



Ke Kauā o Ka Lāhui:
**THE LIFE OF
PRINCE JONAH KŪHIŌ
KALANIANAʻOLE PIʻIKOI**



E Ola, Ka Lani Ali'i Hope o Hawai'i, Ola!

na M. Kawēlau Wright

Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole Pi'ikoi was born March 26, 1871 in Ho'ai village, Kaua'i. He was the youngest of three boys born to Princess Kinoiki Kekaulike and high chief David Kahalepouli Pi'ikoi. Kūhiō experienced a comfortable early childhood, but faced many hardships as he got older. After his father died when he was just nine years old, his mother moved their family to Honolulu. Once there, Kūhiō and his siblings were named princes and eventual heirs to the Kingdom throne by their aunt and uncle, King Kalākaua and Queen Kapi'olani, who had no children of their own. Sadly, Kūhiō's mother died not long thereafter when he was just fourteen years old.

The three princes were adopted by Queen Kapi'olani and were given the best education available. They attended St. Alban's School and O'ahu College, where Kūhiō was a celebrated football star, track runner, rower and bicyclist. In addition to his school-related athletics, Kūhiō was the last ali'i (chief) trained in the art of lua wrestling and was considered an expert in the holds that were kapu (forbidden) to everyone but ali'i.

Kūhiō then attended Saint Matthew's Military Academy in San Mateo, California. During their summer break of 1885, he and his brothers obtained fifteen-foot, 100-pound redwood planks and made them into papa he'enalu (surfboards), which they took to the Santa Cruz shoreline. A massive crowd came to see the royal brothers as they surfed in the freezing waters, thus introducing surfing to the West coast of America. They did the same in Europe during an 1890 vacation to Bridlington, Yorkshire in England. After his time in California, King Kalākaua sent Kūhiō to Japan where he lived for a year as a guest of the Japanese government. He then studied business at the Royal Agricultural College in England and was hosted in European royal courts while there.

King Kalākaua died in early 1891 and was succeeded by his sister, Queen Lili'uokalani. Her attempt to install a new constitution was met with a coup led by haole (Caucasian) businessmen with the help of the United States. After the coup and diplomatic attempts at restoring the Kingdom government, Royalists

decided that an armed rebellion was necessary to reseal the Queen and her government. Kūhiō was arrested for his role in this 1895 uprising. A military tribunal found him guilty and sentenced him to one year in prison and a \$1,000 fine. The government offered him a reduced sentence or pardon if he identified others that participated, but the loyal 24-year-old refused and was sent to prison.

Kūhiō was released in September of 1895. He married Chiefess Elizabeth Kahanu Kaleiwohi-Ka'auwai shortly thereafter and they lived in Waikīkī until they decided to leave in response to Hawai'i's increased political uncertainty. They traveled to Africa in 1899, where the prince hunted big game and took part in the Second Boer War. While the couple had the financial means to live abroad, they decided to return to Hawai'i for Kūhiō to take on his kuleana (responsibility) as ali'i serving Hawaiian people. They returned in 1901, after Hawai'i was taken by the U.S. as a territory.

Hawai'i's politics had shifted during their absence. In addition to the Democratic and Republican parties, the Home Rule Party, created by those still loyal to the Queen, was in power. It was assumed that Robert Wilcox, the incumbent delegate to U.S. Congress would again be victorious in the 1902 elections. Initially, Kūhiō had been a supporter of the Home Rule Party, but stepped away because he felt that a delegate from a party familiar to U.S. politicians would have more success than the Home Rule Party that was unique to Hawai'i.

The Republicans were assured defeat again by Wilcox unless they could find someone the native Hawaiian population would vote for. They decided that person was Kūhiō, an ali'i loved by Hawaiian people. They predicted this love would make Kūhiō a formidable opponent, and convinced him to be the Republican Delegate candidate. Kūhiō believed that his years of diplomatic training would allow him to navigate the U.S. congressional environment and pass initiatives benefiting Hawai'i, even as a non-voting member.

The campaign for U.S. delegate pitted Wilcox and Kūhiō against one another. Hawaiians loved both candidates, but Kūhiō's political platform focused on his ali'i lineage. The centuries-long relationship of love and loyalty between Native Hawaiians and their ali'i was realized in Kūhiō as a possible leader of Hawai'i in the U.S. political system. As a result, Kūhiō swept the elections by winning a considerable amount of the white and Native Hawaiian votes.



Kūhiō arrived in Washington, DC in 1903 as Hawai'i's Territorial delegate at a time when racial prejudice was rampant in the United States, and he was often discriminated against and denied service at business establishments. In addition, Kūhiō faced challenges garnering support for Hawai'i among U.S. congressmen, which he believed was caused by their collective ignorance. As a result, Kūhiō spent nearly twenty years educating his congressional colleagues about Hawai'i. He led in-depth discussions when he and Princess Kahanu entertained them in order to familiarize them with Hawai'i and its people. Starting in 1907, Kūhiō began hosting congressional party visits to Hawai'i to give his colleagues firsthand experiences of Hawai'i's issues and related initiatives that required their votes to pass.

