar. The people who left, understandably, were thinking about, "Should I take a risk and get nothing, or go when the going's good?" Those people left. They had other alternatives. The people who stayed virtually had no alternatives.

GK: There was a disabled Vietnam veteran that was involved in organizing against the eviction in the beginning. He was a paraplegic, I guess?

Virgil: His name was Eddie Enos. He lived right on Hikina Lane. He lost both of his legs in the Vietnam War in a mine explosion.

GK: Did you ever get a chance to talk with administrators at Honolulu Community College?

Virgil: Yes. What propelled my involvement was a meeting I had with administrators at Honolulu Community College. I was called into a meeting with an administrator. I

always remembered that. He started to inquire how many people were involved in this movement. He said the bottom line was—I always remembered this, we do not want this to become another Kalama Valley. Then I went back and reported to our organizers what he said. They were shocked. From that time on, we started to really pursue the matter.

GK: What was your reaction when he said another Kalama Valley? What did you think he meant and how did you feel about that?

Virgil: He was kind of angry when he said it to me and tried to dominate over me. I remember, his attitude was, "We don't want this to affect your future."

GK: Oh, okay.

Virgil: Okay? To me, that made me even more determined and steeled. The reason why I got into the whole eviction thing and pursued it and organizing it was because of my dad and my mom. My dad served in the First World War.

My mom survived the occupation in the Philippines and she was a school teacher. . . I felt the government had a responsibility to take care of these people who put their lives on the line. That's why I said to myself I'll be damned if they're going to kick them out as if they were something to be used. It was the principle of it all, so I continued my involvement.

GK: What was the role of Kokua Hawaii organizer Raymond Catania?

Virgil: Essentially, Ray assisted all of us and guided us and coached us how to do this, how to approach people, how to organize things.

GK: What were people's reactions when you were trying to organize?

Virgil: Mixed. Primarily, most of the people were saying, "Yeah, we should organize. We should try to do something because we might be next." They came from a certain social stratum.

GK: Working class, unions?

Virgil: Yeah. At that time, a lot of people in that census tract were working. A few of them were working in the Dole and Del Monte pineapple canneries. At the same time, the hotels were being built, and a lot of people were in service industry jobs.

GK: What else do you remember about Kokua Hawaii members?

Virgil: Palama Street. Kokua Hawaii ran the Moose Lui Print Shop on Palama Street, where they printed their posters, brochures and the *Huli* newspaper. Ray was a pressman there. It was a fascinating place, from my vantage point as a younger person. A lot of them

were intellectuals and debating things that I didn't fully understand. They were trying to, essentially, connect the dots. . . I was acquiring my own experience in organizing.

GK: How did you feel about all that was happening?

Virgil: We were growing up in a period of rapid change in Hawaii. There was a lot of digging and construction going on, not only in Palama but also in other communities. . . Hotels were being built in Waikiki, and downtown Honolulu was changing. The change came to our neighborhood. It was the hallmark of urban renewal, but renewal that left us in the dark, and that's literally what happened.

I watched as the face of Honolulu changed. As a young boy, I witnessed a lot of digging and construction going on along Beretania Street, Aala Street near Aala Park, Kukui Street, and Iwilei. Hundreds if not thousands of people and small businesses were displaced not only for urban renewal, but also by the construction of the H-1 and the H-2 freeways. The 1970s saw the insane rush by corporations to build high-rise hotels in Waikiki, destroying the very uniqueness that attracted visitors there in the first place. So eventually, change came to our neighborhood too. . . There was no room for little people who were always left in the dark and were usually its first victims.

Kokua Hawaii helped me and other residents understand what was happening and why. They helped as best they could. . . They were acting in the best interest of the people in the neighborhood. They saw us as people, not as entities, throw-aways. And they came in with a certain degree of experience.

There was stuff coming out of the ethnic movement, the self-awareness movement in the 1970s—the Black Panthers, SDS, opposition to the Vietnam War. Kokua Hawaii provided a framework to understand what was happening.

There were international tensions back then, the Cold War. It made people question what we all were led to believe maybe was not the truth.

GK: What was the framework?

Virgil: The only viable ideology or perspective that could render any kind of meaning to what was happening on our islands in the world was a class analysis linked to Marxism. It was unfortunately linked to communism—the big "C."

GK: What did you think about that?

Virgil: You know what was funny? People, all the politicians, they cover their mouth at the mention of communism, as if you've got tuberculosis. But what did Richard Nixon do? He opened the doors to trade with Communist China.

GK: Yes.

Virgil: He went to them. He dealt with the big C, right?

GK: Yes, he did.

Virgil: Talk about hypocrisy.

GK: When did you first meet members of Kokua Hawaii?

Virgil: I think it was when I was attending Damien High School. There was a young lady who came and did a presentation. I think she was Hawaiian. She made a presentation on Kalama Valley. She showed a slide show and film and she talked about it, and it was controversial because it raised the question, "What is happening to our city and our state based on what was happening in Kalama Valley?" I'll always remember that. When the so-called eviction occurred in our neighborhood, I made the connection between the dots.

GK: Could you describe the residents and what they were facing?

Virgil: The residents had full-time jobs, family obligations and personal needs. They had lives, in other words, so it was a further burden to one and all to worry about the strain produced by the threat of an eviction. We met at night at a common agreed upon time.

GK: Where did you meet?

Virgil: Once in a while, we met on the third floor of an apartment building on Hikina Lane. There was an end apartment that had burned down, and all that was left was the concrete floor and some walls. No roof. I referred to it as "The Penthouse." Sometimes, we would hold meetings outdoors in Hikina Lane or in people's homes. It kind of fluctuated, depending on the number of people. As interest about the eviction developed in the community, we started to meet at the cafeteria at Kaiulani Elementary School.

GK: It started growing?

Virgil: Correct. It started growing, because as we uncovered more information. We found out it was going to affect not only Hikina and Akepo, but it was going to essentially affect the whole census tract. As we were trying to find out more information and the source of the eviction, the residents including I came to understand the bureaucracy was not there to assist people but to confuse any honest inquiry and dissuade involvement in the political process. Public involvement was only an after-thought. We were considered a nuisance.

GK: Who else did you seek out for help?

Virgil: One of the organizations that initially helped us was the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii. Their attorneys came from a different kind of mindset, essentially from a legal point of view that involved tenants' rights. So they helped us. But you got to understand

from my vantage point, and from the way I was looking at it, too, the attorneys wanted us to compromise. They wanted us to cave in. Don't rock the boat. Try to get the best deals you can. They wanted us to play ball.

GK: How did you feel?

Virgil: You know what? I grew up in that neighborhood. I had a feeling for the neighborhood. You can't compromise with those type of people. . . I always remember that meeting with the college administrator, and he was kind of vicious, toward me as a teenager. . . This guy's an educator? My God, he's an educator of a community college, and he's kind of talking viciously and domineeringly down toward me? I didn't feel he should get away with this. Ironically, the faculty at Honolulu Community College did come out in support of us.

GK: How did things change?

Virgil: The University of Hawaii was a complex bureaucracy with state, city and county interests. You also have trade unions quietly vying for work, and different campuses competing for dollars, including the move to develop a West Oahu campus. I think because the whole resistance to the expansion of Honolulu Community College created a bad image, the attention began focusing elsewhere and the focus shifted, in my opinion. . . The proposed expansion fell from favor.

GK: When do you think they put the brakes on the proposed expansion?

Virgil: I think it happened in 1974 when we had a meeting with then Governor George Ariyoshi.

GK: Really?

Virgil: Yeah, we went into the governor's office—myself, my mom, Ray, and a couple other residents. I think that's when he decided to have a moratorium, because the issue was becoming too costly for them. Also, as best as I can remember, George Ariyoshi's parents had a laundry, and George would deliver laundry to residents when he was growing up. When he was running as the lieutenant governor with Governor Burns, to secure votes, he went door to door delivering laundry to customers, including us. I remember he'd give us a political brochure, or just deliver the laundry.

During that meeting in his office, he called my mother by her name, "Hello, Mrs. Demain." To his credit, he remembered the old loyalties. He wasn't that coldblooded. He didn't forget his roots, and so that's why I think it influenced him to hold a moratorium, until such time the evictions were held off and things could be resolved. We also had to deal with the private land owners, and we didn't know what was going on, because from our area, there were different property owners. . . Who knows what kind of deal they made?

GK: Did any of the residents get evicted because of the expansion?

Virgil: No. But some people left because of the initial notice. We did slow down the expansion. The cottages and apartments were old, and without maintaining them, they're going to implode. People are going to move. My family stayed until 1981, then we moved on. The cottage where we grew up is now part of the college, where carpentry students learn building skills. Tenants in Hikina Lane moved on. There was a couple of incinerators in operation, and it wasn't healthy. Eventually, the city closed down the incinerators.

GK: So what good came out of the eviction fight?

Virgil: I think people learned. They learned what is community. The people who were involved in organizing learned how to connect the dots and get involved in other struggles. They themselves understood it was not just our own eviction struggle going on at that time, but also other people's as well. We obtained a sense of self respect, a sense of empowerment and dignity as a citizen and human being.

This is supposed to be a so-called democracy. You know? It's a republican form of government. And the very ones who were treating us that way, who've given us the run-around at times, slamming the door or giving us the cold shoulder, were people in authority.

GK: You mentioned there were other communities facing eviction at that time. What communities?

Virgil: There were communities on old Vineyard and Young Street in Honolulu, Ota Camp in Waipahu, Heeia-Kea and Waiahole Valley in Windward Oahu, and the sugar plantation in Ewa.

GK: Did you have a chance to visit any people in these communities and how did you get to meet the residents?

Virgil: I met a lot of them through Ray, Joy Ahn and other Kokua Hawaii members. Regardless of their political ideology, their sacrifice without pay or any other material compensation cannot ever be repaid. No one else stood shoulder to shoulder with us facing ridicule, harassment and potential arrest. Whatever gains we made came about because such people cared.

GK: So I guess you didn't feel alone in terms of fighting evictions?

Virgil: Yes. I was also invited to talk and share what was happening in my community. We had all these so called brush fires that were happening in the islands. The sad thing was the newspapers didn't even report about them most of the time. . . That's the reason why we organized and later took to the streets because the press wasn't giving us any kind of coverage unless it was noticeable. Those were momentous times for all of us who were

involved. It was indeed a sad and worrisome time where tenants moved from confusion to finding their personal conviction. Nothing comes without cost. It was a time when we put aside our own personal needs to invest in the future.

GK: How did you take to the streets?

Virgil: Well, one of the biggest protests was a joint effort among evicted communities at Waiahole-Waikane valleys. It became the focal point. We actually joined in the occupation of the valleys. Ray and I and other Kokua Hawaii members camped in this field. People from Chinatown and Ota Camp came too. By my estimate there were close to 200 supporters camped in the fields. Anyway, what happened was word came down that there was a potential threat of eviction that night, so Kamehameha Highway was blocked.

GK: Wow. How did that happen?

Virgil: You see, that support couldn't have happened if we hadn't gone out and made contact with people in communities facing eviction months in advance. Back then, we didn't have emails and text messages. We did it the old fashioned way. We did it by foot, by phone call, by knocking on the doors, leafleting, posting and then we'd do it again. Organizing consumed hours, consumed days; it consumed your frame of thinking. For a young man just out of high school and trying to find his way through this life, all that happened was really a learning experience which forever altered the direction of my life.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with
Robert Fernandez

Robert Fernandez
Photo by Ed Greevy

Robert "Bobby" Fernandez was the president of the Waiahole-Waikane Community Association during a period when hundreds of farmers and residents were threatened with eviction and alliances were formed with various communities and groups, including Kokua Hawaii members to stop the eviction in the mid-to-late 1970s. Gov. George Ariyoshi eventually stepped in to successfully purchase 600 acres of land in Waiahole Valley to keep it as farmland in perpetuity. Fernandez, who still lives in Waiahole Valley, was interviewed by Gary T. Kubota on April 11, 2017, at Burger King in Kaneohe.

GK: Good morning, Bobby. When were you born and where did you grow up?

RF: I was born in 1946. I grew up in Waiahole Valley.

GK: Who were your parents?

RF: My dad was Sylvester Sonny Fernandez, and my mother was Eleanor Hoke Fernandez. I'm the youngest of five, and I'm nine years away from my youngest sister. So, I was a surprise package.

GK: And what did your dad do?

RF: My father used to work for Hawaiian Electrical Products. He was a sales person, and my mom worked for Honolulu Electric as a clerk.

GK: How did they get to live in Waiahole?

RF: My father was part of a family that was left land by his mother and he was the only one that homesteaded it and kept up with paying the taxes and eventually accumulated the property from the rest of the siblings. So that was our home.

GK: How far back did the land ownership go with your family?

RF: I'm not sure, probably early 1900s or something like that. I'm not exactly sure when they acquired the property. But I guess my great-grandfather ran cattle in Waiahole. I don't think they got it through the Great Mahele or anything like that. I'm pretty sure they bought the property from somebody. The land was a part of the bigger family parcel so we still have cousins who own their property in Waiahole.

GK: So, when the eviction notices came for the farmers, you owned the property. What was the situation?

RF: Yes. We supported the farmers and residents who didn't own the land. We also had plans in case evictions did take place, where families could actually camp on our property at that time, because the majority of the land was owned by the daughter of Lincoln McCandless, Elizabeth Marks, and the majority of the people were McCandless tenants and faced eviction.

GK: What made you side with the farmers and residents facing eviction?

RF: I was born and raised as a young boy running around, was treated so well by everybody that lived there, so, they, all my neighbors, had a special meaning to me.

GK: How did your involvement in the eviction fight evolve?

RF: About two years, maybe a year and a half before the eviction notices, I guess, to kind of put everything together and find out who knows what, we all got the neighbors together and had a meeting at the Waiahole Elementary School cafeteria. Through that, I guess is how we first started to actually find out what rumors were true and which weren't. As I recall, that's how the Waiahole-Waikane Association evolved. That was the start of it.

GK: Were you working with anyone?

RF: One thing I really need to mention is that I was involved with the KEY Project in Kahaluu, and I became a good friend with Bob Nakata. He called to my attention the possible residential development that was going to change the land use in Waiahole. So, that kind of really started off the ball rolling too.

GK: Could you describe Waiahole and the farmers?

RF: We had several farmers. One of the farmers that farmed up the road—his operation was mostly flowers and ti leaves, then we had the Tsuhako family who raised taro and sweet potatoes. We had the Matayoshis and the Teruyas who are Okinawan farmers. Next to the main highway, there were several taro patches, irrigated taro patches that used the ancient Hawaiian auwai systems. The taro was farmed by the Kaya family. There was a lot of farming in Waiahole. I mean there were several other farmers involved, exact number I can't tell you right now, but I could with a little bit more research or remembering.

GK: So there was a mixture of ethnicities in Waiahole?

RF: There was a big mixture. I think we took a survey and I can say that I think maybe 46 percent was Hawaiian and part Hawaiian, of the people that lived in the valley. You've got to remember that we had all different ethnicities—a lot of Okinawan farmers and they were in the community a long, long time. So the farming community kind of evolved. I remember my dad saying that before my time, they grew taro and they even grew rice and also pineapple within the valley. Times change.

GK: Can you describe the situation facing Windward Oahu residents?

RF: Everybody was afraid. There was a general plan that would turn the Windward side into the second city. Plans were already drawn up. Part of the plan was to make a power plant in Heeia-Kea. There was going to be a power plant, and there was a move to get the people that resided there evicted. A deep draft harbor would be built in Kaneohe Bay. They were going to dredge it all up. Along with that came housing development. All the land that the large private land owners were sitting on for years would become valuable. The next step for the landowners was to get the Land Use Commission to change the zoning from agriculture to urban.

GK: Can you describe how people felt about the plan to change the valley to residential development and their thoughts on it?

