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TESTIMONY OF KALI WATSON, CHAIRMAN
HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
HEARING ON MARCH 19, 2024 AT 1:00PM IN CR 224

SCR114 / SR96, RELATING TO PRINCE JONAH KUHIO KALANIANAOLE

March 19, 2024

Aloha Chair Shimabukuro, Vice Chair Fevella, and members of the Committee:

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL) supports this concurrent resolution urging the DHHL to display a portrait of Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole in each state building, office, meeting room, and waiting area under the department's jurisdiction.

Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole spearheaded the passage of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act and was responsible for instituting the county system still in place today. As a statesman, Kūhiō shaped the foundation for Hawai'i's modern government structure. This measure seeks to honor his legacy by requiring his portrait be displayed in state buildings under DHHL's jurisdiction.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

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Unity, Equality, Aloha for all



To: SENATE COMMITTEE ON HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

For hearing Tuesday, March 19, 2024

Re: SCR 114 / SR 96

URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS TO DISPLAY A PORTRAIT OF PRINCE JONAH KUHIO KALANIANAOLE IN EACH STATE BUILDING, OFFICE, MEETING ROOM, AND WAITING AREA UNDER THE DEPARTMENT'S JURISDICTION.

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION

This resolution urges the Department of Hawaiian Homelands to display a portrait of prince Jonah Kuhio Kalanianaole in each state building, office, meeting room, and waiting area under the department's jurisdiction.

This resolution implies that DHHL leadership and the managers of those buildings, offices, rooms, and waiting areas have not already placed such portraits in those places. Bills REQUIRING the placement of such portraits in such places were introduced in 2021 and 2023, and failed. Apparently during these last three years, DHHL personnel still have not seen fit to put up those portraits. One must wonder why they have not done so. What do they have against Kuhio, so that the legislature felt compelled to FORCE them to do it in previous years and continues to feel compelled to urge them to do it now? Or perhaps the facilities have not yet been built, and the legislature is acting now to urge DHHL personnel to erect such portraits when the facilities are built, for fear they would not otherwise do so. Or maybe the reason why DHHL personnel want the legislature to pass this resolution is for the purpose of ensuring that additional taxpayer money will be sent to DHHL. But in 2022 the legislature appropriated \$600 Million dollars extra to go to DHHL. Isn't that enough money for them to get the job done? This resolution also proposes an astounding level of "overkill" by urging that each and every office, meeting room, and waiting area must have a portrait of Kuhio. Did the authors of this resolution forget about the hallways, toilets, and broom closets?

Jonah Kuhio Kalaniana'ole is widely regarded as a cultural and political hero among today's ethnic Hawaiians. But there are some important reasons why even Hawaiian sovereignty activists would want to re-evaluate their opinion of him, if they were aware of these facts about his life. Below are details about two of those reasons: (1) He abandoned Hawaii at the time when its independence was being lost to annexation, in order to go to South Africa on an adventure as a soldier fighting for Britain in the Boer War; and (2) he waged a personal attack against ex-queen Lili'uokalani during the last years of her life, trying to have her declared mentally incompetent so he could become conservator of her estate and grab her Waikiki properties for himself.

Before providing some details about those character flaws, let's think about the idea of putting up pictures glorifying Kuhio in public buildings on DHHL lands, even if his character had been beyond reproach.

In dictatorships around the world there are photos of the dictator looming large over public squares and inside government buildings. It's ugly. After a while those pictures arouse resentment and feelings of oppression more than they inspire love or respect. Haven't we all seen news reports from China showing the huge photo of long-dead Chairman Mao looming over Tiananmen Square in Beijing? In the old Soviet Union there was a big photo of Joseph Stalin in every classroom in every school, every office in every government building, and every grocery store. Big brother is watching you!

Some ethnic Hawaiians revere Kuhio as a prince for the same reasons the peasantry in any monarchical nation reveres its royalty -- majesty, mystery, pride in the nobility of a great leader, and hope for handouts to help the poor and downtrodden. Wealthy racial separatist Hawaiian government institutions honor Kuhio as their founding father, the man who bowed low enough to the colonizers to bring home the bacon from their far-away seat of power.