Kūhiō introduced many initiatives to benefit the people of Hawai'i during his long career in America's capital. Some details of these follow, but this is by no means an exhaustive list.

Kūhiō created an initiative to dredge and improve Honolulu Harbor in 1903 and struggled to gain enough support in Congress to pay for this project. The congressional visits to Hawai'i helped Kūhiō's efforts in this area by educating the voting members, and after more than ten years, he finally obtained an overhaul to the Board of Harbor Commissioners in 1916, which allowed for harbor improvements in Hawai'i.

In 1905, Kūhiō advocated for and obtained an Organic Act amendment creating the system of county governments across Hawai'i with their own elected officials which still operates today. This meant that each county could run semi-autonomously, and respond directly to situations affecting the people of their own islands.

Prince Kūhiō tirelessly advocated for Native Hawaiians, contending that they had suffered from European diseases and drastic changes to their culture. In 1914, the prince invited two hundred Hawaiians to his home in Waikiki for a meeting, and established the organization 'Aha Hui Pu'uhonua O Na Hawai'i. This organization created the original plan for the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA), which aimed to rehabilitate Native Hawaiians on former Crown and Kingdom Government lands. Kūhiō then used the created plan to introduce the idea of HHCA to the U.S. congress.

Kūhiō also organized a 1918 meeting of forty Hawaiian leaders in Honolulu. This meeting was the start of Hawaiian Civic Clubs that worked with the 'Aha toward passage of HHCA. While Hawaiian Civic Clubs were created to support the HHCA, they have had a long-lasting effect, as over sixty civic clubs still operate today across Hawai'i and the United States. These clubs advocate for improved welfare of Native Hawaiians in areas such as culture, health, education and economic development.

It took six long years of negotiations and numerous iterations of the HHCA before it was passed in 1921. While the final version was very different from the original plan, and Kūhiō was reported to have been frustrated by these changes, he did finally see it signed into law.

These are just a few examples of Prince Kūhiō's work during his time in Washington. As a non-voting member of Congress, he had to rely on his strategic, social and oratory skills, all of which he had gained through his ali'i training. Ultimately, Kūhiō was elected and served ten consecutive terms from 1902 to 1922, demonstrating Hawai'i's support of their prince. Kūhiō lived his life exemplifying his role as an ali'i and used his unique training to do what he believed to be best for his people.

*This essay is an excerpt of a longer piece by historian M. Kawēlau Wright.
Read the entire essay:*





Jonah Kūhiō: Surfing, Diplomacy and the Rejection of False Choices

na Kealani Cook

Kūhiō in his time was an orphan and a prince, a politician and a prisoner, the most popular politician in Hawai'i, and the most powerless man in the US Congress. In order to remain connected to his people, his past, and arguably to himself, he needed to maintain connection and grounding in Hawaiian culture and the Hawaiian past, yet as a statesman in training he also needed to remain connected and engaged with the world beyond Hawai'i. In the perspectives and propaganda being produced by the empires, non-White peoples still connected to their past were incapable of participation in the future that the empires sought to shape.

In many moments of his life, Kūhiō rejected this simplistic vision of the world and the false choice of either being Hawaiian or being a part and shaper of the future. The Hawaiian Civic Clubs and other organizations that Kūhiō helped form followed a similar path, seeking to look to the Hawaiian past to guide them while also encouraging international practices and influences they saw as beneficial to the Hawaiian people.

Which is not to say that he or the Civic Clubs were always successful in their efforts. He was also often willing to engage with seemingly oppositional forces and ideas, including joining the Republican party in 1902. The party was in the hands of a handful of powerful oligarchs who were the very same "mission faction" who had committed the overthrow, imprisoned Kūhiō for revolting against them, and believed in and supported the idea that Hawaiians and Hawaiian culture were best thought of as part of the past. He joined them because they were the most powerful political and economic group in the islands, and allying with them would allow him to employ some of that power for the Hawaiian people. At the same time, however, his status and support guaranteed the party's electoral dominance, preventing any real weakening of the oligarchy until the 1950s.

Even Kūhiō's successes show evidence of this tension between working within the system and working against it. His well documented public conflict with Governor Frear showed that even Kūhiō grew frustrated at times with the lack of success

to be found from working within a power structure dominated by the former “mission faction.” In 1911 Kūhiō condemned Frear for proposing “worker’s homesteads” instead of farmer’s homesteads—essentially what Kūhiō wound up accepting in the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920. Some then and now would argue that the oligarchs and their allies ended up getting a better deal in the act than the Hawaiian people did. Kūhiō’s ties to the oligarchy were instrumental in getting access to a small amount of low-quality land for Hawaiians, but it also prevented him from looking for a better deal in opposition to the oligarchy’s desires.

