



THE HAWAII COUNCIL FOR THE HUMANITIES PRESENTS

FILM FOR THOUGHT 2022



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FILM FOR THOUGHT 2022

In 2022, as the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic begins to dissipate, we are bearing witness to war in Eastern Europe, rising political conflict around the globe, and ongoing climate change catastrophe. On O'ahu, the poisoning of our water supply from the U.S. Navy's fuel tanks at Red Hill poses an immediate threat to life. Meanwhile, over a dozen U.S. states, emboldened by the Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, have moved swiftly to strip away rights to abortion. How will we survive in this world?

The five films in this year's Film for Thought series look, unflinchingly, at how social change happens, and not always for the better. Each film records and represents people who struggle, resist, and organize. They offer us a political education—showing us how power operates. The films challenge audiences not to imagine or dream up another world but to grapple with the world we live in now.

In *WHINA*, the revered Māori leader, Dame Whina Cooper, galvanizes thousands to march hundreds of miles across Aotearoa/New Zealand to bring visibility to Indigenous land struggle; while in *BAD AXE*, a mixed-race Asian-Latino family bravely attends a Black Lives Matter protest in a MAGA-supporting town and confronts armed white supremacist militia members. In *MIDWIVES*, set in Rhakine State, Myanmar, a Buddhist midwife takes on a Muslim apprentice as groups of Buddhists hold demonstrations to expel and exterminate Rohingya Muslims from the country; whereas in *BATTLEGROUND*, conservative Christian groups, led by and comprised overwhelmingly of white women, align themselves with President Trump to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. *MY SMALL LAND* tells a more personal story of friendship and everyday resilience via a family of Kurdish refugees that encounters the violence of a highly restrictive immigration system in modern-day Japan.

Recently, activism has come into mainstream consciousness through social movements like Black Lives Matter as well as well-publicized events like the Women's March and Trans Liberation March. These events recall the 1960s protest movements for queer liberation, civil rights, and an end to the U.S.-Vietnam War. While activism calls to mind larger movements that aim to gain and exert power, it can also take the form of small acts of daring and defiance. How does activism change the world? And what role does film play in representing that activism or inspiring or educating new movements? All of these films invite discussion about social change, as well as the legacies and resilience of individual people.

Mahalo nui to our five fierce wāhine of color scholars, Kim Compoc, Grace Caligtan, Monisha Das Gupta, 'Ihilani Lasconia, and L. Ayu Saraswati. We invite you to read their reflections and attend the free Film for Thought discussion events. Finally, we hope you will use the films to talk story with friends and family and dare to ask difficult questions about how we have arrived at the state of the world today.

DANIELLE SEID, UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MĀNOA

Danielle Seid is assistant professor of English at UHM, where she teaches courses in film, television, and media. She writes about popular representations of race, gender, and sexuality for academic journals like Amerasia, Feminist Media Studies, and Flow, as well as media outlets like Public Radio International.

BAD AXE



HAWAI'I PREMIERE
UNITED STATES 2022 | ENGLISH | 101M

6-NOV 4:00 PM | KAHALA
NOV 14 - 27 | ONLINE

DISCUSSION WITH DAVID SIEV
ONLINE | FREE (DETAILS AT [HIIF.ORG](https://hiiff.org))

SYNOPSIS

After leaving NYC for his rural hometown of Bad Axe, MI at the start of the pandemic, an Asian American filmmaker documents his family's struggles to keep their restaurant open. As fears of the virus grow, deep generational scars dating back to the Cambodian Killing Fields unearth between the family's patriarch, Chun, and his daughter, Jaclyn. When the BLM movement takes center stage in America, the family uses their voice to speak out in their town where Trumpism runs deep. What unfolds is a real-time portrait of 2020 through the lens of this multicultural family's fight to keep their American dream alive in the face of a pandemic, Neo-Nazis, and the trauma of having survived a genocide.

BAD AXE world premiered at SXSW, where it won a jury award and the coveted Audience Award for Best Documentary.

