

Hawai'i Pacific University (HPU) School of Social Work: Panel Discussion on Film *Out of State*

(film trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CaaL3Jr-soI>)

**March 13, 2018 Panelist Speakers:**

**Wayne Ka'Ahanui**, Student & Formerly Incarcerated

**Roshian Lafaele**, Assistant Manager, Fernhurst YWCA Women's Work Furlough Program

**Lorenn Walker**, Director, Hawaii Friends of Restorative Justice (HFRJ)

**Lynette Cruz**, Professor, University of Hawai'i system and Kapuna for HPU

**Beau Bassett**, Producer of Film & Lawyer

**Moderator:** Peter J Mataira, HPU's MSW Program Director & Assistant Professor

**Special Guest:** Lady Heeni Phillips-Williams, Barrister & Prison Judge from New Zealand

**Observer:** Erika Hill, Intern for HFRJ who prepared these notes

**Introductions & comments of panelists:**

**Wayne:** 51 years old, formerly incarcerated and currently in college to obtain a degree in social work. Knows people from the film. From the overcrowding they transition people to the mainland. To touch up on this film, for me it did a wonderful job on showing the two different types of behavior when you get out of prison. Can't say either is wrong cuz I understand addiction. One was done on work furlough and the other came out with these connections that had burned those bridges. It shows the difference in their success. Work furlough gave connections. I am in social work program and going to be a therapist. But without the connections, it's difficult. When you listen to a Kapuna find the deeper meaning, the difference between what they say and what they mean. The interpretation is different. My son was 5 when I went in. It was hard. My purpose was to serve the community. They coming out with nothing and now I'm making plans and helping people find others, because some need more help than others. All you youngsters are in the right place right now. A lot of these men are trying to transition back into society and there is nothing for them. Some need more than others.

**Roshian:** Assistant manager for the women's work furlough program Fernhurst that the Honolulu YWCA operates. It's through my internship with HPU that I got to where I am. Everything shared in the video is what we work through every day with women. Finally got to see the man's perspective. Hopefully through the video others can see that there is a lot of work that needs to be done—on the legal side. If you have a drug charge you do not qualify for certain things and if you have a murder charge you do qualify. There is a lot of work that needs to be done with social work. The programs are 6 months and trying to change someone in that amount of time is nearly impossible. It is necessary to help these people gain connections to family to help for addiction, etc. Each situation can be different and if they do not have certain things it can set them up for failure. There need to be programs that help them with different aspects like employment (IDS, etc.), addiction, etc.

**Lorenn:** Background in education, became Montessori teacher at 18, on my own at 14, in jail at 16, had a baby at 18, got education and help. Almost got murdered at 24 in Waikiki. Was seriously injured and needed surgery, became very depressed, but knew I had a daughter and with a counselor's help and went to college, went to law school in Boston. Clerked for criminal judge and became a state deputy attorney general. Represented Hawai'i in lawsuits, some against prisons. After 10 years returned to school to study public health. 20 years ago learned about restorative Justice (RJ). People sit in circles talking instead of sitting in front of someone who tells you what to do. Better to engage everyone in dialogue, which I learned from Montessori. The prison in the film is private for-profit prison. It has an incentive for people to commit crime, not reduce recidivism. The people in prison are our people. Our organization provides RJ transition circles to help people make their own plans for their success. The circles or aspects of them are being used around the world. The circles give power to individuals to decide what's best for them, the circles bring children healing, and reduces recidivism. The State is not interested, but federal court is. Hawai'i imprisons about 6,000 people when there were only about 25 women imprisoned in 1979. People haven't gotten worse. We are criminalizing social issues, including criminalizing children for normal childhood mistakes. The film shows Saguaro prison where Hawaiians are imprisoned in Arizona, but not shown are two other private prisons next to it. Prison is an industry. It is wrong and it is harming our state. There are six people, mainly lawyers, who are working as lobbyists for the private prison industry in Hawai'i, which paid them all over \$200 thousand dollars in 2016 and 2017. The prison industry is ruining people's lives and hurting our community, while some profit from it.

**Lynette:** That was a depressing movie. Graduated from HPU, went to university of Hawai'i. Stayed in that program before they were about to kick me out. Did volunteer work in the prisons early on. Couldn't be too political, but we taught history and culture. It was overwhelming; limited to 30 students and the line was endless. Everyone wanted to know what it was to be a Hawaiian. Currently teach a class and an anthropologist by training. At one point we were okay, we were healthy and well, then someone came by and put their boot all over us and we speak their language and learn their history and lost who we were and no wonder we are not okay and end up in prisons. Percent real number was 85% or 90%. There is kinda like a bounty on Hawaiians. Those prisons are being built for Hawaiians. One thing I think social workers should be aware of is that when you teach a history that doesn't teach our history then we are left out. Military came and took something that wasn't theirs. You can build programs and walk around the issue, but need to acknowledge the issue. Kapuna in residence, what is that, I don't really know; cite some cultural concepts. What does it mean to have aloha or pono? What is the right thing to do? Need to know. Something is wrong with a man going to Arizona and being from Hawai'i...

