

THE HOUR OF REMEMBERING

Elizabeth Kapu'uwailani Lindsey

This is the hour of our remembering, of our putting those parts of ourselves that have been dismembered and disenfranchised back together again. It is only from this place of wholeness, our holiness, that we can dream once more. And when we dream, let it be of a Hawai'i where our people are healthy and vibrant, where we no longer kill ourselves with despair and abuse. Let us dream a Hawai'i, as Dr. Manu Meyer says, "where our children are inspired to make knowledge joyful." And let us dream a Hawai'i where our land and her resources are loved and properly cared for.

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Twenty-five years ago, my father, Henry Lindsey, shared a prophecy with me before he passed away. I'm sure many of you are familiar with this—that at the turn of the new dawn, which has been interpreted as the 21st century, a wisdom will rise from this land, born of humility and *pono* (goodness, righteousness), calling our people to *ho'i*, to return, to their source. As we return, we will remember that we are beneficiaries of a powerful, ancestral, and spiritual legacy. And as we remember, we will meet adversity with spirituality, and we will rise again. It's a prophecy that I continue to think about. And when I see Kekuni Blaisdell here,* who was a close friend of my father, I'm reminded of the wisdom that we have with us and the wisdom that we have within us.

The veil is so thin. If you could see with spiritual eyes, then you would know that your ancestors are here with you.

My father was an educator, inventor, and passionate genealogist. He was a man of uncommon humility. When I was growing up, he would often say, “Elizabeth, the veil is so thin. If you could see with spiritual eyes, then you would know that your ancestors are here with you. They're always here with you. They're here to guide you, to help you, but you have to ask because they won't impose themselves on you.”

This evening, if we could see with spiritual eyes, then we would know that this room is filled with greatness. And we would be humbled by those whose blood pulses through our veins, those who have paved the way, bringing us to this moment in our collective history, and who are always there, if we but seek their guidance. And so as I stand before you and *aloha* (greet) you and acknowledge you, I also *aloha* and acknowledge those family members who are in this room with you, because it is most important to know that we are not alone. We do not have to walk this journey by ourselves. We always have guidance, we have protection, we have a lot of wisdom that is working with us, and it would be arrogant for us to think we are doing it ourselves—the height of arrogance, in fact.

* This article is based on a speech delivered at the 2005 Research Conference on Hawaiian Well-Being in Honolulu, Hawai'i.

And so I direct my remarks to our *remembering*. Our remembering who we really are when we often forget in this contemporary, modern, sometimes noisy world. We stop remembering. We forget what we came here to be, who we really are. And it is time to take a break and start to recall that again. Through Kamehameha Schools, we have become *ma'a* (accustomed) to the idea of being beneficiaries to a substantial estate. And yet, the truth is that while Kamehameha's trust is substantial, it does not compare to our ancestral and spiritual legacy.

In each of us is a genetic code—a cellular memory—of inexplicable intelligence. Scientists and quantum physicists are only now scratching the surface on what our *kūpuna* (ancestors, elders) always knew. Our *kūpuna* were spiritual giants who lived with this knowledge, an innate intelligence that they were cocreators with a divine source. So keen was their knowledge of what is now referred to as quantum mechanics that they had the ability to call forth the winds and the rain by name. They could heal the sick and command the plants to flourish. They lived the principles of *ho'oulu* (to grow, to cause to increase). As a result, we have inherited a cultural, ancestral, and spiritual endowment that is wealthier and far more powerful than anything this modern world can offer.

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When I was growing up, being that both of my parents were educators, I was raised by these old Hawaiian women in Lā'ie. And my earliest memories are of being taken to the ocean where they would hold us and they would speak, always in a very humble voice. They did not have to show off to anybody. They went to the ocean and they called the fish, and they would pray. And when they went to plant, they planted according to lunar cycles, and they blessed everything. They blessed the land, as well as their implements and the plants that they were putting into the ground. They blessed all of it, and they understood their responsibility and their cocreatorship with a source that was so divine. And that was not so long ago.

