



“The Calling Voice”

Ka Leo Kāhea

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Official Publication of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii

“A New Community Will Sprout and Thrive Once Again”

BISHOP'S CORNER



By **REV. TOSHIYUKI UMITANI**
BISHOP, HONPA HONGWANJI
MISSION OF HAWAII

Editor's note: Bishop Umitani delivered this message at the Maui Wildfires Memorial Service on Sunday, September 24, 2023, at Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin. The service was presented by the Hawaii Honpa Hongwanji Ministers Association and the Maui Ministers Association. All donations made at the service went to the Maui Wildfires Disaster Relief Fund, organized by Honpa Hong-

wanji Mission of Hawaii (HHMH) to support Lahaina Hongwanji and relief efforts on Maui. Watch the Maui Wildfires Memorial Service on the HHMH YouTube channel at <https://youtu.be/clyxKab2un0>

First and foremost, on behalf of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, I would like to express my sincere condolences to the families and friends of those who passed away and also express my sympathy and concerns to those whose lives are deeply impacted by the Maui Wildfires. This is a moment of profound sadness and loss, and it is a time when we come together as a community to find strength in each other and offer our love and support to those on Maui.

The fire that broke out on August 8, 2023, devastated the town of Lahaina. The beach town of Lahaina in western Maui was once the capital of the Hawaiian Kingdom. With its blend of cultural heritage and natural beauty, this historic town attracted many kamaainas

and tourists. It was a town where many churches and temples of different religious traditions co-existed in mutual respect and harmony. The town was always filled with laughter, music from the stores and restaurants, birds chirping, and families and friends spending their peaceful time together.

Such a beautiful town of Lahaina has been destroyed, nothing left but ashes. Ninety-seven people were confirmed to have perished, and more than 2,000 buildings and houses have been damaged or destroyed. Many people lost their loved ones, their homes, and their belongings.

Lahaina Hongwanji Mission, located in the center of the town, was not spared the destruction by the fire. The history of the Lahaina Hongwanji Mission began in 1904. Since then, the light of the Nembutsu teaching has been successfully passed down through the dedication, sacrifices, and contributions of the successive resident ministers, their families, temple members, and many

people in the community. Lahaina Hongwanji Mission, along with other churches and temples, was the place of refuge for the people living in the area. The temple welcomed all people equally and was filled with the sound of the Nembutsu reverberating in the Hondo on Sundays. I can only imagine the depth of regret and sadness of those who have protected the temple.

Two weeks after the disaster, I visited Maui. My Dharma-friend, Rev. Hironaka, drove me to Lahaina. From a hill overlooking the town, we both looked down on the town of Lahaina. I couldn't help but be stunned by the desolate scenery, which was completely different from before. No words came out. I thought of those who lost their lives, their homes, and what they cherished, and those who desperately escaped the fire. The two of us put our hands together in gassho in the direction of the Lahaina Hongwanji Mission and recited “Namo Amida Butsu.”

What we have lost is too

great. In every corner of the devastated area, there were people's lives, belongings, and memories. They will never come back. People wanted to protect them, but there was nothing they could do. They had no choice but to run away.

When I looked next to me, I saw my friend crying silently. He put his hands on the fence, squeezed his hands tightly, and shed tears as he looked down. I couldn't do anything for my friend but to put my hand on his shoulder. Since then, I have been thinking of the meaning of his tears. It must have been tears of sorrow at the loss of everything he cherished. It must have been tears of regret for not being able to protect the temple. Those were tears that I would never be able to comprehend.

However, one thing I can clearly say is that the voice of the Nembutsu, Namo Amida Butsu, that spilled out of his mouth was the compassionate voice of Amida Buddha

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In Memory of Lahaina Hongwanji Mission

By **REV. AI HIRONAKA**
LAHAINA HONGWANJI MISSION

Editor's note: On August 8, Rev. Hironaka, his wife, their four children, and their French bulldog piled into their Honda Civic to escape the flames with just moments to spare. Rev. Hironaka gave the following talk at the Maui Wildfires Memorial Service on September 24. Watch the service on the HHMH YouTube channel at <https://youtu.be/clyxKab2un0>

In the gentle embrace of Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani, the State Ministers Association, and the Honpa Hongwanji Mission, and on behalf of Lahaina Hongwanji Temple, I extend my heartfelt gratitude for all of your unwavering support.

It has been over a month and a half since August 8. People often ask, “Are you better now?” I wish I could say “better,” but what defines “better”? Physically and mentally, I was better a week after the fire compared to now. Perhaps, there was still gasoline in the tank, the energy to keep going. After running out of gas, it feels like I'm pushing the car by hand.

People have not yet emerged from the depths of sorrow. Tears well up unexpectedly in everyday life. What do these tears hold within?

Watching the news, I'm reminded of the fear that engulfed us on that day. The flames, driven by strong winds, spread from house to house, igniting like matches, sounding like a burner.



The hall of Waiola Church and nearby Lahaina Hongwanji Mission (right, back) are engulfed in flames on Aug. 8. (Courtesy of Matthew Thayer/The Maui News)

Lahaina Hongwanji Mission also has a missing individual, Matsuyuki Osato. I used to visit him once a month to get ti leaves for my daughter's hula, and sometimes, he brought vegetables and mangoes grown in his garden to the temple. I heard from his neighbor after the fire that the mango tree in their neighborhood was knocked down by the strong winds that day, blocking the road. I humbly express my deepest condolences to the Osato family.

After the fire, my daughter temporarily transferred to another school. There, she endured bullying. How sad it is.

On the first day of practice for Lahainaluna High School's football team, many players didn't have shoes. How can I just see them without tears.

Waiting in lines at the bank, post office, Red Cross, insurance, exhaustion from queueing.

When I visit other people's homes, I see beautiful family photos. Baby pictures, wedding photos, family portraits—all shining brightly. But at the same time, it reminds me of the pictures I lost, and I don't know how to express the emptiness and sadness.

However, these feelings can't be outwardly expressed. These are very ordinary scenes, something to be celebrated. But now, for us, these ordinary scenes become the source of heartache.

A friend living in the same shelter told me with a sad expression, “I went to Home Depot, and I smelled something burning, and I panicked! But it was the smell of BBQ from the Kiawe Tree food truck. For us, Kiawe Tree BBQ used to be the delicious smell that made our mouths water. Now it's a trigger

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PBA's 16th Annual Lighting Our Way Banquet Highlights Community Values

By **MEGAN LEE**
DIRECTOR OF ADVANCEMENT,
PACIFIC BUDDHIST ACADEMY

Pacific Buddhist Academy honored inspirational community leaders and one inspirational community organization at the Lighting Our Way Banquet on Oct. 13 at the Prince Waikiki Hotel. The event is also a fundraiser for the school, with proceeds supporting peace education. The honorees were immediate past Bishop Rev. Eric Matsumoto and early childhood educator Mrs. Tamayo Matsumoto; Alicia Moy, President of Hawaii Gas; Suzanne Vares-Lum, President of the East-West Center; and Kupu, a non-profit organization dedicated to building a brighter future for Hawaii's youth.

Event planning can be a difficult task in times of adversity. I gained firsthand understanding of this in my first year at PBA, which coincided with the onset of the pandemic. Upon learning about the tragedy in Maui, we brainstormed how the school's annual plan could support our neighboring island community.

At this year's event, friends of PBA

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A Message Celebrating Peace and Nonviolence



BY REV. SOL KALU
HONPA HONGWANJI MISSION OF HAWAII HEADQUARTERS

The following is the text of a message delivered at the 18th Annual Celebration of Mahatma Gandhi Day and International Day of Nonviolence in Kapiolani Park, Honolulu, October 1, 2023.