RF: The greatest fear of the majority of the community was that they were going to get evicted. When we started, some felt like, there's no way we can fight these guys because they own the land and they can do whatever they want with the land 'cuz it's theirs. Some members of the community had been evicted before. They relocated to Waiahole. One particular guy, Edward Spencer, said, "I'm not going to move any more," and he pretty much put his money where his mouth was and he donated $1,000 to the association when we first started so. . . .

GK: Wow.

RF: He's not going to move any more. He was in Kalama Valley, got kicked out. He was in Kalihi Valley and got kicked out. So now he's in Waiahole, and he's not going to get kicked out anymore. . . He's a really, really tough old man. He grew mostly ti leaves. The family is still there and retained their place. You had all the fears of eviction but with all the support we started gaining, people started changing their minds. The community really gained support from a lot of people who said they were going to fight it to the end, and they did, supporting the fight against the eviction.

GK: Kokua Hawaii organizers along with the Ethnic Studies group were providing support at that time?

RF: Yes, Kokua Hawaii members were a great influence. They came down to support us. I

really especially liked Soli Niheu. Soli and Joy Ahn were there for the same reason—and that was to support us. They provided a lot of help to us. Also, their friend Pete Thompson, and all the people from the University of Hawaii's Ethnic Studies group. They taught us a lot. They actually came down and stayed in the valley. Of course, I was skeptical in the beginning. We're more conservative. But, they taught us a lot about how to stand strong and how to protest. They were aces in that area, and we learned a lot from them. I think, it really paid off.

GK: Did you ever get to meet presidents of the other community associations who had faced or were facing evictions?

RF: A lot of community groups rallied, and we all got together. There were a lot of different groups. We talked with Pete Tagalog of Ota Camp in Waipahu. There was Ricky and Jerry Kaluiwa involved in Heeia-Kea. I kind of admired Randy Kalahiki and my Auntie Jackie Chong who helped youths at the KEY Canteen. When I became involved in Waiahole, Randy came over and talked with me and supported us. Also Creighton and Kathy Matoon from Punaluu were great allies.

GK: How did that feel?

RF: Well we could use all the support we could get. Although I was skeptical about each group that came to help us as to what was the reasoning behind it. But you know, we wanted support from all different aspects of the community.

I mean I can speak like that now, but back then, I was like, my foot was in my mouth all the time, because I couldn't speak and I couldn't think because I had never ever gone through college or anything, never been a part of a protest. We were super green and super scared of everything. You know, I guess local style, you just lay back. You know what I mean? You don't push your luck. That's the way you know we're taught.

GK: Can you describe what led to Waiahole-Waikane residents and supporters to block Kamehameha Highway, the main highway along the Windward Oahu coastal corridor?

RF: Okay. We had received information authorities were drawing up the papers to evict the people from the valleys, because the people had stopped paying rent to the landlord. The money was all put into the bank, into an escrow account, or a joint fund. This was only after the rents were raised anywhere from a hundred percent to three hundred percent. That's when people really put their foot down and decided to do that. We got word that the sheriffs were going to come to serve eviction notices to the people and to have them evicted. A lot of people, at this time, rallied. Supporters actually occupied the valley. There were a lot of supporters camping out.

GK: What was the plan?

RF: Kokua Hawaii and other outside groups had supporters who were on notice. We had

this planned, that if, in fact, they were going to come and evict us, we and supporters were going to block Kam Highway. We formulated a plan to block Kam Highway, on both sides, on the north end and on the south end of the valley. We had people watching the police and listening on the police frequencies. One of our supporters called, and said, "Hey, they're coming." So, we said, "Okay. We formulated the plan. Let's implement it." So we did. We sent, I think about, seven cars on the north end of Kam Highway. Right by the Waikane Bridge, on the other side, on the Kaneohe end. People just parked their cars and trucks and stuff. Of course, they locked them up, and they completely blocked the road, on both ends. On the Kaneohe side, we stood on a private driveway. There was Mike Hare, who was our attorney representative, myself, Bernie Lam Ho, owner of the property we stood on, and other members of the Waiahole Association.

We just stood there and waited for the cops to come. When they came, the cops were angry. I mean, this one policeman, I remember him distinctly. He was like, "What the------ are you guys doing? Who the ---- do you think you guys are? What the ---- you want me to do? Call the mayor?"

I looked at him, and I said, "Yeah. Call the mayor (Fasi)."

And, he looked at me. He was like, "You got to be kidding me!"

"No. We're not moving nothing till the mayor talks to us."

GK: What happened?

RF: I don't know. When push came to shove, nobody got arrested. Maybe somebody called the mayor? They assured us that there was no eviction going to be taking place that night, or anytime in the future. With that, we cleared the highway. Then, we rallied by the poi factory. Of course, people must have been angry, because it was blocked for one hour, from going, traveling home.

We all stood along the highway, in front of the Waiahole Poi Factory, holding support Waiahole-Waikane signs, thinking people would be angry at us. But the people were going by blasting their horns and tooting at us. It was like, all elated, "Hey, these guys not angry with us. They supporting us!"

GK: Wow.

RF: If it wasn't for the assistance, I mean outside people who came in with knowledge about how to deal with this politically, without being so conservative, as we were, I don't think the eviction fight would have been successful. I mean we learned a lot. I was never involved in a picket line in my life. The way it was portrayed to us, they reasoned with us that we did have rights to do this. It could never be fought with money or legal rights. But, it could be fought politically. That's what we all centered on. It took a long time, but we learned.

GK: What did you learn?

RF: We planned every demonstration we had to try to foresee things so that, "If a guy gets out of hand while demonstrating, what are we going to do?"

We didn't want anybody to get arrested, so we had our own marshals within our picket line. If somebody got out of hand or overly emotional, we would grab them, and we would take care of them. It was really good. Nobody in the valley would think about this stuff, but I think the outside supporters like Kokua Hawaii did. Throughout all of our demonstrations, no one got arrested.

GK: That was part of the training in Kokua Hawaii, so that there wouldn't be any violence.

RF: Yeah. That's the major thing that we stressed. I mean, I even had the vice squad, I mean the police, come and talk to me, try to pick my brain to find out what's coming up. Of course, I never give them anything. I just listened to them.

GK: Did you ever go up to the state Capitol in Honolulu to demonstrate?

RF: Oh yes. We went to the Capitol several times and to Elizabeth Marks' residence too. We walked right on her property, right through her driveway. Then, we came outside, and we just picketed.

GK: How'd that go?

RF: Her neighbors loaned us their rubbish can lids. You know, those days, the rubbish cans were all metal. They'd go, "Hey, yeah. Take that and bang on this!" I guess some of them didn't care for her, either. Anyway, we had a lot of support. We went to schools, and talked to students about the struggle. We talked to several groups and held several press conferences and interviews.

GK: Yeah. So how did the residents react to threats of eviction?

RF: When push did come to shove, actually some of them did leave. We tried to talk them out of it. I remember this one incident where a family actually had all their possessions packed and loaded in the back of truck. When somebody told us about this family moving out, I took off down there to talk to them.

GK: What did you tell family members?

RF: I told them if push comes to shove and we do get evicted, we'll help you move that stuff but please stay now. Until today, they're still there.

GK: Great!

RF: That was a victory. Of course, you couldn't reason with some people. They were afraid, understandably, so they moved out.

GK: What did you do?

RF: One of the things that we did was, when the people moved out, we tried to fill those houses. There were only a couple of these instances. And guess what? Those people who moved in got the lease after the eviction struggle.

GK: And how do you feel now?

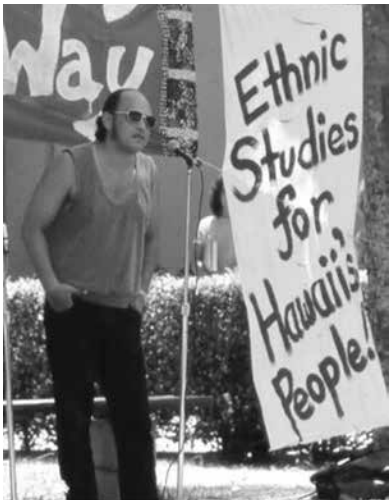
RF: The trend still continues.

GK: Yeah?

RF: Because you're still dealing with the state. The state doesn't know how to deal with the tenants. If you know the way government is run in Hawaii, we're not at the top of everybody's list so it's still a battle. Although people do have long-term leases, which is a plus. Thank God the state did accumulate 600 acres so people are still farming and still living in their places. Of course, most of the old timers, they're all gone now. Their relatives remain to practice and maintain their lifestyle.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Raymond Ako



Raymond "Buddy" Ako
Photo courtesy of the James Young family

Raymond "Buddy" Ako, an associate of Kokua Hawaii, served as the director of the Hauula Youth Center and also as an organizer joining coalitions to advance the causes of minorities. He was a member of negotiating groups to save the University of Hawaii-Manoa Ethnic Studies Program in 1972 and to help stop the eviction of Waiahole-Waikane residents in the late 1970s. Ako was interviewed on February 23, 2017, at Burger King in Kaneohe.

GK: Good morning, Buddy. When were you born, and where were you raised?

BA: I was born in 1938 and was raised on Waikalua Road in Kaneohe. My dad James worked as a civilian supply clerk at the Marine Base when it was a naval air station. My mom, Lei, was a house wife.

GK: How did you end up living in Hauula?

BA: My mother and father divorced when I was born, actually. So my mother got custody of me, remarried, and they moved to Hauula.

GK: Where'd you go to high school?

BA: I went to Kahuku High School.

GK: Can you describe the area?

BA: There was a lot of sugarcane. Kahuku was a sugar plantation town. Kahuku was the place that you went to have fun. There was a theater, restaurants, high school, hospital and the sugar mill operated by Alexander & Baldwin on land leased from Campbell Estate.

GK: After you graduated from high school, what happened?

BA: I joined the Air Force. That was in 1956. I served four years in the Air Force and got out in 1960. I went to work for the Air National Guard as a personnel clerk for a few years

before I became a policeman in 1963 for several years, then I worked for a household moving company and attended a church college at Laie.

GK: How did you get involved in community organizing?

BA: In 1969, I began hanging around with Mervyn Chang in Hauula. He lived at Pokiwai Place. There was Mackey Catania and Ko Hayashi. Kokua Hawaii's printing press was located at Mervyn's place. There was another guy. . . Park?

GK: Linton Park

BA: Linton Park. Yeah, Linton Park, it was enjoyable sitting with him.

GK: What happened?

BA: You sit around all day with them and then, I slowly began to listen to their stories and, um, began to get a different outlook on life, more so a different outlook on what happened to Hawaiians. So much wrong was done to us historically that we never talked about.

GK: How did it make you feel?

BA: I began to see the light. It made me ask a lot of questions like why did it take me till I was about 28, 29 years old, why did it take me that long to understand the true history of what happened to us Hawaiians. . . I was growing up to be super American, a patriotic American. It really turned over my entire outlook on life. I regretted that I arrested Hawaiians. I went through that whole regretful part of my life. But it is what it is. That was the beginning of my so-called, "being radicalized."

GK: What was the image you had of yourself and other Hawaiians?

BA: The image I had and many people had of Hawaiians was that they were dumb, stupid and lazy. That's it. I was from a very poor family on Waikalua Road. We still had our house when I was growing up, but it was broken down.

GK: Did you speak Hawaiian?

BA: We spoke no Hawaiian at all, just bits and pieces. My Chinese grandfather raised me up after my parents divorced. My grandaunts and granduncles spoke Hawaiian among themselves but not within our household.

GK: Why?

BA: I don't know. When you're a kid, you don't question those things. I was just intent on learning English and going through the standard educational process.

GK: How did that leave you feeling?

BA: I didn't want to be Hawaiian. I wanted to be American—study hard, learn about George Washington chopping down that cherry tree. You know what I'm saying here?

GK: Yeah.

BA: Then I went further to get Americanized when I joined the military, and you double that patriotism by being a cop.

GK: So how did you reconcile that?

BA: It was really hard, facing friends with my new ideas about Hawaiian rights and taking back the land. My mother used to tease me when she saw me, "Got any new land for us today, son?"

GK: (Laughs)

BA: I got terribly ostracized when I went to the dark side (laughs), so to speak. But I felt we're not gonna win everything but we're gonna try to win something.

GK: So what did you do?

BA: I reconciled my past by being Hawaiian all over again, and helping where I could.

GK: So what did you do?

BA: Eventually, I heard about how a youth development program in Hauula was looking for help. It was run by HCAP, Honolulu Community Action Program. So, anyway, I got involved in that, and through that effort I met Pae Galdeira who had a youth program in Waimanalo and Randy Kalahiki with his youth program in Kahaluu. We created this Waimanalo, Kahaluu, Hauula network of youth clubs.

GK: Describe to me the youths in Hauula?

BA: The youths in our Hauula had this stigma, very, very negative reputation about being bad guys, tough guys. But through the community action program and OEO, Office of Economic Opportunity, we are able to get funding to create these programs for at-risk kids, including the dropout kids. We tried to help the kids get their GED or something like that.

GK: How did you do that?

BA: We organized these kids into a recreational activity—a pool table and ukulele playing, then broadened our efforts taking into account all of the elements that go into making

them a better person—educational classes, such as how to be interviewed for a job. You teach them what is right and wrong.

GK: Hmmm. Not easy. Did you use your experience as a former police officer?

BA: Yeah. I used to tell them, "Listen, you guys wanna know how to steal? I'll teach you how because I used to be a cop. I'll teach how." So, I just throw it back at them. I'd tell them, "Don't be foolish." I had Randy and Pae Galdeira supporting me in this whole effort.

GK: When did you get involved in community activism?

BA: I think my first protest was in Hauula when the laborer's union was going to put a housing project here in 1969. This is land the laborer's union owned. Many in the community, including myself, felt it should go first to Hauula residents who were members of the laborer's union, rather than opening it up to the entire union.

GK: Yes. What happened?

BA: It never got built. They couldn't get the proper zoning. There were repercussions. Later on, when I was unemployed, I went to the laborer's union and tried to sign up, but a union man said, "Ako, no, you cannot join this union."

GK: How did this make you feel?

BA: I knew there would be backlash to all of that. I could live with that. But I could not live without being me.

GK: What happened as far as jobs?

BA: Randy, Pae and I were slowly building our network of community action. Pretty soon, I got hired as the Windward district manager for HCAP for six years starting 1973.

GK: What was your next protest?

BA: It involved saving the Ethnic Studies Program at the University of Hawaii-Manoa in 1972.

GK: Why?

BA: I was completely turned off against that whole university structure—the ivory tower. But I saw a need for more Hawaiians to be involved in it. Somebody contacted me.

GK: I did, after talking with Kokua Hawaii leaders Soli Niheu and Joy Ahn. I called Randy Kalahiki and Ota Camp Makibaka Association President Pete Tagolog to help us as well. We relied upon people in Ethnic Studies to provide research to help us fight

the evictions and provide education about ethnic history. There was a quantum shift in the protest movement on campus in 1972 because community leaders were present and participating for the first time in a UH sit-in. You were then the director of the Hauula Youth Center?

BA: Yes, the sit-in needed to happen. Anyway, I took my kids, and I told them, we're gonna go up there to learn something. We're gonna take it to a different level, I told them. Let's go up, just observe, and see if we can help in any way. I said, mostly they want the bodies. We'll like at least wake them up and say, "Wow yeah, they got a lot of guys up here."

GK: There were more than 300 that I counted and the numbers were still growing. Well, I guess you looked, then took action to save Ethnic Studies, 'cause you were on the negotiating table. (Chuckles) I remember the Ota Camp Association brought food to support the protest. I guess you also had a hand in helping to feed the protesters and their supporters.

BA: We had support from all over. University of Hawaii anthropologist Tom Gladwin provided the money to feed everybody in Bachman Hall, at least to make stew and rice or chili and rice and sandwiches.

GK: Yeah.

BA: If you don't provide food, you can't keep the crowd; they're going home.

GK: We not only kept the crowd. It began growing, especially around dinner time. (Laughter)

BA: Yeah. Then after the negotiations during the sit-in, I became the chairman of the People's Advisory Committee appointed to determine the future of Ethnic Studies. It did produce some positive educational results.

