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REDISTRIBUTING WAIWAI: CARRYING ABUNDANCE FOR MOVEMENT BUILDING IN HAWAI‘I

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Redistributing Waiwai: Carrying Abundance for Movement Building in Hawai'i

Micky Huihui
Hawai'i People's Fund

In this community spotlight, Executive Director Micky Huihui describes the work and aims of Hawai'i People's Fund, an organization that seeks to contribute to social justice movements in Hawai'i through funding and supporting grassroots organizations and leaders doing on-the-ground social justice work.

Just as an ipu (gourd) holds precious wai (fresh water), Hawai'i People's Fund holds abundance for only a short while to be shared with our communities to support their transformation. Its insignia represents its support of huli i uka a i kai (transformation from mountain to sea). At the top, a mauna (mountain) image honors the 1971 huli in Kalama Valley, and below it, the huli at Maunakea in 2019. Both of these pivotal moments heralded the awakening of social change consciousness and movement building in Hawai'i. Water imagery represents the fight for Kapūkakāi (Red Hill) and ongoing efforts to secure water rights across the archipelago, with the negative space depicting the woven netting that holds the ipu and the abundance within it. Movement organizing in Hawai'i weaves together generations of intersectional struggle for peace and justice in Hawai'i – strength in numbers; power in solidarity across issues, class, and race; as well as commUNITY giving and doing.

Figure 1. *Hawai'i People's Fund Insignia*



Since 1972, Hawai'i People's Fund (HPF) has given all of us an opportunity to be a part of something bigger than ourselves. HPF is the *only* organization in the world specifically addressing the needs of grassroots, progressive movement builders in Hawai'i. Initially formed in response to short-sighted development efforts, economic and social disparities, and Indigenous dispossession in Hawai'i, this mighty 'ohana has challenged these inequities by resourcing and advocating for those who upend these issues and contributing to healing.

In 1971, in what Haunani-Kay Trask (1987) called the “birth of the modern Hawaiian Movement,” farmers in Kalama Valley and their supporters from Kōkua Hawai‘i stood up to the Bishop Estate in the first public and highly publicized challenge of farmland to real estate conversion. Members of Kōkua Hawaii included HPF’s Founder, Mr. John Witeck, and many other patriots back when being a patriot was not cool. These folks and many others galvanized the community and redirected resources to support and sustain direct action resisting development in Kalama Valley. The socially conscious movement they instigated in the 70’s is literally at the *root* of the People’s Fund. It taught us to assemble a critical mass of key social justice advocates. It gave rise to the idea that solidarity across struggles can be supported by community-based philanthropy. It showed us what could fuel a viable movement for positive change in our communities.

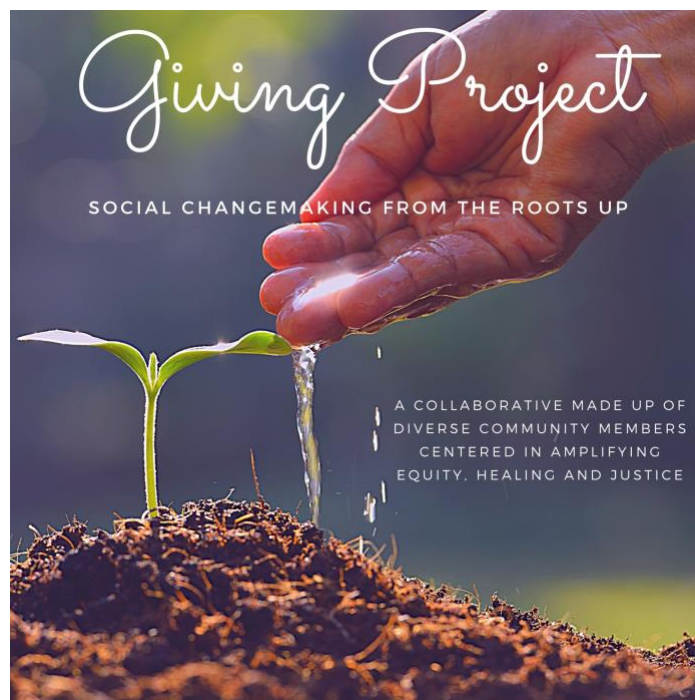
And this movement – a movement of intersecting struggles lifting each other up – spread. Support for Kalama gathered awareness and action in Awawāmalu (Sandy Beach, O‘ahu). These folks then lent a hand in resisting evictions of Chinatown residents, many of whom were laborers. These folks, in turn, showed up to stand with Ko‘olau in Waiāhole/Waikāne. Then, the Filipino and Japanese immigrant community at Ota Camp stood with Kānaka in the Kaho‘olawe struggle and the resistance to the Sand Island and Waimānalo evictions. This movement was a *movement of resistance* to what was becoming the norm of social and economic development, displacement, and dispossession. This cross-class, cross-issue, intersectional approach to organizing was also supported by community-raised funds. *This* is HPF’s creation story – we are a vibrant ‘ohana of changemakers, movement builders, fundshiffters, and advocates for a better world, moving resources to those who are on the ground challenging systems of oppression.

