

# 'ĀINA WARRIORS

**Kaleo Aolahiko**

*Kalihi Resident and Backyard Farmer*



Tucked away on a narrow lane in Kalihi Uka, Kaleo Aolahiko lives quietly. His work hours were recently reduced as a result of the current pandemic, but his mood is bright and he still finds joy in life.

Kaleo talks about continuing the traditions of his Tūtū whose land once flourished with food and medicine. He tries to practice his Tūtū's teachings and his own upbringing by growing food.

His yard is abundant with kalo (taro), malunggay, hō'io (fernshoot), and niu (coconut). In fact, when he harvests kalo, he makes laulau for himself, using the leaf, corm, and stem of the entire plant. There is no waste.

With the current situation our world is in, Kaleo finds comfort in knowing that everything he produces on his land, he will eat. And he hopes to pass that knowledge on to his own mo'opuna (grandchildren).

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“It's (the 'aina) not in our mind anymore. I seen my Tutu - their generation. It (the 'aina) was part of them. It's not like you had to tell us or my parents generation (go help clean yard). Once you see Tutu out there, you just go (to help).”

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## Kalolo Tuihalafatai

*Kalihi Resident and Community Caregiver*



In 1993, Kalolo Tuihalafatai, moved his young family to Kalihi Uka. As a parishioner of Our Lady of the Mount Catholic Church in Kalihi, he volunteered to be the caretaker of its cemetery.

The original church was built in 1870 and became the site for the immigrant Portuguese congregation's services.

Eventually the church moved to lower Kalihi, but the cemetery remained at the original location with no one to care for it. Kalolo decided to take on the kuleana to upkeep the graveyard. Every two weeks, he makes his way to the back of the valley to mālama the cemetery.

He doesn't get paid. "It's just something I need to do for them," he says sweeping his arm across the space where all that is left are a handful of headstones.

There are many food and medicine trees on property that share the kūpuna space. 'Ulu, mountain apple, and avocado line the perimeter of the cemetery.

Originally from Tonga, Kalolo remembers making food and medicine from the same plants in his homeland. "Yah we use that one," he points to the mountain apple bark. "For stomach problems."

Kalolo remains vigilant about continuing to care for the cemetery as he's been doing for the past 27 years. He is committed to taking care of the kūpuna and the food plants that grow abundantly in the cemetery.

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**Debbie Azama**

*Mo'ō 'Āina - Protector of the Land*



Deep in Kalihi valley, Aunty Debbie and her 'ohana are taking back their community. For years, neighborhood kids and hunters would access the upper reaches of the valley to hike or hunt. But social media brought attention to the once isolated spot, bringing malihini to a quiet and peaceful community.

Through the recent pandemic, she has decided to put a stop to people trespassing on BWS land. "We are here to educate the public," says Aunty Debbie as she stands next to a hand painted sign. "People don't realize that this 'āina is our grandmother and we are here to protect her."

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“This land is your grandmother,  
and she loves you.”

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**Dolly Tatofi**

*Kalihi Uka Resident and Ho'oponopono Practitioner*



She is soft-spoken and has an infectious laugh and speaks with passion about Kalihi Uka. Dolly Tatofi has lived in the valley for 16 years and raised her sons in the same home for the most part of their young lives. She and her 'ohana have also witnessed change in the valley as more people enter the quiet neighborhood.

Many visitors use the narrow winding road to park their vehicles in front of her rock wall, intending to “explore” the area. Dolly uses the opportunity to educate the unknowing individuals. “Just trying to help remind them to be respectful to the place that they come to. They don’t know the stories about this place. They just know ooohhh fun!”

Knowing the history of place and the mo'olelo behind it helps to understand and connect to the land you visit. In fact, Dolly's grandparents had a home in Honoli'i on Hawai'i Island. The home is no longer in the family, but Dolly remembers spending time there and listening to mo'olelo about the 'āina.

She says the rain name of Honoli'i is the same rain of Kalihi Uka – Koi'ilipilipi. Mo'olelo also tells us our genealogical connection to 'āina, and Dolly knows this all too well. “Although I didn't grow up here (Kalihi Uka), it's a reminder of where I came from.”

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