DIRECTOR	David Siev
PRODUCERS	Jude Harris, Diane Quon, Kag Vasquex
CINEMATOGRAPHER	David Siev

THOUGHTS

Director David Siev's riveting documentary BAD AXE takes its name from his predominantly white hometown in rural Michigan. Siev began the project in March 2020 to chronicle his family's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, namely the lockdowns and difficulties in keeping the family restaurant afloat. But this film covers so much more: the anti-Asian violence, the murder of George Floyd, and the fear that Trump might be reelected. With a Cambodian refugee dad and a Mexican American mom, three mixed-raced adult children, and two boyfriends (one white, one Black), this is a family with more than one reason to be afraid.

The film begins with the eldest daughter Jaclyn opening hate mail from an ex-customer, who tells them to "go back to Cambodia" after learning that the family marched in the local Black Lives Matter protest. Jaclyn refuses to give in to their demands to shut up, even if they lose the restaurant the family has spent decades building. She cannot just stay quiet and assimilate like her parents did. She explains: "Standing up for other people isn't political. It's just doing the right thing." In this way, the film chronicles not just the era of Black Lives Matter, but of Asians for Black Lives, and the life-or-death stakes of multiracial solidarity.

Although Michigan is part of the "blue wall," most of its counties vote red, with the urban areas and college towns swinging the state blue. Bad Axe, a town with less than 3,000 residents, is over 90% white, 6.1% Hispanic, 2% Asian, and only .04% Black. (In contrast, Detroit, two hours south, is 77% Black, 14.4% White, 7.7% Hispanic, and 1.9% Asian). The Siev family and others like them don't just face occasional microaggressions, they must keep themselves safe from the local militia building a neo-Nazi training camp. Siev's father admits: "I'm more scared now than I was of the killing fields." This line references Siev's first film YEAR ZERO, which stars his father (Chun Siev) and details the family's escape from Khmer Rouge genocide in 1977. This backstory adds another layer of emotional complexity to the film. Chun apologizes for his mistakes, holds his children close, and trains them on how to use a shotgun.

A filmmaker based in New York, Siev returned home for the filming of BAD AXE. In contrast, his two sisters remained close to home and continued to help with the restaurant. Their Mom, Rachel Siev, who attended the Black Lives Matter protest, remains courteous to everyone no matter how threatening the phone calls get: "You don't live here; you have no clue," she tells her son. The family restaurant, named after Rachel, employs MAGA supporters and serves them their food; the Sievs risk their lives every time they open their doors. Indeed the film itself becomes a risk to the family's safety after the film's fundraising trailer is released. Still, the family insists that people do change, and they're not going anywhere.

The film doesn't take the time to detail the genocide of Native Americans that the town's terrifying name references, nor the U.S.-led "war on terror" in the Middle East. Yet this film is absolutely about white supremacist terror and trauma. At the same time, Siev describes his film as a "love letter" to Bad Axe, the town where he grew up and where his grandmother is buried. For the director and his family, Bad Axe is synonymous with family love. Their town pride may not make sense to outsiders and maybe it doesn't have to. Even the Black boyfriend Austin says, "I don't want people to think my town is racist." This is a portrait of a people who deeply love their place, and even their country, warts and all.

KIM COMPOC

Kim Compoc is an assistant professor of history at the University of Hawai'i, West O'ahu. She is affiliated with the Honolulu-based organization Women's Voices, Women Speak and the International Women's Network Against Militarism.

BATTLEGROUND



HAWAI'I PREMIERE
UNITED STATES 2022 | ENGLISH | 104M

12-NOV 3:00 PM | KAHALA
NOV 14 - 27 | ONLINE

DISCUSSION WITH CYNTHIA LOWEN
15-NOV 5:00 PM | ONLINE | FREE

SYNOPSIS

This June, the Supreme Court overturned Roe versus Wade, ending 50 years of constitutional protections for abortion in the United States. How have we arrived here, when 7 in 10 Americans support access to legal abortion?

