

HAWAII CONFERENCE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

The Friend



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SHOW ALOHA

ONE 'OHANA

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Why It Matters

There are those moments in time when a match is struck and thrown on smoldering tinder, when the flames of racism roar back to life with renewed intensity. We are living in such a time.

Violent attacks, fueled by racism against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, increased sharply in 2020. Sadly, such attacks are not a new phenomenon—such injustices have been going on for centuries. When these hateful acts are committed, they inflict trauma, not just on individuals, but on entire communities.

In this issue of *The Friend*, we examine anti-Asian American and Pacific Islander racism and violence and why it matters to us in Hawai'i. Writers from here and on the continent courageously share their stories with us. Due to space limitations, we present excerpts from the longer submissions and will post all contributions on the Conference website (www.hcucc.org/the-friend). We encourage you to read their complete stories.

**Little children, let us love,
not in word or speech, but
in truth and action.**

I John 3:18

As you read through this issue, you will discover that there are so many interconnected threads that could be followed—the racial triangulation of Asians, Black and White people and the stereotype of the “model minority”; White supremacy and systemic racism; the eroticization and fetishization of Asian women; the importance of building bridges between Asian, Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities; xenophobia and immigration; class inequities and access to resources and health care;

the history and complicity of the church in perpetuating the myth of white superiority. Unfortunately, we had to limit the scope for this issue.



This is just the beginning of a conversation, an opportunity to learn from the experiences and wisdom of others. We know we have not gotten it all right, and we ask for grace as we attempt to tackle this emotionally-charged, complex, and multi-faceted subject.

As we continue to listen to new voices, we must also critically examine our own biases, behaviors, thoughts, and actions. We must acknowledge that we all have our stories, our realities that we live in and through which we view the world.

But it is not enough to just listen to the various voices—our hearts must be moved to take action. As Traci Blackmon, UCC Associate General Minister for Justice and Local Church Ministries, stated in a recent webinar, “When we know better, we must do better.” So where do we go from here? We need to continue the conversation and tell our stories. We need to listen to the stories of others with open hearts and without judgment. We need to grieve together the tragic loss of lives and opportunities and process our collective trauma. We need to critically examine our own biases and behav-

iors and ask for forgiveness. We need to call out injustice and hold each other accountable. We need to stand up for, and in solidarity with, those who continue to be oppressed, and take action in our own communities. As Martin Luther King, Jr., reminds us, “In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”

We offer this issue of *The Friend*, which is coming out during Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, as an opportunity to listen to a variety of voices and to ignite a spark that will lead to honest and open conversation. During the month of May, we celebrate the vast array of contributions that Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Americans have made to the history, culture, growth, and achievements of the United States. We invite submissions of comments, reflections, and insights to coconutwireless@hcucc.org. We hope that you find something that speaks to your heart in this issue of *The Friend*!



God is still speaking

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Cover Design: This month's cover features friends in the Hawai'i Conference. They are intentionally holding signs that do not reflect their own ethnicities to show that we stand together in support of one another.

The Rock Upon Which Christ's Church Is Built

NALEEN NAUPAKA ANDRADE, KAHU, KAHIKOLU CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God? Acts 11:15-17

The apostle Peter told this story in 1st century C.E. to Jerusalem followers of Jesus after they criticized Peter for accepting the hospitality of Gentiles, eating with them, and violating their centuries-old religious dietary practice.

Peter's response, however, reveals that neither the preaching nor preacher, nor a religion's rules decide whom the Holy Spirit baptizes. This passage makes clear that it is the Holy Spirit that chooses to whom Jesus' invitation and gift are given. Peter and his critics in Jerusalem realize that Jesus' teachings and sacred realm are not exclusive to one group. With its own divine agency, the Holy Spirit chooses to link all groups, races, ethnicities, and cultures to God and each other. What we witness within Peter and members of this first church is a dazzling understanding that Jesus' church would not be limited by their small-minded humanness. God was so much more...Yet, in the years and centuries that followed, religious institutions and their ideologies would again and again exclude the Other and endorse the wounding of men, women, and children who do not conform to their preconceived notions of who are chosen and superior.

Amid the COVID-19 viral pandemic, the rise of Asian Americans being falsely accused of being the primary viral spreaders, and unjustly

made scapegoats by expedient political leaders, Peter's story remains relevant and needed in 21st century America and its 50th State. The catastrophic rise in Asian American violence, particularly among women and elders in the past 18 months is gut-wrenching. It requires a response that rises to the same urgency as the Black Lives Matter movement toward justice. It requires the same compelling demand to rebuild the capacity of America's Pacific Islanders and Native Hawaiians to be democratically self-determined and sovereign. Some in Hawai'i believe we are immune to a resurgence of racism and violence. We are not.



