

Finding Our Way Podcast
Aloha 'Āina with
Dr. Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio

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IG: @findingourwaypodcast
findingourwaypod@gmail.com
www.findingourwaypodcast.com



Prentis: To understand the history we embody is to understand whose eyes we use to see, whose stories and fantasies we inherit. Colonization, along with its violence, is an altered looking. The imposition of a story of entitlement. This is an episode in part about the land of Hawai'i, but it's also about the struggle for sovereignty. It's about how we both imagine and destroy paradise and the connection and intimacy available when we begin with listening. Our guest today is Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio, who is a Kanaka Maoliwa artist, activist and professor of indigenous and Native Hawai'ian politics at UH Mānoa. She is the author of "Remembering Our Intimacies: Mo'olelo, Aloha 'Āina, and Ea." She is also a friend, and takes us through a really deep and challenging, gorgeous exploration of freedom and intimacy. I hope you enjoy this episode. Jamaica, first I wanna thank you for

saying yes to being on this podcast, and I wanna welcome you to Finding Our Way.

Jamaica: Thank you. It was, um, humbling to be invited and just stoked to be in conversation today.

Prentis: I'm honestly so grateful. I haven't talked to you in a long time, but you know, as soon as—I don't know if listeners know, but I lived in Hawai'i for some time, where my partner's family is from, and is currently—and you were one of the first, I would say you're part of the first people I've met, but one of the first people I witnessed in Hawai'i telling the story or telling a story of Hawai'i and your work and your voice deeply impacted me. So I wanna thank you for that. And, um, just grateful to be in conversation with you. I wanna start with the question I always start with, um, which, you know, the podcast is called Finding Our Way, and it's kind of about asking questions that feel critical for this time that we're in and talking with the people who are asking questions, who are attempting to answer questions who are trying to figure out a path forward. So I wanna ground us first with this question: from your perspective, from where you are, where are we? And we can be defined, however, you'd like to define it, but where are we, where are we headed? How would you talk about this time?

Jamaica: Mmm, thank you for that question. The first word that jumps to my mind is not surprisingly a Hawai'ian word. The word is huluhia. It means to overturn, but it also means to be in a state of overturning, and in a state of both chaos and creation and abundance and fear, but also power. And the word has been used to describe everything from prayers and chants to our God of the volcanoes, Pele, to describing actual political upheaval. You know, when a new mō'i, a new Supreme leader is, is taking control of a particular part of our Aloha 'āina, of our land, of our environment, it's been the best word, I think, to describe actually much of my life. You know, I'm 31 years old. I was born in 1990 in Hawai'i. That means I was born really in this major upswing of the Hawai'ian movement that had gained steam since the 1970s and eighties, where people were really starting to figure out strategy and tactics and had a bit of a modern educational foundation in, in Hawai'ian teaching.

Jamaica: And that's just only gotten more palpable that huluhia feeling, especially in, in 2019, when we were, we'll probably talk about this on Maunakea, and then everything that's happened since from a

coup staged at the United States capital, to a global pandemic, to the poisoning of, the US military poisoning, Hawai'i's aquifer. All of that fear and the kind of terrifying nature around that speaks to huluhia but also all of the beautiful uprising from, you know, indigenous rights, collective movements from Black Lives Matter. Uh, people taking power back is a kind of huluhia and insistence of the power we always had. I like to describe this time as that, because it helps me make sense of all the hard parts of our lives right now. And there's so much that is difficult and painful and terrifying, but it also gives me strength and hope and understanding that this is actually what transformation has always felt like. This is what it feels like to tear down violent systems and to make space, to create the world we deserve. Yeah.

Prentis: Yeah. You know, one of the things that really is striking me in what you're sharing, what you're offering in this frame is not a looking away. It's not a denial. It's not saying everything is great. And okay, but saying, this is part of a process of undoing what has been done. I think there's a lot of, um, purpose in that. There's a lot of possibility in that, in, in any direction, but it gives us a, a place to look and act. You name so many places that I wanna go in this conversation. And I, I first wanna begin with, I wanna begin with Hawai'i in a way, I think there's so many projections, colonial projections I'll say, that if you are not from Hawai'i, if you're from the United States in particular, you inherit so many projections on what Hawai'i is and what entitlement you have to Hawai'i. I just wanna ask you as Kanaka, as Kanaka Maoli, what, what is Hawai'i to you? Can you help me see, to whatever degree I can, Hawai'i?

