

A Decolonial Pin@y's Journey

By Dr. Chris Lipat, DC, Reiki Master, March 2016

Decolonial Pin@ys was a group founded in O'ahu in 2013 and actively met through 2016. We established a Facebook group called Decolonial Pin@ys – Hawai'i which is active to this day. The following is an account of my own trajectory to being a founding member of Decolonial Pin@ys – Hawai'i. Please know that each member, especially the ones who's families have lived in Hawai'i for generations, and have ancestors buried here, or have given birth to their daughters and sons here, have their own rich stories, perspectives, and contributions to the group. I, as the latest Pin@y settler to O'ahu, share the following perspective.

“Lipat,” means to move or transfer in Tagalog. I wanted to think it was a name rooting me to the land of my ancestors in Batangas, Philippines, but our name resulted from a colonial naming system instituted by the Spanish Governor General Narciso Claveria in 1849 to straighten out tax rolls. The story is that our family name was San Gregorio, but due to our lack of status, we were bestowed the surname Lipat.

My father, Gregorio Aranda Lipat, born at the foot of Taal Volcano during World War II to his parents fleeing Japanese invasion, was the first of his family to graduate from university. He became a doctor, and moved to the US under the 1965 Immigrant Act. His plan was to work in Connecticut, make his way back across the US, and eventually return to the Philippines. He got as far as NJ, where he met my mom, an Ilocana nurse born and raised in Zamboanga del Norte, and also the first of her family to come to the US. They had their first date on the Staten Island Ferry. I was born soon after in Jersey City, NJ in 1970. My dad fulfilled his dream, eventually ending up with a home back in the Philippines, with a daughter living in NJ, one in LA and me in Honolulu, and they enjoy their well-earned retirement years traveling and enjoying life as much as possible.

Growing up in NJ, I had the privilege of living a middle-class life in the suburbs. NJ had an excellent public school system, and North Caldwell, where we ended up, was on the most recent list of 50 best suburbs in America. But my class privilege did not shield me and my few other Filipino and Chinese friends from the daily racism we experienced from our Italian and Irish classmates in the 1980s. Racism is something we hardly talked about at home. Being in a first-generation household, I didn't really have language for these experiences in the 70s and early 80s. My parents never talked about the racism they experienced, so when I experienced it, I didn't really have much of a forum for talking about it at home. I was one of the first kids born in my parent's cohort; they didn't know what SAT's were. My friends and I would do what we had to do to protect our sense of self: walking to school instead of taking the bus to avoid morning racist catcalls; being allowed to sit out of basketball at gym class to avoid being scratched and picked on by the Italian girls. There were homophobic catcalls too, by the same racist working-class Italian and Irish classmates, directed at our honors social studies/theater teacher. But just as I didn't quite understand the psychological and structural implications of racism, I didn't quite understand what being gay meant other than a man seeming a little more feminine than the “norm.”

But growing up in NJ, our parents did instill a sense of pride in our culture. We watched Philippine folk dance performances, attended barrio fiestas, and frequented Filipino parties for

extended family and friends every weekend. Except for not learning Tagalog, we were immersed in NJ Filipino culture outside of the school environment.

These early experiences of racism and homophobia in my childhood shaped the choices I would make as an adult. I chose Oberlin College for my undergraduate education, because of its diversity and strength in music and biology (I was pre-med at the time). It was also a very progressive/liberal campus. I learned about the Asian American experience and eventually became a leader of Asian American student organizing on campus. I loved the Third World House, where we would all come together as immigrants and overseas folks to learn, exchange and make beautiful music and poetry together. I was hooked on community building, and after college, I sought ways that I could recreate that for myself again and again. In 1993, New York City, just 30 minutes from my childhood home, would be my next stomping grounds. For the next 12 years I lived and loved fiercely. I came out as bisexual in my Junior year at Oberlin, and in NYC, I connected with Asian Lesbians of the East Coast and Kambal Sa Lusog, a Filipino lesbian and gay organization. I joined Gabriela Network and was a founding member of Kilawin Kolektibo a NYC Pinay lesbian/bi group. I got involved and became board chair of Audre Lorde Project center for LGBTST People of Color organizing while also being the Grants Program Officer overseeing all the grants programs, including the groundbreaking International Fund for Sexual Minorities at Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice.

