

Revised Nov. 2022

Transcript of 1982 gubernatorial inaugural speech by Governor George R. Ariyoshi, delivered on December 6, 1982. Transcribed from an official publication by Perry Arrasmith, 2022, under the auspices of the School of Communication & Information, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

The 1982 Inaugural Address of George R. Ariyoshi December 6, 1982

This ceremony, the inauguration of a Lieutenant Governor and a Governor of Hawaii, is one that reaches back through time all the way to the year 1900.

And it is fitting that the ceremony—whether for the appointed Governors of the territory or the elected Governors of the Aloha State—has always taken place here before this honorable and historic structure.

It is a ceremony honored by time, and today it is a ceremony honored by your presence.

In accepting once again the leadership of this state for the next four years, I thank you for coming. And I am glad you are here. Because you—the people of Hawaii—are what this ceremony is all about.

I stand before you grateful indeed that the people chose in November's election to validate the work we have done in the Governor's office. But I prefer to see this moment in a larger perspective, for the state of Hawaii itself is bigger than any political party, bigger than any political differences, bigger than candidate—winner or loser. In the larger sense, what we celebrate here today is the orderly continuity of our beloved and very special state.

In the election, each of us fought hard for our beliefs and our aims. That is the very essence of the democratic process. But let me suggest that one of the most significant things about the election is simply that it took place.

In a world of postponed elections, in a world of no elections at all, in a world where out of 124 nations today with populations of over one million, only 14 have been democratic through most of the 20th century, our American elections come off on schedule—and do in fact reflect the will of the people!

Franklin Delano Roosevelt once described democracy as “the most humane, the most advanced, and in the end the most unconquerable of all forms of human society.” Perhaps, it takes this great vitality from the fact that—compared to all other forms of government—democracy works somewhat as the human mind works.

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In democracy, as in the human heart, we find a process of endless choice.

In democracy, as in the human heart, we must peacefully balance our own needs against the needs of others.

In democracy, as in the human heart, we move almost instinctively toward integrity and generosity—knowing that in that balance, we may find the best path into the future.

I would like to touch briefly this afternoon on three ideas which I think lie at the heart of that future. I want to talk with you about how we treat each other, about how we treat our land, and about what I see as the greatest opportunity that lies before us today.

In spite of our differences, there is a live-and-let-live tradition in these islands, a sense of community, a sense of neighborliness. It has been here a long time.

Back in 1854, when Kamehameha the Fourth assumed the throne, he said in his inaugural address:

“To be kind and generous to the foreigner, to trust and confide in him, is no new thing in the history of our race. I therefore say to the foreigner that he is welcome. But the duties we owe to each other are reciprocal.”

Well...the foreigners did come from all corners of the world. My parents were among them. And people are still coming! Today our population is close to a million.

We may look different.
We may speak differently.
We may worship in different ways.

We may cook different foods and make different music—as we shall see in the program immediately following these ceremonies over in the Capitol rotunda.

But from this diversity—perhaps under the spell of the aloha spirit—we have achieved a one-ness.

This tradition has held firm, even though it has been strained from time to time. I think I can say, with modesty and accuracy, that here in our island home, we live together with a greater general harmony—a more honest harmony—than can be found anywhere else.

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Let us resolve to hold fast to this fine tradition—even as new people arrive, even as new ideas arrive, even as the past recedes beyond our memory. For only as we work and live in this way can we have any kind of a decent society at all.

Adlai Stevenson once said that “how we treat each other is just as important as what we get done.” Those words are in my heart today, and I commend them to you.

And then there is the important issue of how we treat our land.

Though we have made mistakes, it is true that we are developing a sense—a philosophy—of how to use the land here in our special and fragile place. Some landscapes, of course, are beyond our power to add or detract. Looking at the Grand Canyon, at the Painted Desert, at Niagara Falls, at Waimea Canyon, or at the great green upthrust of the Pali, we see scenery to which man's presence can simply not add anything.

But in most cases, the quality of the landscape, the everyday working landscape, consists of what the French scientist Rene Dubos has called “a fitness between man and his surroundings.”

That sense of fitness is what we have been working toward over the past decade here in Hawaii. It is not easy to define, as we see from developing our State Plans. Sometimes the fitness must be defined case by case.

