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Unsettling Kalihi: The Kalihi Valley Instructional Bicycle Exchange (KVIBE)  
and its Decolonization of Urban Space

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of  
the requirements for the degree Master of Arts  
in Asian American Studies

by

Demiliza Saramosing

2018

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2018

## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Unsettling Kalihi: The Kalihi Valley Instructional Bicycle Exchange (KVIBE)  
and its Decolonization of Urban Space

by

Demiliza Saramosing

Master of Arts in Asian American Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2018

Professor Keith Lujan Camacho, Chair

This project examines the Kalihi Valley Instructional Bicycle Exchange (KVIBE) non-profit youth organization's mobilization around bicycling, popular education and Indigenous pedagogies. By employing ethnographic community-based research methods, I illustrate how their curriculum connects immigrant and Native boys of color from low-income and working-class backgrounds to their own histories, to each other and to their ancestral homelands and contemporary home in Kalihi. I contend that KVIBE decolonizes urban space in Hawai'i through their engagement with Kanaka Maoli epistemologies, Nakem pedagogies and youth experiences. In engaging with interdisciplinary scholarship on Asian Settler Colonialism studies, Oceanic Ethnic Studies and Community-Based participatory research, KVIBE becomes a site for exposing the violences of U.S. empire, revealing overlapping stories of place and imagining decolonial futures in Hawai'i.

This thesis of Demiliza Saramosing is approved.

Victor Bascara

Kyungwon Hong

Roderick N. Labrador

Keith Lujan Camacho, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2018

For the youth who call Kalihi home.

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experiences you have made and are continuing to make at KVIBE. I am excited for the decolonial future each of you are cultivating in Kalihi and in a greater context Hawai'i. It is an honor to be given the privilege to record and share your voices with the world.

## Introduction: Foregrounding KVIBE

Turning onto 1638 Kamehameha IV Rd one afternoon, I am greeted by a vibrant mural painted on the outside walls of the Kalihi Valley Instructional Bike Exchange (KVIBE), an extension of the Kokua Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Health Center located in the heart of Kalihi. The mural tells the story of KVIBE. Scanning from left to right, the mural begins with an egg cracking down its middle to represent the building's origin as a community egg farm. Two kids working on bicycles then emerge from the hatched egg, illustrating how the egg farm has become a place where young folks can hang out and build bicycles. The doors and main entrance for KVIBE then appear on the far right of the mural.

Leading to the entrance of KVIBE are rows of bikes ranging from different colors and sizes. As I entered, boys in their middle school uniforms formed clusters within the shop, giggling with one another while sharing a couple of spam musubis from the 7-11 down the street. Other boys occupied the communal area, bobbing their heads and dancing to songs by Migos and 21 Savage that reverberated throughout the building and spilled out into the KVIBE parking lot. Another group of boys gathered around a bike, scrubbing the rust off of it while inserting new break cables. Kevin, KVIBE's manager, then walked up to me from out of the office, "Sawp Demz, welcome home," he said, while giving me a hug.

Soon after, he broke away and shouted, "Eh, boys! It's time fo' circle awp!" Boys ranging from 8-16 years old unstacked mini-stools and placed them in a circle inside KVIBE's communal space. Once they organized their chairs, everyone, including myself, congregated to the space and plopped themselves onto the stools. Within the circle, the youth and staff shared their names and places they call home, as well as identified their

genealogical and political ancestors. Their elders included mothers, fathers, siblings, aunts, uncles and grandparents. Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X likewise represented their lineages. They also recalled the islands of Chuuk, the Marshall Islands, the Philippines, Samoa, Haiti, Hawai‘i, Kam IV and KPT, and KVIBE, as their homes. They called the “circle” their home. By honoring their ancestors and the places they love, KVIBE urges the youth, staff and others to embody *Nakem*. For KVIBE, they translate Nakem, an Ilocano word and way of being, ‘soul-consciousness.’

It is in this awakening of Nakem where healing can take place at the heart of a majority immigrant, brown and working-class community. It is in KVIBE’s vision of Kalihi as “an inclusive community in which neighbors help to heal neighbors, and people see themselves as part of a larger whole, connected to each other, to their culture and to their shared land.”<sup>1</sup> In my time with KVIBE, I had the privilege of building relationships with the youth and staff. By learning their stories or social biographies, I gained a better sense of the kind of healing that took place in between the many bike spokes that kept intact the wheels of KVIBE. As a Pinay who grew up in lower Kalihi Kai, the social biographies felt familiar to me as theirs reflected some of my own experiences as well. I am now excited to share what I have learned from KVIBE and their Nakem pedagogy, a framework that captures so beautifully the day-to-day moments at KVIBE. In KVIBE’s practice of Nakem pedagogy, they work within an abundance framework in which people do not see themselves, their communities and their homes as denigrative. Instead, this framework allows us to see

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<sup>1</sup> “About KKV - Kokua Kalihi Valley,” accessed December 8, 2017, <http://www.kkv.net/index.php/about-kkv>.

ourselves and our connections to people and places as signs of wealth. I thus hope to highlight the abundance of gifts and community support that emerged in what looks like a hostile and violent place in the context of settler colonialism in Hawai‘i. I also intend to center how Nakem promotes the health and well-being of youth, in particular boys, in Kalihi. How Nakem transforms/ed them into agents of change for their families and the Kalihi community is the main focus of my study. Specifically, I am to examine how KVIBE’s staff and youth practiced Nakem pedagogy through popular education as well as, explore how KVIBE’s mentorship program challenged toxic notions of hegemonic masculinity. I likewise analyze how KVIBE’s staff and youth identified Kalihi Valley as their home while also discussing how Kalihi Valley’s ahupua‘a claimed them.



Figure 1: KVIBE facility, 2018.

### **Situating Myself in the Project: “Ate Demi is from the Hood!”**

Before delving into my findings, I’d like to situate my own positionality. A couple of months after my first visit to KVIBE, I pulled out of the KVIBE drive-way when one of the boys made circles with his bike in front of my car. He yelled out with a grin, “Ate Demi is from the hood!” I responded, “Represent!” He was right. My own origins in Kalihi begin with my immigrant Filipino parents. After my grandmother divorced her U.S. military husband, she moved herself, her brother, and my eight-year-old mother from Hickam Airforce base, O‘ahu, into a small two-bedroom apartment in nearby Kalihi. In my parents’ early 20s, my father, being the “black sheep” in the family, moved out of his family’s two-story immigrant household in Ewa Beach to move in with my mother. A couple years later, my parents had me and my two sisters and our family still live in the same apartment that my grandmother moved into over almost 30 years ago. Just like my grandparents, my parents struggled and still struggle with working 3-4 blue collared jobs in Waikiki, such as janitorial, security and food service work, each in order to survive in Hawai‘i. As such, my sisters and I grew up as latchkey kids. We spent more time hanging out afterschool with friends on the streets of Kalihi than spending quality time with our parents because of their long hours at work.

After being immersed with KVIBE for a two-month period, I learned that their experiences resonated with mine. We bonded as immigrants and working-class families. We shared stories of pushing back against the racism we’ve encountered. We pushed back against more affluent people telling us that our ancestral homes in Chuuk, the Marshall Islands, Haiti, the Philippines, Samoa and above all, Kalihi are “ghetto” and “dangerous.”



We exchanged joy in honoring and healing our ancestors and places we call home. We cheered each other on when sharing our social biographies of taking pride and loving our Black and Brown bodies. Overall, my being raised in Kalihi allowed me to connect with the KVIBE youth and staff members in a way that other researchers might not be able to.

While it is vital that I talk about the ways I am an “insider” to the community, it is also my responsibility to discuss my “outsider” identities. I am a woman in a majority male space. At first, I felt nervous taking on this project due to my own history with toxic masculinity as a survivor of youth sexual violence in Kalihi. Meanwhile, I also desired learning more about KVIBE’s aim to teach alternative masculinities not predicated on the dominance of femininities. While being a woman makes me an “outsider” most of the time, I was an “insider” to another woman staff member and the girls who would trickle into the KVIBE facility. I can also be perceived as an “outsider” simply because I was raised in Kalihi outside of the federal housing complexes. Although I went to K-12 public schools, I have the privileges of receiving higher education on the continent and having the economic capacity to live and travel in and beyond Los Angeles. For these reasons, I can simultaneously be perceived as an “outsider” although I was raised in Kalihi. By acknowledging my positionality, I hope to be transparent about the privileges I have and hope to use them to make space for the voices of KVIBE.

## Literature Review

In this section, I highlight the scholarship that have paved the way for me to do my own work. They include: Asian Settler Colonialism studies, Oceanic Ethnic Studies and Community Based Research/Participatory Action Research.

First, settler colonialism is a theoretical framework that allows scholars to analyze a mode of colonialism that is predicated on the elimination of native peoples, and the permanent settlement of nonnatives, otherwise known as settlers on indigenous lands. Patrick Wolfe recognized settler colonialism invasion as a structure. It is perpetuated through institutions like western conceptions of science, education, health and government. Moreover, elements of a complete settler colonialism structure include the attainment of Native lands, the elimination of indigenous bodies and the reliance on imported labor and nonnatives replacing natives.<sup>2</sup> In Hawai‘i, settler colonialism manifests itself in Dennis M. Ogawa and Glen Grant’s Hawai‘i’s Multicultural Model created in 1993. Their multicultural model draws from the following points: 1) people from Hawai‘i abide by Native Hawaiian value of aloha, 2) people intermarry in high numbers with different ethnic groups 3) people believe that Hawai‘i affords equal opportunity and status for all 4) and people identify with a “local” culture that emerged with the migration of different ethnic groups to Hawai‘i. Over the years, however, Hawai‘i-based scholars have critiqued these findings as a myth that hides the historical and ongoing colonial violence on Hawaiian lands.

For instance, the notion that Hawai‘i is a multicultural paradise elides the history of how the United States seized Hawaiian lands from Indigenous people, attempted to eliminate

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<sup>2</sup> Patrick Wolfe, *The Settler Complex: Recuperating Binarism in Colonial Studies*, 2016.

Native Hawaiians through murder and disease and imported Asian laborers to Hawai‘i to work for a plantation economy. Today, the majority of Chinese and Japanese settlers dominate positions of power within political institutions like the state legislature, often supporting decisions beneficial to Asian settlers and detrimental to Native Hawaiian sovereignty and self-determination. Furthermore, Asian settlers have made themselves “at home” in Hawai‘i thus indigenizing themselves while obscuring Native Hawaiian indigenous claims to land. In her essay, “Settlers of color and ‘Immigrant’ Hegemony: ‘Locals in Hawai‘i,” Haunani-Kay Trask writes,

Our Native people and territories have been overrun by non-Natives, including Asians. Calling themselves “local,” the children of Asian settlers greatly outnumber us. They claim Hawai‘i as their own, denying indigenous history, their long collaboration in our continued dispossession, and the benefits therefrom. Part of this denial is the substitution of the term “local” for “immigrant,” which is, itself, a particularly celebrated American gloss for “settler.” As on the continent, so in our island home. Settlers and their children recast the American tale of nationhood: Hawai‘i, like the continent, is naturalized as but another telling illustration of the uniqueness of America’s “nation of immigrants.”

Scholars such as Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura have also produced work on the settler colonialism system in Hawai‘i.<sup>3</sup> They demonstrated how Asian settlers’ claim to “local identity” allows them to indigenize themselves to Hawai‘i while benefiting from the continued dispossession of Kanaka Maoli. At the same time, Jonathan Okamura’s work shows how the multicultural model conceals how ethnic difference actually frame inequality in Hawai‘i where Whites, Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans and Korean Americans

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<sup>3</sup> Candace Fujikane, *Asian Settler Colonialism From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press,

occupy higher statuses within the archipelago's ethnic demographic. On the other hand, Native Hawaiians, Filipinos and Samoans occupy the lower rungs of this socio-economic system. Moreover, Okamura states that the latter groups are underrepresented at the upper levels of the occupational scale as professionals and executives, but overrepresented in lower-level positions as laborers and service workers. Nevertheless, as Dean Saranillio shows us, even Filipinos can likewise undermine Kanaka Maoli efforts for sovereignty whenever they seek "American" settler empowerment. In all, scholars of Asian settler colonialism studies seek to dismantle the multicultural or "local" empire in Hawai'i in order to imagine a Hawai'i grounded in Kanaka Maoli indigeneity. I intend to add to this dialogue by sharing the lives and stories of youth of color from Kalihi who do not have political power within settler colonial governance in Hawai'i. Moreover, I focus on how KVIBE's practicing of Nakem pedagogy as a means to root themselves in indigenous values which assist in cultivating kinships with one another in a place like Kalihi. Through this work, youth of color revision new ways of being, grounded in Kanaka Maoli and other indigenous practices, beyond the Hawai'i nation-state.

Second, Epeli Hau'ofa's canonical essays, "Our Seas of Island" and "The Ocean Within Us" demonstrate how peoples from the vast Oceania have resisted colonialism despite its attempt to isolate and confine the Pacific to "tiny" regions. Others who have joined this conversation have framed solidarity efforts from the vantage point of the sea. The goal is to highlight how Ocean peoples have resisted and still resist the boundaries of Polynesia,

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2009); Jonathan Y. Okamura, *Ethnicity and Inequality in Hawai'i* (Temple University Press, 2008).

Micronesia and Melanesia by maintaining relationships and kinships across Oceania. The spirit of Hau‘ofa’s work is captured here:

‘Oceania’ connotes a sea of islands with their inhabitants. The world of our ancestors was a large sea full of places to explore, to make their homes in, to breed generations of seafarers like themselves. People raised in this environment were at home with the sea. They played in it as soon as they could walk steadily, they worked in it, they fought on it. They developed great skills for navigating their waters, and the spirit to traverse even the few large gaps that separated their island groups. Theirs was a large world in which peoples and cultures moved and mingled unhindered by boundaries of the kind erected much later by imperial powers. From one island to another they sailed to trade and to marry, thereby expanding social networks for greater flow of wealth.<sup>4</sup>

I intervene in this literature by demonstrating how KVIBE youth challenge denigrative and belittling narratives about their homes through Nakem pedagogy. Also, I show how Nakem pedagogy nurtures oceanic social networks amongst the youth and how the organization perceives these relationships as community wealth. I also align my work with Alice Te Punga Somerville’s *Once Were Pacific: Maori Connections to Oceania*, Robbie Shilliam’s *The Black Pacific: Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections*, Keith Camacho’s “Filipinos, Pacific Islanders and the American Empire.” These texts focus on the need to study different colonial subjects together and to examine their intersectional histories of struggle and resistance. I likewise place my work alongside Rod Labrador and Erin Kahunawaika‘ala Wright’s “Engaging Indigeneity in Pacific Islander and Asian American Studies.” Labrador and Wright wrote about the importance in engaging students, both Kanaka Maoli and non-natives, in place-based work in Hawai‘i in order to unlearn White and

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<sup>4</sup> Epeli Hau‘Ofa, “Our Sea of Islands,” *A New Oceania: Rediscovering Our Sea of Islands*, 1993, 2–16.

Asian settler renderings of Hawai‘i. By doing so, students can learn about Kanaka-led community-based movements rooted in working the land and begin problematizing coalitions around race- and indigeneity-based categories. During my time at KVIBE, I learned that the youth and staff members are deeply aware of their colonial histories which allow them to connect along the lines of shared struggle. Throughout this thesis, I examine KVIBE youth and staff’s own engagement with place-based work in Kalihi on their bikes and in their cultural circles.

Third, and finally, my work intervenes in youth studies and masculinity studies literature. Often times, the experiences of youth are dismissed and overlooked in academia and in the political sphere. But the following scholars demonstrate that examining youth stories can assist in understanding how U.S. empire manifests in their daily lives. In Sunaina Marr Maira’s *Missing: Youth, Citizenship, and Empire after 9/11*, she emphasizes the importance of youth studies: “Focusing on the everyday lives of these youth helps shed light on the connections between state power and experiences related to school, work, family, social relationships, and popular culture and to provide a broader analysis of citizenship and empire grounded in daily experience.”<sup>5</sup> Likewise, Victor Bascara’s analysis of Linmark’s *Rolling the R’s* is one of the texts that has informed my thesis. He captures the ethos of youth in Kalihi and demonstrates how youth challenged settler colonialism as multiculturalism in Hawai‘i. Similarly, Katherine Irwin and Karen Umemoto’s *Jacked Up and Unjust: Pacific Islander Teens Confront Violent Legacies*, Stella M. Gran-O’Donnel’s “Being Belonging and Connecting: Filipino Youths’ Narratives of Place(s) and Wellbeing in Hawai‘i” and Ty

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<sup>5</sup> Sunaina Marr Maira, *Missing: Youth, Citizenship, and Empire after 9/11* (Duke University Press, 2009).

Kāwika Tengan's *Native Men Remade: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Hawai'i* greatly influenced my thinking. These works helped me to see how honoring and recognizing youth place-based connections can contribute to holistic health. Moreover, they demonstrated the significance in observing the interplay between hegemonic masculinity and alternative forms of masculinities within community spaces. In all, their community-based research/participatory action with concepts around youth studies and masculinity studies have paved my own path for conducting ethnographic research with the Kanaka Maoli, Filipinos and other communities in Kalihi. Building from these works, I hope to show how KVIBE's day-to-day engagement with Nakem pedagogy encourages deep individual and collective healing for immigrant, native and Kanaka groups. This process, I argue, seeks to decolonize Kalihi as an urban space in Hawai'i.

### **Timeline**

In the beginning of my master's program, I did not originally plan to write my master's thesis on KVIBE. Originally, I had planned to study Filipino literature and performance that demonstrated settler attachments to Kalihi. In summer 2017, I took courses with Professor Roderick Labrador through the UCLA Hawai'i Travel Study program. Through my own participation, I was able to learn about politics at home *from* home, both inside and outside of the classroom. With a great emphasis on service-learning, I was able to learn more on Kanaka Maoli epistemologies and indigenous ties to place through visiting cultural sites (Hālawa Valley Heiau, Mokauea Island, etc.) and physically working the land. I also was able to build relationships with artists, activists and scholars who were dedicated to

the Hawaiian sovereignty movement. Although I was still interested in my initial project, this experience ultimately led me to wanting to conduct a community-based project in Kalihi.

After the one-month program was finished, I stayed home for another month to spend time with family and friends. At this time, my sister, Sara Lee “Sara” Saramosing, worked for the Kokua Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Health Center non-profit organization (KKV) as a Tobacco Prevention specialist. Sara first engaged KKV through her volunteer work when she was a senior at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. When she was searching for a volunteer opportunity to complete her course requirements, I had connected her to Jeffrey Acido who I knew already worked at KKV as the KVIBE-CECE co-manager. It is through this connection that prompted my sister to ask me one afternoon, “Do you want to visit KVIBE after I’m done with work?” Later that day, we did visit KVIBE.