Good morning to everyone on this event marking the 18th Annual Celebration

of Mahatma Gandhi Day and International Day of Nonviolence. In this turbulent time in human history, marked by social unrest, continuing wars and threats of global escalation possibly leading to the annihilation of all life on earth, it is all the more imperative for us to deeply reflect on how important it is to avoid violence in any form to resolve differences. The great political ethicist, lawyer and Indian nationalist Mahatma Gandhi, in whose memory this event is being held, spread the concept of ahimsa—nonviolence—that is, not causing harm to anyone in any situation.

Ahimsa is an ancient Indian principle of not harming or inflicting any pain or hurt, of refraining from committing acts that can cause another living being to suffer. This is a cardinal virtue not only in Buddhism, but also in Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism, religious traditions

founded in ancient India as well as the other great religious traditions in the world like Islam, Judaism and Christianity, just to name a few. It is a principle that applies not only to human beings but to all life forms, governed by the laws of karmic consequences of any and all actions, positive or negative.

Violence, most often expressed in warfare, has been part of history since the beginning of organized human societies. Wars for control of resources, and the immense suffering they cause, has plagued humankind like natural disasters. We human beings can send ourselves to the moon and back and spend billions of dollars to eliminate the diseases that kill us but we pay little attention to rooting out the motivations that cause us to kill each other. The history of humankind is a history of wars and conquest. For thousands of years humans have been

unable to liberate themselves from fear of violent death due to the actions of other humans.

And why is that? Because we cannot rid ourselves of hatred, discrimination, selfishness, and desires. We are blinded by our delusions, our ego, our blind passions that prevent us from seeing things as they really are. Our desire to possess creates attachment and discrimination as in “this is mine,” “this is my territory,” “you look different from us and speak a different language, therefore you do not belong with us,” and so on. This desire to possess and discriminate is strengthened by the belief that the world and everything in it is real and permanent. The Buddha taught that nothing is ever permanent and things are always in a constant state of change, so to think that our lives and material things are permanent is wishful thinking.

Surely we realize that no one can live forever and that

no one carries money, power, or beauty with him or her at death. Most wars begin with a desire to conquer other people or possess others’ wealth or resources. But sometimes wars can begin by simple arguments and petty quarrels among tribal groups that escalate out of desire to avenge a hurt ego. Where there is no forgiveness, patience, or tolerance among nations, there can be no lasting peace.

Both Mahatma Gandhi and the Buddha understood and taught that the core teaching of resolving differences is not through violent means but through love and understanding. And this is achieved through changing our perspective on how to relate to our fellow human beings and other life forms as well. Wars and other acts of violence originate in the mind, therefore the solution also comes from the mind.

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Online Buddhist Education Series Begins January 2024

BY REV. SATOSHI TOMIOKA
TRIPLE CELEBRATION COMMITTEE
CHAIR, BUDDHIST EDUCATION DIVISION



The goal of Buddhist education is to share the joy of being embraced by the Buddha of All-embracing Wisdom and Compassion. It is our

wish that people live the life of Nembutsu with self-reflection through Amida Buddha and contribute to the realization of a society in which everyone can live a life of spiritual fulfillment.

The Triple Celebration Buddhist Education Series will provide lectures by distinguished speakers, with content and format to help people receive the mind of awakening from Amida Buddha and relate the teaching to their lives.

This Buddhist Education Series strives to provide classes which can cause a transformation to occur in people’s lives guided by Amida Buddha’s Primal Vow.

The Buddhist Education Series consists of 10 online sessions from January to August 2024 covering four main topics: the significance of the establishment of Jodo Shinshu Tradition; the essence of *Kyogyoshinsho*; the transmission of Jodo Shinshu from the past to present; and “The World is Waiting for Buddhism and Shinran Shonin.”

The Jodo Shinshu Tradition was established with Shinran Shonin’s writing of *Kyogyoshinsho* in 1224. *Kyogyoshinsho* explains that the way of attaining enlightenment (*sho*) is through reciting the Name of Amida Buddha (*gyo*) with an entrusting heart (*shin*), which is taught in the Larger Sutra (*Kyo*). Sessions on *Kyogyoshinsho* will take place from April through July.

See the poster for a complete listing of sessions, presenters, dates, and times (Hawaiian Standard Time). To register, please use the QR code on the poster or the link below. (If you receive an invitation email, you don’t have to re-register.) Feel free to share this registration link with your friends and those who may be interested.

<https://forms.gle/kXbGaoyLyqKe2w629>
For security purposes, please do not

HONPA HONGWANJI MISSION OF HAWAII
TRIPLE CELEBRATION
ONLINE BUDDHIST EDUCATION SERIES

1. What is Mahayana Buddhism? JANUARY 13, 10 AM DR. DAVID MATSUMOTO
2. What is Pure Land Buddhism? JANUARY 20, 10 AM DR. MATSUMOTO
3. Development of Jodo Shinshu in Japan and Hawaii Part 1 FEBRUARY 3, 2 PM PROF. MITSUYA DAKE
4. Development of Jodo Shinshu in Japan and Hawaii Part 2 FEBRUARY 17, 2 PM PROF. DAKE
5. Significance of establishment of Jodo Shinshu Tradition MARCH 16, 2 PM PROF. EISHO NASU
6. Kyogyoshinsho: Teaching APRIL 13, 10 AM REV. MUTSUMI WONDR
7. Kyogyoshinsho: Practice MAY 18, 10 AM REV. YUKI SUGAHARA
8. Kyogyoshinsho: Entrusting Heart JUNE 22, 10 AM REV. KIYONOBU KUWAHARA
9. Kyogyoshinsho: Realization JULY 20, 10 AM REV. HENRY ADAMS
10. The world is waiting for Buddhism and Shinran Shonin: Joy of the Nembutsu AUGUST 24, 2 PM REV. GENE SEKIYA

Scan to register **September 7 & 8**

850th Anniversary of Shinran Shonin's Birth
800th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Jodo Shinshu Teaching
135th Anniversary of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii

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To join Zoom Meeting, go to <https://Zoom.us>. Click “join” and enter meeting ID and passcode below.

Meeting ID: 885 8827 0792
Passcode: 656715

Bishop

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that enveloped all of his suffering, sorrow, powerlessness, frustration, and anger, and keeps calling to him, “It must be painful. It must be sad. But I will never abandon you. I will never let you go.”

Seeing the sentient beings of the nembutsu

Throughout the worlds, countless as particles, in the ten quarters,

The Buddha grasps and never abandons them,

And therefore is named “Amida.”

(Shinran Shonin, “Hymns of the Pure Land”)

Amida Buddha is the Buddha of Wisdom and Compassion that grasps and never abandons the sentient beings who say the Nembutsu. Namu Amida Butsu is Amida Buddha’s declaration and commitment that he will illuminate and embrace us all without fail.

We encounter pains and sorrows throughout our lives. We must face the challenges, whether good or bad, favorable or unfavorable. No matter how challenging my life may be, nobody can take my place for me. Even when our family is struggling, we cannot take their places. Each of us has to carry a heavy load on our shoulders. Amida Buddha recognizes

our karmic limitations and keeps calling to us, “You will be fine; just come as you are.” Such a compassionate heart of Amida Buddha is condensed in our own voice of “Namu Amida Butsu.” It penetrates our hearts, minds, and bodies. It gives us the consolation in our difficult daily lives and the courage to move forward. Our life is a journey with Amida Buddha. We are never alone. I saw a ray of hope in the Nembutsu that my friend recited.

Losing the Lahaina Hongwanji Mission’s buildings is a sad reality for the members and friends of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii. But, even though the temple may have been destroyed, and even though the statue of Amida Buddha may have been destroyed, the essence of Amida Buddha, the compassionate calling voice, is always with us. This is not the end of the Lahaina Hongwanji Mission. Wherever we recite the Nembutsu is the Lahaina Hongwanji Mission. Wherever we recite the Nembutsu is our home, where our dear parent, Amida Buddha, welcomes us with open arms. Lahaina Hongwanji Mission has not disappeared. It is still standing in our hearts as Namu Amida Butsu. Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii is more determined to dedicate ourselves to establishing a society where the sound of the Nembutsu prevails.

