

Lē‘ahi

Creative Arts Journal



Spring 2014

Kapi‘olani Community College
Board of Student Publications

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Creative Arts Journal

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UNIVERSITY of HAWAII*

KAPI‘OLANI
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Board of Student Publications
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About *Lē‘ahi*

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Nicki Ralar / *Strength*

IT LOOKS LIKE THIS & IT SOUNDS LIKE THAT

From *ENG 22 Beginning Composition*

The recent ACT research demonstrates that academically prepared students, as measured by the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks, have greater chances for success in their future educational endeavors. However, academic readiness is just one of several factors that contribute to educational success. The academic behaviors of students and the interest levels in their specific major or career are other key factors. Together, these elements define a clear picture of student readiness for postsecondary education. To encourage progress, the educational system needs to monitor and sustain all key factors of success. (“The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2013,” ACT)

I did not know my ABC’s, yet I sang along with the kids in the neighborhood. I’d get teased because I sang it wrong. “A-min-en-o-t,” sounded like *l, m, n, o, p* to me! I did not know how to count either. The funny thing is I used to swear like a sailor. I grew up around bad language and cursing, so it came naturally to me. I was never read to as a child. When I was in pre-school, I did not learn anything. All I did was take naps or play on the jungle-gym all day. I hated that place with a passion. I didn’t last there very long because at the ripe age of 4 years old, I got kicked out for beating up my classmates. I was an angry child. I was never prepared for pre-school. One day I was being dropped off at that god-forsaken place and was told, “You better behave!” I hated being told that. I was left with total strangers not knowing what the hell was going on. To this day, my recall of this pre-school is dark, dreary, sad and in need of a shower of holy water in every nook and cranny. The place still gives me the creeps. It would have been shut down if it had to abide by today’s standards.

Teachers and administrators who work with children from low-income families say one reason teachers struggle to help these students improve reading comprehension is that deficits start at such a young age: in the 1980's the psychologists Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley found that by the time they are 4 years old, children from poor families have heard 32 million fewer words than children with professional parents. (Motoko Rich, "In Raising Scores, 1 2 3 Is Easier Than A B C")

At age 5, I was still struggling in a place that I was not prepared for. I was a kindergartner at Benjamin Parker Elementary School. My teacher was Mrs. Ching, God bless her heart. She put up with me day in and day out. I was unruly because I just plain hated being in school. No one ever told me why I had to be there. I missed my mom, and my dad was in and out of jail a lot. Home is where I wanted to be. I got placed in the corner a lot for time-outs. On more than several occasions Mrs. Ching kept me after school and would tell my siblings to go home and not wait for me. She was sorry when she did that, because I ransacked her classroom. I tossed chairs, desks, tables, and anything that was in my way. She used to physically hold me so that I would not leave the classroom. Boy was she ever sorry that she did that. I then became physical with her. This happened almost daily and I thought to my little self of only five years old, "Why the hell am I here?!"

I reluctantly went to school every day regretting the crap that I would have to deal with later. I liked playing with the toys and building things with blocks, but for me it was rare because I did not earn enough "good behavior" tickets to enjoy playtime with my classmates. The one and only thing I loved was when Mrs. Ching read to our class. I instantly perked up and she couldn't turn the pages fast enough. She had a voice of an angel and words magically came to life as she read on.

One day she asked to speak with me before everyone came to school. I always arrived to school early so I could eat breakfast. I told her, "Nope, I like eat breakfast first." She smiled and said, "Okay, after you eat breakfast, can you sit with me?" I agreed. The first thing she said was, "I notice that you like it when I read stories to the class?" I said yes. On this day Mrs. Ching promised she would read to the class

more, but what blew my mind was she also offered to read to me before and after school. I became the happiest five-year old in the world! Mrs. Ching kept her promise and read to me every morning and after school. I slowly began to get better at working with other students, playing nicely, doing my homework and most of all the tantrums stopped completely. Toward the end of the school year Mrs. Ching asked me to sit with her again. This time we talked about going to the first-grade. She made sure that I was prepared to move to a higher class. She told me what will be expected of me and that if I should ever have questions or needed someone to sit and read with she would be more than happy accommodate me.

In the first grade, Mrs. Hagihara was my teacher. On the very first day of school, we were issued a reading book. I was so excited that I couldn't wait to take it home and show my mom. I felt like a "big girl." I quickly felt deflated when Mrs. Hagihara started picking students to read. Everyone took turns reading sentence by sentence until it was my turn. I wanted to bury my head in dirt. I was ashamed because I could not read at all. I stared at the page and made up a sentence using the illustration of a pig doing a jig. I said, "The pig is dancing." The sentence read, "The pig can jig." Roaring laughter came from all the little brats who could read. I felt like an idiot. From that day on, I swore that I would learn to read because I did not like being teased and I did not like my classmates calling me dumb. I used to beat the crap out of the ones that egged me on. They kept teasing me and I kept beating them up. It was the same way at home. My siblings and I fought like animals because there were no boundaries. My mom was never home because she had to work to feed us. My dad was probably in jail again. We practically raised ourselves.

