



HĀNA ▲ EAST & UPCOUNTRY MAUI ▲ MOLOKA'I ▲ LĀNA'I ▲ KAHO'OLAWÉ

LEGACY OF KALAUPAPA HONORED

Val Monson contributed to this article

On April 11, the Hawai'i State Senate took an important stand when it adopted Senate Concurrent Resolution 208. **SCR 208** acknowledges the sacrifice of the people of Kalaupapa and apologizes for the harsh restrictions which separated people with leprosy from the general public.

The resolution recognizes the approximately 8,000 people sent to Kalaupapa between 1866 and 1969, who left behind all that was dear to them to be isolated on the remote Moloka'i peninsula. These people willingly relocated to Kalaupapa because they were led to believe they were a threat to public health. In other words, the people of Kalaupapa cared more about their fellow Hawai'i residents than they did about themselves.

The seeds for such a resolution were planted 30 years ago when Paul Harada, a respected leader of the Kalaupapa community, testified before the Hawai'i State Legislature about the need to save Hale Mohalu, which was established in 1949 as an alternative to Kalaupapa and a place where residents could stay when medical treatment was only available on O'ahu. Despite the protests of the Kalaupapa residents and their supporters, Hale Mohalu was eventually closed.

At that Legislative meeting, Mr. Harada said that while people of Kalaupapa have often thanked the State of Hawai'i for providing care, the State and people of Hawai'i have never thanked the people of Kalaupapa for all that they had sacrificed.

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Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa Gathering at their 2007 annual meeting.

- Photo courtesy Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa.

For more information visit: <http://www.kalaupapaohana.org>

A MESSAGE FROM KALANI

Despite the best efforts of law-makers, government officials and community leaders, our laws sometimes reflect the human weaknesses of the population, and fall well short of infallibility. While we all strive to represent our constituents and communities in a way that furthers our mutual best interests, occasions arise where our efforts present challenges.

Such is the case of Kalaupapa, an isolated strip of land on the coast of Moloka'i. Sitting at the base of one of the world's greatest sea cliffs, this world-famous community of isolation for Hansen's Disease patients has grown into a symbol of personal sacrifice and government error.

Between 1866 and 1969, Hawai'i law required that those diagnosed with Hansen's Disease relocate to Kalaupapa, and later Hale Mohalu on O'ahu. In repeated acts of tremendous sacrifice, patients went willingly, standing apart from their families and communities because it was believed to be the only way to stop the spread of the affliction. Today, the patients' submittal to quarantine is an unimaginable act of humility and heroism.

The story of Kalaupapa shifts to one of tragedy in 1948, when an effective treatment for Hansen's Disease was developed. Although

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(from left) Pauline Hess, Senator J. Kalani English, (Board Member of Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa), Ivy Kahilihiwa, Boogie Kahilihiwa and Piolani Motta greet visitors to Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa's booth at the 6th Annual **Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement** Convention in 2007.

The International Association for Integration, Dignity and Economic Advancement (**IDEA**), operates as an international network of support that seeks to end the social isolation that is often associated with Hansen's Disease. IDEA leadership is primarily made up of individuals who have themselves personally faced the challenges of Hansen's Disease in many parts of the world. To learn more, please visit: <http://www.idealeprosydignity.org/>



Paul Harada, enjoying a happy moment at his home in Kalaupapa. photo - Valerie Monson

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 208

RECOGNIZING AND ACKNOWLEDGING THE PEOPLE OF KALAUPAPA AND THEIR FAMILIES FOR THEIR SACRIFICES, AND APOLOGIZING TO THE PEOPLE OF KALAUPAPA AND THEIR FAMILIES FOR ANY HARSH RESTRICTIONS THAT CAUSED THEM UNDUE PAIN AS THE RESULT OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES SURROUNDING LEPROSY.

WHEREAS, from 1866 to 1969, an estimated 8,000 citizens of Hawai'i were forced to leave their families and to be isolated, most often on the Kalaupapa peninsula, because of society's fear of leprosy (also known as Hansen's disease); and

WHEREAS, these individuals were mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters who were separated at all ages, from very young to very old; and

WHEREAS, for many of these residents, the separation was permanent, yet, because they felt they were protecting the general public from a disease that was not curable until the 1940s, most people diagnosed with leprosy willingly made this greatest of sacrifices; and

WHEREAS, these sacrifices were made because these heroic individuals did not want anyone else to experience this disease, which was not only physically painful, but also emotionally difficult to bear; and

WHEREAS, despite being exiled by their own government and suffering great deprivations and injustices throughout much of their lives, the people of Kalaupapa have been remarkably resilient and have responded to their situations with kindness, generosity, and forgiveness rather than anger, bitterness, and despair; and

WHEREAS, the families of those sent to Kalaupapa also suffered unimaginable pain; and

WHEREAS, fathers and mothers were forced to take their unsuspecting children diagnosed with leprosy to a designated facility and leave them there, resulting in farewells of agony and sorrow; and