During my time there, I had the chance to converse with the KVIBE-CECE co-managers Jeffrey Acido and Kevin Faller as well as the other staff members. I also enjoyed talking to the boys about why they loved KVIBE and how much fun they had on the Kalihi Ahupua‘a Bike earlier that year. After learning more about the Kalihi Ahupua‘a Bike Ride’s groundedness in Kanaka Maoli epistemologies of our city, I became even more compelled to learn more about the KVIBE organization. For that reason, I received confirmation from Jeffrey and Kevin on my request to conduct my master’s thesis on KVIBE.

I returned home from Los Angeles in November 2017 and continued building rapport with KVIBE staff and youth. In January 2018, I spent time at UH Mānoa’s Pacific Collection gathering mo‘olelo (stories) of Kalihi, news articles and reports on KVIBE and its mother organization KKV. In April and May 2018, I spent three to four days each week working in



the KVIBE facility (building bicycles, cleaning the space, running errands, etc.) while conducting interviews, participating in culture circles and Nakem-based activities and collecting information based on my interactions with the KVIBE space, staff and youth. I also attended their community dinners, meetings with partner organizations and Thursday Intern Nights. Upon returning to Los Angeles, I conducted three follow-up interviews over the phone with staff members for clarification questions.

During my time in Hawai'i, I interviewed several folks for this project. Since KVIBE youth are central to my project, I spoke with them to better understand how the organization impacted their health and well-being. In order to protect the identities of the youth, as much as is really possible, I have given fictitious names to the boys. I also created composite backgrounds in certain instances to make it difficult to trace individual stories back to the youth. Furthermore, I've also included photographs from the organization's public Facebook page throughout this thesis. I chose to use photographs taken before my visit to KVIBE to prevent individuals I interviewed from being identified. Through doing this, I hope to practice my responsibility as an ethnographer.

In order to have a better grasp on the organization, I asked KVIBE staff members to clarify the organization's rich history as well as elucidate more on their mobilization of Nakem pedagogy. Because of their close relationship to the youth, I also felt that it was vital to hone in on their emotions and interactions with the KVIBE boys. For this project, I spoke with two people who identified as Kanaka Maoli. I interviewed Professor Erin Kahunawaika'ala Wright because of her genealogical ties to Kalihi and her wealth of history of the place passed down to her by her grandparents. I then spoke with Kanoa O' Connor

who works as a youth coordinator for KKV's Ho'oulu 'Aina refuge, the sibling organization to KVIBE. I chose to interview Kanoa because of his important involvement in the Kalihi Ahupua'a Bike Ride event and because I noticed the boys' openness with him when we visited Ho'oulu 'Aina at a Saturday community event. In all, these interviews assisted me in better illustrating how KVIBE has decolonized urban space in Kalihi.

### **Overview of Chapters**

In Chapter 1, I discuss the mo'olelo of Wakea and Haumea in Kalihi. I then provide an overview of how Hawai'i shifted from a kin-ordered/tributary society to a capitalist economy society premised on sugar production. I likewise talk about how U.S. economic policies and militarism in the Pacific compelled Filipinos, Chuukese and other communities to migrate to Kalihi and Hawai'i more generally. Due to the vast amount of low-income and working-class immigrants that now reside in Kalihi, I also lightly touch upon non-profit organizations that emerged in the city. Among them is the Kokua Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Health Center and KVIBE. I then end this chapter by discussing KVIBE's development of Nakem pedagogy for young boys in Kalihi.

In chapter 2, I talk about how Nakem Pedagogy serves as a strong foundation for the making of KVIBE's Pizza and Poetry Night. Through the sharing of food and poetry at this event, I discuss how the youth shared more about their social biographies. I also examine how the KVIBE staff and youth invoked kinship with one another by exploring how their lives have been impacted by various systems of oppression. I especially focus on the mentorship of Ate Grace and Kuya Kevin. Overall, I demonstrate how KVIBE positively

impacted the health and well-being of all participants immersed in Nakem-based activities.

And in Chapter 3, I explore three sites of study: the KVIBE interns and their everyday interactions with their va‘as (bicycles as “urban canoes”); the Kalihi Ahupua‘a Bicycle Ride; and the boys’ civic engagement and public policy advocacy in Kalihi. I introduce the leadership and mentorship of Kuya Bo and Kuya Justin in this section. With their va‘as, the KVIBE interns learn valuable life lessons such as leadership skills and taking care of the spaces they inhabit. Moreover, the boys’ involvement in the annual Kalihi Ahupua‘a Bike Ride and the advocacy committee teaches them how to appreciate Kalihi as a sacred Kanaka Maoli place as well as assert their own opinions on better improving the urban built environment for the safety of all Kalihi residents. I conclude by recounting the themes and events discussed throughout my thesis as well as spotlight KVIBE’s future directions through the ideas of Ate Grace, Kuya Kevin and Kuya Max.

Above all, I intend to show how KVIBE decolonizes urban space in Hawai‘i through their engagement with Kanaka Maoli epistemologies, Nakem pedagogies and youth experiences.

### **Before Immersing Ourselves in Nakem Pedagogy**

I wanted to take note that the KVIBE youth use the Tagalog words “Kuya” and “Ate” or “older brother” and “older sister” to refer to the KVIBE staff members. As a result, I have used these terms to address the staff throughout my thesis. In Nakem Pedagogy and many other indigenous frameworks, the process of naming is important. When we can name people and places for who and what they are we can better center their value in the world. For this

reason, I do not italicize Hawaiian words throughout this text. For those who are unfamiliar with these words, I have defined them in English within parentheses. Being that I see my project as a political one, I see the grounding of Native Hawaiian terms as supporting the Kanaka Maoli revitalization movement in Hawai‘i. Now, I discuss terms that I use interchangeably. Often times, I use the labels “Kanaka Maoli,” “Kanaka ‘Oiwī,” and “Native Hawaiian” to refer to ethnic Hawaiians with any degree of ancestry. I also switch between “Kalihi,” “Kalihi Valley” and “Kalihi Waena” when mentioning the city and ahupua‘a that is central to my study.

## Chapter One: Situating KVIBE & Nakem Pedagogy in a Multilayered Storied Kalihi

In the Kumulipo, Wakea, the sky father, and Haumea, the Earth mother, left the border of Kahiki to become the parents of the Kanaka Maoli and the Hawaiian Islands. Haumea was a woman who bore many names, such as Papa, Kamaha‘ikana and Laumiha. In her spirit body as Haumea, she was known to be a beautiful woman dressed in a skirt of yellow banana leaves and wreaths of ti leaves around her head and neck. When Wakea and Haumea arrived to Hawai‘i, they lived on the misty hill of Kilohana which stands high up in the valley of Kalihi, upland on the north-east side, on the cliff which rises west of the coral beds of He‘eia. Here, they passed the hot days of summer and drenching showers of the rainy season. Wakea and Haumea also gathered an abundance of food in Kalihi which included “over-ripe bananas in the uplands, the mealy yam that lay in the soil, the wild taro so delicious for poi, ‘o‘opu moe wai (gobey fish in the stream), ‘öpae kala ‘ole (smooth shrimp), lau hö‘i‘o (fern root) of the forest, ‘alamihi (black crab) from the Ko‘olau area, fragrant seaweed from He‘eia and päpa‘i (crab).”<sup>6</sup>

One day, while Haumea went down to the lowlands to fetch crabs and seaweed, Wakea was captured by chief’s men for cutting down wild bananas from the forest. The guards’ men explained that he was seized for taking the bananas although fruit should be for people just as it should be for the flock of birds in the sky. Meanwhile, Haumea felt a sudden wave of longing for her husband, dropped her container of crabs and seaweed and hurried home. She looked down the valley and saw him with his hands tied behind his back and

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<sup>6</sup> Elspeth P. Sterling and Catherine C. Summers, *Sites of Oahu* (Bishop Museum Pr, 1978), 325-326.

being led away to the chief. Upon arriving to the place where her husband was to be burned to death, she requested the overseer to allow her to give her husband one last embrace. Haumea then posed as if to touch Wakea but instead struck the tree that he was bound to so hard that it made a thundering sound and shook the earth. The tree then opened up like the mouth of a large cave and the two disappeared inside of it. After telling the chief what had happened, the chief's men were instructed to cut down the tree with an axe and to find the man and the woman. This went on until a kahuna, or healer, told them that this woman was no other than Haumea, "the mysterious one from the borders of Kahiki" and the woman of many bodies and gods. Since then, the people performed ceremonies to appease the gods that resided in Kalihi Valley.<sup>7</sup>

In this chapter, I open with a mo 'olelo (story) to demonstrate Kanaka Maoli epistemologies of Kalihi as a place of abundance and justice. I then provide an overview of U.S. western influence in Hawai'i and how it transformed Kanaka Maoli relationship to the ahupua'a (mountain-to-sea land division). In my interview with Professor Erin Kahunawaika'ala Wright, I spotlight her family's genealogical ties to Kalihi and their stories of the spatial changes throughout time. I also examine how U.S. policies and militarism in the Pacific has impacted Filipino, Chuukese and other communities' migration to the city. Since Kalihi is now home to a majority low-income and working-class immigrant population, I talk about the emergence of non-profit organizations in the area. After, I review background information on the Kokua Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Health Center and KVIBE. I end this chapter by discussing KVIBE's Nakem pedagogy for youth in Kalihi.

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<sup>7</sup> Sterling and Summers, 326.

## **Kalihi: A Place of Abundance and Justice**

In the beginning, this mo‘olelo highlights the islands as ancestor and sibling to the Kanaka Maoli. Moreover, it signifies Kanaka Maoli’s responsibility to malama (take care of) these connections. Wakea and Haumea chose to live in Kilohana, because of its ideal location and abundance of food throughout the Kalihi ahupua‘a. In reference to the mo‘olelo, the food was so delicious that Wakea was apprehended for his frequent feasting on the fruits in Kalihi. In the mo‘olelo, or story, it was Haumea who pointed out the injustice of the chief’s instruction to punish those who eat from the land:

No ke aha hoi i kapu ole ia ai ka manu i ka maia a kapu iko la hoi i ke kanaka? Hoouna ka hoi ua ‘līi nei o oukou i kona poe kanaka, e kiu i ke kanaka e kii ana i ka mea a kona lima i luhi ole ai; a hoouna ole ka hoi oia i na kau kia manu ana e pu-lehua a e ahele i ka manu ai maia?<sup>8</sup>

Why should the banana not be taboo to the birds, but taboo to people? That ali‘i of yours has sent his people to watch for people taking something that his hands have not worked to grow but he doesn’t send any bird catchers to snare the banana-eating birds?

In Noenoe Silva’s analysis of the mo‘olelo, she argues that the “relationships are pono (just) when people can gather food freely in the forest, just as the birds do. The land is there to feed the people as well as the birds.”<sup>9</sup> Perhaps we can also assume that the death of two chief’s men served as a warning to heed her call for justice; to make things pono for the Kanaka Maoli of Kalihi Valley who eat from and are a part of the land. In addition, there are many prominent stories about Kalihi that include adventures with Wakea and Haumea’s

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<sup>8</sup> Noenoe K. Silva, “Pele, Hi‘iaka, and Haumea: Women and Power in Two Hawaiian Mo‘olelo,” *Pacific Studies* 30, no. 1 (2007): 159–181.

<sup>9</sup> Silva, 169-173.

children, Kapoulukina‘u, Kamohoali‘i and Pelehonuamea, shark gods from Pu‘uloa (known as Pearl Harbor) who rest inside the shallow cave of Keana Kamano.<sup>10</sup> They demonstrate the wealth of mo‘olelo about Kalihi.

In this way, the Kanaka Maoli have passed down the mo‘olelo of Kalihi so that their descendants and all those who encounter this place will know the life of its land, people and stories. According to Elspeth P. Sterling and Catherine C. Summers, Kalihi can also mean the “outside edge” or boundary valley. Another name of Kalihi is Kalihilihi O Laumiha, otherwise known as “the edge of Laumiha” or the “eyelashes of Laumiha.” In the Kumulipo, Laumiha is referred to “intense-silence.”<sup>11</sup> Since Haumea is known to have many names, Laumiha could be another embodiment of Haumea. In another vein, Kalihi’s ample food and resources reflects the mo‘olelo of Wakea and Haumea eating copious foods throughout the Kalihi ahupua‘a. For instance, Kalihi had a shallow seaside area, now described as the shore of Kalihi Basin, that once hosted six fish ponds. Kahaka‘aulana (Sand Island) of Kalihi also consisted of many fishponds. And in the flatlands in lower Kalihi Valley extensive terraces that measured 1.25 miles straddled both sides of the stream. Wakea and Haumea thereby utilized the interior valley’s rough and narrow characteristics to grow sweet potatoes, yam, wauke and bananas.<sup>12</sup> Resonating with Haumea’s regenerative abilities, Kalihi’s rich soil and bountiful fishponds manifested as food for the people and as the power of female reproduction and humankind. For this reason, Haumea is often considered the goddess of

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<sup>10</sup> Sterling and Summers, *Sites of Oahu*.

<sup>11</sup> “Ulukau: The Kumulipo: A Hawaiian Creation Chant,” accessed April 26, 2018, <http://www.ulukau.org/elib/cgi-bin/library?e=d-0beckwit2-000Sec--11haw-50-20-frameset-book--1-010escapewin&a=d&d=D0.23.5&toc=0>.

<sup>12</sup> E. S. Handy, “Native Planters in Old Hawaii,” 1972, 475.



childbirth.<sup>13</sup> In this way, we can read Haumea as the rejuvenating life source for Kalihi and Kanaka Maoli.

### **Shifting Economies, Shifting Societies**

The mo‘olelo that I discussed at the beginning of this section allow us to better understand how Kanaka Maoli epistemologies shape Hawaiian society. Before Captain Cook’s contact with Hawai‘i in 1778, the dominant mode of production in Kanaka Maoli society relied on a kin-ordered/tributary system, called Kapu. Kanaka Maoli sustained themselves by cultivating food and resources from their respective ahupua‘as. Furthermore, the ahupua‘a system was managed by each ali‘i of a moku-puni or landbase and was divided into mountain-to-sea land divisions. The ali‘i then collected food and resources cultivated by the maka‘ainana (commoners) in order to redistribute them evenly amongst the community. Scholar Marion Kelly states that although “the land was controlled by the ali‘i, who expropriated food and labor from the cultivators of the soil, the maka‘ainana, everyone had rights of access and use to the resources of the land and sea.”<sup>14</sup> This statement highlights the kind of mutual respect fostered by the Kanaka Maoli of different ranks and status. As a result, a kin-ordered/tributary society allowed the Kanaka Maoli to generally work four hours

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<sup>13</sup> Lisa Humphrey, “Kalihi: Mythological and Traditional Accounts,” Supplemental Archaeological Inventory Survey Plan for the City Center (Section 4) of the Honolulu Rapid Transit Project, Kalihi, Kapalama, Honolulu, and Waikiki Ahupuaa, Honolulu (Kona) District, Oahu Addressing Changes from the Vicinity of Ward Avenue and Halekauwila Street to the Vicinity of Queen and Kamakee Streets TMK: [1] 2-1, 2-3 (Various Plats and Parcels), 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Marion Kelly, “Land Tenure in Hawaii,” *Amerasia Journal* 7, no. 2 (1980): 57–73.

per day and to use the rest of their time to perform art, dance and poetry.<sup>15</sup>

The arrival of Captain Cook to Hawai‘i then transformed the Kanaka Maoli economy from a communal and land-based one to an economy intertwined with the American and British in the global markets. This shift compelled the Kanaka Maoli to increasingly value the economic trading power of kapa (bark cloth) and sandalwood in the global economy. And as the ali‘i began to trade and consume extravagant items, other nations soon perceived Hawai‘i to be a sovereign nation. After 30 years of participating in the global economy, Hawai‘i then became a place for western settlement. Moreover, Kanaka Maoli reorganized their Kapu system (ali‘i, kahuna, maka ‘ainana etc.) into a western form of government based on a “privy council, legislature, and judiciary.”<sup>16</sup> Haole advisers, especially those who were U.S. missionaries also swayed the ali‘i or chiefs to allow them to own private businesses.<sup>17</sup>

Due to their western influences, the Hawaiian Kingdom implemented the 1848 Mahele and 1850 Kuleana Act to reorganize the lands of the Hawaiian Kingdom into three primary groups: the ali‘i or crown lands (23%), the Hawaiian government lands (37%) and the kuleana lands (40%).<sup>18</sup> These acts enabled foreign and non-citizen haole businessmen to purchase lands for the purpose of developing sugar plantations. These foreign investors

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<sup>15</sup> Ward Churchill, Sharon Helen Venne, and Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa, *Islands in Captivity: The International Tribunal on the Rights of Indigenous Hawaiians* (South End Press Cambridge, MA, 2004), [http://www.magamall.com/Client/Disticor/DisticorDirect\\_LP4W\\_LND\\_WebStation.ns5/255b189eff2529f985256fb1008072a4/93156200e2e285938525702d0069d5e6!OpenDocument; Kelly, “Land Tenure in Hawaii.”](http://www.magamall.com/Client/Disticor/DisticorDirect_LP4W_LND_WebStation.ns5/255b189eff2529f985256fb1008072a4/93156200e2e285938525702d0069d5e6!OpenDocument; Kelly, “Land Tenure in Hawaii.”)

<sup>16</sup> Churchill, Venne, and Kame‘eleihiwa, *Islands in Captivity*.

<sup>17</sup> Churchill, Venne, and Kame‘eleihiwa.

<sup>18</sup> “The Mahele - Hawaii History - Short Stories,” accessed June 13, 2018, <http://www.hawaiihistory.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=ig.page&PageID=288>.

mainly included the “Big Five”: Alexander & Baldwin, Ltd., American Factors Ltd., Castle & Cooke, Ltd., C. Brewer & Company, Ltd., and Theo. H. Davies Company, Ltd.<sup>19</sup> Through this economic shift, the Kanaka Maoli cultivation of land no longer served as the dominant mode of production in Hawai‘i. Instead, the Kingdom of Hawai‘i began to utilize lands to produce exported goods in order to attain (often low) plantation wages. From these examples, we can understand how the traditional ahupua‘a system encouraged community and spiritual relations with the land, as well as take stock of how the Mahele and the Kuleana Act rendered land as private property and commodity in the global economy.