GK: I remember besides Randy and you, Paige Barber of group called "The Hawaiians" was also at the sit-in representing her group.

BA: Yes, Barber was part of that. She was part of a group of moderate Hawaiians—Winona Rubin, Gard Kealoha, and Pae Galdeira and other active Hawaiians at that time. Eventually, we controlled the board at Honolulu Community Action Program (HCAP) to create programs.

GK: The Hawaiians organization also had some success at increasing the number of houses built on Hawaiian Homesteads?

BA: Yes, the Hawaiians organization went after the Hawaiian Homestead issue too. The state was building only about 35 homes a year, and The Hawaiians wanted more to be

built. So we began to organize all the Hawaiian homesteads on all islands. Eventually, 3,000 to 5,000 people marched to the Capitol. . . Anyway, Ariyoshi eventually appointed Georgiana Padeken and Winona Rubin to the Hawaiian Homes Commission. The next year, the number of homes went from 35 homes to about 295 homes.

GK: You were also involved in protesting the planned eviction of people at Waiahole-Waikane?

BA: I did. There's a picture of me with a little boy on my shoulder. . . (laughter) blocking the road to Waiahole-Waikane. Anyway, we got asked to participate in that.

GK: How did you feel about supporting Waiahole-Waikane tenants?

BA: In the beginning, Randy, Pae and I were very, very reluctant because of the radical elements involved in the protest. There was talk of physical confrontation, and we didn't want that. We thought negotiation was the better thing. Bobby Fernandez and Sei Serakaku were the community leaders. The Hawaiians organization advised us, "Stay out of there. We got our own fight." The residents asked us to intervene because they knew we knew Gov. George Ariyoshi and he was very, very supportive of all our Hawaiian activities.

GK: Who knew Gov. Ariyoshi?

BA: Pae Galdeira and Randy Kalahiki.

GK: So, they supported Gov. George Ariyoshi during the elections?

BA: They supported George all the way. So, George was willing to talk to us. We had visited him previously about Hawaiian Homestead issues. When Gov. Burns died in office, Ariyoshi took over and he was more favorable.

GK: What was the situation back then?

BA: The landowner, Elizabeth McCandless, refused to meet with Waiahole-Waikane leaders Bobby Fernandez and Sei Serakaku.

GK: My understanding is that this happened a couple of weeks after hundreds of Waiahole-Waikane residents and their supporters blocked Kamehameha Highway leading into the valley for a couple of hours. What happened?

BA: So, somebody got a hold of Randy. We went to our Hawaiians organization. Again, Gary, nobody wanted to get involved. It's too radical for us. But we had a very nice meeting up in the valley. The Rev. Bob Nakata mediated that meeting, and the residents agreed to let the Hawaiians such as us meet with the governor. And we met with the governor and Mrs. McCandless.

GK: How did it go?

BA: We had a long session there. We had our own strategy. The only thing we wanted to do was to lift the evictions, and go back to the table, which she had refused to do. And the eviction notices were already served and had been burned by the residents. The ones at the meeting were Pae, Randy, Gard Kealoha, Winona Rubin, and me. There was also attorney Alan Kay, who represented Elizabeth Marks, and later became a federal judge. He was fairminded and compassionate. He's retired now. He set up a meeting with Mrs. McCandless at the governor's place. And we went there, and we talked it over.

She was very bitter. . . The talks went back and forth. Our strategy was to get her to lift the eviction. We asked for 90 days, thinking 30 days was what we wanted. She was eventually willing to lift the eviction for 30 days.

GK: What happened after that?

BA: After this meeting, Ariyoshi created this blue-ribbon committee and said he'd meet with us after talking with the committee. He never told us who he was going to meet with. He preferred to keep that to himself.

GK: Then what happened?

BA: Ariyoshi decided he was gonna buy whole valley. He found the money to do it. So, Ariyoshi settled it. But I like to think we had a hand in that. We negotiated the lifting of the evictions that gave Ariyoshi the time to figure something out—which he did.

GK: Randy Kalahiki was also involved in helping to provide legal rights for Native Hawaiians. How did that come about?

BA: A lot of Hawaiian problems required some kind of legal solution—fighting evictions, fighting against quiet title actions to take Hawaiian ancestral lands. There were no resources to carry the legal fight.

For a time, the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii became a way to do it. Through HCAP, through our district councils, we were allowed to elect representatives to the Legal Aid board. And that's how we started. Pretty soon, all the island's community action programs began to get board members elected. And eventually, we got enough of the votes to kind of take over that whole board. And so, Pae Galdeira became the chairman of the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii. Johnny Waihee (former governor of Hawaii) was one of the attorneys. Mel Masuda was one of the attorneys.

Then, Nixon got elected president. He cut off a lot of the HCAP money. He cut off a lot of the OEO money. Because you know, Gary, politically we were organizing the poor people and their strength in numbers began to increase, and the ones in power nationally and statewide. Welfare rights was our number one priority. Hawaiian rights was our priority.

State legislators balked when they saw native rights, including land and water rights. They wanted to see Legal Aid involved in eviction, divorce, and abuse cases—that kind of stuff. They didn't want Legal Aid to get involved in the political arena. So slowly our money began to dry up.

GK: So what did the Randy and others do?

BA: Gail Prejean, Randy Kalahiki, we started the effort to create our own nonprofit legal corporation. That's how the Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation was founded. We got Native American help. John Echohawk was in charge of the Native American Rights Fund. John came down here. We met with him. He gave us the starter money. He went to all the major foundations, Kellogg, all the big guys to get money. We started by getting grants for the Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation.

GK: What do you think of the Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation today?

BA: Look at it today. It's a separate. It's a pretty powerful legal arm for the Hawaiians.

GK: How do you feel about all of the changes that came about during the start of the Hawaiian Renaissance?

BA: If they want to label it the "Hawaiian Renaissance," that's fine. The way I looked at it is we tried to address the problems facing Hawaiians and other people and contribute to solving them, and things began turning around.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

James Ng

James Ng
Photograph courtesy of Ng family

Native Hawaiian James Ng had been a member of the California motorcycle street gang Gypsy Jokers, but had left the group to return home to Hawaii with his wife Roseanne. After meeting with fellow Kamehameha School alumnus Soli Niheu, Ng decided to join Kokua Hawaii in its fight against the eviction of farmers and Native Hawaiians in Kalama Valley and was arrested on May, 11, 1971. Ng was interviewed by Gary T. Kubota on March 6 and March 7, 2017, via telephone from his home in Bainbridge Island, Washington.

GK: When and where were you born?

JN: I was born in 1943 at St. Francis Hospital in Honolulu.

GK: Where were you raised?

JN: I was raised in Nanakuli and later in Kaneohe by my parents James and Catherine Ng. My dad worked as an electrician at Pearl Harbor.

GK: So, when you're growing up, what schools did you go to?

JN: In the beginning, I never went to school that much. I went to the beach. So, my parents decided that I should be going to a school in town in Honolulu. So, they enrolled me in St. Theresa Catholic School in Liliha.

GK: Sounds like a far commute?

JN: Yeah. We were living in Nanakuli. I would wake up early in the morning, 4:30 a.m. My dad would drop me off at St. Theresa, then drive to work at Pearl Harbor. Eventually, we moved from Hawaiian Homestead in Nanakuli to Kailua, then bought a house in Kaneohe. I went to St. Anne's School in Kaneohe. Then later, I went to Kamehameha High School in the 1960s.

GK: Did you know any persons who later became members of Kokua Hawaii?

JN: I knew Soli Niheu. We were in the same ROTC company together at Kamehameha High School. He and I were PFCs (Private First Class).

GK: ROTC was mandatory for students?

JN: Yeah, it was. Soli later became a non-commissioned officer. Later, after graduation from Kamehameha, I moved to California and attended San Jose City College, then San Jose State. Guess who's there too?

GK: Soli?

JN: He was living with his brother David. He was ahead of me in classes. He was studying business administration. The next time I saw him was on Oahu after I got married to my second wife Roseanne. We decided to move to Hawaii, just two months before the Kalama Valley arrest. We were both living in Kaneohe. We were thinking of going back to California, when I ran into Soli at the airport.

GK: What happened?

JN: He asked me what I was doing, and I told him I was just about, going to get on the jet airplane and go back to California. And he says to me, "No, you cannot. We're in Kalama Valley. We're helping Hawaiians and this guy George Santos. He's a pig farmer. They want to evict him to build high-end homes. You should come in the valley with us."

GK: So what did you say?

JN: I asked Soli, "Do the farmers own the land?" He said, "No, it's not the point. It's Bishop Estate land, but Bishop Estate is displacing a lot of people." And I had relatives that were displaced by Bishop Estate. That happened in Waimanalo in the late 1950s and early 1960s. I mean the Bishop Estate was set up to help educate Hawaiians. Yet they were kicking out Hawaiians on the land.

GK: (Chuckles)

JN: So anyway, he tells me how to get to the valley. The entrance is on the opposite side of Sandy Beach. And I said, "OK."

GK: Right.

JN: I think it was Mother's Day, we went in, and they were having a big luau by George's house. The luau was at Moose Lui's house.

GK: Cool.

JN: The normal road was blocked by cops. We got in through side trails. Some guys came

out on dirt bikes, and I got on one. And Roseanne got on the other. They packed us into the valley. The next morning, the cops were there. They arrested all the demonstrators, all the Kokua Hawaii people.

GK: How were you both arrested?

JN: Roseanne didn't want to go up the ladder on the roof, so she stayed on the porch. I went up on the ladder with Ed Ching.

GK: What was your understanding about why you were getting arrested?

JN: We were just against local people being displaced. They had no place to go. We decided we're gonna help fight for their residence in there.

GK: How did you feel?

JN: I didn't like seeing local Hawaiian people being displaced. I saw a lot of that going on. It was just a class issue at that time. I realized that being younger that if you were poor in Hawaii, you were at the mercy of the rich, especially big landowners.

GK: At one point, I know you were with some kind of biker gang or biker club or something. What was that about?

JN: Yeah, in San Jose, at that time, it was the rival club of the Hell's Angels. We were called the "Gypsy Jokers."

GK: How big was it?

JN: We were the second largest bike gang in California, besides the Hell's Angels.

GK: How did you fall into that?

JN: Well, I bought a motorcycle, and I ran into a guy who lived down the road from me in Santa Clara. He introduced me to another guy who was in the Gypsy Jokers, and they helped me rebuild my motorcycle. There were some Hawaiians I knew who were in the Gypsy Jokers.

GK: Once you were in Kalama Valley, how did you feel?

JN: At first, I was kinda skeptical about getting in there. I didn't know how we were gonna get out if the police were blocking the way to keep people out.

GK: Were you afraid of getting arrested?

JN: (Laughing) Oh, I've been arrested before. No, I wasn't afraid of getting arrested. I

figured it was gonna be inevitable.

GK: Did you get a chance to talk to residents?

JN: We talked with Moose Lui, Black and Anne Richards. Moose was explaining to us why the police were out front, blocking the entrance and we talked it over. There was a luau. I was kinda hungry for Hawaiian food.

GK: Did you see Soli?

JN: Roseanne and I finally saw him that night. He introduced us to George Santos. George was nonstop talk about his fight with Bishop Estate.

GK: Did you meet Joy Ahn in Kalama Valley? What did you think of her?

JN: Yeah, Roseanne and I did. Soli took us to meet her because she was an alumnus of Kamehameha High School. He said he wanted me to meet his sister that was a little older than us but fighting for the same cause. So, I met Joy Ahn that night.

GK: Did you know she was a former congressional aide to Patsy Mink and a teacher at Waianae High School?

JN: Yeah. It made me think if someone like her was there, you knew the issue wasn't just some Portuguese pig farmer's personal vendetta against Bishop Estate. It had to be a bigger issue.

GK: Where were you when you got arrested?

JN: I was on the top of the roof facing the police officers. In fact, one of the police officers was a 1959 graduate of Kamehameha. He recognized me, and I recognized him.

GK: Did he say anything?

JN: It was kinda hard. He was just motioning like, "What the hell are you doing up there?" (Chuckles)

GK: Then what happened?

JN: I remember we began singing the Kamehameha School Alma Mater. I thought it was ironic. Here we were singing the Alma Mater song of the school that Bishop Estate funded, and we were against the officials of Bishop Estate.

GK: What did you think about the arrest itself?

JN: Just the night before, I asked them what would they charge us with if they arrested

us? They said trespassing, a misdemeanor, so it didn't bother me about being arrested.

GK: After the arrest and the newspaper articles, did your mom and dad say anything to you?

JN: (Laughter) Oh, yeah. They were upset. "What the hell are you doing and getting arrested for? I thought you were all through with that kind of stuff." (Laughter) Because riding with the motorcycling club, I was in and out of jail all the time in California.

GK: What did you tell them?

JN: I told them, "I'm. . . I'm going to jail because I don't believe what they're doing is right." They said, "But you know the people of Bishop Estate. You cannot fight City Hall. . . It's not the farmer's land. They're leasing. . . If Bishop Estate is gonna sell the land, well, it's their land to sell, not the people's." My cousin who worked at Halawa Prison told me, "You're fighting a losing battle."

GK: It is a big corporation. Do you think the arrests including yours in Kalama Valley made a difference?

JN: Yeah. It made a difference, especially among Hawaiian people who were becoming involved in land issues.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with
Claire Shimabukuro

Claire Shimabukuro
Photo courtesy of the Shimabukuro family

Claire Shimabukuro was among the 32 people arrested in Kalama Valley on Oahu Island, protesting the eviction of Native Hawaiians, farmers and their supporters on May 11, 1971—an event historians have identified as the start of the Hawaiian Renaissance. It was also a time when Shimabukuro was busy, serving as a member of the steering committee of Kokua Hawaii, the group that organized the eviction resistance and eventually several other eviction resistances in Hawaii. As a member of Kokua Hawaii in the early 1970s, Shimabukuro became a volunteer driver for the federally-funded Honolulu Community Action Program, bringing van loads of eggs, milk and bread at discounted prices to residents living in low-income housing.

Shimabukuro later became a major force in the growth of the Meals On Wheels Program on Oahu, serving as its executive director, coordinating the daily delivery of meals to thousands of Hawaii people in critical need of essential services. The interview took place on October 16, 2016, and November 7, 2016 at her residence in Kaimuki.

GK: Good afternoon, Claire. When and where were you born?

CS: I was born in 1952 in Honolulu.

GK: What did your parents do for a living around that time?

CS: In the early 1950s, my father Thomas Yoshiaki was a manager for the Hawaii Housing Authority, the agency that administered state public housing projects. He was the housing manager for the projects, such as Mayor Wright Housing, Kalihi Valley Housing, Halawa Housing, and Manana Housing in Pearl City. My mother was a social worker for the Department of Social Services. Both had college degrees.

GK: Your parents' level of education was rare for that time. How did that happen?

CS: My mother was the daughter of an Okinawan immigrant whose parents had been

plantation owners in Okinawa. They sent him to Hawaii in 1905 to keep him from being drafted in the Russo-Japanese War. He was a plantation luna (supervisor) and a subcontractor. So, he had money, relatively speaking, but made a lot less than the other lunas. There was still a lot of racism because he was the only one that wasn't haole. But he believed in providing an education for all of his children, including his daughters. So, my mom went to school here, and then she went to Mills College later to do graduate work. Mills College in Northern California was regarded as the Radcliffe of the West. . . She did studies on the cannabis culture and how it was affecting the social fabric of the United States.

GK: What about your father?

CS: My dad came from a very poor family, fatherless and destitute. His father had abandoned them.

GK: How many children were in the family?

CS: There were three—his older sister who left school to work, my father who was the second oldest became the housekeeper, and a younger brother who suffered from heart disease all his life and ended up dying because of malnutrition at the age of 12. They had a very destitute existence. When my grandfather left our family, my grandmother taught herself how to sew and worked as a seamstress in Paia and Kahului. She ended up saving enough to relocate the family from Maui to Honolulu, where there was a better opportunity for business and employment. The family lived on Piikoi Street near Beretania. She also worked as a hotel housekeeper.