I passionately held many volunteer and paid social justice positions and eventually burned out. By 2004, I relocated to Oakland, CA. In my last 2 years in NYC, I survived with Reiki. Sockie Laya Smith, a former activist and healer in the Philippines had moved to NYC and became a member of Gabriela Network. She taught me and my friends Reiki, this Japanese form of energy healing, and it became an invaluable stress management tool for all of us. Mary Ann Ubaldo, or “Unkel Ann” as she was lovingly called in our circle, encouraged me to become a Reiki master. She was our culture bearer, one of the early Baybayin jewelry makers, and we learned Reiki together.

I absolutely loved Reiki. It was like magic that anyone could do. For a geeky tomboy that exclusively read fantasy books, it was like finding the holy grail, or pulling that sword from the stone. I used it daily, and on mornings I woke up early and anxious, I would Reiki myself and I could last the day as though I had a full night’s sleep! I would Reiki situations. I decided I would be a Reiki practitioner when I moved to Oakland.

Through my experiences with Reiki, and learning about chiropractic, I decided to go to chiropractic school. I couldn’t go to medical school because I just knew I would want to change the broken system and because I knew that I had some fundamental issues with how the medical field upheld the supremacy of drugs and surgery over methods that enhanced the body’s own healing abilities. Eventually, I was to become a holistic chiropractor, inspiring people to become their best selves through proper alignment and nutrition.

While in chiropractic school, my friend Jamela Santos, a Filipina born in Guam/Guåhan, moved to Oakland. Her sister, Nicole Santos, was in the PhD program at UC Santa Cruz. They introduced me to a group in 2006 that was just starting called Famoksaian, a CHamoru term meaning either “the place or time of nurturing” or “the time to paddle forward and move ahead.” It is a grassroots network of activists, scholars, students, community leaders and artists who seek to push a progressive political, economic and social agenda for CHamorus and their communities at the local, national and international levels, through the promotion of the work of

decolonization and cultural/historical revitalization in their politics, creative endeavors and everyday interactions. I met Sabina Perez, Fanai Castro, and Tiffany Lacsado and became involved in supporting the work that they were doing to resist the impending US military buildup in Guåhan.

Through my anti-imperialist feminist education that I acquired from Ninotchka Rosca and Gabriela Network, I was all for supporting this group and their work. I learned about the tensions of the Filipinos in Guåhan as their population grows, competing with CHamorus' claims to land and employment, while complicit with other pro-military CHamorus in praising America as post-WWII savior and embracing capitalist development as the best way for Guåhan to grow and prosper.

It was my first exposure to indigenous Pacific Islanders. I was confused myself about whether Filipinos were Asian or Pacific Islanders. It felt like both, but as I continued my journey these past few years, I have a better understanding of how these distinctions matter.

This journey eventually led me to Hawai'i, where I live now.

I moved to Hawai'i to heal and to serve. I had visited Hawai'i right before chiropractic school, and as soon as I got off the plane, the warm, gentle breeze and the power/mana of the land/'āina, as I was to learn the Hawaiian words for these, called to me, and I knew I needed to come back to serve the communities here. Later, I was to learn from Auntie Pua Case, a Kanaka Maoli speaking about Mauna Kea, that the land is not helpless, it knows how to defend itself. And it will call to those who can rise to its call. Those words resonated with me, and likely with many of my friends who are now my "tribe." There have been times when we've felt discouraged, when it feels too hard to survive here. But being connected to the land in Hawai'i, even as you are not indigenous to these islands, you grow to love the land and join in the shared sense of aloha 'āina that many folks who stay here experience, indigenous or not.

In order to serve relevantly and respectfully, I spent the next two years getting acclimated, building connections, attending events, reading books on Hawai'i and just listening. Moving to a place with a very visible native population who protested the US takeover of their country, you cannot help but feel a sense of guilt for being complicit in benefitting from the confiscation of land, their economic oppression and cultural suppression. It is a very paralyzing, unproductive experience, and it's a phenomenon labeled by UH Manoa professors Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura as "Asian settler colonialism."

