Voices and Visions 2007

Innovative... Ideas Angles Views Paths

Spectrum
Voices and Visions 2007
Acknowledgements

In their first collaboration, editor Cynthia Thurlow, graphic designer Taressa Ishimi, and adviser Michael Tsai bring together the diverse talents of Kapi‘olani Community College (KCC) student contributors.

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Students who are interested in submitting contributions to any of the student publications are welcome to e-mail kapio@hawaii.edu.

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"By three methods we may learn wisdom: first, by reflection, which is noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest."

-Confucius
Mud
By Aaron Marsh

I sat on the porch of one of Ketchum Air Service’s cabins on the remote mud flats of Cook Inlet and watched the last of the high tide draining quickly. The water sloshed around the pilings of the small shack and drained away like water in a tub. With the water went any hope of seeing the floatplane that was supposed to pick me up. I was now alone in the sea of mud shining in the rising moonlight.

I was hungry, tired, damp, and covered in mud. I was supposed to be on an airplane flying back to Anchorage 10 miles away. Back home to dinner, back to see my mom off to work, back to a shower, dry clothing and my own warm bed. Standing on the porch, I could see the glow from the city of 250,000 people tucked away against the Chugach Mountain Range across the inlet. High and dry above the mud I saw one of the most dangerous waterways in the world standing between me and home. Anchorage may as well have been a thousand miles away.

It was 1979, and I was 14 years old. That morning I had ridden my bike to work at Ketchum Air Service, in Lake Hood, the world’s largest seaplane base. Although it was early fall, it was a bright sunny morning with a light nip in the air. My heart was full of pride. I had a cool job: I was a Ketchum dock boy, one of six boys the company hired each spring to work on the airplane docks. All of the kids were older than I was, and from wealthy families. I lived with my mom and brother in a trailer park, and, unlike the other boys, I needed to work to help my family. I was very grateful for the job.

The summer was over, and I was the last dock boy working. The others had gone back to school, but my family needed the money, so I still worked afternoons and weekends. The day before I had been in school, where, like most young teenagers, I had always felt I never fit in. But on this day, I was a person with a job and responsibilities. I was to fix the deck on a company cabin in the mud flats.

It was early Saturday morning and old Charlie Angle, a pilot, was loading lumber onto one of the large de Havillan Beaver floatplanes. We needed to work fast if we were to get to the mud flats with the morning tide. As I untied the plane and clamored aboard, Charlie cranked the large radial engine and it coughed to life. We taxied on the lake, lifting off smoothly on our journey to the mud flats. I was a little apprehensive by this time; I wished I
could hang out with my friends at the trailer park, or help Paul, the aircraft mechanic, with the planes, but I had a job to do.

It was a short trip over several miles of open water to the mud flats off Cook Inlet. Setting the plane down near the cabin, we slowly taxied on the calm water, watching for driftwood and logs that littered the flats. The plane came to a stop alongside the cabin and I jumped onto the deck with the mooring line in my hand. Charlie gave me some last-minute instructions as we unloaded the plane: wait for the tide to recede, pry up the old deck board, chop it and stack it for the wood stove inside the cabin, and then nail down the new boards. He warned me again about the unpredictable dangers of the mud flats. Charlie glanced back toward the inlet, watching the receding tide; he said he needed to go, but one of the Ketchum family would pick me up on the evening high tide. This was goodbye for this summer, as Charlie was returning that day to his family home in the Lower Forty-Eight.

With a gentle shove, the floatplane drifted away with the outgoing tide. Charlie waved goodbye and gunned the motor. It picked up speed, broke free of the water, and climbed away toward Anchorage. I was alone on the mud flats. I watched the tide go out, quickly increasing in speed to almost a torrent and then slowing,
draining away to leave hard-packed, grey mud and silt.

I worked quickly, pulling up an old plank and nailing down a new one, not paying much attention to my surroundings. With only a handsaw and hammer, work was slow, but by midday, I was finished. I was quite proud of my deck job. The cuts were a little rough, but the new deck was a vast improvement over the nearly rotted-through old timbers that were now neatly stacked in the cabin next to the stove. I sat down to eat my lunch, taking in my domain. Most of the small puddles had drained away and grey mud was drying in the warm sun. In a few weeks, the mud flats would be teeming with birds and duck hunters plying about. But now it was quiet. I could see a large ravine cut from the force of the tides between the nearest cabin and me. The cabin was about half a mile away. It was painted bright green, with a large porch and high-pitched roof. The wealthy Scott family owned it. Steve Scott, the son, was one of the dock boys at Ketchum. We were best friends during the past two summers. But once school started, we went back to our vastly different worlds. We would say “hey” when we passed each other in the hall, but that was about it.

I didn’t own a watch, but I calculated I had a few hours to kill before the plane returned to pick me up. Feeling bored, I hitched my boot-like hip-waders and stepped out onto the mud. The ground was firm where the grass grew, and the mud not as sticky. Walking toward the Scott cabin, I came to the ravine. It was about 20 feet across and 10-feet deep, with soft, muddy sides dripping and oozing silt to the bottom. I was smart enough to know I was not going to cross at this point and get stuck in the mud. People die in the mud. I recalled that the previous spring a lady got stuck while clamming on the mud flats on the other side of Anchorage. By the time Fire and Rescue got to her, she had sunk up to her waist. They tried to dig her out, only to have her sink slowly deeper. Soon, the tide came in and she was underwater breathing through an air regulator. By the time the rescuers freed her, she had died of exposure in the frigid water. I shuddered just thinking of the graphic news footage.

Working my way gingerly inland along the ravine, I was able to find a place to cross. It had taken me far longer to get to the Scott’s cabin than I had planned. I would have to turn around immediately if I wanted to get back before the tide came back in and with it, my plane. Despite my mounting apprehension, I climbed onto the Scotts’ clean deck, with the grey mud sloshing from my boots and contrasting with the bright, green deck. I looked back at the Ketchum cabin. It looked alarmingly small and far away, drab, with grey, unpainted sides. As I expected, the door to the Scott cabin.
had no lock. In Alaska, for survival purposes, it’s illegal to lock any cabin. The cabin was clean with a nice kitchen area equipped with cabinets and a water cistern, beautiful porcelain stove, and a loft with bunk beds. Very nice. Nicer than my mom’s trailer. I twinged with envy, but with my curiosity satisfied, I needed to start back to my cabin.

“But no plane came, and the tide rushed out again.”

I tried to make up time by crossing the ravine directly, and almost instantly I found myself up to my knees in mud. I desperately grabbed a long driftwood stick and worked it between my hip-waders and the mud to break the suction, only to get my other boot stuck. I repeated the process while quelling my panic. I didn’t want to be here when the tide rushed back in. By sitting down in the mud and pulling my legs out of the hip-waders, then pulling the hip-waders out of the mud, I was finally able to get across the ravine and up the other side in nearly an hour. Half swimming, half crawling, I scrambled up the ravine bank. I made it onto the deck of the little cabin with little time to spare. The water was flowing back in alarmingly fast. I was covered in mud. It was caked in my hair, and I could taste it in my mouth. I removed by boots and jeans and washed the mud off by hanging them over the deck in the rushing tidal water. In my wet clothes, I sat and waited for the plane. I wolfed down my remaining lunch, swallowing my Coke in big gulps. I was chilled to the bone. If the plane didn’t get there soon, I would have to light the stove.

But no plane came, and the tide rushed out again. Now I was panicked. What had happened? The night sky was clear, so it was not bad weather. Maybe plane trouble? But the company had six airplanes. This was bad. Imminent survival mode kicked in and I went back inside the cabin to fire up the wood stove. The stove quickly grew cherry hot and I, at least temporarily and perhaps ignorantly, felt relieved. Stripping down and wrapping myself in an itchy grey wool blanket, I hung my clothes to dry. There were meager supplies in the cabin: some old coffee in a rusting can, a stovetop percolator, rock-hard creamer, some sugar, salt and pepper, and a few tin plates and pans, but no sustainable food to speak of. Getting water from the rain cistern, I made a pot of coffee, heaped it with creamer and sugar, and settled down for the night. I slept on one of the bunks that had a thin canvas mattress,
thankful that the cool weather had kept
the mosquitoes at bay. I slept restlessly in
spurts, getting up to restock the stove when
it cooled down. In the dead silence and
darkness, I listened for a plane.