During this challenging time, we extend our gratitude to the first responders, volunteers, and all those

who have tirelessly worked to provide aid, comfort, and support. I also would like to express my appreciation to the many individuals, ministers, and members of our temples and organizations for their outpouring support in the wake of deadly wildfires.

To the people on Maui, we are with you as you grieve, recover, and rebuild for as long as it takes. We are here; we stand together as one community, one ohana, and one sangha.

Recently, there was news that the Lahaina Banyan Tree’s greenery blooms in a sea of dead leaves. After just over a month since the blazing fires, new clusters of green leaves have begun sprouting on its massive branches. It once again reminds us of the teaching of impermanence. The beautiful and thriving community of Lahaina has turned into ashes. Lives lost, properties lost, and many cherished materials have been lost. They would never come back. But life goes on. “Though the light of the sun is veiled by clouds and mists, beneath the clouds and mists, there is brightness, not dark.” The power of life is so strong that, despite the unimaginable tragedy, we will stand strong. We stand in solidarity with those experiencing suffering and sorrow, and together, we will move forward in rebuilding our community. A new life, a new community, will sprout and thrive once again.

Namu Amida Butsu.



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The Ka Leo Kāhea provides a variety of articles on Jodo Shinshu Buddhism for Hawaii residents.

The Ka Leo Kāhea, a quarterly newspaper published by the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, features organizational news and experiences by Jodo Shinshu members, and a variety of articles relating to Buddhist principles.

Editorial rights are reserved to postpone, edit, or withhold from publication anything submitted which does not meet those specifications or the specifications of the editorial staff.

The meaning of any submission will not be altered, but we reserve the right to correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation when necessary.

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Gratitude for Your Donations to the Maui Wildfire Fund



By **DR. WARREN TAMAMOTO**
PRESIDENT, HONPA HONGWANJI
MISSION OF HAWAII

Aloha kakou! I hope that you are doing well, spiritually and physically. I would like to thank everyone who has made a contribution, large or small, to Maui relief efforts. Thank you for keeping the people of Maui in your hearts and minds. Dāna (generosity) is the first of Six Paramitas. You give without expecting anything in return, the essence of nonattachment.

I would also like to thank the HQ staff, the Social Concerns Committee, the Maui Wildfires Ad Hoc Committee and

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Sangha members at Wailuku, Kahului, and Makawao temples, who have provided invaluable support to our Maui 'ohana.

The Maui Wildfires of August 8 resulted in a horrific loss of life and property, and in Lahaina town in particular. As of this writing, 100 people have perished, including one Lahaina Hongwanji member. Over two thousand buildings were destroyed, including the Lahaina Hongwanji temple building, minister's residence, social hall, and temple office. The *nokotsudo* (columbarium) may be intact, but we have not been allowed to access the site.

Approximately half of the Lahaina temple members were displaced from their homes by the fire. As of this writing, Rev. Hironaka and family are living in temporary housing, with the minister's residence at the Kahului Hongwanji Mission soon to be available.

The Maui Wildfires received intense national and international media coverage in the days and weeks that followed.

National and local relief agencies and many individuals quickly took action to assist those affected by the wildfires. Regardless of these efforts, we know that many Maui people are still facing hardship every day.

The Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii (HHMH) launched the Maui Wildfire Disaster Relief Fund to support our Dharma friends and other Maui residents affected by the wildfire. To date, we have received over \$600,000 from friends in Japan, the continental USA, Canada, Hawaii, and elsewhere. I have been asked by various people about the Maui Wildfire Disaster Relief Fund, and I would like to let you know how the donated money has been used.

Approximately \$45,000 was distributed relatively quickly to various Maui relief agencies, including the Hawaii Community Foundation Maui Strong Fund, the Maui Food Bank, and the Hawaii Red Cross. Approximately \$5,000 was given as omimai (an expression of concern) to ministers of the Lahaina Hongwanji, Lahaina Shingon (Hokoji Temple), and the Lahaina Jodo

Missions, all destroyed by the fire. Approximately \$210,000 has been distributed as omimai to Lahaina Hongwanji members and other members of our Hawaii 'ohana impacted by the wildfires. HHMH still has a large reserve amount in the fund to cover unanticipated future expenses. The Committee on Social Concerns (including Bishop Umitani and HQ staff), working with the Maui Wildfire Emergency Response Ad Hoc Committee and Lahaina leadership will continue to monitor events on Maui and use funds from the Maui Wildfire Disaster Relief Fund to support our Sangha there.

For a detailed accounting of how the money has been distributed, please go to our HHMH website at www.hongwanjihawaii.com. You will see statements by Bishop Umitani, the Status Report of Lahaina Hongwanji Mission, the Committee on Social Concerns Maui Relief Update, and the Maui Wildfire Emergency Response Ad Hoc Committee report. I hope these reports will reassure you that your donations are being used effectively and responsibly.

I would like to share words of appreciation from the Lahaina Hongwanji leadership titled "We Bow in Gratitude." The full statement appears on the HHMH website.

"Even as we visibly or stoically weep over losses in lives, property, livelihood — one powerfully encouraging force is the overwhelming scope and depth of support we have received. This support has come from the innermost circles of family and 'ohana, friends, neighbors, from Lahaina Hongwanji members and relations. The support widened to the sangha of Maui Hongwanji temples, Honpa Hongwanji and statewide temples... and finally from the larger communities and agencies, local to world-wide."

It is a long road to recovery for everyone who has been injured, displaced, or otherwise affected by the Maui wildfires. It will take years to recover and, realistically, it is not yet clear what "recovery" will mean for Lahaina Hongwanji Mission. We will continue to do our best to support our Maui 'ohana in the months and years ahead.

Maui nō ka 'oi.



Left photo: Peace Day 2023 Crane Installation Makawao-Style. Courtesy of Jean Heselden. Right photo: Peace Day 2023 Special Service for Maui at Makawao Hongwanji. (Courtesy of Mimy Kiyohara)

Peace Day 2023 Special Service at Makawao

By **JEAN HESELDEN**
MAKAWAO HONGWANJI MISSION

In the spirit of promoting peace around the world, on Thursday, September 21, we joined via Zoom the *Ring Your Bell for Peace Day* event sponsored by the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii. On Saturday, September 23, we held a Peace Day Special Service at our temple, Makawao Hongwanji Mission, made

possible by the Maui United Buddhist Women's Association and the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii.

As honored guests for Saturday's Peace Day Special Service, we welcomed:

Rev. Shinkai Murakami of Wailuku Hongwanji, a Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temple, to deliver our Dharma Talk.

Rev. Tomoki Hirasawa of Pa'ia Mantokuji, a Soto Zen Buddhist Temple, to lead us in a Zazen experi-

ence focusing on inner peace.

Sisters and Brothers from Vietnamese Buddhist Centers in Hawaii, who practice in a Vietnamese Zen tradition, to share a Buddhist chant in Vietnamese.

As Buddhists, we strive to promote cultivating inner peace. We practice peace by combining care and respect for individual dignity with mindfulness, wisdom, and compassion for all members of our

society.

Our origami cranes are a symbol of the universal human aspiration for peace and harmony for all people and forms of life. This year we add our wishes for inner peace of mind and heart for the people of Maui, as we join hands to help each other rebuild after the devastating wildfires of August.

Mahalo to the Little Tokyo Service Center of Los Angeles for the colorful strings of origami cranes

displayed on the podiums in the temple hall. These cranes carry love, support, and wishes for healing from Los Angeles to everyone on Maui.

Mahalo to members of Makawao Hongwanji's congregation for folding and installing over 3,000 white origami cranes on our lawn in order to give our community a reason to pause in their busy lives and to reflect and refresh.

Mahalo to everyone who joined us!!