In regards to political changes non-native westerners with large tracts of land soon wielded political power. As a result, Native Hawaiians experienced land losses due to the rise of the Big Five companies. With the Hawaiian government’s passage of the Master’s and Servants Act in 1850, the Big Five companies then received support to employ foreign laborers to conduct “contract work on the sugar plantations.”<sup>20</sup> Onward, this act enabled the importation of Asian laborers from China, Japan and the Philippines to work the ethnically stratified plantation economy. Because of the Philippines unique position as a U.S. colony, Filipinos, as U.S. nationals, migrated to Hawai‘i even when the 1917 Asiatic Barred one Act prohibited people from Asian countries from entering the United States.<sup>21</sup>

After statehood in 1959, the Big Five then slowed their production of sugar and concentrated their efforts on the creation of a tourism-based economy. Around this time, the

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<sup>19</sup> Roderick Labrador, *Building Filipino Hawai‘i*, 2015, <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=3414423>.

<sup>20</sup> Labrador.

<sup>21</sup> Min Zhou and James V. Gatewood, *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader* (NYU Press, 2007).

Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 authorized the migration of highly-skilled laborers to the United States, as with Filipino nurses and physicians. Yet despite the tremendous variety in the educational and occupational backgrounds of Filipinos, they continue, as a group, to occupy the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder in contemporary Hawai'i. Scholar Jonathan Okamura have argued that such stagnant upward social mobility is due to Filipinos being “trapped in a slow growth, high cost/low wage, limited opportunity economy” associated with the racial hierarchy of the tourism industry.<sup>22</sup> Although there are intra-group stereotypes between immigrant and local Filipinos in Hawai'i, Professor Roderick Labrador demonstrated that Filipinos collectively contend with enduring stereotypes since the plantation era. These stereotypes include Filipinos as dog-eaters, heavily-accented and low-wage and low-prestige workers.<sup>23</sup>

Following World War II, the United States held fraught political relationships with other nations throughout the Pacific byway of its militarism and cold war diplomacy. With respect to the Chuukese of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the United States formed the Compact of Free Association (COFA) in 1983. As an international agreement, the COFA sought to improve health and education systems of Chuuk as well as to allow Chuukese to enter, live and work in the United States without a VISA or green card.<sup>24</sup> But according to the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports of 2003 and 2006,

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<sup>22</sup> Jonathan Y. Okamura, “The Illusion of Paradise,” *Making Majorities*, 1998, 264–339.

<sup>23</sup> Labrador, *Building Filipino Hawai'i*.

<sup>24</sup> John F. McDermott and Naleen N. Andrade, *People and Cultures of Hawaii: The Evolution of Culture and Ethnicity* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 298.

the compact has not met its health and education goals in Chuuk and the FSM and it is not likely that self-sufficiency will be achieved. Today, Chuukese immigrants comprise up to 50 percent of the residents in homeless shelters and 80 percent of the families in large low-income housing in O‘ahu.<sup>25</sup> As a result, the Chuukese community has struggled with their transitions from a sustainable land-and sea-based village life to a wage-based economy in Hawai‘i. Furthermore, Chamorros, Filipinos, Haole, Japanese, Samoans and other communities often racially target Chuukese as the major consumers of Hawai‘i’s health, education and social services.<sup>26</sup> As a scapegoated Pacific Islander group in Hawai‘i, Chuukese, elders and youth alike encounter individual and institutional forms of racism on a daily basis.

As this section reveals, Hawai‘i became part of a dominant capitalist and militarist society by the late twentieth century. This brand of settler colonialism also attempted to erase Kanaka Maoli epistemologies, mo‘olelo and memories; the interpellation of Filipinos into the tourism system as working-class, menial laborers; and caused the migration of Chuukese and other Pacific Islanders to Hawai‘i in the 1990s. For the next part of this chapter, I will localize these histories in Kalihi, a place where overlapping histories of native and immigrant struggle and resistance meet.

For this section, I wanted to show how the transition of Hawai‘i’s society from a kin-ordered tributary economic system to a dominant capitalist tourism economic society, which

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<sup>25</sup> McDermott and Andrade, 307.

<sup>26</sup> “No Aloha for Micronesians in Hawaii,” Honolulu Civil Beat, June 10, 2011, <http://www.civilbeat.org/articles/2011/06/20/11650-no-aloha-for-micronesians-in-hawaii>.

I read as inherently intertwined with settler colonialism, contributed to the attempted erasure of Kanaka Maoli epistemologies, mo‘olelo and memory of place. Moreover, I wanted to reveal how this western U.S. settler colonial system influenced the displacement of Kanaka Maoli from their own indigenous lands through the rendering and taking of land as private property and commodity by Haole businessmen. The same U.S. settler colonialism system caused the migration of people from other islands touched by U.S. colonialism in the Pacific, albeit different ways, and interpellated them into the current tourism system to perform often working-class, menial labor. For this next part of this chapter, I localize this history to Kalihi, where overlapping and intersecting histories of struggle and resistance of Kanaka Maoli and recent immigrants, whom are marginalized at the bottom of Hawai‘i’s socioeconomic ladder, meet.

### **Kalihi: “The Edge of Modernization”**

Professor Erin Kahunawaika‘ala Wright is Kanaka‘Ōiwi Hawai‘i from Kalihi, O‘ahu, and was raised on the land that has supported her mother’s family for the last six generations. Decades after the passage of the Mahele and Kuleana Act, Professor Erin’s maternal great-great-grandmother, Leilehua Kamakea and her sister, Ana Pūla‘a, purchased the original Kalihi landholdings. They then secured their family home on Kamehameha IV road and have maintained it since the 1800s. Leilehua’s daughter, Elsie Kamakea, was Professor Erin’s maternal grandfather’s mother and Professor Erin’s grandparents were Benjamin “Kekuipuaahiahi” or “Kekuipua” and Dorothy Wong. Finally, her parents are Sandra and Charles Wright. As a member of the fifth generation, Professor Erin has inherited their

family home and plans to pass it down to her son. Professor Erin described her great-great-grandmother's landholding and her own pilina (relationship) to Kalihi Valley within Kalihi Waena: "She [Leilehua] used to own the land all the way where I live to the Kalihi stream... so, KPT [Kuhio Park Terrace Housings] lays on the land where my grandmother used to own. Our great-great-grandma bought land she raised her kids and their kids and her kids' kids, we have that closeness to it. We feel very protective and loyal to this place." In this statement, she references the Section 8 Kuhio Park Terrace Housings, now referred to as the Towers of Kuhio Park terrace after its renovation in 2013, as sitting on Leilehua's land title holdings. Before KPT was built in the 1960s, Professor Erin talked about how there were five to six acres of lo'i (taro farms) stretched across that area because of its closeness to the Kalihi stream.

Since Professor Erin's grandparents lived until their 90s, they were able to share with Professor Erin stories about Kalihi's transformation over time. They told her stories of Kalihi during the Hawaiian Kingdom period, where it was a favorite place of King Kamehameha IV and Queen Emma and other members of the ali'i, or chiefly class. For example, Queen Emma had a summer palace in Nu'uuanu, which marked the edge of the Kalihi ahupua'a, hence the reason as to why she and other friends of the palace would spend a large part of their time in Kalihi. Queen Liliuo'kalani, the last reigning monarch of the Hawaiian Kingdom, enjoyed Kalihi as well. Professor Erin stated that the Queen even influenced her great-great-grandmother to name her grandfather, "Kekuipuaahiahi," a flower that blooms in the evening time. She added, "My grandfather, his name was Kekuipuaahiahi. That was the name his grandmother gave him because [Queen Liliuo'kalani] use to come to their part of

the neighborhood and sew leis [with those flowers] in the evening. She would pick the flowers in the evening and sew them. It used to be right across the street from where we live in that area. She loved children. She would make lei for them. [Leilehua named him after those flowers] to commemorate her.” The story of how Professor Erin’s grandfather received his name serves as an example of how Kalihi, as both a people and a place, can become inherently tied to one’s identity as a Kanaka Maoli.

In other stories belonging to Professor Erin’s family, her Chinese grandmother Dorothy talked heavily about the beginnings of urbanization of the Kalihi community:

She told me that Kalihi was the first place to have flushed toilets, a [better] sewer system. Her flushed toilets was a big deal when people used to have outhouses. She looked at Kalihi as “the edge of modernization,” really building up this urban infrastructure, and who would have thought they chose Kalihi as a place to do that? If everyone used to have outhouses and Kalihi was the first place to have flushing toilets in its infrastructure, that’s a big deal.

Professor Erin emphasizes how often her grandmother would talk about Kalihi as being the first place to have flushed toilets. Her grandmother’s frequent conversations on flushed toilets suggests that this technology perhaps improved the situation on how waste was disposed in Kalihi. Although a flushed toilet, as a marker of modernization, may have positively impacted the community, it is also significant to note that the continued urbanization of Kalihi, and the rest of Hawai‘i, took land away from Kanaka Maoli. Although Leilehua and Ana underwent the appropriate processes to attain landholdings in Kalihi, the U.S. government still enacted U.S. Eminent Domain Laws over their land titles during the war in the 1940s. These laws allowed the government to take private properties



and convert them into “public” use sites such as schools and roads.<sup>27</sup> These laws also supported the government’s construction of two of the major five major section 8 housings in Kalihi, the Towers of Kuhio Park Terrace and Kalihi Valley homes (Kam IV housing). With her genealogical ties to these lands, Professor Erin expressed:

My family felt like they followed the American rules, they got money, they bought the land, got titles, but America came back and took it. They gave her really petty money... she got way less than what she paid for. For our family, that was the beginning of our personal connection to the history of land dispossession in Hawai‘i. The whole history of land dispossession for Hawaiians, but that was our history. Our family talked about the dispossession, yes. It’s a story we all know, primarily because my Chinese grandmother [Dorothy] made sure we didn’t forget. I learned the most from her. My grandfather never really talked about it. I think it was too painful for him, really.

Across Professor Erin’s and her grandparents’ lifetimes, they have witnessed the demographic and spatial changes in their neighborhood, as with the Japanese, Chinese and Native Hawaiian makeup of Kalihi in the 1950s. Today, Kalihi is home to mainly Filipino, Samoan and Micronesian immigrants. Professor Erin stated that in her part of the Kalihi Waena neighborhood, she has more neighbors of Micronesian, primarily Chuukese, and Filipino descent. Further, three of four Japanese families still live on their street and a handful of Native Hawaiian communities continue to reside in Kalihi. Along with the shifting demographics, Kalihi is home to five of the major section 8 federal housing projects: the Towers of Kuhio Park Terrace [KPT], Kalihi Valley Homes [Kam IV], Kamehameha Homes, Mayor Wrights and Kukui Gardens. Given that Erin has lived in between KPT and

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<sup>27</sup> L. I. I. Staff, “Eminent Domain,” LII / Legal Information Institute, August 6, 2007, [https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/eminent\\_domain](https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/eminent_domain).

Kam IV housing, she grew up during the 1980s and 1990s when Kalihi became highly stigmatized. For this reason, she experienced much community disorganization in Kalihi: “We see this shit happen. Kids drop their trash on the street. We live in the middle of shit, domestic violence, fighting on the streets, hearing shots...”

While there has been a massive in-migration of people to Kalihi, a majority of its Kanaka Maoli residents have moved out of the community. Professor Erin provides two reasons: (1) it’s socially stressful to live in Kalihi and (2) it’s hard to afford land in the neighborhood despite Kalihi being a more affordable place for poor and working-class people to live. She states:

For our family, my grandfather’s cousin inherited their land up the street from his uncle, they ended up losing land because they couldn’t afford it. Even though it’s seen as an affordable neighborhood, they’re still suffering the economic conditions of being Hawaiian in Hawai‘i. And even with them inheriting the land, they still gotta pay all this money for taxes. They couldn’t afford it, so they lost it. For our family, that’s hard because that’s part of the family lots.

For those who own land in her neighborhood, she acknowledged that it takes more working people within the household to afford land titles in Hawai‘i:

From just me seeing things, it’s mostly Filipinos who own land in my neighborhood. They buy land and they build and there are lot of people. Unfortunately in my neighborhood, that is the stereotype, living stereotype, but for us we realize it’s the economic reality in Hawai‘i too, where the only way to own land in Hawai‘i is to have plenny people contributing and paying for stuff. On our block there are 5 or 6 big houses with lots of people living in them. There are a lot more cars from there and the housings, it’s really crowded now.

Even though Professor Erin expressed her frustrations with Kalihi, she still feels a sense of commitment and loyalty to this place that has and continues to be home for her

family:

I have a love and frustration with Kalihi. I love it so much because of my kula iwi, the beloved place that you're connected to because of your genealogy. So, I have that huge affinity for it. Just thinking about how hard my family worked to get that 'aina especially back in the day with how people treated Hawaiians, it was really hard— [she begins to cry.] Now, I'm getting all... It's a great place.

Since Professor Erin spends much of her time working at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, she acknowledges that she has not been involved in the community as much as she would like to. Many families have moved in and out of Kalihi: "There are just different people now. It's a different feel. We don't know our neighbors anymore even with people across the street." Moreover, she shared that she and her son are still trying to figure out how to get connected to her neighbors and become more involved in the neighborhood. From time to time, for example, Professor Erin and another Kanaka Maoli friend who recently moved back to Kalihi would participate in a neighborhood watch group "so people know we're around and we give a shit about our neighborhood." She has also worked indirectly with Kalihi youth like the 808 Urban Art collective in getting both Native and non-Native youth to anchor themselves in Hawaiian culture, art, and place. As a student affairs professional at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Professor Erin has resources but emphasizes not wanting to begin her own initiative in the Kalihi community. She stated, "I don't feel like I've been part of the larger community for a long, long time. People might be like, 'who the fuck are you?'" For this reason, she and her son have been thinking through what it means to make commitments to places in and beyond the household. Ultimately, Professor Erin wants to build more relationships with the Kalihi community. She conveyed:

Kalihi is a beautiful place that has history and a genealogy. If people knew about it, they would have a closer relationship to it. It's not just a place where we live. It's a place, for so many of us, that provides sustenance, it sustains our families. Whether it's literally like Ho'oulu Aina or in the [urban core] where they can afford to live. People assume that since [our family] is not low-income, we're not from the same story. Our story is just different. We live in the same place and we can learn from one another. Just because we have some privilege, it doesn't mean we shouldn't be part of the conversation. That's why we want to make more personal connections in our community.

### **Kalihi: “The City with No Pity”**

As Professor Erin illustrates, Kalihi is an urban city located five miles away from Downtown Honolulu and the hot-spot tourist destination of Waikiki. This place consists of a dense population of 46,000 residents and includes Alewa Heights, Iwilei, Kalihi Kai, Kalihi Uka, Kalihi Valley, Kalihi Waena and parts of Kamehameha Heights, Kapalama and Palama.<sup>28</sup> It is a gateway community for many immigrant arrivals to the city. In general, the community mirrors the low-socioeconomic status, and middle-class families of its Governor Wallace Rider Farrington High School students: Filipinos (61.4%), Samoans (10.4%), Native Hawaiians (8.9%), Micronesians (8.4%), Tongans (9.1%) and Guamanians/Chamorros (0.2%). The per-capita annual income is also \$14,634, ranking the community in the lowest quartile in the state.<sup>29</sup> Kalihi residents have higher rates of unemployment, frequent usage of welfare and food stamp assistance, and lower levels of home ownership than residents in all other

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<sup>28</sup> “Farrington Area Community Profile,” Center on the Family College of Tropical Agricultural and Human Resources (University of Hawai'i at Manoa, 2003), [www.uhfamily.edu](http://www.uhfamily.edu).

<sup>29</sup> Stella M. Gran-O'Donnell, “Being, Belonging, and Connecting: Filipino Youths' Narratives of Place(s) and Wellbeing in Hawai'i” 2016, <https://digital.lib.washington.edu/443/researchworks/handle/1773/36832>.

areas of the state.<sup>30</sup> In many social media platforms, Kalihi is known to be “the city with no pity.”<sup>31</sup>

With over 25,000 students, Governor Wallace Rider Farrington High School enrolls one of the largest populations in the state and serves students primarily from lower socioeconomic status and ethnic minority backgrounds. Students who identify as immigrants who require instruction in English as a second language make up a large proportion of the student population (about 13.5%).<sup>32</sup> Over 60% of students receive free or reduced-cost lunches. Furthermore, 64.3% of adolescents living in the Farrington area have reported living in unsafe neighborhoods; according to a statewide survey, they highlighted much community disorganization (such as graffiti and fighting), low family attachment and poor family supervision.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, a majority of adolescents also valued their education. Further, many parents reported a high degree of involvement in their children’s schools.

In response to many of the issues in Kalihi, there have been many non-profit organizing efforts in the area. Some examples include the Adult Friends for Youth, Alliance for Drama Education via their T-Shirt Theatre program at the high school, Keiki O Ka ‘Aina, Palama Settlement, the Susannah Wesley Center and YMCA. Kokua Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Health Center is another non-profit organization that provides numerous programs and resources for people within the community.

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<sup>30</sup> “Farrington Area Community Profile.”

<sup>31</sup> “Māhele - Kalihi,” accessed April 26, 2018, <https://aliiempire.com/products/549uibpq81>.

<sup>32</sup> “Farrington Area Community Profile.”

<sup>33</sup> “Farrington Area Community Profile.”

## **An Overview of Kokua Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Health Center and KVIBE**

In this section, I focus on the emergence of KVIBE in 2005 as a result of community-based organizing led by the Kokua Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Health Center (KKV). I also highlight past KVIBE staffers' use of bike mechanics and bicycling itself as a vehicle to provide mentorship and create positive interventions in the lives of Kalihi Valley youth. To conclude, I spotlight KVIBE's turn towards a more holistic health approach that allows them to not only be physically healthy through bicycling but to also be emotionally and mentally healthy through holding daily culture circles that name and summon ancestors and that honor the places they call home. Through these culture circles, the KVIBE staff and youth foster a collective Nakem pedagogy that nurtures love and healing in Kalihi.