And here we are now in the 21st century, and we don't remember the names of the winds and the rain. We have forgotten how to go to the ocean and speak and call the fish to us and take only what we need. We have forgotten those things, so the essence of my remarks is on our remembering again. Our *kūpuna* understood

the true definition of *mana*—that which manifests the power of the divine. And our ancestors were the keepers of this wisdom, the keepers of this light, and now this is our *kuleana*. It is our responsibility to remember again so that we have something to pass on to future generations.

It is my *mana'o* (thoughts, opinion) that the greatest loss our people sustained had less to do with land or a shift in political and economic strength, though those were significant issues. The greater tragedy has been the psychological, emotional, and spiritual trauma we have endured. Jon Osorio wrote a terrific book brilliantly titled *Dismembering Lāhui* (Honolulu, 2002). To dismember means to tear, pull, or cut apart limbs. As disturbing as it sounds, this is what happened when Hawaiians assimilated into a culture that was foreign to us.

We became disenfranchised on a multitude of levels, the most tragic being our spiritual dismemberment. For those of you who have not yet read Osorio's book, I suggest you do. In it, he poignantly recounts a cultural unraveling. And so, this calling for us to return to our source, to remember who we are and where we

come from, and what our inheritance is—our true spiritual and cultural inheritance—is so important because it calls forth the parts of ourselves that have been dismembered and disenfranchised, so that we become whole again. And in that wholeness, we begin to heal once more.

When we talk about healing and wholeness, and we look at it through native eyes, it is very different from a Western point of view. It is about bringing all of us together in such a way that we are no longer fragmented. Even in education—and I am grateful for David Sing's wisdom in guiding my own studies—working on my dissertation was difficult, there's so much that's Eurocentric. We use measurements that are not true to us. They separate things, they compartmentalize

things. "You do this, and that has no relationship to this." When in fact, a native mind will tell you it is all interconnected. The only way you can see a whole picture is to look at it holistically and not separate it out.

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When I was working on my PhD, there was a woman in California who coined the term “indigenous science.” Her argument was that our measurements are as important and as accurate as measurements that one would call Eurocentric, except that we do not give our indigenous measurements value. We sort of dismiss them, and we think there are other ways of learning and other ways that are more important, or more valuable than our own. And we dismiss ourselves in the process.

Regarding our wholeness and coming together to be healed, one of my favorite quotations is, “we do not attract that which we want; we attract that which we are” (James Allen). Let me repeat it: We do not attract that which we want; we attract that which we are. Quantum physics and quantum mechanics are showing that frequency attracts like frequency. A simple example would be how many people say, “I want more money. I want more money, I need more money.” And yet, they are still running on the idea of lack and scarcity. We see examples of people who have won lotteries. They have a lot of money and then, a few years later, they’ve lost it all because there is an underlying current based on lack and scarcity.

If what we want is an empowered Hawaiian nation, then we must first become strong in and of ourselves.

When we look at our wholeness, we have to dig deep and go back to the core of what is driving us and where we are wounded and where we need to be whole, and become empowered again. If our current conditions are not what we want, then we must become the change we seek. If what we want is an empowered Hawaiian nation, then we must first become strong in and of ourselves. If what we want is to unite our people, then we must *ho’oponopono* (correct, set right) our own lives first. If what we want is a healthy community, then we must commit ourselves to being well, to becoming well and whole. This is our kuleana. It is a privilege that is not reserved for just a select few within our community. We are all responsible for this. To take care of ourselves so that we can take care of our families. And as we are able to take care of our families, we can take care of our community. For as one of us heals, we all become more whole. As one of us excels, we all advance as a people. And as one of us is strengthened, we are all empowered.

Does it strike you as ironic that we, who come from an ancient and powerful lineage, now seek recognition from a government that is culturally immature (just a few hundred years old), morally bankrupt, and spiritually impoverished? We are spending so much time right now debating the issue of political sovereignty when in fact our true sovereignty, this *ea* (sovereignty, independence), can neither be granted to us nor stripped from us. Each of us holds the key to our own freedom. When we become the change we seek, then and only then will we truly be able to determine our future. Whatever form our future government takes, it must be based on a foundation that is born out of personal sovereignty.

