

'Nutgrass network' conspiracy? — part 2

Haunani Apoliona, MSW
Chairperson Trustee, At-large



Aloha e nā 'ōiwi 'ōlino, nā pulapula a Hāloa, mai Hawai'i a Ni'ihau, puni ke ao mālamalama. Our values define our priorities and move us to act. Ironically, it is our actions that decisively reveal our values and priorities. But much more is revealed to those who have the gift of discernment, as Queen Lili'uokalani said, "to hear what is not said, to see what cannot be seen." This month highlights more on the "Nutgrass Network Conspiracy" introduced in my August trustee column, which referenced the Grass Root Institute of Hawai'i (GRIH) and their additional "nutgrass network" organizations Heritage Foundation and Aloha For All.

By connecting the dots on these organizations and their leaders, we are better informed about their collective strategies to negatively impact Native Hawaiians.

In August 2005, Derek Ferrar authored a *Ka Wai Ola* article entitled, "Who's behind the Grassroot Institute of Hawai'i." The article revealed that this "think tank" against federal recognition has ties to Hawai'i State Senator Sam Slom and national far-right networks. GRIH's website names several organizations as "helpful and friendly" to GRIH. These include: Small Business Hawai'i, Hawai'i Reporter, Americans For Tax Reform, the Heritage Foundation, Reason Public Policy Institute/Reason Foundation and the Heartland Institute. Other organizations identified in working with GRIH are the State Policy Network and Evergreen Freedom Foundation.

In March 2006, Freedom Works Chairman Dick Arme (a former Congressman) and President Matt Kibbe visited Hawai'i to "formally launch a new partnership with Hawai'i's most prominent free-market think tank, the Grassroot Institute" (Freedom Works press release). Freedom Works is a national organization with over 800,000

members, including 1,900 in Hawai'i. This same Freedom Works press release stated that Arme and Kibbe came to Hawai'i "to kickoff an aggressive agenda for 2006 and beyond." Arme states: "this trip will give us the opportunity to connect with our members, build new relationships, and identify opportunities to advance the cause of freedom in the Aloha State."

The August 2005 *Ka Wai Ola* article identified additional groups and an individual with ties to GRIH, including: the Atlas Economic Research Foundation, the Pacific Legal Foundation and Bruce Fein, a former GRIH consultant, *Washington Times* newspaper columnist and Heritage Foundation scholar.

Bruce Fein is noted for writing analyses challenging the facts underlying Public Law 103-150, also known as The Apology Bill, enacted in 1993. He authored articles opposing the Akaka Bill, and his writing was entered into the Congressional Record in 2005 by Senator Jon Kyl of Arizona, opponent of the Akaka Bill. Other continent-based opponents to the Akaka Bill included: Citizens For Equal Rights Alliance Foundation, Wall Street Journal newspaper columnist John Fund and Morris J. Levin, a former Washington, D.C.-based lobbyist for the organization Aloha For All and Aloha Petroleum.

One lead Nutgrass in the Network is Richard O. Rowland, GRIH president and a former director of the Small Business Hawai'i Board of Directors. GRIH and Small Business Hawai'i have several members in common. Senator Sam Slom, President/Executive Director of Small Business Hawai'i, serves on the GRIH Advisory Board. Jack Schneider, Small Business Hawai'i Vice-President/Board Chairman serves on the GRIH Board of Directors. Walt Harvey of East O'ahu Realty serves on the SBH Board of Directors and the GRIH Board of Directors as Treasurer, and also used his website to oppose the Akaka Bill.

Next month we document the "stated" purposes of the remaining organizations noted in this article along with who the lead faces are. We will see connections and overlaps in the continuing saga of the "Nutgrass Network Conspiracy." 22/48

How the state ripped the heart out of Waikiki

Rowena Akana
Trustee, At-large



DLNR values the dollar over Hawaiian-owned business, despite the fact that tourism is dependent on our unique Hawaiian culture and aloha spirit

'Ano'ai kākou. Barry Napoleon established Hawai'i's first beach concession in 1952 on the sands of Waikiki Beach. Although competitors moved in and the beach boys jockeyed for position, the tourists still saw the best O'ahu had to offer. Surfing lessons, canoe rides, or just plain talking story, the Waikiki Beach Boys personified the spirit of aloha. Then, Barry experienced first-hand how the state only gives lip service about our "aloha spirit."

Barry said that from 1982 to 1984, he paid \$400 a month to Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) for an 8-by-12-foot space in front of the Hilton Hawaiian Village. The DLNR took control of the beach concession stands after they saw the profits that could be made and began selling permits.

Problems for Barry began when he complained to the DLNR about alleged criminal activity out of his mainland competitor's concession. Three days later, the DLNR revoked his permit and confiscated his equipment, saying he had violated the conditions of his rental agreement by encroaching on several inches past his allotment of sand.

In 1985, he found a new home at the Waikiki Shores. Barry was paying the owner \$15,000 a month for ground-floor space fronting the beach. The DLNR found out and evicted him. Barry won a temporary restraining order so he could prove his permits were valid. The DLNR ignored the court order and again confiscated his equipment. Without his business, Barry could not earn enough money to press his case.

Earlier that same year, his two nephews tried to reopen a beach concession. The state quickly tore it down. Barry Napoleon was 65 years old at the time. He had spent the better part of his life on the beach at Waikiki, and now the state took his livelihood in favor of mainlanders.

Eleven years later, it seems that DLNR is back at it again. On July 26, Mary Vorsino of *The Honolulu Advertiser* wrote that after 29 years and thousands of students, Clyde 'Aikau closed his surfing school and concession stand at Duke Kahanamoku Beach in Waikiki and ended the only business he's ever known. Clyde, the brother of legendary surfer Eddie 'Aikau, was forced to let go of his ten employees, who he hopes will find work as surf instructors with the Hilton Hawaiian Village. The Hilton is taking over the concession stand. It is unbelievable to me that DLNR didn't even give 'Aikau the courtesy of a break in the rent because of his expertise and tenure.

Vorsino quoted DLNR Chairman Peter Young as saying that 'Aikau has only himself to blame. "We did not tell anybody what rent to suggest other than a minimum, and then it was competitive," Young said. "We would hope they would evaluate their respective business plans and bid responsibly."

I was shocked at the callousness and insensitivity of Young's comments. Where is his sympathy for struggling Hawaiian-owned businesses? Like the tragedy with Barry Napoleon, DLNR seems to be once again putting the almighty dollar ahead of protecting the real reason people come to Hawai'i — our unique Hawaiian culture and the Spirit of Aloha. Marketing campaigns can't sell what doesn't exist.

I believe that OHA needs to investigate whether we should take control over the beach boy concessions at Waikiki Beach. OHA could then ensure that the beach boys are culturally sensitive and that preferences are given to Hawaiian owned businesses. After all, the beaches are considered submerged lands and are, therefore, ceded lands. Tourists from around the world remembered Barry and other beach boys like him for one simple reason: they were genuine. They were Hawaiian. Let's bring that authenticity back to Waikiki.

I mua e Hawai'i nei.

For more information on important Hawaiian issues, check out my website at www.rowenaakana.org.