Youth Specialist, Emi Hashi

HHMH Hires Youth Specialist, Emi Hashi

Makawao Hongwanji Member Will Head Youth Activities

Editor's note: In late September, Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii (HHMH) Bishop Umitani announced the arrival of Emi Hashi as the new Children and Youth Activities Specialist (Youth Specialist). Ms. Hashi is from Maui and has a long history of participation in HHMH youth and young adult programs.

"Home is where one starts from."
— T.S. Eliot

Hello! My name is Emi Hashi and I am the newly hired Children and Youth Activities Specialist for HHMH. I grew up attending Makawao Hongwanji Mission, where I was active in Dharma School and Jr. YBA. I later attended the University of Hawaii at Mānoa and helped with YESS Camp and the Buddhist Study Center Fellowship Club. I graduated with my Bachelor's in Human Relations in Organizations in 2014 and

my Master's in Communication in 2016. For the past seven years, I've been living in Phoenix working on my doctorate in Communication from Arizona State University, which I hope to complete soon. I recently moved back to Hawaii in June 2023 and have been working at the Buddhist Study Center (BSC) since the beginning of October.

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HMMH Triple Celebration "Sharing the Joy of Nembutsu Together: Our Living Heart of Gratitude" - Sept. 7-8, 2024
850th Anniversary of Shinran Shonin's Birth, 800th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Jodo Shinshu Teaching,
135th Anniversary of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii

In Gratitude, Hawaii Federation of Buddhist Women's Associations



By **DONNA HIGASHI**, MOILIILI HONGWANJI MISSION BWA, HAWAII FEDERATION OF BUDDHIST WOMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS

As we approach the Triple Celebration in Hawaii in September 2024, I was asked to share some of my personal reflections about the Hawaii Federation of Buddhist Women's Associations (HFBWA), which was founded in 1954 by Lady Yoshiko Ohtani. You might have also learned that the *Fujinkai* (Japanese for Buddhist Women's Association) was co-founded in Japan by Lady Takeko Kujo during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. However, I believe each Buddhist temple—and there are close to 10,000 in Japan alone—has a complimentary women's group connected with it. Likewise, there are close to 30 Jodo Shinshu temples in Hawaii.

After graduating from the University of Hawaii in 1968, I transitioned to Moiliili Hongwanji Mission because my branch temple



Dharma Friends at the 14th WBWC (from left): Lois Ohta, former Bishop Eric Matsumoto, Sharyn Sekine, Donna Higashi, Tamayo Matsumoto, and Dennis Sekine. (Courtesy of Donna Higashi)

in Kaimuki was closing. At Moiliili I was welcomed to join the BWA. Although I was busy teaching in the Hawaii public schools, never felt pressured to serve in leadership capacities and was always encouraged by the late Rose Nakamura (my second mentor) to attend meetings, seminars, or trips, only when I could. My first mentor was actually my late mother, Misae Higashi, a member of the Hawaii Betsuin Fujinkai. She attended services regularly and participated in many

Fujinkai functions, even traveling to Japan several times for special commemorative events at the Honzan.

Around 2000, when I was more involved in BWA activities at the Unit and United of Honolulu levels, I was asked by the late Carol Yamamoto (my third mentor) of the HFBWA to join the planning team for the 13th World Buddhist Women's Convention (WBWC) scheduled for September 2006 in Honolulu, Hawaii. I retired from the Department of Educa-

tion in 2002 so that I could attend the 12th WBWC in Sao Paulo, Brazil that year. I knew that I would be the co-chair of the 13th World Convention in Hawaii with Fusae Kiyokawa (my fourth mentor) also of Hawaii Betsuin BWA, and I joined as the First Vice President with Carol as the President. Thanks to the help of the WBWC Advisors, the late Bishop Chikai Yosemite, Mrs. Chihoko Yosemite, and Rev. Shigenori Makino, the 2006 WBWC held at the Hawaii Convention Center was a grand success. We

had a meaningful program, and we were pleased that during planning, the Pacific Buddhist Academy was always highlighted. Hawaii had hosted two World Buddhist Women's Conventions before, in 1967 and 1982, and will host one again in 2027. Please support the BWA.

Declining membership is a concern at all temples and levels, including in the BWA. As our members age, some fail to pay their dues and have been removed from our lists. However, we didn't want that to happen since our elders were the leaders in previous years. Some were now in care homes; some just forgot to pay; sometimes their family members paid for them sporadically. So we started a dual system of Active Members and Associate Members.

While active members pay full dues, the Unit pays \$1 to the Federation for each associate member. The Unit leadership decides who continues on the associate level so they can be counted at the Unit, United and Federation levels. This has worked out well since each Unit has to verify and account for each person on their membership list.

Our goal is to increase the number of active members. Although we have stabilized our mem-

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Thinking Pink at Kamuela Hongwanji Mission

By **DAVID OSHIRO**, PRESIDENT KAMUELA HONGWANJI MISSION

The viewing of cherry blossoms in Kamuela is always a fun way to enjoy the start of spring in North Hawaii Island. After a hiatus of two years, Kamuela Hongwanji's participation in the annual "Waimea Cherry Blossom Heritage Festival" was welcomed by thousands of Big Islanders and visitors from near and far. There was an estimated attendance of 20,000. This is Hawaii's version of "hanami" or cherry blossom viewing celebrations in Japan.

With the efforts of the local community, over 75 Taiwan cherry blossom trees were planted in the scenic park of Kamuela's church row. They are a peace symbol and a perfect setting to gather and celebrate the beauty of the pink cherry blossoms.

Since the onset of the festival 30 years ago, Kamuela Hongwanji Mission has played an active role in the planning and participation of the event. Furthermore, dedicated members have contributed much time and labor nurturing the cherry trees.

Rev. Masanari Yamagishi, our resident minister,



opened the 30th annual event with a blessing. "I chanted the sutra, *"Sambujo"* at the opening ceremony at Parker Ranch Center," he explained. "I did it with my respect to all Buddhas, temple members, and festival staff. All the people at the ceremony listened quietly as I chanted."

Kamuela Hongwanji hosted a temple open house with Rev. Yamagishi and temple members hosting and they introduced and explained Shin Buddhism (the path of gratitude and humility) to festival attendees. The constant flow of visitors (500 plus) were able to view the altar, offer incense and ask questions.

"It was the first time for many of them to visit a Buddhist temple, so I explained to them how to offer incense in front of the



Above photo: Rev. Masanari Yamagishi greets visitors in the hondo. Photo at upper left: Statue of nine-year-old Wakamatsumaru (Shinran) outside the temple. (Courtesy of Rev. Masanari Yamagishi)

statue of Amida Buddha," said Rev. Yamagishi, who also oversees the Honokaa, Kohala, and Paauilo Hongwanji Mission temples. "I enjoyed explaining the incense offering, a history of Buddhism, and the general teachings of Buddhism to them. I also enjoyed taking about Amida Buddha, our founder Shinran Shonin, and the teaching of Nembutsu with some people."

Kamuela Hongwanji also had a concession stand selling our ever-popular

nishime bento, along with other Asian food delights. Cherry blossom cuttings and cherry blossom tree sales were popular and sold out within a couple of hours. In our social hall we hosted cooking demonstrations by guest chefs, fruit and vegetable carving demonstrations, and Japanese tea ceremony.

Thanks to the help of Sangha members and friends (and in spite of the cold weather), the 30th annual Cherry Blossom Festival was a successful

fundraiser, and we had the opportunity to introduce Jodo Shinshu Buddhism to many festival goers. "Many people were from the neighbor islands, the mainland, some regions of Canada, Germany, and Japan," Rev. Yamagishi noted. "I hope the teaching of Nembutsu is spreading around the world and we can share it together."

Mark your calendar for the first Saturday in February of 2024 for the next Waimea Cherry Blossom Heritage Festival.