Jamaica: Hmm. I don't think anyone in my 31 years of life has ever asked me that question. So I'm gonna sit with that for a second. But the, the first answer of course is that Hawai'i is home, and it's not just my home, but it's home to my family and it's, and when I say it's home to my family, I mean, it's been home to thousands of generations of my people, both human and beyond human. It is now home to my daughter, which means Hawai'i has changed for me in a real way, which I think you, you probably understand. It, it seems so simple to say, but is actually quite profound and important for native people to insist that we will continue to be here, especially in a place like Hawai'i, as you say, that it has so many powerful colonial projections that have erased us or depicted us as somehow ornamental to this place.

Jamaica: Uh, when that couldn't be further from the truth. Hawai'i is also a place that is somehow, still so far beyond the power of that colonial imagination. That is always coming back. That no matter how grossly overdeveloped or harmed or violated, she just keeps coming back. Early in the pandemic when we shut down tourism, the fish came back, the sharks came back, in a matter of months, right? So it's, it's this place that is always regenerating and correcting us, correcting our harms. I think we have a lot to learn from Hawai'i in that, in that kind of tenacity, in that understanding that I consider myself a kia'i, a protector, of mountain, of land, of water, but I've, I've said this before, but I, I find the need to say it often, we as humans don't actually protect our environment. Uh, she gives us an opportunity to come back into our humanity when we step into the role of protector. But we know that the 'āina will outlive us. She will outlive every colonial scar and trauma that has been inflicted upon her. And we gather strength from that as, as Kanaka. I've learned to hate the word resilience because it kind of honors the ways we've been violated, but there is certainly a resilience to our 'āina that we draw mana from, that we draw power and inspiration from, and that's the Hawai'i that is currently buried under all kinds of tourist BS.

Prentis: Yeah. Yeah.

Jamaica: You know?

Prentis: I, I do, you know, it's when I first went to Hawai'i, you know, my partner was living there and she asked me, I mean, she wasn't my partner then, but she asked me to come visit her, and I got there and I thought, this is not the United States. <laugh> <laugh>, And it occurred to me pretty quickly. That, that was a whole experience that I continued to have over time, but it also reshaped how I felt about... At that time, I was going back to Los Angeles where I was living, and Los Angeles looked different to me. The colonial project of Los Angeles looked different to me. I'm grateful for the realignment of my own looking that Hawai'i was able to offer me too. Um, I, I wanna drop into this question around tourism because I, I, I feel like this last, you know, during the pandemic, it was the first time I had heard people

Prentis: I knew saying, oh, should I not go to Hawai'i? <laugh> Do you think I shouldn't go to Hawai'i? Because of, I think activists and organizers, like you, and other folks who, whose voices were breaking through in that moment to say much of what you

shared about how Hawai'i came back, fish came back, the sharks came back. But I, I guess I just want you to trouble that water some too about tourism and Hawai'i. Cuz I think for some people it was the first time that they had even engaged the idea that Hawai'i was not accessible to them. And from whatever perspective you wanna kind of talk about that accessibility and tourism. I'd just love to hear your thoughts.

Jamaica: I, I don't remember where I read this, which is unfortunate, cuz I like to cite my sources, but I read this wonderful quote a few years ago and someone said, "Hawai'i is the place where even the most politically conscious go to sleep." You know, like I've got all kinds of folks that I would describe as woke, you know, doing the work in their own communities, organizers, activists, critically conscious in, into the praxis of it all, who it doesn't reach over into the paradise that is how Hawai'i has been depicted. Right? Hawai'i is almost beyond the reach of political consciousness in that way. For me, that wasn't something that was illuminated by the pandemic as it might have been for a lot of a lot of people, because that's just been our experience for so long. So yeah, I, I think about this, this question a lot, what does it mean as someone who is very openly outwardly anti-tourism, anti the corporate tourism model, like unequivocally totally against it.