The Last Supper stained glass by Sadao Watanabe; Nu'uuanu Congregational Church, used with permission

Racism in practice is the learned belief that different races have traits and customs that make them superior or inferior to each other. On the continental U.S., racism manifests predominantly as differences in skin color and physical features such as the shape of your eyes, nose, and hair texture. White skin is considered superior, black skin the most inferior. Between White and Black Americans racial profiling describes different skin colors from brown, red, yellow, olive, etc., with the accompanying physical features. In Hawai'i, racism manifests

not as skin color, but as ethnicity (i.e., your kinship group's cultural affiliation and identification) and social class (e.g., where you went to high school, your socioeconomic status, if you speak English with an accent). My point is, whether we are on the continental U.S. or here in Hawai'i, racism, which is the most corrupt form of excluding and wounding the Other, exists; and if left unchecked, will exponentially grow.

As a UCC conference located within the state that has a majority of Asians, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders, we have a moral and ethical responsibility to be an advocate and voice for Asian American, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian populations. The United Church of Christ could use its considerable power to influence and extend the dialog on Black Lives Matter and Indigenous Rights to include General Synod resolutions that responsibly chart a course for ending the racial violence against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and help to generate public policy that dismantles systemic racism and eliminates hate-speech.

Theologian, scholar and UCC minister Walter Brueggemann described the Bible as the inspired Word of God breathing into us—vibrant in its power to guide our path toward God's grace and justice.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. 1 John 4:16b, 18-19



We were overwhelmed by the number of submissions for this issue of *The Friend*. In an attempt to include them all, we present excerpts from the longer submissions and have posted all contributions on the Conference website at www.hcucc.org/the-friend. We encourage you to read their complete stories.

Picturing Others

DAVID K. POPHAM, CONFERENCE MINISTER

How do people make judgments about one another? How do we go about deciding who is friendly and who is an enemy? From a religious point of view, how do we determine who is *clean* and who is *unclean*? According to psychologists Chen-Bo Zhong and Julian House, one of the cardinal points on our moral compass is purity. They believe that purity carries with it the emotional reaction of disgust. For Zhong and House, disgust is rooted in our moral “desire to be separated from our *animal nature*.”* Their analysis indicates that moral judgment is more a product of gut reactions without mindful intention than a product of reasoned response. Furthermore, Zhong and House conclude that since our moral fear reflects a disgust with our animal nature, our gut reactions project racial stereotypes in relationship to three distinct behaviors connected to animals: *beast*, *savage*, and *virus*.

The prejudicial attitudes that portray humans as beasts tend to employ two images: sub-human and garbage feeders. Sub-human categorization includes apes and monkeys, with the intention of painting the person as just not quite fully human and in need of a guiding hand, such as the idea that apes and monkeys need the human hand to save them from jungle instincts. This stereotype has a long history of being used to paint African Americans as sub-human. It is worth noting that during the illegal overthrow of Queen Lili‘uokalani, similar messaging was used against the Queen for the purpose of arguing that a superior hand was needed in Hawai‘i.

The representation of humans as

garbage feeders carries with it the notion that certain people live like scavenging animals. Typically, in the U.S. this has been the go-to prejudicial portrait of immigrants. Monetarily frugal, immigrants often live as large extended families in smaller houses and apartments. Therefore, immigrants are often portrayed as “packed in like rats” and “crawling like cockroaches.” These images portray immigrants, such as those from Pacific Island and Latinx countries, as animals and insects we associate with garbage foraging.



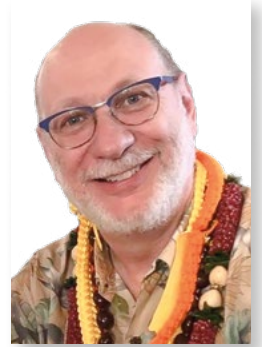
Savages is a prejudicial concept that divides the world into the civilized and the uncivilized. The uncivilized are at the gates ready to break in to “rape our women” and “take our children” (into the wild woods and turn them back into animals). This conceptualization of non-Europeans gave rise to the Doctrine of Discovery. Therefore, when Europeans arrived in the Americas, they painted First Nations people as savages that either must be tamed through civilization or killed off like ravenous creatures such as the wolf. This portrayal, which is still in place today, led to one of the largest genocides in world history in both North

and South America.

