Rethinking Hana

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Abstract

My work life story began long before I existed, let alone worked. Throughout my piece, I talk about many things from ancient Hawaiian practices, such as the ahupua‘a system, to the Western influenced modern day work life. I recall my own work experiences to illuminate the difference between work in Hawai‘i and work in the Continental United States. My main goal in this comparison is to encourage anyone, from Hawaiian locals to Hawaiian lovers, to realize that Hawai‘i does not need the Continental United States in order for the islands to, once again, be a strong nation. If anything, Western culture needs Hawai‘i. It needs Hawai‘i’s value of hana to, one, make the work force stronger, and two, make people more unified. Basically, we must shift from a work mentality, to a hana mentality.
The Question

I am writing this piece with the intent that it has some autobiographical qualities to it, however, what will be read throughout may not seem like a Life Writing paper, but it is. The expected style of Life Writing may be perceived as some sort of personal narrative, but the bulk of my essay focuses on old-to-modern Hawaiian ideals and historic points concerning work development on the islands. Those ideals and points only scratch the surface of this story, the heart of my words are voiced through the sophistication of the ahupua`a system, the history of the Hawaiian people, and the conflicting values between two different work cultures. My work-life story began long before I existed, and that is why I will speak so much of the past—because the past is the reason for my present and my future. During the pre-overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom, the Ali`i, the maka`ainana and those with Hawaiian Nationality, thrived on these islands with a political and economical organization that was independent of foreign rule until 1893. Hawai`i was friends with other nations, not subordinate to other nations. This is the history of not only my people, but of a people that belong to the entire world, a people that deserved better treatment from its neighbor (i.e. America), and because of Hawaiians’ actions and choices, I see and do my job a certain way—they are the prequel to my story and is pertinent to understanding the importance in what I’m saying. So now I must pose a question:

In this modern day, does Hawai`i truly need Western leaders within the business world, or can an independent work force be one of the many steps toward becoming nationally independent?

Understandably, the aforementioned question is extremely loaded and carries heavy complications and burdens. However, it is something that must be addressed, and in no way am I the first to do so. Some of you may already have your answer, but please refrain from finalizing it yet. I will ask this question one more time in this paper with hopes that I will have used my experiences, findings, and interviews to justly depict the evolution of the Hawaiian work force. Also, I feel I am obligated to tell you that many people will not agree with what I am saying; some people might even call me a Sovereign Hawaiian, and I’m not sure if that’s true yet; but one thing I do know is Hawai`i
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should start and end with Hawaiians; whether those Hawaiians are of blood or nationality, it does not matter. To set the stage, I will briefly cover some key points in history, my own opinions and, to the best of my ability, a Hawaiian mentality.

To Think Hawaiian is To Be Hawaiian

Before Hiram Bingham and Asa Thurston brought Christianity and a written language, and before the Big Five brought Dole Food Company and Liberty Mart, there was the ahupua‘a system. And with that system were birthed some very unique perspectives—perspectives like ‘ohana and aloha, or in other words, collectivism and love. I understand that some of these Hawaiian terms may be a little confusing and hard to grasp for those unfamiliar with it, and some may be wondering what collectivism and love have to do with jobs and the work force, but trust me, those two points matter a lot more that it may seem.

I want to introduce a Hawaiian navigational idea that can hopefully help ease people into a Hawaiian-ized mindset in order to see a Hawaiian mentality as beneficial to the business mindset seen in this day and age. The navigational mana‘o, or saying, goes as such, “Ka wā ma mua, ka wā ma hope.” The literal translation is that the future is found in the past. Confusing, I know; I did not understand it at first but it really does make sense. It is sort of like walking backward. While taking steps back, we cannot see what we are walking toward, but we can see what we are walking away from. We cannot see the future, but we can see the past. We must refer to the past in order to know how to face the future that we are walking backward into. Using this analogy, it makes sense that we should look to our past for guidance into what we cannot see—we should intertwine those values that existed with the values that exist today. In relation to the topic at hand, the past sheds light on the sophistication of the ahupua‘a and kapu systems. Those organizations are valuable and pliable tools for not only the future of business in the Hawaiian Islands, but also business nationwide, and possibly even worldwide. Take a second to imagine what business could be like if it truly centralized itself around caring for others, not maximum profit. Right now, Capitalism rules the world, and we forget that we are human beings, not facts and figures. Love and world peace
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might be wash out by countless beauty pageants, but we need to start taking them seriously. We can love our business partners, but first we have to recognize that we are not better than them, that they are not our competition. This is a very large assumption I am making, but even though executing and adapting these old systems may take a hundred years, it all needs to start somewhere.