GK: So what happened?

CS: They were newly arrived in Honolulu and had no social support system. They fell through the cracks. I found a letter from my father saying that they almost starved to death because my grandmother was taken ill with pneumonia and he and his sister were alone, and they were going to elementary school. And she kept saying, "I'll struggle to stay alive, but you guys have to promise to stay in school." And he said they were crying, and they were trying to do their studies, and the electricity was turned off, and the water was turned off, because she couldn't pay the bills. And he said they survived only through the kindness of the grocery store people who gave them food. . .

GK: Mm-hmm.

CS: They could have been dead but they survived. Needless to say, my grandmother's a very strong person. . . She went through some pretty deep hardships.

GK: So what happened?

CS: President Franklin Roosevelt started his New Deal policies and a lot of new services

were provided, such as the WPA. Roosevelt was the hero of that era.

GK: So there was a turnaround?

CS: There was a lot of optimism during that time. But my father and his friends will tell you that Franklin D. Roosevelt was a great president, but not without the masses of people pushing him to the left. When my father talks about war, he'll say. . . there are two things. Number one is he'll say, "Okay, World War II is a just war because it stopped the rise of fascism. . . But as a social worker, I would think that all conflicts could be settled without war." Many of his generation's defining moment was the civil war in Spain.

GK: What happened to your father?

CS: He went to McKinley High School, and he went to California to work and ended up going to UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles). While attending college, he had to work and live in the kitchen of the place that he washed dishes.

GK: It was rather bold of your father to go to California and to work his way through college?

CS: Well, here's what happened. His father, who had left the family when my father was three, ran away and joined the Salvation Army and ended up in Los Angeles. So as my father was getting to the age when he would graduate from high school, his father wrote to my father and said, "Hi, I want you to come and live with me because then I'll send you to college."

So, my father went. But when he got there, he realized that his father wanted him to work and support him. So, he ended up doing both, supporting his father and himself, and putting himself through school. It was a real disappointment.

GK: How did that go?

CS: The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in December 1941. He left during his last semester in college and was incarcerated in an internment camp at Heart Mountain, Wyoming.

GK: Wow.

CS: It's unclear as to whether he volunteered or was drafted, but he served in the U.S. military and went to Europe with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. He had education, a college education. The military put him in Italy. And he did a lot of the accounting functions as a supply clerk.

GK: How was it in the internment camp for him?

CS: His friend from the internment camp tells me that they had a going-away dinner, and

it was like the Last Supper. They had no money, so they only had a little candle. And they ate, I don't know, pork and beans out of a can. And this was like their farewell to him like they wouldn't see him again. . . My father told me that on the boat going over, there were a lot of local boys that were frightened because it was war. So, he and a couple of other people played music all the way and sang. . . My father would say that World War II, unlike Korea, Vietnam, and the Mid-East conflicts, World War II was a just war. The others are wars of U.S. imperialism.

GK: Did he talk about his own personal experiences during World War II?

CS: When he talked about war or World War II, he won't go into detail about some of the grimmer parts. He comes from a generation like your dad and perhaps a cultural and racial background in which you don't trumpet your stuff. You're very quiet. . . So, when he said, "You know, guys died," I mean, it was an understatement because, generally, the Japanese Americans were slaughtered. . . He wouldn't even talk about his childhood.

GK: What happened after the war?

CS: When he came back to Hawaii, he worked for the Hawaii Housing Authority.

GK: Where did you grow up?

CS: When my parents were first married, they lived in an apartment above a garage in Kaimuki. Then we moved to Halawa Housing because my father, as a government employee and leftist, felt that you cannot manage a public housing project if you don't know what the conditions are like. So, we grew up in public housing.

GK: Wasn't that where Bette Midler once lived?

CS: Yes, I remember the Midler family. Her brother Danny was developmentally disabled. I don't remember Bette. She was a lot older than me. Her mom was a proud woman. I think for some people, Hawaii is a place that galvanizes your resolve. We also lived for part of the year in Waianae where we were on a watermelon farm.

GK: Mm-hmm.

CS: It was also part of this romantic notion of growing your own food and all this stuff. So, my dad and a friend of his from the HGEA (Hawaii Government Employees Union) had a watermelon farm in Lualualei Homestead Road.

GK: Mm-hmm.

CS: I've started kindergarten in Waianae, but the commute for my father was too far. For the most part, I was raised in Halawa Housing and went to Halawa Elementary, then Aiea Elementary, Aiea Intermediate and then went to St. Andrew's Priory in downtown

Honolulu for the last four years. It was then an Episcopal women's school, an English-style system of education founded by Queen Emma.

GK: Why did they decide to send you to St. Andrew's Priory?

CS: My mother didn't tell me until much later. It was because I had an English and Social Studies teacher who hated me. . . I remember students were supposed to do book reports. So, we had to stand up and say what book we chose. And, I stood up and said, "Animal Farm." And in front of the entire class, she said, "Don't you think that's a little too juvenile? Don't you think that's a little too young for this class?" And I was 13 and just puzzled as to why she said that because my uncle Dave, who was a brilliant engineer and a communist and all this stuff, we had discussions about George Orwell's allegory of the failure of communism in the Soviet Union as told through his experiences. I mean, that's the kind of round table discussion we would have at home in Halawa Housing. (Chuckles)

GK: She didn't understand what Animal Farm was about?

CS: She apparently had no clue. So, dumbfounded, I said, "This is an allegory. . . " and remember, I'm 13, and she's the authority figure, ". . . about how communism has failed in the Soviet Union—the arguments being that because some people feel that Orwell had a utopian view of communism and the real world works differently. But others feel that absolute power corrupts absolutely. And so, this is a story about. . . how that works or not, that people can become their opposite like this."

GK: What was her reaction?

CS: Her face just dropped. She became really angry. After I began attending college, my mother told me that the teacher had recommended that I be put into the remedially mentally retarded section in high school. So, my mother decided that rather than fight, she'd look for private schools. She nixed Punahou because she said that is the school of the haole missionary. She didn't want to send me to Catholic schools, because they were religious. She looked at the curricula and she figured that the Priory was the best.

GK: How'd it turn out?

CS: Here's the deal. It was an excellent education. A couple of the teachers had been acolytes of Saul Alinsky, unbeknownst to the administration. The quality of the education was excellent. I hate to say this because I'm gonna sound like a horrible snob, but I didn't like some of my classmates because they were entitled spoiled kids to whom the world was the next Gucci bag or something.

GK: It sounds like you were coming from a different background?

CS: I was going to demonstrations while I was in high school. My parents would give me notes to the Priory, "Please excuse Claire, today. She's going to a demonstration against

the Vietnam War." And so, I would take the note to the school and I would leave. . . I don't know if I told you this but my uncle on my mother's side was blacklisted during the McCarthy era. My mother's brother-in-law had grown up in Texas and was a member of the Communist Party USA. He was a brilliant engineer. He and my aunty took part in the civil rights movement and went to Mexico to meet revolutionary artist Diego Rivera. They also were good friends with John and Marion Kelly. My uncle was fired from his job at IBM because of his political beliefs. My mother was involved as a social worker with A.Q. McElrath and Jack Hall (later to become ILWU leaders). So I kind of grew up in the movement. Kalama Valley was just a progression of that.

GK: So your family supported you.

CS: They were all involved. I was involved with Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the Hawaii Resistance, as a supporter of the Black Panther Party, when I was still in high school and so were my cousins. My cousin Leota went to Cuba and supported Cuban leader Fidel Castro. She was in Cuba at the same time as some of the Kokua Kalama members. It was far more of an international movement than meets the eye. I remember the draft was happening. My cousin Craig was doing anti-war activities and draft resistance counseling. He was also at Wounded Knee and the Chicago Democratic Convention of 1968. My cousin Scott — his brother who had enlisted in the Marines, of all things — ended up helping to found Vietnam Veterans Against the War. So my family culture was the movement.

GK: How was Kokua Hawaii different than these other groups?

CS: The thing about Kalama Valley that was transformative for me was that a lot people from different kinds of movements, including the church, surfers, students, communities, Hawaiians, and other local people came out to join a rebellion. It was the first time I felt like I had my own part of the movement, not just my family's tradition. Kokua Hawaii was an organization that had been in the works for a long time. We had a steering committee. We had different spokespeople for different appropriate situations. We had a collective leadership, and most importantly, we had heart.

GK: Who were your first contacts?

CS: People I've known for years were the first to be arrested in 1970s in Kalama Valley. They were an extension of the anti-war movement in Hawaii. The residents as a whole were not involved then.

GK: So there was a shift in focus?

CS: Yes. Suddenly, we were doing land and housing work. Larry Kamakawiwoole was a close friend of John Witeck and the Rev. Wally Fukunaga who was the reverend at the Off Center Coffeehouse near the University of Hawaii. Larry brought in a number of people,

including Soli Niheu and Edwina Akaka.

GK: How old were you when you were arrested in Kalama Valley?

CS: I turned 19 a few days before the arrest—Kokua Hawaii leader Linton Park and I shared the same birthday in April and we had a celebration in the valley.

GK: How did you reconcile your activities with your educational goals?

CS: I was gonna go to Yale or Bryn Mawr or those kinda places. My mother sat me down and she said, "What's your intention? The school thinks you should be a doctor."

I said, "I think I wanna protest the war and organize, do some organizing with poor communities now."

And she said, "Well then you better not go to those schools for this reason: "If you can't stand and say your principles in the place that you live, then you can't do that work." So, you should probably stay here. So, I went to University of Hawaii. Most of the time, I was just standing at the university's Hemenway Hall in front of a table, collecting money for your—fill in the blank—Puerto Rican relief fund, anti-war things, we had draft counseling things, and ultimately, Kalama Valley.

GK: How did you get from the university to Kalama Valley?

CS: The university was focused on the anti-war movement. I wanted to do more work in the local community. A family friend, an unsung hero, was John Kelly. John was an old red as well from way back. I learned a lot about how you organize from him. He was doing Save Our Surf work and was looking at the impact of sewage itself on surfing sites like Sandy Beach outside Kalama Valley.

GK: Can you describe Kalama Valley as you remember it?

CS: I remember Ehukai place, the road in the valley, and how dry it was. It was almost barren-looking, not a lot of green. By the time Kokua Hawaii occupied the valley, there were five or six houses that were occupied. On the right hand side was Moose Lui's home and the collection of local hippie types who lived with him. Down the road on the left side, George Santos had his house and pens. It was a working pig farm. Further down on the left, Manny Boteilho had a pig farm. And Ah Ching Po's house and pig farm. The Richards family was further down at the end of the road. Black Richards, his father and sister Anne, were scrap metal dealers. Black was also a mechanic.

GK: How did this situation develop?

CS: The pig farmers kept getting pushed out of the valleys on Oahu because of the developments, moving further east, from Kahala, Aina Haina, Niu, and Kuliouou. Kalama

Valley was the last valley. It was a metaphor for what happens to the poor, including many Native Hawaiians. Those who fed the people and did an honest agrarian living were getting pushed further and further and further until there was nowhere else to go.

GK: How was Moose?

CS: Moose was kinda like one of those counter-culture type guys. You know Moose Lui was larger than life. Literally, he was above six feet tall and he had wide girth. He used to always go around with sunglasses. He had long white salt and pepper hair and used to wear a bandana around his head. The young people who were around him were guys that were out of the late 60s. Hawaii is on a slow boat culturally. So, like the Haight-Ashbury culture came to Hawaii probably in the early seventies or something. So, these guys used to hang around in Moose's house and smoke and hung out with their music. You know Bambutu, Danny and Red—those guys looked like the Furry Freak brothers or they looked like Cheech and Chong. So Moose kinda hung out with them. . . He was a guy who just wanted to live his life. You know, he could be said to be an older Hawaii hippie. I mean, culturally speaking, he was Hawaiian in the way that many people were, but there was not a consciousness of, you know, we're Hawaiians.

GK: Mm-hmm.

CS: He had been a heavy equipment operator for Local 3.

GK: You ever talk with them?

CS: I talked to him and his wife Mrs. Lui, a Native Hawaiian woman. She was very grounded. She talked about when they grew up, they grew up with kupuna that spoke Hawaiian. They were told they couldn't speak Hawaiian in school. So she was one of the people in the valley who talked about the decimation of the Hawaiian culture and of the language. She told the story in a matter-of-fact way, "When I was young I used to speak Hawaiian." In fact, my mother, who is Okinawan and grew up in Kohala, spoke Hawaiian.

GK: What do you remember of Black Richards' father?

CS: He wasn't a very large man. He was slender. He was always wearing overalls. You know, the mechanics overalls. He was a scrap metal dealer. He had a crew cut and a mustache. He didn't say very much. He's very hard working.

Black was everybody's idea of an iconic hero, and he looked it. You know, Black had a mustache, and he was a Hawaiian guy. He had long hair in a ponytail and wore a bandana tied around his head. He just had a very awesome scary look, and he talked about how people had to fight back. He was buoyed by the movement of people. And his sister Anne was very emotional every time she spoke. . . Black and Anne were in their 20s at the time.

GK: What did she speak about?

CS: She would call all the women "sister." She would speak from the heart, and she would cry because she was gonna lose her house, and everybody would cry too. She would pour her heart out. They were both arrested with us.

GK: Why did they step forward?

CS: They represented the generation that was coming into their own. Black was working class. He was like, from Hawaii, you know, from the ground, a scrap metal dealer. You know, he was not from the educated, "Let's inherit the counterculture protest kind of thing."

GK: Do you think Anne and Black's willingness to be arrested was an indication that the nature of the Hawaii protest movement was changing? How many working-class people had been arrested protesting an eviction in recent history?

CS: Yes. Heretofore, the Hawaii progressive movement was characterized by the local labor movement of 1930s -1950s; and the civil disobedience movement was characterized by the anti-war movement involving many white university students. Kalama Valley revolutionized the movement in Hawaii.

GK: While you were a member of Kokua Hawaii, what were you doing to fight the eviction?

CS: We organized geopolitical tours. When people would drive into the valley, they would see different people staged in different places with signs like, "George Santos and his X number of pigs, where will they go?" Different people would be holding signs. There was a photograph of Edwina and Kalani and I sitting on a car. And it said, "Where will the people go?" And people would drive by and they'd see all of us standing in front of different houses or along the road with educational signs. And so, I think we did that many times as a way to build consciousness. Then we would do pickets in front of Bishop Estate offices and trustee homes. We did it strategically. I remember one time, Nelson Ho and Aaron Kanai and I were picketing Bishop Estate trustee Hung Wo Ching's house, because we were Asian. Asians were picketing the house of the Asian trustee. At the same time, a bunch of Hawaiians were at the house of trustee Richard Lyman who was Hawaiian.

GK: What were some of the activities you were involved in as a Kokua Hawaii organizer after the Kalama Valley arrest?

CS: I was a member of the steering committee and wrote articles for Kokua Hawaii's *Huli* newspaper. Once a week and sometimes more, I helped evicted pig farmer George Santos on his farm, which was relocated to upper Pearl City. I also worked as a volunteer with the Kai-Kalihi Co-op. As a volunteer, I delivered milk and eggs to all the housing projects, along with our *Huli* newspaper.

GK: How did you become the executive director for Meals On Wheels?

CS: For about 18 years, my regular day job was working in management in the air freight forwarding industry. At one point, I was the executive director of the Hawaii People's Fund and a community organizer with Unite Here!, Local 5. I was actually offered the executive director job with Hawaii Meals on Wheels.

GK: What lessons did you learn as a result of the Kalama Valley protest?

CS: Despite mistakes, it sparked a local movement. Residents of different neighborhoods in danger of eviction started coming to us. If we had been much more strategic in a protracted struggle, we would have done the research, we would have targeted things. But after Kalama Valley, that was almost not necessary because people were literally calling us—people from Ota Camp, Census Tract 57, Niumalu. Halawa Housing, some people from Kona.

