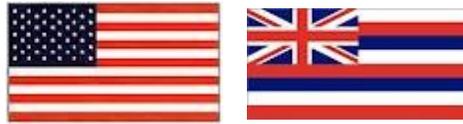


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Unity, Equality, Aloha for all



To: SENATE COMMITTEE ON HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

For hearing Tuesday, March 19, 2019

Re: SCR 69 / SR 47

REQUESTING EVERY COMMERCIAL OR PUBLIC BUILDING LOCATED ON DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS TRUST LAND TO DISPLAY A PHOTOGRAPH OF PRINCE JONAH KUHIO KALANIANA'OLE AND A DESCRIPTION OF HIS ACHIEVEMENTS.

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION

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 me comment on the idea of putting up a picture of Kuhio in every building on DHHL lands.

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? I believe that 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 viewed 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.

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