This leads me into the initial problem hampering the progression of this idea’s implementation: Hawai‘i’s political standing remains stolen, an accusation that is now becoming more and more illuminated among the population within, and beyond, the islands. Kumu Pili, a Hawaiian Studies Professor at a local college on ‘Oahu, dedicates a portion of her class to introducing her students to David Keanu Sai. David Sai received his Ph.D. from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa as a Doctor in Philosophy with a focus in Political Science, and focused his dissertation on de-occupying Hawai‘i. It was titled *The Myth of Ceded Lands: A Legal Analysis*. Below is a quote I excerpted from my interview with Pili concerning the forward movement of this de-occupation:

“He has a plan and he works internationally. There have been people waiting to support us in getting out of the occupation but many of us feel like it’s not time yet; everybody has to get educated first because we’ve all been taught the wrong history for so long. Welcome to *The Matrix*!” (Pili 01:20).

In order for Hawai‘i to re-establish itself, enough people must learn what it truly means to live in Hawai‘i, what it feels like to be Hawaiian, and realize the validity of Hawai‘i’s power. To learn, feel, and realize all of this, we need to rethink hana. Hana, if translated into English, means work. But common knowledge acknowledges that no translation is ever fully accurate. That being said, Hana is not the same as work. Work is performing tasks in order to earn an individual, monetary income. Hana, on the other hand, runs much deeper than anyone’s wallet. According to Kumu Pili, who compares work and hana as the following: “Hana is to do something, to make something. Work seems like something that requires you have an income” (Pili 7:30). This is how I want this topic to be perceived as; not to reap any benefits, but to make something good for the world I live in.
To begin, I will start with explaining the ahupua’a and kapu system. Realizing what these are will help relate how they benefit the modern work force.

The Ahupua’a System

As Mark Alfred Kawika Fontaine explains in his thesis, *Two Views of Ancient Hawaiian Society*, the Ahupua’a System is power “shared between chiefs and commoners in a reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship” (Fontaine 2). Likewise, a subtle yet significant difference between a maka’ainana and an employee, or an Ali’i and a boss, is perspective. Both may have similar social/business statuses, but fundamentally, both contrast the other. A maka’ainana fulfilled his or her role in society rather than striving for more, as some employees might. An ali’i saw his or her status as a moral imperative rather than simple stepping-stone to more greatness, as some employers might. The Hawaiian perspective provides a collective approach, rather than the Westerner’s view, which provides a more self-empowering method. Neither is right or wrong, but one benefits widely while the other benefits singularly. And, hopefully, to others, it will seem more logical to have a nation of successful communities rather than a handful of successful individuals.

Now I will explain why the ahupua’a system is a strong method. “[T]he implementation of the ahupua’a system up to Western contact [was] from about 1450-1778 CE.” (Fontaine 9). Once Captain Cooke made his landing and Kamehameha I conquered all the islands, the ahupua’a system took its first steps. It was a system created to organize a much larger community than it originally was. Hawai‘i suddenly became much larger. Eight separate islands became one unified collective. Order needed to be created, and so it was. Basically, the aupua’a System divided and balanced social classes, job diversities, kapu (sacred) locations, and even daily maintenance responsibilities. An ahupua’a System designated and organized different Hawaiian communities and the jobs within those communities. Refer to Image 1 for a clear image of a basic ahupua’a. An ahupua’a is the representation of a symbiotic relationship between mankind and nature. The clouds’ rain feeds the mountaintops, which sends water to aquifers, forests, and kalo patches, which the designated farmers
then mālama, or tend to. But what does this have to do with Hawai‘i’s hand within the modern business world? It is as simple as this: Hawaiians are professional learners. When the ahupua’a system was created, the Hawaiians learned how to make it thrive. When lands outside of the Pacific were introduced, Hawaiians traveled and brought electricity to the islands. Hawaiians were, and are, sponges. Since they know how to learn, they know how to teach. This is the hana that makes Hawaiians successful and this is the value that they would bring to the Continent’s business world, but only as an independent nation.