In the morning light, a thick fog blan­
keted everything, the rising sun just a
bright smudge in the sky. I was hungry
and uncomfortable in my now-dry but very
muddy clothes. When the tide started to
come back in, I didn’t hold any hope of
seeing a plane. The fog was thick, too thick
to land. Maybe they would send a boat, I
thought hopefully. But how could you find
this cabin in the fog? I could barely make
out the Scotts’ bright green cabin through
the passing curtains of fog. The tide came
and went. My spirits were down. It was
deathly quiet. Where were they? How could
they forget about me? Surely my mom
would have noticed me not coming home
last night before she went to work? What
about when she came home in the morning?
No, I justified, she knew how busy I was
going to be during the weekends this fall.
What about my younger brother, Jason? He
would surely miss me. But then again, he
was probably at one of his friend’s house for the weekend. He
always preferred his friends’ houses to our trailer.

Hunger prevailed. I decided to go back over to the Scotts’
cabin to see if they had any food. Wary of getting stuck again,
I worked my way inland before trying to cut back to the green
cabin. But by the time I got to the ravine, I couldn’t see either
cabin. I could only see a few hundred feet in front of me. In the
silence, I could hear my heart pounding. As I worked my way
back along the far side of the ravine, the real Alaskan weather
came. It started to rain, lightly at first, then heavier. It made the
mud slick and sticky, and I was quickly getting soaked to the
bone. But with the heavy rain, the fog thinned enough for me to
see the Scotts’ cabin. In the driving rain, I ran to cover the few
hundred yards to the cabin. I frantically climbed onto the porch,
stripped off my hip-waders, and ran into the cabin. The rain was
deafening on the sloped tin roof. I felt like the intruder that I was,
but I was happy to be out of the rain and mud.
The pantry was stocked to the hilt with beans, Spam, canned hams, and canned milk. Greedily, I opened a tin of almonds, a can of milk, and spooned some Spam right out of the can. The Scotts' expensive porcelain stove was oil fired. It quickly came to life with a turn of the valve and push of the igniter. I found a pair of coveralls and changed into dry clothes. I spent the rest of the day silently watching the rain come down, my fear turning to anger. I felt bad about looking in the Scotts’ cabin, and then I was mad at the Scotts’ son, Steve, who had so much he didn’t need to work. I was angry with the Ketchums, as I felt I was expendable, able to be run off or left on a mud flat. My own mother was too busy with work to care about me. I shouldn’t have had to work. I should have been at home doing my schoolwork. School! It was now Sunday and I needed to go to school the next day!

I looked outside and realized there was no way to walk back to my cabin now. The driving rain had made the mud wet and slick,
too dangerous to walk on. But I didn’t want to miss the plane and I didn’t like the way I felt here. Glancing out to the rear deck, I found a 10-foot smoker craft, a small rowboat. I was elated to also see a small two-horsepower motor on a wall hook. I filled the motor with gas and it fired up. Carefully lowering the boat onto the mud, I mounted the little motor, and then picked up some supplies: a rain jacket, food, a bottle of blackberry brandy, a gas lantern, and a Jack London book of short stories. On the chalk memo board near the door, I left a note saying that I took the boat and supplies. I signed it, “Aaron Marsh, the stranded Ketchum Air Service Employee.” I waited patiently for the high slack tide, casting off the mooring line, and started the motor. I took my bearings and headed toward my cabin. The little boat gave me an amazing feeling of control over my life, for the first time in two days. I couldn’t use it to get home, but I covered the distance between the cabins in mere minutes. I unloaded the boat and pulled it onto the porch. Still no plane, just rain and mud. Wearing the borrowed coveralls, I washed my clothes in a basin now plentiful with fresh water. The wood stove soon warmed the dampness out of the cabin. I fried some dinner and then fell asleep drinking brandy and reading Jack London by the light of the borrowed Coleman lamp, with the cold rain coming down outside.

I woke up the next morning feeling refreshed and put on my clean clothes. Monday. I was not going to school that day. The day was grey and overcast, but the rain and fog had lightened a little from the day before. I was dry and felt more confident. When the tide came back, I put the small boat back in the water. With another long day stretching before me, I went exploring. It’s amazing how something like a boat can, under the circumstances, make you feel so empowered. I motored to the other cabins; none were as nice as the Scotts’. I kept an eye on my cabin and the tide as I worked my way around most of the other cabins. They were well stocked, so I knew I wasn’t going to starve in the short term.

When the tide started to back out, I raced back to my cabin, fighting the hard current. I spent the rest of the day reading and watching the world from my new front porch. If this was my fate, it wasn’t too bad. Even if the Ketchums never came, the ducks would, and with them, the hunters. As if reading my mind, a pair of mallard ducks landed near the cabin, quacking and wading in a

"If this was my fate, it wasn’t too bad."
shallow pool. Shortly after, more and more arrived. I even saw a flock of Canadian geese pass over and land further on. Who knew waterfowl could bring such joy and hope?

The evening tide came and went with no plane. Following my new routine, I lit the lantern and started dinner. Then I heard the high-pitched whine of an airplane passing overhead. Elated, I ran outside to see one of the Ketchum’s red-white-and-blue Cessnas banking sharply, coming toward the cabin. The motor cut out, and it came down hard in the mud on its floats. It was a very risky maneuver. Floatplanes are meant to land in water, not mud. As it landed, the engine immediately went to full power and the plane moved slowly toward me where it ground to a halt about 20 yards from the cabin. The motor cut out, the cockpit door opened, and out climbed Craig Ketchum. He yelled to me, “Hey Marsh, vacation’s over!” using humor to hide his relief. He told me to secure the cabin and help him to turn the airplane around.

I put out the stove and lamp, tossed my dinner out, and pulled on my hip-waders. As I tuned to leave, I stopped and ran back for the Jack London book. I held a wing rope as a pivot point to turn the plane around while Craig gunned the engine. When I climbed in the cockpit, I mentioned that the fuel gauges showed empty. Craig said they took out all the fuel to keep the plane light, then put back just enough fuel to get in and out of the inlet. I also noticed all the passenger seats were removed. The plane, at full power, sluggishly crept down to the water line, fighting the mud that did not want to let me go. But once in the water, we sped up, smoothly rising into the air and turning toward Anchorage, my home.

Craig finally asked me how I was, and I responded that I was O.K. I mentioned entering the Scotts’ cabin and borrowing their boat. Craig said we could straighten out the whole situation next week. He apologized for forgetting about me Saturday night; both he and his dad thought the other had picked me up. By Sunday, when they realized I was missing, the bad weather had closed in. He let me know that there were a lot of people very concerned about me. Craig said he told everyone he thought I was a very capable young man, and he wasn’t worried in the least. Suddenly, I was proud of myself. I was no longer the poor, unconfident trailer-park kid, but a young man able to control his destiny. Alone, I had managed to survive a desperate situation. This gave me the courage I would use again and again in subsequent years to face the many personal challenges and adventures that came my way.
Elemental Defiance
By Stacey Shimabukuro-Lui

A single shell lies crushed to a gritty powder as its
Pressed form washes into the
Sandy evidence of others like it
Who gave in

As a neighboring pebble is raked on the shoreline tide and
Scoured upon the granular shore
Remaining true to pebble form amidst the sand

Shoreline flower
Retreats with a sullen countenance and
Slowly wilts its petal life dry
In the blare of the laser sun

As a neighboring bud
Holds its strapping head high
Refusing to wither through the noonlight heat
Defying the elements
In the same assaulting light

A stiffened tree cracks each
Wooden appendage
To the twisting element blowing unseen
Obliterated in nature’s obsessions

As the pliable shrub
Bends to the whims of harsh winds
Breezing its form to the salty sky
Strongly rooted in sandy ground

Elemental assault on
Shoreline affiliates
Transform feeble members
To the whims of nature’s desire
Amidst the valiant who refuse defeat
To the assaulting conditions of forceful ambiance

Defiant in the sand
Catalysts

By Joshua Dever

Four years, that’s how long it has taken me to finally realize how much my high school actually meant to me. I have only just now looked back and stared beyond the simple memories of my friends, beyond the visual remnants of my teenage youth. I look back now through clear glass. The tint of currency is gone. No longer does the fact that I am “in high school” hinder my perspective; I can now truly see it for what it was, and how it changed me. Leaving Palau Mission Academy was easy; it is having left that continues to be the struggle. Looking back, I see me then and me now. Two different people bound by common memory. Two different people separated by a common experience. I am what I am now thanks to the academy.

Upon entering your freshman year of high school, no matter who you are, you are a rock chiseled from a cliff face. You are jagged, hard cut, rough, and, imperfect. It is here that your definition of life begins. It is here that you first begin to choose who you are, and who you will become.