In 1972, residents of the Kalihi Valley community formed the Kokua Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Family Services (KKV) in response to the lack of accessible and appropriate health care services for the valley's low-income, Asian and Pacific Islander immigrant population. Since its beginnings, KKV staff members have stayed committed to their motto, "Neighbors being neighborly to neighbors." They fulfill their mission by connecting residents with the existing services: "medical, dental, behavioral health, maternal and child health, nutrition, case management, eligibility, transportation, smoking cessation, health education, chronic disease self-management, home visits, active living, elderly services, family strengthening, community building, advocacy, positive youth development and cultural appreciation, environmental preservation and food production activities."<sup>34</sup> Today, KKV employs 180 staff members who are fluent in 20 Asian and Pacific Islander languages

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<sup>34</sup> "About KKV - Kokua Kalihi Valley."

and dialects and serve over 10,000 community members each year.<sup>35</sup> These staff members work out of nine locations throughout the valley—including two of the largest public housing communities in the State of Hawai‘i, a 12,000-square foot health center, a 16,500-square foot Wellness Center, a 4,000-square foot Elder Center and 100 acres of leased State Park land at the back of Kalihi Valley. KKV is invested in promoting all aspects of community health—physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. KKV aims to fulfill the vision of the community leaders who founded KKV over 50 years ago: “A healthier Kalihi Valley is an inclusive community in which neighbors help to heal neighbors, and people see themselves as part of a larger whole, connected to each other, to their culture and to their shared land.”<sup>36</sup>

In 2003, KKV had the desire to address a historically neglected public health issue in Kalihi Valley: the physical infrastructure and built environment of communities that influence physical activity. Due to Kalihi Valley being the first home for new Asian and Pacific Islander immigrants coming to the United States, the state soon found that the physical infrastructure of its streets, sidewalks, schools, parks and other public services could not adequately support this growing population. In other words, since Kalihi Valley did not have a built environment that was activity-friendly, community members’ health became deeply impacted. For instance, health center data at KKV showed how a patient population in Kalihi Valley increasingly suffered from exercise-related chronic conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and obesity.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> “About KKV - Kokua Kalihi Valley.”

<sup>36</sup> “About KKV - Kokua Kalihi Valley.”

<sup>37</sup> Hamamoto MH, Derauf DD, and Yoshimura SR, “Building the Base: Two Active Living Projects That Inspired Community Participation.,” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 37, no. 6 (2009): 345–51.

As a direct response to this concern, KKV used an Active Living by Design (ALbD) partnership model to develop an unused 100-acre called the Kalihi Valley Nature Park. They then established a bicycle repair and recycling program. The two projects that emerged from this initiative included Ho‘oulu ‘Aina (“to grow the land” and “to grow because of the land”), a program invested in cultural education and community transformation through stewarding the 100-acre land, and the Kalihi Valley Instructional Bicycle Exchange Program (KVIBE). Over a span of five years community partners “mobilized thousands of community volunteers, attracted widespread media coverage, and created a growing number of innovative and effective programs for active living.”<sup>38</sup> By cultivating land that grows healthy foods for the community and creating a bike shop that encourages physical exercise and offers primarily male mentorship via the bicycle amongst community members, KKV aimed to create a holistically healthy Kalihi Valley community.

KVIBE opened its garage doors in February 2005 and allowed kids, a majority of them being boys of color, to recondition and build bikes at no charge so long as they dedicate their time and “sweat equity” to the shop. After donating 12 hours of their time towards the building and fixing other peoples’ bikes, for example, the youth can earn their own bikes through the program. It carved out a physical presence in the community through the establishment of the KVIBE bike shop in the corner section of the KKV warehouse. Community members agreed that this was an ideal location for KVIBE. KVIBE is located on a two-lane community road, which used to be a four-lane road until KVIBE joined the movement in advocating for safer streets within half-mile of a public elementary school, a

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<sup>38</sup> Hamamoto MH, Derauf DD, and Yoshimura SR.



public middle school, a large district park, and several neighborhood stores. KVIBE's placement in the community has made it an accessible and attractive location for youth, adult volunteers, and community members across the island. Situated directly between two of the state's public housing complexes, Kalihi Valley Homes (known as Kamehameha IV or Kam IV to many of the community members) and The Towers of Kuhio Park Terrace, KVIBE attracts youth from both complexes. Although this region is known for its culture of gangs and violence, KVIBE is one of the few neutral zones in the area youth can mingle safely and freely with no gang colors allowed on premise. In an interview with Honolulu Civil Beat, former KVIBE staff member Jordan Ragasa explained, "Rivalries between gangs affiliated with each complex can cause tension, but we are really adamant about putting away those kinds of rivalries."<sup>39</sup> Another KVIBE staff coordinator Kevin Faller calls the space a "temporary amnesty" and insists that everyone is treated with respect. The shop also includes a large inventory of donated and repaired bicycles, two bike repair stations, an office, and a covered lounge space in which neighborhood youth can congregate afterschool to talk story, play video and board games, or simply hang out with friends. With its tools, repair stations, posters, couches, and caring and creative male staff, KVIBE has been especially attractive for 8-18-year-old boys in the community.<sup>40</sup>

From its beginnings, KVIBE has been incorporated into KKV's Youth and Family Services program (YFS). It is situated within the YFS program, KVIBE serves as an

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<sup>39</sup> "This Kalihi Bike Shop Is Helping Kids Learn Life Lessons," Honolulu Civil Beat, November 21, 2016, <http://www.civilbeat.org/2016/11/this-kalihi-bike-shop-is-helping-kids-learn-life-lessons/>.

<sup>40</sup> "This Kalihi Bike Shop Is Helping Kids Learn Life Lessons."

innovative and hands-on and vocational training site for youth in this community. In a Honolulu Weekly interview with former KVIBE manager Matt Yee, he states, “Bikes and bicycle mechanics are sort of the hook, but we’re essentially a way to affirmatively intervene and showcase positive values to these kids.”<sup>41</sup> In another interview with KVIBE Department Coordinator and Founder Chris Blumenstetter, he talks briefly about some of the good values he wants kids to learn from spending time at KVIBE. “I’d like to see more of the kids in the community being responsible for their own product, not just through a bike when its broken,” explains Blumenstetter. “For what you have, upgrade it and make it nicer— a lot of kids have a ‘disposable mentality’ and we teach them to take care of their own equipment.”<sup>42</sup> In its beginning stages, the other programs that promote “good values” in KVIBE have included “nutrition lessons and healthy snacks; gang violence, and pregnancy prevention activities; part-time job opportunities and a placement site for expelled and probationary youth at the nearby public middle school.”<sup>43</sup> In the last two years under the leadership of Kevin Faller and Jeffrey Acido of KVIBE-CECE, the organization has also implemented other kinds of programming such as intern movie nights, and monthly community dinners that allow for the building of close relationships and trust amongst KVIBE staff and youth as well as other members in the Kalihi community. What is most central to KVIBE programming now is the groundedness in the organization’s practicing of Nakem pedagogy.

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<sup>41</sup> Matthew Dekneef, “Keep the Vibe Alive.,” *Honolulu Weekly*, August 28, 2010, v20 n30 edition.

<sup>42</sup> Kevin Whitton, “Good Times Keep on Rolling.,” *Green Magazine Hawai’i*, Winter 2009.

<sup>43</sup> Hamamoto MH, Derauf DD, and Yoshimura SR, “Building the Base.”

## **The Root of Nakem Pedagogy x KVIBE-CECE**

### *Nakem Pedagogy Background*

Dr. Jeffrey Acido graduated from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa with his Ph.D. in Education in 2014. His autoethnographic Ph.D. dissertation entitled, “Nakem Pedagogy (Soul Consciousness) and Constitutive Elements of Nakem Praxis,” explored his diasporic experience of constantly moving between Ilocos, Philippines and Honolulu, Hawai‘i; his working-class upbringing in Kalihi; his grassroots activism work in California and Hawai‘i; his support of stories by the marginalized and oppressed members of a community; and his creation of Nakem pedagogy. While Nakem pedagogy has a myriad of meanings, Acido defined it as “soul-consciousness.”<sup>44</sup> In constructing his own definition for the soul, he pulled from Rachel Kessler’s understandings of soul in her work in education:

I use the word soul...to call for attention in schools to inner life; to the depth dimension of human experience; to students’ longing for something more than an ordinary, material and fragmented existence.<sup>45</sup>

Adding onto Rachel Kessler’s definition of soul and her urgency in calling our attention in schools to “the depth of human experience,” he stated that attention to the soul is

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<sup>44</sup> Jeffrey Tangonan Acido, “Nakem Pedagogy (Soul Consciousness) and Constitutive Elements of Nakem Praxis” (University of Hawai‘i at Manoa, 2014), <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1672919163/abstract/5E4976713730496FPQ/1>.

<sup>45</sup> Rachael Kessler, *The Soul of Education: Helping Students Find Connection, Compassion, and Character at School* (ASCD, 2000).

“a call for the use of one’s stories as rooted through the body, routed through genealogical ancestry and always tied to the land that one was born in and/or currently calls home.”<sup>46</sup>

According to Acido, the soul in the indigenous Ilokano sense is “the knowledge that consciously and unconsciously animates and mitigates our understandings ourselves and the world.” By introducing Nakem Pedagogy, Acido advocated for centering soul stories, stories, or social biographies that summon “our personal and immediate experiences... and our ancestors’ experiences.” Nakem Pedagogy practitioners validate and value these social biographies as embodied knowledge and wisdom. By centering these social biographies, people not only seek to rewrite denigrating narratives about their languages and names, lands they come from (home) and the bodies (ancestors) they represent. They also become aware of the colonial structures, systems and narratives that have shaped their traumas and experiences. Through this realization, their social biographies can become as empirical truths that challenge colonial violence. Therefore, Nakem pedagogy aims to liberate and heal the souls of marginalized and oppressed people.

#### *KVIBE-CECE x Nakem Pedagogy*

In 2016, Kevin Faller, or Kuya Kevin who comes from a working-class Tagalog family residing in Ewa Beach, joined the team as KVIBE’s manager. As a former student of Jeffrey Acido, or Kuya Jeff, Kuya Kevin began to incorporate Nakem pedagogy into KVIBE’s curriculum by hosting daily culture circles, where KVIBE youth take turns in the sharing of their names, places they call homes and ancestors. At this time, Kuya Jeff also

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<sup>46</sup> Acido, “Nakem Pedagogy (Soul Consciousness) and Constitutive Elements of Nakem Praxis.”

worked as the coordinator for KKV's Community Education and Civic Engagement program (CECE). Six months after Kevin secured his position at KVIBE, KVIBE and CECE merged into KVIBE-CECE to engage youth in bicycling mechanics as well as Nakem Pedagogy. In addition to Kuya Kevin and Kuya Jeff, the other KVIBE-CECE staff members include Brock Corby (Kuya Bo), Mackson Phillips (Kuya Max), Gracieuse Seven Jean-Pierre (Ate Grace) and Justin Jay Vinoya (Kuya Justin). Their team consists of folks from Chuukese, Filipino (Ilokano and Tagalog), Hatian and Haole backgrounds.

Kuya Bo, Kuya Max and Ate Grace are hired onto KVIBE staff through the joint funding support of KKV and AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), a program that places applicants in non-profit organizations nationwide that "help eradicate poverty." The KVIBE staff positions belonging to Kuya Kevin, Kuya Jeff and Kuya Justin (who is also a former youth participant of KVIBE) are funded through KKV's KVIBE and CECE general aid funds and the Prevention Institute based in California.

For KVIBE staff members and the greater KKV organization, they recognize cultural traditions and values of Kanaka Maoli, Asians and Pacific Islanders have been "fragmented by colonization, economic exploitation, and the loss of ancestral homelands."<sup>47</sup> Moreover, they acknowledge that holistic health and wellbeing of Kalihi men have been heavily impacted through their "struggle to hold onto a sense of identity, purpose, and power within

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<sup>47</sup> "Back to Our Roots-Catalyzing Community Action for Mental Health and Wellbeing" (Prevention Institute, n.d.), <https://www.preventioninstitute.org/sites/default/files/publications/Back%20to%20Our%20Roots-Catalyzing%20Community%20Action%20for%20Mental%20Health%20and%20Wellbeing.pdf>.

the current social environment.”<sup>48</sup> As a result, KVIBE, with the support of KKV, mobilizes Nakem pedagogy to address holistic health rooted in land, body and language. In doing so, they invoke an indigenous healing for KVIBE youth. In a Prevention Institute article, Kuya Jeff explained:

When our teams talk about indigenous and indigeneity, we’re talking about a whole world view, complicated and complex and beautiful, a map for many of our communities who had their map replaced by another map, and so when we’re talking about indigenous and cultural practices, we’re necessarily talking about a world view and whole cosmology in which our young people and our communities can locate themselves.

When KVIBE youth can locate themselves in the world, KKV believes that the youth can foster a “sense of dignity and belonging.” For example, Kuya Kevin attributes his own self-healing to Nakem pedagogy and hopes to instill the same growth in the youth who come into KVIBE:

Being a working-class boy with immigrant parents, going to public school, going into university spaces...even stats don’t even lie to you. If you’re a Filipino man, you’re part of the highest group of dropouts and the lowest group of Filipinos attending the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. Nakem pedagogy taught me to go against the stats. Mentorship through popular education helped me figure out structures to navigate the system, I believe. We believe there are many systems and ideologies but just following Nakem pedagogy, I was able to weave through that system.

Kuya Kevin attributes his navigating and graduating from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa to his Nakem pedagogy training. Though attaining higher education isn’t the goal of KVIBE’s practicing of Nakem pedagogy, Kuya Kevin and Kuya Jeff believe that Nakem

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<sup>48</sup> “Back to Our Roots-Catalyzing Community Action for Mental Health and Wellbeing.”

pedagogy can get them and others to “go against the stats” and to love and feel confident in themselves. For the KVIBE staff, this is healing, the key mission of KKV. To instill this kind of self-awareness and love for themselves and the places they call home, KVIBE emphasizes the importance of asking and answering Nakem Pedagogy’s critical questions within the culture circle: How does your body feel today? What is love to you? Can you tell me a time when you were angry? In my own observation, I believe these further questions prompt social biographies that nurture the relationship the staff and youth have with themselves as well as with each other. Moreover, the sharing of social biographies builds an atmosphere of trust which allows for the youth to practice what KVIBE repeatedly calls, “their authentic selves.” This is exemplified through the boys rushing to KVIBE on their bikes right afterschool to do a variety of activities with the staff together: they build bikes, play video games, watch movies and eat ramen together, cultivate food at Ho‘oulu ‘Aina and play and serve at the monthly community dinner. It is in these close friendships with one another that allowed the boys to feel comfortable in participating in the Pizza and Poetry Night that I discuss in the following chapter.

## Chapter Two: Home, Hope and Healing at Pizza and Poetry Night

In the previous section, I noted that KVIBE's practice of Nakem pedagogy with the youth and staff members creates an atmosphere of trust. This environment allowed everyone to feel connected to their and other social biographies and to ancestral and contemporary notions of home. With a strong foundation in Nakem pedagogy, youth and staff alike created all sorts of programming. For this reason, I conducted a focus group with the youth in order to gain a deeper understanding of their social biographies beyond the superficial knowledge they shared in daily culture circles (e.g. their names, homes, ancestors). In this chapter, I will talk about my experiences in co-organizing one such focus group. Along with KVIBE staff member Ate Grace, we facilitated the event "Pizza and Poetry Night" in April 2018 at the KVIBE facility. I intend to share the youth's definition of "home" as well as examine seven poems written by them. Moreover, I will elucidate on Kuya Kevin and Ate Grace's own poetry readings that emerged from feeling moved by the youth's energy and courage in reciting their social biographies. I will also describe the reactions participants had to their and others' poetry. I will then conclude with how KVIBE's Nakem pedagogy impacts the health and well-being of young men and its staff members.

With my tears of empathy, I will likewise reflect on how their stories impacted me. Throughout writing this chapter, I struggled with reading and analyzing the youth and staff's social biographies for two reasons: Specifically, I had trouble channeling my anger and frustration at the systemic oppression revealed in the boys' poetry. I also struggled in reflecting upon trauma and resistance as a young girl growing up in Kalihi. During my time at KVIBE, I learned quickly that guests who come into the space are not just "flies on the



wall,” observing the staff and youth from a distance. KVIBE staff members emphasized the importance for guests to join in the collective telling of our social biographies and to become immersed in their practicing of Nakem pedagogy. For this reason, I could not engage in the staff and youth’s social biographies without engaging with my own. Indeed, I was not able to get through writing this part of my thesis without working through my own social biography. As such, I will include vignettes of a poem I wrote while examining the stories of the youth and staff. In doing so, I show how my own healing process is inherently intertwined with Nakem pedagogy, the boys, Ate Grace (especially in regard to being a woman), the KVIBE community and the place called Kalihi.

#### *Ate Grace and Kuya Kevin’s Social Biographies*

In order to better understand Ate Grace and Kuya Kevin’s relationship to the boys, it is vital to understand their social biographies. Ate Grace is the daughter of two Haitian political refugees who supported former President Jean-Bertran Aristide’s denouncement against the previous dictatorship of President François "Papa Doc" Duvalier in the 1990s. At this time, those who were against “Duvalierism” were being persecuted, which led to Aristide supporters, including Ate Grace’s family, fleeing Haiti for the United States. As a two-year-old, she remembered getting on a small, rickety boat with her parents and seven siblings. They first headed toward a refugee camp in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and eventually migrated to Atlanta, Georgia. In Atlanta, both Ate Grace’s father and older brother died, leaving their family to cope with their deaths while at the same time navigating issues of racism, classism and xenophobia due to their refugee status. Although Ate Grace had a

difficult childhood, she stated that her family's Christian faith allowed her to remain resilient. During my time with KVIBE, I've heard Ate Grace empathize with the boys' immigrant stories in culture circles due to her own lived experiences. "I've lost men in my family. But because of KVIBE, God has blessed me with an abundance of brothers," she told me in multiple conversations.

Although Kuya Kevin is not from Kalihi, he reorients Kalihi to be on the "south side" of O'ahu, aligning the city with his hometown of Ewa Beach. He is able to deeply connect with the boys on two levels: (1) he comes from a working-class Filipino immigrant family, growing up in a two-story Navy townhouse with 20 people and (2) he's from another "hood" that faces similar struggles regarding socioeconomic status. At one community dinner, he gathered four barbers, "his boys" from Ewa Beach and Nānākuli, to give the KVIBE boys free fresh-fade haircuts that usually cost up to \$60. Kuya Kevin told folks at the community dinner gathering, "There's something about the South. There's a lot of pressure here that creates diamonds. We, those from Kalihi, Ewa Beach and Nānākuli are diamonds." The reason why Kuya Kevin goes out of his way to bring his networks into Kalihi is because he wants to give opportunities to the KVIBE boys that he was not able to receive as a child. "Dems, this is beautiful. Seeing all these people together. I didn't have this kind of support and mentorship growing up. Now, we've become resources to the community," Kuya Kevin said to me outside.