![The Ahupua’a System](image)

**Figure 1. The Ahupua’a System (Water Team)**

**The Kapu System**

The kapu system is the social/political system created to maintain structural order within the Hawaiian Islands. Rather than using words to describe how the kapu system differs from the Western business system, I decided to show it. I created two charts illustrating my distinction between a Western business hierarchy and the kapu System hierarchy, which are located in Figures 2 and 3. Take note of the structural difference between the two. I constructed the western business world into pyramid form to illustrate the race-to-the-top mentality. The goal is to strive toward the CEO position because that
is where all the money is. In contrast, I made the kapu system chart into a circle in order to illuminate the unity the kapu system is meant to instill. Everything is connected and no one is better than the other. This comparison is meant to clearly show the very real difference between two work cultures.

Perhaps the most relevant and recent use of the ahupua’a and kapu systems is reflected through the Hawaiian Monarchy. No monarch in the Hawaiian Kingdom ever received a paycheck. Doctor David Keanu Sai explains the income of Hawai‘i’s rulers, specifically Queen Lili‘uokalani’s, saying, “The Crown Lands were her purse to survive. In the Hawaiian Kingdom, you did not collect taxes to pay the Queen. Even in the House of Nobles, where the nobles, they were not paid; they served without pay; the Queen served without pay; the Crown Lands was their supply of money” (Sai). This fact proves that Hawai‘i’s leaders never wanted individual power, only unified strength among the island chain. An Ali‘i believed in sustaining stability, not gaining status. Think about it this way: Hawai‘i is one chain of islands and the Continental U.S. is one land divided. Hawai‘i was and is able to maintain unification even though each island is divided by ocean, yet, on the Western Continent, invisible borders were instilled to encourage separation. This comparison parallels with the disconnection within the Western workforce. A typical business on the Continent promotes the idea that hard work equals promotions, which leads into competitions, which results in champions and failures. A typical ahupua’a has fishermen who fish and give their catch to farmers, who farm and give their kalo to fishermen, and both fishermen and farmers give their food to Ali‘i, who maintain the peace so that the fishermen can continue to fish and the farmers can continue to farm; this was a system that lead to stability and success. The Hawaiians were on their way to advancing those practices into more modern jobs with the creation of the Hawaiian Kingdom, but ever since the overthrow, everything came to a halt.
Hawai‘i Can Be Its own Leader Once More

Hawai‘i has the potential to contribute greatly to businesses and educational systems nationwide—to lead in the notion that it is not ideal to be the highest one of many, but rather a strong one of many. In other words, businesses should not be
catering to the leader that appears mighty, but rather the workers that make the leader mighty. I am not asking for anarchy when I say Hawaiians should have their land back, and I am not asking for separation when I say Hawai‘i deserves to be independent. This story does not call for blood; it calls for a better future. When I say Hawaiians should have their land back, I am saying that we need a place to grow and harvest our culture. And when I say Hawai‘i deserves their independence I am saying that we want a friendship with the rest of the world and not an unjust ruling. It is through Hawai‘i’s growth and independence that I envision us benefiting the business world within the United States. The simple reason why I know we can be an amazing business partner for the Continent is because we do not want to be the best; we only want to help under the sun and not under the U.S.’s shadow.

**What Do Other People Have To Say?**

I have pulled quotes from some interviews that I conducted in order to obtain multiple perspectives toward my topic at hand. These interviews represent people’s experiences working in Hawai‘i and another’s experience working in the Continental United States.