I was a skinny, short, fuzzy-haired, simple young man. No extremities, no unique character, and no defining attributes. I was a freshly chiseled rock if there ever was one. But I was a lively one. It was in this year that I slowly, firmly established my position as class clown, not by choice, but by default. I said things, people laughed. I was class clown.

Thus began Lesson One in social hierarchy. Now, class clown wasn’t a very coveted position, nor was it a powerful one, but it was indeed a respected one. If you can make people laugh, people will like you. And so I giggled and charmed my little way through freshmen year, and slowly, some of my jagged edges smoothed out. But my journey had only just begun.

People were already coming into my life to play a part that would alter the way I would proceed toward my destiny. Pieces began to fall into place that would define my pathway through my high school career. I was a simple jagged stone, waiting for my avalanche to start.

Sophomore year was a year of awakening. I was introduced to an interesting set of circumstances, such as a bodybuilding nerd for a chemistry teacher, and a beautiful young psychology major as an English teacher. Now, being 15 years old and hormonally inclined, I enjoyed being taught by an attractive psychologist. The body-
building chemistry nerd, however, did not excite me as much.

In addition to these two extreme oddities, there came what may have been the greatest blessing of my adolescence: Mr. Kristopher Clark. Mr. Clark, or Clarko as I came to call him, became a mentor to me. He was young, but not immature. He was also old enough to have an aura of wisdom around him. I told him everything. I asked him everything. He was my hero.

It was, in fact, Mr. Clark who may have made the greatest contribution to my life. He showed me my worth, and he helped me see my potential. He looked at my dreams of becoming a filmmaker and he said, “Go after them. Life is all about chasing something, striving, reaching. It’s our dreams that make us who we are.” He was among the few who actually believed in me, and I worshiped him for it. And it wasn’t just me that he affected. He changed my entire class. Through him, we found a way to draw closer to each other; he became somewhat of a father figure to us all, and that’s what truly made us feel like family. With him as the spine, all our pages fell into place, and we felt as if we were part of something greater. It was during my sophomore year, thanks to Mr. Clark, that my rock finally began to take shape. I finally found who I wanted to be.

Now three years deep, I felt I had come a long way. The people around me had already begun to change. My friends and classmates
had been worn smooth by the lives they lived, the lives we had shared together. My junior year was all about chasing my dreams. I had invented them. Now, I was going after them. The faculty had once again rotated and moved on, and new blood joined the stream.

One more person now stepped into my life to guide me. His name was Scott Knight, and he taught me graphic design. I had, up until that point, considered many lines of work, but none had captivated me like graphic design did. Mr. Knight gave me an opportunity I had long awaited, a line of work that combined art and message, hobby and job. I found my calling. The rest of the year boiled down to me honing my skills. I was no longer hard cut.

There is something quite scary about graduation. As I put on that gown, I felt as if I had somehow missed something. I had waited all my life to walk up that aisle, but now I felt like the moment had come too soon. My classmates had now become official human beings. We were all expected to know who we
were, and why we were. Our lives had led to this. It’s funny how 25 people can collide. My classmates had been nothing short of perfect. They had never made me feel out of place. They had never mocked my dreams. They did nothing but support and motivate me. For my entire high school career, I was able to flourish because of the tolerance of my peers; they never made me feel like I couldn’t accomplish anything. Our destinies had, up until this point, been intertwined, and now we were being torn apart. We had ricocheted off each other, and now we were flying in different directions. All along the way, we had crushed and ground each other into smooth stones.

"Our destinies had, up until this point been intertwined, and now we were being torn apart."

My senior year was nothing short of surreal. I look back on it now and barely remember how it felt. It went by so fast I didn’t even have time to consider it. But it was here that I reached my conclusion. My dreams were mine to chase. I swore as I shook the principal’s hand and took my diploma that I would chase them to the end of the earth. I had already, in the three years previous, found a cause, a hero, and a calling. All I needed now was a chance. I woke up the day after graduation and opened my eyes to the first day of my life. I was finally ready to take my place among the rocks that formed the avalanche of my life.

Palau Mission Academy did more than educate me, it shaped me. In many ways I owe my entire being to the people who went out of their way to help me find myself—my heroes, the teachers who instructed me on things that go far beyond textbooks, and thousand-word essays. I owe my classmates, who not only stood by me as I stood tall, but who also stooped down to pick me up from the dust. I know now that I am not my own doing. I owe all that is good in me to those who raised me in hope, those who had faith in me. My parents, my friends, my classmates, and my teachers, all played extraordinary parts in my life. They watered me and watched me grow. They laid me in the stream, and saw my jagged edges and hard cuts erode. I am now a smooth and shapely stone, far from who I set out as, but closer to who I set out to be.
To my unknown friend,
I never knew you ...
In some ways it's like you're not even real,
Because all I know of you are stories and pictures ...
But somehow I always sensed your missing presence in
my life
And with all that's happened lately,
Your missing presence has been all the more clear.
I have wondered how and whether we would get along.
And I don't know why,
But there have been times when I wished I could turn to
you for advice
Or just to talk, feeling as though you were the only one
who would understand.
It's hard to understand how someone I have never known
could be so painfully missing from my life, but you are.
I wish I knew you.
I wish I could know who you would be today.
I wonder who I would be if I had known you.
I miss you, without knowing you.
And without knowing why, I continue to need you.

Sincerely,
Someone who loves you
“Irreplaceable Pieces” by Taressa Ishimi
"It is not always by plugging away at a difficulty and sticking to it that one overcomes it; often it is by working on the one next to it. Some things and some people have to be approached obliquely, at an angle."

- André Gide
Stop and Go

By Leslie Foster Ishimi

Stop pleading.
Stop trying to prove.
Stop arguing,
thinking, justifying, whining and
trying to figure out.
Stop wishing, wondering, and worrying,
guessing, groping, gasping and grasping.
Stop calculating, controlling,
confounding and confusing yourself
and others.

For five minutes every day
stop all that nattering and
Just
Be.

Not be still.
Not be grateful, graceful or smug.
Not be standing in the sun
or the rain.
not even be knowing
that all is right in the world.

Not be humble, not be quick.
Not be right.
Not have your hose on straight,
not have on hose at all.

Just
Be.

Then for the rest of the day,
Be
Useful.
"Progression" by Dylan Little
Taken during the O'ahu blackout following the earthquake on October 15, 2006.
The pastor of my church, the Seventh Day Adventist Mission in Palau, announced an amazing opportunity in chapel one morning. It was a call to duty, a call to serve the community, and of course, God. His terms were simple; translate everything someone says in English into Palauan, and say it in front of a crowded church full of eager listeners. A few of us volunteered, and the pastor gathered us around in a group. He told us there would be a monetary reward for our help, something he didn’t want to mention while recruiting in fear that some would join simply for financial reasons. Our enthusiasm doubled; not only were we going to be driving off to distant villages to spread the gospel, but we were also going to get paid for it. What a deal! We soon began to practice our speaking skills and translating abilities amongst ourselves. Weeks passed as we quoted each other line after line, English, then Palauan, the other guy, then you. Eventually it became routine. But, as usual, practice doesn’t always prepare you for everything.
Soon the fateful first day arrived. It was a sunny and slightly drier than usual Friday afternoon. Dress code required that we wear collared shirts and slacks. My friend Peterson and I were the two Palauan translators for our teams, and we were each paired to a student missionary. Our papers in hand, Peterson and I set out to do various menial tasks such as piling the church’s 1989 Toyota pick up truck full of metal chairs, tables, metal stands, audio equipment and projectors. Of course this involved actually driving the truck from place to place to collect these various resources. When the time finally came to leave the main church, we thought we were more than ready.

We had been driving for about 10 miles, that’s 10 miles out of 55, when a little yellow light caught our attention. We had been joking and laughing in excitement up to this point, but I assure you, it was dead silent now. We both looked at each other eyes wide open in both shock and fear. “Gas!” we both shouted at the same time. Neither of us knew exactly how long the light had been on, and we definitely didn’t know how much fuel we actually had left. We couldn’t even panic we were so scared. We pulled to the side of the road. The pastor, who had started out after us, finally caught up and pulled up next to us.

“What’s wrong?” he asked, smiling widely. “Run outta gas?”

He was laughing, we weren’t. Neither of us knew how to say it, so Peterson was blunt.

“It reads empty. The gas light is on.”

The pastor got out of his car and looked at the gauge.

“Ah, you’ll make it.” He sounded sure. “Just drive it till it wont go anymore, then we’ll pick you up and take you the rest of the way.”