The final prejudicial picture, while technically not of the animal kingdom, is long associated with disease-carrying creatures. This stereotype paints people as a contagion or deadly virus. It is well known that the Nazi regime portrayed those of Jewish heritage as vermin and the societal disease eating away at post-WWI German society.

The LGBTQ community was also conceptualized as diseased and disease spreaders with the onset of the AIDS pandemic. Today, with the propaganda of a former U.S. administration still ringing in our ears, those of Asian heritage are facing this same smear. In this conceptualization there is only one way to protect ourselves from a disease and that is to eradicate the contagion. It is little wonder then that hate crimes against Asian people are on the rise in the U.S.

We can ask the question, “How is my kind painted?” That is a worthy question and one that needs to be explored for producing balanced and wholistic portraits of one another. However, the Christian must go further. We must ask how we ourselves paint others. The call of Christ upon us is to root out our own unconscious gut reactions which paint others as beast, savage, and virus and to replace that with the deliberate and intentional use of compassion, grace, and hospitality.



*Zhong and House, “Dirt, Pollution, and Purity: A Metaphoric Perspective on Morality,” in *The Power of Metaphor: Examining Its Influence on Social Life*, eds. Mark J. Landau, Michael D. Robinson, and Brian P. Meir: The American Psychological Association, 2014.

Changes at Craigside

ANDREW BUNN, HCF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Hawai'i Conference Foundation has owned and operated units in the Craigside (Tower III) apartment building for as long as the building has existed. The Foundation developed the building as a rental project in the mid-1960's, with a focus on being able to make affordable housing available for retired clergy and church workers. The apartments have also served as an important investment property for the Foundation.

Over the years the needs of the Conference and the Foundation have changed. The revenue stream

of offerings shared with the Conference has declined for the past decade as the need for missional support has increased. The Conference has had to look to the Foundation for an increasingly larger share of income in order to support the mission work of the Conference. It has also recently had to cut back on mission expenditures.

As an investment property, Craigside III has not performed well in recent years. The building is aging, maintenance costs are on the rise, and the challenges of sharing control over maintenance and operation of

the building with the Association of Unit Owners have been consistently difficult. As a mission property, the building meets the needs of only a very small number of retired people and disproportionately ties up resources that could be directed to broader strategic goals within the Conference.

For these reasons, the Board of Trustees of the Foundation has decided to sell the units in Craigside III. This is part of a larger plan to provide stronger missional support for the Conference. Part of our long-term strategy with the Conference is to raise money for a statewide program that will support Hawai'i Conference clergy who retire on the island of their choice. We will also try, as best our resources will permit, to provide support for our retired clergy currently living at Craigside III.

We are only just now completing the process of engaging a broker to advise us on the best process to follow and the timing of sales. We are intentionally approaching this as a gradual process, with a plan to sell approximately six units a year following a divestment process that will take multiple years to complete. Once we have decided on a timeline for the marketing of specific units, we will give ample notice to our tenants. We will also do our best to minimize disturbances to our tenants as our broker and its agents work in the building.

Change is never easy, but it is sometimes necessary, and we appreciate the understanding and patience of our Conference community as we go through this process.



Racism in America Is Not a New Phenomenon

IESE TUUAO, PASTOR, SAMOAN CHURCH OF HAWAI'I, LMS

These recent acts of violence towards Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are not new for some who have been living and experienced them firsthand on the mainland. As a college student back in Los Angeles in 1972, I was incarcerated because they thought I was an illegal alien, coming from Mexico, even though I pled with them that I'm Samoan, a U.S. national; I even showed them my driver's license—that did not help me. Two more stories in my memory box come to mind:

In 1989 in Cerritos, California, Sheriff deputies in riot gear broke up a peaceful bridal shower by a Samoan family. The partygoers, most of them Samoans, were brutally beaten up and falsely arrested. Eleven deputies and about 35 Samoans were injured in the resulting melee. I remember the L.A. County District Attorney, Ira Reiner, characterized those charged with felonies as "very large people" with a "mob mentality." The Sheriff claimed

that the neighbors called and complained but the neighbors denied it, and a resident videotaped the whole melee showing deputies repeatedly hitting some of the partygoers as they lay handcuffed on the ground.

I also remember in February 1991, right before Rodney King's beating by Los Angeles police, two Samoan brothers were killed by a Compton police officer when they responded to a domestic dispute. The officers claimed that they feared for their lives. The stereotype of Samoans then was that they are big and fierce people with little brains. Resentment still lingers in the Samoan Community in Southern California. I remember working with community leaders and churches to take part in the largest peaceful protest ever by Samoans and many other people of color in Southern California in 1991.