## **Planning the Pizza and Poetry Night Focus Group**

After spending two weeks at KVIBE, I had expressed to the KVIBE staff members one day that I wanted to conduct a focus group with the youth to gain a better understanding of their personal experiences and growth within KVIBE. Acknowledging that this focus group was in line with their own aims to conduct evaluations of their organization, Kuya Jeff and Kuya Kevin told me that I had to submit a proposal outlining the details for a focus group. I also learned that they had lost one of their grants the year before for failing to evaluate and measure KVIBE's success in promoting the health and wellbeing of the boys. Knowing that I could help KVIBE attain more funding, I pressed on.

In my original proposal to the KVIBE staff, I included a three-page list of questions I planned on asking the youth. While Kuya Jeff affirmed that my list was a "good starting point," he suggested that I come up with creative activities to engage the youth in sharing their social biographies with me. In retrospect, the questions I outlined were "too academic" and I needed to reframe the language for a youth audience. Therefore, I felt like this was very useful feedback, especially coming from staff members who were trained in popular education. Although I used popular education as a pedagogy in my classrooms at UCLA, collecting insight from popular educators working with youth assisted me in my own work with the KVIBE interns. After being given this advice, I spent that night and the next day thinking about what kind of activities I wanted to lead in the focus group space. Although I had jotted down some ideas from that night based on student activities I've facilitated in high school and at the University of Oregon, I felt very uneasy and self-conscious about my plans.

This lack of confidence stemmed from my fears of not being able to connect with the young boys because of my rare interaction with youth in university settings.

The following Thursday, I continued to plan for the focus group in the KVIBE office after confirming the date of the focus group for that upcoming Saturday. Kuya Jeff reminded me that the focus group would be conducted after regular working hours. As such, he told me to keep in mind the staff members' extra labor and time that would be devoted to the group. Anxious about organizing this focus group, I sat down on their couch, cross-legged with my eyebrows pointing down into my laptop keyboard. Ate Grace then walked to me and offered to help organize the focus group. I thanked her and let her know that I was grateful for her assistance. "We've been trying to do evaluations for a long time now, we just haven't done it yet because we've been so busy," Ate Grace told me as she sat next to me. "Thank you for getting the ball rolling on this."

On that day and the Friday after, Ate Grace and I spent time planning what came to be known as the "Pizza and Poetry Night" focus group. This event was held between the hours of 1pm-4pm on a Saturday. And since we were asking both staff members and youth to stay after KVIBE closing hours, I offered to buy pizzas for everyone. When the boys rolled into KVIBE afterschool, we approached each of them and told them to come to Pizza and Poetry Night, and to invite their friends. Originally, the goal of the focus group was to allow us to have a deeper understanding of the KVIBE youth's social biographies beyond their two-minute responses during their Nakem culture circles (e.g. stating their names, homes, ancestors, etc.). Though we had planned a couple of theatre-inspired games, the program evolved into a "I am from/Who I am..." poetry activity. With this new direction, we felt that

we could learn more about their social biographies. After collaborating with Ate Grace, we decided to center the poetry of the KVIBE youth.

In line with the overall mission of Kokua Kalihi Valley (KKV), we also aimed to evaluate how KVIBE’s mobilization of Nakem pedagogy allowed for the fulfillment of KKV’s Four Connections Framework. In past years, Kokua Kalihi Valley has worked with folks from the Islander Institute, a civic enterprise that fosters social, economic and political change in Hawai‘i. Together, they developed the Four Connections Framework, an “Indigenous Framework for Health.” When people talk about good health, they refer to feeling connected in one or more of these four ways: connection to place, connection to others, connection to past and present, and connection to your better self.<sup>49</sup> Following KVIBE’s relationship with KKV, Ate Grace and I developed activities that allowed the youth to discuss how KVIBE has impacted their views of themselves and others in Kalihi and elsewhere. We listened to their social biographies in their poetry, as well as determined how such activities positively impacted the health and wellbeing of the KVIBE youth.

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*Your sister line awakened.*

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<sup>49</sup> Kokua Kalihi Valley and Islander Institute, “Making Connections: An Indigenous Framework for Health,” October 2015, <http://seedsofnativehealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/ConnectionsFramework-FINALSKO-3.pdf>.

### **Kicking Off the Event: What Does “Home” Mean to You?**

On the day of the event, a total of 18 boys from Filipino, Chuukese, Marshallese and multiethnic backgrounds showed up. They ranged from eight to twenty years old. To hype the boys up for the Pizza and Poetry Night, I pulled two 15-year-old senior interns Kyle and Ace to the side and told them to begin today’s circle with the chants they learned at a “solidarity event” I had attended with them. I asked these interns not only because I saw them enjoy their time in leading the chants at the event. Rather, I noticed that they held a deep respect and care for the “kuyas” in the space. With this observation, I figured that these older boys in the KVIBE shop were the best models for hyping everyone in the room, especially the junior interns in the space.

At the beginning of the event, Ate Grace and I welcomed and thanked everyone for making it out to KVIBE’s first Pizza and Poetry Night. To kick-off the event, I told everyone that Kyle and Ace were going to open with the chants. Kyle led the first call and response chant:

Kyle: Who are we?  
Everyone: KVIBE!  
Kyle: What do we do?  
Everyone: Liberate!

Since not everyone participated in the solidarity event to learn the chant, the KVIBE youth took more rounds to rehearse it. In the middle of their rehearsal, I interjected, “Now say it with your fists up in the air! Take it away, Kyle!” Kyle, a lot louder this time, raised his fist in the air while leading the chant. The others followed with smiles appearing on their faces. After Kyle led a couple more rounds after that, Ace stepped in to lead the next chant: “Ain’t no power like the power of the youth ‘cuz the power of the youth don’t stop!” While

Ace led this call and response, he motioned everyone to huddle up, put our arms around each other and rock side to side. I looked up to see everyone giggling and smiling from ear to ear. Kuya Kevin, who was busy working on a bicycle with Kuyas Bo and Justin in another corner of the facility, walked over to the circle, took out his phone and recorded this moment. “That’s muh boys!” He said, cheering them on. Ate Grace then broke the circle by stepping into it with a new chant,

Grace: When I say K, you say VIBE! K—!

Everyone: —VIBE!

Grace: K—!

Everyone: —VIBE!

Ate Grace then gestured everyone to be seated after their bouts of chants. She also offered slices of pizzas to the boys. I then quickly jumped into the next activity where we displayed Webster’s Dictionary definition of the word ‘home’ on a PowerPoint Presentation screen: “The place where one lives permanently, especially as a member of a family or household.” I then asked everyone, “How do you define home?” Grace followed up by asking the boys, “Let’s break it down, what are some words that stick out to you?” They raised their hands and responded with the words, “family,” “household” and “permanent.” Then, she asked, “When you think of family, when you think of home, what is your definition? Why are those places home to you?”

Although the first question did not ask whether or not KVIBE was home to them, a common trend was to quickly define “home” as KVIBE. The next few statements demonstrate why KVIBE is home to many of the interns.

Home is where you’re welcomed. Where family is. For example, KVIBE. Every time I come to KVIBE, I feel like I belong here. If I come here

everyone says, 'Wassup, how you doing?' They really care for each other. That's what I think of home. - 15 years old

A place where you have a roof over your head, kuyas to look out for you, have them teach you how to grow up, what is purpose, what is life. Not everyone has a home. But they will eventually find one. - 15 years old

My definition of home is places where you can make memories. A place with love. Full of intention. Maybe one day I'll look back onto this place and say, 'this is the place that taught me how to be human.' KVIBE is the place that taught me to care for people I don't even know. One day, all of this will be a memory to me. This place will be my home forever. - 16 years old

In these statements, the boys defined home as KVIBE because it is a place where they felt a sense of belonging. For the boys, there is a sense a belonging within the KVIBE space because of the frequent acknowledgments and check-ins they receive from those they perceive as 'family' every time they walk into the space. In my own everyday observations, the boys always welcomed each other into the space with hugs or handshakes. This everyday check-in between the staff members and youth nurtured a space where they are 'loved' and 'supported.' Another important aspect to note, KVIBE is a place they call home because they learnt lessons that taught them how to care for others whether they're in your cultural group or not.

In the next statements, the boys trouble the mainstream Webster's Dictionary definition of 'home':

Permanent is false. We call KVIBE home as well. Wherever you feel welcome. Us people who feel welcome. We feel welcome here. Examples at KVIBE are hard to define. I feel welcome we do a lot of fun stuff, they treat me as a family. They treat me as a brother. They call me kuya. Kuya in Tagalog is 'older brother.' A place or anywhere where there's those loved ones or people that 'keep ya head up,' shout out to Tupac. Where when you feel down, they're always there to support you and when you're doing great



they're still there to support you. And when they're feeling down you're there for them as well. - 15 years old

My definition of home is where your heart truly wants to be. It could be a person, a.k.a. 'homie'. That's where the word "home" comes from. It could be a place. It could be Kalihi where your heart truly desires or where it wants to be. I call my house a 'house,' I don't call it a 'home' because I don't like being there. - 16 years old

In these statements, I imagine that the boys interpreted the Webster's Dictionary definition of the word home in the traditional, mainstream sense where 'home' is only designated as a physical place where one grows up with (usually blood-related) family. However, the first response refutes this definition of 'home' being permanent, especially when KVIBE feels like 'home' to him, a person who just started participating in the program two years ago. Moreover, he appreciated how the other staff members and youth referred to him as an "older brother." Just like the aforementioned statements, he determined that KVIBE has provided him a space to reciprocate love and support. With a nod to Black Hip-Hop Artist Tupac's music, he claimed that his community at KVIBE allowed everyone to "keep ya head up" through the good and bad times. By invoking Oakland-based Rapper Tupac's music to describe KVIBE's community-bonding and collectiveness, he inadvertently aligned KVIBE and himself with Blackness. In this particular song, Tupac addressed the intertwined racism, classism, sexism and misogyny against the Black community and encouraged them with the words, "keep ya head up." Although this boy of Chuukese descent did not identify racially as Black in the U.S. context, his "shout out" to Tupac suggests that many of the issues Tupac talked about resonated with his individual and community's experiences within Kalihi. Though their positionalities within the U.S. Empire differ, it is

important to note that this boy drew inspiration from Tupac's message as he relates it to KVIBE's support for one another.

The next statement took a creative spin on "home" by stating that "home" is the root word of "homie." This signifies that "home" and "people" are one in the same. That is, wherever his "homies" might be, that is where "home" is for him. Furthermore, by stating that "home is where your heart truly wants to be," he suggested that home is where people (homies) develop emotional attachments to places like Kalihi. He then said that he does not call his house, the physical place where he currently resides, a home. He simply told me that KVIBE is his home.

Through this activity, we found that KVIBE enables youth to have healthy connections to place, others and to themselves. Further, I noticed that Nakem pedagogy has created a space to become more intimate and vulnerable with each others' thoughts and emotions.

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*I want to hold my younger selves in my arms.  
I want to hold that girl who would leave home at midnight,  
run across Kalakaua Park to climb over the gates of St. Anthony Church,  
and cry at the feet of the Virgin Mary.*

*Holy Mary, Mother of God.  
The 10th grade girls keep calling me 'slut'  
Please make them stop.  
Please don't have them kick my ass.  
Please forgive them for what they do not know.*

*Forgive them for not knowing that he refused  
to take his hands off my body  
after I had said no.*

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**Poetry Time: Where I'm from/Who am I?**

The first time I did this poetry activity was back in my undergraduate years at the University of Oregon. Through “Where I’m from” poetry, I learned about my peers’ relationships to people and places as well as their personal experiences that inform who they are today. I felt that creative work was fitting for evaluating the goals of Nakem pedagogy and the Four Connections framework. Working with Ate Grace, we had the KVIBE boys recite poetry after they described their own notions of “home.” We gave the junior and senior interns 30-45 minutes to write their poems in their designated green notebooks. We told them that these poems are open-ended. They could reflect the struggles and triumphs they have gone through. Also, we prompted them to write about their emotions and/or places they have been to or haven’t been to. We asked them to think about the memories they had with others.

*Kuya Kevin’s Poem: Who Am I?*

But before the boys began writing, Kuya Kevin stepped back into the circle and told Ate Grace and me, “Before they start, I wanna share a poem I wrote.” Although we did not originally plan to have Kuya Kevin read his poem for the event, we opened the floor to him. He shared a “Who Am I?” piece he wrote for a college course he took at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. I noticed that after Kuya Kevin shared his, “Who Am I?” poem, many of the boys alternatively switched between “Who Am I?” and “Where I’m From” prompts within their own creative work. Kuya Kevin’s poem focused on his personal experiences on themes relating to the American Dream, manhood and imagining what freedom looks like:

As long as the ancestors within us are still struggling, we as a person cannot be truly happy. Three words: Who am I? I believe I am my father and every

one of my ancestors that came before me...People have said my father and I act one in the same. My fair share of how much of a 'junior' I am, but no 'Jr.' In my name. Who am I? My father said I could be anything I want to be, and it's up to me to turn my day dreams into reality. Hypothetically, is this what my father wanted to be? 'Cuz my grandpa led the same advice, so why the hypocrisy? I'm sure he didn't sign up to work a 40-hour job, feeding his 50-year-old bod, only to hit 60 in the next several months. Continue his 40-hour slavery until retirement, maximize his life's appreciation so his children can show appreciation.

I am first-generation American; my parents were immigrants. Everything I have now, my car, my education, is an asset derived from my parents' struggle. Our freedom and our equality is an asset of Malcolm X and MLK struggle. And yes, Dr. King, I too, have a dream, I have a goal. And that is to retire my parents because my dad didn't have that option. He taught me how to be the best part of me. No cash, but still I eat. No gas, but I perform on E. 'American dream' programmed me. But now, my passion burns like calories, not for the salary, but for my purpose in this thing called life.

In Kuya Kevin's poem, he talked about how he and his lineage of male ancestors, namely his father, are one in the same. Right from the beginning, Kuya Kevin informed us about his families' intergenerational struggles while grappling with his own. Although his father told him that he could freely live a life he truly wants to live, he questioned why his father did not have that opportunity. Instead, Kuya Kevin talked about how he was interpellated into the United States' capitalist economy, or what he described as "slavery." Though the concept of "slavery" in the U.S. context often refers to Black chattel slavery, Kuya Kevin did not frame his father's labor as such. In my conversations with Kuya Kevin, he described his father as overworked and underpaid in the United States' capitalist system, echoing the history of Filipino labor in Hawai'i. For this reason, he acknowledged the fruits of their labor, honors their working-class struggle and hoped to give back to his parents by relieving them of their financial burdens. In addition, he acknowledged Malcolm X and

Martin Luther King Jr., two prominent figures in the Black Power movement, as the trailblazers in paving the pathway towards a liberation rooted in equality, economic justice and civil rights. Though he highlighted his internalization of the ‘American dream’ in which one can achieve upward socioeconomic mobility through ‘pulling oneself from their bootstraps,’ he no longer aspired towards that goal in his own life. Instead, he hoped to live out a different kind of purpose.

Kuya Kevin continued reading:

Who am I? I haven’t come to conclusions. But all I have are options and my heart is always shopping for new identities that need adoption. ‘Cuz, I’ve been the outcast, I’ve been the drop[out], I’ve been the player, I’ve run from cops. But in this scene, they took away all the props. Here, I’m left with the question: Who am I? I did away with the notion of ‘living for the weekend.’ Because, all I looked at society and all I seen was ‘weak men.’ Getting up for Mondays, dying for Fridays, traveling on lease cars on the highways. And buy material things that all defines them. More than getting wasted under the neon lights and wake up on Saturday morning just to do it again. Funny, because I was looking at the mirror the whole time I wrote that. And then I break the box, gained knowledge on justice while being a real fuckin’ boss... Who am I? Since we all look different, our purposes can all be the same. I am someone, an individual. whose mostly confused and partially spiritual. Looking to answer this question. Praying the maker will respond. Hoping society will quiet down, so I can listen... Who am I?

In this part of his poem, Kuya Kevin walked us through the different identities he assumed so far in his lifetime. He informed the boys that he may not know his own identity now nor his exact life purpose at this moment. However, he told them what he was not. According to Kuya Kevin, he disassociated himself from the category of “weak men,” or those who invest and identify with the superficial material things in life (e.g. cars, partying, status etc.). For him, he abandoned a lifestyle in which he works just to attain luxurious items

or go clubbing after a hard week of working within the capitalist system. Instead, he “broke the box” of superficial manhood with his growing consciousness and heart for social justice. Although he did not go into depth on what it meant for him to be a “real fuckin’ boss” today, my conversations with him gave me the impression that “a boss” is a young man who cares, respects and fights for justice alongside people in the community. Instead of identifying with material markers of male success, he found wealth in community-building as a young man in his 20s. At the end of his piece, Kuya Kevin stated that he is still on a spiritual journey to find his own identity and purpose. In all, his creative work suggested an alternative future of social justice that exists outside of the false American dream narrative.

Because the younger boys viewed Kuya Kevin as a positive role model, they felt encouraged to write their own poetry. They appeared to appreciate his vulnerability in sharing his own thoughts and emotions through his “Who am I?” poem. I found Kuya Kevin to be a powerful role model given that society promotes a toxic masculinity that encourages boys and men to repress their emotions. At KVIBE, it is acknowledged that the repression of men’s emotions serve as a violence to themselves. In Kevin’s poem, he showed that it is alright to talk about familial pain and anger towards economic injustice and the facade of the American dream. Moreover, he demonstrated that manhood does not have to be rooted in superficial materials but can look like caring for justice and the well-being of others. As a result, I concluded that KVIBE’s Nakem pedagogy and its courageous leaders’ ability to become vulnerable and honest with their own personal social biographies creates a space where healing amongst young boys of color is possible.

### *Their Turn*

After Kuya Kevin's poetry reading, Ate Grace and I told the boys that it was their turn to write. Some chose to draft their poems inside the KVIBE office on the couches and others chose to sprawl their bodies across the concrete floor to write. Two of the boys chose to reflect outside on the benches next to the busy streets while one of them climbed up the staircase to begin his creative piece. After 30-45 minutes, Grace asked everyone to come back to the circle to share their poetry. She made a cross with masking tape on the concrete floor at the center of the communal space and signaled to everyone that the person sharing their poetry would be standing on top of it. This way, everyone would be able to give their full attention to the person sharing their piece. Grace proceeded to tell them that in poetry readings, we snap our fingers to encourage each other to read on. The first boys to read their poetry talked about the differences in how others might perceive them and their community versus how they see themselves:

I am from Chuuk where it is silent at night because of ghosts. I am from the place that they bombed. I am from where people are poor. I am from getting teased from being Chuukese. I am from where there is gangs, a place where there is a lot of fight... I am an immigrant. I am a person who loves my life. I am a person who loves my family and my friends. I am a person who got to be a junior intern at KVIBE by working hard and earning things I want to have and love to live because of all my homes. I am from where people love their life even though they are poor. – 10 years old.