Skeptical, we followed his order, and drove on. Basically the rest of our two-and-a-half hour trip boiled down to our eyes darting from the road to the fuel gauge, which had gotten to the point where it couldn’t go any lower. When we finally pulled in to the small church parking space, an entire 45 miles from where we “ran out of gas,” we couldn’t believe our luck. The words “thank God” took on a whole new meaning.

Until then, I had heard miracle stories, some simply amazing, and some amazingly simple. But, I never would have guessed that one was lined up to happen to me. From that day forward, my perspective on God, his motives, and his mysterious ways, changed. I never looked at a blessing the same way. God can make a fish feed thousands, and oceans split apart. God can move mountains and flood the entire earth. But funniest of all, God can make an old Toyota pick up truck go 45 miles on an empty tank.
Fading Out
By Malia Montgomery

This is the nightmare house of dreams.
The place you go when you’ve been bad
or very unfortunate.
Live ...
comes a voice from within.
It’s all we have.
Such a small faint voice, that good one,
the one you hope somewhere never
disappears —
Sick-O and Heal-O
By Leslie Foster Ishimi

Sometimes I wondered how far off track you
had to see me wandering
in order to feel like a healer but
Always I wondered
how far off track I would let myself go
just to be in your care.
"The Best Medicine" by Taressa Ishimi
“Lightning in an Entrance Way” by Taressa Ishimi
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 states, “No qualified handicapped person shall, because a recipient’s facilities are inaccessible to or unusable by handicapped persons, be denied the benefits of, be excluded from participation in, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (Federal 22681). Does Kapi‘olani Community College (KCC) comply with the Rehabilitation Act?

In the article, “Serving Students with Disabilities: Reflections of a Community College Teacher,” Robert C. Johnson states, “Kapiolani CC sits on a hill near the slopes of Diamond Head. Although the location provides a gorgeous vista of the ocean and nearby Waikiki, the sloping campus is a trial for students and faculty who use wheelchairs ...”

I couldn’t agree more. As of the Spring 2007 semester, there were six students on campus who used wheelchairs. That number seems incredibly small considering the 7,289 students we have registered on campus, but KCC needs to address the following issues: the problems with slopes and hills for people in wheelchairs, door access for individuals in wheelchairs, and the dissemination of more information regarding wheelchair use on campus.

The first issue we need to consider is that slopes and hills on the upper part of campus are challenging for staff and students in wheelchairs. Johnson states that construction during 2000-2001 reduced the degree of slope on several sidewalks to enable easier movement about the campus. In spite of this, moving from the lower part of the campus in a wheelchair to a higher part of the campus takes time and extra initiative. Mary Joan Haverly, a Disabilities Services Coordinator at KCC said those in electric wheelchairs don’t seem to experience as many problems as those in manual wheelchairs. Apparently she is not alone in that belief. KCC student Goekce Seydan has a manual wheelchair. She recommends having an electric wheelchair versus a manual wheel-
chair, otherwise do not apply to KCC. As a full-time student, she’s
tired and her upper body is sore by the end of the day. This makes
it hard for her to focus in class when taking notes and studying.
This can result in an ‘F’ for the course.

I’ve had a class on the upper side of campus before and it’s hard
for me to walk up the steep hill, even with stairs. I can’t possibly
imagine what it must be like for someone in a wheelchair.

The second issue that needs to be addressed is door accessibility
for people in wheelchairs. The “Uniform Federal Accessibility
Standards” say all operating devices on accessible doors shall have
a shape that is easy to grasp with one hand.

Haverly said KCC has complied with this standard and all fed-
eral accessibility standards. However, she does feel that electric
and power-assisted doors should be used for every building that
staff and students use – for example, the Holomua Center, a.k.a.
the Tutoring Center – because these doors are not limited to just
Some students may not agree. They might not want their money being used to help people in wheelchairs.

assisting people in wheelchairs, but everyone (from older individuals to those having to carry heavy books). Once, during the Fall 2006 semester, I was leaving the Kalia Building when a staff member or student in a wheelchair was trying to enter. As I opened the door for him, I noticed that he had to back up a bit, so he would have enough room to get his wheelchair over the doorstep. Seydan agreed that doors that require a student to open a door by pulling it toward them are not wheelchair accessible. KCC has 17 buildings and only 10 have automatic or power-assisted doors. Of those 10, only the cafeteria and the library have automatic sliding doors (Johnson). 

Lastly, we need more information regarding wheelchair use on campus. “We, by law, are supposed to have one accessible route for the entire campus,” Haverly said. “After saying this, yes, we do, but you need to know how to access the route.” 

KCC staff or students do need to know how to access this route. The question is, how does someone in a wheelchair find this information? Seydan said, “The Special Student Students Office gave me a regular map, but I didn’t understand exactly where I was supposed to go. In the beginning, I had to ask where the route started for each building, but after awhile I got the hang of it.” 

Haverly also said that at one time the school wanted to put up a you-are-here-map, but lacked the funds. Such a map is a wonderful idea because it can help everyone. Another suggestion is a map for people in wheelchairs showing how to access each building. If not, a special orientation for people in wheelchairs should be held before working and/or studying on campus. 

In order for KCC’s campus to have better wheelchair accessibility, money is a concern. University of Kentucky student Shannon Long, in her article, “Wheelchair Hell: A Look at Campus Accessibility,” gives a possible solution regarding her college: “A possible solution could be the use of tuition. If only $2 could be taken from each student’s tuition, there could be almost $50,000 extra per semester for handicap modification.” Is this a possible solution for KCC? If KCC were to apply this solution, $14,578 could be raised from the 7,289 enrolled students. With that money
we can have a your-are-here map or more electric and power-assisted doors or additional ramps.

Some students may not agree. They might not want their money being used to help people in wheelchairs. They may ask, “Why are we so concerned about people in wheelchairs, why not consider helping the blind, deaf and other people with disabilities?” Other students may want their money used for more tutoring, especially in courses that do not offer any tutoring.

However, advancing KCC’s wheelchair accessibility on hills can help staff and students get around easier. This will result in staff and students having more energy and focus toward their schoolwork.

We all know what it can be like to get lost on campus, feeling tired and relieved when we finally find the right classroom or office. For a person in a wheelchair, that feeling can be amplified. Keeping that in mind, KCC must explore better wheelchair accessibility on campus. Why can’t we give people in wheelchairs the same stress-free environment as those who are able to walk?
"Like tourists huffing and puffing to reach the peak we forget the view on the way up."

-Friedrich Nietzsche
"An Innocence Pending" by Taressa Ishimi
"A Collective Dream" by Dylan Little
An experiment in selective colorization. Photograph taken at the Honolulu Zoo in late 2006.
A Little Bit of Noir

By J. Thurlow

Starring
Della Jacobs Sanders
and Joshua Michael
“Why are you sitting outside?” Jordan asked me.
A car sloshed by, its tires kicking up rainwater.
I took a long drag from my cigarette, blew a jet of smoke at its taillights.
Jordan popped his little black umbrella, holding it over his head. “Why are you out here?” he asked me again.
I flicked my cigarette into the street. Pulled another one out.
“Because.”
“Because why?”
I almost smiled. Lit the cigarette and said, “Because it’s a Raymond Chandler evening, and the pavements are all wet, and I’m lurking in the shadows ‘cause it hasn’t happened yet.”
I didn’t look up, but I could feel the confused frown.
“What hasn’t happened?”
I took a deep drag. “It.”
I almost laughed when he said, “What’s ‘it?’”
“If I knew that,” I said, finally looking at him, “I wouldn’t be here lurking, now would I?”
He thought about that for a moment. I mean, he really thought about it. And then he said, “Well you sit here in the rain and lurk. I’m going back inside.”
I took another drag of the cigarette, looked back out at the street. “You do that.”
I heard a door open and slam as he went back inside.
A cab sloshed by, windshield wipers and rain obscuring the inside.
It squealed to a stop, splashing water.
Nel stepped out of the cab, all gray, almond eyes and tropical skin and full, pillowy lips, an old pulp novel clutched in one hand.
She was wearing this Ingrid-Bergman-in-Casablanca trench coat that I bought her one Christmas.
She loved Casablanca.
The rain matted strands of dark hair to her face, and she looked like an angel, backlit from the lights inside the cab.
I pushed myself from the ground and moved toward her, cupping her face in both hands and for one second we had this perfect noir moment, staring into each other’s eyes.
We were Humphrey and Ingrid, on stage together, a street lamp as our spotlight.
Neither of us noticed the rain.
I kissed her, tenderly at first, gently.
But she wrapped her arms around my neck and crushed my lips to hers.
And I lost myself in her, so totally and completely that it was like drowning in warm red wine.
We stood there in the rain, knowing each other, becoming each other.