But was Kuhio's personal behavior princely? At least two major events in Kuhio's life after the revolution of 1893 should cause Hawaiian sovereignty activists to question his worthiness as their torch-bearer. On these two occasions Kuhio was grossly unpatriotic to his Hawaiian "nation." The first occasion was when he abandoned his nation at its time of greatest peril in order to pursue personal pleasure and foreign adventure. The second occasion was two decades later when he abused his power and prestige to launch a personal attack against Queen Liliuokalani in order to steal her land, for his personal enrichment, from the children she intended to help. Kuhio's behavior on both occasions should be seen as not merely selfish, but treasonous from the viewpoint of today's sovereignty activists.

In January 1895, at age 23, Kuhio participated in the attempted counterrevolution against the Republic of Hawaii led by Robert Wilcox. He was sentenced to a year in prison, where his fiancée visited him regularly. After his release they got married and went to Europe. It's understandable that the heir to the throne would feel unhappy about imprisonment and about the loss of his future crown. Certainly nobody

would begrudge him the right to get married, and perhaps to travel for a while.

But Kuhio's extended absence is inexcusable in view of the major political events taking place in Hawaii. He played no part in fighting against annexation, even while his fellow "patriots" were making speeches, writing articles in the newspapers, and gathering 21,000 signatures on a petition in 1897 opposing annexation. Today's sovereignty activists excuse his non-participation by claiming he was "in exile." But nobody forced him to leave. Others who had been imprisoned with him stayed in Hawaii after their release in 1895.

Kuhio extended his European adventure by going to Africa where he spent three years fighting on the side of England in the second Boer War.

Let's put that in different terms so that today's sovereignty activists will get the point. Kuhio, designated heir to the throne, abandoned his native land during a time of great political upheaval and went to war halfway around the world, fighting on the side of one White colonial power against another White colonial power in a war to see which one would win control over the land of a poor, downtrodden dark-skinned native population.

Kuhio returned to Hawaii in time to join the Republican Party and defeat the incumbent Robert Wilcox in the 1902 election for Territorial Delegate to Congress, whereupon he took the oath of office swearing to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic (Traitor to the Hawaiian nation!). He introduced the first bill in Congress for statehood for Hawaii (Traitor to the Hawaiian nation!). He finally "brought home the bacon" after 19 years in Congress with passage of his Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (Sellout!).

The case of Kuhio vs. Liliuokalani in 1915-1916 is perhaps even more troubling. The "prince," now Hawaii's Territorial Delegate to Congress

for 13 years, abused his power and prestige to launch a personal attack against Queen Liliuokalani in order to steal her Waikiki land from the children she intended to help. Kuhio publicly accused her of mental incompetence in order to nullify her creation of the Queen Liliuokalani Childrens' Trust, and to establish himself as conservator of her estate, so that after her death her Waikiki properties would go to him instead of to the benefit of the Hawaiian children. Luckily for the children, his lawsuit failed. Full text of the Hawaii Supreme Court decision, including details about what Kuhio was trying to do, is on a webpage: JONAH KUHIO KALANIANAOLE v. LILIUOKALANI, Supreme Court of Hawaii, 23 Haw. 457; 1916. Syllabus and full text of the Court's decision: <http://tinyurl.com/ce7avc>

Evelyn Cook's book "100 years of Healing" includes extensive description of the lawsuit, and especially the role of attorney W.O. Smith in defending Liliuokalani. Knowledgeable readers might be surprised, because W.O. Smith was one of the leaders of the revolution of 1893 that overthrew Liliuokalani. But as time went by the ex-queen realized that Smith was completely trustworthy whereas Kuhio was arrogant, selfish, greedy, and profoundly disrespectful to the woman most ethnic Hawaiians still regarded as their Queen. Instead of native Hawaiian "Prince" Kuhio, Lili'uokalani appointed White man W.O. Smith as trustee of her Queen Lili'uokalani Childrens Trust.

Kuhio was also a womanizer, both in Hawaii and in Washington D.C., -- in today's parlance we might call his scandalous behavior Trumpian. He earned the nickname "Prince Cupid" (Google it if you want some titillation).

Kuhio does not deserve to be ensconced as head of a cult of personality. You should defer this resolution to avoid the embarrassment of voting against it or the even larger embarrassment of voting for it.