Hilo Hongwanji Preschool New Building Grand Opening Celebration



Left photo: Grand opening celebration attendees posed in front of the building before taking a tour of the interior. (Courtesy of Tracey Niimi) Right photo: The ceremonial untying of the lei was performed by (left to right) HHMH President Dr. Warren Tamamoto, Hilo Betsuin President Ed Hara, HHMH Bishop Rev. Toshiyuki Umitani, Hilo Betsuin Rimban Kazunori Takahashi, Hilo Hongwanji Preschool Director Alison Tateishi, The Hiroaki, Elaine & Lawrence Kono Foundation representatives Marjorie Oda-Burns, Kerry Kurisu, and Kord Kurisu, and KTA Super Stores President and Chief Operating Officer Toby Taniguchi. (Courtesy of Tracey Niimi)

BY SANDY TANIGUCHI, PRESCHOOL DEDICATION PROGRAM CO-CHAIR, HONPA HONGWANJI HILO BETSUIN

On October 29, Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin celebrated the completion of our new preschool building with a special service and program. The dream of many has become a reality for all! We were humbled that many of

our sangha and community members came to celebrate with us.

We are so grateful to our contractor, Fujiyama Construction, and their subcontractors who worked to complete the construction of the building despite many challenges that increased costs and delayed actual construction work. Most critical was the COVID pandemic, affecting the cost and availability of materials and supplies.

Soon brand-new furniture will be moved in. Then our teachers and students will move into their new “home” and play on their new playground equipment, too. We are hopeful that this building will be fully paid for by the end of the official campaign period, December 2025.

Now completed, Hilo Hongwanji Preschool is testament to the vision and power of people working together. All children deserve a school like ours as they begin their educational journey.

Global Citizenship Explained at 2023 Spring Seminar

BY EDYTHE VASSALL, BOARD OF SPIRITUAL AFFAIRS, HONPA HONGWANJI HILO BETSUIN

The Hilo Betsuin 2023 Spring Seminar returned to its pre-pandemic format this year, with sessions held in person and on Zoom. Our guest speaker was Rev. Elaine Donlin, Assistant Minister, Buddhist Church of San Francisco (BCSF).

Rev. Donlin became a minister’s assistant in 2008, and received Tokudo ordination at Nishi Hongwanji in 2013. She is a founding member of the BCSF LGBTQ+ group, the first such temple group within the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA). She served as Federation of Buddhist Women’s Associations President in 2019 and 2020. For over 10 years Elaine Sensei has partnered with the San Francisco Zen Center to provide meditation and Buddhist teachings in the SF County Men’s and Women’s Jails. For the past 10 years she has led a monthly Metta Gathering in Shin temples in San Francisco, Mill Valley, and Sebastopol, and also organized the BCSF Winter Shelter Hot Meal Program for people without homes. Rev. Donlin has served on the San Francisco Interfaith Council Board of Directors for six years, and has spoken at interfaith collaborations in the US and internationally.

The events at Hilo Betsuin started on the evening of March 17 with an interfaith panel on the theme “Caring Across Beliefs.” Four ministers participated: Rev. Eric S. Anderson from the Church of the Holy Cross United Church of Christ; Rev. Alena Uhamaka of Hilo United Methodist Church; Jack Paikuli, Director of Communications for the Hilo Stake of Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-

Day Saints; and Rev. Elaine Donlin.

Each speaker shared what tools their church or temple put into place to assist people during the COVID pandemic—not only their congregants and sangha members, but the community at large. From care during isolation to providing food and shelter, they helped people deal with practical difficulties and the trauma of losses caused by the pandemic.

The Spring Seminar on Saturday, March 18 was lively and interactive. Thirty participants followed Rev. Donlin’s two-part presentation, which centered on how to build a “culture of belonging” at our temples, and how to engage with larger, outside communities.

A culture of belonging encourages connection and trust in all encounters, builds structured practices into group activities (such as a “point person” to help others), and establishes goals that build confidence and group identity.

For example, how do we engage our Dharma school students? What opportunities are we missing? Elaine Sensei described a teachable moment that she missed. BCSF received a gift of reusable chopsticks to replace their single-use variety. That act of kindness and concern for the environment could have been shared with the Dharma school students... but it wasn’t.

Regarding how the temples can engage with other communities, Rev. Donlin shared with us the topic of global citizenship—something most of us had never heard of.

Global citizenship is the umbrella term for social, political, environmental, and economic actions of globally minded individuals and communities on a worldwide scale. ...the belief that individuals are members of



multiple, diverse, local and non-local networks rather than single actors affecting isolated societies. Promoting global citizenship in sustainable development will allow individuals to embrace their social responsibility to act for the benefit of all societies, not just their own.

—from the United Nations website: www.un.org

Attendees felt that global citizenship sounded appealing to youth. In fact, the UN encourages universities “to promote global citizenship by teaching their students that they are members of a large global community and can use their skills and education to contribute to that community.”

After the presentation and small discussion groups, as we shared lunch and talk story, participants agreed that Elaine Sensei was an engaging speaker and a good listener.

For the Spring Ohigan service on Sunday, Rev. Donlin gave a talk on the Six Paramitas of generosity, ethical conduct, patience,



Top photo, from left: Rimban Kazunori Takahashi, Rev. Elaine Donlin, and Rev. Joshin Kamuro in front of the onajin after the Spring Ohigan service. Bottom photo: Rev. Elaine Donlin spoke to 30 participants at the 2023 Spring Seminar. (Courtesy of Edythe Vassall)

diligence, contemplation, and wisdom.

We can think of the Six Paramitas as “acts of gratitude for living this present moment of interconnectedness with all things, enveloped by great compassion,” she said. “They can help us recognize the arising of our self-centeredness.” She described the Six Paramitas as “a helpful guideline as I walk the path of impermanence, inner and outer struggles, and challenges.” Elaine Sensei closed by

quoting Rev. Dr. Taitetsu Unno, who said, “The bountifulness of Great Compassion makes possible our liberation from the iron cage of our own making.”

Be sure to join the Hilo Betsuin Spring Seminar on Saturday, March 16, 2024. Our guest speaker will be the multi-talented Koichi Mizushima, Minister’s Assistant at the Buddhist Church of Sacramento, Jr. YBA Advisor from 1996 to 2019, and staff member of the BCA Center for Buddhist Education.

In Our Community – “Jikoen Chikara” Supports Maui Fire Victims

BY KARLEEN CHINEN
SPECIAL TO THE HAWAII HERALD

It began with Jikoen Hongwanji Mission member Gene “Geno” Oshiro’s email to temple leaders suggesting that they organize a fundraiser to help the people of Maui who had been devastated by the Tuesday, Aug. 8 wildfires. Within days, Jikoen’s board had approved of the idea and plans for a modest fundraiser were in the works. By Wednesday, Aug. 16, just eight days after the raging wildfires had turned historic Lāhainā town into ash, claiming over a hundred lives in the process, plans for a two-hour-long, drive-thru fundraiser on Sunday, Aug. 20, were emailed to temple members and supporters. Its theme: “Jikoen Chikara,” or “Jikoen Strong.” “The first 100 donations will receive a special gift of Reverend Nishiyama’s famous curry and rice bowl, Jikoen’s *andagi* and yummy energy balls. The suggested minimum donation to receive a special gift is \$20,” the email read.

The Rev. Shindo Nishiyama, Jikoen’s multitalented resident minister, planned to make the curry himself. He and his wife Suzue (“Suzie”) donated the two full pots of chicken curry to the fundraiser. “*Gassho*,” the Japanese word for “gratitude,” is used often in Buddhist correspondence — even when raising funds for others who lost everything on Aug. 8. “He (Nishiyama-Sensei) wanted to give back to the donors,” explained Doris Oshiro, the temple’s immediate past president.