Miles Davis wailed an outro on his trumpet, and the screen faded to black, leaving us in Happily Ever After.

And then Nel broke the kiss and broke the spell.

She huddled in her coat, and she looked away and told me, “I’m leaving for Portland. Tonight. I’m headed to the airport.”

I asked her if that was what she really wanted, to pack up and leave her life behind. To leave everything.

She told me she had to, and she hoped on day I’d understand.

I told her that I already did. And then I told her I was coming with her.

We stopped off at my apartment and I threw three pairs of black jeans and four white button-ups into a duffel bag, packed it with a week’s worth of socks and boxer-shorts.

I took my Humphrey Bogart fedora and put it on Nel’s head.

We made love on the carpet, and she wore the hat the whole time.

Afterward, Nel pulled out a half-crushed pack of Chesterfields, lit two and handed me one.

I could taste her lipstick on the smoke, grainy and sweet and just a bit like maraschino cherries. It sent shivers crawling down my spine toward every nerve.

I was hard again, and I leaned over and kissed her, flicked my tongue across her lips, a vampire begging entry.

Her lips parted and her mouth was warm and wet and sultry.

She placed a gentle finger on my chest and whispered, “We don’t have time.”

We got dressed, and I slung my duffel bag over my shoulder, grabbed my bat-
tered guitar case, and we went to the waiting cab reeking of sex and cigarettes.

She read her book the whole ride. I just waited.

When we got to the airport, the clouds were gone and the dusk was a heavy indigo.

We paused a minute, admiring the color before entering the bustling metropolis of the terminal.

I paid for my ticket in cash, thanking God Nel wasn’t going to another country because that would have raised too many eyebrows.

Never pay for trans-continental flights with cash.

We stopped at a bar in the airport. Nel got a glass of bourbon and I ordered a shot of tequila.

We sat there for Christ knows how long, nursing our drinks under a neon Bud Light sign.

I watched people stroll by in time-lapse photography.

I tried not to think about what we were leaving, where we were going, how we would live.

I’d get jobs doing what I did. She’d get jobs doing what she did.

I remembered I’d left my jacket back at my apartment, this old black leather James Dean thing. Nel sipped her bourbon and told me she’d buy me a new one.

She swore suddenly, looking up from her book.

I wondered how many of them she’d packed.

“What?” I asked her, throwing back the rest of my tequila, motioning to the guy behind the bar for another.

“Valerie,” Nel said softly.

I never worked without Valerie.

I told Nel not to worry about it, but I knew I’d call Jordan from the plane and have him drive up, maybe leave it in a bus terminal in Portland.

I checked my watch, told Nel we had to go, the plane was boarding in ten minutes.

She finished her bourbon, taking an ice cube in her mouth and sucking on it.
I shot back my tequila and left a twenty on the bar. It was raining in Portland when we landed. Nel said we could stay at a friend’s place until we got back on our feet.

Jordan showed up at the door three days later with my James Dean jacket. Said Valerie was inside with a box of shells. Told me he’d moved into my old apartment and asked if I wanted anything from it.

I said no, but if he could bring my Harley up there one day I’d appreciate it.

He tossed me this shit-eating grin and said he was keeping that, too. Jordan and I went to a bar and had drinks and talked.

When I went to the bathroom some guy offered me a job. I didn’t know how he knew, but it didn’t really matter.

It was raining a hard, cold Portland rain, and Valerie glinted, all stainless steel, in the streetlights above. I gripped her in two hands, my joints stiff and aching from the cold.

The gun didn’t kick as much as you’d think. Made enough for a Kawasaki and a loft.

We said goodbye to her friend, whose name I never learned because we were there for less than a week. Jill or Jane or something like that.

The loft was huge, all hardwood floors and big clean windows and already-furnished bedrooms.

Nel said that was gross, sleeping on someone else’s sheets.

“Wasn’t that what we were doing at your friend’s place?” I asked her, not trying to be a dick, honestly confused.

She made a nasty face and told me it wasn’t the same thing. She wanted new sheets — a zillion-count Egyptian cotton.

It was a very big deal, and they had to match the drapes.

I paid for everything.

Nel went out every night, doing what she does, brought home a lot of money.

I got jobs doing what I do every now and then.

It was more than enough to live on.
Nel's friend had a friend who owned a butcher shop. She got him to give me a legit job. I told him to draw me a check every two weeks, and I'd give him back the money.

Fuck the IRS.

One time, Nel's trick turned out to be my mark. I tailed him on my Kawasaki, watched him pull up to her at a corner. She stuck her head in the window, rear high in the air, swaying from side to side, still working. She got in the passenger side, and I followed them to a motel. I slipped the desk clerk a fifty to forget my face. It made me sick listening to them from outside their door. Grunting, panting, moaning. She was faking. He wasn't.

I checked my watch. Twelve-and-a-half minutes. I kicked the door in, pulling Valerie from under my James Dean jacket. Nel's eyes went wide, and she pushed herself against the headboard of the bed. The mark went to say something, but I put a finger to my lips. His eyes never left Valerie.
I closed the door softly, without turning around.  
"Please," he murmured.  
I smiled, hoping it was reassuring.  
I drove Nel home on the back of my Kawasaki.  
When we got there, I smoked my cigarettes.  
She read her books.  
Less than a year later, Nel wanted to move again.  
Said the winds were just blowing her that way.  
She wrung a pulp novel nervously in her hands.  
Texas, she wanted to go to.  Said she didn’t expect me to drop everything again and come with her, but I could see in her eyes that she did.  
I didn’t go.  
I thought about going back home. Moving in with Jordan.  
But it didn’t feel right.  
I stayed in the city. Got jobs doing what I do.  
I made a lot of money.  
Didn’t spend much of it.  
Nel left one of her books at the loft, Peter O’Donnell’s "Modesty Blaise."  
I started reading it.  

Nel came back to Portland before I was finished the book. She was wearing my fedora and the Ingrid-Bergman-in-Casablanca trench coat that I bought her one Christmas.  
It was raining, hard.  
Lightening flashed outside, then thunder, like someone falling down a flight of stairs.  
For a moment she was a silhouette, backlit from the lightening.  
And then I could see her, all almond eyes and tropical skin and full, pillowy lips.
Nel opened the trench, and all she had on was a pair of thigh-high nylons and red heels.

The rain had matted strands of dark hair to her face, and she looked like an Angel.

We didn’t say anything for a long while, this Walter Mosley moment playing between us as she stood just outside my doorway.

Thunder boomed outside, and she broke she spell, asking, with a slight Texas twang, “Can I come home?”

“Sure,” I told her, stepping back to let her in. “Why not?”

Miles Davis wailed some outro on his trumpet, and the screen faded to black, leaving us in Happily Ever After.
Blood Diamonds
By Cynthia Thurlow

Sierra Leone, Civil War, 1999 – forced labor enslaved to work in the diamond fields and mines
RUF (Revolutionary United Front), promised the people would be free
To join in the wealth of the diamond industry
Instead all they fostered was cruelty and hate
Children as soldiers and prostitutes
Recruited for barbarity
To line the pockets of RUF prosperity
Their poor hands, their bodies, their minds, their souls
DMX, five carats in your ear
Kobe and Lil’ Kim
How can you rest?
Diamonds mined in war zones, sold to finance the conflicts
Don’t you listen to the words of Kanye West?

Blood diamonds

Liberia, ex-president Charles G. Taylor
Supported Sierra Leone’s RUF
With weapons and training in exchange for the bling
Now his ass is facing trial in the Hague
Shaq and P. Diddy and Mariah too
Listen to me talkin to you
Stop for a moment and listen if you will
To first-hand accounts of the atrocities suffered at the hands of the rebels
there’s no escape
From the torture and amputation and even rape
Do you seek understanding through the Kimberly Process to certify the origin of your bling?
44 nations participate in the scheme
Please tell me that this process is not only a pipe dream
But we have to start somewhere don’t you know
Blood diamonds

Ivory Coast – a nefarious route
For exporting conflicts from Liberia and war-damaged Sierra Leone
Government stopped all diamond mining to curtail the trade
UN Security Council banned all exports of the bling
T.O., Busta Rhymes, Mos Def and J. Lo
Are your baubles conflict-free?
Do you even know?
War-torn African nations
Brothers and sisters killin each other for shiny pieces like glass
Making their way into to rings, earrings and necklaces of lovers
all over the world
Why is this “the” symbol of love and devotion?
Bombarded from Christmas through Valentine’s day
To “show her that you care”
Why must this be the way?