This whole time I have highlighted how much I think Hawai‘i does not need the Continental U.S., and I know not everyone agrees with me. Even people who were born and raised here and immersed in the culture do not agree with me. Bob Shin, a staff member at the school I work at, graduated from UH Mānoa’s Shidler College of Business. In my interview with him he states,

> Culture is everything in how a business operates. Work culture [in the mainland] is more stressful and people have higher expectations; they are required to produce. Relationships are more professional, as oppose to Hawai‘i where people are much more family oriented so people become more like friends than like coworkers. But I find that professional relationships are easier because if you are able to separate your personal relationships with your work relationships your work becomes easier because you can separate your feelings. That’s why mainland companies are more effective. (Shin 2:00)
Bob captures very valid ideas that U.S. businesses like to sell; everything is strictly business, which leaves an inhuman-like emotional disconnect and guilt-ridden actions. In other words, backstabbing and firing a person just became a whole lot easier. I do not believe the way Bob views the business world is wrong, but he is an example of how much the Western culture has influenced many of the local people living on the Hawaiian Islands. This is just the way it is here in Hawai‘i. We are a mixture of Sovereign, Western, and other mindsets. We need to start settling on what will be universally known as a Hawaiian mentality.

My next interviews are between two ladies, Lehua and Stacey, both of whom work with Bob, but share slightly different perspectives on the matter at hand. Below they share their opinion on the difference between the work force in Hawai‘i and the work force on the Continent. Lehua’s distinction goes as such,

Ours (Hawai‘i) is definitely networking, who you know, family, and people always try to find out what kind of connection they have to you, like what high school you went to; nobody else asks that. So it’s finding out where a person is from, not necessarily an ethnicity but rather who knows who.

Stacey describes it as more of a social questionnaire, saying,

People in Hawai‘i ask, ‘Where did you grow up?’ Cause if that person grew up on the Big Island, I ask, ‘Hey! What part of the Big Island? I have family there’ or ‘Do you remember this?’ Where on the mainland, you have nothing in common and everyone is coming from all over the place, and when people say where they’re from they say, ‘Hey that’s great, that’s someplace I always wanted to go to,’ and then they kind of stop right there. No common ground.

From their points about the social aspect in work culture differences, I asked a follow up question asking what they think makes businesses in Hawai‘i different. Stacy goes on to say,

Just like in the mainland business here is money too, but it’s about how we go about doing the business that makes us different. In Hawai‘i it’s, how well can I communicate with you? Do I feel there’s a connection? Is it a good connection that I’m comfortable with and if I’m not comfortable I’m gonna go look for someone else.

In addition, Stacey said,
It is under my assumption that, on the mainland, they were taught to work, work, work, work, and you have to do good. Here in Hawai‘i, we all have to do good, but we have to do good together.

The work force in Hawai‘i: ‘Ohana is about family. And on the Continent: ‘Ohana is about work. My next interview with Shaun Yoshida, an educator who has worked both in Hawai‘i and the Continent, describes what he felt when he moved from Hawai‘i and worked in San Francisco.

Going back to the original topic of mainland versus Hawai‘i, I think, because we live in an area that has a rich history, and I can’t put my finger on it, but I feel we’re anchored a little bit more. And I’m not saying that my coworkers in San Francisco were floundering, but I just feel like when we do our job, here, there’s a connection to everything—people, land, whatever. Whereas over there it be strictly people, which is not bad, but I think here, it may not bigger than that but it’s deeper than that.

People in the mainland seem to lack an identity. What I mean by this is that the Continental U.S. has one of the newest cultures on the planet. Native Americans have their history; the Chinese have theirs, but modern day Americans do not have a history that dates back hundreds and hundreds of years. If we were to strip down the U.S.’s history down to its bare-ass, we would expose the undeniable fact that the U.S. is built upon a need to exploit and conquer. Every country has their dirty history, this just so happens to be America’s. This foundation built a nation that builds businesses that, likewise, know only how to exploit and conquer, but as a marketing tactic, they call it money and success. It is in this aspect that Hawai‘i can be an asset—the idea of hana that the ahupua’a encouraged and the collective mentality that the kapu system maintained.

I am not saying that we should totally regress back to the ways of the old, but these are valuable points of view that can be used to lead Hawai‘i’s business world into a more successful future. We need to start valuing the culture here and stop allowing the richness of that culture to be defaced. I stand by my stance that Hawai‘i does not need a Western culture’s rule, but it will take many, many more brains and hands in order for the implementation of independence to be successful. And after reflecting on the
perspectives I gained through my interviews, I have concluded that Hawai‘i stands a very good chance.