Colorful People Stand Up for One Another

MITCHELL YOUNG, PASTOR, MONTEBELLO PLYMOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Following the killing of Asian American women in Atlanta, I received a message from Rev. Ashley Hiestand of Mount Hollywood UCC: "I am holding you and your congregation in my prayers, as I can only imagine the pain of this week." It was made all the more poignant because Mount Hollywood UCC has had a proud history of helping sister church Hollywood Independent UCC, known then as Japanese Independent Church of Hollywood, by holding and caring for their church property while the bulk of their membership was forcibly removed from the West Coast during World War II.

When we grew up in Hawai'i, we rarely thought of Asian Americans as people of color, perhaps because we were the majority, but now more than ever, we have been challenged to recognize that when any people of any color suffer, we all suffer. It is time for us to become allies with all who seek justice over privilege. As much as we currently live in an anxious time for many in our Asian Pacific community, those heart-felt treasured messages of support remind us that we are not alone.



First Chinese Church of Christ in Hawai'i

TEDDY LLANA, HONOLULU MARSHALLESE UCC

Asian and Pacific Islanders have been treated unfairly, feeling hate due to economic reasons when people felt we came here to take over jobs supposed to be for Hawaiians/Americans. This should be addressed to stop the hate. I am a victim of hate with my superior in my 18 years of service for the state.



WENDY TAJIMA, EXECUTIVE PRESBYTER, SAN GABRIEL PRESBYTERY, PC(USA); ALTADENA COMMUNITY CHURCH UCC, VOLUNTEER

Whenever I am asked about my first call in ministry, I recount how churches on the continent could not see me as a pastoral leader, even though I had many years of experience as a manager in the non-profit and business worlds before seminary. Instead, what they saw was an Asian woman, and in their mind Asian women were submissive or prostitutes. Even as I prepared for ordination, two haole men with supervision over me asked me about prostitution, in totally separate instances. There was no role model for Asian woman leadership in the imagination of most people here, even in California. But Hawai'i people saw AAPI women as senator, lieutenant governor, and just about every school teacher they had growing up! I was so thankful to be able to come to Hawai'i, and I learned so much about being a pastor, thanks to you.

Recently, I was struck by how the murders of people at Asian-identified

spas in Atlanta seemed to reveal long-ignored challenges for Asians on the continent, namely the exoticization of AAPI women and our relative invisibility. Initial reports of the massacres barely mentioned the victims at all, but instead focused on police and government officials praising each other for their quick response. I was grateful for the people who addressed particular aspects of this tragedy: African-Americans pointing out the specific targeting of Asian businesses and stepping forward in solidarity with the Asian community; Korean churches coming to the site of the businesses to pray for the victims; and Asian journalists talking about being seen as the perpetual foreigner (if they are seen at all), or the dehumanizing impacts of the fetishization of Asian women. At the church I attend (where Kekapa Lee did his seminary internship), some non-Asian members organized against anti-AAPI violence. It was an unusual and lovely experience, to see other people stand up for people like me.

No Home to Go To



Percy and Atina Benjamin now lead the Maui Marshallese Ministry UCC/JRD, but they have lived in Arizona, Iowa, and Utah, as Percy was going to school and starting UCC churches. Percy grew up in the Marshall Islands. Atina's family is from Bikini Atoll, but because nuclear weapon testing by the United States in the 1940's and 1950's made the area uninhabitable, Atina grew up on Kili Island. Prior to testing, the Bikini islanders were promised that they would be able to go back to Bikini, their ancestral home. When interviewed about their experiences as Pacific Islanders in the United States, Percy consistently answered every question with "yes and no," recognizing that while each situation presented opportunities for people to react negatively, there were also times of acceptance. He always started with a positive response and did not focus on the negative. When Atina was encouraged to say what she would like people to understand about her experience in the United States, she said, "Don't say, 'Go Home.' I want people to know that I have no home to go to."

Being a Brave Bystander

JAMES AKINAKA, NU'UANU CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

I didn't truly understand racism until I moved away from Hawai'i. As a person of Chinese and Japanese descent, I never saw myself as a minority while growing up on O'ahu. But since I moved to New York City, racism has become impossible for me to ignore.

Vilma Kari, a 65-year-old Filipina American immigrant, was walking to church just before noon on March 29, 2021, when a man kicked her to the ground. "You don't belong here," he shouted at her while kicking her in the head several times.