Blood diamonds

Democratic Republic of the Congo – formerly Zaire
Now a member of the Kimberly Process I hear
Your reward
Exportation of 8 percent of the world’s diamonds
De Beers controls 70-80 percent of the trade
They bought your 200-carat Millennium Star
During the height of your civil war
Fabolous and Ludacris did you see that rock Jay-Z gave to Beyoncé?
Republic of Congo - Congo-Brazzaville
Can’t even explain how your diamonds come to be
How the hell’d you export diamonds with no official industry?
Listen to the informed like Jadakiss
3.7 million dead in Angola, never to return
For
Blood diamonds
I Will Bring a Grateful Heart
By Leslie Foster Ishimi

Every day is like a suitcase that gets filled with what happens. But at the end of each day only one decision matters: What will I take from this day’s suitcase to the next day?

It was the best of Saturdays; it was the worst of Saturdays. It started as many Saturdays do, at the office. I got a few things done before leaving for a 2 o’clock funeral. Funerals are hard. I’m always moved by the People Bouquets – so many forms of caring, no two alike. Sometimes I feel deeply touched by the suddenness of a loss, other times by the long road a person had to walk to get to the gate. I cry over the empty place left in a loved one’s heart, but I am also moved by the miracle of renewal that refills our hearts and lets us visit joy again. I’ve learned not to expect much. I just show up, weak-kneed, ready to be part of the process as best I can.
I’m about 60. I have some references. I’ve lost both parents, my only brother, classmates, friends, and best friends. Gone are the voices that knew me when I was fast on my feet. When I didn’t snore. When my teeth didn’t soak in blue Tupperware at night. When my hair was soft and long and flowing. Yet there are small bonuses too. I continue to “consult” those I use to talk with face-to-face, but I no longer have to locate them physically, or wait for when we’re both near a phone. Differences of age, opinion or ability don’t get in the way anymore. The love and the loved one become a fabric of my heart, forever more unalterable by time or circumstance. The group is with me 24/7, a board of support that is growing in number each year. Some losses you can fill in, some you can’t.

The funeral this Saturday was for the 10-year-old son of a co-worker. The kind of loss you can’t fill in. I had visited him in the children’s ICU a few days before he passed. You know how they say such places are a font of inspiration? Well, for me, it was the most depressing junction of heartbreak and sadness I’d pulled up to in working memory. Not that I don’t understand it – I do. If I were God, I’d take children for myself. I’d take them first, and I’d take them all, except then no one would grow up to make more. That Saturday, when I visited, I knew Reyn was going to be taken. I just didn’t think it would be by Tuesday. His eyes were so bright. Twinkly, like everyone said. And his smile was so much more knowing than the smiles of passers-by, some of whom forgot to smile or just couldn’t anymore. When I heard Reyn’s time had come, I went numb. To protect myself, I think, from the thought of losing one of my own children. At some level out of my control, I was sure the thought alone would kill me, if I really let it out of the basement.

Three Saturdays later, was the service. I wanted to be there for my co-worker, her husband, and their other son. Even if I hadn’t walked the journey of a child with long-term illness, I did know what it meant to lose a brother. And I knew the aching heart of an always-vulnerable parent. As I approached the chapel, my stomach started to knot, centipedes squirming in unpreparedness, dread, fear, and something gluey that was turning hard like mortar. I thought of the hands on a clock and tried to convince myself, as I’d tried before when understanding got complicated, that eventually the big hand comes back around to the top.

This Saturday, neither the board of support nor the hands of time could help. As I neared the family, every sadness I’d known clamored to be heard again. Tears and heaving sobs, unyielding. The chapel was filled with moans of others who also couldn’t hold back.

The service provided beds for our rivers of grief. Pictures, slides, thoughtful readings, stories and reflections from ministers
and family, friends and teachers. Hymns and songs filled by the mourning voices of hundreds who bravely opened their shaking hearts to the family. Old women who touched the boy to honor the family’s love, grandmas who knew what to do. A pastor who asked us to honor the 10-year-old by not complaining about our lot in life. There was such perfect expression of love, honor, kindness and truth that for a few minutes I wanted to applaud. Then tears fell again, for a life well lived, a person well loved.

When the service was over, I was exhausted. The mortar and centipedes were gone, but they’d left destruction, disorder, and chaos. Reyn’s brother couldn’t get an easy rhythm back to his breathing, the rest of us were having difficulty too. I wanted to close the Saturday suitcase. I wanted “Saturday” to be over. But I’d already decided I’d go on.

I’d been Carol’s last haircut every sixth Saturday for 25 years. The sun was almost down and she was sweeping the far end of her shop when I arrived. She put the broom down and moved quickly to me. “What’s the matter?” I told her.

Eventually our conversation moved to other things – her son, my daughters, new business challenges. And then she told me about Richard.

My friend is 12 years younger than me. Her husband Richard is 12 years older than me, and he’d just gotten his first hearing aid. They’d been watching a rented movie late one night the previous week. My friend didn’t care much for the movie and was tired; so she stood up, and said, “See you in the morning.” She had just turned for the bedroom when her husband sprang from the couch exclaiming, “I was not snoring!”

We laughed as only long-time friends can. Deep from bellies that two minutes earlier had thought all the earth’s air was gone. We laughed until we were strong with love again, until we were sore and weak with silly again. And later when I got home and was making dinner I was still laughing. And when I took a shower I kept laughing. And when I flopped onto the bed, I laughed again. The big hand wanted to start for the top again. For me. I should know by now. Faith is the place between where you are and where you need to be going. Reyn knew that.
I readied for sleep. I could pack working clothes, warm, moist and wrinkled with sadness. I could pack a thick suit to protect my vulnerability, but that would require a larger suitcase and Sunday would be backbreaking. I could bring Friday’s clothes and pretend Saturday hadn’t happened. Or I could pack a light sweater with the love I’d been privileged to feel and witness.

Life is hard. I’ll bring the sweater for when it gets distant and cooler again. But my children are safe this day, so I will also bring a grateful heart to Sunday. And I will not complain about my lot in life tomorrow.
“Mountains cannot be surmounted except by winding paths.”

-Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
Radio frequency identification devices, “RFIDs,” can radically alter life as we know it. RFIDs are security tools that corporations and government agencies have already begun to implement into our lives. RFID technology uses tiny computer chips that may someday replace the bar code system, allowing strangers to study your purchasing habits, or to look at your medical records and pinpoint your exact location. This is not science fiction. This is real, and we should all open our eyes and be aware—even fearful. Although RFIDs can serve practical security and surveillance uses, they represent an alarming threat to our privacy and civil liberties.

RFIDs, nicknamed “spy chips,” are hooked up to antennas that pick up electromagnetic energy beamed from a reader device. When it picks up the energy, the chip sends back its unique identification number to the reader device, allowing the item to which the RFID is attached to be remotely identified. Unlike traditional bar codes, every RFID has its own unique number. No two cans of soda or pair of shoes will have the same number. RFID supporters argue that this system is no different than the purchase tracking a credit card or frequent shopper card allows. However, these chips can be read from a distance of up to 30 feet away and can be read right through your clothes, wallet or purse. That screams invasion of privacy.

As technology advances on clothing and packaging, so does the sophistication of RFIDS. They can be created so small now, an RFID the size of the dot on the letter “i” can be used to track you. RFIDs can be in many different forms and sizes. As a consumer, you will not be able to notice what product or packaging contains a chip. One form of RFID, “VeriChip” is literally the size of a rice grain and is by far the most threatening chip. If implanted in us for the purpose of automatic identification, our privacy will be destroyed. The chip, which contains a unique 16-digit identifier, can be inserted just under the skin for the purpose of accessing personal medical records via a password-protected database, or assessing whether somebody has authority to enter into a high-security area. VeriChip is the only company today
to offer an implantable, FDA-cleared RFID microchip. It offers both the VeriMed or VeriGuard versions of the chip. Although the FDA has cleared human implantable chips, they have clearly stated they will not be regulating them.

A surprise decision by the FDA permits the use of implantable ID chips in humans, despite an FDA investigator’s recent public reservations about the devices. The FDA sent chip manufacturer, Applied Digital Solutions, a letter stating that the agency would not regulate the VeriChip if it was used for security, financial and personal identification or safety applications (Scheeres).

There are many companies that are now using RFIDs or plan to in the near future, and have valid reasons for wanting to do so. This technology would be valuable to companies because it would allow them to keep an exact count of shelved products, know precisely what is in their warehouses and help them fight theft and counterfeiting. Eventually, it could even eliminate the checkout stand, because doorways could scan items directly to an RFID account. In addition to companies like Wal-Mart, Gillette, Target, Proctor and Gamble, IBM and Kraft, schools, banks, physicians, insurance companies and even the U.S. Postal
Service and the government want to use this technology. Again, although they may have good intentions, there is too much potential for misuse, and technology is not without flaws. RFIDs could allow strangers unwanted power over us.