There have been heated debates amongst my friends as to how useful the term Asian settler colonialism is as an organizing tool, perhaps because it invokes blame and does not offer productive solutions. But I found that it is a definite growth experience to move through these feelings and to transform them into fuel for commitment to understanding how you connect to your own culture, what role your peoples have historically played in the colonial capitalist framework, and how you can articulate your authentic connection to indigeneity, to Hawai'i and to other Pacific peoples. It is a tall order necessitating doing your own research outside of mainstream education and cultural frameworks.

I had moved to Hawai'i with my partner at the time and she was pursuing a PhD in Pacific Literature from UH Manoa. At that time, Craig Santos Perez and Brandy Nalani MacDougal had just started teaching at the university, and they curated a series of poetry events called Native

Voices in 2012, featuring Pacific indigenous visiting poets and university students. My partner was also taking a paradigm shifting class called Decolonial Futures, offered in the Political Science department by Noelani Goodyear-Kaupoa. These events were powerful touchstones for Pacific students, and the following semester, Oceania Rising was formed by students on campus and influenced by Hawai'i Peace and Justice to foster solidarity for a peaceful and just Oceania. Unfortunately, there were no active Filipino students in the group, even though we shared common ground with other Pacific Islands in hosting and resisting the negative impact of US bases on our shores.

As a Filipina observing and supporting these events of and by Pacific Islanders, I had to scrutinize my own gut knowing that we do relate in some way, but I had to do the work of articulating the how. It made me realize that aside from Guåhan/Guam, which didn't actually get colonized until the 17th century, the Philippines was the first to be colonized in the Pacific by Spain in the 16th century. The rest of the Pacific had not been colonized until the 19th century. Although I know that there are many Filipinos who identify as indigenous and can lay claim to language and culture belonging to a particular region of the Philippines, the majority of Filipinos had forsaken their tribal roots, subsistence lifestyles and lands generations ago in order to survive, embrace colonial Christianity, participate in capitalist industrial modes of production and climb up the socioeconomic ladder by any and all means.

Lane Wilcken, a community scholar who self-published his pioneering research *Filipino Tattoos: Ancient to Modern*, exploring Philippine tattoos and the relationship with other Pacific tattoo traditions alongside his controversial book *The Forgotten Children of Maui: Filipino Myths, Tattoos and Rituals of a Demigod*, he makes connections between Filipino traditions and myths to those of the Pacific. His claims of connection had bristled many Pacific scholars.

Growing up in the US, Filipinos often do not feel comfortable identifying as Asian, especially because most Asians in the US are from East Asia, rather than Southeast Asia, which is where the Philippines is categorized. Many Filipinos claim to be Pacific Islanders because we are a country of over 7,100 islands in the Pacific, we eat fish, pork and ube, and have coconut trees and we are brown skinned. But in the US and in international forums, Pacific Islanders do not claim us. And the Philippines has traditionally looked to Asia and the US to build relationships, ignoring our Pacific Island neighbors.

Whereas the ocean connects us, our colonial history, our immigration history, and our geographic situation separates us culturally from the rest of the Pacific. Just as we have become model students of our colonizers, we have come to be settlers that continue to view indigeneity, our own and everyone else's as backwards or as something to be materially consumed. In a time where resources – scholarships, grants, even social cache – are parceled out according to identity, the sheer number of Filipinos in diaspora distort the population number crunching that calculates need, which equals dollars. Oftentimes, it's not that Pacific Islanders want to distance themselves from Filipinos, it's that culturally, there is a shared sense of indigeneity that links Pacific Islanders into an Oceanic identity that most Filipinos at this moment in time do not share.

I say at this moment in time because with the urgency of climate change, resource shifts, and the revaluing of indigenous technologies and ways of knowing, the Philippines is on its journey to revaluing our indigenous cultures. Alongside revaluing comes healing of long-time colonial rifts and a potential for solidarity which places the health of the land and people above profit. I

believe, as do many of my friends that it is retracing and embracing these old ways that we will survive the chaotic future that lies ahead of us.

My Filipina friends and I in Hawai'i are on a journey together to explore and find the stories that will inspire Filipinos embrace our full selves, so that we may envision a sustainable independent future on the islands where we can build together with Hawaiians and other settlers in a way that engenders peace and genuine security.