This happened in front of an apartment building in New York, where two doormen watched from inside the lobby. One of them even closed the door on her. Thankfully, she survived, and her assailant was arrested, while both doormen have since been fired. But she should have been able to walk to church in peace without becoming the victim of a hate crime.

The attack terrified me. It happened just 13 blocks from my office in Manhattan, on an otherwise normal Monday morning. Were it not for the pandemic, I could have been walking to lunch nearby when Vilma Kari was attacked. If I had been there, I hope that I would have been brave enough to help her.

My Hawai'i friends and I are fortunate that our families still live in the islands, where—compared to the mainland—they are at lower risk of being targets of anti-Asian hate crimes.

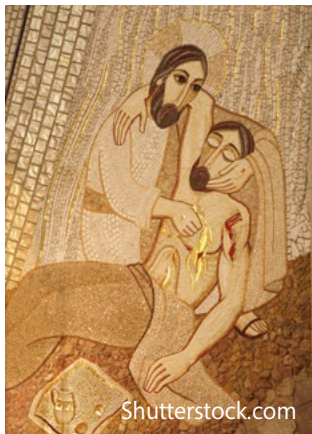
And yet, we live in a country where racism is not just a possibility, but an inevitability. When left unchecked, it spreads like a pandemic. As a young and able-bodied person, I've realized it is my responsibility to help protect our elders. If I expect others to protect my parents and our kūpuna back home in Hawai'i, then I need to be willing to help protect anyone from racism.

When Vilma Kari was attacked, there was another witness who, unlike the doormen, stepped in to help. This person screamed to draw Vilma's assailant away from her. We should all be brave enough to be an active bystander.

Hollaback!, a grassroots organization that combats public

harassment, has launched a free online training series on bystander intervention. I am attending an upcoming session in May, and I encourage you to do the same by registering for a session at www.ihollaback.org. The free 60 minute training can help you learn how to stop someone from being harassed without putting yourself in harm's way. We all have a responsibility to protect our kūpuna and those around us.

Racism is a pandemic. If we want to live in a country without it someday, then we must fight it with attentiveness and courage today. Being a brave bystander is the first step in saving lives.



KAREN FAY RAMOS-YOUNG, RETIRED AUTHORIZED MINISTER, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

No matter where the violence is happening, in your neighborhood or mine, #STOP AAPI

HATE and #BLM:BLACK LIVES MATTER call us to interrogate ourselves; to honestly look at our unwarranted assumptions about people, our biases and prejudices.

In Hawai'i, when asked about my parents' hometowns or their alma mater, due to the inquirers' unintentional biases, these conversations normalized a hierarchy with me at the bottom. My answers: Pu'unene, Takayama Camp, Pā'auhau, Waialua and Honoka'a High Schools, placed me in assumed lower socioeconomic class and some folks devalued and dismissed me even as an ordained minister. With others, a kinship grew because of common plantation,

working class roots.

I am a dark Asian American woman, and I am cautiously aware that even within Asian American communities, in our churches and with my vocational responsibilities, I will encounter oppression, microaggression, gender inequality, and I will feel devalued because of the color of my skin. Hospital patients, for example, expected me to clear food trays, bring fresh linens, wipe up spills, move bedside urinals and commodes before introducing myself as the minister offering a pastoral visit.

We can act and respond to violence and hate by looking within ourselves, speaking against archaic systems of racism, questioning patriarchal social structures, being a voice for equality and equity, justly treating newer Asian and Pacific Islander immigrants with understanding and kindness. Choose not to be a perpetrator of unjust ways of thinking.

Hate Has No Place Here!

PACIFIC ISLANDER & ASIAN AMERICAN MINISTRIES (PAAM) UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST; DICK HOM, MODERATOR

Angry! Outraged! Upset! There are no words to reflect what is happening in our Asian American and Pacific Islander communities.

The Pacific Islander & Asian American Ministries (PAAM) of the United Church of Christ has always called out and condemned all types of racism and xenophobia against all communities of color since 1974 and

will continue to do so if this virus is among us.

Contact your local legislative officials and demand support for the AAPI community in your area. Contact your local civil rights organizations to add your name to their lists. Discuss in your church how you can show

support for your AAPI community during this time.



No More Chinaman's Hat

RENNIE MAU, HAWAII PAAM MODERATOR

I have Polynesian blood, but most of my bloodline is Chinese “Hakka” from my father and “Lungdu” from my mother. My Asian American side goes back five generations! I feel I

can talk about this from an AAPI perspective.