Mrs. Hagihara made study groups. This was genius because every student in the group was supportive and encouraging. There was no teasing or finger pointing. I did not have to beat up anyone. I loved it. I was in a group with kids who could barely read. They were still one up on me as I could not read at all! We sat in our groups and discussed each word in a sentence. This helped me some, but I still could not put it together. I would listen to the words that my teacher read and I would read her lips and copy the way she said it. I have a great memory, mostly photographic, and I would remember what a word looked like. I'd put it all together and with a barely audible voice I'd say the word fearing that if I said the word out loud and it was said wrong, someone

would laugh at me. As I grew more and more confident, I would meditate on words and like a mantra I would say out loud that a word “Looks like this and it sounds like that.” This is how I learned to read. Mrs. Hagihara was fascinated with my method of teaching myself to read and encouraged it throughout my first-grade year.

I suppose it was inevitable that as my word-base broadened, I could for the first time pick up a book and read and now begin to understand what the book was saying. Anyone who has read a great deal can imagine the new world that opened. (Malcolm X, “Learning to Read”)

As I got better and better at recognizing and reading words, my vocabulary expanded and reading was such an ultimate high. I read every chance that I could. I loved reading Encyclopedia Brown, Beverly Cleary, S.E. Hinton, and anything I could get my hands on. I could not afford books, but my teachers and librarian at the time, donated books to me, as they knew how much I loved to read. Books have taken me to magical kingdoms and murder scenes. Books have taught me that “I must increase my breast. The bigger the better, the tighter the sweater, the boys are depending on us!” That mantra has been engraved in my mind ever since I read it in a book by Beverly Cleary.

Unfortunately, as the years went by teachers like Mrs. Ching and Mrs. Hagihara were few and far between. I did enough just to get a passing grade. I just wanted it to be OVER! The only class I loved was expository writing. The only way to get into this class was to write an essay, pass with flying colors and then be accepted by the instructor. This was a class for gifted writers. I did this so I wouldn’t have to take English literature and read Shakespearean crap. This was the only way out of it. I had expository writing from my freshman year until I graduated in 1985. In that same year I gave birth to my first son. Dreams of college had to be put on the back burner.

In my early twenties, my son was almost two years old. I decided to go back to school with an interest in nursing. I took a placement test for English and Math, and to my surprise I was placed in English 101. I tanked in Math and was placed in the lowest math class. I did better in English than I thought I would.

This time around at age 47, I did not score as well on the ACT COMPASS reading and writing tests. This is why I am in English 22. I was ill-prepared for the test and I did not study at all. I know that if I were better prepared and studied, I definitely would have done better by scoring higher on my COMPASS reading and writing tests. Although I didn't have a good score in reading and writing, I did worse on the math tests.

“Your mother or father doesn't come up and tuck you in at night and read you equations,” said Geoffrey Borman, a professor at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin. “But parents do read kids bedtime stories, and kids do engage in discussions around literacy, and kids are exposed to literacy in all walks of life outside of school.” (Motoko Rich)

I am number four of eight children. Both my parents were not educated. My mother could read enough to get her by. My father could not read or write. Education did not come first in our family. Food on the table, clothes on our backs, and a roof over our head came first. As I mentioned earlier, I did not read until the age of six, and I was never read to as a child. We didn't have money to buy books or school supplies for that matter. I grew up speaking broken English. I knew more swear words than proper words. This was just a reflection of the things and happenings that were going on around me. My speech got better only because I had friends that spoke perfect English. I copied the way they spoke and I practiced and practiced so I could speak proper English like they could. I got better at reading because all of my friends read too. We had our own little book club. I made a choice to be better and I surrounded myself with “better.” I repetitiously did things like write a new word that I learned in my notebook until I could spell it without looking. I would sing the same song over and over until I got all the words right, not to mention the tune. Whether it was reading, writing, painting, singing, or playing a sport, I practiced and practiced. I make choices and I stick with them, good or bad.

I can honestly say that because I am the way I am, my parents have taken a page out of my book. My mom went back to school and graduated with a high school diploma. She is the only girl in her family to do

this. She has three sisters. My dad does word-find puzzles. Remember, he couldn't read or write. I am currently in college with an interest in nursing. I am the only child in my family that has gone to college. To me, no matter what one's background is, the sky is the limit. Determination, hard work and a positive attitude can help achieve anyone's dreams.

Finally, I'd like to praise parents for trying their best to raise young children. It is not an easy job. I know, as I have two sons of my own, and I did the best I could to encourage them to get an education and stay out of trouble. I was a single parent. Today I am married and I am blessed to have five grandchildren. I refuse to have my grandchildren grow up in this world without love, guidance and a passion for reading. Reading is the key to life's successes. I've read books to my grandchildren since they were in their mommy's tummy. I read to them every chance I get. They sit mesmerized and entranced at every story I read to them. Their favorite book is "Where the Wild Things Are." I love that they can confidently get in front of their class and share with their classmates a recent book that they have read. My two older grandchildren have won multiple rewards for scholastic achievements. With that said, every child deserves the wonderful treasures in life that reading brings to them. It is our responsibility to prepare and nurture children in every aspect of their lives. One day they will be making decisions for us. One day they will run this country. Let's not skimp on preparation and education.



Elliana Moore / *Chronicle*

Neil Uto

ONE FOR ALL

From *ENG 273C Creative Writing and Literature*

The sun rises in the mouth of Russia
an ordinary day like all the others.
The darkness unnoticed
glooming over the U-235's den.

The U works day and night giving life to the town.
An unwanted guest
provokes the U.

The metal cone bellows
then a fiery boom.
Invisible poison
rain from above.

The mist of death
spreading throughout the land.
Looking for a way to stop the spread
alas, there is but one.

The venomous lake
blocks the halt.
Fully knowing
man dives in, never to resurface.

The man has done it
the halt has come. Tomorrow will rise
for all the others.