What Is It Exactly That I Do?

I work with a wide variety of personalities on a daily basis. Sometimes I work with students still attached to their mothers’ umbilical cords. Once, a girl came in with her mother and they were inquiring about attending the college I work at. I looked at the girl, assuming she was the one that would be going to school, and asked her, “Have you applied to our campus yet?”

She mutely turned to her mother, neglecting to answer my question, and the mom said, “No, she hasn’t applied yet. We were hoping to get her started today.”

I smiled a tight smile, thinking, *How is this girl gonna survive in college if she can’t even answer me that question?* But I said, “Okay, go ahead and have a seat at one of those computers.” I helped her because my job is to help, but beyond that, my job is to have pride in my work, no matter who I’m helping, and to do the best that I can because my best is what other people deserve. In relation to the Continental business mentality, I never would have helped her as nicely as I did just to look good in front of my boss. You see, in the office I work in, our motto is, “We never say no. We never turn a student away.” And so I keep telling myself that over, and over, and over again in my head every time I deal with a student that is a little bit less than easy to work with.

There was another incident. A boy walked in who wore his face too cool and his pants too low. He slid his way into the office and announced, “Uh, I like apply fo college.”

I look at his four-sizes-too-big pants, his I-don’t-give-a-shit face, and I question his seriousness, but then I remember what he asked. He wants to go to school, and who am I to say whether he can make it or not, all because of his physical impression? There is no predetermining factor that can make that judgment. I helped him as if he were any other well-dressed person and answered all his questions with all my best answers.

These memories reflect the way I perform any job. I have no hidden vendetta, nor any desire to be the most efficient worker. All I want is to be the best person that can help a student—which will make me efficient and will make me a good worker. And, if I
am ever rewarded for my work, then so be it. Benefits and promotions are a side dish, but are in no way the main course. That would absolutely no fun. Working feeds wallets and bills, which are valid and important. But we forget that helping others feeds the soul, and is either equally or more important than a paycheck.

**Hawai‘i Grown versus Continentally Manufactured**

Money isn’t the key factor to a happy work place, but positive treatment is; and if workers are happy, exceptional work proficiency is merely a side effect. In my experiences working, I dealt with both ends of the spectrum that I am highlighting throughout this piece: Hawai‘i work culture and Continental work culture. I worked under a home-grown, local-to-Hawai‘i boss as well as a perfectly manufactured, continental raised Californian. The names of my supervisors will not be disclosed so I will call them Lani and Fred throughout this example. Lani is the supervisor from Hawai‘i, and Fred is the supervisor from California. The main and most important difference between my two former bosses was the way they treated my fellow workers and me. Both had the same goal: Make the program the best it can be. However, their contrasting executions made and then broke the program.

To discipline us, Lani would call together a group meeting to reorganize and fix our mistakes. Doing so helped keep us a strong, working unit. I remember a time that I was called in to Lani’s office. I was working for her for about two months at that point, and she had to talk to me about something. At first I thought I was in trouble and nervously knocked on her cubical door. “Come in!” Lani called sweetly when she heard my knock.

“Hi,” I said with a smile, trying to act cool.

“Hey Shyanne! Come have a seat,” she told me through her smiling chipmunk cheeks. “How are you doing?”

“Pretty good. How are you?”

“I’m good. So, I called you in here because I wanted to touch bases with how you were doing here. Is everything going okay?”
Relieved, I said, “Yes! Everything is great. I’m really liking this job and I am very happy.”

This short recollection focuses on Lani’s basic treatment of us. She didn’t call me in to give me some sort of evaluation; she only wanted to open up the line of communication between the two of us. The key point I want to make about how she treated us is she wasn’t using some sort of tactic, it was just the way she treated us. She didn’t read in some book how she should treat employees, she merely just treated us like people; she treated us the way she was raised to treat people—with respect, understanding, and care. Unfortunately, Lani moved on to a different job and we were forced to receive a replacement boss—a replacement boss named Fred. Fred is from California and has Bachelor’s degree in something smart and a Ph. D. in something that sounds even smarter.

