

Eric Chock, Author  
Speech for Bamboo Ridge Reception  
Lama Library, Kapi'olani Community College  
February 13, 2020

Archiving Bamboo Ridge: Kapi'olani Community College, 2020.

We were young and we thought we could change the world, and we did, a little. We added some literature to it, voices and characters that hadn't been heard from before, and with Bamboo Ridge we provided a venue for writers to express their particular worldview, with a focus on the local lifestyle that we could see was already disappearing. In those days of what was called the Hawaiian Renaissance, we didn't want our lifestyle to be pushed out like plantation villages being replaced by suburbs--we wanted our lifestyle to thrive. We loved our world.

We loved it enough so that we tried ourselves to write about it, to share it, to glorify it, to nurture it. We loved it enough so that we worked to showcase that world as expressed by other local writers in our little staple-bound lit mag. We loved it enough to *enjoy* staying up late in Darrell's loft, looking for a tiny comma, or a *correctly* spelled word like "the" or "and" to Exacto-knife out of some scrap piece of copy, and then glue where it was needed to *perfect* someone's story or poem, burnishing it smooth with a wooden ruler, for what we hoped would be eternity.

We loved it enough so that Darrell stenciled the "bamboo ridge" logo in deep blue onto the doors of my white Plymouth Valiant, so I could drive around town and around the entire island, delivering a few copies to any store that would carry us. There weren't that many bookstores in those days, but I was proud enough to walk into every Longs on the island, wearing my Bamboo Ridge T-shirt, and ask the manager if he would give us 60% of sales of local literature. Boy, was I young and naïve!

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But apparently something about what we loved was good enough. Something about the image of a yarn hat, with beer can cut-outs woven into it, smashed on the road, as a bolo head youth watches helplessly. Something about the intricate details of how to eat a fish head, just because it’s so good. Or about the analogy of a Chinese Hot Pot, and having that sweet shared soup at the end. Or just the phrase “black out baby.” Or something about what a man sees in the black rock he pounds into the ground to make the corner of a wall around their home, for eternity, while his lazy son sleeps inside.

Apparently there is something about that sense of eternity that was always part of the whole project of Bamboo Ridge, and so we are going digital. We put a lot of sweat and tears into our labor of love, all who have worked to sustain this community project over the years, and we have enough hope and pride to think that as time reshapes the very meanings of the words we chose to use, that some people, someday in the future, will find some pleasure in looking us up and reading what was written in the olden days in Hawai‘i--and I hope that they will laugh and learn and ache along with the characters and voices in the stories and poems, even if only as the by-product of some sincere English professor’s research assignment.

And to all those who have helped to make such cruel assignments possible, we thank you. We thank all who have worked so hard to make this happen, to the Kapi‘olani Community College and UHM for giving us a virtual home, and of course to all the writers and poets and playwrights and essayists and artists--past, present, and future--who have contributed to this chorus of voices that has illuminated and celebrated and given further definition, and meaning, to all our lives.