

## Interchange between Rowena Akana, OHA Trustee-at-Large and Jere Krischel, January 2011

<http://www.oha.org/kwo/2011/01/KWO0111.pdf>

Ka Wai Ola [OHA monthly newspaper], January 2011, page 28

Monthly commentary by Rowena Akana, trustee at-large

Don't rule out the Akaka bill passing in 2011

‘Ano‘ai kakou. On Nov. 15, 2010, Sen. Daniel Akaka introduced a compromise version of Native Hawaiian Government Reorganization Act of 2010 (S.3945).

While there has been much talk in the media that the Akaka bill has little chance of passing in the next two years, I wouldn't rule it out for the following reasons:

- Hawaii-born President Barack Obama is still in the White House and remains a strong supporter of the bill.
- Sen. Daniel Inouye, the most senior member of the U.S. Senate, remains the chairman of the powerful Senate Committee on Appropriations. After 51 years in Washington, I'm certain Senator Inouye can find a way to twist the arms of the Republican Senators who are holding up the bill.
- Gov. Neil Abercrombie can lobby the Senate with the help of his close friend, Republican House Speaker John Boehner. (Star-Advertiser, Nov. 21, 2010)

Yes, it won't be easy, but there is certainly still reason to hope.

### POLITICAL STATUS ONLY

It is disappointing that critics of the bill continue to call it "race-based." Jere Krischel of the Grassroot Institute of Hawaii, which opposes the Akaka bill, even said that it would "racially segregate families and communities into groups with different rights based on whether or not they have Hawaiian blood." (AP, Nov. 9, 2010)

This is so ridiculous that anyone with half a brain knows this is crazy. The Grassroot Institute, with a handful of members from the lower 48 states, has

no real roots in Hawaii. They know darn well the bill doesn't do any of the things they claim it does. Their propaganda is based on lies and it's time for all of us to call them out.

We must investigate who really makes up their membership and what is their real agenda. Who is Jere Krischel and where does he come from? How long has he lived in Hawaii? Why do he and his contacts hate Native peoples and what are they afraid of?

Ever since Americans landed here on our shores, they have tried to control our people and our lands. Krischel needs to be reminded over and over – Hawaiians aren't immigrants, nor are we foreigners looking for handouts. Krischel and his ilk are the foreigners and they are the racists! They need to go back to where they came from and take with them their racist attitude. We don't need them to spoil our Hawaii. Hawaiians for centuries have always been generous and kind to our malihini and visitors. We certainly don't want outsiders giving us a bad rap!

Establishing a political relationship between Native Hawaiians and the federal government will hopefully silence these racists and put a stop to their continuing legal challenges to Hawaiian programs. It will also prevent the loss of millions of dollars the state currently receives from the federal government for programs that perpetuate the Native Hawaiian culture, language and traditions.

The Akaka bill is only meant to begin the reconciliation process between the federal government and the over 400,000 Native Hawaiians living in the U.S. Passing the Akaka bill is simply the right thing to do. It doesn't have anything to do with being a Democrat or a Republican and should not be such a politically divisive issue.

I look forward to working with the Obama Administration, our Congressional Delegation and Governor Abercrombie as we take our next crucial steps toward Native Hawaiian sovereignty.

Mele Kalikimaka me ka Hau'oli Makahiki Hou! '

Are you interested in Hawaiian issues and OHA? Please visit my web site at [www.rowenaakana.org](http://www.rowenaakana.org) for issues and links to other information sites.

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From: Jere Hiroshi Krischel [mailto:[jere@krischel.org](mailto:jere@krischel.org)]  
Sent: Friday, December 31, 2010 12:48 PM  
To: Rowena Akana  
Subject: Ka Wai Ola January 2011

Aloha Rowena,

I just read your article in the January 2011 Ka Wai Ola, and I thought I'd answer a few questions you had.

Where do I come from?

I was born at Kapi`olani Hospital, and raised in Hawai`i. I have lived in Pauoa, Kaneohe, Red Hill, Makakilo, Wahiawa and Poamoho Camp. I attended Playmate School in Makiki, and Punahou School from kindergarten to 11th grade before attending the University of Southern California on an early admissions program. I worked as a paper boy in Wahiawa from 1985-1987, picked pineapple for Del Monte on summers and weekends throughout high school, and used to take the bus all the time (83 and 92 express, 52, 50 and 4 mostly).