As I mentioned before, Lani checked in with us by asking if we were doing okay; Fred, on the other hand, checked in with us in a vastly different manner.

I sat at the front desk of the center I worked in and looked up through the glass window toward the front door, hearing the beckoning footsteps of what I thought was a student, but turned out to be Fred. “Good morning, Shyanne,” Fred said in his strictly business tone, not even bothering to smile.

“Hey Fred,” I said trying to smile, preparing for an awkward conversation.

“I am thinking about moving you to the International Center’s office,” he told me with a face as straight as can be. No “How are you doing?” or any such greeting.

I was in shock. For one, the International Center is always staffed with workers who can speak a second language, which I did not, and two, only people who really messed up had to move offices. So I asked, “What have I been doing wrong?”

“Nothing. I only want you to broaden your skills. I want to make this program shine. Unless you believe you are incapable of adapting to a new work environment?”

He lifted his eyebrows and tightened his lips as he asked me that last part.

What he said offended me. I understood why he wanted what he wanted, but the condescending way in which he spoke me made me totally adverse to anything he asked me to do. And what was that bullshit about making the program better? His treatment...
toward me and my reaction were the result of two clashing cultures. However, if a person brought a collective mentality, like the one I mentioned before, I do not think there would be as much hostility. It was better when Lani was running things because she knew that our sense of drive was more important than impressing higher-ups. She knew that if we were happy, then the program would have been just fine. Yes, Fred was my boss, but in no way did I respect him. I respected Lani, and I was not the only one. Here are a few points my coworkers made about Lani:

“She is an awesome boss, I freakin’ love her. I think what made her a good boss is that was very easy to talk to. She was very personable. I wasn’t ever scared to go to her or ask a question” (Jennifer 6:30).

“Lani was very on it, very organized; she remembered important dates and made sure everyone else was on the same page and no one was left behind” (Burns 27:00).

And here are some things they said about Fred:

“He had really good intentions, but he never followed through” (Jennifer 10:00).

“He pushed all the concerns and ideas into the program and he didn’t know anything about it. He should’ve tested the waters first” (Burns 29:00).

Even though these interviews may make Lani seem like the perfect boss, she wasn’t. She worked herself far too hard, reflecting a very uptight trait, but the fact that we were family to her allowed her to use that quality to make all of us better. Fred was uptight, but he was nothing like family, and that is why the program fell to rubble.

Treatment is more effective than a pay-raise. Fred truly and stereotypically brought in continental business ideas that clearly did not work with the entire local Hawai‘i foundation of the program. Lani was born and raised here, and she knew how to interact with all of her subordinate workers because she used a unified, collective
mentality that we are all subconsciously geared toward. She did not make us feel as though we were lesser than her, but still called for authority. Fred, on the other hand, was from California and went to some university up in the states. The way he ran the program felt utterly and entirely foreign. It was hard to adjust to his idea of authority and order. I know he would not have been as bad of a boss if only he expressed some sort of effort to understand the culture his workers came from and showed respect for the program that Lani left behind. Because of his ignorance, Fred reflected some of the insensitivity that occurs when other people visit the Hawaiian Islands. Sure, they come here and they love how welcoming we are, but they don’t think that they should start adopting that mentality as well. This is a general statement, but it is a pattern that I have experienced throughout my whole life growing up on ‘Oahu. Even though visitors appreciate and love this Hawaiian Paradise, they exploit us. From the Overthrow to tourism, it all looks the same to me. People who grew up in Hawai‘i believe it’s offensive that Westerners come here and make a home without understanding what it truly means to live in Hawai‘i. And this is valid to an extent because some locals do not realize the culture clash. Many Westerners were not exposed to the local Hawai‘i culture and cannot be blamed for some seemingly insensitive actions. Hawaiians are a loving people and one of our main qualities is being an understanding culture. Not many other cultures have kapu land such as a heiau, so we have to realize that other peoples will not respect certain rocks like Hawaiians do.