WHEREAS, those same parents would later watch from the docks as their children were loaded onto the ships destined for Kalaupapa, possibly the last time they would see one another; and

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 208

WHEREAS, children born to the people of Kalaupapa were immediately taken away at birth and grew up with other relatives or in orphanages, and, if they were fortunate, would eventually get to know their parents, but not until they were nearly adults or older; and

WHEREAS, relationships between parents and children could be difficult to establish and maintain because of the forced separation; and

WHEREAS, the Kalaupapa residents and their families have mostly accepted their circumstances throughout the years and put their lives back together as best they could; and

WHEREAS, the government has maintained Kalaupapa for the last remaining residents as long as they choose to remain there, and provides for their medical, food, and housing needs; and

WHEREAS, there has never been an official acknowledgement to the people of Kalaupapa for all that they did and the exemplary manner in how they have lived their lives; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Twenty-fourth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2008, the House of Representatives concurring, that the Legislature recognizes, acknowledges, and expresses gratitude to the people of Kalaupapa and their families for their sacrifices, for thinking more of the public than of themselves, for giving up freedoms and opportunities the rest of society takes for granted, for rebuilding their lives with pride and dignity, for overcoming prejudice and discrimination, and for consistently reaching out to others in need; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that while with the adoption of this measure, the Legislature does not confer any legal cause of action or any legal rights, remedies, relief, restitution, or reparations on any person, it nonetheless apologizes for the past actions against, and treatment of, past and current residents of Kalaupapa; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this overdue action be issued with the utmost respect and admiration for those remaining Kalaupapa residents, the descendants of those who have died and family members who all have endured separation from loved ones and the anguish that came with it, with the hope that if any quarantine or isolation is necessary in the future to protect public health and safety, it will be used only with appropriate safeguards to protect every individual's dignity and rights; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to all the residents of Kalaupapa, Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa, the Governor, the Director of Health, and the Superintendent of Kalaupapa National Historical Park.

A MESSAGE FROM KALANI

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isolation was no longer medically necessary, it remained a matter of law for over two decades; mandatory relocation remained on the books until 1969.

Sacrifice, separation, and official inattention combine in a history that demands action. The best and least of human behavior call for an acknowledgement and an apology.

The Hawai'i State Legislature has passed Senate Concurrent Resolution 208, which offers both an acknowledgement of the sacrifice of Kalaupapa's residents, and an apology for the government's action. As you read in these pages about the history of Kalaupapa and the importance of the resolution, I hope you will keep in mind that while we strive to be perfect, there is greater value still in recognizing our mistakes, acknowledging our fallibility, and rectifying our errors.

Apologies in the law are unusual. Native Hawaiians who saw their government overthrown, and Japanese-Americans interned during World War Two have benefited from acknowledgements of past wrongs. I hope that the passage of SCR 208 will have a similar effect on our community, celebrating the heroism of Kalaupapa, and our government's willingness to help the healing process.



APRIL 30, 2008

VOLUME 8 ▲ ISSUE 5 ▲ PG. 3



Mr. Harada continued to share those thoughts until his death on January 4, 2008. Last December, Mr. Harada's younger brother Glenn, a member of the Board of Directors of Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa, a nonprofit organization consisting of those with an interest in the community, suggested asking the State Legislature to adopt a resolution that would acknowledge the Kalaupapa residents. "For over one hundred years, the people of Kalaupapa agreed to stand apart because they believed that by doing so they were serving their families and their communities," said Senator J. Kalani English, whose district includes Kalaupapa. "They are not victims, but heroes. We should be willing to acknowledge their selflessness, and recognize their sacrifice."

In memory of Paul Harada and the many other Kalaupapa residents who have passed away, and in honor of the remaining 28 Kalaupapa residents, the 'Ohana decided to carry on with plans for the resolution.

Sen. English quickly offered to introduce the resolution stating, "The people of Kalaupapa deserve to be recognized for all that they have been through. I am humbled by the enormity of their sacrifice, and proud to have played a part in seeing this resolution finally passed."

A community meeting was held at Kalaupapa in early February to review a draft resolution. Tears flowed as the resolution was read aloud, triggering memories of separation and discrimination that the years had not faded. Some at the meeting felt that an apology was due them and those who had experienced even greater hardships and injustices. After the meeting, others in the community said they felt the resolution would not be meaningful without an apology.

A revised resolution, including an apology for pain caused by the policies of past governments, was introduced by Senator English and heard by the Senate Committees on Health and the Judiciary. The 'Ohana, the State Department of Health, the Governor's Policy Committee, and Attorney General Mark Bennett all reviewed the final version of the resolution that was adopted by the Senate on April 11th and the House on April 25th.

◀ *St. Philomena Church beneath the cliffs of Moloka'i. There are an estimated 2,000 unmarked graves in this area. These individuals are among those honored by the Kalaupapa Resolution. Presently, there is an effort underway to restore 90 headstones and 1,300 grave markers at the Kalaupapa National Historic Park.*
photo - Valerie Monson

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