On the morning of Aug. 20, Nishiyama-Sensei was in the temple’s kitchen at



Above photo: Mission accomplished! From left: Doris Oshiro, immediate past president of Jikoen Hongwanji; Suzue “Suzie” and Rev. Shindo Nishiyama; and current president John Toguchi. (Courtesy of Wayne Shinbara) Photo at left: The Rev. Shindo Nishiyama shows off his shaka-ono curry. (Courtesy of Wayne Shinbara)

7 a.m., standing over the stove, adding ingredients to two big pots of curry. Other temple members and volunteers, 35 in all, began arriving a short time later. Woks for the *andagi* were filled with cooking oil and fired up. The volunteers planned to make at least 300 *andagi*, filling 100 sandwich bags with three *andagi* each.

Inside the social hall, other volunteers lined up the 100 aqua-blue eco bags that Keith Shiroma, manager of Central Pacific Bank’s Kalihi Branch, had donated to the temple. Later, like a fine-tuned assembly line, they packed each bag with Jikoen Hongwanji’s gifts of *gassho*: a curry rice bowl, a bag of three hot *andagi* and another sandwich bag with three energy balls that the Rev. Irene Nakamoto had donated to the effort.

At 10 a.m., cars began turning into the North School Street parking lot with their donations for Maui’s people. Nishiyama-Sensei picked up his big “MAHALO” sign and, for the next two hours,



joined volunteers on the distribution line, personally greeting and thanking the occupants of every car that dropped off a donation to help the fire-stricken people of Maui.

By noon, all of the blue bags were gone. After enjoying lunch together, the volunteers cleaned the kitchen, put away all of their supplies and called it *pau hana* at 2 p.m., happy to have lent a hand to support Maui’s people. “Jikoen Chikara” had been a total labor of love and compassion: the volunteers, the ingredients needed to produce the yummy treats, the bags — complete with “Thank you” tags — that held the treats, the event banner, publicity flyers and even lunch for the volunteers.

“In Jikoen style, we knew it would not be perfect,” summed up



Top photo: Jikoen Hongwanji members Dorene Toma (left) and Barbara Higa cooking *andagi*. Next to them, volunteers Eric Nitta and Jon Itomura make *andagi* in a second wok while Nishiyama-Sensei looks on. (Courtesy of Wayne Shinbara) Bottom photo: Jikoen members Pete Doktor and Doris Oshiro give a bag filled with goodies to a “Jikoen Chikara” donor. (Courtesy of Wayne Shinbara)

Jikoen president John Toguchi. “But with everyone’s heart being invested, we knew it would be successful. Our result was a *sangha*/*’ohana*/*community* response, not to mention an *Uchinanchu* response,” Toguchi said, referring to Jikoen’s long historical ties to the Okinawan community.

Rev. Nishiyama said he and Suzie enjoyed spending the day with Jikoen’s members and supporters. “I appreciated everyone for supporting me and Jikoen for Maui as ‘Jikoen Chikara.’ Jikoen is always loving to help others with *Uchinanchu chibariyo!*, and they are so sincere in caring for our community!”

As of Wednesday, Sept.

6, donations for “Jikoen Chikara” totaled \$20,200, which was sent to the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, Hongwanji’s statewide headquarters, for its “Maui Wildfire Disaster Relief Fund.” Attached to the check was a letter requesting that Jikoen’s funds be dispersed immediately to the Maui residents who are in need as a result of the fire.

Karleén Chinen is a former Hawaii’i Herald editor and writer. She is currently writing a book chronicling Hawaii’i’s Okinawan community from 1980 to 2000, titled “Born Again Uchinanchu: Hawaii’i’s Chibariyo! Story.” Reprinted with the author’s permission.

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Ka Leo Kāheā? Please support our
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You may mail a check to HHMH.

Honolulu United BWA Donations to HHMH



From left to right are Donna Higashi, HUBWA Treasurer, Susan Okano and Sandra Toma, Dana Committee members, Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani of HHMH, and Liane Wong, Dana Committee Chair. (Courtesy of Lois Ohta)

On Aug. 26, at the Honolulu United BWA (HUBWA) Joint Education and Membership Conference, the Dana Committee of HUBWA presented Bishop Toshiyuki Umitani with a Humanitarian Dana Donation of \$3,000 to Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii (HHMH). This donation, from HUBWA’s Dana Funds, is intended for Lahaina Hongwanji Mission. HUBWA Joint Conference participants also donated \$2,591 to HHMH for its Ministerial Training Fund.

SAVE THE DATE
Buddhist Study Center presents
Spring Festival
“Nurturing Mind & Body”
APRIL 6, 2024
9:30-2:00
1436 UNIVERSITY AVE
Health and wellness workshops,
food, activities, and info booths
Welcome to all!!!
Questions? Contact (808) 973-6555 or
ehashi@honpahi.org

25 Years of Adopt-A-Highway on Hilo Coast

By **KEN OKIMOTO**

PAPAĪKOU HONGWANJI MISSION (FOUR TEMPLE COUNCIL)

This year, 2023, is the 25th year of Hongwanji's participation in the Adopt-A-Highway program along the northeastern coast of Hawaii Island. The Adopt-A-Highway program is coordinated by the State Highways division. The division's website says: "Adopt-A-Highway is a public service program for volunteers to pick up litter along Hawaii's highways. It's a way for environmentally conscious citizens to make a contribution to a cleaner Hawaii. In addition to a cleaner roadside, participants help to prevent pollutants from entering our storm drains, streams, and the ocean."

The Adopt-A-Highway program was first proposed to Honomu Hongwanji leaders by their Rev. Kevin Kuniyuki in 1998. They agreed to the proposal and diligently carried it out for ten years. However, because of age, health, or death, by 2008 only six healthy Honomu volunteers were still willing and able to participate. Bob Mento and other Honomu leaders then successfully convinced the Four Temple Council to adopt the program under the leadership of the late Richard Fujii of Papaaloo, later followed by Harold Uyeno of Honohina, then Helen Benevides of Papaikou.

The Council had been recently formed by Papaaloo, Honohina, Honomu, and Papaikou Hongwanji Missions at that time. The main purpose of the Council was for the four temples to coordinate expenses and duties related to sharing a minister, while otherwise continuing to operate independently; each retaining its own policies, plans, Board of Directors, and Officers. In addition, participating together in some joint activities, such as the Adopt-A-Highway program, received enthusiastic approval from all four.

The adopted highway section was a 2-mile segment along Highway 19 in the Honomu-Papaikou area. The usual routine was for about 20 folks to meet quarterly each year along the highway at 8:30 a.m., then to pick up trash till about 10:00 a.m. They would leave about 25 filled trash bags along the highway for State Highway crews to later pick up, and then the volunteers would regroup at Honomu Hongwanji for refreshments and fellowship. Cost average for such a workday was about \$200, basically for the refreshments. State Highway provided bags, colorful safety vests, gloves, and safety information. When asked what were the most unusual things they had picked up over the years, Bob mentioned car tires, hubcaps, a bicycle, cans, bottles, personal male and female items, farmers' produce baskets, and more.

So, it has been 25 memorable years for folks from the four neighboring temples to regularly get together to do a nontraditional community service project. Sadly, Papaaloo Hongwanji recently had to shut down permanently, but its members continued in a newly merged Honohina-Papaaloo Hongwanji Mission.

If you want to learn more about the Adopt-A-Highway program, go to this link:

<https://hidot.hawaii.gov/highways/home/doing-business/adopt-a-highway/>

Recently, a Hawaii News Now TV report included the Adopt-A-Highway crew as one of several community service groups a Hilo TV producer recognized for serving the community. You can see that clip at this link: <https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2023/04/19/meet-hawaii-island-youtuber-whos-making-an-impact-one-yard-time/>

Mahalo to Our 2023 Donors!

The name of the newsletter is a reference to our Shin Buddhist teaching that reminds us of "Namo Amida Butsu" — the voice of Amida calling to us and our voice calling to Amida in response. *Ka Leo Kāhea* informs and connects us with every member of our statewide Sangha. Through this connection, temples and districts can learn from and help each other, thus strengthening our organization.