Jamaica: <laugh> I think about what does it, what does it mean to be a visitor? What does it mean to build pilina, intimacy with people beyond Hawai'i, with comrades who we're doing work with? You know, if we say that Hawai'i has something to teach the world, and I believe it does, I believe Kanaka have something we can offer in the same way that we have a lot to learn from our friends. That means there has to be some opening for those kinds of exchanges, but because the tourism industry has saturated our lives and really caused extreme, detrimental harm to our people in our environment, it sucks up all the oxygen. Right? It's so hard to imagine what it would mean to welcome someone and creates this kind of almost like shut it all down. I don't want anyone to come here. <laugh> Um, you know, and that's part of a larger history,

Jamaica: I think, for a lot of people who are coming to these ideas for the first time. I'm a nerd, right? So I'm always gonna suggest y'all you should read this, but Haunani Kay-Trask, god, our beautiful kumu, she wrote a beautiful article called "Lovely Hula Hands." And it was published first in 1993 in a book called From a Native Daughter,

which is obviously a nod to Notes of a Native Son. Um, so connections, you know, there. But, the end of the chapter, she says, "If you're thinking of coming to my homeland, don't. We don't need any more tourists. We certainly don't like them." And that sentence alone, that's a direct quote. That sentence alone really shattered a lot of people's minds in a certain way. They're like, "you can't say that." But the power of an, a native woman saying to everyone, like "you cannot come here in a good way right now."

Jamaica: And what does that force us to do? And how must we look, reflect on ourselves in a new way when consent is very clearly not granted. And we cannot say we didn't know. And so, yeah, I, I struggle through those questions a lot in wanting to imagine and really live into a world where people's access to Hawai'i is not mediated by the Hawai'i Tourist Authority. Or not mediated by some BS Disney movie or some Apple Plus series developed by Jason Momoa, but is really like a authentic, honest, vulnerable intimacy forged between real people like meeting at the center. But, you know, colonialism's just in the way, so I don't know what to do with that today. <laugh>

Prentis: This always happens to me when I interview people, I feel so inspired and alive and curious, and I'm feeling that with you right now. One, I think I wanna say to people, not from Hawai'i, that I think part of what gets obscured to in our construction of like a paradise of Hawai'i, or fantasy of Hawai'i, is that we forget to honor the land that we live on and to see the beauty in the land that we live on. It, it's just a, it's a paradigm that puts a paradise elsewhere, where that ends up aiding in our destruction to the lands that we live on.

Jamaica: Mm-hmm <affirmative> mm. Cause so much about Hawai'i is like that paradise, but also this idea of a need for escape. Then I really think about what kind of world have we created that we are all so hungry for escape? You know, whatever systems and violences we can name here, the talk that we're all trying to escape from. I had never heard anyone explain this other side of the, the paradise mindset as a way to dishonor your own land. That's gonna stick with me for a while, but I, but I think about that, why not create a world that we don't wanna escape?

Prentis: Well, I mean, honestly, Hawai'i taught me that. And I say that in a very, as much as I can, in a grounded non-romantic way, Hawai'i

taught me that. Hawai'i taught me that, taught me to, to look differently at where I stand. And in some ways it helped me return to the South. So I'm grateful for that. I wanna kind of deepen into this place around intimacy and relationship to one another and relationship to place. And I've heard you talk some, I've seen you write some about intimacy and the practice of Aloha 'āina . And I just wonder if you can talk about how you are not only conceptualizing, cause it puts it only in the head, but how you're living this practice of intimacy that is inclusive of and connected to and within the land.

Jamaica: Yeah. So for, for folks who may not be familiar with that phrase, Aloha 'āina, if you were to look it up in a dictionary, it would say "love for the land; to care for the land." And then shortly after it would probably say something like "Patriot" or "patriotism". So, and that's the definition of the word, patriotism and patriot, that was really early associations that were offered to me in, in that word growing up and it never quite fit in my head. And luckily there are people like Noenoe Silva who wrote really extensively about how patriotism exalts something very different than Aloha 'āina does. Aloha 'āina exalts the land, that puts the land at the center of our nationhood of our relationships, to each other. It's a completely new orienting or different orienting. And I've, I've spent a lot of time thinking about this phrase. I mean, I, I wrote a book inspired by Aloha 'āina that really tries to, not define it, but to help to describe some of the intimacies that it includes that have been often erased.