Consider the case against Google. The federal government went to the Supreme Court for authority to search records from Google’s database to identify and punish pornography sites for making content easily accessible to minors. Google initially would not comply, saying it would violate the privacy of its users. In February 2006, Google was forced to comply and private searches on the engine were viewed and scrutinized. We later learned government officials made arrests for crimes varying from drug dealing to illegal Internet sales with that information. It is also possible that valuable trade secrets were divulged to Google’s competitors. Hence, our private information could be used for more than what companies are leading us to believe.

The threat to our privacy can be endless and while consumers might be able to avoid spy-chip-implanted clothing and living for now, spy chip makers have invented clever ways to force us to comply, sometimes without our knowledge. AmeriPride and Cintas are already embedding RFID tracking tags in company uniforms. Some schools and companies are requiring students and employees to wear spy chip identification badges around their neck to keep closer tabs on their daily activities. RFID chips embedded in passports and ATM cards will identify and profile customers as they enter banks, allowing employees to know how well-to-do or broke we are. If embedded in shoes or tires, strangers could track you as you walk and drive—so much for driving to get away. Furthermore, government agencies would have the ability to electronically “frisk” citizens without their knowledge and set up invisible checkpoints on the roads and pedestrian zones to monitor their movements. The uses of spy chips are truly endless and the manufacturers’ tactics are becoming more clever, and harder to detect. If RFIDs replace barcodes and are completely implemented as planned, American citizens would be forced to give up their rights of privacy for a new world order in the name of security and safety, and although many of us may not agree and may not want to comply, we may not even have a choice. Privacy laws are in transition right now. All we can do is brace ourselves for the worst and hope for the best.

Privacy is the expectation that confidential personal information contained in a private place will not be disclosed to third parties when that disclosure would cause either embarrassment or emotional distress to a person of reasonable sensitivities. Legal
“Rights that were once assumed can now be taken away by the government...”

reason for the delay in recognizing privacy as a fundamental right is that most modern invasion of privacy concerns involve new technology. Our cell phones are capable of photographing, recording and videotaping. Our computers are capable of collecting, and finding and storing personal information, and our land phone lines are vulnerable to wiretapping and recording of conversations. We live in a new world of growing technology in which our rights can be easily compromised. Many privacy statutes that are in effect today have been undermined by the new “Patriot” laws. Rights that were once assumed can now be taken away by the government under these new laws. The Patriot Act was intended to protect America from terrorists. However, you may recall the cyanide scare, in which cyanide packages were mailed to politicians and government officials. The government scrutinized Americans who worked with this poison. They narrowed their suspicions to one American who worked closely with the drug and falsely accused him as being the main suspect, destroying his reputation, career and life. We need proper protection of our privacy.

Government is the strongest force in America and thus has the greatest potential to be abused. R.J. Rummel, a professor of political science at the University of Hawai‘i, has devoted his career to researching the phenomenon called “democide,” the killing of people by their own government. In the 20th century alone, government action against civilians was four times more deadly than all the century’s wars combined. Rummel’s survey of the various cultures notorious for violating human rights: China, Germany, Mexico, Japan and North Korea, have yielded the conclusion that these problems stem from excessive government power. In America, the use of RFIDs to track the daily habits of private citizens infringes on our privacy and signals the beginning of a tyrannical reign of government oversight. Although Rummel offers a solution to the problem through a system of restricting and checking government power, it begs the question who will watch the watchers?
Surveillance is power. Governments like to assure their citizens that surveillance will make them safer, but surveillance is more likely to ensure the security of the the regime in power than to protect citizens. Once surveillance tools are in place, governments are tempted to use them to identify and hassle people who oppose their rule, whether they are members of opposing political parties (think Watergate) or citizens acting for peaceful change (think Martin Luther King, Jr., or more recently, 21-year-old Sara Bardwell, a member of the group “Food not Bombs” that cooks for the homeless – she was intimidated by the FBI for protesting the Iraq war). Surveillance by the state has a chilling effect on people’s willingness to work for social change and root out abuse. In a surveillance state, people keep their heads low and conform. And, of course, that’s how the government likes it (Rummel).

As a society, we must realize the use of RFIDs as an invasion of our inalienable right to privacy. The government has been implementing these devices in our lives for years now, beginning with the use of RFIDs in commercial products, and culminating in a program to track individual citizens. Although this may seem like a wonderful thing, a computer voice warning that your cholesterol is high, the price for such conveniences is too high. The moment we sacrifice even
the slightest bit of our personal privacy, we license the rest to be taken as well. We must challenge this shift toward a lifestyle of surveillance and oversight by educating ourselves and uniting behind a strong concerted voice and reaffirm our rights as individuals.
Ame No Ko

By j. thurlow

A Jack with one eye that cuts, threw me
Dagger Dancing with tied wrists
I go flying
Recline with a cup of Kerouac
Snap me back to Reality
What do you see from your shadowed perch, oh Page that would be night?
Dual me in circles that spiral Galaxy-wide
Ask me why
Falling up
Flying down
Swooping upon the villagers - A thing of myth & Legend
Great winged Beasts & Endless feast where bellies Never fill & thirst cannot be quenched
Are you Really Awake, perchance to Realize a Dream?
You can cast the skin but no the sin
Each Action Leaves its Mark
I will not be defeated!

Pow

Slam

Ha! Ha!
Little does he know that my super power is the ability to create tap outs!

"Graphic Intensity" by Taresa Ishimi
They try to pull me to the floor.
I resist.
I dance in my head.
Thank you, however,
for making the effort.
The crooked old hand painfully inched across the stained tabletop toward the faded picture. The wooden frame released the crumbs of age at the slight grasp of the old woman. She knew it would. Everything faded and crumbled over the years. Her sagging eyelids, her pruned lips, and her painfully hunched body did little to represent the one-time beauty queen portrayed in the photo. No one in the care home suspected that the crumpled old woman once commanded legions of men to gawk in her presence, or that her beauty once invoked many women to jealously admire her poise. The days of her public reign brought respect for her every word as reporters and admirers habitually turned their eyes in her direction, sacredly worshipping every word she spoke. Now, as her hand shook to hold the frame, the custodian dutifully swept around her, more interested in removing the whitened lock of her hair that fell onto his wooden floor than in the old woman sitting in the vinyl-cushioned chair.

Look at me! thought the old woman as she lifted her eyes to see the hurried worker sweeping an errant piece of a jigsaw puzzle into his dustpan. The man never looked up. The old woman disappointedly lowered her eyes in silence as the custodian moved on to sweep around the other residents in the room. At least she was still alert.

When she first moved into the care facility, the old woman pushed her creaking walker down the sterile and dim hallway. She stopped at the first doorway which streamed a ray of fluorescent light into her unfamiliar path. The old woman steadied herself on the aluminum bars as she leaned forward to peek into the glowing room.

"Why don’t you come inside?” chimed a voice from the whitesheeted bed. “I sure could use some company today.”

The old woman gripped her walker as she suspiciously gazed into the eyes of the welcoming resident. The resident looked directly back with a gentle smile. Then the old woman lifted her body as high as her stiffened joints allowed and she wheeled her aluminum device into the room.

The woman on the bed spoke again, “My name is Ethel. What’s yours?”
That’s where their friendship began. The old woman and Ethel ate their hot bowls of oatmeal together every morning, then they routinely hobbled down the dim hallway to the recreation room. At least there, other residents sat, mostly in slow-moving silence.

Ethel and the old woman refused to be silent. They characteristically sat on the vinyl-cushioned chairs at the stained table in the corner, reminiscing about the town, the people, and everything old that did not exist anymore. Sunlight always streamed into their corner in the mornings.

Sometimes the irritated girl in the pink scrubs interrupted the two friends as she announced into the sterile air, “It’s getting too noisy in here.” The girl turned the page to her magazine, straining to read the latest celebrity gossip in her dim corner. Then, as an afterthought, she bossily added, “Keep it down!”

Ethel and the old woman ignored the frowning girl. How wonderful it was to have someone who understood – someone to chat with, someone to connect with. Of all the residents in the facility, Ethel’s eyes were the most alert and the most full of life. The old woman enjoyed her company.