Hawai‘i People’s Fund supports, funds, and amplifies the work of Hawai‘i-based grassroots organizations that challenge systems of oppression (Hawai‘i People’s Fund, n.d.) (see Figure 2). Primarily, HPF connects activists and donors who want to confidently invest time or resources in on-the-ground, grassroots organizing. We are also resource deployers who redistribute community-raised funds through consensus-based, activist-empowered grantmaking. Our grants provide financial resources, technical assistance, and unique networking opportunities to propel the missions of Hawai‘i-based grassroots movement builders, thereby helping to fuel a broader, growing movement for positive social change across Hawai‘i (see Figure 3). Momentum in solidarity movement building is at a fever pitch locally and globally. Thus, HPF’s mission to contribute to collective liberation through its cross-class, cross-issue, multi-pronged, intersectional approach to organizing, which is supported by the generosity of a community who values the critical importance of social justice in Hawai‘i, has been and will continue to sustain HPF moving forward. We truly *do* believe we change the world each time we are able to connect community philanthropy with organizations committed to ensuring a vibrant, just future for generations to come. This aim of collective liberation has guided HPF since the beginning, and while the world has certainly changed, our shared resolve has remained the same.

Figure 2. Areas in Movements for Social Change



Figure 3. Giving Project



HPF prioritizes building *pilina* (cultivating relationships) with grassroots organizations and the larger philanthropic community, building trust, capacities, and assets that affect the sustainability of the change we collectively seek. HPF's values, granting criteria, and grantmaking processes have positioned us at the forefront of funding progressive change in Hawai'i. Our activist-led grantmaking committee is comprised of folks who are on the ground and in the know. They are trained through experience to know and to understand where the pain points are in our community, where the movement is, and how to direct community-raised funds to those most impacted by oppression. Our partners are *already* positioned as changemakers *in* community and are ready to innovate and to pivot in order to provide and to serve their communities. We trust that an organized community is best positioned to solve the problems they face, and HPF prides itself in being a "first touch" for many grassroots organizations in Hawai'i. In other words, HPF's "Change, Not Charity" community-based philanthropy model connects giving to grassroots organizations that are the story of social change in Hawai'i. We recognize that the hui we serve *already have* the power and solutions, and by redirecting resources to fuel that power through our activist-led, consensus-based grantmaking process, we ensure that the direct correlation between community giving and doing results in social change that benefits everyone (Hawai'i People's Fund, n.d.). The organizations that HPF has funded have gone on to become established leaders in the movement toward equity and justice in Hawai'i. Many received their first grants from HPF. Since then, not only have they continued to trailblaze in their communities, but they have also gone on to win larger amounts of funding from well-resourced foundations to further catalyze their work. This affirms that the seemingly cutting-edge movement work that HPF has been in relationship with and committed to for half a century is a powerful strand of the generational resilience that is accelerating and expanding in Hawai'i as we speak.