I'm from people who respect each other. I see respect in my own way. It means to 'resee' each other. I'm from people who thinks some cultures are dumb. I'm from gangs that fight each other. They don't realize they're brothers. I'm from places where it rains and when it rains people play. When we play we see each other. Where am I? I am in a place that fix bikes. I am in

a place where people turn young leaders into better leaders. Where am I? I am at a place where people are being kuyas and being motivations to other people. People don't disrespect each other. – 11 years old.

According to these poems, these boys demonstrated how well-aware they are of the denigrative descriptors placed onto themselves in both Chuuk and Kalihi. As a sort of haunting, the first poet recalled the nuclear bomb tests that took place in Micronesia which began the exodus of migrants from this region to the United States, in particular Hawai'i. Now in Kalihi, the haunting still lingered as the boys encountered racism, gang violence and socioeconomic struggle. While they were cognizant of these narratives prescribed onto them, they pushed back against them with their own social biographies and reflections on how they saw themselves in the world. With an abundance framework, they talked about how they love and enjoy their lives because of their involvement with KVIBE. Through KVIBE, these boys honored their relationships with family, friends and “all [their] homes” even when dominant narratives tell them that they should hate or look down on them. Although described as a “poor people” in his city, the first poet discussed how they thrived in life because of the rich community bonds that kept them together. Another aspect that both poets commented on is KVIBE's impact on their lives as young leaders striving to become better people who “don't disrespect one another.” Overall, these first two poems showed how KVIBE has transformed them into leaders who became empowered by the connections they made with various people and places.

The next two poems illustrated their struggles with finances within the household among other impacts in their families:

I live in a big house that's pretty on the outside that lies on the inside. The inside is filled with anger, sadness and stress. Anger because we have to work



every day. Sadness because our bodies are sore. Stress because we can't pay off all of our debt. Where I'm from I was taught how to impress. And pray to be blessed. But that didn't really help me until I found this place called KVIBE. They taught me how to change my ways, how to be more responsible and not care about all the praise. – 15 years old.

Where I'm from, alcohol is an escape. An escape to feel safe. We fake that we safe cuz the world is insane. My mom still in pain. Where I'm from we can only day dream because we stuck in this mainstream of having picket fence day dreams. Where I'm from, home is just a memory, a place where my ancestors once lived. Where I'm from, money is the incentive. They say money is the root of all evil but where I'm from money is the root of all people. Where I'm from, it's hard to listen. Everyone is killin' and makin' a living. 'Where I'm from' is what they want me to say. 'Where I'm at' is what I'm trying to say. 'What I am? What am I?' I'm a brown Ilokano boy who is just trying to find his way back home. — 16 years old.

These two poets were of Filipino descent. The first poet led us into his life beyond the “pretty big house” that he and his family reside in. Usually, big houses denote wealth and happiness as it is one aspiration listed as part of achieving the “American Dream.” With his first sentence alone, he shattered this imagery of American success and recounted labor, body soreness and financial debt as the root causes of emotions that are hidden within the home. The author discussed how living his life behind the facade of achieving the American Dream “didn't really help” until he joined KVIBE. He stated firmly that KVIBE has been transformational in his life. In my other conversations with him, he had told me that KVIBE has taught him to be more responsible by recognizing how he must alleviate his family from these financial struggles that he has grown more aware of. In the second poem, the poet discussed issues that also exist in the household due to financial struggles and the search for the American Dream that never comes. He critiqued people's attachment to money by seeing it as the source of oppression experienced within his household and perhaps the greater

Kalihi community. Interestingly, he expressed his yearning for home back in Ilocos Norte, Philippines, where his “ancestors once lived.” Through this statement, he implied that ‘home’ in the Philippines may be a lot easier than the life he is currently living in Kalihi. While his poem did not show how KVIBE transformed his life, he credited KVIBE and the staff members for providing him knowledge to critique the “system of money.”

The next set of poems were written by two Chuukese boys. They express the lack of safety and security they felt before joining the KVIBE organization:

Just realized how messed up my life was... What am I? I’m a kid who just got his life back. I’m not lying its just a fact. Almost died once, not fun. Where I’m from, I’m from a hood that’s up to no good. There could be a gun fight or a scrap. I know it ain’t right but who’s gonna give a crap? Years went by, life feels kinda strange. Thinking about it I just wanted to change. Back then did drugs never really cared, had no one to hug, no one to talk to. Always hear those words. ‘F-You.’ looking at KVIBE, came thru...— 15 years old.

Where I’m from, I’m originally from a land of the oppressed. Came to Hawai‘i because they wanted what was best for me. I came to a land of racism and hate. I just hate the fact they choose me to beat up again not physically, but mentally. I came to a land where I had to be friends with people my own race. I came to the land that had no faith. I came to a land where I didn’t feel safe, even in my own house. I am from KVIBE where race doesn’t exist. Where we hang out with different colors. I am from KVIBE where they spread faith to the community which we call home, Kalihi. — 16 years old.

In the first poem, the author alluded to possibly losing his life due to the violence he has witnessed or encountered in Kalihi. As a child, he did not feel safe with the frequent fights that occurred in his neighborhood. He informed us of his access and consumption of drugs and how he engaged in this risky activity due to his feelings about others not caring for him or what happens around him. Although he expressed apathy, what is significant to note is that he wanted to change his ways— ways that do not refer to his childhood where he “had

no one to hug, no one to talk to.” When he mentioned how KVIBE “came thru” for him, he stopped mid-sentence. He then said, “Nah, never mind,” as he handed me the recorder and took his seat. He later said to everyone that he did not want to get “into his feelings” too much. Although he didn’t finish his poetry, his actions nevertheless demonstrated how much KVIBE meant emotionally for him. In my other interviews with him, he called KVIBE a place where he is surrounded by a supportive family. I assume that he feels safe and secure as a member of KVIBE.



Figure 2: Kuya Max prepared Nakem pedagogy boards right before culture circle, March 2017.

The second poet spoke to his experiences with racism in Hawai‘i. His family’s desire for “what’s best for him” in Hawai‘i probably stemmed from the COFA agreement between Chuuk and the United States ensuring better healthcare and education for Chuukese at home and the diaspora. Instead of being supported in Hawai‘i, however, he exposed Hawai‘i as the

“land of racism and hate” as people beat him up mentally. Being beaten up mentally speaks to the ignorant and derogatory statements about migrants from the islands of Micronesia in Hawai‘i. By speaking openly about this experience, he inadvertently challenged the dominant notion of Hawai‘i as a multicultural paradise or safehaven. This troubling of the multicultural melting pot in Hawai‘i brought forth the critical need to address the racism Chuukese youth face in Kalihi. Since he did not feel safe being around racists, he felt forced to befriend others who were part of his Chuukese community. At the same time, some people in his household did not make him feel safe or at home. The poet concluded his written piece by talking about his experiences as a member of KVIBE where “race doesn’t exist.” Though race is surely structured in our society, his statement denoted that “race” and more so “racism” did not exist within KVIBE, a space with people from “different colors” commune to “spread the faith.” Since he saw KVIBE as “spread[ing] the faith” to the Kalihi community, I presume that KVIBE provides refuge from racism.

Like Kevin, the KVIBE interns discussed their experiences, thoughts and lessons they learned on what it means to be a man in today’s society:

Who am I? I am the so called ‘struggle’ my parents/family see me. I wish they could just re-see me so I don’t have to carry all that pain and discouragement on top me. This was the little me. I got teased and compared to my father which my entire family hated, so I was also taught to hate him. I grew into something I thought I wanted to be, little did I know it was what they wanted me to be... — 16 years old.

Where I’m from, being Black is a crime, white people are prejudice, feed police lies. Had to act local just to be in disguise. I went through abuse, ran away, man I hate to see my momma cry. All that was ever wished on me was stupidity. Even now days that shit still gets to me, I tried to kill myself three times, no one missing me. I’ll just become another memory fading easily. Never could please anyone, that’s my mystery of why it was so hard and why

it gets to me. KVIBE is the only family I have, y'all don't know what y'all mean to me. If you understand my history. Where I'm from snakes all in my garden, dodges them cautiously. Where I'm from, we dream of white picket fences knowing that we won't make it there. So we imagined ourselves up in the hills where everyone cares. Where I'm from, everyone pretends they care, but if I was gone tomorrow nobody will be aware. Where I'm from, life is really fucked with nobody to love. It makes me want to disappear with my hand on a gun. I use to play gangster, those years were fun, but now it's time to be a man to learn how to live and love. — 16 years old.

In the first poem, the writer of Chuukese descent expressed the pressures he felt from family members who saw him as trouble as a child. He did not explain why his family hated and compared him to his father but highlighted how he also learned to hate his father, and perhaps in turn, hate himself. Although the poet did not offer an explanation as to why he was bothered through this comparison to his father, we can presume his ability to not be proud of his father had made a huge impact on his life. Moreover, his last statement emphasized how his family repressed the agency he had to determine his own identity and future. Through his kin's "teasing" and father/son comparison, they inadvertently participated in the emasculation of both the father and the poet. By making the poet feel less than respected or valuable, his family unconsciously participated in a kind of patriarchal violence exemplified by the author's learned hatred.

As a mixed-race Black and Samoan teenager, the second poet discussed his positionality within this colonial and patriarchal society, where his Blackness became subordinated and feminized against whiteness. In order to hide from this oppression, he turned to "local" identity for protection. In Hawai'i, being local connotes belonging and acceptance into the U.S. multicultural melting pot narrative where everyone gets along. Though the writer mentioned his local incognito, the next sentences revealed how people still

call him derogatory names like “stupid.” Like the previous poem, this author’s social biography urgently brought attention to the colonial violence that still persists in Hawai‘i. He then exposed the American dream, as represented by his phrasing of “white picket dreams,” as a pipe dream that will always be beyond his community’s reach. As with the other youth, he also highlighted the strong attachment he has to KVIBE. According to this writer, KVIBE is the only place where he finds family, comfort and meaning. Furthermore, his last sentence implied that KVIBE has taught him how to be a man that “learns how to live and love.”

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*I want to hold her and tell her that everything will be okay.  
In years to come and an ocean away, God will bless her with womxn  
who will know her stories,  
who will cry with her  
and heal with her.*

*She will learn to be gentle with herself.  
She will go back home to grow flowers at the feet of the womxn who are hurting.*

*Beginning with herself, and after, her mother.*

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*Ate Grace: “I am your Sister-Line...”*

By this time, many of the junior interns were sobbing loudly into their shirts through their staggered breathing. The older boys wrapped their arms around the junior interns as they wept. I saw the senior interns embrace of their younger counterparts as a sign of support for one another. Although Ate Grace did not have anything written, she stood up from her seat and told everyone that she was going to share a poem:

I am from where they tell you that the darker the skin is the uglier you are. I am from where they say that ‘poorness’ equates Black and Brown, that ‘stupidness’ is Samoan, is Chuukese, is Hatian, is Filipino. I am from where

boys grow into men and men die without knowing their cause. I am from where women have a calling, but they never answer the phone. Where boats are our only savior to ‘make it out.’ Where food stamps and Medicaid and public school and [federal] housing, they tell you, that is your glass ceiling. I am from where you wanna be more, you are always treated as less. I am from Kalihi. New immigrant on the block. I am Hatian. I am from people opening up their home to me. Where I look just like Kyle. I am from where Ace smile looks just like mine. Where Spencer’s sadness reflects my own. I am from where Kuya Max’s mind is where it claims to be. I am from where Joey’s sweet kindness always remind me of who I can better be. I am from a group of boys that are men. That are wise. That are hard. That are angry. That are sad. That are depressed. That are happy. That are extraordinary. That are rare. Diamonds in the rough. I am from where pressure burst pipes. I am from where pressure makes diamonds. I am from crying. That is the only way to express my healing. I am from where I see grown men crying, and I rejoice. I am from where words and letters can never express the fights my mom used to go through. I am from where I was ashamed, ‘You poor Hatian.’ Because your mom can’t read or write in English. I am from all of you. I am from your red eyes, your sniffing noses, your lifted heads, your high hopes, your big dreams your big smile. I am from your sister line. I am from your mother’s line. When I look at myself, I am from you and you are from me.

It is no wonder why Ate Grace was able to stand in the middle of our circle and recite her poetry with ease. For Ate Grace, she related to the boys because she knows the oppressive impacts of empires’ influence in her life and the lives of others in the KVIBE facility. I felt tears running down my face as she referred to the struggle of women of color in our communities. In other interviews, she told me that Atlanta was Kalihi to her and that she saw her stories and the KVIBE staff and youth’s stories as one in the same. Soon after, she pushed back on condescending knowledges imposed on their communities and acknowledged the many gifts KVIBE has to offer: their smiles, emotions, brilliance and kindness. Moreover, Ate Grace recognized how the boys’ ability to feel a range of emotions is what makes them “extraordinary” and “diamonds in the rough.” As their “sister line” and

“mothers’ line,” she informed the boys that she is part of their own families’ ancestry though she is not biologically related to them. In addition to the women in their lineage, Ate Grace told them that she is also their sister. She saw herself reflected in their “sniffing noses” and “high hopes.” Since she related to the boys on an intimate familial level, Ate Grace implied that they are her brothers and that she is there to support them.

Ever since this Pizza and Poetry night, Ate Grace shared that the atmosphere in KVIBE had transformed and that she felt the boys hugging her more tightly every time they walk through the doors of KVIBE. I observed that delving deeper into Nakem pedagogy through this activity allowed the boys to be more vulnerable and open with her. As another woman in the space, I realized this shift. One day, Ate Grace and I noticed that 10-year-old Marcus walked into the KVIBE office and laid on my lap while I sat on the couch. “It’s like he sees you as his mother or grandmother,” Ate Grace said. Because I bore witness as the boys’ “sister line,” I, too, began to heal.



### Chapter Three: Boys, Bikes and Resistance in the Settler Colonial City

“What we can offer is the kids come in, they exchange 12 hours of donation time, they help sweep up the shop, fix up bikes, and in return, they can go ahead and take home a bike. A bike that they made, that is personalized to them which they put their “sweat equity” into. From there, they’ll be riding these bikes and peddling these bikes to liberation.”

- Kevin Faller

“In Hawaiian, the word ‘va‘a’ means ‘canoe.’ For us at KVIBE, our bicycles are our urban canoes. We navigate them on the streets of Kalihi. They take us to school, home and KVIBE. On the count of three: Two claps, one stomp, say ‘va‘a!’”

- Daily Closing Culture Circle statement

Ever since 2005, KVIBE has mobilized around the bicycle to reach out to Kalihi youth and to give them a ‘safe space’ for them to connect with their love for fixing and riding bicycles. While their initial goal was to promote physical health for youth in the community, KVIBE has organically become a place to build community amongst one another as well as to provide them with mentors/role-models invested in paving positive pathways. In this chapter, I highlight the life lessons learned through bicycles at KVIBE by focusing on the interns’ everyday interactions with bikes at KVIBE, the Annual Kalihi Ahupua‘a Bike Ride and their Kalihi Bike Advocacy Initiative. In these three sites of study, I examine how KVIBE interns learn valuable life lessons such as leadership skills and taking care of the spaces they occupy. Furthermore, I intend to demonstrate how the boys’ involvement in the Kalihi Ahupua‘a Bike Ride and civic engagement in Kalihi allows them to appreciate Kalihi as a sacred Kanaka Maoli place. I also discuss how these case studies teaches them to assert their own opinions to better improve the urban built environment for themselves and the greater Kalihi community. Through this study, I explore Kuya Kevin’s epigraph on how

bicycles offer a sense of liberation for boys in Kalihi.

### **The KVIBE Interns and their Day-to-Day**

Though all youth are welcome to hang out and build their own bikes at KVIBE, a select few are granted the opportunity to become KVIBE junior (7-14 years old) and senior interns (15 years old and above). The internship lends them the opportunity to learn and perform basic bicycle restoration practices. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, junior interns partner with the more experienced senior interns in applying bicycle concepts and mechanical theories for the refurbishment of bikes. Although both interns aim to produce 15 refurbished bicycles per month, there are slight differences in their job responsibilities and expectations. According to the 2018 KVIBE Internship Application, junior interns are responsible for the everyday shop upkeep in addition to fixing bicycles. The obligations include wiping, cleaning and preparing bikes for sale at the non-profit organization Re-Use Hawai'i; participating in bike repair shops ; attending and participating in KVIBE events (e.g. monthly community dinner, movie nights, etc); hosting community member who donate bikes to KVIBE; organizing bicycle parts and tools and ensuring that tool bins are neat; keeping the shop clean and safe by sweeping floors, taking out trash and cleaning the restroom at the end of the day; answering the phone and checking voicemails; and being a role model at all times.

Even though many of these roles do not directly relate to the actual building of the bikes, they still serve a vital purpose. At KVIBE, they believe that their goal in restoring bicycles can be accomplished if the space is tidy and welcoming. Without a clean space to

work in, it is difficult for the interns and staff to produce bicycles in an efficient and timely manner. This brings me back to a memory of one culture circle where Kevin stressed the importance of having a clean KVIBE space. He said, “This place is our home. If you say you love this place so much, you need to do everything you can to take care of her.” With a glimmer in his eyes, one of the boys replied, “KVIBE is a girl?” Kevin responded with a smile, “Yes, she is,” followed by giggles from other boys in the circle. By loving and respecting a feminine figure, the interns learned what it means to take care of a place. In addition, they are taught to respect one another in the bike shop. Specifically, the staff expects all junior interns to “be available to the community.” According to KVIBE’s junior intern application, each person is “a mentor to everyone who steps into the shop. Carry this title with dignity and pride.” Bestowed with such a privileged title, the boys often express much honor as junior interns at KVIBE.



Figure 3: KVIBE interns showing peace signs and shakas to the camera after building their new bikes, 2016.