Being a new settler, I heard stories of the contentious divisions between local and immigrant Filipinos at Farrington High School and met a number of Hawaiians descended from 3-5th generation Filipinos who know very little of their Filipino heritage. Filipinos in Hawai'i have a very different immigration history, ethnic and class status as compared to my East Coast Filipino upbringing. It's hard to articulate exactly how being identified as Filipino in Hawai'i is a different experience, but what I and my friends knew is that many young Filipinos in Hawai'i lack access to cultural arts, history and context in relation to the Pacific, which is a basis for cultural pride and belonging that is specific to Hawai'i.

In meeting indigenous Pacific Islanders in Hawai'i, many of whom still retain their language, culture, rootedness to land and genealogy, it inspires me as a diasporic Filipina to look to my own culture and history in order to relate. My friend and sister in activism, Grace Caligtan, an Ilocana and Igorot of the Cordilleras raised in the DC area, credits living in Hawai'i for inspiring her to reclaim her indigenous roots. The challenge for Filipinos in Hawai'i, though, is finding culture bearers willing to stay here, teach and become mentors for the next generation.

When I moved to Hawai'i in September 2010, I began to reach out and learn about the different groups active on issues relevant to Filipinos in Hawaii. I called upon some of my first friends in NYC who were members of Youth for Philippine Action, and later on, Kilawin Kolektibo with me – Sonya Zabala and Melisa Casumbal. Sonya had moved to Honolulu with her Filipino-Hawaiian husband in the mid 1990s. Melisa had moved to Hawai'i 10 years prior. They had invited me to join their group, Urban Babaylan, which was a touchstone for progressive Pinays who occasionally convened on the full moon to meet for ritual and mutual support. This group of women became one place of spiritual and familial sustenance for me. But this group was intentionally not a political space for organizing.

I participated in November 2011 in "Passionistas' Resisting: Sistahs and Braddahs Uniting to Undress Globalization and Militarism." This was a collective art installation by Women's Voices, Women Speak, Pek Pek Liberation front, and Third Path for Reproductive Justice (O'ahu). Through this project, spearheaded by Grace Caligtan, I met Women for Genuine Security and Hawaiian independence activist Auntie Terri Kekoolani and learned more about the work of Hawaii-born Filipinas Ellen-Rae Cachola and Darlene Rodrigues, along with Gigi Miranda in Women's Voices, Women's Speak, the Hawai'i chapter of the International Women's Network Against Militarism. I valued that Filipinas are a strong voice in this group, and knew this is a space specifically for coalition work focused on the impacts of US militarism.

I met Allison Lum, AiKea Movement organizer at a clothing swap. She had invited the participants to a film and panel event in March 2013 discussing the 1970s resistance movement to development at Waiahole-Waikane. The intention of the AiKea organizers were to deepen our understanding of how our struggles today as workers are connected with land use struggles, GMO and pesticide exposure, the crisis in education and other crises that we are facing in every

direction due to corporate greed and short-sighted land development. Ray Catania, Filipino union member and Hawaiian sovereignty ally, and the Rev. Bob Nakata shared their personal experiences in organizing in Hawai'i during the 70's. The successful Waiahole-Waikane land struggle was an example of people banding together across ethnicity and interest to build an island-wide movement to defend their way of life and secure their futures.

Attending this event, I was inspired by AiKea's vision, part of which links worker organizing to Hawaiian independence struggles, and I decided to join and learn. The AiKea Movement is the community organizing arm of Unite Here! Local 5, the organization of hotel and other hotel and airport service workers, the majority of whom are Filipino. Although key leaders of Local 5, including Eric Gil, the Secretary-Treasurer, hold this vision of supporting Hawaiian independence, Local 5 and AiKea continue to be in process around how to prioritize, educate their members and carry out this uniting vision.

As I continued to learn and listen, early in 2013, my old contact on the continent, Glenn Magpantay, attorney and co-Director of National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Association, reached out because they were planning a leadership conference in Hawai'i in July of 2013. I hadn't done queer organizing since I left NYC in 2004. I decided to support their work by sharing what I learned and what few contacts I had made in my first couple of years on the island. As a member of NQAPIA's fundraising committee, of which part of the funds would come to Hawai'i for API lgbt organizing, I was asked to offer a welcome speech as part of the host committee for the event.

