I. Reflections: Times Past

THE LEGEND OF LONOIKAMAKAHIKI

It is appropriate that a reference manual about violence begins with a story about love. The preceding passage appears in the renowned historian Abraham Fornander's 1916 recounting of the mo'olelo (legend) of Lonoikamakahiki, Great Chief of the Big Island, and Kapā'ihi, a Kaua'i commoner. The moving story relates how Chief Lonoikamakahiki, abandoned by his warriors on a journey to Kaua'i, was clothed in braided fern, fed, sheltered and finally led through the rainforest to safety by Kapā'ihi, who had felt compassion for the Chief's abandonment and vulnerability. Throughout their journey, Kapā'ihi maintained a respectful distance both day and night, as was appropriate between a commoner and a chief. One day, when the Great Chief asked Kapā'ihi why he had come to take care of him, Kapā'ihi replied simply, "Aloha au iā 'oe, ukali mai nei." The Great Chief thereupon invited Kapā'ihi not to be afraid and to come closer, and together they entered a chief-aikāne relationship.

THE AIKĀNE RELATIONSHIP

The aikāne has traditionally been described as the "consort" of an ali'i (a noble of royal lineage), and was a commoner or of a lower ali'i status, although through the aikāne relationship he was elevated to a much more influential position within society. These intimate same-sex relationships appear frequently in Hawaiian mo'olelo and 'oli (chants) as well as being represented in hula kahiko (ancient hula). They also appear frequently in the post-contact (post-1778) historical record, including documentation of the aikāne relationships of Hawaiian monarchs well into the 19th century.

There clearly was a sexual aspect to these relationships but, like many present-day same-sex and opposite-sex relationships, they were also marked by deep bonds of respect, commitment, spirituality and, as reflected in Kapā'ihi's simple words, love. Mo'olelo, 'oli and hula reflect similar examples of same-sex intimacy and love between women, such as appears in the Pele legend cycle, in which Pele's younger sister Hi'iaka refers to her "intimate friend," Hōpoe, as her aikāne. Although women's same-sex relationships are less visible in the post-contact historical record, this is thought to reflect the decreased visibility of women in general in documents of this period. Within traditional Hawaiian culture, many individuals, including aikāne and ali'i in aikāne relationships had opposite-sex as well as same-sex relationships.

RESPECT FOR SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS

More important than the simple existence of same-sex relationships in traditional Hawaiian culture is the fact that they were common and respected

within families and throughout society. They were seen as important for maintaining the integrity of a people and came with both personal and civic responsibilities. Individuals were measured not by the gender of those whom they loved, but rather by the qualities of respect, responsibility and honor they displayed as members of a community. The recognition and even celebration of same-sex relationships reflect a traditional Hawaiian world view that was comfortable with the breadth and fluidity of human sexuality and the human capacity for love that transcends the sex or gender of one's partner.

RESPECT FOR THE SPECTRUM OF GENDER IDENTITIES AND EXPRESSION

Another reflection of the openness of traditional Hawaiian culture is its acceptance of a spectrum of gender identities (the personal sense of being female or male, or another gender) and gender expression (the ways in which an individual's gender is expressed in the world).

MĀHŪ

In pre-contact Hawai'i, individuals referred to as māhū assumed a respected place within society. Māhū were (and are) biologic males who express their gender in ways considered more typical of females, and assumed gender roles considered more typically feminine, although completely consistent with their identity as māhū. They also assumed highly-valued functional and ritual roles within the family and broader community that were not open to females or males. Māhū were seen as guardians of Hawaiian history and tradition, passing on their special knowledge to future generations through mo'olelo, 'oli , hula and the example of their lives.

WAHINE KAUA

Similarly, there were women who did not assume typical female roles within Hawaiian society, for example the wahine kaua or koawahine who, unlike most women, participated in military campaigns as warriors as well as tending to the wounded in battle. Importantly, these women and māhū were seen as valued and celebrated members of society, performing essential roles that were integral to the perpetuation of Hawaiian culture.

This reflected a recognition that gender identities and expression extend across a diverse spectrum of possibilities beyond simply female or male, a concept that Western and other societies have only recently begun to understand. It is essential that those who seek to serve victims and survivors of violence, including sexual violence, in contemporary Hawai'i's LGBTQ communities understand the profound importance of this legacy: the acceptance and celebration of sexual and gender diversity in traditional Hawaiian culture.

CONTACT: 1778

In 1778, which marks Hawai'i's first contact with the West, Hawai'i's political, economic, social, spiritual and cultural traditions and institutions began to face the steady destructive influence of alien cultures through trade, settlement and colonization. Over the course of less than a hundred years, lands were taken away and thousands of lives lost as a result. Equally devastating, these new settlers gained the power to create and enforce new laws and social norms targeting the core of Hawaiian identity. The use of the Hawaiian language was forbidden in many settings. Efforts were made to conscript and change Hawaiians' traditional understanding of their history and the meanings of their words in order to make them conform to the moral sensibilities of the newcomers. Many of the traditional cultural and spiritual beliefs and practices that were integral to Hawaiian identity were denigrated and/or forbidden, including the belief in traditional deities, the practice of hula, manner of dress, the relationship between kānaka maoli (indigenous Hawaiians) and nature and the land, and the social arrangements that had sustained Hawaiian society for millennia. The traditional Hawaiian openness to the diversity of human sexuality and gender was also disparaged and suppressed. Those individuals who formerly had been woven into the historical, social, political, economic and spiritual fabric of Hawaiian society were marginalized in their own land and made invisible.

THE IMPACT OF CONTACT ON HAWAI'I'S LGBTQ COMMUNITIES

This transformation in Hawaiian culture over the past two centuries is profoundly relevant for contemporary LGBTQ communities in Hawai'i. The incidence of violence both within and against a particular community (whether defined by race, ethnicity, gender, class, religion, ability, immigrant status, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, or any other defining characteristic) is directly related to the recognition and acceptance of that community within broader society. Furthermore, since institutions and agencies often reflect the attitudes and mores of that broader society, the social supports and services that have been created to ameliorate violence often fail to recognize and meet the needs of stigmatized communities.

RESPECTING OUR PAST

REMEMBERING

There is in Hawai'i a cultural "remembrance of times past" in the form of mo'olelo, such as that describing the love of Chief Lonoikamakahiki and Kapā'ihi. It is also preserved in 'oli and hula, as well as the deep shared "blood memory" among kānaka maoli that continues to recall and honor the traditions and beliefs that sustained ancient Hawaiian culture, including its confident celebration of sexuality and gender diversity.

Even more importantly, this centuries-old current of cultural remembrance lives and thrives in kānaka maoli homes and communities across our state. It is this living force that, in spite of more than two centuries of opposing alien cultural influences, today allows many families and communities to continue to embrace, love and celebrate their children and friends who have discovered, or someday will discover, their LGBTQ and māhū identities. It is these same families and communities who presented testimony before the legislature during the recent hearings on same-sex relationships and, by invoking the "blood memory" of legislators and their fellow citizens, prevailed in bringing Hawai'i closer to its cultural roots.

LEARNING, ACCEPTING, CELEBRATING

It is this living memory of a traditional acceptance and celebration of those who today are referred to as LGBTQ that will allow us to openly recognize their presence within our broader 'ohana, the violence they face, and to develop supports and services, including those addressing sexual assault, that are relevant to their unique experiences and needs. Offered validation and safety, these communities will be rewoven into the rich historical, social and spiritual fabric of Hawaiian life.