My Asian ancestors, like many immigrants and migrants, came to America seeking a better life. Unfortunately, most never asked permission of the indigenous natives of the land to enter. Many were escaping harsh poverty and hunger, with refugee and asylum status. Some came because our Hawai'i ali'i had arranged and invited contract laborers, so we don't say they were uninvited. But many came with little or no knowledge of the local indigenous people. Settler colonialism addresses this failure in protocol. It would be likened to my walking into your home, opening your refrigerator, helping myself to whatever was inside, and making your home my home.

Settler colonialism is a relatively new field of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research, involving many areas—history; law; genocide studies; indigenous, colonial and postcolonial studies; anthropology; historical geography; economics; politics; sociology; international relations; political science; literary criticism; cultural and gender studies; and philosophy.

Through settler colonialism local history and culture are erased. For instance, I grew up on the wind-

ward side of O'ahu learning about “Chinaman's Hat,” but decades later I learned of the true name and story of Mokoli'i Island. With the military and plantation era...much of Native cultures and many name places were erased.

People of color are pitted against each other for a piece of the leftover pies. Often this is an intentional distraction as the privileged continue their greed to gain more, while people of color duke it out and gain less.

Hawai'i PAAM endeavors to help our immigrants/migrants—many themselves AAPI—not just “to start in the middle,” but to learn from the beginning about Hawai'i, and to have respect for the local indigenous people and cultures.

Indeed, there are many reasons for hate toward Asians and Pacific Islanders that are not related to settler colonialism. Perhaps now is a time to start at the base foundation for real healing to take place—time for the 3 R's to be lifted up: Redress, Reconciliation, and Restoration.

For more on “Asian Settler Colonialism” join or follow our Hawai'i PAAM Facebook Group for upcoming workshops, articles, and publications.



Asians in America

Anti-AAPI racism has been a reality of American culture since the 1800s. Back in 1871, at least 18 Chinese men were lynched in Los Angeles. The first U.S. law restricting immigration based on ethnicity was enacted in 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act. The 1924 Immigration Act expanded the immigration ban to all Asians, and was not repealed until 1965. In Hawai'i, there has been distrust of “locals” (evidenced by the 1932 Massie Affair), especially of our hosts, nā kanaka maoli. The illegal overthrow and imprisonment of Queen Lili'uokalani reflect total disregard for the rights of the Hawaiian people. And in its 2018 report, the State of Hawai'i confirms that Native Hawaiians continue to have the lowest per capita income of the largest race groups (White, Filipino, Japanese, Hawaiian, Chinese)—though the Marshallese suffer from the highest levels of poverty among all groups.

see https://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/economic/reports/SelectedRacesCharacteristics_HawaiiReport.pdf
(COMPILED BY WENDY TAJIMA)

Nick Buto, Student, Chapman University

Growing up in Hawai'i, I did not face racial discrimination for being Asian. I was used to seeing people who looked like me who shared similar cultural traditions. When I moved to California for college, I noticed that there were not many Asian

students, but I still felt comfortable and welcomed. When the Black Lives Matter movement surged over the summer with the death of George Floyd, I found it hard to comfort my Black friends. I could not relate to what they were going through beyond a superficial level, and I could only offer words of support and comfort.

It was not until the recent shooting in Atlanta where Asian women were targeted and murdered that I felt scared because I am Asian. Imagining that one of those women could have been my mother sent an unfamiliar scare through my body.

For the first time in my life, I feel the unjust pain and fear of being hated because of my Asian heritage.

With the intent to return to California to resume in-person classes in the fall, I now think about how my lifestyle may change. I may not feel comfortable running alone at night, or I may not want to shop alone. This fear is something I am not used to, but is a sad new reality many Asian Americans must now face.



YZ [pronounced "wise"] literature is wisdom from the young, Generations Y and Z to be more specific. See how young people are shining, witnessing, and reflecting light.

What Would You Like People to Know about Being Micronesian in Hawai'i?

Suzie Sigrah, Lāna'i Union Church

- We didn't expect to have people already have a name for us, already labeled.
- People say go back to Micronesia. People come here for labor, jobs, education. If we could go back for those things, we would—but I grew up here.
- There is a lot of teamwork. We do everything together. If we know you're Micronesian and you need help, we are going to help. It's a tight community.
- All our chants, all the things we celebrate, if people could just join us in that, they would see so much more of who Micronesians are.
- Kosraeans are very respectful of our elders.
- If you really get to know a Micronesian, you'll see a big difference from what people think we are.
- We're really welcoming. If you go to our island, you will be met at the airport and receive a lei.