Jamaica: You know, some of the intimacies that have been bastardized by our Western Christian conversion in Hawai'i, you know, the ability for a wahine to fiercely love and care for and another wahine. But if I were to break down Aloha 'āina at its most basic and fundamental sense to me, Aloha 'āina is a reminder, an orientation even, to understanding that in order to love someone, you must love the 'āina that has fed them, that has fed you, that has taught you about love, and that these relationships are completely inseparable. Meaning, if I am removed from my 'āina, if I'm removed from my land, I am removed from my source of learning about love and therefore my relationships will suffer. I will not be an effective lover, an effective partner. I don't have access to learning from the kahawai, the stream, and how she loves the lo'i, the taro patch.

Jamaica: I don't have the knowledge and the instruction from how the kai, the ocean, and the kahawai, the stream, meet at the muliwai, at the brackish water, and they make love and produce life. Right? Without my connection to 'āina, I don't get to learn that there. So I learn about love elsewhere, right? I learn about it in TV, and on the internet, and on Twitter. <Laugh> And that is a disorientation from what it means to really Aloha. And I'm thinking about this, you know, you asked me, what does this practice look like? Right? Because I've written and I've, I've theorized about it a lot. I've spent a lot of time with Aloha 'āina in my head and imagining, you know, what does that mean for my body? What does that mean for my spirit? And the way that I move? And there is no greater example to me than the time that I was blessed to spend, at the foot of Mauna a Wakea in 2019 at the Pu'uhonua o Pu'uhuluhulu, the place of refuge we established at Pu'uhuluhulu, and that place of refuge for those who may not be familiar, was established specifically to block further desecration of our mauna and block the movement of construction vehicles traveling up to the summit of our mountain.

Jamaica: But it was in that place where that connection between a love for land and a love for the people beside me was really put to action. When you think about, as an example on July 17th, 2019, 38, elders were arrested, blocking desecration of that 'āina, of that land, and following their, their arrest and removal, the road was then blocked by a couple hundred native Hawai'ian women, native Hawai'ian māhū, queer and trans folk, and native Hawai'ian kāne, men. They took over the road. We saw ourselves as protectors. We, um, we articulated ourselves as people who were protecting the mountain that was at our backs, but then we also, in a very real way, protecting each other when faced with five different enforcement agencies across the islands, including the national guard, militarized police, LRADs also known as sound cannons, tear gas, canisters, guns, batons, right? When you stand in that line saying, I'm here to protect 'āina, and then you realize you're linked in a line of women who you would give your life, your life to protect,

Jamaica: it makes very clear the way that the mountain or all 'āina, all land, becomes the, the 'apu, the water basin almost, to carry your love for your people. Right? The, the 'āina, makes the space for that. We would not have been loving on each other in that way, if the mountain didn't call. But I also think about how then the mountain in my conception and practice of Aloha 'āina, becomes

not just a theoretical ancestor to myself and my now five and a half month old child, but how she is in every way, a part of this child's genealogy. Right? I, I fell in love with my partner on the mountain. I met and was protected by the kāne who helped us conceive this child on that mountain. I dreamed, I wrote my first letters to this child on that mountain, right? So that is also Aloha 'āina, that, that place. We're actually taking her there tomorrow. I'm really excited about it. This is why I'm, I'm thinking about this, right? But that place without her, she would not exist. And I know without the mountain, I would not exist. And, and that's more removed in my mind. There are other degrees of separation, but for my child, there is no degree of separation. If there was no mauna, there would be no Kaleiwohi. And to me, that in this new world that I'm living as a parent, that is the meaning of Aloha 'āina.

Prentis: Wow. I haven't actually heard anybody talk about it that way and, and weave it through story and lineage. And that way I feel really moved by, by that. I feel really moved that. Some people may know this already, and some people may not know, but you are a part of a family that is known for being artist educators. I mean, your father is very well known scholar, musician, and you are also, and I'm, I'm wondering if, kind of in this place where we are—I, I still feel when you started talking, you were talking about being at the foot of the mauna, I, I still feel that place very strongly—I'd like to hear from you the importance of generational movement, this legacy and movement, like, how are you almost conceptualizing time now that you have a young one and knowing the elders that you come from? How do you relate to generations of movement?

