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Honolulu, Oceanic Urbanism: home(IN)stead

**Jonathan "tookHNLA" Evangelista and Roderick
N. Labrador**

Abstract

This photo essay by photo journalist Jonathan "tookHNLA" Evangelista and anthropologist/Ethnic Studies scholar Roderick Labrador explores what an "oceanic urbanism" can mean by visually representing contemporary legacies of the 1920 Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, which set aside roughly two hundred thousand acres of Hawaiian homestead land that effectively created a reservation-type landscape in the islands, relegating and regulating Native bodies to contained spaces. Although the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act sought to "rehabilitate" Kānaka Maoli by returning them to the land, it primarily reinforced the colonial relationship between the United States and Kānaka Maoli and racialized Native Hawaiians through blood quantum regulations.

The city of Honolulu is usually figured as Waikīkī, a global tourist playground often imaged/imagined as a tropical paradise with swaying palm trees and white, sandy beaches. Honolulu is also an urban center, surrounded and constituted by kai and wai, ocean and fresh water, respectively, thus exhibiting an oceanic urbanism. This photo essay by photo journalist Jonathan “tookHNLA” Evangelista and anthropologist/Ethnic Studies scholar Roderick Labrador explores what this oceanic urbanism can mean by visually representing contemporary legacies of the 1920 Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, which set aside roughly two hundred thousand acres of Hawaiian homestead land that effectively created a reservation-type landscape in the islands, relegating and regulating Native bodies to contained spaces. Although the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act sought to “rehabilitate” Kānaka Maoli (or Native Hawaiians) by returning them to the land, it primarily reinforced the colonial relationship between the United States and Kānaka Maoli and racialized Native Hawaiians through blood quantum regulations.

The photos are organized using the oceanic metaphor of sets, which are composed of groups of waves, which collectively form swells. In this case, these sets of photos would form a (global) south swell. Photos of Waikīkī are sandwiched by photos of two Hawaiian homesteads, Wai‘anae on the west side of O‘ahu and Waimānalo on the east side:

SET 1:

wai•‘anae
mullet•water

SET 2:

wai•kīkī
spouting•water

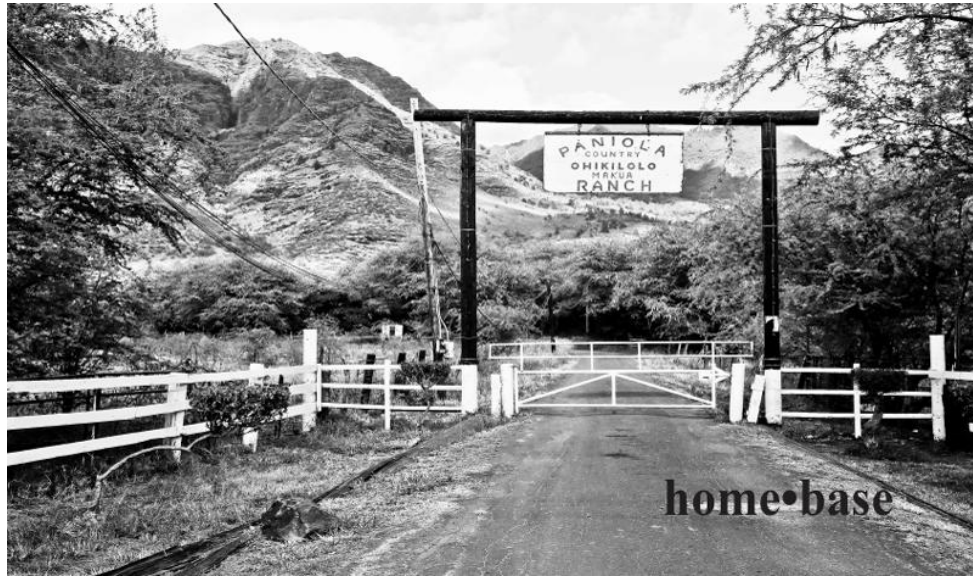
SET 3:

wai•mānalo
potable•water

The photo/cards play with the idea of “home” and the various iterations and possibilities of home. For example, does the bronze statue of Duke Kahanamoku reflect the erasure/exposure of the Native in this oceanic urbanism? What does “home” mean for dispossessed Natives in this global city? Where is “home” and how does one make “home” in these homesteads and in Honolulu’s oceanic urbanism?

Set 1:
wai•'anae
mullet•water









home•omorphic



















Set 2:
wai•kīkī
spouting•water

















Set 3:
wai•mānalo
potable•water



















About the authors

Jonathan “tookHNLA” Evangelista was born in the Philippines and immigrated to the U.S. with his entire family when he was three years old. He grew up in the inner city of Los Angeles, where Hip Hop became one of his greater interests in life, speaking to the things he encountered in his youth and eventually becoming a foundation for his thought, and later his photography. After he relocated to Honolulu over ten years ago, he linked his love for Hip Hop with his love for photography and became one of the few photographers to document the local Hawai’i Hip Hop scene. He currently works with various groups/organizations in planning and organizing local Hip Hop events while also completing several works for exhibit.

Roderick N. Labrador is an Assistant Professor of Ethnic Studies at the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa. His research and community work focuses on race, ethnicity, class, language, cultural production, migration, education, and Hip Hop in Hawai’i, the United States, and the Philippines.