But as we human beings intervene in the workings of nature, as we intervene in the landscape or the seascape that surround us, let us do so in the same way that the Benedictine monks learned to do back in the sixth century. They used the land, but at the same time they enhanced the land. In these more complex times, let us remember them.

Let us resolve not to overwhelm the land. Let us preserve its beauty, its fertility. And as we build what we need, let us find the right balance—the fitness—between ourselves and the earth itself.

My friends, a great opportunity lies before us today. One of the new official state maps published by Hawaii carries the title *The New Pacific*. The title is accurate, for the great Pacific basin is today the scene of many changes—of much newness. New exchanges of ideas. New patterns of trade. New emerging countries, striving for recognition and independence.

Today, from our base in Hawaii, we can take advantage of our great geographic gift by reaching out across the Pacific in every direction—in friendship, and in many other ways. We can do this because of the special quality of our people—because we are a Pacific people and we understand the Pacific way.

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We have before us a business opportunity, a farming and aquaculture opportunity, a transportation opportunity, a telecommunication and technology opportunity, an educational and scientific opportunity.

Soaring beyond the borders of our islands, we can be more than a “way-station” in the New Pacific. We can become a great engine of ideas and cooperative ventures as the Pacific basin emerges into the 21st century and takes its place in the modern world.

And we can do all this while still holding fast to the good things that have made up our diverse past. Let us see this chance, my fellow citizens —and let us take this chance! The Age of the Pacific is upon us!

In these three areas, and in many others, how we conduct ourselves today will clearly affect Hawaii’s tomorrow.

When a great stone is tossed into the water—as when an idea is tossed into the minds of receptive people—waves are set up. Reactions begin.

At first the waves have a high frequency, and they move out at high speed from the source. They grow longer and lower as they travel out from the sources, but they never stop. Neither in theory nor in fact do they stop.

About 15 years ago, a scientist from the Scripps Oceanographic Institute set up a series of five wave-measuring stations, stretching south-to-north across the Pacific. One of his stations was here on Oahu. And he found that wave patterns beginning in a great antarctic storm could be measured as they came ashore at Cook Inlet in Alaska—11,000 miles away. Now, if you went down and stood on the shore at Cook Inlet you could not perceive this pattern of waves. But the computer perceived and recorded the pattern—and the waves had indeed traversed the entire Pacific Ocean.

As we look across the horizon of time into the future, we cannot expect that those future citizens of Hawaii will perceive or understand everything that we have done. But our actions—large and small—will have a lasting effect across time and space.

So in the democratic spirit, we must act with prudence as well as confidence.

In that same spirit, we must act with sensible caution and high hopes.

In that same spirit, we must build upon the good things of the past, but not be afraid to try something brand new.

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Whether our special place remains special over time is to some degree in our hands right today.

If I may speak personally for a moment, let me tell you that I accept the challenge of being once again your Governor with a full and grateful heart.

This difficult job is, in fact, a great gift from you. And what you have given me is not simply the title. Receiving this trust for the third time this morning, I find that it is as precious as ever. For we must now live up not only to what we have accomplished, but to your realistic expectations for the next four years.

Though this is my last term in this office, it will not be a time of unwinding or running down.

I shall remember, as Lincoln put it, that “the dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy past.”

And though the times we live through are uncertain, I shall strive to work with confidence, and remain continuously open to new ideas.

I shall welcome anybody’s contribution to this state—whatever form it may take—at any time.

And right down to the last day, I shall try my best to be a good Governor.

It has been 28 years since I first went door-to-door in search of votes, and my posters—many of which were tacked up by my parents—identified me as “the boy from Kalihi.”

Well...that was a long time ago. Over the years, I have been tested and tempered and perhaps toughened by time. But I want to assure you that in terms of the enthusiasm, dedication, and hope that I will bring to this job for the next four years, I am still—at heart—“the boy from Kalihi.”

Let me close, if I may, with a paraphrase of the closing words of another inaugural address—one that I have long admired. Twenty-one years ago, standing before the east face of the Capitol in Washington, D.C., President John F. Kennedy used these words to speak of the nation. Today, standing before Iolani Palace, I borrow them to speak of Hawaii:

“Let us go forth to lead the state we love, trusting in God, but knowing that here on earth, God’s work must truly be our own.”

Mahalo.

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