\

Opposite Page

Right Top: Joseph Gonzaga / *Enter the Woods*

Right Bottom: Nicki Ralar / *Secrets*





Nicki Ralar / *Touche Amore*

THE ONE MILE ROAD

From *ENG 273C Creative Writing and Literature*

An amber sun patiently ascends its celestial body from the low lying hills. Light cascades across the sky, enveloping the violet night as stars exit the stage. The moon whispers goodbye to the earth and vanishes with the stars. Wheat fields ripple like a golden curtain against the horizon, carrying the scent of newborn kernels. Stalks of aurium tower against each other and cover the fields like a golden fur coat. Sparrows dart in between the blue with long straw in their beaks. Chirping and singing songs of a new day, the birds twittered and sang their favorite melodies. Clouds pulled and pushed by the Easterly winds tumble into each other while the sun rests atop its perch above the earth.

Beneath the sun stood a small shack in the middle of the wheat farm. It was a simple thing, with five windows, a single wooden door, and a porch. The dirt road leading from the house had given it a hushed, red tint. What was once white paint now looked fragmented and cracked along the seams and walls of the small shack. Shingles and wooden planks jutted out from their usual positions giving a prickled and gruff appearance. The house seemed to utter occasional groans and creaks in its old age.

Upon the porch sat an old man with a gnarled face, furrows coursing through the folds of his skin, with short grey tufts of hair that rustled in the wind. Years of work in his youth gave him a large form; time and age only deepened the wrinkles. His hands, worn from decades of work, rested upon an oak chair nearing its time of service. The old man's eyes stared down the dirt road that disappeared into the yellow wheat fields; he waited.

The sound of a grudging V-8 kicked birds up into the air, trailing a dirt cloud above the wheat stalks. It was a Chevy Cabriolet, white walled tires, black gloss finish, cowhide leather interior, and carrying two men that bounced up and down the dirt road. The car drove straight up to the house and parked in front of the porch. Doors opened and closed as the two men gruffly lifted out of the car a body with a sack-cloth over its head. Grunting, they dropped the body onto the ground

and stepped back against the car. The newcomer coughed a couple of times and struggled to lift himself into a kneeling position. Dried blood and mud caked the sackcloth tied around his head while his thin hands were tied with a thick cord of rope that rubbed his skin raw. Overalls saturated with sweat and fear clothed the quaking man. His rasped breath blew the sackcloth back and forth; his wrists struggled against the ropes.

“Please, please! I-I can give you what you want!” said the captive, turning his head this way and that, searching for someone to beg.

Easing himself from the oak chair, the old man kept his quaint eyes on the shuddering figure and strolled slowly to the end of his porch. Pulling a revolver from the small of his back, he raised his gun.

“I know you can.”

A jolting crack silenced the world. The corpse slumped onto the ground, and new blood emerged from the immediate cavity, saturating the sackcloth like a wet rag. The old man walked back to his oak chair and sat down. Gun in hand, he tapped it rhythmically against the leg of the chair.

“What do you want to do with him?”

“Follow the sun, drop the body when it sets.”



Joseph Gonzaga / *Passing Time*



Elliana Moore / *Engulfed*

AWAKE

From *ENG 273C Creative Writing and Literature*

The hardest part to accept about my death was surviving it. On February 2, I was in a motorcycle accident. Everyone including Jai Cunningham at the 6 pm news referred to me not by my name or even as a person, but the third traffic fatality of 2013. I always had an understanding that death was the ultimate consequence of carelessness. My mind was changed at 6:07 pm, when doctors proved medical science and Drake's YOLO motto wrong and revived me. I was still unconscious but no longer the third traffic fatality. At 6:07 pm, I learned the hardest thing to battle was not death, but the journey I was lucky to get a chance at, recovery.

Rehabilitation of my life began in the cold, dark, empty hall I stood in and was unable to see ahead. Something similar to being a terrified kid on the Matterhorn roller coaster at Disneyland, there are ups and downs, but it's so dark you can't see ahead. We walked through and passed the nurses' station over and over again, overhearing the Super Bowl game broadcast on television. The unfamiliar guy I was with was talking to me. I was too busy trying to make sense of the horrible pants I had on. They were the kind of pants you find at the back of *People* magazine, under "Worst Dressed."

At this point, I wasn't sure where the hall led to or where we were going, but hearing about the Super Bowl a few days ago played as a distraction. I knew who I was, but I wasn't in my body. I could see myself walking ahead of me, like watching a home movie of myself.

The pain was unbearable but the worst part was hearing comments from everyone as if I was going somewhere. All the muffled voices talking to me but I couldn't see sounded so far away, but so near at the same time. No one realized I was too hurt to go anywhere.