GK: How would you describe it?

CS: I think it was like a magnet. You know Che Guevara used to say, create one, two, three, many Vietnams. Because the whole idea of Vietnam was people fighting against colonialism. And if you create many of them, then you bring down the colonialists. I remember spending a lot of time in high school classes speaking that this movement was not particularly about Hawaiians. . . It was an issue of class and to help the poor fight back.

GK: Which high school classes did you go to?

CS: Some were at Roosevelt at Setsu Okubo's class, and at classes by Dennis Hokama, who taught at Aiea High School.

GK: What would you normally say?

CS: We'd start by telling the story of Kalama Valley. John Kelly put together a slide show. Some of us would use it. Kelly was showing the impact on water, the impact on surf sites, the impact on housing.

GK: How did your parents and relatives react in terms of you being arrested in Kalama Valley?

CS: It was easy for me. . . I remember they came and brought some potluck and birthday cake in Kalama Valley, because Linton Park, a protest organizer, and I were born on the same day. My mother came every day to the courthouse with my family and brought lunch for us every day.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Francis Kaholi

Francis Kaholi
Photo courtesy of Gary Kubota

Francis Kaholi was a teenager when his family left Kalama Valley after receiving a notice that they had to move to make way for a future residential development. Kaholi, who recounts life in the valley, was interviewed at his home in Ewa Beach on May 2, 2017, by Gary T. Kubota.

GK: Good morning, Francis. When and where were you born and raised?

FK: I was born in October 1952. Our family started off living in Kaimuki.

When I was four to five years old, we moved to Jack Lane in Nuuanu with my grandparents. Then, after a year or so there, we moved in 1959 and ended up in Kalama Valley and lived on Ehukai Street near Sandy Beach.

GK: So, who were your parents?

FK: Benjamin Kaholi and Jennie Lum.

GK: What did your dad do for a living?

FK: He was a stevedore working for various companies, including Castle & Cooke. My mom was a housewife taking care of nine kids in the family, then worked as a nursing assistant at Leahi Hospital for many years.

GK: How many brothers and sisters?

FK: I had six brothers and two sisters. The oldest was Howard, then Benjamin, Yvonne Roldan, William, Richard, Olinda, then myself, Dolinda, and Fred.

GK: How was life in Kalama Valley?

FK: Oh, it was a hard life, but it was satisfying. We could do what we wanted to do whenever we wanted to do it pretty much. No complaints from the neighbors pretty much. A lot of the neighbors were related to my dad. We lived about a mile up the main

road. His brother Henry Kaholi lived across the street. Henry was married to Phoebe Kapiko. My Aunty Phoebe's mom lived next door. She was one of the pig owners. She had a small little pig farm there.

On the other side of my Uncle Henry and Aunty Phoebe was Aunty Phoebe's other brother, William Yockman. On the left side of them, there was the Richards family, which had a big junkyard. Then on the other side of them were the Jeremiahs. On the right side of my house, there was the Sumida family who moved out. The Price family moved in; it was a Hawaiian lady married to a haole guy. It was a pretty colorful family. A lot of fights. Across the street from them, there were the McNeelys. On the right side of the McNeelys were the Wongs. They had a pig farm. And above that, on the right side, there was a. . . Hizer family. After them was Black Richards.

GK: Where did these people come from?

FK: During those times, people were moving out of Hawaii Kai in a place known as Lunalilo Home Road. A Puerto Rican family picked up their house and moved it over to an empty lot next to the Cuizon family. Later the Cuizon house was occupied by Black Richards. The Puerto Rican family eventually moved out, but one son actually lived with us because he wanted to finish high school. He actually married one of the girls from the Cuizon family. The families in Kalama Valley were tight knit. If you go further up the road, there were two more pig farms, one owned by a Portuguese family. There were also the Rezents and Miyashiros.

GK: Where was George Santos' pig farm?

FK: Santos' farm was closer to the beginning of the road. A stream was behind to his house. It was mostly dried up.

GK: How large was the community?

FK: There were 98 families. I never knew them all because some of them were part-time living there, and some of them were real private. I only knew them because I and other members of my family used to deliver newspapers in Kalama Valley. My brother William had the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* paper route. We delivered to more than 50 houses in the afternoon, after school.

GK: How'd you do it?

FK: The whole route was about a mile-and-a-half long on a road, some paved, some dirt road with a little gravel. We piled up all newspapers inside of this old car, and we would drive the car up the road, with my brother on one side of the hood, and me on the other side of the hood, riding it like a horse. My mom would drive her '53 Mercury. There were pig farms and a chicken farms.

The Yamada chicken farm was one of the largest one on this side of the island at that time. They later moved out to Waimanalo.

GK: What did you usually do when you were home as a kid?

FK: We had fun. I never did my homework after school. (Chuckles) If we could, we'd go play touch football on the road with neighbors, cousins and friends.

GK: So, you could field a football team on both sides?

FK: Oh, yeah. Definitely. I mean, we couldn't get enough space to play everybody. It was a real family-oriented-type neighborhood where we lived, because a lot of the players were family or relatives. So when we had parties, everybody in that area was gonna go, plus outsiders.

GK: What else did you do for recreation?

FK: We did a lot of hiking in the mountains. We used to go up to what they called the "Cinder Pit." We dug through all the trash that was dumped there. Sometimes, we'd find some good stuff. We'd make camps. We'd walk a mile to Sandy Beach. Sometimes, we'd get a ride. George Santos' son Steve had a small little Datsun truck. We would all pile on that, and we'd go up to the beach. He'd come pick us up, but the main thing was getting the gas. And, the gas we had. We had no problem because we'd go to the junkyard. We'd get all the gas from there.

GK: You'd go to the junkyard to find gas in the tank of a junked car?

FK: Yeah. Just siphon it out.

GK: How was the road?

FK: It was a problem when it rained because the drainage system was never kept up because there was no drainage system, really, and the place would get flooded. And, if it was really bad, it would be all water from the Rezents' house up to the bridge and over the little bridge. It would be all water for 200 yards all the way up to the Jeremiah's house. Guys would get stuck in it. There was a time when we actually had a small little boat that we would drag and paddle down the road and pick up people and paddle back. They would wade through the other parts of the road because it was shallow.

GK: (Laughter) How did they get the cars out?

FK: Wait 'til it dried. Sometimes, the water would sit there for days. For a child, growing up in the valley was actually a very good, satisfying learning experience. We learned a lot about animals. We learned a lot about how to fix a car. My friends, the Richards kids, put together a car. And then we would get in the car, then we'd go down to the beach.

My dad always told us, "If you go down to the beach, no come home emptyhanded." He wanted us to pick up seaweed, limu, pipipi. He would be happy with whatever seafood we brought home. We'd take this Japanese guy named Melvin Kaneshiro, my sister's boyfriend, to show us how to catch moi. Sandy Beach had like three places for fishing. One was Tiger Bowl next to the Blowhole, that had a little bay area. During certain times of year, we would cut our fingernail and use it for bait on a small hook. The fish see anything white, they'd bite it. That's how we caught fish and put it in the bread bag. We'd fill the bag up with fish or seaweed or something from the sea.

GK: What happened when your dad received the notice to move?

FK: He was really hard pressed on trying to find another place. We moved out in 1970 back to Kaimuki by Mahina Avenue right behind Liliuokalani Elementary School. I'd just got back from basic training. I had joined the National Guard right out of high school. Dolinda was still going to high school, and there was Richard, Fred, Ben, and myself. So, we were forced out of the Kalama Valley, and all those people who were part Hawaiian who were qualified for Hawaiian Homestead—they went to the top of the waiting list—the Waipa family, us, my Uncle Henry and one more family. We moved over to Waimanalo in 1971.

GK: What were you doing back then?

FK: In 1971, I started working for Sheraton Waikiki Hotel. My friend got me that job. I was a housekeeper working the graveyard shift. After a couple years, I became the head houseman, which was the assistant supervisor to the night shift supervisor. The pay was little bit more. I got a raise to $4.55 an hour. I stayed there until '78. And in '79, I worked for the State Department of Health at Leahi Hospital, and I stayed there for 30½ years. The guy who hired me was my old boss at the Sheraton. He knew my capabilities. I was well-versed in the stripping and waxing and buffing of floors and stuff.

GK: What were your family's feelings at the time of the eviction protest?

FK: Actually, when I first found out you guys was doing this protest, I said, "Oh, look these crazy people." We already got our notice, and my dad already was thinking about moving out.

GK: The protest got off to a late start and you're right—many families had moved out. Were there many Kalama Valley people who had been previously evicted from other valleys?

FK: Yeah, from Kuliuoou and Lunalilo. The developers were like building these suburbs that the people couldn't afford. All these farms were being moved. I think besides the Santos, there was a pig farmer, Fuji. My friend worked for them. There was Sampaio. There was another Sampaio family who moved up there. I'm kind of thinking it's the Kay family, they were living in the last house. I'm trying to think back. I ended up sleeping in the patio.

GK: So how long did your family wait before they received a Hawaiian Homestead?

FK: My dad waited 20 years before he got it. I think they said I was a year old when they applied for Hawaiian Homestead in 1953. I think they got moved to the top of the list because they got pushed out of Kalama Valley.

GK: Really?

FK: My mom gave my uncle Francis Lum a call, "Brada, what you can do for help me out?. . . I like get one homestead if possible." He was really close to the governor at that time. I was named after him. He was the chief protocol for Gov. George Ariyoshi. About a year later, my family and relatives all got moved over to the homestead in Waimanalo.

GK: So, do you think Francis helped? Do you think the protest helped to get you relocated.

FK: It's hard to say.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Ed Greevy

Ed Greevy
Photo courtesy of the Greevy family

For several decades, Edward "Ed" William Greevy III has been the photographer documenting land struggles in Hawaii. His photographs have been exhibited in a number of venues, books and magazines, such as a one-man show at Linekona near the Honolulu Academy of Arts and a photograph of Hawaiian activist Haunani Trask displayed at International Center for Photography in Manhattan. Greevy came into contact with a number of leaders who were pivotal in helping to fight evictions. He was interviewed by Gary T. Kubota at the Kapiolani Community College library during March 2016 during a black-and white-photography exhibit at the Lama Library at Kapiolani Community College.

GK: Good morning, Ed. Tell me a bit about yourself.

EG: I was born in 1939 in Los Angeles. My father Edward William Greevy Jr. was a carpenter. Our family moved to Hawthorne in the greater Los Angeles area. It was a lower-middle-class community in the 1950s, near aviation-related businesses like Northrop Aircraft and Douglas Aviation.

GK: What made you come to Hawaii?

EG: Well, I was from California, beginning to surf, and came to Hawaii in 1960 with three friends on a four-engine prop DC-4. It was $100 one-way, and we flew out of Burbank Airport. Hawaii was just becoming a state. There were no jetways. You had to walk on the tarmac and then up a ramp to get in the plane.

GK: Sounds like you found a no-frills deal?

EG: I swear the plane had caged chickens as freight. (Chuckles) Those props didn't go very fast or very high. We had a lot of headwinds. It was an 11-hour flight. Almost everybody was sick on the plane because it was so rough. It was a real bumpy trip. United Airlines and Pan American had just begun 707 jet service to Hawaii, but it was expensive.

GK: Who else was on the flight?

EG: We met a couple of girls who were returning to the islands from winter break. They were going back to the University of Hawaii. It was early January 1960.

GK: Sounds good?

EG: Yes. We sort of made friends with them and they persuaded their boyfriends who had pickups to give us a ride to a youth hostel. The boyfriends kind of grumbled about it but did it. They also carried our surfboards and cardboard boxes we had for suitcases. The youth hostel charged $4 a night and had a four-month waiting list, so we ended up sleeping in Ala Moana Park.

GK: Then what happened?

EG: The next day was the first day of registration at the University of Hawaii. I attended the University of Southern California for a year, and I along with my friends decided to take courses at the University of Hawaii. The park caretaker let us store our surfboards and other stuff in a shed. We entered as unclassified students, and we got all the classes we wanted in a day. It was very laid-back.

GK: So what happened on the second day.

EG: We looked through the classifieds in a newspaper and found a place to stay on the second night—a little place off Date Street within walking distance of the university. We bought a 1947 Dodge pickup. (Chuckles) That was our transportation. I was there five months. I went back to Long Beach State to finish school as a political science major.

GK: When did you begin to take photographs?

EG: All through college, I wanted a good camera but could not afford one. After college, in December 1962, I went to Japan. I bought a Nikon F and a 500-millimeter lens. I came back to California in February. I thought I was gonna be a surf photographer. In those days, big companies would go to college campuses to recruit in May every year. Everybody was set up for all those recruitings in May, not in February. So, my sister was working and living in New York. She says, "Come on back here. Work for a life insurance company. They have a management training program. They hire about a dozen guys every year. They'll hire you." And they had a law school tuition reimbursement program. So, you could go to law school. So, I ended up doing that, drove across country, went to work for Mutual in New York, and went to NYU night law school in the mid-1960s.

GK: So you became a lawyer in insurance?

EG: Well, surfing was booming on the East Coast in the mid-1960s, so my sister's husband and I started a national surfing magazine in Greenwich. We would do stories on Hawaii

and concentrated on surfing competition stories at the East Coast beach towns and Hawaii. Part of my job at the magazine was to find people to send us pictures and stories. We would get these submissions from college graduates. Usually, I had to rewrite everything. But we did have a teacher from Long Island in New York who moved to Florida to surf year around and sent us these really sharp photographs. He later became the editor of *Surfing* magazine in San Diego. Eventually, I developed a chronically dislocated shoulder, got it fixed, and met a night nurse whom I married and came back to Hawaii in 1967. So, a couple of years later, the editor from *Surfing Magazine* writes me a letter and says, "We've heard of an organization called Save Our Surf, and surfers now are interested in environmental issues because we're losing surf sites to boat harbors and pollution and whatever. He said, "So would you look into them for me?" At the time, I was working on and off as a claims adjuster for an insurance company and I had a one-man commercial photography studio. Soon thereafter, I was looking at a poster protesting the widening of Kuhio Beach and see a phone number for Save Our Surf. I called, and John Kelly answered the telephone, and he invites me to his home. This is back in 1970, 71.

GK: So what happened?

EG: So, in a couple of days, I drive to his house at Black Point, and there's 15 to 20 teenagers running around, planning this big demonstration at the State Capitol, and they are also lobbying for a sewage treatment plant at Sand Island. The sewage outfall was two miles out and on a couple of kona days, you'd have shit floating back and pooling in Waikiki. They actually had to close the beach back then. Save Our Surf was lobbying for a beach park at Sand Island and sewage plant back then. Both happened.

GK: Really?

EG: Yes. At the meeting, the group had a treasurer's report, announcing their bank account was now less than $10. So, I'm thinking, "This group isn't going anywhere." But I found out that John Kelly had his own printing press, and other activist groups had their own, too. There were about four activist presses. In those days, you may remember this—if you took a political anything to commercial printers, they wouldn't print it. You had to have your own press. That's why John built one under his house. John taught me that the only free press is the one you own.

GK: So what happened?

EG: As it turned out, I was like John's staff field photographer. He would call me up and say, "Can you meet with so and so or whatever and do this?" To me, it just didn't make any sense to destroy surf sites for tourists. That's not a good idea to destroy natural things that benefit few people in order to make a few more bucks.

GK: I guess John was a good organizer?

EG: And his wife Marion would do the typing for the text on her IBM typewriter or

whatever. John was a photographer too. But he didn't have time to go out and shoot a lot. So, he'd send me out. And I would shoot black-and-white and sometimes Kodachrome for slide shows. I had time, and I had the facilities. So, that's how I got started. At the time, government officials were trying to alter the surfing site at Baby Queens with more sand to enlarge the beach. A lot of Hawaiians were learning to surf at Baby Queens.

GK: I understand John was a concert pianist at one time. How'd John get involved in forming Save Our Surf?