Welcome address to the NQAPIA Community Catalyst Awards event July 27, 2013

Aloha kakou! Mabuhay! Bula vinaka! Hafa adai! Iokwe! Malo e leilei! Talofa lava! Kia orana!

Mahalo nui to Kumu Hula Bradford Lum for welcoming us to O'ahu. Not being native to this island, it is a welcome that I do not take for granted. And I am sure all of you feel the same. My name is Dr. Christine Teaño Lipat - my parents are from the island of Luzon. Mother is Ilocano from Cagayan Valley and Ilocos Sur, born and raised in Mindanao, and my father is Batangueño from Lipa City. I am a Filipina born and raised in NJ and have lived here in O'ahu for 3 years. I am a member of the local NQAPIA host committee.

The NQAPIA Community Catalyst Awards is honoring individuals who make a difference for LGBTQ folks in Hawai'i. But who are we? Here, we are māhū/ fa'afafine/ fa'atama/ fakaleiti/ takātapui/bakla/tibo. Here to show our families and communities how to love without boundaries, and, as my Pacific scholar partner reminds me, as Esera Tuaolo does in his visibility work, and as Kim Coco Iwamoto and Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu, and our most visible māhū cultural leaders here in Hawai'i exemplify, it is by our very strength of presence as we stand strong in our sense of belonging to our cultures, that we decolonize notions of beauty, gender binaries, and love that limit and divide our communities. In doing so we can uplift not only our own, but everyone's sense of self-worth.

My first encounters with Pacific Islanders as a collective force was meeting and becoming a supporter of Famoksaiyan, a mixed, queer inclusive group of mostly

CHamoru students/activists in California fighting for decolonization of Guåhan and for cultural revitalization. Then I met OLO, One Love Oceania, a fierce group of Bay area queer indigenous Pacific women. Through them, I met the love of my life. Through these multiple encounters with Pacific indigenous scholars, activists and artists and through building relationships, which lead to trust and ultimately to that larger feeling of community, love, and family, I have come to a deeper understanding of myself, my place in this world. And when that happens, a peace and a calm grows inside that comes only with that feeling of connection.

Indigeneity is all about connection. Remembering that we are not separate from each other, from the 'āina/the land, the sea, from our ancestors, from our future generations. The NQAPIA conference and this event is one little step in healing the disconnections that have been at the core of the colonial system of divide and conquer. Asians and Pacific Islanders have been lumped together into this very US colonial geopolitical designation; this kinship is not easily forged, particularly in the context of Hawaii's history.

The intellectual, emotional, and spiritual challenge that faces people who are allies to Kanaka Maoli, here in their occupied nation is how to turn that deep sense of loss, which we ourselves can relate to in some way, and turn it into supporting justice for all and self-determination for Native Hawaiians. AiKea, a 1-year old new movement building group here in Hawai'i started by Unite Local 5 is just such a resource. I am so excited to be a part of AiKea and look forward to you all learning more about them.

Today is the 170th anniversary of La Ho'iHo'i Ea, Hawai'ian sovereignty restoration day, when the British restored sovereignty to the Hawaiian Kingdom after 5 months of occupation. Raise your hands - how many went today? Awesome, thank you for showing up for justice!

I want to thank you all for the effort it took for you to be here. You are all here because you value the contributions of LGBTQ API's and because you want to make connections. It is through knowing each other that we can be each other's greatest allies. So please take advantage of this unique and historical gathering. Introduce yourself to anyone and everyone. Exchange emails and cards. Make a date to have lunch, coffee and laugh. Invite each other to events and make a commitment to go. Build new bridges and have fun in the process!

All these experiences became a backdrop to me reaching out to my progressive Filipina friends to fill a need. How do we as Filipinas build authentic relationships to Hawaiian and Pacific indigenous peoples in Hawai'i? How do we communicate shared values of aloha 'āina to our Filipino community while bridging the awkward alliance between labor and indigenous rights? How do we prepare our community for leadership in a free and independent Hawai'i?

On August 29, 2013, I sent this FB message out to 26 Filipinas in Honolulu to meet up:

Kumusta ang aking mga kaibigan!

