



From the desk of  
*Senator Pohai Ryan*  
Hawaii State Senate

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**Kailua Embraces Ho`okipa**

Earlier this month the New York Times published a beautiful article in their travel section entitled "My Kailua" by Lawrence Downes (<http://travel.nytimes.com/2011/09/04/travel/return-to-kailua-hawaii.html?pagewanted=all>).

*Excerpt: The windward Oahu I know best is three communities: Kailua, Lanikai and their next-door country cousin, Waimanalo. They're beachy but not snooty. Kailua has a downtown but no night life to speak of. It's less a spot for touristic stimulation than a place you nestle into, as Hawaiian royalty once did, escaping dusty Honolulu since long before King Kamehameha's day.*

Downes's thoughtful and heartfelt writing really captured the spirit of Kailua and would certainly convince anyone considering a Hawaii vacation to book their airfare at once.

It has subsequently come to my attention that a letter to the editor was submitted in response to the article which reads as follows:

*"Lawrence Downes paints a nice picture of my Kailua. The trouble is that Mr. Downes forgot to mention that real Kailuans don't want tourists at all. There is, in fact, a plan in place to start a 'tourists go home' campaign. Gentrification and creeping tourists have already destroyed what remained of Kailua's quaintness, and many local folks are being displaced by high rents because of the proliferation of illegal rentals, higher grocery costs and higher taxes."*

I take exception to this letter. Every resident has a right to an opinion, but not to speak for the whole community by labeling only those who hold these unfriendly views as "real Kailuans". As a Native Hawaiian representing the district that encompasses Kailua and Waimanalo, it is important to stress that our island culture embraces the value of **ho`okipa** (hospitality). It is a central component to our sense of **aloha**. Additionally, we do not own Kailua; we are the stewards and have the responsibility to **malama** (take care of and nurture) the land and the people we come in contact with.

In my experience as an active community member, I encounter far more people than not who embrace visitors, not only for their economic contributions, but also for cultural exchange and a broadening of world views. Although we are an island state, far removed from both the east and west, we do not live in isolation. In fact, the sharing of cultural values is what makes us so unique in a world full of "us vs. them" mentalities because we are an inclusive culture made up of many practices and views. Personally, I love to share Hawaii with others, and specifically how special Kailua is.

When Hawaii residents travel across the world, I certainly hope they are not confronted with views such as those espoused in the editorial letter. Any such "tourists go home" campaign that may crop up will not be embraced by this state senator, and I believe that most "Kailuans" will stand with me on the side of tolerance and with the Hawaiian value of **ho`okipa**.

Aloha,

**Senator Pohai Ryan**

*-serving the 25<sup>th</sup> Senate district of Hawaii*

*Hawaii Kai, Waimanalo, Keolu Hills, Lanikai & Kailua*