EG: John was a graduate of Juilliard in NYC. I understand that at one point, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was going to realign the stream at Maili Beach, where it feeds into the ocean. They were going to change the existing rock revetment. Next to it was a surf site. John was a big wave surfer. He knew George Downing and Wally Froiseth and some of the other oldtimers. So, when John found out that they were gonna do this, he didn't think it was a good idea, so he and Downing and these other guys, these guys formed Save Our Surf. It wasn't a mass organization in the beginning. They just lobbied with the Army Corps and said, "You know if you do this, you're gonna wipe out a surf site. Can you change the plan a little bit?" And so the Army Corps did. There wasn't a big confrontation. So when you pass through Maili today, there's still a surf site there.

GK: Cool. Could you describe your own participation in all this?

EG: I told John, "You know, I'm not an organizer, but I want to help. I have a studio, and I can make big prints." I could do four-feet by eight-feet murals. . . I built a few frames to mount them, and John liked the idea. He had made his own two feet by three feet photographs. He called them his "hand-helds." The Save Our Surf guys would take these murals to high schools on the Big Island and other places. Very few had seen anything like that here at that time.

GK: What was the impact?

EG: He got invited to this group on Big Island, mostly Hawaiians. It was late at night. It was like a one-lightbulb meeting place. He didn't know anybody. Nobody knew him. And he started to do his presentation. And they're just sitting there. You know, it was, like, 30, 40 people. And John was a pretty good speaker, and he wasn't getting any response.

GK: Really?

EG: Then he held up one of the photographs from the days of the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy displaying the Committee of Safety and all the guys in their overcoats and guns who overthrew the queen. So, he holds this photograph, and the place goes bonkers, with people saying, "Those are the guys that stole our land." The photograph was like an icebreaker. From then on, there was communication.

GK: Wow. I guess certain photographs can touch off emotions?

EG: It helped. In the early 1970s, Save Our Surf won most of the shoreline struggles. They got a sewage plant built, and they got a park at Sand Island. The government didn't widen Kuhio Beach at the time. And the government didn't build a seawall across Waimea Bay.

GK: What across Waimea Bay?

EG: A seawall. There was actually a public hearing on that. There were proposals to build a seawall to protect the beach.

GK: What did you think of SOS youth leaders?

EG: They took the time to learn about sewage plants and spoke at the State Capitol rally—Scott Steuber and Michael Moriarty. The group had a PA system and everything and there were a couple of thousands of kids there. They partnered with Kokua Hawaii at the rally. At that time, in the early 1970s, that was a record demonstration. When I saw what they were doing and they were successful at it, I said to John, "You know, I can help out with the photography."

GK: How did you make a living while taking photographs for the movement?

EG: I did freelance insurance claims adjusting and lived in a friend's darkroom, rent-free, and taught young photographers how to develop and print film. One of them was P.F. Bentley, who later became a staff photographer for *Time Magazine*.

GK: What made you want to volunteer to take photographs of people being evicted?

EG: My father was a union carpenter. He always taught me to support the underdog.

GK: How did you meet people facing evictions?

EG: After winning several environmental battles, John Kelly announced he and a few other SOS members were going to focus on helping the anti-eviction efforts. I thought that was interesting and wanted to support them. I was also providing photographs about politics for the *Hawaii Observer* and went out with a writer to Waiahole Valley. I also worked with Haunani Trask on an unfinished book. She was then director of the Center for Hawaiian Studies.

GK: Can you describe how you came to get into Kalama Valley and what happened on the day of the arrest?

EG: John Kelly suggested I visit Kalama Valley while it was occupied. I did that two to three times. I was not there the day of the bust.

GK: What happened?

EG: John visited my photography studio on Kapiolani Boulevard and took a look around and said, "I'll put you to work." One day, he called me and said, "Could you go and meet with Randy Kalahiki out in Kahaluu, because there's a big plan for a zoning change coming up for Waiahole-Waikane? We need pictures of the community. If you could meet Randy, he'll take you on a tour of the community, which is what happened."

GK: What did you photograph?

EG: The photograph of his grandmother Tutu Kawelo was shot that day. We went around, met people and I photographed much of the Waiahole-Waikane community.

GK: How was Randy back then?

EG: I didn't know who Randy was. I'd never heard of him. He was a nice guy. While we were driving around, Randy stops to meet Honolulu Councilman Andy Anderson. I knew Anderson from the news. He was with the Honolulu City Council. When they were talking, Anderson paid of lot of attention and treated Randy with a lot of respect.

GK: So Randy was helping in the organizing at the time. Who else did you meet that were community organizers at Waiahole-Waikane and what do you recall?

EG: Pete Thompson, Joy Ahn and Ray Catania.

GK: You also mentioned the eviction fight at Heeia-Kea and 11 families facing eviction and Kokua Hawaii and Joy Ahn and Soli Niheu? Can you share what you remember about that struggle?

EG: There were several large-scale developments planned for the windward side. Hawaiian Electric provisionally bought land in Heeia-Kea for a new power station.

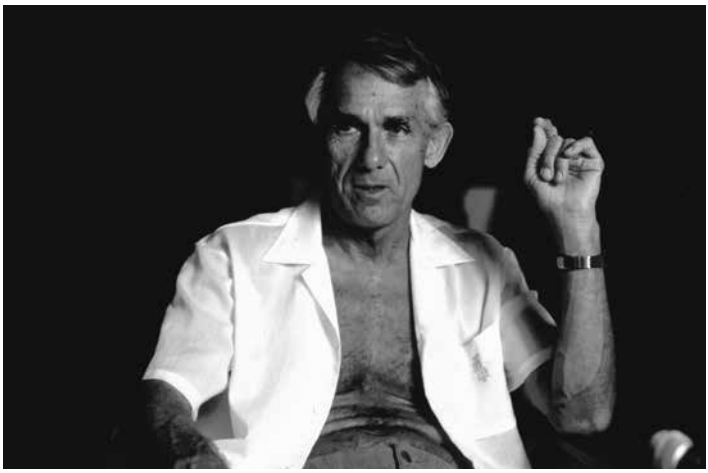
GK: Did you get to meet Pete Tagalog? You mentioned that Pete Tagalog visited various communities to talk about the eviction struggle at Ota Camp?

EG: I met Pete Tagalog at an anti-eviction rally in Waimanalo and at other protests.

GK: I remember Pete Thompson who worked as an instructor at the University of Hawaii Ethnic Studies Program playing a role in Waiahole-Waikane? Any recollections about Pete?

EG: Pete was very charismatic and always treated me with respect. He was easy to work with.

GK: Did you ever get a chance to visit with Stanford Achi at Nukolii or any other eviction struggles?



John Kelly
Photo by Ed Greevy

EG: I stayed at Stanford and June's home several times documenting their communities.

GK: How did you start taking photographs of the Chinatown evictions?

EG: John sent me to Chinatown to document evictions there.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Cindy Lance

Cindy Lance
Photo courtesy of the Lance family

Cindy Lance was an anti-Vietnam War activist in the early 1970s, when she decided to support Native Hawaiians and farmers fighting an eviction in Kalama Valley and becoming a Kokua Hawaii supporter. Lance, who is part Hawaiian, also describes her transformation and her family's transformation, as Hawaiians played a leading role in the eviction fight and began restoring pride in their Hawaiian culture.

GK: When and where were you born?

CL: I was born in 1951 in Honolulu.

GK: Who were your parents?

CL: My father was Ralph E. Lance of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania who came to Hawaii with the U.S. Army Band and never left. My mother was Martha (Rasmussen) of Kakaako. She was born to a Danish sailor who arrived on a whaling ship and a local girl of Hawaiian/Mongolian/Spanish descent. Mom's grandfather was a Spanish soldier stationed on Guam. My father's people were primarily English. This hodge-podge makes me one-eighth Hawaiian, among other things.

GK: What did your father do for a living?

CL: After serving in the Army, my father worked at the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, first in the lumber yard and later as an electronics engineer. He was there when Pearl Harbor was bombed. He survived that. But during the long war-time work shifts—14 to 18 hours—he lost four fingers of his left hand.

GK: What about your mother?

CL: My mother graduated from St. Andrew's Priory, was married, and after the birth of my older sister, she went to work at Liberty House, rising to the position of buyer in the arts and gifts department.

GK: How did they meet?

CL: Both parents were devout Christians who, early on, belonged to the long defunct

Honolulu Bible Training School (HBTS) that groomed young Christian leaders. Later, they helped found several local churches. In addition to an active church life, my mother, who left Liberty House in 1951 when I was born, did lots of volunteer work for charities and Christian organizations. In the mid sixties, she began volunteer work and later became the manager of the KAIM bookstore on Harding Avenue owned by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. My father took an early retirement to assist her.

GK: Where were you raised and educated?

CL: I grew up in Manoa Valley and attended Manoa Elementary, R.I. Stevenson Intermediate, and Theodore Roosevelt High School (Class of 1969) and immediately went to work at KAIM Bookstore, then for KAIM radio station.

GK: How was growing up in Manoa?

CL: In the 1950s, Manoa was a bastion of white Republicans. When my parents purchased their home in 1951, all but one neighbor refused to speak to my mother who, though fair-skinned, was clearly part Hawaiian. Those same neighbors fled Manoa when the Japanese began to buy houses in the valley in the late 1950s. The white flight was to the newly-developed Kahala district. You'll recall that flower growers and pig farmers were evicted from the Kahala area to create space for the upscale development. If memory serves me right, this is when pig farmer George Santos was forced to move to Kalama Valley.

GK: Roosevelt High School seemed to produce quite a few activists?

CL: Yes, there were quite a few including Kehau Lee and Sylvia Chung who became supporters of the Kalama Valley occupation. They were a year above me.

GK: What kind of activism were you involved with?

CL: I became an activist while still in high school, mainly organizing against the Vietnam War. Roosevelt had the first Students for Democratic Society (SDS) high school chapter in Hawaii. I was a "junior member" of both the University of Hawaii SDS and the Resistance. During the G.I. sanctuary movement in Honolulu, I was among those who lived at the Church of the Crossroads as part of the support community and also played an active role in the G.I. underground, moving G.I.s to the U.S. mainland and, ultimately, to Canada. I was also part of the umbrella group, People's Coalition for Peace and Justice (PCPI). Some things that came out of that group were Kokua Country Foods, the forerunner of Kokua Market. I was also actively involved with, (please note group purposely downcased the letter c): "catholic Action" and Liberated Barracks, an anti-imperialist G.I. group. I spent 10 years with Liberated Barracks and during that time, the group supported land struggles and union battles, with G.I.s involved in picket lines, sign holding, and discussions with leaders of these struggles.

GK: How did you get involved in the Kalama Valley struggle?

CL: While a senior in high school, I was encouraged by movement friends, including Gene Parker, to join the Kalama Valley occupation because of my activism and because I was part Hawaiian.

GK: What did you do once in Kalama Valley?

CL: I was a supporter of Kokua Kalama and Kokua Hawaii. In spite of people's pleas for me to remain in Kalama Valley after the haole supporters had been asked to leave, I felt the media would zero in on this pale face and try to detract from the issues. Gene then recruited me to act as an intermediary between those occupying the valley and their loved ones on the outside—these were mainly girlfriends, wives and children, most of whom were haole.

GK: What did that entail?

CL: At night, I would go into the valley and the next day, I'd make the rounds to keep the others apprised of the political struggles, legal predicaments and decisions, and relay messages and requests. I shuttled back and forth carrying personal notes, medications, signed checks, etcetera.

GK: How did the experience affect your life?

CL: For one thing, I made lifelong friends! It also made me appreciate my Hawaiian heritage. I'd never quite known where to put myself. I was the fairest of my Hawaiian family, quite often hearing relatives say, "Who's that?" and then the response, "That's your cousin, Cindy." I didn't share the anti-Hawaiian sentiments of neighbors and haole classmates, and had friends of all ethnicities. On "Kill Haole Day," some Hawaiian friends would always come to my rescue. At the same time, I'd hear my mom put down "blalahs." I grew up hearing my dad discourage my mom from using so many Hawaiian words because "people will look down on you." It was very confusing. I even went through a period when I refused to wear a muumuu! The proud Hawaiians fighting for their culture and land inspired me. It made me proud for the first time to be Hawaiian. The beginning of the land struggles also gave me the opportunity to struggle with my mom about the theft of our land, the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy, and colonization.

GK: What happened?

CL: After many hours of struggle, she, unlike my father, became a supporter of the Kalama Valley occupation. She also had some pretty heated arguments with my dad about how "the haoles stole our land." I think in her own way she was empowered as well. She began paying more attention to cultural events like the Merrie Monarch Hula Festival, and reading liner notes and translations for Hula Records where I worked as the project manager.

GK: What did you do at Hula Records?

CL: I ended up spending 17 years at Hula Records, researching music and writing about new and revered Hawaiian recording artists and advocating for the re-release of many Hula musical gems. The public demand in rediscovering old Hawaiian music demonstrated a major shift in culture and in outlook from my pre-Kokua Kalama days.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Gwen Kim

Gwen Kim
Photo courtesy of Gary Kubota

For several years in the 1970s, Gwen Kim was a member of Kokua Hawaii, helping with research and outreach to a number of communities fighting evictions. Together with her late husband Henry "Soli" Niheu, Kim's home became the center for dozens of Kokua Hawaii meetings, and she advised and helped to develop a core of Kokua Hawaii community organizers who played significant roles in providing a voice for poor working-class communities. Recently retired as a social work administrator with Queen Liliuokalani Children's Center, she has been called the mother of Onipaa Na Hui Kalo. Her arrest protesting military expansion was captured in the award-winning film by Keala Kelly, **Noho Hewa.** ***The interview was conducted in Honolulu on March 29, 2016, and October 5, 2016.***

GK: Good morning, Gwen. When and where were you born?

GWEN: I was born in 1943 in Honolulu. But I was raised as a young child in Windward Oahu. My paternal grandparents were farmers and when they died, being the oldest, my father, who was Korean, inherited and took over the farm. I remember my sister and I playing as kids in the taro patches and pulling each other on the harvesting sled. . . I absolutely loved being close to the land.

On my mother's side of the family, my grandfather was Rev. Choon Ho Lim, and he was sent to Hawaii by the Methodist ministry in Korea on the boat with my oldest auntie. And, he was sent to come and take care of the Methodist flock of immigrant workers. Some worked at a fishing cannery on the Windward side.

GK: Where did your grandfather preach?

GWEN: He went from camp to camp on different islands, including camps on Maui and Wahiawa on Oahu. He lived on the Windward side.

GK: What kind of education did you get as a child in Windward Oahu?

GWEN: As I grew up and went to Waiahole School, Parker, then Castle High School; the only Koreans I knew were my biological relatives. The other Koreans were part Hawaiian or Japanese-Korean.

GK: How did it feel as a child growing up in a multi-cultural country setting?

GWEN: Oh, my God, I loved it in Kahaluu. We were a part of everybody's cultures. . . Every door in that community was open to me. We were like little animals running all around. (Laughs) Everybody took care of us. We would go into the Japanese house, and we'd run around and go to the Hawaiian house where Helena Akima would tell us spooky stories underneath a tree. We just adapted to the cultures. So when Kokua Hawaii members of other cultures visited our Kaneohe house, it brought back good memories.

GK: How about the adults?

GWEN: Well, women really had a hard life because the women would stay home and the men drank on the weekends. . . My father would go to "Termite" Pakele's house on the hill in Kahaluu, and they would drink from Friday night to Sunday night, and then they would wash up, go home, then work Monday through Friday. But the women stayed home and the men would just drink, do whatever.

GK: Really?

GWEN: She divorced my dad and lived alone with us—my younger sister and me. I was in the fifth grade. She was one of the first who ever divorced where we lived. I saw the hard life that my mother went through. We lived down the road from the state hospital. My mother was an LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse) there. We were raised on her income.

GK: How was that?

GWEN: We went from a life of comfort to poverty. Poverty is when you're so happy to have cans of food brought home from the hospital kitchen that have been given to my mother—stews and whatever. That's how she would supplement her income. . . I had to go to work when I was 12. I always tried to work to supplement our income.

