

MAKAPŌ

Anuheā Nihipali

These are things I have been called: cringe. nīele. pupule. freckled Hawaiian. Indigenous. LARP-er. man-hating. “a fucking child.” silly/little thing. mähū. weak. dramatic. born-for-the-stage. performer. mediocre. off-putting. rotting girl. barely-girl. almost-girl.

I call myself: anuheā. I am an Indigenous, lesbian, most-likely-genderqueer, autistic creator. I make a complex home in the algorithm of your black mirror, living many lives as a viral rage-baiter, forever learner, and artist. These days, I mostly explore my relationship to identity through writing.

Before pursuing writing as a medium, I left Hawai‘i in 2018 to attend an American university. I entered college as a double major in psychology and visual art, hoping that a cross-disciplinary approach to my academic career would provide an environment to pursue decolonization. However, participating in a conceptual program at a PWI transformed my practice, dissociated me from my interest in pursuing the social sciences, and pushed me to create work exploring my indigeneity, queerness, and neurodivergency.

After being dissociated from one’s identity, the recovery process harbors complexity. Whether exploring genealogy or mähū orientation, uncovering aspects to one’s orientation in society can breach the lines of intergenerational trauma. As a queer person, I am particularly interested in exploring

how the Western Empire concealed our identities in community with one another through relentless colonization. I believe personal narratives are important to this recovery.

Beyond our newfound freedom to explore these intersections, I recall only a few narratives that express both an Indigenous and personal relationship to lesbianism in modern Hawaiian praxis—let alone as presented through a mo‘olelo framework.

Contributing to the growing discourse surrounding Indigenous lesbianism, aikāne, and modern narratives of māhū. ***“makapō” highlights the pain and catharsis of recovering one’s cultural and queer identity while defining a steadfast testimony: Our identities as queer, Indigenous people are inseparable from our Hawaiian-ness.***

The title holds kaona in its translation as both a marking on the eye or being “of” the goddess, Kapō. Exploring the dual relationship I have built with my families’ ties to Kalawao, our original reasons for migration to O‘ahu, our settling in ‘Ewa, and my developing sexuality, “makapō” mobilizes various mo‘olelo as a vehicle to explore truths surrounding my internal and familial histories—specifically my history and mo‘okū‘auhau as an Indigenous lesbian. Throughout the piece, there are many references to traditional and modern markers of history, land, and culture from Kapō’s flying kohe to a 76-South fade.

Each highlighted motif in this poem signifies equally important pieces of my genealogy. Where my ancestor's mo'olelo inform me, my stories will inform my keiki and kin. Through writing about my ancestral history, magical realism, and personal narrative, I honor my 'ohana, our gods, and my identity as a Hawaiian lesbian in my work. I am glad to be a part of expanding māhū discourse.

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KAPŌ WITH THE FLYING VAGINA
KAPŌ WITH THE RED SPOTS WHO
CHURNED AND CURDLED HULA KI'I
ON MOLOKA'I ON MOLOKA'I
WHERE THE PEOPLE ARE PROPHETS AND
THE GODS ARE POISON
AND THE MO'OLELO ARE FILLED WITH
– MAN EATERS,
– RIVERS RUNNING RED WITH KUPA'S BLOOD,
– ILO SLIDING IN THE NIGHT
(COVERING ONE EYE)

ON MOLOKA'I
WHERE MY GRANDMOTHER FED HERSELF
WITH KUKUI NUT GROVE AND HER OLD GOD,
(THE GOD HER PARENTS BURNED)
WHERE MY GRANDFATHER WASN'T A WRITER,
WHERE THEY CREEPED THE PALI TO
THE LEPER'S HOUSES, ROTTING.
WHERE MAKAPŌ GREW UP–
WHERE HIS MOTHER STILL LIVES IN THE TREES AND IN THE
WORDS WE SAY:

AIA KE OLA I KA WAHA / AIA KA MAKE I KA WAHA
LIFE IS IN THE MOUTH / DEATH IS IN THE MOUTH

AND IN 'EWA: FAR FROM THEIR BIRTH PLACE,
I AM HIDING IN MY CLOSET.
I AM THINKING OF GETTING A 76-SOUTH FADE
(THE ONE THAT LOOKS LIKE A FOXTAIL)
I WANT TO TEAR MY KOHE OUT—
DISEMBOWEL MYSELF FROM THE HOLE AND EAT HERS WELL. IN 'EWA
IN 'EWA, I CUT JUST BELOW THE END OF MY ALA NIHO.
I MAKE SURE THE BLOOD DOES NOT TOUCH HER, BUT
THE WORMS ON MY LEG ARE HUNGRY FOR:

MEN.
NEW DIRT.
PUSSY.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anuheā Nihipali maintains a number of impressions through your black mirror. The digital sphere calls her Niele. Freckled. Off-putting. LOLcow. Loud. Obnoxious. Almost-girl. Barely-girl. But Anuheā rests in the identity that they name themselves: Kanaka ‘Ōiwi. Writer. Multimedia maker. Performer.

Born and raised on the Westside of O‘ahu, Nihipali balances their relationship to being Hawaiian with a ritualized mourning—grieving the water that once belonged to ‘Ewa—rotting against the image of an old cliff.

Nihipali exposes the modern Indigenous experience through research, inhabitation, meme, performance, poetry, photography, scan documentation, and writing. Exploring themes of trauma, mo‘okū‘auhau, and sensuality, Nihipali articulates the small moments of resistance and social life through the mundane, the tragic, the orgasmic. They seek to answer: What is the Indigenous relationship? How do we put together a new story from pieces? How do we view those pieces in a digitally animistic age?

Today Anuheā’s art practice mainly resides on their blog, *Social Deficit*. You might find them creating artwork in this capitalistic prison or chilling in their room with their pōpoki (cat), Cheese.

