

Revised Nov. 2022

Transcript of 1998 gubernatorial inaugural speech by Governor Benjamin Cayetano, delivered on December 7, 1994. Transcribed from the Honolulu Advertiser (12/07/1998) by Perry Arrasmith, 2022, under the auspices of the School of Communication & Information, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

The 1998 Inaugural Address of Benjamin Cayetano December 7, 1998

Aloha Kakou!

Let me begin with some words of thanks.

It's been a long journey from growing up as a kid in Kalihi to the governorship of Hawaii. The significance of how this journey was made possible is not lost upon me—and I am profoundly grateful to all for the privilege.

I want to thank my family—my wife and our First Lady, Vicky, our five children for their unwavering support and love during the good and bad times—and all who made it possible for me to serve the people of Hawaii over the past 24 years.

Today, we celebrate not a political party's victory—but a process which is very vital to our way of life. Today, we celebrate freedom, we celebrate democracy.

We have just been through a close, hard-fought election. The election is over.

For all who believe in the democratic process, now is the time we as a people must come together. This is the essence of democracy, it is why democracy works better than any other form of government.

Four years ago, I unveiled my vision for Hawaii. Those four years were not easy. But we made some tough decisions and we have made excellent progress.

Today, I ask you to join me in completing that vision.

To those who did not support me in the election, I welcome your wisdom. I welcome the energy and commitment you displayed which made the election such a hard-fought and close one. To you I pledge an open mind to your ideas, to your sincere desire to work together for the common good.

To our children, whose future is foremost in my heart and mind, I pledge to continue making their education my number one priority.

Revised Nov. 2022

In the Information Age, we must equip and prepare them to compete and to lead successful lives as citizens not only of Hawaii—but of the world.

We have already built a record number of new schools and classrooms, extended Hawaii's woefully short school year and increased teachers' salaries.

But we need to do more. Over the next four years, we will take big steps to improve our children's skills in critical thinking, their computer literacy, their proficiency in a second language and the condition of their schools.

We will work to develop ways to measure performance of schools, teachers and students to make our public education system more efficient and effective.

To our business community: I pledge to build on the improvements made over the past four years in reducing the high costs of business, the burden of regulations and taxes.

We will work with small and big business to improve the business climate, promote entrepreneurship and attract new capital to Hawaii to bring about full economic recovery.

To all who care about Hawaii's environment: I pledge that my decisions which preserved the Hanalei River and the Ka Iwi Coastline and which established the Whale Sanctuary will serve as benchmarks for my vision for our environment.

We owe a duty to future generations to preserve and nurture Hawaii's natural beauty and resources.

Four years ago, I pledged I would not seek economic development at the expense of the environment. Today, I renew that pledge.

To our Hawaiian community: We will continue the pace we set for placing a record number of Hawaiian homesteaders on the "aina." We learned much over the past four years and we will do even better over the next four.

And I pledge here and now that I will leave no stone unturned in settling the state's differences with OHA over the ceded lands.

Before the end of my term we will reach a settlement which is fair and just to all, Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian.

Revised Nov. 2022

Four years ago, we planted the seeds to establish Hawaii as a place for the world to gather in order to teach, to learn, to heal and to do business.

We've taken some big steps forward.

We succeeded in attracting the Mayo Clinic and other world renowned healthcare organizations to Hawaii.

We partnered with the private sector in building the nation's first statewide telemedicine system.

We gave the University of Hawaii autonomy and laid the foundation for a 21st Century university in Kapolei.

And we've made Hawaii one of the most advanced telecommunication states in the nation—reducing the disadvantage of our isolated location and giving our businesses the capability to touch every part of the globe.

Much has been done. And working together, we will do more.

But these matters are not our greatest challenge. In time, Hawaii will become a premier center for healthcare, education and commerce.

Our greatest challenge is “change” and how we deal with it.

Change is inevitable. But some things remain constant.

A few minutes ago, I affirmed virtually the same oath taken by Hawaii's first governor nearly 100 years ago. The oath remains unchanged because it represents a value which is integral to our way of life.

But while the oaths for governors remain unchanged—today's Hawaii is much different from the Hawaii of old.

Indeed, Hawaii has changed, mostly for the better.

Hawaii's political being changed from territory to an American state.

Hawaii's landscape of political power changed from oligarchical rule by an elitist few to a democracy where power is shared by many.

Revised Nov. 2022

Hawaii's economy changed from sea trading, to big sugar and big pineapple—and over the past 40 years—to a strong reliance on tourism.

Throughout these changes, however, the spirit of aloha—our host people's greatest gift to the world—has remained constant.

It has endured because our forebearers—in spite of their differences—understood its central role to the unique greatness of Hawaii as a society.

It has endured because they lived it, strengthened it, nurtured it and passed it on, unchanged, from generation to generation.

The spirit of aloha is the glue which holds us together.

It is the ingredient which led Michener to describe us as the world's "Golden People" and John F. Kennedy to declare that Hawaii is a model of harmony to the rest of the world.

It is the heart and soul of the Hawaii we all love today—the Hawaii we want to pass on to our children.

Today, I ask you to join me in pledging that all of us here today will work together to assure that the spirit of aloha will be strengthened, preserved and passed on to the children of the New Millennium.

We start today, here and now, by reaffirming our belief in it, by practicing it, by living it every day—by using it to inspire us as we shape solutions to our problems and as we devise strategies to meet our challenges.

We owe this to our children, as one day they too will owe it to theirs. In these times of frequent, rapid and sometimes unwanted changes—that will be our greatest gift to them of all.

In just a little more than a year, we will enter the 21st Century.

We have been blessed as the generation which will take Hawaii into the next century.

What we do over the next four years will set the direction for at least the first decade of the next century, perhaps longer.

Knowing this, I am awed by the enormity of the responsibility, grateful for the privilege of leadership—and excited by the possibilities of making positive and meaningful changes to build a better Hawaii.

Revised Nov. 2022

Four years ago, we started on a voyage through stormy waters. Then, you honored me by choosing me as your captain.

Today, the skies are clearer, we can see the stars and the waters are calmer. Today, we can see the horizon of our destination.

I thank you for again honoring me as your captain.

I invite you to join us in completing our voyage. For as John F. Kennedy said in his inaugural address 38 years ago, “In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than in mine, rests the final success or failure of our cause.”

The great Hawaiian monarch, Queen Liliuokalani, once said, “never cease to act because you fear you may fail.”

My fellow citizens, let us be bold, let us not fear the future.

“E Ho‘o Hui Pu Mai Kakou.” Come join me, let us do this together.

Mahalo.

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