As for the senior interns, they are expected to perform the junior intern tasks as well as assemble bikes with precision; oversee the Re-Use Hawai‘i bicycle inventory; and be outstanding role-models for the junior interns and others who come into the KVIBE facility. Most importantly, senior interns are encouraged to strengthen their relationships with other community builders such as staff members at Kokua Kalihi Valley’s nature park Ho‘oulu ‘Aina and kitchen staff at Roots Cafe in the Wellness Center. In addition, senior interns are also asked to be more immersed in leadership building with the Civic Engagement and Popular Education (CECE) team, the co-part of KVIBE. In all, both junior and senior interns are tasked with responsibilities that sustain the maintenance of the KVIBE shop. Because of their contributions, KVIBE has been able to exist since 2005. What’s most interesting to me is KVIBE’s selection of KVIBE interns through an abundance framework, one that does not render the youth nor the community through a deficient lens, but one that hones in on their plentiful gifts. For example, through KVIBE’s abundance framework, interns are selected based on the notion that Kalihi youth are leaders in the community and that those who become interns have the opportunity to better harness their leadership skills.

#### *Thursday Intern Night*

In this next example, I would like to briefly focus on one Thursday Intern Night in April 2018 that I attended to better demonstrate how KVIBE train their interns on bike mechanics and restoration. On that evening, staff members Kuya Justin and Kuya Bo, organized an activity that allowed the junior interns to learn more about the various tools needed to repair bicycles. Also, Thursday Nights have always been designated for interns to

learn new bicycle mechanic skills. At the same time, many of the KVIBE interns usually leave early on Thursday nights if they become bored of the lessons. For this reason, Kuya Bo and Kuya Justin planned to make this lesson more entertaining so that they would stay. They recognized the necessity of creating a fun activity given that the boys spend countless hours in classrooms every day.

Kuya Bo, 25, a Haole KVIBE Americorp staff member from the Midwest, asked the junior interns who were wearing black/grey/white color schemed colors to grab their little green notebooks and meet him right outside the KVIBE shop. They made a circle and sat down on the gravel parking lot. They then listened to Kuya Bo and Kuya Justin, who is 20 years old, and a former Filipino youth intern with KVIBE. They both instructed the youth to number their notebooks from 1-10. Afterwards, they were given the following instructions: “Inside on the table, there are 10 tools labeled with numbers 1-10. Your job is to go inside and guess two things: the name of the tool and what does the tool do. No cheating. Be honest. Just try your best to answer what you think the name of the tool and what it does is.”

Afterward, the 10 junior interns went inside to look at the set of tools on the table, two by two. Each person took at least 5-8 minutes to finish their guesses. I saw them kneel down to get a closer look at each of the tools, touch them, probably trying to remember what they used each tool for in their group fixes with the senior interns and jot down in their notebooks their answers. While each person was waiting for his turn, the others ran out to the parking lot to play a Chuukese stick dance, a traditional dance usually done between two people where they both hold sticks and rhythmically hit the sticks against one another. Although KVIBE holds these sticks and encourages the boys to practice this tradition,

playing the stick dance at this time was not appropriate. As such, Kuya Bo and Kuya Justin called the boys back to the shop to have them finish up this activity. When the boys did not listen the first couple of times, Kuya Bo and Kuya Justin asked for them to return and participate. Kuya Kevin, who was hanging inside of the office space, then came out of the office to say, “If you can’t be dope, be regular. Stop being fake like you want to be here. If you can’t listen, try again tomorrow!” Soon after, the boys ran back into the KVIBE shop to continue doing the activity, giving their attention back to Kuya Bo and Kuya Justin. I saw this exchange as an example of how Kevin reminds the boys to be their “authentic selves,” a central expectation of KVIBE interns.

After everyone was done answering numbers 1-10, Kuya Justin and Kuya Bo rallied the youth into the KVIBE communal space to go over the answers. Kevin then collected their notebooks and graded them. While Kuya Kevin graded the notebooks one by one, Kuya Justin and Kuya Bo picked up and reviewed each tool and its function:

1. Adjacent wrench -used for any size bolts	6. Phillips Screwdriver - removes/installs screws/bolts
2. Chain breaker - removes/installs chain	7. Pliers -strips nuts, bolts and cables
3. Crank Puller -removes/installs crank	8. Tire lever -removes and installs tires
4. Flathead Screwdriver -removes/installs screws/bolts	9. Three Way Allan Key wrench - loosens/tightens nuts and bolts
5. Pedal Wrench -removes/installs pedals	10. Wrench - loosens/tightens nuts and bolts

After the staff members said the name/function of each tool, the junior interns repeated them. Then, the staff members spent a couple of rounds testing each junior intern’s knowledge of each tool. At the end of the workshop, Justin and Bo thanked the junior interns

for participating in the activity. Lastly, Kevin recognized three junior interns for having the most correct answers in their notebooks. Although it wasn't a competition, the recognition made them smile and acknowledged their efforts. Everyone clapped for themselves and congratulated everyone for having learned more about the tools that day.

While Tuesdays and Thursdays are meant for specific internship training, the KVIBE interns worked on bikes on days when the shop was open to the public: namely, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. After every culture circle, junior and senior interns then engaged 3-4 different bike stations spread throughout the KVIBE space. While working on bicycles, the interns would sing and bounce to trap music and talk about food and happenings at school in between giving instructions to one another. From my observations, a lot of the deeper conversations were held during the culture circles. Otherwise, the boys appeared more relaxed in their conversations with one another whenever they were refurbishing bikes.



Figure 4: Thursday Intern Night: Bike tools workshop, 2018.

Throughout the week, visitors also dropped off used bikes and bike parts to the KVIBE facility. Similarly, folks often emailed photos of their bikes to KVIBE and inquired about the possibility of giving their bikes. Others came in with their bikes and asked for repair, and in return, they donated money to KVIBE. Through selling their refurbished bikes at Re-Use Hawai'i as well as taking in donations from visitors, KVIBE self-sustained the workings of the shop. These community folks assist in the recycling and refurbishment of used bicycles as well as monetarily support KVIBE. In all, they contribute to the movement of teaching KVIBE youth valuable lessons in taking care of the places they call home, leadership and always performing to be the best versions of themselves.



### *On Building Your Own Bike and Fulfilling Responsibilities*

For many of the youth that enter the doors of KVIBE, they came in with the hopes of building their own bicycles. In this chapter's epigraph, Kevin stated that the boys donated 12 hours of their "sweat equity" in order to be eligible to build their own personalized bikes. KVIBE kept track of each boys' hours by having them check-in right after school as well as check-out when they are about to leave KVIBE. Aside from sweeping the shop, organizing parts and helping to refurbish bikes for Re-Use Hawai'i, the boys' participation in culture circle are also counted towards their 12 hours. For many of these boys, they came to KVIBE right after school every day because they loved being able to build bikes as well as achieve their goal to attain their own. When the boys completed their 12 hours of sweat equity, KVIBE staff members and senior and junior interns congratulated them for reaching their objective as well as help them assemble their own personalized bikes. The youth have the privilege in choosing from a variety of bike frames of different sizes, colors and styles, pedal brakes and wheels.

Before removing the bikes from the bike stands, they scrub the rust off handlebars and other parts. After the bikes are scrubbed down and parts are intact, the boys take them on test runs around the block. They ride their newly built bikes towards School Street, take a right and bike uphill into the residential area, back onto Kamehameha IV "Kam IV" and return to the KVIBE facility. At the closing culture circle, the younger boys then express their gratitude to their kuyas for helping them build their bikes.

For the youth, their bikes become sentimental to them especially since they know the amount of time and energy it takes to build bicycles. Moreover, the making of one's personalized bike is a team effort that encourages stronger relationships with one another. Since it took a family effort and one's own time and energy to build the bicycle, the boys felt even more inclined to take care of their bikes. This is exemplified through their coming into KVIBE to wipe down their bikes, pump their tires and ensure that their bicycles do not get stolen. When their bikes do get stolen, which is a rare occasion, it became a distress on the entire KVIBE community. For example, when one of the boys, Karl, did not see his bicycle parked at the bike rack outside of his middle school, he walked into the KVIBE space with his head down and shoulders slumped. When he told his kuyas about what had happened, four of the older interns comforted him and voluntarily walked around the middle school in search for his bicycle. When they returned with no news of the bicycle turning up in their sight, Ate Grace visited the Principal's office to ask if anyone had seen Karl's bike. Like the senior interns, Ate Grace did not locate the bike. Karl's unfortunate story demonstrated how a stolen or lost bicycle can impact an individual and the KVIBE community. Although his story was focused on his stolen bicycle, what is important to note is the kind of community interactions that occurs when one is experiencing pain or sadness. As the actions by the senior interns and Ate Grace revealed, the KVIBE staff and peers expressed empathy and concern for boys like Karl.

In another vein, the KVIBE staff members and the youth collectively celebrate those who frequently have shown progress in the work they've done as well as the maintenance of their bikes. For those who have put in extra dedication to work around the shop, the staff

members make it a point to acknowledge them in the workspace so that everyone knows. Sometimes, they come in the form of recognition certificates and hugs. Other times, they are rewarded with new backpacks or newly-ordered wheels. Take, for instance, the story of Lil' TJ. One day, Kuya Kevin asked, "We just got new bike lights! Who wants them?" Hearing this, Lil' TJ turned around with his long, light-brown curly hair swaying so quickly and said, "I do!" Kuya Kevin questioned, "Do you deserve this?" Standing at three feet tall, Lil' TJ looked up at Kuya Kevin who ranges around 5'6 and said, "Yes I do. I take care of my bike and I've kept my bike longer than the older boys." Kuya Kevin then rewarded him the bicycle lights soon after Lil' TJ's confident answer. By knowing what he deserves, Lil' TJ implored Kuya Kevin and everyone else who were listening to their exchange to recognize how responsible he has been with his bicycle. Being able to articulate what you know you deserve can be a difficult process for folks, even for adults. But eight-year-old Lil' TJ showed us that he was not afraid to say what he deserved due to knowing his positive track-record of taking care of his own bike. Because of his ability to defend his argument, he was rewarded new bike lights. Lil' TJ's story shows us that youth at KVIBE can learn life lessons in 1) making progress in whatever you do 2) asserting your ideas and 3) defending what you believe is right.

### **The Kalihi Ahupua'a Bike Ride**

The Kalihi Ahupua'a Bike Ride (KAR) is an educational bike ride that leads riders from mauka (mountain) to makai (ocean) in the ahupua'a of Kalihi. The eight-mile downhill ride highlights five "story stops" where riders can learn about the cultural and historical

significance of each place and its role in transforming the face of Kalihi.<sup>50</sup> Since 2017, the KAR has been designed and led by the youth of Kalihi Valley to uplift community spirit by offering the general public information on health resources, cultural and historical knowledge about Kalihi and instilling a sense of pride for those who call Kalihi home. This event has been a long-time dream of previous KVIBE coordinator Marcos Bendana. This program came into fruition through the work and imagination of Kuya Jeff, Kuya Kevin and Kuya Jordan, who worked with KVIBE as a previous Americorp VISTA staff member. As Nakem pedagogy practitioners who place value on social biographies of the land, they intentionally identified specific sites in Kalihi. For instance, the KAR focused mainly on Kanaka Maoli mo‘olelo (stories) of Kalihi. In this section, I will reference interviews I facilitated as well as discuss writers who participated in the first KAR in April 2017.<sup>51</sup>

The first KAR attracted 130 riders. They met at the first “story stop” which was at the top of Kalihi Valley at Ho‘oulu ‘Aina, Kokua Kalihi Valley’s 100 acre-park. At Ho‘oulu ‘Aina, staff members invited the people of Kalihi and beyond to malama ‘aina (care for the land). Such tasks included was not limited to breaking down cassava branches to grow more cassava plants, planting sugar cane and ‘awa, clearing out weeds around native plants and more. Grounded in Kanaka Maoli ways of knowing and being on Hawaiian lands, they wholeheartedly believed in the proverb: “If we don’t have healthy land, we can’t have healthy people.” Over the years, KVIBE followed this principle by developing a stronger

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<sup>50</sup> Radiant Cordero, “Summit - History and Resilience Experienced through Kalihi Ahupua‘a Bike Ride,” accessed April 19, 2018, <http://www.summitzine.com/posts/history-and-resilience-experienced-through-kalihi-ahupuaa-bike-ride/>.

relationship with Ho‘oulu ‘Aina. For instance, Kuya Kevin consistently brought KVICE youth every third Saturday of each month to Ho‘oulu ‘Aina to conduct community service. Kanaka Maoli Ho‘oulu ‘Aina staff member Kanoa O’Connor subsequently developed a closer relationship with the KVICE youth. In my last visit to Ho‘oulu ‘Aina with the KVICE staff and interns, I saw this closeness in action as I witnessed four of the boys latch onto his arms and legs as they walked over to their designated work station. It is this kind of closeness that enables an event like the KAR to blossom. This strong relationship led to Kanoa leading the first “story stop at Ho‘oulu ‘Aina for the 130 bicycle riders who were present.

They started the KAR by doing their “aloha circles,” which are similar to KVICE’s culture circles. When I interviewed Kanoa, he told me, “The kids become the best example of how to begin a circle, respect everyone and how to be proud of who you are, where you come from and who you come from.” Before the riders departed the nature park, riders joined hands as Kanoa shared some of the mo‘olelo of Kalihi:

Does anyone know what the word "Kalihi" means? It means "The Edge." Some people think that means Kalihi is the edge between town and country. There are a lot of ideas about what Kalihi means. But the real old-timers call this place by a different name. The really, really old name of this ahupua‘a, of this valley, is actually Kalihilihiolaumiha. And that translates to "the Eyelashes of Laumiha." And this valley was famous for gods and strong beings. And one of those beings was Laumiha and her name actually means "Intense-Silence." I recently came across this room that was constructed in Germany. The acoustics in this room are such that, if you go inside, it makes you uncomfortable because it’s so quiet in there that you can’t hear anything except your blood flowing through your body. I like to think that’s what Laumiha might mean: so intensely silent that it makes you feel uncomfortable.

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<sup>51</sup> “I Plan to Attend the Second KAR on July 14, 2018 to Better Reflect upon My Ethnographic Account of the Ride.,” n.d.

We like to share the old name of this valley because that way the name lives on. A lot of the old names for places in Hawai'i were almost lost. Kalihilihiolaumiha is the old name of this ahupua'a, and that's the ahupua'a that we're going to celebrate today as we do our bike ride together. This is a place that we call home, or a place that we work, or a place that we grew up, or a place that our grandparents or parents grew up. This is a place that means a lot to a lot of people.

See the ridgelines coming down into the valley and forming smaller valleys? Back in the old days, our kūpuna had names for all of these smaller valleys contained within the larger valley. For generations, the old timers called the land that we are standing on right now 'Ōuaua. If you break that down into smaller words, it's 'ō-ua-ua and, in Hawaiian, "ua" means "rain." So this place is called "o-rainy-rain," and if you guys come up here with any frequency, you know that it rains up here almost every day. So we're very grateful that 'Ōuaua is actually blessing us with a little sunshine right now to start our bike ride off. Taken together, the word 'ōuaua also means to have tough or thick skin, and so we like to say the people of old must have named this place 'Ōuaua because they had to have tough skin to deal with all the rain here without modern clothing like rain jackets. We also like to think that it speaks to greater Kalihi as well. A lot of people that come from here have that tough, thick skin; it's a calling card of the Kalihi people.

We like to share the names of these places so that we have a framework to start from here today. The land is the oldest member of our circle here. This bike ride is celebrating environmental sustainability, the beautiful community that we have here, and the land itself. A lot of times, the land gets forgotten. So we're very thankful that we actually have an opportunity to honor the land through this bike ride. The land is our foundation, and the stories you are going to be hearing are all connected to this valley and the beautiful community we have here.

At this story stop, Kanoa drew special attention to the Kanaka Maoli names of Kalihi's land and rain, as well as acknowledged the ancestral and present-day folks living of Kalihi. He highlighted the sacredness of Kalihi as he told the story of Laumiha, the goddess who presents both land and being in this place. In an interview I conducted with Kanoa, he

stated that silence is a form of reverence. During ceremonies that were performed at certain parts of the lunar calendar, Kanaka Maoli were expected to keep completely silent. Noises were kapu (forbidden) and not adhering to this kapu could mean losing your life. He stated, “Laumiha (Intense-Silence), has this connotation of being very, very sacred. Something that should be revered. She’s present in the spaces of silence, places that encourage quiet reflection—spaces that are uncomfortably quiet.”

He then explained the importance of naming and honoring the Kanaka Maoli. Kanoa also talked about how the land, or in this case the rain, has influenced the people of Kalihi. Due to high levels of rain in Kalihi or ‘Ōuaua, it is assumed that the Kanaka ancestors who lived there had to have thick/tough skin to withstand the rain. He referenced the present-day people of Kalihi as also having tough, thick skin.<sup>52</sup> In my interview with him, he clarified what he meant with this statement:

Kalihi, for a lot of our community, it’s the contact point. The frontline for a lot of our communities being pushed out of our Native lands because of colonization, where they can’t call the places they come from home anymore. Kalihi is that space of refuge for our community. I think that in a way Kalihi is a space that is inviting, a piece of land with open arms for all the refugees of colonization. That’s how I see it. We have the most public housing in state. Most of our brothers and sisters from the Pacific that are in the housing and the places that they’re coming from, their homelands, not gonna be similar to housing situations [in Kalihi]. In terms of colonization, Kalihi is a place where people can come and are coming. The first contact point. From that understanding, that’s where Ho‘oulu ‘Aina is coming from. We need a space more like home for all of our Native people. A space where they’re doing things they could be doing back home like farming or pulling weeds, accessing forest, reminds a lot of people of home.

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<sup>52</sup> Cordero, “Summit - History and Resilience Experienced through Kalihi Ahupua‘a Bike Ride.”

Although many of the residents in Kalihi today are not native to Hawai‘i, Kanoa recognized how their native identities connected to other places in the Pacific. According to Kanoa, the thick, tough skin of Kalihi residents stemmed from a large number of them being “refugees of colonization.” This empathetic perspective welcomed the KVIBE boys to live and be in Kalihi and to call the place home. Moreover, this viewpoint is reminiscent of my conversation with the Kanaka Maoli scholar Ty Kāwika Tengan. “It seems to me that the boys at KVIBE are not claiming Kalihi Valley. Rather, it’s about how the valley is claiming them,” expressed Professor Tengan. As “refugees of colonization,” Kalihi Valley and KVIBE can become indeed what Kanoa calls a ‘kipuka’ for the boys. Kanoa explained:

A kipuka is a little piece of forest that survives the lava flow that takes down the forest. It’s a little patch that ends up cheating the lava flow so it could grow again. All peoples of Kalihi are experiencing the lava flow of colonization right now. We can see the little patch of forest as humans, the little ones, overgrowing in the places that colonization destroyed. I think that’s why KVIBE is super important, it’s perfect for Pacific communities... It’s a sacred space. A place where people can go to feel safe and comfortable. It’s neutral ground in Kalihi, down the road from Kam IV and KPT. This place is valuable. It’s more about having the safe place more than it is bikes.