**Beau:** There is a lot of shit going down in the prison system. Came from a family where a lot of people struggled and for some reason I didn't struggle as much. Something was different with how I grew up then them, even though we grew up the same. A big part of my job as a lawyer was to help clients get services that they needed. It was disappointing to see them come back and didn't have a sense of who they were (Kanaka) or even mixed. I was taught to take care of the ocean. The community, as a whole, doesn't care about certain values. Value system is lacking. When I see the subjects of our film, I see it as a good thing that they are working on getting to know their roots. My cousin Ciara had the idea for the film and I saw these people coming in and out of prison and thought this idea was good. I have to talk up my clients and present a plan to the person in silky robes. I had to present the value of what this cultural practice brought to this client's life. They didn't understand Hawaiian spirituality, they understood the Bible and Christ instead, but not the cultural practices. One of the main reasons I wanted to make this film was to help represent why the practices are beneficial.

**Moderator Peter:** Brother Wayne reminded me that we should never stereotype our brothers and sisters that come out of prison. WHERE IS HOME? Could see that in Hale, our brother needs help. The women in prison are our mothers. We are talking about an industrial complex, recidivism is their business model...which is horrifying to hear that. It's hurting our communities, not just now but in the next generation with children that are not connecting with their mothers and fathers. That needs to change. What does shit mean? It means it sucks, its injustice and it needs to transform. Thank you for reminding us that these are our people. Culture is healing, but that is not what we see in Waikiki, its profitability. Tourism makes money, but how does it help with our brothers and sisters?

**Guest Heeni:** Barrister, Lawyer from New Zealand. Appointed as Visiting Justice for three years in Auckland prisons and reappointed in 2015. Formerly a school teacher for 13 years, went back to university after real estate selling. Completed a Bachelor's degree, Masters of Arts then a law degree. In returning to university met my husband, lawyer and Queens Counsel with my journey heading towards a criminal law, mental health law and civil law path. Am of Maori/ Pakeha/European descent, speaker of the Maori language. See Maori as cousins of the Hawaiian people. Maori women make up a very high percentage of the prison population in New Zealand closer to 80% as do Maori males – about 58%. Our new Labour Coalition Government elected 2017 have philosophy/aims in relation to prison reform similar to our League, named after my late husband i.e. The Sir Peter Williams QC Penal Reform League. The government wants to axe building a new prison, reduce the prison population, abandon the three strikes law. They previously took the Maori vote for granted. Now they have to prove themselves as high number of Maori politicians in this party, but significantly high Maori prison population. For Maori from dysfunctional families, poverty, parents lacking skills, lacking education, means more likely to end up in prison – is easy to criminalize social issues. Education is really important, that is what we should be spending our taxpayer dollars on, not more prisons.

## Q&As

Comment from student: formerly incarcerated transsexual woman, thank you and good for you Wayne. I'm a fan of this movie because they depict such a big view of the culture. I'm a social worker and have been trained in RJ (by Lorenn) and work with state of Hawai'i. Have the highest case load and I'm still cool and it's from learning things from Social Work and was open to learning many things. Need to learn from people who think out of the box and do many things, like RJ is one of the most interesting things in the world.

Q: Statistically, do you find that those who participate in the work furlough program as opposed to those that walk out have a better chance or is it more a behavior issue?

A: It reduces recidivism

Q: What do you suggest for programs?

A: It is hard to access funding, some allows certain things, some don't allow for people with a history of Meth or Sexual problems, there is not a lot of housing or clean and sober for people. Some go from parole from prison straight to the shelter.

Q: Is there any bill or push to get others assistance?

A: YWCA does push for housing, bill for auditing, 250 million a year and now there looking for extra money, they need to be audited—they are against it. Bill number maybe 2047

Q: How are lobbyists setting the agenda determining the terms?

A: Hawai'i needs less prison beds. Need rehabilitation. \$150 to keep one person in prison and then they don't get an I.D. wtf? They need to work on identification before they get out, a bill for a pilot was "passed" so hopefully we will actually see it.

Q: How do we allow people to grow out of certain narratives while they are young, especially when they feel trapped and stuck when they are young?

A: we should ask what is going on in Hawai'i? Why are Hawaiians ending up in prison and homeless in their own homeland? I think we are in the way, we protest when people want to build on sacred land, can't speak our language in court.

Comes down to education, changing down narrative to something that is broader.

Proponent of history, need to learn why there is rage. Need a place to express. Gotta find out what happened to Hawaiians, nobody believes it, we have our own language, we are suffering loss, it's not our fault or your fault. Not taking shit no more, if I express myself I end up in prison, how do I express cuz I feel depressed. Untangle ourselves from a system that never really worked and once we do that we can move forward.

## Notes from Movie:

Alaka'i-leader

Kuma Hula-Native Hawaiian Hula teacher

Kanaka-Native Hawaiians

Mana-Powerful

‘Uhane-Spirit

‘Ikaika-Strong

He’e-Playboy

-“We are not waiting for permission to be indigenous people. We are indigenous. We gotta stand up and say it.”

-“My mistake: I’d rather be respected or feared in life, today is opposite.”

-“You have to be able to let go.”

**Photos**