Jamaica: I, I begin with the understanding that, and this is not something I understood as a child. This is something I came to understand as I grew older. I had an incredibly privileged upbringing to grow in the malu. The malu is a word we use to describe the shade or the protection. We, when we stand under the mountain, we say, we live in the malu of the mauna. I've realized now, as I have aged, how privileged I was to grow up in the malu of my father and in the malu of his comrades, people like Haunani, like Lilikalā Kame'eleihiwa, like Albert Wendt, like Teresia Teaiwa. These people who frequented our conversations and our dinner tables, and then to continue to grow older, and for that community to broaden, for that dinner table to broaden, to include people like Mari Matsuda and Charles Lawrence and Joy Enomoto, you know, brilliant revolutionary thinkers who have transformed.

Jamaica: You know, you say that Hawai'i changed the way you, you looked and you, you saw your own environment. I mean, these people changed narrow vision of the world, you know, who, who showed me so many intimate connections between my intimate experience as a Native Hawai'ian woman and the intimate experiences of so many other people living on other land and fighting connected, but distinct violences. I think about how I would have sat at a table with so few of these people had I not been born to my parents. You know, my father's a musician. And that was actually his entry into Hawai'ian politics, is, he was kind of late to doing the school thing and late to the activism thing, but it was music that got him there. It was Hawai'ian music that got him there. And so I think if my grandfather and great grandmother hadn't taught my father, these songs, hadn't cultivated in him, an intense and unwavering love and connection to our ancestors through this music,

Jamaica: then he would never have stepped into a university classroom and he would never have studied under and with Haunani, Lilikalā, Kanalu Young. And I may never have been born at all, let alone have been, been able to bear witness to their brilliance. I mean, them being at the center of organizing and movement work when I was a child. And to see that as if it was common, as if it was happening in every dining room, I can almost not articulate how transformative that has been to my life, as someone who continues against all the violence that has tried to stop this, continues to imagine, continues to believe that we can build something different because I grew up thinking that that those conversations were happening in every single home. Beautiful world to live in as a child and then to kind of be traumatized to realize, oh, wait, this is not happening everywhere.

Jamaica: Um, what am I gonna do about it? <laugh> Um, that was hard. You know, I'm not gonna lie. Like the teenage years were difficult because I couldn't reconcile my experience in the intimate parts of my life, to the broader experience I was beginning to have as a conscious free moving person. <laugh> I I've said this before, I think a lot of people assume that my father, the activist, artist, scholar, that he is at some point sat me down and told me America sucks... and all these things are horrible... and this is, this is the dogma of what we believe... and here's our scripture... And I need to make it really clear that that that never happened. My father allowed me the privilege of accompanying him to, to be,

you know, the child in the corner or on the laps of all the aunties and uncles, as they planned revolution.

Jamaica: Um, and he didn't tell me what was right or what was wrong. He just offered me opportunity to learn from places that my classroom would never take me to. And so, as I think about, okay, so how these generations move from my, my great grandparents and beyond who practiced and cultivated these stories and these songs and how that became the people, the center of my father's purpose, and then blossomed into something. I mean, I, there's no other word for me than spectacular and awe inspiring. And then has come to shape my life and the way that I think about not only what is possible, but what is our kuleana, what are our responsibilities and privileges to dream and build the world we deserve. That offers both incredibly unclear and also very clear instructions on my job now as a parent. And I am being challenged in new ways because I have always had the privilege and tenacity to speak very directly, to make clear my beliefs, my criticism, my dreams, and I want so badly for my, my daughter to, to have a bit of that magic that I did growing up, to think this is happening in every house, that these conversations are happening everywhere, but I also want so badly to allow her dreams and her vision to grow unimpeded by my own, that mine is not just the voice in her head telling her where we need to go, but that I find a way to do what my father somehow magically did and cultivated my ability to dream for myself.