With KVIBE being part of Kalihi Valley, I understand how the valley becomes a kipuka for “refugees of colonization.” In Kanoa’s closing remarks at the first story stop, he also captured the significance of knowing these stories of Kalihi as the riders descended the summit of Kalihi Valley. From there, they flowed from the deep, wet and green hills to the drier and lower area of the Valley.

At the second stop, they arrived at the KVIBE facility where riders learned how the mural painted on the side of the building represents the weather patterns of Kalihi. 808 Urban Art Collective, a program that was initiated by Kalihi-based Kanaka Maoli graffiti artist John



“Prime” Hina almost a decade ago, and the people of KVIBE/Kalihi collaborated on this community-generated mural. Moreover, youth artists of the 808 Urban Art Collective also took part in painting the front mural of KVIBE that I had discussed in my introduction. Their murals share with riders the significance of urban arts rooted in Kanaka Maoli cultural education. The second story stop mural depicts Ua-Po‘o-lipilipi, or Ua-Ko‘i-lipilipi, the name for the rain that occurs in Kalihi, and Makani Haupe‘epe‘e o Kalihi, the hide-and-seek wind that flows throughout the Kalihi ahupua‘a. Both are portrayed in the mural through “the loud, blue droplets fronting the backdrop, which depicts a stream reminiscent of the popular Kalihi Ice Ponds.”<sup>53</sup> In my interview with Kanoa, he reflected on KVIBE’s presentation of the mural: “One of the Nakem boys actually explained the process in making these mural and what stories it represented. It’s awesome to hear these stories of space from the youth.”

After stopping by the KVIBE mural, the participants continue the ride with a turn onto School street and Gulick Avenue leading to Mokauea and Hau Streets. Radiant Cordero, a Kalihi resident and writer explained that this part of the ride took them through “...the smells of restaurants, mom and pop stores, older gentlemen smoking cigarettes on the sidewalks, sawdust, chemicals wafting from industrial warehouses and whiffs of spam or longganisa permeating through the screen doors of homes.”<sup>54</sup> They then made their next stop at Eki Cyclery on Dillingham in the Kalihi Kai neighborhood. This is a bustling part of the city where there is more noise with neighbors walking to and from their homes and a vibrant farmers’ market just a block away. Eki Cyclery is a family-owned business that has existed in

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<sup>53</sup> Cordero.

<sup>54</sup> Cordero.

the community for more than 100 years, offering Kalihi residents bicycles, independent of cars and mopeds.<sup>55</sup> KVIBE support Eki Cyclery for serving the community and for promoting healthier and safer transportation.<sup>56</sup>



Figure 5: The KVIBE interns at Ho‘oulu ‘Aina during the 2017 Ahupua‘a Bike Ride.

At the third story stop, two community members shared the mo‘olelo of Kapalama Canal which is located next to the City Square Shopping Center. Traditionally known as Niuhelewai or “coconut (going) in water,” this place sourced “freshwater springs, where wetland plants like kalo thrived with fresh water from both Niuhelewai and Kapalama streams.”<sup>57</sup> Moreover, the riders learned that the canal connected and drained the springs that

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<sup>55</sup> “In Past Years, Cars and Mopeds Have Caused Many Accidents and Deaths in the Community.,” n.d.

<sup>56</sup> Cordero, “Summit - History and Resilience Experienced through Kalihi Ahupua‘a Bike Ride.”

<sup>57</sup> Cordero.

led to the Pacific Ocean via Honolulu Harbor. Though the lo‘i kalo that thrived there was later reduced to one area now known as Lo‘i Kalo Park, non-profit organizing efforts have sought to restore this place and make it into a site for Hawaiian education. For the last story stop, riders rode makai to Sand Island where they talked about the place’s various uses during World War II, which included its use as an internment camp for Japanese American citizens.<sup>58</sup> The guides emphasized the importance of remembering both the mo‘olelo of this place as well as the histories impacted by the U.S. colonization of Hawaiian lands.<sup>59</sup>

For many of the youth who participated, they enjoyed being able to occupy Kamehameha IV road that’s right outside of where most of them live to bike freely down to the makai side of the Kalihi ahupua‘a. One of the boys stated, “It felt like we’re the Kings of Kalihi because the cops shut down the road for us and we had complete freedom to ride throughout the streets of Kalihi.” The youth appreciated being able to ride down with a large group of community members who came to the bike ride and took pride in their leadership in executing a safe and educational ride. I noticed that for many of the youth, they did not remember the exact stories told at each story stop. For example, one of the boys told me that he remembered the stories about people from Kalihi having tough skin because of the specific rain in Kalihi but he could not recall the Hawaiian name for the rain. At the same time, they remember the good feelings they had on the KAR as well as the sense of pride and awe of hearing those stories of abundance about their home in Kalihi. Another intern

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<sup>58</sup> Wendy L. Ng, *Japanese American Internment during World War II: A History and Reference Guide* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002).

<sup>59</sup> Cordero, “Summit - History and Resilience Experienced through Kalihi Ahupua‘a Bike Ride.”

expressed, “It helped me learn more and understand the history of Kalihi.” It is too soon to tell whether or not the KAR has been a formative experience in their lives. But after participating in one culture circle, one of the boys expressed his excitement in learning about the “ahupua‘a” in school. This informed me that the first KAR has engaged KVIBE youth with the physical and spiritual place of Kalihi. By organizing events like KAR every year that connects youth with their urban bikes to the land, there is so much potential in being able to cultivate aloha ‘aina (love for the land) in and responsibility for Kalihi. On their bikes, KVIBE boys can ride to many places all through the ahupua‘a and learn the Kanaka and urban landscapes of Kalihi.

### **The Kalihi Bike Advocacy Committee**

KVIBE’s organizing and participation in the Kalihi Ahupua‘a Bike Ride demonstrates its commitment to the youth and community members learn about the Kanaka Maoli place names all throughout the Kalihi ahupua‘a. While KVIBE strives to anchor themselves in Kanaka Maoli knowledges of Kalihi, they are also grappling with pragmatic issues within the city in regards to attaining better and safer streets in the community. In this section, I discuss KVIBE youth’s joint participation with The Hawai‘i Bicycle League (HBL) in civic engagement within the settler colonial city sphere. For KVIBE and HBL, they have had a long-term partnership that included organizing collective bike meets, participating in each others’ community dinners as well as other bike valet events. In more recent years, they have been discussing plans for creating new bike lanes and safer streets throughout the Kalihi

community.<sup>60</sup> After the success of both organizations working with policy-makers to repave Kamehameha IV road, Honolulu City and County law officials are asking the organizations to weigh in on the conversation regarding more “complete streets” in the city.<sup>61</sup>

The initiative for “complete streets” in Kalihi ensures that streets are safely shared and accessible to pedestrians, especially those with disabilities, bus users, cars and bike lanes. While HBL consists of adults, KVIBE mainly works with youth.<sup>62</sup> As the youngest group, KVIBE contributes their voices to this greater discussion that would impact the structure and culture of the Kalihi community. In fact, senior intern Dwayne, who became a part of KVIBE when he was 11 years old, has organized and successfully executed the transformation of Kamehameha IV road right outside of the KVIBE facility into a “complete streets” model. Even though a police station lies on Kamehameha IV road, which used to be a four-lane road, there were constant speeding issues, risking the safety of youth who attend schools and play in the district park within the area. As a result, the crosswalks for pedestrians were dangerous. Even with KVIBE’s doors open to the public since 2005, there were no safe places to bike on the streets. In 2012, the Complete Streets city ordinance was passed which had much support from HBL, KVIBE, Kokua Kalihi Valley, Kaewai Elementary, Dole Middle and the Kalihi Valley Neighborhood Board. The Caldwell administration then executed the plan to transform Kamehameha IV road from the two lanes

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<sup>60</sup> “Advocacy Resources,” Hawaii Bicycling League, accessed April 27, 2018, <https://www.hbl.org/advocacy/advocacy-resources-and-updates/>.

<sup>61</sup> “Complete Streets,” accessed April 19, 2018, <http://www.honolulu.gov/completestreets>.

<sup>62</sup> “Kalihi,” accessed April 27, 2018, <http://www.honolulu.gov/completestreets/kalihi>.

in each direction to a one lane in each direction, a center turn lane and bike lanes. Pertaining to bicycle lanes, the city implemented a “right sizing” approach to make room for cyclists, which have led to an average 29% reduction in injuries. According to the HBL website, the most common comment on the change is, “I can’t believe how much easier it is to cross the road now! People actually stop when you step out in the crosswalk!”<sup>63</sup> Due to this community advocacy success, the HBL and KVICE partnered to form the Kalihi Bike Advocacy Committee to fight for more complete streets in the neighborhood.



Figure 6: Advocacy for complete streets on Kamehameha IV road, 2016.

<sup>63</sup> “Kamehameha IV Rd Complete Streets Celebration 4/28,” Hawaii Bicycling League, April 21, 2016, <https://www.hbl.org/kalihicelebration/>.

One Tuesday night in April 2018, a HBL member came to the KVIBE facility to discuss with the boys action plans for the committee. He passed out a map of the Honolulu area lined with blue, green and red lines. The green lights represented routes that were already approved and repaved for the complete streets initiative. The HBL member noticed that Kam IV road was still in blue, which meant that the route was still pending approval. He told everyone that it is now coded green due to the efforts of Dwayne who sat across from him. Everyone clapped to acknowledge Dwayne's efforts. Dwayne then explained the process he went through to attain complete streets for the Kam IV road. After Dwayne finished his last thought, the HBL representative interjected and asked the group, "So now we're looking to see where we want more complete streets running through Kalihi. What do you all think?"

One of the boys quickly responded with his own experiences bicycling on Gulick Avenue. When he rides his bike on that road, many of the people driving cars beep at him and yell at him to get off the road. He explained that even when Gulick Avenue has enough room to share with bicyclists, most of the time cars do not like sharing roads. For this reason, he did not feel safe bicycling home and anywhere near the streets leading towards Saint Anthony Church, the O'ahu Community Correctional Center and the H1 freeway. Many of the boys nodded in agreement and voiced their own experiences. For example, another senior intern told everyone that School street, which lies in front of KVIBE, as well as North King Street, should be repaved for students walking to the middle schools and high school. By repaving these roads, the intern imagined a more seamless transport for students going to the

high school, especially those who want to ride bicycles to school. Another KVIBE youth proposed a repavement plan for the complete streets initiative on Dillingham Boulevard by not only allowing more folks to ride bikes in the busiest area of Kalihi. He also wanted to honor Eki Cyclery, the neighborhood's bike shop. Another senior intern agreed about repaving Dillingham Boulevard, especially when KVIBE can better highlight the Honolulu Community College's Hawaiian Studies program right across from the Kapalama Canal during the next KAR.

While listening to the youth converse with the HBL representative, I couldn't help but recognize how rich the boys' "street knowledge" was. Their affirmations of each others' ideas suggested that they know the community streets on an intimate level as bicyclists who frequent the landscapes of Kalihi. This is notable because by looking at my own experience driving a car down these streets, I don't really realize the kinds of risks that happens with folks who do not drive to get to their desired destinations. This told me that the boys' access to bicycles allowed them the ability to travel wherever they wanted to go and offered me another way to view their perspectives of Kalihi. With bicycling, they are able to see the struggles bicyclists have with other cars and buses. They are able to connect more vividly with pedestrians crossing the streets. This kind of bicycling culture and viewpoint of Kalihi allows us to see that bikes aren't only a way to get folks out of cars to exercise. More vitally, bikes can link riders with the community on a more grounded level. Thus, it is fitting for KVIBE boys to be central advocates for this movement for more complete streets in the ahupua'a of Kalihi. In the closing circle, many of the boys expressed the ways that their bodies were feeling: Liberated. Excited. Optimistic. Hopeful. Invigorating. Very Excited.



Blessed. Community Health. Empowering. Their emotions implied that they appreciated and valued having their voices heard. While Justice felt great being “part of the change to make streets safer for himself on the road and others,” Austin felt “as if he was making the world a better place.” Further, these feelings point towards a hopeful future for Kalihi as they become more involved with advocating for urban infrastructure necessary to ensure the health and safety for people in their city.

## Conclusion: On KVIBE's Decolonial Wheels of Liberation

In this thesis, I began with the overlapping stories and histories of Kalihi as a Kanaka Maoli, immigrant and U.S. settler colonial place. I then discussed KVIBE's mobilization of Nakem pedagogy as a necessary tool in healing young boys of color, both from native and immigrant families. This was made evident in the Pizza and Poetry Night I co-organized with Ate Grace. I then talked about these boys' engagement with their bicycles as they anchor themselves in Kanaka Maoli mo'olelo and knowledges of Kalihi while grappling with the pragmatic issues that exist within the settler city. For these reasons, I argue that KVIBE seeks to decolonize Kalihi byway of Kanaka Maoli epistemologies, Nakem pedagogies, and youth experiences.

As a result of the westernization and colonization of native relationships to place in the Pacific, Kalihi can be read as a place of fracture. Although U.S. imperialism in Hawai'i, Chuuk, the Philippines and other parts of the Pacific looks different in each place, the through-line that connects these peoples and places is their general disorientation from their ancestors, bodies, cosmologies, identities, lands and worldviews. As a result, KVIBE and the larger organization of KKV sees the vitality of healing for the people of Kalihi. Just as much as Kalihi is a place that holds stories of fracture, it is also a place that carries stories of abundance and what is pono. Just as Haumea spoke into existence what is pono in Kalihi, the KVIBE and KKV staff and youth also discuss this matter. Like Haumea and Wakea, they, too, see Kalihi, as a home and a place of community wealth.

In the beginning of this thesis, I talked about the ways U.S. empire has made people who reside in Kalihi feel undesirable and unimportant. For this reason, decolonial love and

attention for the KVIBE boys byways of Kanaka Maoli epistemologies and Nakem pedagogies are vital. Together, they allow the youth to understand who they are, their deep relationships to others all while understanding their positionality on Kanaka Maoli land. As exemplified through this study, the youth demonstrate how KVIBE has positively contributed to their overall health. When they are able to heal themselves, they are able to love themselves, share their gifts as well as recognize injustice and assert pono in the world.

A new direction that I found interesting during my time at KVIBE was how the organization was not exclusive of girls. In fact, that is the exact opposite of what I saw happen during my time back home. There are some girls who trickle into the facility to build bikes, partake in culture circle and hang out with Ate Grace. I noticed that my presence also attracted more girls to the space as well. Perhaps this is a testament to what Kuya Kevin mentioned to me in an interview, “I believe you do popular education wherever the popular experiences are. KVIBE is where the experiences are at.” I contend that popular education routed through Nakem pedagogy summons similar social biographies from girls and women in the space. Through more story-sharing between intergenerational women, more girls feel comfortable with coming to KVIBE. Kuya Jeff further explained the beauty of Nakem pedagogy, “Our pedagogy does not cater to anyone. The pedagogy brings out experiences and people resonate with them.” In all, it is the Nakem, the soul, that perhaps bring more girls into the space.

This resonance with the soul is best exemplified through Ate Grace’s organizing a woman of Kalihi group called “Visions of Women with Abundance.” Ate Grace and I talked about the importance of having another space to commune to go deeper into women’s Nakem

stories. Because of KKV's strong foundation of holistic healing, KKV would be a place for community healing around issues on different gender identities and sexualities (e.g. non-binary, bakla, mahu, etc.). Although it may be true that girls are more often times pipelined into higher education more than their male counterparts, there is value in having a space to discuss girls' unique intertwined struggles with racism, misogyny, colonial patriarchy and sexism in today's settler colonial society. For example, when girls do enter the KVIBE facility, they have opened up to me individually about their insecurities with their dark skin or revealed to me that they're not able to go outside often because their fathers informed them that they are "too young." In chapter two, I offer my own social biography that I presume could resonate with other girls of color living in Kalihi. In my own story, I used education as a vehicle to escape the colonial patriarchy and sexual violence I encountered growing up. For these reasons, I believe that the creation of an inclusive space within KVIBE and/or another sibling space for girls to engage in decolonial love and healing work is significant.

At the same time, I also learned that funding may be an important factor in executing more of these spaces. How do other organizations within the non-profit industrial complex accomplish healing byway gender and sexuality? How is it possible to address these problems while being sustainable within the non-profit world? From what I've observed, many of the staff members love working with the youth and will dedicate hours to them. At the same time, they can potentially burn themselves out while being significantly underpaid.

As a popular educator, Kuya Kevin had told me that the work at KVIBE is not complete. After two years of incorporating Nakem pedagogy into the program, he believes

that it is time to discuss further action. Kuya Kevin references Paulo Freire's belief that popular education is not complete without a direct-action movement that comes from the working-class. While they have the capaciousness to organize around a variety of different issues, I would like to highlight the common themes I've observed throughout my time researching and talking to different people throughout this project. Overall, each person I've spoken with, both Kanaka Maoli and immigrant, have strong critiques of capitalism and its detrimental impact on the people of Kalihi. Moreover, I also noticed that all people, including the youth, refute the idea of the American dream in Hawai'i. Because of KVIBE's investment in the decolonial project, a dialogue on how its alignment with the U.S. repatriation of Hawaiian lands to Kanaka Maoli would be most productive. Chuukese KVIBE staff member Kuya Max told me an elder's thoughts on the aforementioned concept and islander solidarity with Kanaka Maoli, "When we got here to Hawai'i, all we saw were American dollars. We became American and we strived for the American dream. All we see are American dollars, buildings, structures, etc. [The elder] says that we need to meet other islanders not as Americans, but as islanders. Islander to islander." Further discussions on this topic would be interesting to have with other KVIBE staff members and youth.

Overall, this master's thesis exploration of Nakem pedagogy demonstrated the ways how, as Professor Ty Kāwika Tegan puts it, the Kalihi ahupua'a has claimed the boys. Kalihi is a refuge, a kipuka, for all people. It is where people resisting the traumas of U.S. imperialism in the Pacific to the settler colonial city can also find rest and security at the decolonial heart of Kalihi. In bearing witness to the KVIBE youth's own healing through stories rooted in their names, homes and ancestors, I, too, participate in my own healing. The

Kalihi ahupua‘a has also claimed me as well. It is through the constant sharing of our social biographies that I am hopeful for an alternative indigenous future we can collectively create together. And like Haumea, we can use our social biographies, to strike the feet of what is not pono in Kalihi. What follows is the trembling of the settler colonial city. And after, the creation of inroads and news roads on KVIBE’s decolonial wheels of liberation.

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