

Hawaiian History month, September 2021

Hawai‘i History Month 2021

This coming September 2021 will be our second year of sharing ‘Onipa‘a and Hawaiian History Month virtually with the general public. Even though our communities are still in the throes of a COVID surge, this September’s scheduled events will bring incredible opportunities and food for thought for you, your families, and friends!

Because Queen Lili‘uokalani’s Lā Hānau (birthday) falls on September 2nd, we begin Hawaiian History Month by honoring her on that date, which has always always been the catalyst for our work together. In addition, International Peace day is recognized on Sept 21st around the country and the world—also an appropriate time to remember and celebrate the Queen, who was always a woman of peace and righteous action, or pono, and whose life and work on behalf of her country and her beloved Lāhui—her people—were exemplary.

But reasons for celebrating her life are plentiful. As the leader of Hawai‘i, she displayed courage in the face of insurmountable political pressures. As a bard and accomplished musician she left an enduring legacy. We keep her voice and spirit alive by singing her songs. She is our Gandhi, our Mandela— a woman who not only strove for justice and peace, but who worked tirelessly during her life to have the Kingdom of Hawai‘i restored, and her land and people cared for.

Many Hawaiian ‘ohana (families) have remained Aloha ‘Āina, or patriots, since the illegal overthrow of the Kingdom in 1893. The queen’s legacy lives on as well in the countless forms of work that organizations devote to Hawaiian advocacy through health, education, and culture. This movement has grown swiftly and powerfully over the past forty years.

2006 marked the first annual ‘Onipa‘a celebration of Lili‘uokalani’s birthday. In 2007, the Hawai‘i Pono‘ī Coalition began as a consortium of Native Hawaiian-serving organizations and individuals dedicated to telling the true history of Hawai‘i. This critical work of educating all of Hawai‘i’s citizens about the Queen and the independent Kingdom of Hawai‘i continues.

Proposed by the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs, a coalition of members and organizations interested in putting forth a Hawaiian agenda, Senate resolution SCR55 declaring September as Hawaiian History Month is broadly supported. This timely and important resolution is just one of many positive movements, within the Hawai‘i community and beyond, towards social justice and reconciliation in response to the historical and cultural wrongs Hawaiians have suffered since the illegal overthrow of their country. Because the results of these wrongs still affect us today, it is crucial and timely to create an opportunity for greater historical awareness of these often hidden past wrongs, which should arouse the public’s conscience, and lead to productive action.

www.hawaiianhistorymonth.org

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What to expect during the month of September 2021

Each week builds upon the foundation created by previous ‘Onipa‘a and Mai Poina events held in Honolulu during the first week of September. This year’s celebrations will mark our fifteenth year as a dedicated hui and coalition, working together to educate the broader public about Hawaiian history. They will also mark our second year online—in virtual space.

RESOURCES:

Links to numerous films, curriculum materials, guide, and additional information will be made available through the Hawai‘i Pono‘ī and Hawaiian History Month websites, which will also provide an archive of presentations from 2020 through September 2021 and beyond.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Since Lili‘uokalani’s time, and through the extraordinary efforts of so many Aloha ‘Āina, the Kū‘ē Petitions of 1897, which contained 38,000 signatures opposing the illegal annexation of Hawai‘i, and the Mele Lāhui, the songs collected and published in 1895, continue to be consulted for inspiration up to today. Information about these and other meaningful documents and first person sources will be available on the Hawaiian History Month website. These are important resources. Many of us did not learn about these treasures as part of our education, as only today are we fully recapturing access to the complexity and strength that the multiple suppressed historical narratives and resources offer us today. Among the more recent important documents also present on the website is the Apology bill of 1993—Public Law 103-150.

Why Hawaiian History Month?

The original purpose was to advocate for education **of and** cultural awareness about the overthrow and illegal annexation of the Hawaiian Kingdom.

The September celebrations and events honoring the Queen are also making clear to Hawaiians, and to those who visit Hawai‘i from around the world that as a Lāhui, or nation, we have been working steadily to improve our situation from Lili‘uokalani’s time until our own. And especially in the last forty years advocacy for preserving and building upon this legacy has accelerated.

Since 2006, the Queen’s birthday has been celebrated by the Hawaii Pono‘ī coalition, a consortium of Native Hawaiian-serving organizations dedicated to telling the true history of Hawaii. In time, the Coalition’s concerns have also come to coalesce around larger but related challenges of preserving the community’s health and wellness.

Hawaiians from diverse backgrounds and with a wide variety of concerns and expertise in education, general welfare, social justice, and the arts have been joining together to educate all of Hawai‘i’s people about those difficult, ongoing issues that face the Hawaiian community.

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Our focus has always been on outreach, and on healing through education, so that we can move forward as a community here in our beloved Hawai‘i. Increased awareness and understanding in our Lāhui, and among our allies, allows us to imagine a path forward. By understanding what happened historically we can not only begin to heal, but also to reconcile ourselves to that painful past, moving forward with an understanding of the possibility for forgiveness. Hawaiian History Month is designed to advance this process, and because this year’s offerings will once again be virtual, they actually make it possible for a larger audience to participate in the rich variety of programs.

A critical mass of people are now moving towards understanding the true issues of Hawaiian identity and the politics of place. Communities need healing more broadly. Now is the time to bring Hawaiian history and values to life, to make the experience of being in Hawai‘i real. Settlers and tourists also have an interest in knowing the truth about this land and its people beyond the balmy weather and pristine beaches. Over the past decade, 3000 to 5000 people have attended ‘Onipa‘a and Mai Poina in person. Now, through our digital format and platforms, created out of necessity, we can reach hundreds of thousands!

Welina mai ‘kākou. Welcome to Hawaiian History Month, and to the chance to engage with the issues crucial to our communities, and to our beloved homeland, Hawai‘i nei.