Jamaica: And I, I think that is our role as we move from 'ōpio, young people, to makua, to parents, we train the next generation, not with necessarily our blueprint, our dogma, our, you know, specific vision, but instead offer them opportunity, access, confidence, support, and those are all like new things I'm not so good at yet, so growth is uncomfortable as I'm sure you know,

Prentis: <laugh> Absolutely. I've been, um, since earlier, when you were sharing about tourism in Hawai'i, I've been thinking about just this, the discomfort people, and I'm not doing this in a careful way, but the discomfort people might experience in hearing this for the first time, and I, I think it's really important. I think it's really important for us to have those spaces. There's so much growth in the discomfort. There's something here for me to confront about what I've always taken for granted. And there's something new to create here. And I actually don't know how yet to do that. I think there's such an offering in that. That's how we grow. It's how we

mature. One thing we haven't really touched on, we touched on tourism, but we haven't touched on the militarization of Hawai'i and the militarization I'd say of the Pacific.

Jamaica: Explain all the ways the military has ruined my life? <Laugh> Is that the, the meta question behind the question? <laugh> How much time you got?

Prentis: What, what needs to be said now, uh, about the militarization of Hawai'i and maybe I think a connection or a way to kind of move through that is, and I hope this doesn't add an unnecessary layer, but I'm thinking about sovereignty and what sovereignty means. I was in some ways introduced to the depth of what sovereignty could be in Hawai'i. And it comes very much up against how I experienced the, the way that Hawai'i has been so deeply militarized. So maybe that's a way through it, is thinking about sovereignty. But I've just, whatever feels necessary to share now,

Jamaica: For sure, where to begin? Since we did talk about tourism, it, it might be useful to begin articulating the connection between tourism and the military. There's a word that was coined by brilliant, radical, wonderful, late great Teresia Teaiwa. The word is "milatourism". And she articulates beautifully how these logics, how these systems are interlocking in a place like Hawai'i. There's not enough time in the world to detail all the ways that these things are, are working together. But what I can tell you is the two, you know, main parts of the Hawai'i economy are tourism and military spending. And this has completely gridlocked our fake state into, you know, refusing any kind of imagination of another way to live, right? Any, any call to reduce military impact or footprint in Hawai'i is met with, we can't survive without the military, not just because "they're here to protect us," but because what will we do without their money?

Jamaica: And the same thing is met when you talk about imagining a different world in Hawai'i than one that is run by tourism. So I'll, I'll leave that there. These things are connected. The military, the US military and Hawai'i has, they've been here since January 17th, 1893, when Marines were landed in Honolulu Harbor and assisted in the overthrow of our Hawai'ian Kingdom. That day began what is technically an ongoing military occupation. So we live under ongoing military occupation. And that occupation has become so normalized. And the, the best way I can describe Hawai'i is both, we live in this strange facade of paradise while also living in a

military state. There is no other way to describe Hawai'i. Where I live in Wahiawa, in the kind of like the center of O'ahu, my daughter is frequently woken up by Black Hawk helicopters, flying, circling overhead, or, you know, gun training happening up the road.

Jamaica: We see military Humvees driving on our freeway. Like that's normal. Their presence is both everywhere and nowhere, if that makes sense. And their impact on our land and our people and our resources is, has been transformative, to say the least. Uh, and this has resulted in a few things. The, the one is that, you know, the military takes up more than 25% of the land on my island alone. And whether it's training areas or housing for military families. Why does this matter? Well, you know, Hawai'i has a serious problem, inability to shelter all of our people, and that's not only created by the military, but it is certainly exacerbated by the military. Other kind of really important impacts in terms of, you know, the physical, the mental, the spiritual wellbeing of our people, I think of two kind of events. The first of course, is you alluded to it in talking about the film.

Jamaica: I recently was a part of co-creating a VR film experience called On the Morning You Wake (to the End of the World) and the project basically centers in on January 14th, 2018, when everyone in Hawai'i got a, like an alert message, saying that there was a ballistic missile inbound, this is not a drill, take cover <laugh>. And I can't, I can't actually say that without laughing. It was outrageous. It was both shocking and unsurprising. I think, for anyone with any sense of military history in Hawai'i, I mean, you don't have to look back very far to see the way that Hawai'i has been made a target, has been used as training ground for American Imperial interests, right? I mean Josh Hartnett's in a whole damn movie about it, Pearl Harbor. You know, I think that that moment revealed something to a lot of us who may have not been thinking about militarism in Hawai'i, who may have not been privileged