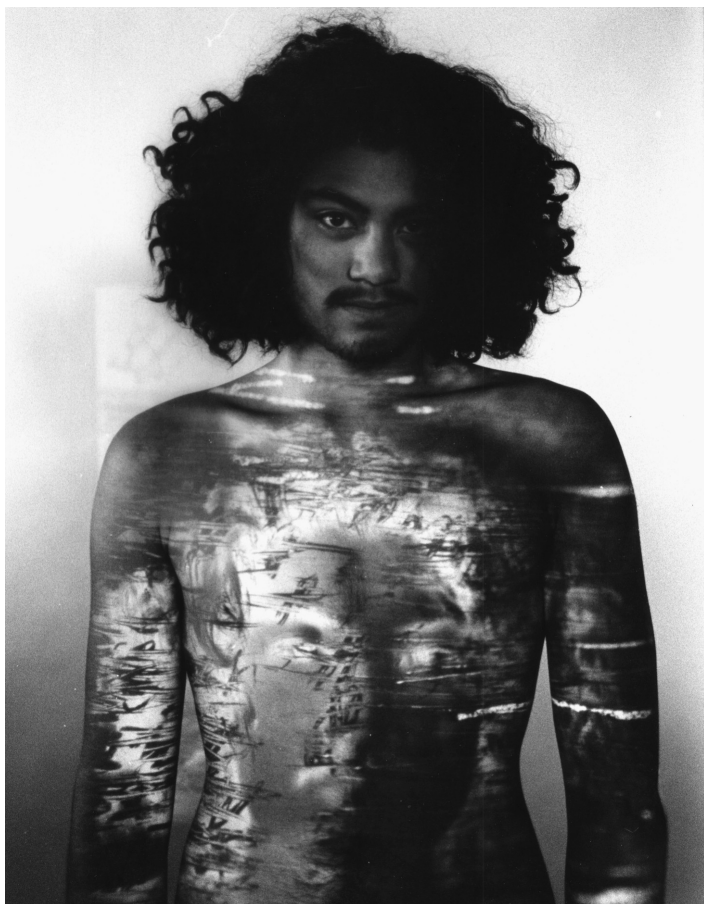
I didn't sleep. I stayed awake. I was never a football fan but the talk of the other weeks Super Bowl made me slightly curious. There were so many animated answers; I wanted to shout out at times, but my body was too tired to express anything. All I could hear was voices and voices. I couldn't feel my leg moving or my finger squeezing, but from

the sounds of it, every movement I made was a miracle in everyone else's perspective. I had a hard time grasping the awe in the voices.

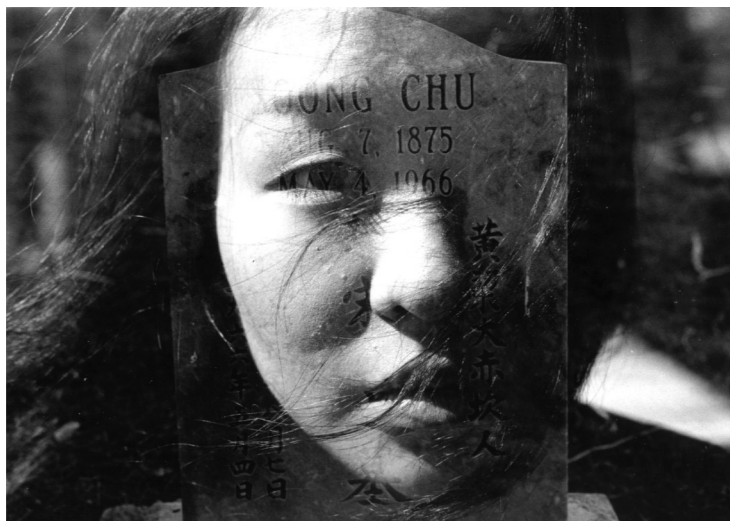
Something wasn't right. I was ignored, but existed. I was dropped, not in an unfamiliar country, but another dimension. A world where the language and directions were strange and unfamiliar. Not Asia, not even the Middle East, maybe Alice in Wonderland. Nothing made sense unless it was in the moment. Similar to being on acid or some sort of hallucinogenic. But not a fun experience; rather, at the point where you're done with your high and you just want it to be over.

The machine that provided oxygen was so intense, it hurt. I was breathing through a straw, under water, where you just wanted to come up and see land or just give up and drown. But all the familiar voices were on land. I couldn't drown. It wasn't an option.

Almost missing the entire February, I finally woke up. I was in an induced coma for nearly three weeks from the second I was brought to the hospital. I woke up knowing who won the Super Bowl, and I retained comments from family. I spoke to a chaplain, a neurological psychologist, and every psychiatrist imaginable, even a hypnotist. My unconscious experience everyone referred to as fascinating; I called creepishly abnormal. This journey I struggled with proves that every single moment, waking or not, counts. Getting up and walking away from this experience, with repercussions, gives me the understanding that death could possibly be the easy way out.



Kalei Makua / Kaleikulaakeliioakalani



Nicki Ralar / *Lost*

LOSSES

From *ENG 273C Creative Writing and Literature*

Keys

Eons of lost keys haunt my future. I've chained and clipped and hidden the spares, but still the tiny tools slip through my fingers. Left behind on bus seats or quietly clanking onto the grass. I scale to the 2nd story of my house, a foot on the dog den, a hand on the air-conditioning, grasp the wood railing and heave over to open an unlocked balcony door. This happens a lot.

Juan's bike

I used it last down our snow carpet alley. My toes incubated in the fur of my UGGs as they pedal me to work. I was already late when the crank seared through the bootie's flesh. I left the roadie in a neighbor's backyard, behind a heap of shoveled snow. I never saw it again. The snow and bike melted away by spring.

Socks

They're opposite charged ions in the wash, but one always ditches the other for a dryer life.

Bank of Hawai'i debit card

I have no idea where that went.