There is no more time for us to be playing small.

The notion of “crabs in a bucket”¹ is an old idea. It is a lie. Let it go. I grew up hearing people say, “Oh, those Hawaiians, they’re so lazy. Ah, you know, crabs in a bucket.” And if you hear it often enough it becomes the truth. And all of a sudden, one day I woke up and thought, “That is a lie!” Yet we buy into it and play it out like it is the truth. We see one another, and sometimes we see someone within our community who starts to advance, and if we are running on the notion of lack and scarcity, we are not happy for them, because by comparison, we think we are failing. That is a lie. That is a mentality based on scarcity. When we can begin to celebrate that someone is beginning to excel, and we say, “Thank you, because you are showing me that the bar is higher now and I can do more,” then we know we are becoming whole and well. When people are getting stronger and starting to speak up and we celebrate their accomplishments, we are getting well. We have had enough. There is no more time for us to be playing small. Our community does not need any more victims. And we do not need to be victimizing anybody else. What we need is to get stronger and better and to stop making apologies for it.

Nature is really brilliant. It is audacious, and bold, and authentic. For example, would a star diminish its own light? Do you think there is a star in the sky that says, “I don’t want to shine tonight. I don’t feel like it. I’m too bright, and I don’t want to make the other stars feel bad about themselves.” Is that not a stupid idea? Or a flower—a bud—that says, “I’m having a bad day. I don’t think I’m going to bloom now.” Why then do we continue to negate ourselves? Here we are, part of this system, and we think, “You know, if I’m a little too bright, they’re not going to be happy with me. I don’t think I’m going to do it now.” We play small. And

our community does not need for us to play small anymore. There is a difference between *ha'aha'a* (humility) and this kind of false humility. There is this ego that drives us where we are acting. It is not authentic.

My challenge for us all is to be authentic. Come into your life as you were meant to be, to be who you were born to be. Stop making excuses for who you are. Be brilliant, because we need you to be brilliant. We need you to be strong. We need you to be smart and to be everything that you can be and to stop negating yourselves.

When people start stepping up and start shining brightly, it gives other people permission to do the same, and then we begin to celebrate one another in a really honest way. We do not have to sit at the back of the room and say, "You know, she's a show-off." She's not really a show-off, you're just feeling kind of bad for yourself. We see it all the time in our community. We do not have to play small anymore, and we must not. Those of the next generation do not need that of us. Frankly, it is not that attractive.

When we start to get more honest, we will say, "You know what, this is where I am right now, and I'm doing the best I can. There are areas I can improve upon, but I am doing the best I can today, and tomorrow, it's going to be better. And the reason I'm doing this is because I know that I was born to do something with my life. And what I am giving back to this community is the best that I have of me." When we have this attitude, all of a sudden we grow a strong and healthy community.

So this is the hour of our remembering, of our putting those parts of ourselves that have been dismembered and disenfranchised back together again. When we become whole and are healing, we can dream again. And we can dream big this time. We do not have to dream small dreams. We can dream really big. And when we dream, let it be of a Hawai'i where our people are healthy and animated again, where we no longer kill ourselves with self-doubt, poor diets, and abuse. A dear friend of mine, Manu Meyer (personal communication, 2005), wrote something I really love. This is what she said:

Be brilliant,
because we
need you
to be brilliant.
We need you
to be strong.

Postcolonial is not a physical place, it is a mental one. We know that things are not improving for many of us. We've become accustomed to eating poorly. We die early. We are unhealed within our families. Ice grips us. We represent the majority in our prisons. We kill ourselves with self-doubt and self-loathing. We are often polemic (which means we are given to disputing), because it is our way of reacting to our erasure (our becoming invisible in our own land).