Comprised of Gen Z activists, members of the Christian Right, and even some Democrats, there are powerful organizations across the US sharing a common goal: to render abortion illegal. This eye-opening documentary focuses on three women from distinctly different walks of life who are leading the charge in their quest to overturn Roe V. Wade, as they face down forces equally determined to safeguard women's right to choose. Immersing the viewer in the anti-abortion side of the discourse, we bear witness to their well-organized networks, politically potent activism, and their policy gains under Trump. With first-rate access to protests, conferences, and recruiting campaigns, this may prove to be an illuminating portrayal of anti-abortion advocates for those on the other side of the debate.

Told with restraint and balance, director Cynthia Lowen seeks to clarify rather than condemn, and presents a new point of entry for this challenging topic. In the face of rapidly disappearing reproductive rights in America, this thought-provoking piece is certain to spark conversation about one of the most pressing issues of our times.

DIRECTOR	Cynthia Lowen
SCREENWRITERS	Cynthia Lowen, Nancy Novack
PRODUCERS	Rebecca Stern, Steffie Van Rhee, Jeff Sobrato, Dexter Braff, Nicole Shipley, Ryan Harrington, Ruth Ann Harnisch
CINEMATOGRAPHERS	Gabriella Garcia-Pardo, Barbie Leung

THOUGHTS

If the fall of *Roe v Wade* has become a moment to take a closer look at politics, power, and rights to bodily autonomy, then Cynthia Lowen's documentary *BATTLEGROUND* offers a clarifying lens.

Lowen gives viewers access to the inner workings of the pro-life movement, a movement that many in the U.S. have underestimated. Days before the 2016 election, we hear closed-door conversations with Steven Bannon, Donald Trump, and leaders of the evangelical conservative Christian Right. We also go backstage at pro-life gatherings and meet a loyal cadre of pro-life college students and their dedicated rhetoricians. And, finally, we go to the voting booth with a self-identified "progressive" atheist who withholds her vote for Trump and cheers when Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg dies, creating the window for Justices Neil Gorsuch, Brett M. Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett to ascend to the court. These film moments reflect an ongoing fifty-year realignment of a political party and its allies who once historically advocated for personal liberty, responsibility, privacy, and limited government.

It's worth remembering that Republican George H. Bush once supported and co-authored the Title X Family Planning program, and then President Richard Nixon signed it into law. For decades, family planning and access to contraceptives was a standard of public health for the Republican Party. In recent times, however, the party's leaders have pursued state-by-state bans on reproductive rights. Now, in our post-*Roe* political landscape, the party seeks a national ban over people's bodies and private health care decisions. While pro-life lawmakers sometimes promise to strengthen a safety net for pregnant people, it is often the states that limit abortion access most severely that have the weakest family support systems. In viewing *BATTLEGROUND*, one may consider Dr. Diana Greene Foster's Turnaway Study, which provides an examination of the long-term socio-economic harm of forced parenting. Given that lack of abortion access takes the heaviest toll on the poorest people, Lowen initially went to places like Alabama, where abortion was first criminalized in 2019 and the entire state had only one abortion provider.

Whether conservative voters like it or not, they are now yoked with single-issue pro-life voters that co-opt social justice language, as with the phrases "Pro-Life=Pro-Woman" and "Black Pre-Born Lives Matter." *BATTLEGROUND* asks: Is the U.S., which has the highest maternal mortality rate among developed countries, a democracy in decline? In this way, *BATTLEGROUND* is a fine work of oppositional research from a self-avowed pro-choice filmmaker who respects both the film's subjects and audience enough to allow them to come to their own conclusions.