Grandma's ring

One day it was just gone. I searched every empty hole in my room and inspected each occupied hatch. I still have the soft purple box it came inside, a game of hide-and-seek, to un-tie the ribbon seal, and wait for the ring to escape from a padded corner. "Olly olly oxen free. O Ruby Ring, where can you be?" I'm too ashamed to tell my grandma I lost

her heirloom gem. My pinkie swelled in reject when I kept the band on too long. I was going to get it resized on a Wednesday, unleash it from the chain around my neck and admire its gleam on my slender right index. Where is the gold set ruby now? Whose strange phalange does it adorn? Has it been melted down to basics and shipped to India, welded into buttons and nose rings? What grotesque slime has seeped into the engravings, that which sleeps under the mass of a city landfill, where's my grandma's ruby?

Megan Amby

REUNITED

From ENG 273C Creative Writing and Literature

I had never seen something so beautiful in my life
The way you lit up that morning, I swear
when I laid my eyes on you I could hear angels singing ...
“Foodland”

I recalled dreams of whimsical wrestling matches
among a pinnacle of Purple Powerade ponds
as they and five bottles of varied Vitamin waters
continued on with me beyond the valley of hydration
They stood by
ready to soothe my crying cracked lips
and desert dry throat
Cascading through the sweet street and fruitful farmland

The *ding* of registers and rattling of my rusty cart was music to my ears
I snatched anything and everything I had yearned for the past-how-
many-weeks
To acquaint themselves in my carriage
Goosey gummy bears and scrumptious salad bowls
Greeted each other along with the other privileged members

But I had not yet found what I was so desperately looking for ...
I have waited far too long to not get a chance at you again
Am I too early?
Am I too late?
Where are you?

My eyes darted at the baking cave
As the aroma of freshly baked mozzarella bread
followed the jolly green shirted man
... And there you were
Oh, what a sight ...

You.
Newly prepared
With the perfectly assembled 2 parts rice
To one part spam
Wrapped delicately within a blanket of crunchy nori
Your name, the compilation of perfectly arranged chords melodically
melting together ...
“**Musubi**”

My taste buds were tingling

I reached out to you without hesitation.
My stomach shrieked with excitement
Much like a young child on Christmas morning
Nothing else mattered anymore
Because I could finally end my long ongoing quest
Hand in hand we could finally continue on together
Because you ...
were finally mine again.



Noelani Ho / *Rolling Fog*

Megan Amby

MY LOVE TRIANGLE

From *ENG 273C Creative Writing and Literature*

November 20, 2011 @9:00pm

I hate it here. There's nothing to do. It's so boring. I need to move like ASAP.

May 18, 2013 @11:17am

Graduation Day :)

On to bigger and better things!

August 16, 2013 @8:03pm

I can't believe I leave in 2 days...

Last night and today was amazing. Me and my friends went camping down at beautiful Hulopoe Bay...

The water was so ono. Calm and cool, just the way I like it. You know how sometimes you go and swim, and is hard for relax because you stay half struggling for breathe? Nope, not today. It's like it knew, "Megan not gon' be back for a while, might as well give her a break for once, ah?"

Haha, I'm going to miss it... a lot.

Lounging on the beach like was our own house; both feet in the sand, double-fisting Heinekens. We listened to 93.1 while we watched the moon reflect on the glassy water, sparkling in the night. That vision still plays in my head... The thought of it just makes me feel so at ease.

I don't think anyone could ever appreciate that moment here in this place I love as much as I do.

August 17, 2013 @11:00pm

9 hours more...

You know that gut wrenching, mind numbing, heart aching feeling... I would rather dive a thousand feet off of a cliff than get on a plane. The worst part about it though is... I'm doing this to myself. I feel so weak and sick to my stomach but not even a doctor could cure this pain...

I spent my whole afternoon today walking around town. It's funny, I got so many encouraging words from so many people ... and also some words not so appealing.

The old man who works the crosswalk outside the school told me, "I feel so pity for you when I told him I leave tomorrow. I'm going to miss seeing him when I go running early in the morning. I'll miss my boss... she told me "Lanai will always be here", though, and that made me feel somewhat better.

I spent the last few hours with my friends saying bye to them. It's going to be a long time til I see them again... Can you imagine, I spent every single day with them at school since we were in Kindergarten til the day we threw our graduation caps in the air?

It's never going to be the same.

August 18, 2013 @2:47pm

This is the worst day of my life.

August 19, 2013 @3:12pm

My dad just left me to go back to Lanai ... I'm alone. #waterworks

August 20, 2013 @1:17am

There's seriously so much to do here. There are stores that are open all night! Gas is \$4.10!

WAL-MART!

August 26, 2013 @5:27pm

Today school started.

I don't know anyone, at all.

No one knows me.

This is so weird

... and kind of cool.

Sept 16, 2013 @2:17am

Sigh... I skyped with my classmates today. I miss everyone so much... I miss home. I feel like I don't belong here. I don't know what to do with myself anymore...

The amount of options is mind boggling. I never even used to have any time to myself except for when I was sleeping. I saw my friends a few times, but now I'm almost always all by myself. College is hard. How the hell did I even pass high school?

I'm already counting down the days to go home!!!

October 11, 2013 @7:22pm

Guess who's finally home? :)

Sweet, sweet fresh air. Is different without all of my classmates here though. I only got to see a few of them. I got to see my family though, go to the beach, get a poke bowl, and the thing I think I miss the most: DRIVE! I never feel this happy and excited in the longest time!

The moment I stepped off of the plane, I took in a deep breath of cool air and it was pure bliss. I feel like if I never exhale I would never come out of that high and I would just stay in that moment forever.

October 14, 2013 @7:57pm

I'm back on Oahu. Is stink. Fml.