Telsin Kephas, Lāna'i Union Church

- In Micronesia we have different people, way different languages. There are four main islands, but there are many small islands that people live on. We don't know each other. It's like saying Asians or Europeans are all the same. You need to be more specific than "Micronesian." For me I am from Kosrae.
- There're a lot of people foreign to Micronesia there—Filipino, White, Black; those people live in our place. We try to treat them well. They are guests to our island. But when I come here, I see that some people that don't know me think, "Oh that is a Micronesian." It was different than what I expected.
- Here people don't treat you cruel; they look at you like you're someone that is bad.
- It's hard to find housing and a good job here.
- Before I came here, I got my Associate of Arts in Liberal Arts degree in Micronesia from the National Campus, and I was working in agriculture.
- I applied for a lot of jobs when I first came here. I mentioned on my resume that I'm Micronesian. They assume all Micronesians will be good at housekeeping, dishes. I applied for plant health technician, (that's what I did back home). A couple years later I was lucky; no one was applying for the job, so I got it.



To learn more and see more from youth and young adults, or to submit content for consideration for future pages in *The Friend*, visit our webpage at hcucc.org/yz-literature.

Excerpts from a Sermon

CASSIE CHEE, MASTER OF DIVINITY STUDENT AT GARRETT-EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

We need to look at where we might miss Jesus in our midst among those whose lives our society has deemed worthy of punishment. In Atlanta, Georgia, eight people were murdered, six of them Asian American women. The murderer said that he killed them because they were “a temptation he needed to eliminate.” These Asian women were deemed worthy of punishment for merely existing because they were considered to be a sexual temptation.

We have a large tourism industry and military presence here in Hawai‘i that put Asian American and Pacific Islander women in danger because of how our bodies are exoticized and hypersexualized. Asian American and Pacific Islander women’s lives are not worthy of punishment simply for existing in proximity to military bases. For our grandmas, aunts, mothers, and

sisters, I want to say: you are whole, and your lives are worthy to be celebrated in all the parts, seen and unseen.

As the church, we need to begin to talk about how shaming women, and keeping women in situations of abuse by claiming that women must obey their husbands, are directly tied to what happened in Atlanta. Just as some of the temple practices and the religious leaders in Jesus’ time became twisted to oppress the poor, we need to make it plain that churches today have been complicit in deeming women’s bodies, and particularly Black, Indigenous, Asian, and Latina women’s bodies worthy of punishment.

May we name, question, and challenge the ways we have all been complicit in the unrightful punishment of God’s people.



Place Anti-Asian and Pacific Islander Racism in a Larger Framework

RONALD FUJIYOSHI, OLAA FIRST HAWAIIAN CHURCH

When I worked as a missionary among Koreans in Japan, I met a Korean *hibakusha* (atomic bomb victim, and *pipokja* in Korean). He told me that when the first Japanese *hibakusha* group went to the United Nations to appeal their case, Korean *hibakusha* asked to go with them. The Koreans were refused. Why? If the Japanese *hibakusha* took the Korean *hibakusha* with them, the reason the Koreans were at the epicenter of the A-bomb dropped on Hiroshima would be revealed. The Koreans were there



because the Japanese military forcibly brought Korean workers from Korea to work in the Japanese factories. The Japanese *hibakusha* wanted the world to view themselves as “victims” only. They did not want the world to see the Japanese as also citizens of a hegemonic nation that planned on making the rest of Asia and the Pacific their colonies.

There is the danger of talking about anti-Asian racism and including anti-Pacific Islander racism within the confines of viewing Asians and Pacific Islanders as victims only. Racism against Asians is a reality and has been a reality ever since the myth of White superiority was developed. And especially

Senate Passes Legislation Addressing Violence Against Asians

On April 22, 2021, the U.S. Senate voted 94-1 to approve legislation that condemns all forms of anti-Asian racism, discrimination, and violence. Mazie Hirono, D-Hawai‘i, was the lead sponsor of the bill. This vote was the first legislative action in either chamber of Congress to strengthen law enforcement’s response to attacks on Asian people and communities, which have sharply increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Senator Mazie Hirono, D-Hawai‘i



Waiola Church

with the government of the USA, including its recently-elected president, viewing China as its major enemy, we should not be surprised that anti-Asian racism is on the rise. However, talking about anti-Asian racism without placing it within the larger framework of racism tends to focus on “we the victims” only, which is not the whole reality.