In Hawai'i, where abortion and contraception remain safe, legal, and available, concerns among the general public about abortion stigma nevertheless persist. For households still reeling from COVID-era inflation, debt, and unemployment, abortion can delay an unexpected pregnancy until a family and home is fully prepared to raise a child. Across the islands, the call for ongoing vigilance to safeguard bodily autonomy, dignity, and human rights is, perhaps, taken most seriously by millennials and members of Gen Z who led an intergenerational coalition this past summer. Recently, the Hawai'i Abortion Collective compiled a resource guide to support those exploring pregnancy options and abortion. Thanks to their grassroots leadership and the legal protections fought for and won in the past, Hawai'i will continue to be a leader in reproductive and sexual health. In the words of one of the coalition's youngest members, "One in four of us loves someone who has had an abortion. Let's remember abortion is health care and it is a human right."

GRACE ALVARO CALIGTAN

Based in Honolulu, Grace is passionate about supporting families, youth-serving professionals, and young adults to have open, honest conversations about bodily autonomy, consent, and meaningful and respectful relationships. For the last twenty-five years, they have been retained as a consultant for expertise in local and national organizing efforts for reproductive justice.

MIDWIVES



HAWAI'I PREMIERE

MYANMAR, GERMANY, CANADA 2022 | ROHINGYA, BURMESE W/ENGLISH SUBTITLES | 91M

11-NOV 6:15 PM | KAHALA

13-NOV 5:00 PM | KAHALA

DISCUSSION WITH SNOW HNIN EI HLAING

19-NOV 10:00AM | ONLINE | FREE

SYNOPSIS

Hla and Nyo Nyo live in a country torn by conflict. Hla is a Buddhist and the owner of a makeshift medical clinic in western Myanmar, where the Rohingya (a Muslim minority community) are persecuted and denied basic rights. Nyo Nyo is a Muslim and an apprentice midwife who acts as an assistant and translator at the clinic. Her family has lived in the area for generations, yet they are still considered intruders. Encouraged and challenged by Hla, who risks her own safety daily by helping Muslim patients, Nyo Nyo is determined to become a steady health care provider for her community.

Snow Hnin Ei Hlaing's remarkable feature debut, which won the Special Jury Prize in Excellence in Vérité Filmmaking at Sundance, was filmed over five turbulent years in a country that has long been exoticized and misunderstood. The filmmaker's gentle, impartial gaze grants unique access to these courageous women who unite to bring forth life. Filled with love, empathy, and hope, *MIDWIVES* offers a rare insight into the complex reality of Myanmar and its people.

DIRECTOR	Snow Hnin Ei Hlaing
PRODUCERS	Bob Moore, Ulla Lehmann, Mila Aung-Thwin, Snow Hnin Ei Hlaing
CINEMATOGRAPHER	Soe Kyaw Htin Tun

THOUGHTS

MIDWIVES is director Snow Hnin Ei Hlaing's first feature film, winner of the Sundance Film Festival's Excellence in Vérité Filmmaking award. The film follows the lives of Hla, a Buddhist midwife, and her Muslim apprentice, Nyo Nyo, in Rakhine state, Myanmar. Their lives as midwives serve as a microcosm of the struggles to survive in a country racked by violence from ethnic genocide, forced expulsion, and competing political power. But whereas the hardship embodied in third-world women is often represented to evoke pity and invite the "white savior" within us (even when we are not white), MIDWIVES precludes that possibility and offers us something else entirely.

Life is hard, but MIDWIVES gives that hardship historical specificity, political texture, and personified agency. The film excels at capturing the stark contrast and simultaneousness of living amidst bombs and beautiful landscapes: that life is both inevitably interrupted and must go on at the same time. It weaves in the banality of everyday life, including the TV programs that play songs propagating Buddhist (i.e., Rakhine) superiority and hatred against Muslims (i.e., the Rohingya), to show how even as Hla is risking her life by treating Muslim patients and teaching Nyo Nyo to be a midwife, she, too, internalizes these values. Hla calls Nyo Nyo "kalar" (darkie, Muslim) who can never be taught to be like her. She sees Nyo Nyo's desire for modernity and materiality as a shortcoming and the source of their conflict. By capturing the tension between Hla and Nyo Nyo, the film refuses to homogenize the women as belonging to the same oppressed group. In fact, narrating the complexity and contradiction that Hla and Nyo Nyo experience and must navigate is key to the film's success. This strategy of representing contradiction allows the film to deliver a depiction of humanity at its most vulnerable and intimate—the film even begins with a scene of women-centered childbirth that exemplifies this sentiment.

