



**“A people without knowledge of their past history, origin and culture, is like a tree without roots.” This quote, famously penned by Marcus Garvey, conveys the inspiration for Pōpoloheno - Songs of Resilience & Joy, a celebration of the African experience in Hawai‘i. The project is produced by Māhealani Uchiyama, a former Hawai‘i resident and quite possibly the only lineally recognized Kumu Hula of African descent.**

**Pōpoloheno is named after the pōpolo, a black colored berry which is found throughout Polynesia. It is valued for its medicinal qualities. In Hawai‘i it has become associated with people of African descent because of its rich, dark coloring. Due to subsequent colonial thoughts and practices, the term has since been used as a pejorative. The project is reclaiming the word and honoring the positive meanings of the pōpolo.**

Decades before the arrival of immigrants from Japan, China and the Philippines, there was a strong presence of Africans in Hawai'i. There as a result of colonization and enslavement, these Africans were initially welcomed in Hawai'i and seen as a valued part of the community. They were doctors and businessmen, scholars and musicians, lawyers and trusted members of the Royal Court.

Many people have not heard of this history, and this is what Pōpoloheno seeks to address. The project, supported by grants from the Gerbode Foundation and the Kenneth Rainin Foundation, brought together a team of esteemed artists tasked with writing about this history, including four-time Grammy winner Kalani Pe'a, Nā Hoku Hanohano Award winners Kamakakēhau Fernandez and Patrick Landeza, Nā Hoku nominee Kaulike Pescaia, renowned Kumu Hula (Hula Master) Kawika Alfiche, Hawai'i's "First Lady of Jazz" Azure McCall and project visionary Māhealani Uchiyama. Each contributed songs which reflect the longevity and diversity of the African experience:

There are mele inoa (name songs) such as *Pua Mohala*, about John Blossom, a formerly enslaved man who served in the court of Prince Kapa'akea and perished while attempting to free enslaved Polynesians in Chile, *Wahine Hō'ola*, in honor of

Alice Ball who developed the first successful treatment for Hansen's Disease (leprosy), and *Pua Laulele*, a celebration of Betsey Stockton who was born into slavery and as a free woman became a teacher at the Lahaina mission.

*A Lei for Reverend King* calls to the solidarity and hope shared upon a visit of Dr. Martin Luther King to the Hawai'i State Legislature. *Kumuniu Cumbia* features a compelling morna inspired rhythm and intonation. It is about Peter Hose, a man from Cape Verde known as the "Hula Cop" because of the unique, dance-like way that he directed traffic.

Contemporary figures are celebrated in songs such as *Kamakakēhau*, an expression of love by Kalani Pe'a about his friend Kamakakēhau Fernandez, an African American who was adopted as a baby from Arkansas and raised on Maui, *Māhealani*, a name-song composed for producer Māhealani by her long-term friend Kawika Alfiche, and *Ka Momi Hiwahiwa*, a tribute by Patrick Landeza dedicated to the first Hawai'i - born US President, Barack Obama.

The collection is rounded out by songs of personal declaration. *He Mele Awaiaulu No Hawai'i Ha'aheo* by Kamakakēhau Fernandez is a tribute to his Hawaiian home, and the jazzy *I Am Where I Belong* takes the listener on a journey from Oakland to the Hawaiian Islands as reflected by former Hawai'i resident, Azure McCall.

**And there are many more stories than could fit on one album!**

**An impressive roster of Hawaiian music legends also contributed to the project. These include Ikaika Blackburn, Daniel and Nani Carvalho (Kailua Moon), Justin Firmeza, Hanale Ka'anapu and Jerome Koko (Makaha Sons), Wailau Ryder and Nathaniel Māhealani Stillman.**

**Advisers on Pōpoloheno are Adam Keawe Manolo-Camp (Historian & Sociologist), Dr. Akiemi Glenn (Historical Consultant), Dr. Puakea Nogelmeier (Hawaiian Language Resource) and Dr. Kalei Nu'uhiwa (Hawaiian Epistemology and Protocol Guidance).**

**Music has the ability to draw people together for a common purpose. For Pōpoloheno, that purpose is to learn more about our shared history and experiences.**

**The more we know about ourselves and understand others, the better our world will be.**

MAHEALANI  UCHIYAMA



# Pōpoloheno

Songs of Resilience and Joy

King Wears Flower  
Lil as Symbol of  
Support From Hawaii

...e alaha kei no kua u hoo  
...Nekia's Taha  
...Pu'u...