Jamaica: like I have to be in the inner circles of brilliant de-military activists like auntie Terri Keko'olani, who's been talking about genuine security for decades, right, as an alternative to national security, this lie we've been sold that we need all this military violence, including kind of the, you know, not just the violence on the land, but the violence on our people. We need all this military destruction because it will protect us. The January 14th event was

a very stark articulation of who was and wasn't going to be protected under national security. You know, you say, you're, you're thinking about sovereignty. It's a reminder of what those Pacific activists of the 1970s and 80s articulated when they insisted that denuclearizing the Pacific must include independence, right? When it wasn't enough to say we need a nuclear-free Pacific, but a group of organizers said, we need to change that to nuclear-free and independent Pacific, that these things are linked. That we, we will not be beyond the violence of militarism and imperialism, if we do not have self-determination, if we are not allowed to make these decisions for ourselves. And, you know, if we have a short memory, so a lot's happened since 2018, right? There was the mauna movement, there was a global pandemic, so even in Hawai'i, even though the, the scars of that really traumatic event live on in a lot of people, we don't actually talk about the event very much. And so the US Navy's poisoning of our water has provided both another moment of shock, but also not being surprised. I, I guess what's important for people to know about the military and Hawai'i, is what's important for people to know about the military period. And that is that the military only makes possible death. There is nothing else that is produced by militarism besides death, besides violence. And we're talking about contamination of water.

Jamaica: We're talking about depleted uranium in our soil. We're talking about violence against women, direct violence and, and rape to women, queer people, trans people. I could cite all the horrible stories. There is no good that comes from this kind of accumulation, than the violent protection of power. And Hawai'i is unfortunately one place where you don't actually have to look that hard to see it. It is just under the surface. And I think again, like I'm kind of, I'm, I'm kind of an optimist, I'm a cautious optimist, which means I have to be able to find the opportunity, the lesson, the ha'awina, as we'd say, the homework, the teaching in the harm <laugh>, that's being done to us. And if there is anything useful or that can be turned to good from this harm, it is that sifting just below the surface of what we've come to take for granted in Hawai'i in terms of the military is an opportunity to challenge militarism everywhere.

Jamaica: It is an opportunity to look to the horizon and to remember Bikini, Enewetak, kitty VAs, Kalama, Maralinga, Emu all these places that have been harmed by Western imperialism and and militarism. It is, it is an opportunity to, to look to Turtle Island and the way the

military has completely damaged and destroyed so many environments and people's there. It's an opportunity to look to Palestine, to forge connections with our comrades there, who, who share similar but distinct experiences with military occupation. And when it's as urgent as the water being poisoned, I think it, it helps us all commit a bit more to this urgency. A bit more to this is now about all of us. It is very hard to say that this is about someone else now. When it's in the water, when you live on an island and it's in the water, this was actually the topic of conversation in my class this morning.

Jamaica: And one of my students said the, the hardest part for her about the water contamination and everything going on around it is that she can't trust that her water is safe. And I, I ask my students, how many of you feel this way? Every single one of them throws their hands in the air. And I just, I grieve for these students. And I grieve for myself. I grieve for my daughter. There were already so many fears and terrors that we have carried with us on our backs. This one thing that we've always said will give us life, "Ola I Ka Wai," "Water is Life." We cannot, we cannot trust it. We cannot trust that it has been protected. I don't think that's a trauma that is ever gonna just go away.

Prentis: Hmm. Thank you for sharing that. And I, you know, years ago, I think it was 2015, I had gone to Ferguson to support some organizers there, and the next day, I had flown to Big Island, to the island of Hawai'i, and gone up to Maunakea with the organizers who were there, at that time. And I didn't talk to anyone then at the time around that I'd just been in Ferguson, because it was something for me to take in, in my own body, to go between these places and the movement and the uprising and the, the resistance, to feel that in my body across such significant time and space and geography. Jamaica Heoli thank you for your time. Thank you for sharing here some of what Hawai'i means and for gifting us the discomfort and the reflection and the being seen. I'm really grateful. I, I, years ago I was in your house, I heard you sing, and that clarity in your singing voice is so palpable in what you share and and how you look. And so I just wanna say thank you to whomever and however that was cultivated in you, and thank you for sharing it here. I'm really glad I got to connect with you today. Thank you.

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