MIDWIVES portrays how patriarchy, power, and politics permeate the everyday life of these women—Nyo Nyo claims that it is hard to be a woman as she is expected to care, cook, and clean after her husband and children. Yet, the film unfailingly returns to how resilient Nyo Nyo and Hla are, albeit in different ways. Hla opens fish and popsicle businesses when her clinic is temporarily shut down; Nyo Nyo practices her entrepreneurial skills by gathering resources as she prepares to open her own clinic.

For the American audience, Nyo Nyo provides us with a different and more nuanced representation of the life of a Muslim woman. As Nyo Nyo claims, being a Muslim itself is not the problem, but rather, being a Muslim born in Rakhine state limits her mobility and livelihood. As it is in the United States, in Myanmar, too, the racial ideology upholding Muslims as terrorists is used to argue for their oppression (and even genocide). Here, connections across national contexts need to be made and questioned: at a global level, how do societies and nations benefit from the transnational circulation of anti-Muslim ideology?

Ending with a scene of Nyo Nyo and her daughter on a bicycle, the film forecloses our impulse to play the “white savior” role as it highlights Nyo Nyo’s success as a Muslim woman in a country that aims to erase her very existence. Instead, it provides us with a space to pause and ponder: Where are we situated within global structures of political and economic inequality, and what roles do we play in maintaining this power hierarchy?

L. AYU SARASWATI

L. Ayu Saraswati is professor in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. She is the author of Pain Generation: Social Media, Feminist Activism, and the Neoliberal Selfie and Seeing Beauty, Sensing Race in Transnational Indonesia.

MY SMALL LAND



UNITED STATES PREMIERE

JAPAN, FRANCE 2022 | JAPANESE, KURDISH, TURKISH W/ENGLISH

SUBTITLES | 114M

9-NOV 7:00 PM | KAHALA THEATRES

10-NOV 3:00 PM | KAHALA THEATRES

19-NOV 2:00 PM | MACC (MAUI)

DISCUSSION WITH EMMA KAWAWADA

10-NOV 5:00 PM | ONLINE | FREE

SYNOPSIS

Sarya has lived in Japan since she was five. She pretends to be German to her friends, which is easier than telling the truth. In reality, Sarya's parents are Kurds who traveled from Turkey to Japan as refugees. Furthermore, she is responsible for her younger siblings while her father is at work. Despite the hardships, the future seems bright, and soon, Sarya will be attending college. A tender relationship develops with her work colleague Sota, and her own feelings begin to surface. All Sarya wants is a completely normal life. However, when her father's application for asylum is denied, she is increasingly torn apart. A truly haunting film about the balancing act of a young refugee who is searching for her own world while caught between two other ones.

MY SMALL LAND, the directorial debut of Emma Kawawada, a mentee of celebrated Japanese auteur Hirokazu Kore-eda (NOBODY KNOWS, SHOPLIFTERS), is a nuanced film that explores issues of xenophobia and the impenetrable immigrations laws of Japan, while at the same time telling a heartfelt story about the ups and downs of coming of age, falling in love, and finding yourself.

DIRECTOR	Emma Kawawada
SCREENWRITER	Emma Kawawada
PRODUCERS	Hiromi Morishige, Megumi Banse
CAST	Lina Arashi, Daiken Okudaira
CINEMATOGRAPHER	Hidetoshi Shinomiya

THOUGHTS

Earlier this year, the flight of 1.5 million refugees from Ukraine at the start of the Russian invasion captured international attention and garnered an outpouring of support. The mainstream media's framing of the flight of Ukrainians immediately raises the question: Why is such empathetic coverage rarely extended to Afghan, Syrian, Palestinian, and Ethiopian refugees, to name a few groups who are among the 89.3 million forcibly displaced people around the world? In fact, the story of seeking asylum—the interminable wait, and life-threatening dismissal of asylum claims because of the narrow legal definition of a refugee—plays out daily at the US-Mexico border and across the United States. Thus, stories about refugees are as much about their confrontation with a labyrinthian legal process as they are about their day-to-day life.