One day, Ethel asked, “Do you notice that they don’t look at us?”
The old woman paused. Then she answered, “What do you mean, Ethel?”
“I mean, they are so busy with their duties that they don’t even see us?”
The old woman knew exactly what Ethel was talking about.
“Yes, I don’t get the same respect that I used to get outside.”
She shifted in her seat.
Ethel paused as the girl in the pink scrubs hastily brushed past the two with no acknowledgment of their presence. The girl’s eyes remained fixated on the darkness of her hurried path. Before the girl turned the corner, she quickly stopped to pick up a napkin that lay on the floor. Then she coldly disappeared into the abyss of the hallway.

Ethel continued, “It gets even worse when that spark fades.”
“What spark?” asked the woman.
“You know – the one in your eyes. When it’s gone, they don’t think you’re there anymore, just a blank stare, like you just faded away.”
The old woman nodded. She had seen many residents fade into that blank stare.
“How does it get worse?”
“Well, then you’re really an object. They just shift you forward and back and prop you up in your chair like a doll. No one really talks to you after that.”

The old woman knew. Every time a resident succumbed to that blank stare, ambulance workers arrived shortly after and the patient was propped up and removed like a lifeless object. No talking, not even a mention of the resident’s name, just the cold task of transport. No one really knew where the resident was taken, only that they were gone, gone to a place that specialized in propping statue-like bodies with blank stares.
“I don’t ever want that to happen to me.”
“Me neither. Lucky I’ve got you for a friend.”
“Yes. Lucky us.”

A week later, the old woman walked over to Ethel’s room for an afternoon chat. As she entered the cold space, she saw Ethel staring blankly toward the doorway.

“Ethel,” said the old woman, “Are you alright?”
No answer. Just a stare. It was as if Ethel had crumbled and faded away.
“Ethel, are you alright?”

As nurses rushed into the room, the old woman was ushered out. She never saw Ethel again. When the old woman inquired, the girl in the pink scrubs replied in an irritated voice, “She was taken to another facility that specializes in her kind of care.” The old woman never got close to any resident in the facility after that.

Now she sat alone with her faded picture at the stained table. The overcast sky gave no sunlight to the lonely corner. At least she was still alert. As her shaky hands released her grasp from the crumbling photo frame, the unfamiliar sound of clacking heels entered the doorway.

“I need everyone’s attention!” called the girl in the pink scrubs. Her voice resounded with an artificial coating of sweetness. Several residents slowly turned their heads toward the doorway. Some refused to look up at the girl. The old woman raised her sagging eyes to see the show.

“We have a special guest in our home today. This is Sofia. She has just been crowned Miss County Queen and has come to spend a few minutes with us.”

On cue, an overly dressed woman with red lipstick and sticky stilettos clacked into the center of the room. A glossy sash ran a diagonal from her well-formed shoulder to her perfect hip as her head sparkled with a crown that indicated her importance. Men with cameras and microphones followed the woman, eagerly awaiting her next breath.

The crumpled old woman stared. Wait another 60 years, dearie, she thought. You won’t be center stage then.

The lovely Sofia click clacked her heels on the wooden floor as she made her rounds of compassion through the room. She hugged residents and posed prettily with her perfect smile and her perfect frame while followers gawked and trailed her every move.

The workers in the facility became unusually lively and more chatty and interactive with the residents. The girl in the pink scrubs smiled and conversed with the elderly man in the muted green lounge chair. He said nothing. The custodian sat next to the woman doing a jigsaw puzzle as he tried to “help” her find the next piece. It seemed a great show for the public eye.

Then Sofia turned and saw the crumpled old woman in the vinyl chair. The beauty queen walked with a perfect posture to the overcast area and compassionately sat next to the glaring woman. The camera rolled and Sofia smiled.

“What are you doing today?” asked the beauty queen.

The old woman lowered her eyes to stare at the specks of picture crumbles on the stained table.
Sofia shifted a bit in her seat. Then she flashed a big smile and batted her artificial eyelashes. She looked at the old woman’s picture and picked it up. The frame crumbled a bit more. “Is this you?”

The old woman did not answer. The camera kept rolling as the cameraman rolled his eyes at the old woman’s lack of interaction. The beauty queen gracefully exhaled her frustration and then mustered a hint of kindness to coat her voice, “It was nice meeting you. Have a good day!”

She flashed a smile that seemed to satisfy the cameraman and then she clacked off. As she neared the doorway, Sofia turned her heels to pose for the residents and she waved a perfect beauty queen wave as the old woman slowly lifted her sagging eyes up again.

She practiced that wave really good, thought the old woman. “Thank you all for having me, today. I really feel that more
of the community members should come visit these facilities ...." Then she went on with her memorized thoughts about the importance of taking care of the elderly.

As the beauty queen spoke, a spark glimmered in the old woman's eyes. Her shaky hands slowly reached for her picture again. No one noticed. All eyes were on the beauty queen. The old woman lifted the picture high above her hunched head as crumbles of the frame specked her white hair. Still, no one noticed. Then, as the cameraman zoomed in for a close up of the crowned star, the old woman hurled the crumbling picture into the air, directly towards the beauty queen.

The beauty queen stopped talking as her mouth remained open at the sight of the rectangular object flying her way. Her spiked heels clumsily stepped back as the frame crashed and splattered an attack pattern towards her adorned figure. The frame lay completely crumbled across the wooden floor, scarring the faded photo. Then there was silence.

The clouds from the sky suddenly released a stream of sunlight into the room, spotlighting the corner with the stained table. All eyes turned from the beauty queen and looked directly at the hunched old woman. The old woman stared back. It had been years since this many eyes were on her.

"Let's go!" exclaimed Sofia as her camera-rolling entourage obediently followed her clacking heels out the door. Everyone else sat still.

Then the girl in the pink scrubs rushed forward to assess the crime scene. Her piercing stare pointed into the eyes of the old woman. "Why did you do that?" shouted the pink-shirted one, "Don't you know she is trying to advertise for our home?"

The old woman's eyes pierced back. A slight smile formed on her lips.

The custodian stepped forward to look at the scattered glass across the wooden floors. He turned directly to the old woman and tried to stab her soul with his angry glance. "You messed my floors!" he exclaimed. "Don't you ever do that again!"

The old woman's sagging eyes boldly stabbed back – her soul still intact. Then the custodian and the angry girl in the pink scrubs cleaned the scattered pieces of picture.

As the buzz around the hunched figure slowly faded and the messy floor took center stage again, the old woman gradually lifted her body up from the vinyl-cushioned chair. No one noticed. Then she eased her feet in line with her aluminum-framed walker. Still, no one noticed. Then the old woman slowly made her way down the dim hallway and faded back into her room. Her eyes sparkled brighter than ever.
He notices the little things
the tiny details most would miss
and makes them his own.

He keeps his claws sheathed
the fire in his eyes veiled;
it burns cold.

He makes scathing remarks
here and there, as though unaware
he makes them so well.

Just a word is necessary,
sometimes not even that.
His silence can be terrible.

It reminds me of that poem of Wakoski,
"Steely Silence," but in that
silence is reserved for friends,
a sign of trust.
This is his way of chewing me out,
out of caring. I know

and I suppose in an odd way
the sting has become comforting,
like coming to the arms of an old friend.
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A Little Bit of Noir


Blood Diamonds


**Security or Surveillance?**


**Kakiokita**

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Sherry Medeiros moved to Hawai‘i from California in 1997 to raise her daughter and live a simpler lifestyle. Because there are enough things for us to worry about in our country and in our own personal lives, she believes we tend not to concern ourselves too much with all of the government’s stratagems. She wrote “Security or Surveillance?” to introduce a new perspective and awareness of government agendas.
Malia Montgomery was born and raised in Hawai‘i and comes from a family of nine, not that you’d necessarily guess that to meet her. She has been writing since she was thirteen and loved to read as a child. So far, she has had little success writing prose and a little more success than that writing poetry. She asks that if you happen to meet her, you refrain from trying to hug her, as she does not enjoy physical affection from strangers or meeting most people. She thanks you for your consideration and for reading her submissions.

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Spectrum is devoted to sharing the diversity of writing, art and other forms of creative expression by students of Kapi‘olani Community College. We invite submissions of fiction, poetry, art, drama, translations, reviews and works that are not necessarily easily classified. Manuscripts (up to five poems or 30 pages of prose) should be double-spaced, crisp, dark copies. Art submissions should be on 8 1/2” x 11” white paper or 8” x 10” photographic prints.

All submissions must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a response. Address submissions to: Spectrum Advisor, Kapi‘olani Community College, 4303 Diamond Head Road, Honolulu, Hawaii‘i 96816. For more information, please e-mail tsaim@hawaii.edu.

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