

AN HONOR

Leinā'ala Mahi

This piece concerns the battles that māhū have in situationships where we must constantly define ourselves (sometimes using someone else's language and definitions). The awkward external conversations we are forced to have and the toxic internal conversation that trip us in our journey to becoming who we authentically are. It's about the gravity of labels and how we, as māhū, constantly battle with editing ourselves, even in our most intimate circles, in order to navigate the many worlds we simultaneously inhabit.

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In the Pacific, there is
importance in names.
Names we choose
and names that are chosen for us

LGBTQIA+ invokes
a history bathed
in rainbows and colorways
with warriors and
pioneers of authenticity.

Māhū too
have history
Traditionally, we did not have
to fight for
acknowledgement or equity

We just were.
No jealousy
envy,
beating or
labeling.

No professional ceilings
or private rooms,
meant to ostracize us.
We are the carriers
of culture.

Defining ourselves
Using foreign concepts
Is inauthentic.
We choose
MVPFAFF+

‘Oia
is my preferred
pronoun
Rainbows, for me,
Denote ali‘i lineage.

Imagine how the
kalo would thrive
without the
poisoned waters from
Kapūkakī.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leinā'ala Mahi is a Hawaiian studies graduate working in environmental services for the City and County of Honolulu. Kuleana that they carry revolve around culturally appropriate solutions regarding land use and inserting traditional context back into contemporary conversations.

Their storytelling is inextricably intertwined with visuals to document Native Hawaiian spaces. They were born and raised at Nā Hono a'o Pi'ilani where they learned the art of creating community from kūpuna. In their formative years, they moved to Maunaloa and then lived in the diaspora with other Bay Area Kānaka on Ohlone lands. Their history can be traced back to Kohala, Hawai'i, and Waialua, Moloka'i.