What I see happening is the turning of the tide now, which really excites me, just as the prophecy predicted and foretold that would happen. We are witnessing within our community a reawakening. Meyer also said,

More and more of us are affirming instead of protesting. There is a resurgence in our culture and our language. An unprecedented number of books by Kanaka Maoli authors and scholars are changing our understanding of history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, psychology, political science, and education. Displaced, dismissed, and disengaged, we are now becoming rooted, acknowledged, and animated. We are a culture. We have a language of innate knowing. And we must speak it so that we ourselves can hear because hearing changes us.

We must speak it so that we can hear ourselves, and as we hear the language, it changes us on a cellular level. And scientists are finally discovering what our ancestors have known for centuries. There is a scientist in Japan by the name of Masaru Emoto who has done some phenomenal research called *The Hidden Messages in Water* (Hillsboro, OR, 2004). He talks about how things shift according to the language we use. It is especially important that educators look at Emoto's work. He demonstrates that we change as we hear different language, so that when we start hearing language that is empowering and allows and invites us to be inspired, we will create a ripple effect through our community that inspires other people. It's just what happens, and that is part of what quantum physics is about. I did not know much about quantum physics until a few years ago. I have learned that we affect one another's lives physiologically, emotionally, and spiritually.

There are physical results that can now be measured, that we can change as we begin to think differently. As we begin to speak differently, we affect change in dramatic ways.

Let us dream. Let us dream a Hawai'i where we come to know that all knowledge, all reason, all theories, and all ideas are simply interpretations. Think about it. I studied books at Kamehameha Schools that were written by people who were not *Kanaka Maoli* (Native Hawaiian), who were interpreting ideas of our history without having mastery of the language. We were studying from these books thinking that was the truth. Now we are going back and revisiting some of these books and realizing they are not entirely accurate. Remember, there was a time when people were saying, "The world is flat," and they thought that was the truth. And all of a sudden, someone came along and said, "I don't think so." So we can challenge it. These ideas are simply interpretations. The good news is that we are now the interpreters. We get to interpret the ideas coming out of books. We do not have to buy it all; we have to question whether or not it's right. We need to ensure that our interpretation of the world is based on the values handed down by our kūpuna.

May our wealth
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May we exercise cooperation rather than competition. May a new leadership be born that bridges the political and socioeconomic divide that's long dominated these islands. May pono, not conflict, rule our lives. May our wealth be found in giving the best of ourselves to the world, rather than how much we can accumulate.

Let us dream a Hawai'i, as Meyer (personal communication, 2005) said, "where our children are inspired to make knowledge joyful." Let us dream a Hawai'i where our environment and her resources are loved and managed properly as our ancestors demonstrated they can be. Let us dream a Hawai'i where aloha becomes the intelligence with which we meet life, and let us never again stop dreaming. For together we have a kuleana and a sacred right to *mālama* (care), not only to sustain but to enrich, and to pass on to future generations the vast legacy we have inherited from our ancestors. May this torch of wisdom burn brightly while in our stewardship and carry on as it was prophesied it would be—that at the turn of the

new dawn at this chapter in our collective history, a wisdom will rise from this land born of humility and pono and call our people to ho‘i. When I think about our people, and how we are starving for wisdom, leadership, strength, and courage, it will take all of us to be that for our people. We can’t expect only a few to carry that burden. By virtue of the fact that we will touch many lives, it is up to all of us to carry on. Let this be the hour of our remembering and our ascending, and let us rise as it was prophesied we would.

Me ke aloha pumehana a me ka na‘au ha‘aha‘a.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elizabeth Kapu‘uwailani Lindsey, PhD, President and CEO of Pono, LLC, is a graduate of the Kamehameha Schools and holds a PhD in anthropology. An award-winning documentary filmmaker, she lectures on Native Hawaiian philosophy and culture throughout the world. Engagements include Oxford University, Harvard University, and the Smithsonian Institute. The recipient of national and international honors including the CINE Eagle for her 1996 directorial debut of *Then There Were None*, the former Miss Hawai‘i has established scholarships in literature and serves as an advisor to organizations that advance education and culture.

NOTE

1 This refers to the image of crabs trying to climb out of a bucket. When one crab gets near the top, another crab grabs it and pulls it down.