How long did I live in Hawaii?

From birth until I was 18 years old, with two years spent on the mainland.

What are my motives?

First and foremost, as a human of many ethnicities and nationalities, I have a strong aversion to any racial categorization. The thought of being defined by one's ancestry is anathema to me. Although some may wish to label themselves "indigenous" to one area or another, it is my firm belief that ultimately we are all descendants of immigrants and indigenous to the planet earth, and we should treat one another with equality and respect no matter where the bones of our ancestors are interred.

As an American, from a country with a history born of the rejection of hereditary title and monarchy, I strongly believe in the ideals of human equality. Although the United States has not always been perfect in implementing the 14th amendment, it is an ideal to which I believe we should all aspire. I think the poem by Akemi Matsumoto Ehrlich on the National Japanese American Memorial says it best:

#### LEGACY

Japanese by blood  
Hearts and minds American  
With honor unbowed  
Bore the sting of injustice  
For future generations

As a Hawaiian, from an island chain with a legacy of many cultures melding together, I am proud of the example of our land. When people from the mainland talk about a "melting pot", they usually mean you can get any kind of ethnic food within 15 miles of home - people in Hawai`i mean you can get any kind of ethnic food within 15 feet of one kitchen, or within 15 inches of one plate.

As a scholar, I also have a strong interest in Hawaiian history, which has been further sparked by my recent participation in the debate over the issues of the 1893 overthrow, race-based government programs in Hawai`i, and the impending Akaka Bill. My father, Walter Benavitz,

was a member of the Polynesian Voyaging Society, and participated in the 1987 tour of the Hokule`a. My school, Punahou, was a place of history drawing back to 1841 with a strong Hawaiian studies component.

All of these motivations brought me to the decision that I could no longer remain silent, and allow the racial supremists to dominate the dialogue. Witnessing the current tone and tenor of particular extremists on the issue, those activists inspired the "activist" within me.

It is my sincere hope that with enough constructive discussion, we can overcome our frailties, realize the complexity of "historical truth", and move beyond the politics of identity. We can and should live in a world that tackles humanitarian issues in a needs-based, race-blind manner.

Why do he and his contacts hate Native peoples and what are they afraid of?

I don't hate anybody, Rowena, not even you. As for what I'm afraid of, I'm afraid of institutionalizing racism into institutions like OHA, and the corruption and evil that it causes. I am afraid of returning to a day and age where your ancestry mattered more than your individuality. I am afraid of the people who would divide us by such an arbitrary measure as "race".

Why is he writing this email?

I would like you to publicly apologize for calling me a racist in your column. It was uncalled for, inaccurate, insulting and distinctly un-Hawaiian. I am just as indigenous to Hawaii as you are, and to consider me a foreigner simply because of my ancestry is improper - I came from Hawaii, and there is no other place for me to go back to.

I would also welcome the opportunity to speak with you further on my concerns regarding the Akaka Bill, and all programs in Hawaii and the United States that would contain racial qualifications in them. I understand the desire to preserve and extend the culture of Hawaii, but I believe we can do so without attaching any racial basis to that culture.

I look forward to your apology, and wish you a happy holidays, and a wonderful new year!

Mahalo,

Jere Krischel  
civil rights activist

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On Jan 3, 2011, at 7:28 PM, Rowena Akana wrote:

TO: Mr. Jere Hiroshi Krischel

Thank you for your response. However, I would like to make some final comments to you.

First I suggest you read "Pau Hana" written by a second generation Nisei. You obviously are oblivious not only to Hawaiian History but also to the history of the Japanese and other immigrants who came to Hawaii to work and live. Otherwise, you wouldn't be so pie in the sky pious with your attitudes.

Punahou School was started by the missionaries who did not want to have their children go to school with any Hawaiian or any other minority.

You should also research James Michener's life while he lived in Hawaii during the '60's and left because the Caucasians who lived in Kahala took up a petition against him to move because he was married to a Japanese-American.

The Honolulu Club remained segregated until it was sued in the early 70's.

Reading "Catching a Wave" will give you the insight you lack in truly understanding the place that you live in.

Finally, Hawaii is a very special place and could be the model for the rest of America if the people who live here would understand WHY it is a very special place.