Now, though I am focusing on, for lack of better words, the faults of American business strategies, they have brought in a very beneficial job design. For instance, Michael Rose’s *Reward Management* focuses on how a business can find the right group of people for their jobs based on certain skills and interests. There is a point in the book where the author focuses on strategic rewards, and how that plan is used in retaining good workers. Rose speaks of rewards within a business and how rewards keep workers happy and how rewards express that the business cares about its employees. Rose goes on to say,

Reward is important as it can cost up to 75 per cent of the total costs of the organization and it carries strong messages. It can play an important part in the engagement of people in the business... Effective reward management
is about both the individual elements of reward and the total cost and value. (Rose 247)

In summary, Rose’s book is simply a lesson in treating your workers right, which is good, but that last part of the quote I excerpted seems so odd to me. How can total costs and value be as important as treating ones workers right? How can money equivocate to a human being? At what point does Capitalism provoke people to consider the monetary value of a person? All of these questions are ones I can’t seem to, or don’t want to, find answers for. The only thought that keeps replaying in my head is this: If at any point one wants to have some sort of work-based hierarchy, one will have to understand that the workers make a company strong, just as much as its leaders do. If the focus is money and profit, then the main concerns will remain money and profit, regardless of noticing a worker’s value. Acknowledging a problem may be the first step in fixing it, but it is in no way the last. In Hawai‘i, money is very important, but I noticed that it does not get in the way of treating someone the best way a person can be treated. Where I work, pre and post Fred era, when someone messes up they are not fired; the solution is to teach them the right way and not give up on them.

There is all this talk about treating people like decent human beings, but not much about loving them as such. This sounds mushy, I know, but it is the feeling of aloha that sets Hawai‘i’s businesses apart. On the Continent, there is some form of aloha, but rather than it being something universally understood within a culture, it has to be learned, which is similar to the lessons that Rose provides.

We live in Hawai‘i and that fact is a crucial element in finding a job here and what type of people we could be working with or under. There is also a cultural relevance of living here in Hawai‘i, which I can prove by my working at a Community College on ‘Oahu. This college is not your typical college; we cater to international students, mothers, native Hawaiians, as well as people from the continent. We have technical programs that get a person from college right into the work force. We need to know how to handle many different types of people, and people with very different life goals. But beyond the programs the college offers, I want to use my experiences at KCC and the
work ethic I developed working there as tools to prove that, because of the way Hawai‘i used to be, its work style and values are different than of the Continent’s.

**Conclusion**

We are not only ‘ohana with the United States, but also the entire world. This is how I think about it: Families on the continent love and go beyond reasonable-doubt for the ones they care about; on the flip-side families on Hawai‘i love and go beyond reasonable-doubt for the ones they care about, but they aloha the rain that gives them life, and mālama the earth that births them existence. Hawai‘i not only understands the economical importance of business life, but also the also grand scheme of interconnected relationships between people and nature. My intention is not to put Hawai‘i on top of some high horse. We do not want to be better; we only want respect and restoration of our world standing. Yes, we are small, but we have so many work tactics that can help the U.S. become a greater nation. However, to do that, Hawai‘i needs to be once again recognized as an independent nation. It cannot help anyone when it is stuck under the U.S.’s thumb. I speak this way because of my own work experiences. The whole Lani and Fred thing shaped my perspective on how I view the businesses in Hawai‘i and businesses on the Continent. The only way the two cultures can coexist is if we equal the playing field.

And so, in this modern day, does Hawai‘i truly need Western leaders, or can it be the strong, respectable nation it once was? To say the least, I believe Hawai‘i in no way needs a Western leader, or any leader for that matter, and it can be the nation it once was, but only if we, as members of these islands, no matter what race, become collective and remember that aloha means caring for ourselves, our lands, and our neighbors. We need to shift from a work mentality to a hana mentality. All I want is to someday, even if not in my lifetime, unify the Continents, just like the islands are unified. Everyone who has had some contact with the Hawaiian culture knows that there is something special about it. It isn’t something that we can always describe; it is something that is instilled in us; it is like we have this built-in identity that we can’t explain but we know about with all our hearts.
As a send off, here is one last thought: We are not sharks, we are people. So we should stop trying to be a beast thirsty for some blood money.

Figure 4. “Big Fish” (Quiles)
Worklife Writing at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Fall 2014

http://www.english.hawaii.edu/henry/464/home.html

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