GK: How did you do that?

GWEN: I found out that some friends were maids at the Marine Corp Air Station.So, I went to work there for the summer for a colonel. My mother said I started to eat so much it was hard to keep up with my appetite and everything. (Chuckles). I could go there, eat, and then come home on the weekdays. I think I worked for $20 a month and food and housing on the weekends.

GK: So, how did you manage to get to the University of Hawaii?

GWEN: After I graduated in 1961 from Castle High, my dad kicked in money when we went to university, bought us cars. He worked as a car salesman. My sister and I worked after school and every summer.

GK: What kind of work did you do after college classes?

GWEN: I was a cashier at the movie theater in Kaneohe. During summers, we worked at the pineapple cannery.

GK: Were you always interested in social issues and activism?

GWEN: I was very interested in just general issues. As a University of Hawaii student for a time, I worked as an intern for one of the most powerful legislators, state Sen. Nadao Yoshinaga. I became very disillusioned by the attitude of some legislators who made disparaging remarks about people on welfare.

GK: What did you do?

GWEN: I earned my master's degree in social work in 1967 and got a job with the Legal Aid Society in Waianae. I worked with attorneys and did the community organizing for them.

GK: What kind of community organizing?

GWEN: I worked with a welfare rights group out there that was really successful. We fought against a proposed development in Makaha. I was very attracted to progressive issues. The issue of Kalama Valley came up, and one day, I just walked into the valley by myself.

GK: What made you decided to get involved in fighting the eviction in Kalama Valley?

GWEN: It was the inhumanity of it. We grew up with Hawaiians, and we were friends with them.

GK: How did your parents feel when they realized that you were aligning yourself with the Kalama Valley activists?

GWEN: My parents were divorced, and my mother Vivian had a disability from a stroke. But one of the things that I always remember about my mom was, she was a beautiful spirit and spunky as can be. When I asked for her advice, she would always say., "Gwen, what do you wanna do?" And no matter what I wanted to do, she would always support me and love me.

GK: Do you remember who you saw or spoke to in Kalama Valley when you first entered?

GWEN: Kokua Hawaii members. They were providing the leadership. And I remember talking with Linton Park.

GK: Didn't Park attend the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis?

GWEN: Yes. There were quite a few people with impressive credentials who had decided to make a stand. Joy Ahn was a former aide to Patsy Mink who taught at Waianae High School. Soli Niheu, who I later married, was one of the leaders. He was working for Model Cities at Kalihi-Palama. He was the recreation director. Mary Choy was the wife of a prominent physician.

Henry "Soli" Niheu
Photo by Ed Greevy

GK: I remember Soli had a large black car.

GWEN: When he graduated from San Jose, his mother gave him a Pontiac Lemans. And that was what he drove.

GK: (Laughter) When I first saw him in that car, I thought he was a cop.

GWEN: He looked like a cop. (Laughter)

GK: What happened on the day of the Kalama Valley arrest on May 11, 1971? I know it was your intention to be arrested.

GWEN: When Soli and I rode out to Kalama Valley that day, we were alerted that the cops were all in the surrounding areas. They had sharpshooters in the back of the valley. The police wouldn't let us back in.

GK: Tell me about your late husband Soli.

GWEN: Soli was raised in Kalihi near Auld Lane. Auld Lane was a place where Niihau people lived in apartments in a rooming house. His father was from Niihau and a career National Guardsman. Soli's family was working class. Soli, along with his sister and one of his brothers, went to Kamehameha School. He came from a family that was very pro-American.

GK: So what made him change his mind?

GWEN: He actually had an experience in the Army in the South, where he was jailed and physically beaten. He was in basic training in the Army and went out with some friends of his for a night on the town. He was the designated driver. He agreed to drive because he doesn't drink alcohol. When he was coming back to the barracks, his fellow military

mates, who were there with him and had gone out with him, were intoxicated, but Soli was not. They were stopped by the military police and when they were questioned about what was going on, he was the only person that they actually questioned. They left alone the rest of the other men who happened to be white. When they pulled him out, they basically referred to him as a "n------." They wanted him to admit to doing some kind of wrong, and he refused to do so. They kept him in the brig for several days. They beat him up and they did that for several days, and nobody, none of his friends that he knew came to help him, and he was very much isolated and alone. It was an experience that led him to realize he was part of an occupied people, an occupied nation, and a path that led him to becoming an activist. He was deeply and heavily scarred from the experience and suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). That affected him for the rest of his life. It wasn't until he passed that I learned from his close friend Edyson Ching about what happened.

GK: How did you feel about George and his farm?

GWEN: I loved George, and I absolutely loved being close to the land. Even after the eviction in Kalama Valley, we all would go once a week on the slop run for George. I would drive George's truck, and Noel Kent rode shot gun. We'd pick up the slop. Then George would cook the slop. I felt proud to be part of feeding, feeding the world, you know, feeding the people. And I think being close to that pig farming and cleaning out, washing the pig sty, I felt there was a great dignity and pride to it.

GK: Tell me about your trips with Soli to fight evictions, after the Kalama Valley protests?

GWEN: After the forcible eviction at Kalama Valley, Kokua Hawaii members continued as an organization and expanded its presence fighting evictions in other communities. Some of us actually continued to live together as a collective and often held meetings at our house. We had a collective house in Kalihi.

Eventually, we were assigned to cadre groups to help various communities statewide. We were absolutely passionate about fighting evictions throughout the state. At the heart of it, we knew that we were up against huge forces, but Soli was very confident because we had really smart and dedicated and passionate people who were part of our core. I remember going with Soli to stay at Stanford and June Achi's home during the fight against the eviction at Niumalu-Nawiliwili on Kauai. It was an old country home. We stayed there for a week and discussed eviction strategies.

GK: What happened?

GWEN: There was a collective of people absolutely dedicated to supporting the eviction fight on Kauai. Stanford's daughter, George Cooper, and Sue Wagner were among them.

GK: How did he go about organizing?

GWEN: Soli's style of organizing was real interesting. He didn't like having meetings with people. He would just go, and we'd hang out. It was really more talking stories with the organizers there. A lot of it was building trust and building that foundation of a relationship together.

GK: What other activities were you involved in?

GWEN: We went out and used to sell our newspaper the *Huli* for 25 cents. . . It was a very agitational format—lots of pictures with information that hit the spot about what was happening and what we were doing in different communities. The *Hawaii Hochi* printed it, then later we printed it ourselves on our own press at our office in Kalihi. I think the *Huli* newspaper may have had a huge effect on people and agitating them.

GK: In what way did agitating have an effect?

GWEN: I think that what we were doing just resonated throughout Hawaii. We were part of the anti-Vietnam War movement and very disillusioned with the state of affairs, the deception, the horrible destruction. And then, we went into Kalama Valley where people were just being thrown away like rubbish without any regard.

Though we lost that struggle, we began to receive calls from people who faced evictions—the eviction of residents at Halawa Housing to make way for the Aloha Stadium. That was a big thing. Ted and Shirley Nahoopii were leaders of this struggle. Eventually, Roy Santana stepped in to become president of the Halawa Housing Association. Eventually, we were able to form a large coalition of community groups fighting evictions. Soli worked with Kokua Hawaii in organizing a "Stop All Eviction March" at Aala Park in Honolulu. It involved hundreds of people—all of the communities fighting evictions.

GK: Some historians have identified the arrest in Kalama Valley on May 11, 1971, as the start of the Hawaiian Renaissance. Could you describe how it happened?

GWEN: It was a personal journey for us, especially for Soli. In the process of fighting the evictions and trying to do all these kinds of things, Soli was revisiting his roots and looking for answers in his own culture itself. We actually studied the workings of the government and the system and Hawaiian history and culture and looked for the causes behind the evictions.

Soli grew up on Oahu, but Soli's father is pure Hawaiian, born and raised on Niihau, and his mother, pure Chinese. The Niihau people speak mainly Hawaiian. We visited Pakala on Kauai, which is near Niihau, to meet his relatives. I'll never forget how they brought in supplies when a boat came in. It was at night, and they would use a spotlight to light the boat. The entire process was all done in the Hawaiian language.

GK: There always seemed to be a lot of Kokua Hawaii members and supporters at your home, first in Kalihi and then in Kaneohe?

GWEN: We were all close and helped each other. We became family to each other. Pete Thompson and his girlfriend Sylvia lived in a two-bedroom house on Kam IV Road. We asked if George Santos could stay with Pete. Pete would tell us later that when he agreed, he never knew that George would stay with them there for the rest of his life.

GK: Why do you think members and supporters dropped by often?

GWEN: I think Hawaii people were drawn to us because we were a local group and we were living collectively in the two-story house in Kaneohe. Besides Soli and I and my mom who was disabled, there was Randy Suzuki and his girlfriend Sheila living upstairs, and Roland Nip and his girlfriend Renee downstairs. Joy Ahn would come and sleep on the couch.

GK: Joy would bring food and so would I.

GWEN: It was the best. It was really a movement of extended family members from different ethnic groups forming a core. It was very fluid, but it was structured. We all had our political jobs. That's wonderful that you would have a memory of that. We would always have food for visitors. We were the ohana of the movement. And, we would take care of each other. And that's why whenever people would need a place to stay or they wanted to stay, of course, they could stay. And, of course, we would always share whatever food we had. Those were really wonderful times and wonderful memories for all of us.

GK: It was amazing. Often, I counted 15 people for dinner. Of course, people would bring food and contribute what they could.

GWEN: (Laughter) At times, we'd have stew all the time because you could always stretch that with a lot of rice.

Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project Interview with

Terrilee Kekoolani

Terrilee Kekoolani
Photo by Ed Greevy

Terrilee Kekoolani was a student at the University of Hawaii-Manoa in the early 1970s and developed a new perspective about Hawaiian history, as she became associated with Kokua Hawaii members and others in the anti-war movement. She has participated and helped to organize a number of protests, one of which led to a 1972 sit-in at the university's Bachman Hall. As a university student, she was on the Kokua Hawaii committee during the sit-in that negotiated with the UH administration to save the Ethnic Studies Program. Kekoolani was working as an organizer for the American Friends Service Committee, when interviewed on May 16, 2017, at Coffee Talk restaurant in Kaimuki.

GK: Where you born?

TK: I was born in Oakland, California and initially raised in Berkeley.

GK: What were your parents doing at the time?

TK: My father George was going to architectural school at the University of California-Berkeley campus. He eventually worked in Honolulu. There are several condominiums in the Ala Wai and Ala Moana area and private homes that he designed. While we were in California, my mother Edith was a police officer during the day. At night, she was an entertainer, a hula dancer. She danced at the Tonga Room in San Francisco.

GK: When did your family return to Hawaii?

TK: Well, when my father finished school, my parents decided to come back home to Hawaii. His plan was to start his business in architecture. It was significant because he was one of the few Native Hawaiian architects in Hawaii.

GK: Wow. I didn't know of any Hawaiian architects back then.

TK: He was an artist too. He took up the profession of being a designer architect. That was his forte.

GK: Were your parents involved in activist politics?

TK: They had absolutely nothing to do with it. In fact when I started to become more vocal about my beliefs, we had our differences. Eventually, they saw that I was very determined to pursue an activist lifestyle and they began to support me.

GK: Okay, how long did that take?

TK: It took a little while. When I went to Kahoolawe to protest the military bombing of the island in the late 1970s, for example, and I got arrested, my mom came down to pick me up at the Ala Wai Harbor and my dad took me to court.

GK: Was she a police officer then?

TK: No. When we returned to Hawaii, she became a travel agent, and a very well-known travel agent. She managed Island Holidays in Waikiki.

GK: That's quite a switch in jobs.

TK: My father supported my mother's decision to be a travel agent. He himself wanted to travel. Both of my parents influenced my siblings and myself, saying in order to understand the world, you have to go out and see the world and meet people and go to new places.

GK: Did your activism begin at the University of Hawaii?

TK: No. It began in high school. I started organizing against the Vietnam War.

GK: Why is that?

TK: Because it was a very bad war. I was at an all-girls Catholic school, Sacred Hearts Academy. The nuns were against the war, so at the very least there was support for my activism in that way. When I started organizing, there was a little group of students who went to other schools and met other people our age that were against the war as well.

GK: What grade were you in high school?

TK: I was a junior in 1968.

GK: So how did that evolve?

TK: Because of my activities opposing the war, I began to study militarism in Hawaii. Former Gov. Neil Abercrombie was a teacher at the University of Hawaii at the time, and he and others also were against the war. I would actually go off the Sacred Hearts campus and go to the University of Hawaii in my Sacred Hearts uniform, and I would listen to

some of these guys like Abercrombie, other UH faculty members, and students opposed to the war. It helped me shape my perspective.

GK: Abercrombie was an American Studies teacher?

TK: Yeah. He had a whole look about him, black gloves, black shirt, black pants, black shoes, and then a little beret and a ponytail. I used to go and check out his speeches on the campus. Anyway, those kinds of things interested me.

GK: Did you bring any friends with you?

TK: I tried. (Laughter) There was a small group of us opposed to the Vietnam War at my school and other private schools.

GK: Okay. So what happened after that?

TK: Well, because I had an interest in going to join the protest at the University of Hawaii-Manoa, I started meeting people on the campus, and so it was a natural transition for me to be at the university. I started meeting other activists on the campus and then we started having discussions about forming a group and classes to talk about the issues impacting our different ethnicities. So, that was kind of the seed.

GK: Who were some of these activist students at the time?

TK: There was an African American student, Mutu, then Native Hawaiian Pete Thompson, and eventually I met Kehau Lee.

GK: What happened once you graduated from high school?

TK: I went to the university. The person I was influenced the most by was Marion Kelly. She was teaching anthropology. I became her assistant.

GK: That's kind of an honor?

TK: Yes. She was working at the Bishop Museum in anthropology. She hired me and so I was at the Bishop Museum doing work and going back and forth between the museum and the university.

GK: How were you influenced by Marion?

TK: Aunty Marion stressed going out to the community and meeting community leaders in the midst of struggle. As an anthropologist, she stressed research, doing your homework and getting your facts straight. But most importantly, she said, "Don't be afraid to speak out."

GK: How did you meet members of Kokua Hawaii?

TK: Well, when Kokua Hawaii expanded its organization beyond Kalama Valley, a bridge developed between Kokua Hawaii activists and people on campus. We invited them to come into the classes and speak about their issues and present their point of view. The whole idea was, again, to bring the issues from the community onto the campus.

GK: What kind of issues were presented by Kokua Hawaii members and how was that different than the usual talks in classes?

TK: It was getting into the conditions of our people—poverty, evictions.

GK: How did you feel about being selected to sit at the negotiating table with Kokua Hawaii, looking at Acting Chancellor Richard Takasaki and Dean David Contois at the other end?

TK: It was important to me. For me personally, it was a very good learning experience. It was important for students to have a voice. There were no books about this kind of stuff.

GK: What did you learn?

TK: The whole idea of community activists coming to the campus, bringing their perspective and experience, and us listening to them created new connections among the students, faculty and them. It was like opening the door. It brought us a new understanding—that community people were important to listen to, and their voices must be incorporated in educational institutions. We encouraged students to get off campus and get into the community.

GK: I know an important part of education in Kokua Hawaii included visits to Kahuna Lapaau Sammy Lono's home in Haiku and talks about Hawaiian culture. How did your visit with him affect your understanding of Hawaiian culture and history?

TK: It was Joy Ahn who introduced me to Kahuna Sammy Lono. He had a lot of aloha for her. He really introduced me to Hawaiian spiritualism and culture. At one point, I remember Uncle Lono occupied the state's Kualoa Park to focus on its religious significance and access. His whole thing was challenging the state and going to religious places that Native Hawaiians had a right to be. . . Some of us were actually going down to be with him. It was at the very beginning of the walks around the island and the Lono banner for makahiki. . . He was there when they launched the *Hokulea.* In the beginning, people would make fun of him. He was wearing a pareo made of white sheets. He was bringing the culture back into our thinking. His actions helped to shape what was beginning to shape the Hawaiian Renaissance.