Aloha,

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Ka Wai Ola January 2011  
Monday, January 3, 2011 6:13 PM  
From: "Jere Hiroshi Krischel" <[jere@krischel.org](mailto:jere@krischel.org)>  
To: "Rowena Akana" <[rowenaa@oha.org](mailto:rowenaa@oha.org)>

Mahalo for your reply Rowena, I'm happy to have you share your mana'o with me. Much of what you suggest to me, however, only reinforces my position that race-based government and programs in Hawaii are both misguided and inappropriate.

For example, the fact that Japanese and Chinese immigrants, who were the only ones ever treated like second class citizens under law (see the 1887 Constitution of Hawaii which took away the right to vote from Asians), would be excluded from Hawaiian programs and race-based governments seems like adding insult to injury. My clear understanding of the history of immigration and institutionalized racial discrimination in the past (including race-based pay which put haoles and native Hawaiians on top, Portuguese second, and chinese, japanese and filipino at the bottom), makes me ever more adamant that we should avoid such racial qualifications in the future.

In regards to Punahou School, which only opened its doors to all races and religions in 1851 after ten years of operation, I would argue that we should behave more like Punahou *after* 1851, rather than look at their first ten years as an example to follow.

James Michener and his choice to marry outside of his race also seems to emphasize the point that people should be treated as equal fellow humans, rather than judged by their ancestry or their "purity", as is done with blood quantum measures (even those which only demand a single drop of preferred blood). Had either Michener or his wife worried about the blood quantum purity of their children, they never would have given their love a chance. Should we behave like Mr. and Mrs. Michener, and treat everyone the same regardless of their ancestry, or should we behave like the Kahala haoles who wanted to keep races separate and distinct?

The Honolulu Club and their segregation again, seems like a warning of what *not* to do, not a reason to create new race-based segregation in our society.

I'll definitely read "Pau Hana" and "Catching a Wave", and thank you for those suggestions, but I cannot believe that the lesson we should learn from these examples you've given is that "it's okay to be race-based now, because other people used to be race-based in the past". If someone is raped, we don't achieve justice by promoting more rape of other people. By the same token, if at some point in history someone was racially discriminated against, we don't achieve justice by racially discriminating against others today. The answer is to remove *all* racial qualifications from *all* laws and government regulations, and to treat people as equals in both blood and spirit now and forevermore. The fact that you could somehow interpret my demand for racial equality as some sort of hidden racism just doesn't seem rational at all, and is why I must insist on an apology from you.

I hope you understand very clearly that the Akaka Bill, and any government program which decides a person's worth based upon their racial heritage rather than on their individuality, is poisonous, and just as bad, if not worse, than all of the injustices you listed in your reply to me. While indulging in a spirit of revenge against others may offer some cynical satisfaction, it's destructive both to the self, and to society. I clearly understand that the world has not always been a kind place to everyone, and that even in Hawaii, we've had many injustices in the past

(even before western contact in 1778, when the ali'i ruled supreme and the kauwa served as a permanent slave class). But the evils of the past do not justify more evil in the present.

I believe Hawaii is a model for the world because as far back as 1840, our constitution declared that all people were "of one blood". I believe Hawaii is a model for the world because the Kamehameha Dynasty turned a stone age society into a modern Kingdom in less than a generation by embracing Western ideals, technology and society. I believe Hawaii is a model for the world because despite the rough patches of our history, we are more kapakahi than anywhere else, and in choosing who we will love and have children with, we ignore race with a passion unmatched anywhere else that I know of.

I also believe that what you currently support in the Akaka Bill, and in the preservation of existing race-based programs in Hawaii, including many OHA programs, threatens very deeply what makes Hawaii so special.

I beg you, please reconsider your position on these issues, and help turn OHA into a institution for cultural preservation regardless of race, rather than a racial institution which divides our people and families. There is no reason to repudiate the wisdom of our kupuna who embraced each other's common humanity. There is no reason to have a race-based government or race-based programs.

I still await your apology, but thank you for continuing the conversation nonetheless. It shows both courage and humility to engage with someone you may disagree with, and I deeply appreciate that.

Mahalo, and Happy New Year!