HPF's work does not end with the distribution of funding, however. HPF also provides wraparound support to both donors and communities by creating spaces for community-building and advocacy. For example, through the Giving Project (see Figure 3), which was launched in 2021, cohorts explore grassroots organizing and giving and its potential to bring about social change through time-tested strategies of political analysis, grassroots advocacy, fundraising, and grantmaking (Hawai'i People's Fund, n.d.). Deployed in virtual sessions on themes such as intersectionality of movement work in Hawai'i, the Giving Project pulls participants in as active changemakers, dissolving lines between philanthropy and charity by creating active roles for those wanting to redistribute wealth and do more. In addition, HPF strategizes with grantees on ways to increase access to resources, including financial and social capital, by engaging in continuous community fundraising and outreach, deepening the impact of this fundraising and outreach, and amplifying news about innovations in order to bring their efforts to an ever broader circle of support.

HPF is the only organization in the world specifically addressing the needs of grassroots progressive movement builders in Hawai'i. These groups are often considered too small, too new, or too controversial by traditional funding organizations. Our work reflects the diversity of the communities we serve. Grantmaking decisions are

made by those most impacted; we recognize the intersections of systems of oppression, and our work is inherently tied to struggles for decolonization, economic, gender, and racial justice. We are dedicated to serving the most creative, passionate, and radical visions of community that bravely navigate the intersections of Indigeneity, environment, race, class, labor, gender, art, technology, mental health, incarceration, food, and other crucial issues that we face. HPF assists Hawai'i's progressive community members to mobilize and organize around action. We aim to advance movements, partnering with each other to realize momentum toward systematic change.

Maui Aloha Grantees

Like many other organizations, HPF shifted our focus to respond to the evolving conditions that arose in the wake of the August 2023 fires on Maui. Our community partners' capacity to spring into action immediately affirms the models of care exemplified by this 'ohana. We are leaning in to support grassroots hui (groups) and already established leaders who are healing the tragic effects of settler colonialism and systemic injustices that in very real ways created the conditions for this crisis. Moreover, we will continue to amplify their efforts so that when the recovery phase begins, these community leaders and those they touch in relief and response will have a voice. We believe that social change organizing and change philanthropy in general are *key* to *kōkua* (help) Maui right now and for the foreseeable future. Thus, we lean in to invest where *pilina* already exists, where communities are in a position to define what communities need most, and communities ultimately determine where funding goes. These hui are mobilizing in all areas, organizing and staffing relief hubs, hosting donation drives, providing healing support, volunteering support, supporting Maui businesses, providing language access to non-English speaking folks, advocating for affected workers and tenants, and so much more (see Figure 4). With long-term social change and just recovery in mind when we launched Maui Aloha, we were confident that the people's response would have a crucial impact on what comes next.

Closing Thoughts

As the only intermediary organization in Hawai'i working with this constituency from a social justice perspective, Hawai'i People's Fund strives to be a model for progressive social change and a viable resource for a strong and enduring movement in the islands. We know that amplification of our grantees' efforts and resources to buoy their work is a must, and that consistent, multi-pronged pressure on systemic inequities, across issue areas, moves us closer to our long-term goal of peace and justice in Hawai'i. Continuing to build upon programming and advocacy (through grantmaking, the Giving Project, amplification efforts, and networking across sectors) and the success of these efforts, HPF's work is critical in sustaining movement and power building in Hawai'i. The current trajectory of fundraising and grantmaking inches us ever closer to this vision, and maintaining this consistency, with an eye on sustainability, is key (see Figure 5).