Emma Kawawada's *MY SMALL LAND* tells a story about the lived experience of a Kurdish family as they encounter Japan's legal system governing asylum. By highlighting Japan, which does not immediately come to mind when thinking of migrant-receiving countries, Kawawada inserts this advanced industrial nation, as well as Asia, into the conversation about border controls and the reception of displaced people. Importantly, the film draws attention to an often-overlooked people indigenous to the land split by the national borders of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran, where this ethnic group faces political repression and forced assimilation.

Kawawada's film and characters raise crucial questions about legal recognition and statelessness in the context of belonging, though not to a nation-state. Kawawada casts actors from Japan's small Kurdish community; the use of Kurdish, Turkish, and Japanese tracks the paths of flight. The most powerful moments in the film ask viewers to reflect on mobility—how the simple act of crossing into Tokyo from the neighboring prefecture of Saitama can be dangerous for refugees once the state has denied their asylum claims. With a light touch, Kawawada exposes the diminution of three young children as they face the impassive cruelty of the immigration system through her careful attention to the mundane, and the protagonist Sarya's range of expression. Kawawada skillfully juxtaposes small, individual acts of kindness extended to the children, sometimes ambivalently, with the massive power of border controls.

The most valuable questions that the film raises for me as feminist migration scholar are those that provoke us to think about the control of gender and sexuality in the context of migration and settlement. Questions surface about who becomes responsible for perpetuating cultural practices, and who takes care of needs in the community that has little state assistance. Community pressures about who is set up to marry whom, staged in the very first scene of the film, become amplified and rescripted on migration. Going a step further to disrupt assumptions about Kurdish "tradition," we can follow the film's story to trace the pressures on young women radiating out from the intimate space of the small apartment in which the refugee family lives, to the social spaces created by the local Kurdish community, to the Japanese convenience store where Sarya works, to the fetishization of school girls by Japanese men in the cash sexual economy of a karaoke bar.

In teaching migration, I have found storytelling to be a generative entry point into the gendered and racialized complexities of migrant life as shaped by law. Kawawada has told one such story to great effect.

MONISHA DAS GUPTA

Monisha Das Gupta is Professor of Ethnic Studies and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. She is an Asian Americanist who specializes in migration to the United States and Hawai'i.

WHINA



HAWAI'I PREMIERE

NEW ZEALAND 2022 | ENGLISH, MĀORI W/ENGLISH SUBTITLES | 107M

10-NOV 8:00 PM | KAHALA

13-NOV 2:30 PM | KAHALA

17-NOV 7:00 PM | PALACE THEATER (HILO)

DISCUSSION WITH JAMES NAPIER ROBERTSON

& PAULA WHETU JONES

ONLINE | FREE (DETAILS AT [HIFF.ORG](https://hiff.org))

SYNOPSIS

For nearly a century, Dame Whina Cooper's voice never stopped asserting the rights of her people – land rights, women's rights, education rights – and striving for unity between Māori and Pākehā (New Zealand Europeans).

In 1975, Whina (Rena Owen), frail but still sharp as a knife, is roused to unite Māori to fight not only for their land, but for their very existence. Beginning at front Te Roopu O'Te Matakite, she leads a sacred hīkoi (march) over six hundred kilometres, from the top of New Zealand to Parliament House in Wellington.

Following Whina across three key periods in her life, WHINA charts the tumultuous journey and unshakeable inner strength that led Whina Cooper to become one of Aotearoa New Zealand's most formidable leaders. HIFF is honored to welcome legendary actress Rena Owen (ONCE WERE WARRIORS) to the Festival for a special post-screening discussion as part of the Festival's New American Perspectives program in partnership with the Vilcek Foundation.