October 20, 2013 @5:31pm

Me and my house mates went Costco today. Is pretty fun there. I totally went ham buying things. Getting stuck in traffic was funny too. Me, my brother and his girlfriend sat in the truck bed blasting his EDM music on his iPod. We were having our own party back there. Talk about crazy. Talk about sore ass. Haha.

October 27, 2013 @ 11:17pm

You know, Oahu, you're kind of pretty ...

Lanai has just always been there for me. The people. The land. It never judged me and was always patient and ready to help me tackle anything life had to throw at me. You were my first love and everything I have ever known...

Oahu, you don't twinkle with the same light that Lanai does, but it's amazing to see that you do shine... Everything about you is so fast paced, but around 2 in the morning, if I'm in the right place, STOP, and take a moment to take every piece of you in...you aren't so obnoxious. I can actually close my eyes, and find something to admire about you. When the setting is right, I, for once, can feel you too, breathing with me.

November 18, 2013 @12:53pm

With the right people it's actually nice here. It's not perfect, but it isn't horrible ...

I don't love you yet ... but I think I could like you.



Moana Doi / Ku'u Home



Noelani Ho / *Golden Hour*

HOME CAN BE A BARBEQUE JOINT

From *ENG 200* Composition II

Saipan is home to about 60,000 people. It is only fourteen miles long and five miles wide and yet, there is so much nestled into that little island that I can find nowhere else in the world. Well, at least the parts I've traveled to. In the late 1980s, both my parents moved to Saipan from the Philippines for hopes of a better future. My mom was the accountant at a local poker room and my dad had his own carpeting business. It wasn't until my mom's office needed new carpet that they finally met. In a few years my mom gave birth to my older sister and a couple years after that, to me. My dad craved so much for a boy that they didn't stop trying until my little brother came out. In 1995, our family was finally complete.

We lived in an apartment on Chalan Kanoa Drive in one of the not-so-modern neighborhoods. All within a minute from my house were my elementary school, a donut shop, a poker room, a laundromat, the post office and at least five mom and pop shops. Everybody knew everybody. All the kids went to each other's birthday parties and all their parents contributed to making the food. They were almost like the luaus and wedding celebrations that Holt described in his essay "Dear To My Heart," only with a different menu. Instead of having sweet potatoes, raw fish and limu, there was the red rice flavored with achiote and onions. Instead of having the whole roasted pig, there was the Chicken Kelaguen with coconut and lime juice. Instead of the stuffed oysters, Lop Cheong and squab, there was the potato salad always dashed with Aunt Mary's secret spices. And most importantly the papaya coco—pickled in vinegar, and soaked with orange or yellow food coloring. My aunts and uncles took pride in their food. Even though the Spaniards and the Chinese influenced a lot of it, we still called it our own. The celebrations that were dear to Holt's heart were just like the birthday parties dear to mine. They were special occasions that brought everyone together through food. I grew up believing that these were the foods that everyone ate and enjoyed.

I would be lying if I said food is the only thing that made my home,

“home.” But it certainly made up for a lot of it.

In “If You Are What You Eat, Then What Am I?” Geeta Kothari recalls being forced to eat Indian food and being ashamed of not having the classic bologna sandwiches all her classmates had. It was hard to swallow how much she disliked her cultural food and wanted to conform to American cuisine when my cultural food was all I wanted. We had the hot dogs and bologna sandwiches here, but they were like the broken cookies left at the bottom of the cookie jar. We had two McDonald’s restaurants, but when presented the opportunity almost everyone would choose Chicken Kelaguen over a Big Mac. It’s just the way things worked on Saipan. We weren’t groups of sheep that were desperately trying to fit into the American standard. We were people of our own kind. We took pride in our food and we weren’t ashamed about it.

My father, brother and I moved to the Big Island in 2010. Saipan was still home, but home started having its issues. The only college on the island was on the verge of losing its accreditation. Our Lt. Governor was in jail for embezzling funds from the people to fund his numerous vacations to the Philippines and Dubai. Citizenship laws were getting too confusing, putting many at risk of being deported to their native country. We had to get out. My mother and sister stayed behind so my sister could finish out her degree before the accreditation was completely lost.

Back home, everyone that’s ever been here said that Hawaii is just like home. The relaxed scene was the same; the only difference was the food and the prices of pretty much everything. Imagine my surprise when I went to KFC and they had no red rice. In fact, KFC didn’t serve rice at all. Instead of papaya pickled in vinegar and salt, my neighbors made mangoes pickled in li hing mui. Don’t even get me started on price. I was so used to paying 50 cents for a barbeque stick at a stand on the side of the road, but now if I wanted to buy anything on the side of the road it would cost an arm and a leg. Smoked meat— \$20 for a ziploc bag. Big Island Crunch chocolate bars for \$3? A Hershey’s bar at a gas station back home would cost me 65 cents!! I seriously thought I was on an episode of Punk’d on MTV and this was all just a joke. But of course, I was reassured when my dad kept telling me, “Wake up, Leah, not all people eat like us, otherwise there would be no purpose for travel.” Unlike Kothari, I missed my mom’s cooking. I wasn’t ashamed of it. I wanted to bring loads of it to school and show all my

classmates what they're missing out on. I longed for the tastes of home. I could not stand to swallow this raw fish and disturbingly supposed-to-be-vinegary-but-it's-sweet pickled fruits.

This was all a new language for me. I spent sixteen years believing that everyone everywhere ate what I did. Sure, I understood that Japanese people loved their sushi and Americans loved their burgers, but didn't everyone's pantry have a packet or two of achuete laying around? Didn't all plate lunches come with a side of Chicken Kelaguen?