GK: Did you ever visit or have talks with Randy Kalahiki? How would you describe his style of leadership?

TK: Randy Kalahiki was a community leader. He's the one who taught us about the names of the valleys in Windward Oahu like Waiahole and Waikane and introduced us to the concept of the ahupuaa system and histories of the people who once occupied the valleys.

GK: What are some of the ingredients for a successful protest?

TK: It's not spontaneous. You have to do a lot of planning with other people. Having contact of the community leaders and with the students was very, very important. The community leaders gave us ideas and the confidence to prepare ourselves to take on issues that were very controversial during that time.

GK: I know quite a number of communities were fighting evictions at the time and asking for help. What were some of the qualities and elements required to be a community organizer?

TK: You have to have discipline. Regular meetings are really important. You want to have principled debate where everyone has a chance to have their say before taking action. At the end of the day, you've got to do something.

GK: I understand that Protect Kahoolawe Ohana leaders sought your advice, when several years later, they were thinking of how to stop the military bombing of Kahoolawe?

TK: Of course, during that time, when Ethnic Studies was first established and institutionalized on the campus, there was a whole renaissance of culture on the campus—speaking Hawaiian, doing Hawaiian things in Hawaiian classes was really very popular. Even the students who were Japanese were challenged to learn their culture and Japanese American history. You had cultural things going on, as well as political. Sometimes they clashed. Sometimes it all worked out. That's part of the whole process.

I was asked by Protect Kahoolawe Ohana members George Helm and Walter Ritte to meet with them. They asked me about organizing. "How do you do it? What do we need to do?" They were really, really thinking about how to develop their own strategy and move forward.

Walter, at the time, didn't want to just bring in a San Francisco-style movement. It had to be something different—our own consciousness about being Hawaiian.

GK: I know you joined the Ohana and was arrested with them on one of the landings on Kahoolawe and actually went to court to challenge the arrest?

TK: The protest involved quite a transformation. Even when we went into court, we felt presenting ourselves in what we wore was very important. There were some young people dressing in traditional style. It was a very important turning point for me—not just being an activist, but really challenging oneself to be Hawaiian.

Chronology Of Events

June 1970—Kalama Valley residents, including Native Hawaiians Moose Lui and his wife, express growing discontent about their eviction and the loss of their lifestyle on Bishop Estate land, as the landowner plans with Kaiser Hawaii Kai Corp. to build a middle- and-upper-class suburban development in East Oahu. They ask Bishop Estate, the largest private landowner in the state, and government officials to find them relocation.

July 1970—Two successive groups, including University of Hawaii students, are arrested in individual acts of protest on July 2 and July 9 to demonstrate opposition to the eviction of Kalama Valley residents, including Native Hawaiians and farmers. Many in the group have been anti-Vietnam War protesters. On July 2, those arrested include Lorayne Hayashi, Linton Park, and John Witeck. On July 9, they include Gregory Hasbrouck, Wayne Hayashi, Burnetta K. Lee, Richard King, Stanford Masui, Linton Park, and James Wallrabenstein.

July – September 1970—After meeting with Kalama Valley residents who say they want to stay in the valley, community organizer Lawrence Kamakawiwoole calls people to meet at the Off Center Coffee House in Manoa to form a committee to help the residents. Kamakawiwoole was profoundly influenced by the Black Panthers while working with youths in Oakland, California in the late 1960s. He realized the similarities between the poor African Americans in Oakland and Native Hawaiians in Palama, where he grew up. Those who attend the meeting at Off Center include Ray Catania, Jo Ibarra, Rene Kajikawa, Kehaulani Lee, Soli Niheu, Kalani Ohelo, Linton Park, Dana Park, Gene Parker, Claire Shimabukuro, Mary Choy, and Pete Thompson. The group, along with residents, form a core known as the Kokua Kalama Committee.

September 30 – October 1, 1970— The Kokua Kalama Committee begins a sit-in on September 30 at Gov. John Burn's office to ask him to intervene in the eviction. The Committee leaves after receiving assurance they will meet with Burns. In his interview with the news media, Kamakawiwoole expands the eviction issue to the broader impact of the proposed Kalama Valley development, criticizing its environmental impact and the potential for Sandy Beach to turn into another Waikiki.

October 1970—The Kokua Kalama Committee changes its name to Kokua Hawaii, redefining itself as serving all of Hawaii, engages in public debates with Bishop Estate officials about the housing crisis and the environment. The arguments begin to turn more toward defending the Hawaiian rural lifestyle, preserving the coastal environment, and raises questions about Bishop Estate's mission to help to educate Native Hawaiians. Kokua Hawaii helps to organize a demonstration at the state Capitol, joining forces with environmental groups such as John Kelly's "Save Our Surf," low-income groups

like the Halawa Housing movement, and mainstream youth groups, such as the Young Democrats, and the Hawaii High School Education Council. The crowd is estimated at several hundred people.

November 1970 – March 1971—Unsuccessful efforts are made to avert a confrontation between Kalama Valley residents and Bishop Estate. State Sen. Nadao Yoshinaga, chair of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, introduces a bill for the state to buy 250 acres in Kalama Valley. Yoshinaga called the eviction effort "merciless, unfair, and undemocratic treatment of low-income and farm residents." Kokua Hawaii members start making connections with other minority activist groups nationally, attend a Black Panther conference in Washington, D.C, and meet with the Puerto Rican group The Young Lords in New York, including Young Lords leader Juan Gonzalez (later a commentator on the television program *Democracy Now!)*. Kokua Hawaii helps to organize a second demonstration at the state Capitol, entitled "People, Not Profits—Huli!" Within the group and its supporters, the Hawaiian word "Huli" becomes synonymous for "change" or "revolution." On March 31, Kokua Hawaii calls for a model community for local people in Kalama Valley that includes people of all ethnicities and income levels.

April 1971—Anticipating arrests for resisting the eviction in Kalama Valley, Kokua Hawaii begins to build an encampment of resistance. Supporters erect dozens of tents, dig latrines, provide free physician service, develop their own communications and security system, and provide breakfast, lunch and dinner to resisters. Native Hawaiian residents and pig farmer George Santos vow to stay in the valley.

May 11, 1971—Police arrest 32 protesters, including residents and supporters, in Kalama Valley. It was one of the largest arrests involving a land protest since Hawaii statehood. Several poor communities later contact Kokua Hawaii to seek help in fighting evictions. About half of those arrested become Kokua Hawaii community organizers. Those arrested include Edwina Akaka, Alfred Abreu, Mary Choy, Andrea Richards and her brother Andrew, Linda Bruenecke, Arvil Garis, Alfred Gouveia, Rita Kila, Liko Martin, Roy Nagamine, Samuel A.K. Po, Ah Ching G. Po, Daniel Raymond, Allen Tamayori, Dan Wassman, Prince Wills, Randall Yamaguchi, Lucie Yoshinaga, John Fuhrman, Edyson Ching, Joy Ahn, Claire Shimabukuro, Renee Kajikawa, Randall Suzuki, John Saxton, Kim Albertson, Maurice "Kalani" Ohelo, James Ng, Roseann Ng, Gary T. Kubota, Raymond Catania.

October 11, 1971—14 of the 32 arrestees were eventually found guilty in District Court of a misdemeanor for trespassing in Kalama Valley. Bench warrants were issued for 12 others who did not appear for trial. Several charges were dismissed due to police failing to identify the arrestees in a crowded courtroom. During the trial, Kokua Hawaii leaders publicize the injustices done to residents and farmers, including Native Hawaiians. All the charges were later dismissed on appeal in Oahu Circuit Court.

January 1972—Kokua Hawaii receives a request for help from the Filipino community of Ota Camp with more than 130 residents in Waipahu. Ota Camp had received notice

to vacate the land from a new landowner who planned to develop apartments. Some Kokua Hawaii members, James C.W. Young, Randall Yamaguchi and Gary T. Kubota, move into Ota Camp at the request of its leader Pete Tagalog to help in the eviction fight. Other individuals and groups volunteer to help in the fight, including Johnny Verzon, Leon Dagdagan, Gail Hamasu, and Brian Taniguchi (now a Hawaii state senator)—and attorney Herbert Takahashi. By August 1972, after numerous demonstrations, speech engagements by Pete Tagalog and extensive news coverage, the momentum begins to shift in favor of the residents. Honolulu Mayor Frank Fasi announces a plan that eventually results in donating acres of city land at West Loch for the relocation of Ota Camp residents. ILWU Local 142 secretary-treasurer Newton Miyagi asks for a delay in the eviction. In 1974, Gov. George Ariyoshi announces the state will build low-rent houses on the city land with an option to buy.

March 21, 1972—Kokua Hawaii works with students to save the Ethnic Studies Program and organizes a three-night sit-in at the administrative offices in Bachman Hall at the University of Hawaii-Manoa. Kokua Hawaii protests the university's selection of a four-person committee of professors from outside of Ethnic Studies to determine the future of Ethnic Studies and fears university officials will recommend killing Ethnic Studies during the summer. The Kokua Hawaii sit-in represents a paradigm shift in the usual protests at the university. Kokua Hawaii brings in community leaders and members to support the protest, including Ota Camp, the Halawa Housing Community Association, The Hawaiians, and Windward Oahu leaders Randy Kalahiki and Buddy Ako. The sit-in ends after Acting Manoa Chancellor Richard Takasaki agrees to form an advisory committee of five students, five community representatives, and a combination of five administrators and faculty. Kokua Hawaii insisted that the composition of the 15-member advisory committee include five community members and five students. The advisory committee, the "People's Committee for Ethnic Studies," recommends the continuation of Ethnic Studies, and the recommendation is accepted by the University of Hawaii Board of Regents on April 27, 1972. People's Committee representative Pua Anthony, a university instructor, is praised for making an "excellent" presentation by Regents' chair John Farias Jr. Kokua Hawaii leader Lawrence Kamakawiwoole later is named as the first full-time director of the Ethnic Studies Program. The program is now a department.

February 24, 1973—Members of Census Tract 57 People's Movement, with Kokua Hawaii community organizer Ray Catania, attend a public meeting at Kaiulani Elementary School to protest the planned eviction of hundreds of tenants in the Kalihi-Palama area to expand Honolulu Community College. Catania had been working for several months with residents and supporters, including tenant leader Virgil Demain. The proposed expansion falls from favor after widespread protest from tenants and area businesses and a meeting with Gov. George Ariyoshi in 1974. Ariyoshi met with tenant leaders, including Catania, Demain, and Demain's mother.

May 1974—Moanikeala Akaka joins with other Native Hawaiians to support Sonny Kaniho's occupation of Hawaiian Homes land that was leased to Parker Ranch. Kaniho, who had waited more than 20 years to receive a Hawaiian homestead, protested the

leasing of Hawaiian homestead land to private interests when thousands of Native Hawaiians, like himself, are on the waiting list.

May 1975—Heeia-Kea residents from 11 families oppose their eviction by Hawaiian Electric Co. The Company wants to build turbine generators on the land. Kokua Hawaii community organizers Joy Ahn and Soli Niheu and other supporters assist residents in opposing the eviction. The generators station is never built.

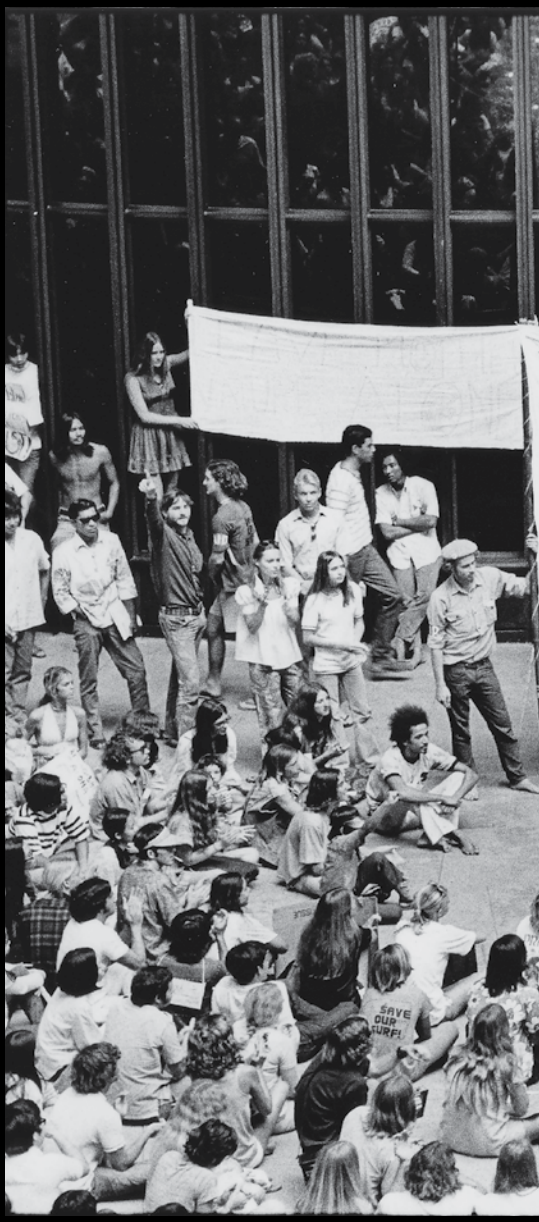
Summer 1975—Some Waiahole Valley farmers receive lease rent increases of more than 100 percent, as land developments including the H-3 Freeway are planned for Windward Oahu. Kokua Hawaii members Joy Ahn and Soli Niheu had been meeting with tenant farmers in Waiahole and Waikane Valleys, along with Ethnic Studies instructors Pete Thompson and Kehau Lee. The Waiahole-Waikane Community Association, led by tenant leaders including Robert Fernandez and the Rev. Robert Nakata, draws support from hundreds of people to resist the eviction. Hundreds of tenants and their supporters block the main highway fronting their farmlands in January 1977. Gov. George Ariyoshi announces on February 26, 1977, that the state will buy 600 acres of Waiahole land from Elizabeth McCandless Marks.

August 1977—Liko Martin and Henry "Soli" Niheu, who were involved in opposing the eviction in Kalama Valley, are arrested with 12 other people on Kahoolawe for protesting the military bombing and maneuvers on the island. Walter Ritte Jr. and Richard Sawyer were being held on an earlier trespass incident on Kahoolawe pending sentencing on August 26. Amnesty International launches an investigation into the jailing and arrests. Also arrested with Martin and Niheu is former UH Ethnic Studies student Terrilee Kekoolani. The arrests in 1977 follows the occupation in 1976 involving nine protesters, including Ritte and Dr. Emmett Aluli. With public opposition rising, the Navy halts the practice bombing of Kahoolawe in 1990. In 1994, the island is turned over to the State of Hawaii. Congress announces plans to spend $400 million over 10 years for the cleanup.

Labor Day 1978—Moanikeala Akaka, a former Kokua Hawaii member, helps to organize a protest on the Hilo Airport runway, criticizing the state's use of Hawaiian Homes and ceded lands without compensation to Native Hawaiians. Protesters said the Hilo Airport was on Hawaiian homestead land that was supposed to provide housing for Native Hawaiians and also on ceded lands. Joining Akaka in the protest are members of the Protect Kahoolawe Ohana, including Dr. Emmett Aluli. Aluli notes his group is reciprocating for the support Akaka gave to its cause to reclaim Kahoolawe.

1978 also marks the year of the state Constitutional Convention and the emergence of the state Office Of Hawaiian Affairs and a constitutional change to recognize Hawaiian as well as English as Hawaii's official language, encouraging the growth of Hawaiian language immersion programs. Moanikeala Akaka is eventually elected as an Office Of Hawaiian Affairs trustee and begins to negotiate with the state for Native Hawaiians to receive revenues for the use of ceded lands—negotiations that continued for years and eventually resulted in a temporary allocation of $15.1 million a year to OHA.

Hawaii Stories of Change — Kokua Hawaii Oral History Project is a collection of over 30 interviews, by playwright and award-winning journalist Gary T. Kubota.



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