We would like to thank and recognize the people who have so generously donated to help fund the *Ka Leo Kāhea* in 2023. Thank you to: Florence H. Shibata, Linda Y. Yamaguchi, Mae M. Aito, Nancy Minamide, Judith Fujiyama, Etsuko Osaki, Tokimi M. Miyatake, Wayne T. Yamaguchi, Sumiko Tokumaru, and Calvin T. Matsumura.

Donations were received from January through September 27, 2023. Please contact us so that we can make corrections for any errors or omissions at newsletter@honpahi.org. If you would like to make a donation, you may use the QR code or mail a check to HHMH.



Ty Wakahiro Tells Jikoen's Story in His Award-Winning Website

By **PIEPER TOYAMA**

JIKOEN HONGWANJI MISSION

Ty Wakahiro first learned about Jikoen Hongwanji Mission's history when he visited Jikoen as a member of Mililani Hongwanji Dharma School. At that time, he learned about the historical connection between Jikoen and the Okinawan immigrant community on Oahu. That visit was the inspiration for his nationally-recognized website.

Ty, a 2023 graduate of Mililani High School, has been recognized not only for his academic accomplishments but also for his history projects. He graduated valedictorian of his class and won the Outstanding Social Studies Student of the Year Award in 2022 and 2023. This year he earned the Hui O Lualima Lorraine Toma History Award. Most recently he won national attention for his website and was awarded the National Immigration History Award.

Ty is also active in the Hongwanji. A member of Mililani Hongwanji, he was recognized as an Outstanding Jr. YBA member by the Oahu United in 2022 and 2023 and is currently its president.

The theme for the National History Day website competition for 2023 was "Frontiers in History: People, Places, Ideas." Jikoen's history inspired Ty to tell the story of the Okinawan immigrant experience as an example of a group of people facing a frontier of prejudice that they eventually over-



Ty Wakahiro (center) poses with friends and family members (left to right: Rev. Shindo Nishiyama, mother Mari, sister Erin, Ty, father Brad, Pieper Toyama, and grandfather William Wakahiro. (Courtesy of Suzue Nishiyama)

came. He saw Jikoen's role in supporting the Okinawan people as a critical factor in their success.

The thesis of his website is as follows:

The first Okinawans (Uchinanchu) arrived in Hawaii on January 8, 1900. Living and working in Hawaii was a harsh frontier for the Okinawan immigrants. As a result of prejudice and other factors, Hawaii's Okinawans lacked a safe place to gather as a community, making the frontier significantly more difficult. In response, the Okinawan community and the largest Buddhist denomination in Hawaii transcended Japanese prejudice to transform the Hawaiian frontier for Okinawans. They did this by establishing a Buddhist temple called Jikoen Hongwanji. It provided an important central place for all Okinawans,

regardless of religion or village, to safely gather and prosper in Hawaii for decades to come.

From meticulous research through books, documents, interviews, and photographs, Ty told of the prejudice and isolation Okinawans faced. A central part of his website documents the story of how Jikoen was started and how it served the Okinawan people regardless of their village origins and their religion. Jikoen provided a safe place for all Okinawans to meet and sustain their culture when they needed it most.

Jikoen and the Okinawan community are grateful to Ty Wakahiro for placing the Uchinanchu and Jikoen stories on the national stage. You can see Ty's website by typing the following link into your browser: <https://site.nhd.org/15001164/home>

PBA

Continued from Page 1

including parents, trustees, alumni, and temple members, joined in preparing the silent auction with proceeds being dedicated to the Maui Wildfire Disaster Relief Fund to help the Lahaina Hongwanji Mission, temple members, and Lahaina non-profit organizations. We received a range of donations including Hawaiian Airlines miles, spa gift cards, international wines, and Tahitian pearls, concluding the night with \$8,102 raised.

This year, I felt that there was a special connection between the honorees and PBA students. The seniors, known for their charisma on campus, developed inside jokes with the honorees after just one day of interviewing them. The Matsumotos enjoyed updating students on their son (2023 PBA graduate) Caden Matsumoto's college experience at Pacific University. Alicia Moy and senior Ryan Lim bonded over bonsai trees.



Seniors James Robinson, Mone Sugimoto, and Vance Maruya present Inspirational Leader awards to Rev. Eric and Mrs. Tamayo Matsumoto. (Courtesy of Alan Kubota)

Rintaro Kawai cracked jokes at the banquet podium about feeling nervous in Suzanne Vares-Lum's presence. And CEO of Kupu, John Leong took the mic to encourage Lycan DeVol to apply for a job.

The night was a beautiful reminder of why honoring inspirational community leaders for their dedication and service is so important. Lighting Our Way plays a vital role in connecting our youth with successful

professionals and role models and, in a reflection of honoree speeches, highlights the next generation of peace practitioners.

PBA would like to thank the community for their kokua in putting on a successful and heartwarming event that supports the mission of the school, provides an invaluable learning experience for our seniors, and is a celebration of admirable Hawaiian leadership.

Rev. Kalu

Continued from Page 2

By taming the discriminating mind and realizing the oneness of all life, a more peaceful world is possible. If humankind can spend vast resources towards making instruments of war and destruction, so too can we channel those resources to a more positive endeavor that benefits not only humanity but the whole planet as well. Indeed, Mahatma Gandhi himself said, "Our greatest

ability as humans is not to change the world, but to change ourselves."

There is a Chinese saying that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. Such is the way to peace, too; we begin with ourselves and radiate it towards others. Everything begins in our minds; what we think, we become. What we sow, we also reap. Violence brings about more violence; love and goodwill begets peace and tranquility. If we harbor peaceful thoughts, we become a peaceful person regardless

of external conditions. And like a wave that begins small, the peace that we spread to others becomes bigger until it engulfs the world and humankind into a different, much better reality, that of the end to wars and much suffering. The way of violence has no mind and there are no winners in fighting, only losers on both sides.

Thank you, and may there be lasting peace for all of us as we live this period of escalating global conflicts that could spell the doom for all humanity.

Rev. Hironaka

Continued from Page 1

for panic.”

Recently, I saw a big black cloud. I found myself checking if it wasn't smoke.

Maybe it's because I'm lost in thought or distracted, but I often pass through intersections I should have turned at. So, my daughters are navigating me now.

The disaster consumed the entire town. Moreover, in the meantime, it consumed people's hearts. The fire has been contained, but I wonder if the fire is still engulfing within people's hearts and is not contained yet. At least, that is the case for me.

Pretending to be fine, the stress.

Isolation, feeling like nobody understands. And I don't want them to understand because, for example, I want to understand the feelings of someone who is dying in a few days due to illness, but I can't. It's impossible.

One day, I took a nap in an attempt to get some sleep, even if just for a little while. I had a dream. It was a dream of a fire. I lost everything. I woke up and thought, "Ah, it's good. Just a dream..." Relief was short-lived, or rather, no, this is reality.

If this is a dream right now, please, I beg you, wake me up.

There is one Buddha who challenged the impossible. After the practice of five kalpas, he became a Buddha of complete empathy with us, he is the one who can become my tears - Amida Buddha.

When I make a wrong turn, he doesn't scold me,

he simply stays by my side as I take the long way. When I can't pretend to be fine, he doesn't say, "It's been long enough, cheer up!" Instead, he stays within me, saying, "It's okay, it's not easy to be cheerful now."

When I panic at the smell of smoke, he doesn't tell me to calm down. He smiles and says, "Your reaction will someday turn into a movement to help neighbors evacuate and many others too."

I would like to live together with this Buddha, to work toward rebuilding the temple with Amida Buddha.

The photos here are of Lahaina Hongwanji Temple on the day after the fire, these photos were taken and quickly spread around the world.

What does this picture look like to you?

To me, it looks like the temple, with every last moment of strength, is protecting the Buddha and desperately fighting against the attacking flames, guarding the spiritual home of the Lahaina community.