I remember calling my long-distance boyfriend a week in and telling him they didn't have Hi-C, a tangerine-flavored juice that came in a cute box, or King Car, a tangy iced tea with a hint of magic at their stores. They didn't have the Karamucho sticks, deep-fried shoestring potatoes coated in a paprika seasoning, or the chocolate-filled pillows I adored. To make me feel better he sent me care packages. Instead of putting pictures or sweet handwritten letters of how much he missed me, he stuffed the large priority-shipping box from USPS with boxes of Hi-C and bags of Karamucho sticks. When I got them, I rationed them so that they'd last till my next package. A 10 oz. bag would normally be gone after one episode of *How I Met Your Mother*, but I made it last for a couple of days.

I cried and begged my mom to let me come home. I wanted to go home because I missed my friends, my boyfriend and my food. I missed being able to walk a minute and satisfy my cravings. If I wanted to recreate a specific dish at home, I would have to hunt through all the Asian and Oriental aisles in Wal-Mart, Foodland and KTA just to make the dish. It was a nightmare.

My nightmare ended when I went back home that December. Before my boyfriend picked me up from the airport, I told him to bring me a bottle of King Car and a bag of Karamucho sticks. I spent the next three weeks indulging myself in all the food I had so greatly missed. Every Thursday, the community put together a street market in the heart of the island and everyone gathered. You could see aunties and uncles selling fruits and vegetables. You would have all the local restaurants offering their food in a more convenient and cheaper manner. There were the artists who sold handmade flowers worn on the ears and even a group of local Asians doing yoga in the middle of it all. I walked through the market and had my 50 cent barbeque sticks. When my boyfriend asked me where I wanted to have dinner, I wanted a plate

lunch with red rice, Chicken Kelaguen, pickled papaya and barbeque ribs. Every time someone suggested eating at a generic place I always rejected it and said “I can have Chinese food in Hawaii” or “Anyone can make a burger, can we please go to the local grill?”

When my three-week vacation was up I loaded my luggage and backpacks with all the delicacies. I had bags of Karamucho sticks, cases of Hi-C and packets of achuete for my red rice. However, my stash didn’t last me that long. I had broken up with my boyfriend, so I no longer had a supply coming in. My sister finished her Accounting degree and graduated that summer. She and my mom were on a plane to Hawaii in no time. I no longer had a reason to go back. Eventually, my mouth forgot what it was like to sip on Hi-C on a hot day. I forgot what it was like to lick off the excess seasonings from my fingers after a bag of Karamucho sticks. I no longer had any of that.

Over time, I have grown accustomed to Hawaii’s food. My dad and my brother were always big sashimi fans. When I found out that they mixed the raw fish in different sauces and garnishes, my love for poke evolved. There was a stand that sold bubble tea that also sold Kalua Pork nachos. After a few months I finally gave in and tried it and boy was I glad. Whenever I went to an L&L diner, I always got the chicken katsu with a spam musubi on the side for later. Whenever I go to parties I always get an extra serving of lomi salmon. So often we desperately cling on to what we like and what’s familiar, but once we try something new and it’s a palate pleaser, we no longer crave exclusively for what we’re familiar with. Pretty soon the fried rice I thought was bland now holds up to red rice I knew 4,000 miles away.

Don’t get me wrong; I still miss the food from back home. Whenever I scroll through my Instagram and I see a friend from back home post a picture of her plate lunch from Thursday’s street market, my mouth still waters. It’s kind of funny how food does that sometimes. While growing up on Saipan, I didn’t realize how much food was such an important part of me. Once I left, I was starved of familiarity and comfort. I had one of the last things that felt like home taken away and replaced by a “new” home. It wasn’t until then that I realized I had taken one of the most common, most overlooked things in our life for granted. We eat food everyday, three times a day, yes? But how often do we sit back and appreciate the flavors that dance on our tongue? How often do we appreciate the convenience it took to get it?

Just last month, my new boyfriend and I had dinner at a barbeque

joint. I ordered the pork skewers and immediately I was taken aback. It tasted almost exactly like home did. For a brief moment, I recalled many memories of having these barbeque sticks back home. There was that time after school when Ellein and I ate and talked about how Rene broke her heart. There was that time we had a potluck and Marie brought them. Sitting in that barbeque joint on Kapiolani, with a piece of pork in my mouth, for a brief moment, I was home.



Dominic Aurelio / *More Than Just a Mom*

Floria Bol

MRS. NADINE PHILIPS - MOTHER OF FIVE

From *ENG 272B* Literatures of Hawai‘i

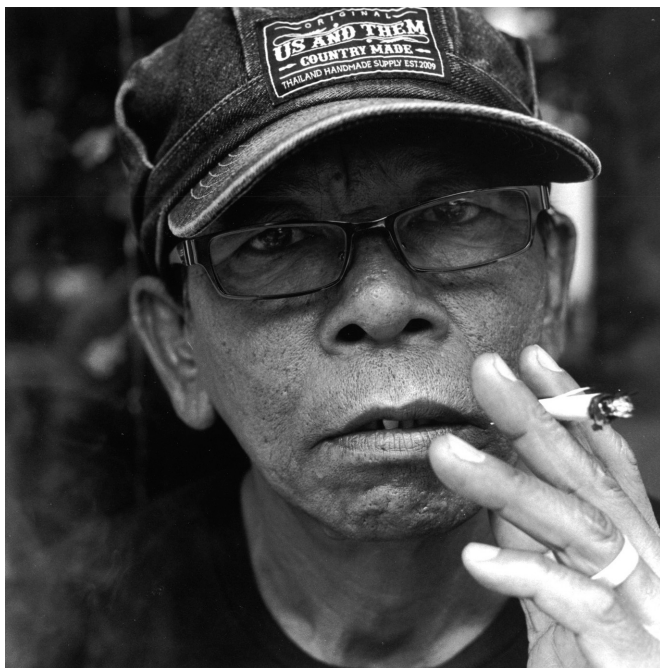
Goodness, gracious, can you kids give ya momma a break?
Maybe the park wasn't such a good idea ...
Kelly! Kelly, girl, get your little butt outta that there tree!
No, no, I did not say you could climb that tree in your princess dress.
Listen to momma, come on down now, come down ... come
That's momma's good little girl!