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On Jan 5, 2011, at 8:03 PM, Rowena Akana wrote:

TO: Mr. Jere Hiroshi Krischel

I don't believe that you want to understand why Hawaiian programs are not race based, but a political status created by the US when dealing with Native Americans, Native Alaskans and Native Hawaiians. Like it or not we were the first people of our Nations. Everyone else migrated to our lands. It really is as simple as that.

When no reparations or any compensation is given for taking or the stealing of Native lands, Natives have every right to seek justice.

I thank you for the dialogue but it ends here. I do not intend to carry out any further discussion with you as it is very clear to me that you really don't want to understand our plight but simply want to argue.

May I suggest that you read up on Indian Law.

Aloha,

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: Ka Wai Ola January 2011  
Wednesday, January 5, 2011  
From: "Jere Hiroshi Krischel" <[jere@krischel.org](mailto:jere@krischel.org)>  
To: "Rowena Akana" <[rowenaa@oha.org](mailto:rowenaa@oha.org)>

Aloha, Rowena, and thank you again for your reply.

First of all, I'll respectfully remind you that like many others without any ancestors in Hawaii before 1778, I was born in Hawaii, and didn't migrate here from \*anywhere\* else. If you want to point out that my ancestors migrated here from somewhere else over a hundred years ago, I'll point out that the same is true of the few Marquesans and/or Tahitians in your ancestry who migrated here before Captain Cook arrived in 1778. The "a small fraction of my ancestors were here before yours were" argument is hardly the basis for any form of government, or appropriate for deciding how to apportion resources between people.

Furthermore, your argument regarding Native Alaskans and Native Americans is fatally flawed and based on a terrible, yet apparently very common, misunderstanding of Indian Law by Akaka Bill supporters. Native Alaskans and Native Americans do not have any sort of claim on the US based on their bloodline, and my non-tribal part-Cherokee son can attest to that. There may be federally recognized \*tribes\* (including the Cherokee Freedmen, who have African American ancestors, and often don't have any Native American ones), but there is no recognition for someone simply because their ancestors lived somewhere before western contact, which is what the Akaka Bill proposes. Most Native Alaskans and Native Americans, including my son, aren't part of any tribe at all, and are treated the same way as other non-tribal citizens are. Particularly for Hawaii, where the Kingdom nobly declared in 1840 that all people were "of one blood", and made no distinction between natives and non-natives, creating a new political relationship based on blood is simply racism, pure and simple.



Lastly, there was no "taking or stealing" of Native lands. You may despise the ali'i for giving away vast tracts of land to their European supporters during the Kingdom Period, and you may despise those native Hawaiians who sold their kuleana lands to non-natives after the Great Mahele, but nothing was taken, and nothing was stolen. Your pursuit of "justice" here, specifically on the basis of bloodline, is terribly misinformed and ignores the true history of the land.

Now, if you've got any sort of specific information about a specific acre of land, that was stolen from a specific person, by a specific person, at any specific time in the history of the Kingdom, Republic, Territory or State of Hawaii, please, share with me - I would love to learn if you have something to teach, and with specifics we can work towards rectifying things without any appeal to race. But simply waving one's hands and declaring that you, based simply on your bloodline, deserve some sort of reparation or compensation from me, for some unspecified piece of land supposedly stolen from a native Hawaiian by some unspecified person at some unspecified time, is not a rational argument, especially considering that my non-native ancestors in Hawaii, by your own citations in your first reply, were terribly discriminated against and exploited. The children of ali'i asking for reparation and compensation from the children of plantation laborers seems distasteful on every level imaginable.

I understand that you may not be comfortable continuing a discussion which challenges your very deeply held beliefs, and don't expect any further reply from you. But now I have a much better idea about where your misunderstandings are, why this is such an emotional issue for you, and I'm grateful that you gave me the opportunity to hear your mana'o.

In closing, I must admit, I'm disappointed that you never stepped up to the plate to apologize to me for your improper and inaccurate accusations of racism in the January 2011 Ka Wai Ola.

While your willingness to continue the conversation this far has been admirable, your lack of remorse for your wrongdoing is truly unbecoming of someone in your position of power and influence.

Mahalo again, and my sincerest wishes that one day, you will find it in your heart to challenge your own deeply held beliefs, and become a champion of race-blind government and policies, just as our kupuna during the Hawaiian Kingdom did.

He Hawaii au; he mau Hawaii ka kou a pau.