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A young King Kamehameha III with excellent advisors published a Declaration of Rights in June 7, 1839, that became the opening lines of The First Constitution of Hawai‘i in October 8, 1840. The opening paragraph reads:
“God hath made of one blood

all nations of men to dwell on the earth,” in unity and blessedness. God has also bestowed certain rights alike on all men and all chiefs, and all people of all lands.

Understanding how enlightened this constitution was, which did not discriminate between people of

different ethnicities and gave rights to the common people as well as to the chiefs, CAN help us to have a fresh look at racism here in Hawai‘i.

See Ronald Fujiyoshi’s full article at www.hcucc.org/the-friend for many resources.

199th ‘Aha Pae‘āina: We Persevere Together E Ho‘omau Kākou

While we will miss being together in person for the annual gathering of the Hawai‘i Conference, sharing ono meals and talking story, we will make the most of this opportunity to “be together” in different ways.

The ‘Aha Pae‘āina will start at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 13, with a Conference-wide worship service. The various ‘Aha Iki meetings will be held Monday–Thursday. The Formation Missional Team is planning workshops, free for anyone to attend, interspersed throughout the week. David Popham will be officially installed as Conference Minister on June 15. The ‘Aha will end with the Makua business session on Saturday,



June 19, and closing worship. All of this will take place online.

Registration is required only for delegates and visitors to the Saturday business session of the ‘Aha Makua. Registration packets have been mailed to the churches and information may also be found online at <https://www.hcucc.org/aha-paeaina>. Registration deadline is June 1 at 4:00 p.m.



Mission Offering Strengthen the Church

Strengthen the Church (STC), one of four special mission offerings of the United Church of Christ, builds up the Body of Christ. Split evenly between the Hawai‘i Conference and UCC national ministries, money received from this offering largely supports youth ministries, leadership development for new churches in parts of the country where the UCC voice has not been heard, and innovation in existing congregations.

Churches are invited to receive this offering on Pentecost Sunday, May 23, 2021, but contributions may be collected on any Sunday.

Resources for promoting Strengthen the Church are available at uccresources.com.

Conference Calendar of Events

MAY 22	Kaua‘i Association Spring Mokupuni Tri-Isle Association Spring Mokupuni HCF Board of Trustees
MAY 31	Memorial Day (Office Closed)
JUNE 11	Kamehameha Day (Office Closed)
JUNE 13 - 19	199th ‘Aha Pae‘āina virtual gathering Installation of Conference Minister David K. Popham
JUNE 26	Conference Council

May 2021

SPEAKING UP, SPEAKING OUT

The Church, Racism, and the Call to Do Justice

LINDA RICH, CHAIR, JUSTICE AND WITNESS MISSIONAL TEAM

By linking Asians to the COVID pandemic and scapegoating them as the cause of the hardship and loss that many Americans have experienced, they have unfairly been made the targets of pent-up frustration and anger.



Perhaps we feel grateful that we are here in the Islands, far from the divisions, violence, and hate crimes of the continent. If we take an honest look, however, we must confess that race-based discrimination can be found right here at home. Our diverse ethnic backgrounds bring with them both the biases that we consciously or unconsciously absorbed from our cultures and the stereotypes

that others attached to our ancestors.

Pacific Islanders are frequent targets of open hostility and racism today. Every wave of Pacific Islander migration to Hawai'i has faced it. Micronesians are the latest to be subjected to hostility and derogatory labels such as "cock-roaches." Why are they here? Their story is one of victimization by U.S. militarism. . . Micronesians are here legally through an agreement with the U.S. government, in recognition of the damage done by bombing their islands.

As Christians, we are called to... ask the tough questions such as why do we have so many neighbors who are hungry, or homeless or lacking access to healthcare? Why are so many Hawaiians still waiting for home-steads? Why are so many Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in prison when

others receive lighter sentences for the same crimes? We are called to search our own minds and hearts for unconscious bias and racism. We must identify the remnants of White supremacy and American exceptionalism that may still influence how we live and work together as the church.

The HCUCC Justice and Witness Missional Team lifts up local, national, and global issues, providing our churches with resources for education and opportunities to act for justice. Watch for notices in the Coconut Wireless and on our web page. Our national UCC office provides us with resources from Pacific Islander & Asian American Ministries (PAAM), the UCC's Council for Health and Human Service Ministries (CHHSM), and the UCC's Council for Racial and Ethnic Ministries (COREM), which you can also find on the HCUCC website's Justice and Witness page and at www.hcucc.org.