Kūhiō is memorialized with a holiday, parks, buildings, and statues. Ironically, he may be memorialized to the point that Kūhiō the manufactured memory has entirely eclipsed Kūhiō as a historical figure. His life, however, has much to teach us through his rejection of the false choice between Indigeneity and the future, and through his failures and successes working within the power structure operating upon that false choice.

This essay is an excerpt of a longer piece by historian Kealani Cook. Read the entire essay:



KA LEI MOMI O HO'OLEHUA

Lyrics composed by Wahinekuipua Hanakahi

Music by John Ka'imikaua

"E nā kūpuna i iwi a lehu lā
E apo 'olu i ke aloha lā
O nēia lei mamo i hi'ikua 'ia
Mai kinohi mai i ka wā 'ānō"

E no'ono'o e pili ana i kou mau kūpuna. A laila, e no'ono'o e pili ana i kāu mau mo'opuna. He aha ka ho'oilina āu e waiho ana no lākou? *Think about your treasured ancestors. Also, think about your future descendants. What legacy will you leave for your descendants?*

Me ka no'ono'o'ana i kāu mau kūpuna, e kākau'oe i leka aloha i kou mau mo'opuna. *With your ancestors in mind, write a letter to your future grandchildren.*

NĀ NĪNAU KĀLAIMANA'O

(DISCUSSION QUESTIONS)

▲ He aha ka waiwai o kou mau kūpuna?
(What is the importance of your kūpuna?)

▲ He aha ka ho'oilina āu e waiho ana no kāu mau mo'opuna?
(What is the legacy that you will leave for your grandchildren?)

KALANIANA'OLE KOU INOA

Henry Enoka

"Ho'okahi ka puana me ka lāhui
'Onipa'a ke aloha no ka 'āina"

Ua no'ono'o mau 'o Kalaniana'ole e pili ana i ke ola pono 'ana o kona Lāhui Kānaka. E koho 'oe i 'ekolu mau pahuhopu āu e ho'okō ai i mea e ho'omau ai i ka pono o ko kākou Lāhui e like me ia.

Kalaniana'ole constantly thought about the well-being of his people. Choose three goals for you to accomplish throughout your life to continue the wellness of our people.


1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

NĀ NĪNAU KĀLAIMANA'O

(DISCUSSION QUESTIONS)

-  No ke aha 'oe i koho ai i kēia mau pahuhopu?
(Why did you think of these goals?)

Mahalo nui to the many who have helped to create *Ke Kauā o Ka Lāhui: The Life of Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole Pi'ikoi*. This living history theater performance and education materials were made possible thanks to the Hawai'i Pono'i Coalition and Hawai'i Council for the Humanities, with initial funding from National Endowment for the Humanities A More Perfect Union Initiative and the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts. The play was written by Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl and directed/produced by Sammie Choy, in conversation with many scholars, teachers, and civic leaders who continue to mālama Prince Kūhiō's legacy in their work. Mahalo M. Kawēlau Wright, Kealani Cook, Davianna Pōmaika'i McGregor, Noenoe Silva, Soulee LKO Stroud, Yuklin Aluli, Anita Naone, Zachary Alaka'i Lum, Jacob Aki, Craig Howes, 'Umi Perkins, Kaleo Hanohano, and Eric Stack, with organizing help from Lyz Soto and Aiko Yamashiro. The performance debuted at 'Iolani Palace on September 4, 2022.

The production exists because of Yuklin Aluli, Hawai'i Pono'i Coalition board member, trailblazing attorney, and fierce advocate for Native Hawaiian Rights. Yuklin recognized the power of sharing mo'olelo as living history and had long wanted a play to tell the story of Prince Kūhiō and the Hawaiian Civic Clubs. We are thankful that it premiered during her lifetime, and we offer this living history as a memorial to her life of service to Hawai'i and to the Hawaiian people.

This humanities guide provides some pathways to learn more about Kūhiō and his complex time. Mahalo to the Hawai'i State Archives for stewarding these powerful historical photos, and allowing them to be shared with the public. Mahalo Kāhuli Leo Le'a for allowing us to reprint from your innovative curriculum for all ages, inspiring us to find and take on our kuleana for the lāhui. This beautiful booklet was designed by Kanai'a Nakamura. Please check out the hhumanities.org website for the full resource.

NOVEMBER 2024 PERFORMANCES

Actors: J. Kamamo Bailon, James Keawe Bright, Alaka'i Cunningham, Kealaula "Lala" Faifili, J. Maki'ilei Ishihara, Charles Kūpahu Timtim

Costume designer: Maile Speetjens

Music director: J. Maki'ilei Ishihara

Hawaiian scholars: M. Kawēlau Wright, 'Umi Perkins



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Kāhuli Leo Le'a



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