It also looks like my child. These photos capture the very last moment of life. "It's okay now, you've done well. You don't have to stand strong anymore. Lie down. Just let go," I want to say.

It also looks like a father protecting his child from incoming bullets on the battlefield. He gets hurt himself but fiercely guards the Go-Honzon (Amida's statue), a noble sight.

I can hear voices saying, "Rev. Ai, don't come back home now! I will try my best until you are back here. But it's hot! I'm sorry, Sensei, I can't stand it



"I will continue to live, along with the voice of Buddha." Rev. Ai Hironaka gave a profound Dharma message at the Maui Wildfires Memorial Service. (Courtesy of Alan Kubota)

anymore."

I feel like I'm hearing a willful voice saying, "Please rebuild the new temple strong like me!"

I want to engrave this final image of the temple in my heart with recitation of Nembutsu.

Namo Amida Butsu
Lahaina Hongwanji's Social Hall, you were always wonderful place for Fujinkai, new year's party, and place of gathering. I sang Karaoke at new year's party, it was embarrassing for me, but you didn't laugh just listened to my singing. I will never forget about you for the rest of my life.

Namo Amida Butsu
Lahaina Hongwanji's business office. You protected my messy table for years. Many, many board meetings were held inside you. You were just like a brain at Lahaina Hongwanji. I will never forget about you for the rest of my life.

Namo Amida Butsu
Lahaina Hongwanji's School Building. You were so famous in this town, you were just like a bridge

between community and temple. In your long history, you were a place for Japanese School, YBA hall, Judo Class, Aikido class, preschool, and many others. I wish I could see you when you were young, full of students after Kamehameha third elementary school. I will never forget about you for the rest of my life.

Namo Amida Butsu
Lahaina Hongwanji's Ministers' Residence, thank you for your long service for all ministers who lived there, as their family home. Thank you very much for protecting our personal belongings, family pictures hanging on you, Father's Day letters from my kids and so forth until you died. If you couldn't make it, that's fine to me. I and my family were so happy to be with you these past 13 years. I wish I could say "Tadaima," or I'm home one more time. I will never forget about you for the rest of my life.

Namo Amida Butsu
Lahaina Hongwanji's temple building Hondo, thank you for your long

service since 1933. You were so beautiful, gorgeous, and a perfect figure to blend with the old historical town of Lahaina. You didn't run away from the fire like I did, you stayed and protected Amida's statue until the end. You were gentle, but so strong. I will never forget about you for the rest of my life.

Namo Amida Butsu
Lahaina Hongwanji's Go-Honzon, Amida Buddha's statue, I apologize for not being able to save you. It must have been hot. I'm so sorry about that. I remembered, we evacuated together when Tsunami occurred in 2011, brush fire in 2018, and we slept in the same room. I wish we could have evacuated together this time too. I tried, but you were in smoke already, I had to run back to my family place with great remorse and disappointment. I chose my life, and I regret it so much. But, because of that, it nurtured my religious heart. You are still guiding me to your Pure Land. From now on, I will worship to my own Nembutsu, which is you coming from my mouth. You looked so peaceful and made me recite Nembutsu I don't know how many times. I will never ever forget about you for the rest of my life.

Namo Amida Butsu
We will rebuild, for sure.

Namo Amida Butsu
I will continue to live, along with the voice of Buddha.

Namo Amida Butsu
Namo Amida Butsu

HFBWA

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bership count, it is not always accurate because more and more women are getting involved at the temple level (which is a good thing), but not necessarily joining the BWA. When asked, they say they are too busy to join or don't want to work in the kitchen. However, some Units have welcomed their Sangha men to join since they, too, see the value of the BWA and wish to support the organization.

On a personal note, I was the HFBWA president from 2008-2011 and ready to lead the Hawaii delegation of 200 members to the 14th WBWC in Kyoto, Japan in May 2011. No one could

have anticipated the catastrophic event in March when the earthquake and subsequent tsunami occurred in the northeastern Tohoku area, with a death toll of 20,000. This was a natural disaster, like the recent Maui wildfires that decimated Lahaina town, including Lahaina Hongwanji. We sincerely mourn the loss of the lives of family members and friends in the community, for even one life lost is one too many.

Our plans were dashed. However, the event was still held. Then Bishop Eric Matsumoto, his wife Tamayo, and advisor Rev. Shindo Nishiyama joined me and 70 others (mainly from Moiliili, Jikoen, and Hilo Betsuin BWAs) at the 14th WBWC and the 750th

memorial year event for Shinran Shonin.

Throughout the years, I reflect on our Buddhist teachings. One gatha sums it up for me. It's called *Ikiru*, translated as "To Live." I memorized the first verse and sing it often.

In gratitude for yesterdays I've seen.

In gratitude for gift of life today.

In gratitude for all tomorrows yet to be.

I bow in gassho.

Namo Amida Butsu.

Changes in the Hongwanji (and the world) have been inevitable with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. Our temples were shut down and each person's life was changed forever. Again,

many lives have been lost and this time I am certain we each know at least one or more fatalities. We slowly began recovering and reconnecting to each other, this time electronically. Today some of us still prefer meeting for Sunday services, seminars, or committee meetings by Zoom instead of in person. However, we are still connected with each other due to the embrace of Amida's wisdom and compassion.

Please visit the hawaiibwa.org website for extensive information on the HFBWA, including a list past presidents to whom we are eternally grateful: Kimiko Okano, Toki Ume-hara, Fusae Kiyokawa, Rose Nakamura, Carol Yamamoto, Donna Higashi, Janet

Honda, Irene Nakamoto, Lois Toyama, and Linda Nagai.

Metta and In Gratitude

Triple Celebration Events

Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii will commemorate the Triple Celebration on September 7 & 8, 2024, at the Ala Moana Hotel. The theme is "Sharing the Joy of Nembutsu Together: Our Living Heart of Gratitude," with keynote speaker Rev. Dr. Takashi Miyaji of the Southern Alameda County Buddhist Church (BCA). We will observe commemorative services and workshops at the event. Stay tuned for registration information.

Emi Hashi

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Growing up in the Hongwanji temple has been a big part of who I am. I learned many Buddhist values from a young age through Dharma School, and my aunts and uncles at the temple shaped me into the person I am today. In Jr. YBA and through the BSC, I met some of my closest friends, who I am still in contact with well into my adult years, over 10 years later. The Hongwanji gave me a community and

support system, as well as taught me the life lessons to handle challenging situations. For example, living on the mainland during the pandemic as an Asian-American was a trying time.

But the Buddhist temple in Arizona was like a taste of home — the temple bell and Shinran statue were comforting and provided a sense of sameness with Hawaii — except with more cacti. And remembering that we are all interconnected, yet accepting that I can only control myself, was an important reminder

while surrounded by those with differing viewpoints from my own. Overall, I'm so happy to be back home and I hope that the next generation of young people will be able to find the same comfort and community in the Hongwanji for years to come.

Over the next few months, I will be busy trying to revive some of the Hongwanji youth programs. The Jr. YBA has remained active under the guidance of their experienced advisors and hardworking members. I will look to support their continuing

efforts however I can. YESS Camp hasn't happened in a few years, but the tradition hasn't died out. There is a group of dedicated staff and counselors who have remained committed to putting on this opportunity for middle and high schoolers to form friendships and learn about the Dharma. It will be a lot of work to plan, but my goal is to have an in-person YESS Camp in 2024. The Buddhist Study Center has also been re-opened and the goal is to create a gathering place for UH Mānoa and other students in the area, to

provide somewhere to study and relax. If we can put together a core group of young people, we can restart the Fellowship Club and hopefully get more young adults active in Hongwanji activities.

I'm looking forward to this journey and thank the Hongwanji Sangha in advance for your support. If you know anyone who might be interested in any of these youth programs, please spread the word. Please tell them to contact me at the Buddhist Study Center, or email me at ehashi@honpahi.org.