Figure 4. Power Mapping of HPF-Funded Community Organizations

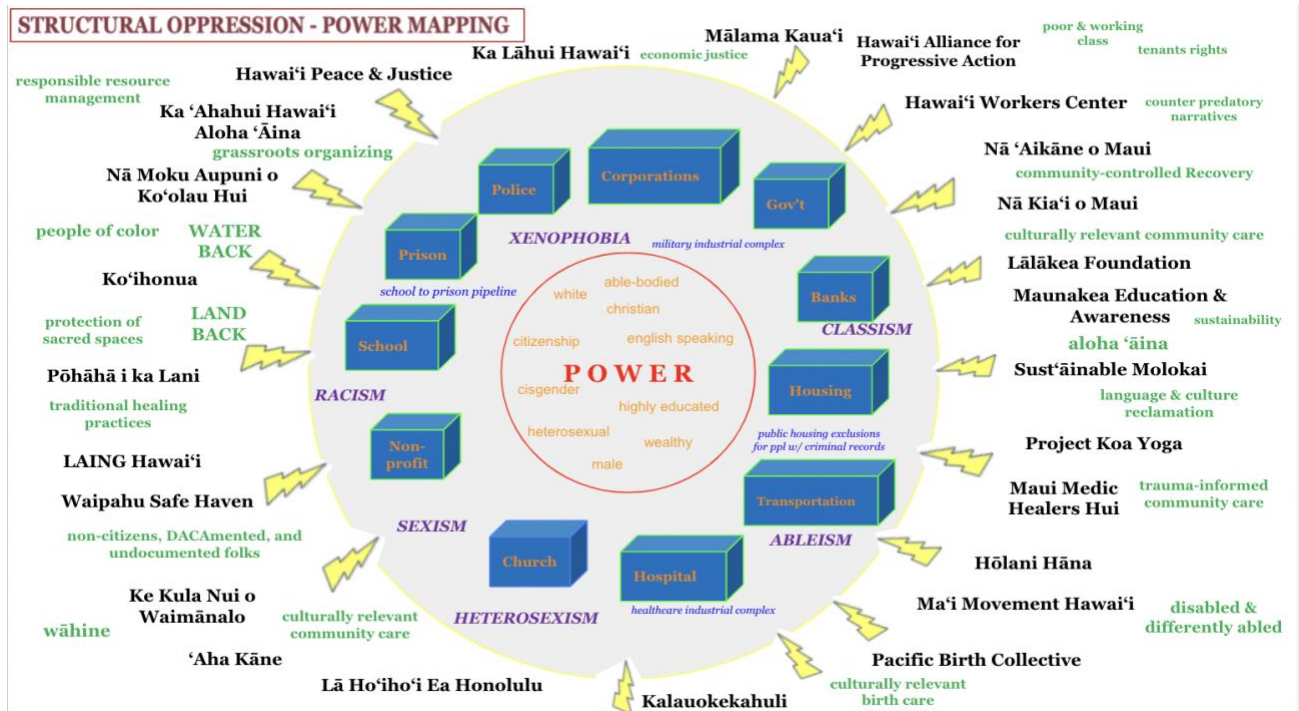
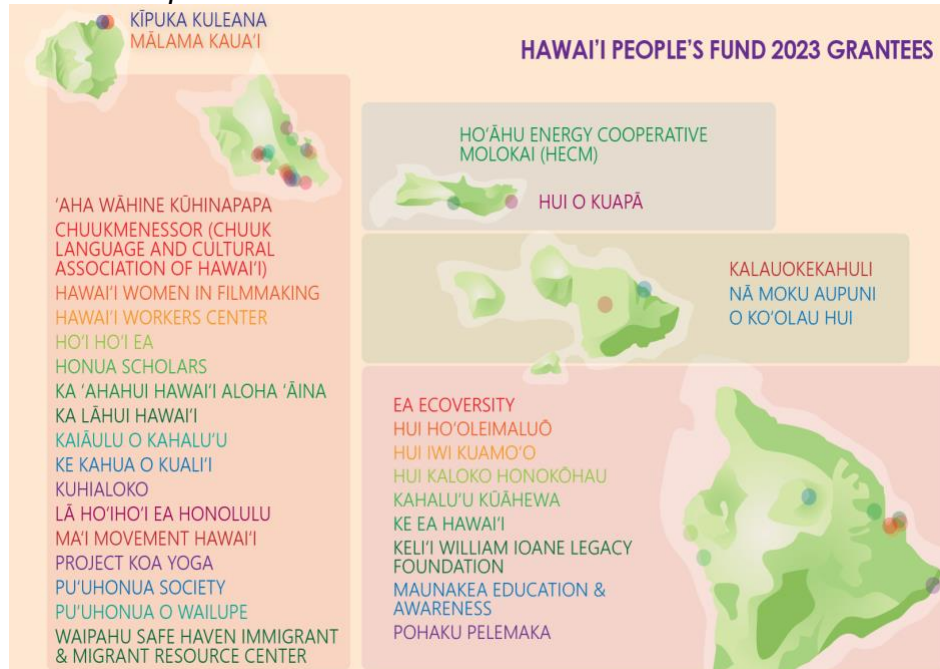


Figure 5. Hawai'i People's Fund 2023 Grantees



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