

KŪ MĀHŪ HINA

Thilani Lasconia

Composed for Lā Ho‘iho‘i Ea’s ‘Aha Mele, “Kū Māhū Hina” is a mele pāleoleo (rap) that compels listeners to re-think how we conceptualize lāhui. Commonly, the term “lāhui” is understood as the “Hawaiian nation.” This understanding of a Hawaiian nation is often laden with heteropatriarchal understandings of what it means to be sovereign. This version of sovereignty is rooted in homo/transphobia and misogyny. Because of this, it lacks the capacity to fully enact ea. We must remember that ea not only means sovereignty, but life, breath, and the ability to rise.

In striving for a sovereignty that is only concerned with state-centric recognition, we will be fighting for the restoration of a nation that has not yet freed itself from the colonial mentality of its occupiers. The remedy to this pitfall is understanding that lāhui is more than a nation, state, or flag. Rather, it is a constellation of pilina that make up our pae ‘āina. Within this constellation are wāhine and māhū who often get written out of our own history despite being critical parts of it. However, our mo‘olelo is the evidence that interdependence between all genders not only existed but was essential to

our existence. In order to truly be a lāhui that is liberated from colonialism, we need to return to our mo‘olelo and each other. In doing so, we will collectively understand the kuleana that kū, māhū, and hina all have in building a thriving lāhui.

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KŪ MĀHŪ HINA

Kū Māhū Hina, Hina Māhū Kū
 Lāhui is in me, Lāhui is in you
 To take care of our nation is to take care of the truth
 E mau ke ea in everything we do.

I was raised by kūpuna
 You can see them in my eyes,
 Mai ka mole ke kahua
 It is from their roots we rise

You need to learn your mo'olelo to know how to survive
 It's our best defense against imperial lies.
 Love like 'āina
 because she loved us first,

Gotta be the main foundation in everything we learn.
 Hō'ā ka hae 'Amelika, let us watch it burn.
 To my generation this huluhia is our turn.

Kū Māhū Hina, Hina Māhū Kū
 Lāhui is in me, Lāhui is in you
 To take care of our nation is to take care of the truth
 E mau ke ea in everything we do.

Hina Māhū Kū
 Kū Māhū Hina
 They're gonna stop at nothing to sever our pilina
 But forever I will need ya, cause pili mau me 'oe,
 I wanna love my wahine like Hi'iaka loves Hopoe

In life and in death mālama kō aloha
 Don't continue to let our occupiers take over
 Not in your body, not in your spirit, and surely not your mind
 It's a process not a statement to decolonize

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Lāhui is in me, Lāhui is in you
To take care of our nation is to take care of the truth
E mau ke ea in everything we do.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

‘Ihilani Lasconia is a Kanaka ‘Ōiwi student, artist, and organizer from Waimānalo, O‘ahu. As a transnational feminist, ‘Ihilani’s work is rooted in dismantling patriarchy through decolonization and anti-imperialism. She is a doctoral student at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa in political science within the Indigenous Politics program. ‘Ihilani’s research looks at historical and contemporary connections between Hawai‘i and Palestine. She has organized around the movement to protect Maunakea, the Red Hill fuel crisis, and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Māhū in Hawai‘i. As a creative, ‘Ihilani explores the mediums of poetry, rap, and spoken word. She is an artist instructor at the Honolulu Museum of Art in the Soundshop program. Through this program, she teaches students in grades 4–12 the importance of self-expression and community pride through music. In 2023, ‘Ihilani was the recipient of a Nā Hōkū Hanohano Award for her work on the collaborative album, *Ho‘okupu*. Her craft is rooted in the geopolitical landscape of Hawai‘i and her experience being queer and Native in the twenty-first century.