Kayla, stop beating up on your sister! What did she ever do to you?
She did what? With a NINJA sword?
Well, ... you older than her and you should know how to DUCK by NOW.
Now you let go of her hair ... let go her hair ... I said LET GO...
Thank you, sweetie!
Now you girls go play nice or we goin' home.

Katie, you give that toy back to that little boy, right now!
I saw you, miss! It is NOT nice to take other people's toys without
AXING first.
No, no... just 'cause it looks like your toy at home don't mean that it's
your toy.
Now let go ... let go ... let go ... I SAID LET... that's momma's good little girl!
Now go say you sorry ... say you sorry ... say you ...
Good girl! Now go play nice with the other kids.

Oh, I tell you, if I ever live through this day ...
Katherine! Katherine! Baby, DROP that nasty thing!
Oh, child, don't go puttin' that DEAD thing in your mouth!
Sigh ... She probably gonna need shots now and, Lord,
I don't need to be goin' to NO Wahiawa General Hospital this mornin'.

Oh... now what?! Krystal, Krystal, girl, what happened?
Stop crying, sweetie, it's okay, momma's here...
Why are you crying, baby? Tell momma what happened.
Who flushed your doll down the toilet?
Kelly-Ann, girl, why did you flush your sister's doll down the toilet?
'Cause it had WHAT on it? And YOU stuck it in the dog poop!
Oh, Lord. That's it... girls get cha stuff. We goin' home,
RIGHT NOW!



Moana Doi / *Mr. Soon*



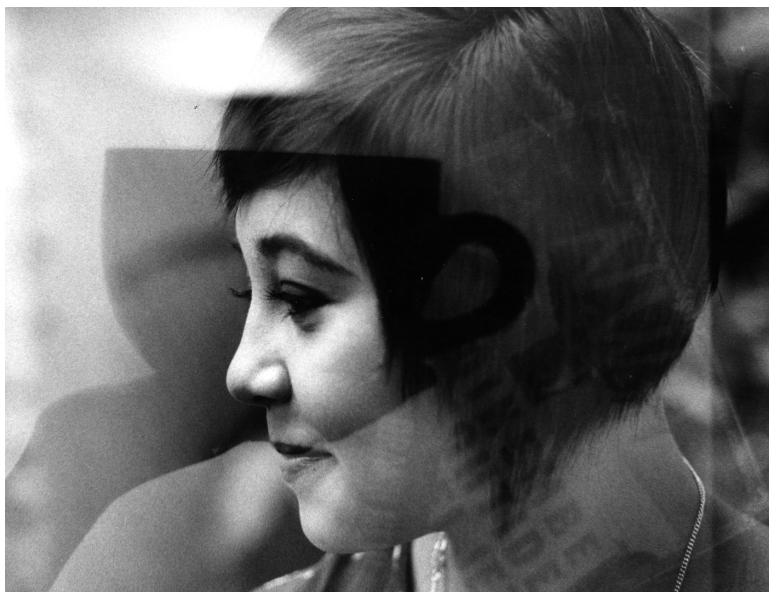
Noelani Ho / *Monroe*



Cole Freund / *Son of Suns*



Bree Ahnee / *Daydreaming*



Erik Oseto / *D'accord*



Cassandra Song / *Self Portrait (Dr. Martens)*

About Lē‘ahi

Nani Lē‘ahi, he maka no Kahiki.

Beautiful Lē‘ahi, object of the eyes from Kahiki. (Diamond Head, always observed with interest by visitors from foreign lands.) Mary Kawena Pukui, ‘Ōlelo Noe‘au 2277.

Lē‘ahi is the name of the highest peak on the volcanic crater overlooking Waikīkī beach. Kapi‘olani Community College sits on her mauka slope, in the ‘ili of Kapahulu.

The crater was called Diamond Head by visitors who thought crystals found in the crater were diamonds. The original name is Lae‘ahi: Lae, a headland or promontory and also a forehead, suggesting wisdom; ‘ahi is the yellow-fin tuna. Hi‘iaka (Pele’s sister) is said to have compared the profile of the headland to the brow of an ‘ahi. The name also suggests that offshore was an ‘ahi fishing ground.

Lē‘ahi appears in “The Fire Chant for King Kalākaua,” by David Malo II, composed to honor the newly-elected King upon his return to Honolulu from his first royal tour of the islands, in March-April, 1874.

Ho‘oluhehu i luna ke ahi o Lē‘ahi.

Lē‘ahi’s fires scatters to the stars.

The chant alludes to a bonfire set on Lē‘ahi to welcome Kalākaua back to O‘ahu. (*The Echo of Our Song: Chants and Poems of the Hawaiians*, 134-144).