DIRECTORS	James Napier Robertson, Paula Whetu Jones
SCREENWRITERS	James Lucas, Paula Whetu Jones, James Napier Robertson
PRODUCERS	Matthew Metcalfe, Tainui Stephens, Liz Adams
CAST	Rena Owen, Miriama McDowell
CINEMATOGRAPHER	Leon Narbey



THOUGHTS

"She is the daughter of Heremia Te Wake, chiefly leader of Ngaati Manawa, Te Rarawa and Ngaapuhi. She is from Panguru, the sacred mountain, and the guiding stars. She is of the sacred tree that leans to the west".

WHINA is a timely biopic that guides us through the life of the wonderfully fierce and brilliant Dame Whina Cooper, often referred to as the "Mother of the Māori Movement." Whina was the leader of the first Māori Land March, a 680-mile protest that spanned across Te Ika A Maui (North Island) to bring awareness to the loss of Māori rights and land, and was also the president of the Māori Women's Welfare League, an organization which fought for government resources to better the lives of all Māori. These incredible feats were met with seemingly insurmountable opposition. Yet nevertheless, Whina fought unwaveringly for her people—even when some of them turned against her. In the film, directors James Napier Robertson and Paula Whetu Jones weave portraits of her legacy from birth to old age that adorn our eyes with hope, strength, and the courage to walk in the footsteps of mana wahine such as Whina.

"It's Māori land not yours! Your lease means nothing!" a teenage Whina shouts as she was thrown into jail for trespassing on "private land." This energy of defiance carries the film through decades of resistance. In particular, the film highlights the 1970s, an era of great change for the Pacific. In Aotearoa, this decade was formative to the creation of the Polynesian Panthers and Māori Land March, while in Hawai'i, this decade ushered in the Hawaiian Renaissance, a time of cultural revitalization and protection of land. During this vibrant time, Kanaka Maoli and Māori undoubtedly learned greatly from one another, and tupuna like Whina were the foundation of this knowledge. WHINA staunchly reminds 'ōiwi ("indigenous" people) that the assertion of our ea, our sovereignty, our genealogical connection to 'āina/whenua, will outlive the faux legitimacy of any piece of paper; whether it be title or treaty, the pilina (connection) 'ōiwi have to their homeland will always run deeper because this relationship is reciprocal and not transactional.

WHINA also reminds us of the reality that native women face "double colonization": that is, when native women experience patriarchal violence from their oppressors and from the men within their own communities who have internalized western notions of masculinity and embraced other aspects of colonization. Whina's legacy marches us towards a fierce and unapologetic understanding of the need for Native Feminisms—a feminism that emphasizes connection to land, people, and culture while understanding that patriarchy disrupts these relationships. Such feminism rivals that of its western predecessors and helps us to see that in any effort for decolonization, women's liberation must be at the heart of this struggle, for we know that women's liberation completes the revolution.

In Hawai'i, it is because of tupuna like Whina Cooper that we have the privilege of articulating the power of "mana wahine"—a term Kanaka Maoli have adopted from the Māori to express the strength, fearlessness, and brilliance of a woman. Whina Cooper is the embodiment of all these qualities and more. We will forever be indebted to her legacy and the foundation which she built for all 'ōiwi to stand on.

Dame Whina Cooper, Mother of the Māori Movement. E ola kou inoa.

A poem for Whina Cooper

Liberation is birthed, not borrowed

We will never return them their normalcy

Raised by the hands of matriarchs,

The mind is a womb that conceives paths to the Revolution.

'IHILANI LASCONIA

'IHILANI LASCONIA is from Waimānalo O'ahu. She is a doctoral student in Political Science at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, a rap/spoken word artist, and organizer in Af3irm Hawai'i, a transnational feminist organization centered on women's liberation. 'Ihilani's research interests include indigenous politics, native feminisms, and queer theory. LAND BACK BODIES BACK.



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