

Pili Ka Mo'ō

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TRANSCRIPT

Kōlea Fukumitsu

I grew up here in Hakipu'u. We're on the windward side of O'ahu. Growing up here was a large part of my identity. We trace our genealogy back to this, this same place on the same 'āina (land) that our Kūpuna (ancestors) walked on before us. This place for us, it's the beginning. It's the middle. It's where we will eventually rest in the land here. The 'iwi kūpuna (ancestral remains) on that 'āina is Inoino and Paku. Inoino is my fifth great-grandfather. Paku was his wahine (wife). 'Iwi kūpuna, it means the bones, skeletal remains of our ancestors. But it's not just that. The spiritual being of that person, their 'uhane, which is their spirit, is still in the 'iwi, in the bones so when we bury them in the 'āina in the soil, their spirit, their mana, is still there.

Summer Fukumitsu

I feel like that definitely gives that 'āina that place power. And I think when we connect to that 'āina, we're not just connecting to the 'āina. We're connecting to the ancestors that are in that 'āina and the knowledge that they carried and that they've absorbed into it. The fact that many people nowadays don't really understand why 'iwi kūpuna is important is that numbing, we're numb to the purpose or sacredness of things anymore.

Kōlea Fukumitsu

When you are closely tied to 'iwi kūpuna or burials and you know them, you know where they are, the understanding of our responsibility to them and them to us is very real.

Malia Akutagawa

Right next door to us is Kualoa. Kualoa was seen as the seat of our ea, of our sovereignty. Whatever chief had control of Kualoa had much power. So it's very interesting in that you have a missionary family that is now controlling Kualoa and acquiring all the lands in Kaava, Kualoa in the lands here in Hakipu'u. 95% of Hakipu'u has become part of Kualoa Ranch's holdings or no longer in the hands of the Native tenants. So there are just remnant kuleana lands existing here and the Fukumitsu family are one of the few families that still have their kuleana lands.

Kōlea Fukumitsu

Kualoa Ranch had purchased property down the road more and we had made them aware that the 'iwi kūpuna, my ancestors, are buried there and to please be aware and contact us in whatever they're doing. They did not. They went and decided to grade and grub large areas, take down large trees, uproot whatever plants were around. And the next day we went to make a stand. We set our stage to make known the place is sacred, and we took a physical stand. I'm protecting my kids, I'm protecting my 'iwi kūpuna and protecting... We sat in the road and we made sure that construction wouldn't happen.

Cop

Let me ask you this: If the ranch or Mr. Morgan can...

Kōlea Fukumitsu

The police tried to mediate between us, the lineal descendants, and Kualoa Ranch.

Woman Behind Camera

I'm sorry. I know you guys are just doing your job, but this is our kids' safety and the safety of our 'iwi kupuna.

Kōlea Fukumitsu

And so we were arrested. It was me and my neighbor Ian Masterson, were arrested for protecting the 'iwi kūpuna and historic sites. After I was arrested and taken away, Kualoa Ranch was business as usual, had their employees down there doing what they were doing the whole time. And it was very clear that two people could be moved easily.

Woman Behind Camera

We love you guys.

Kōlea daughter

Bye Dad, we love you.

Kōlea Fukumitsu

But if you put a kāhea (a call) and you have the lāhui (community) help, it's a lot more strength because it's harder to move a hundred people than two. It was a relief for me and my 'ohana because it helped us in our stand because we weren't alone. And with all of that support, Kualoa Ranch decided that they couldn't fight the lāhui (community) and what they were standing for, so they decided to hold off for two weeks. Mahalo (thank you) for heeding the kāhea (call), we really, really, really mālama (cherish) everybody for that.

Malia Akutagawa

Why is it that Hawaiian burials don't receive the same treatment as burials in the cemetery? They said, "We don't want our children to inherit this struggle." And then I could feel the sadness in the land and I realized that they were carrying that hurt, that burden, that the kūpuna felt. And so I told them a lot of times, we pull upon the mana, the power of our ancestors, to guide us. We walk on the land, we present ourselves with humility and we ask for their wisdom and we feel their presence with us.

Malia Akutagawa

But now, the kūpuna need our help. And they're pulling upon our essence and our mana to help them to transition into pō, to eternity, because they're trapped by their sadness. And we need to show them that we are there for them, that we will protect their bones. And so I told Summer and Kōlea, have your son chant the genealogy of your family.

Malia Akutagawa

And lend your mana, as their mo'opuna, as their descendants to say, "It's okay. We're going to be okay. We are going to bring the breath and a life back into this place. You don't need to worry anymore."

Kōlea Fukumitsu

So you'll walk down-

Young Boy

Is this where we cleared up?

Kōlea Fukumitsu

Yeah. On the face, there's the springs coming out. So you're going to put it right in the face, but a little bit above the water.

Malia Akutagawa

And so that day when they walked the 'āina was really about returning the gifts, giving back to our kūpuna in the gifts that they have enriched us with.

Kōlea Fukumitsu

It's dry. It's usually coming out here. This is our main spring that gives us water down below. And so you always got to respect what was given to you.

Malia Akutagawa

If you cannot protect the land, forget it. And if you cannot protect the ancestors that we have that connection to, in order to help us to return to ourselves and know what is right and what is pono (just), if you cannot hold on to that mana and preserve the memory of our kūpuna, not just in our minds, but the memory that they give this land so that they can teach us how to return to that place of pono and that place of abundance, then we lose everything.

Malia Akutagawa

Many Hawaiians are homeless. Many Hawaiians have been literally evicted from their ancestral lands. You see here in Hakipu'u, 95% of the lands are lost. So that means all those families left the valley or they perish by the epidemics. To unearth our kūpuna in the ground is like the final eviction. We cannot even have our own ancestors rest peacefully. I could feel that part of the work that Kōlea and Summer does is they nurture and nourish this land and they take that poison out. If we are to restore that ea and that pono back to Hawaii, it's imperative that Kanaka (Hawaiians) begin to come back to this place and breathe life back into this 'āina. And the way that we can connect to that glorious past, where the chiefs walked proudly and where the kahuna (seers) guided us with wisdom is, we have to preserve their 'iwi.