You may have heard rumblings from me about wanting to organize a get together amongst us pinays (recently arrived, not so recently arrived, and those born and raised here), to talk about Hawai'i: about navigating our position as settler colonials, about our

relationship to other Pacific Islanders, about indigeneity, about the history of pinay organizing here, and about how we might share our energies and unique perspectives to help make Hawai‘i a better place for all.

In that spirit, I found out that Prof. Vernadette Gonzalez is doing book launch of her first book, "Securing Paradise: Tourism and Militarism in Hawai‘i and the Philippines" next Friday, Sep 6 4pm at the Queen Liliuokalani Center at UH.

<https://www.facebook.com/events/630350956989111/>

I was thinking it might be a great event to check out and then go to dinner nearby afterwards, or perhaps do take out and bring it to my place at 1967 Naio St for further conversation. What do folks prefer? Please invite anyone else who may be interested. I know not everyone is on facebook. Perhaps when the plans are more definite, I'll send this out via email.

If you have a conflict on Friday, Prof. Gonzalez is also doing another book reading at Revolution Books on Sunday Sep 8 at 3pm.

Clearly there is much to talk about and next Friday will be a more informal gathering. But I thought it'd be a great way to get the discussion rolling.

Who's game?

Cheers, Christine

On October 28, 2013, Governor Abercrombie opened a special session for the Hawai‘i legislature to consider the Hawai‘i Marriage Equality Act. It was a very heated time for debate in the community, especially as Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders were recruited by their churches to actively protest against the Act, which galvanized queer people of color, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders and progressive allies in Hawai‘i to come out in support of what was a predominantly white and Asian led movement in Hawai‘i. Veronika Geronimo and Darlene Rodrigues, in collaboration with Grace Caligtan, Paulline Guillermo-Togawa and I, wrote a historic opinion piece for the Fil-Am Courier regarding the Hawai‘i Marriage Equality Act which passed in November 2013.

I have a picture of the actual article, which includes signatories of local Filipina supporters, but the draft text is here:

Marriage Equality Law strengthens families

In confronting the issues of same sex marriage, we must face the fact that these are new times. While our church leaders have historically urged us to oppose homosexuality and marriage equity, Pope Francis shares a self-reflective inquiry, "Who am I to judge?" We take this question to heart, as the Vatican, in an unprecedented inquiry of its parishes on social issues like same-sex marriage, cohabitation by unwed couples, contraception, and the place of divorced and remarried people in the church, is reevaluating its pastoral role. Pope Francis continues, "Tell me: when God looks at a gay person, does he endorse the existence of this person with love, or reject and condemn this person?" We must always

consider the person.” We are being called to look on ourselves and those around us with humility and compassion, values that unite us through difficult times.

All Filipino families are bound by a common thread, a unifying sense of love, devotion and commitment. Despite the forces that pull us apart due to economics, politics and religion, we still find a way to care, support and love each other across oceans.

It is in this spirit that we found ourselves at the Hawai‘i State Capitol last month, supporting our lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/bakla/tibo pamilya in securing their right to marry. In the face of fear and hate, we were there to support those whom we’ve raised, and those who have raised us. We were there for the many more who have yet to courageously embrace all of who they are. We were there because we wanted to demonstrate what an inclusive and loving community looks like and how it behaves.

An inclusive loving family supports the single mom, the gay son working overseas to send money home, the relatives without papers, the adopted cousin, the children born out of wedlock, partners with racial/ethnic backgrounds other than our own, grandparents who are their grandchildren’s primary caretakers, the lesbian aunties who move back to care for an ailing parent. Filipino families come in all shapes and sizes. Unconditional love is what builds unity and strengthens our community; homophobia, shame and judgment separate and weaken us.

In the wake of Typhoon Haiyan and with the approaching holidays when family means more to us than ever, we urge our community to reconcile with our LGBT/bakla/tibo family members. Let them know they are valued and loved, that there is no shame in being gay. What we seek through this letter is healing divisions amongst our families, our communities. It's love that makes a family! Typhoon Haiyan reminds us that there are larger forces at work and that we are all needed. No one should be left behind.

By January 2014, the Facebook message list increased to 31 members. We decided to meet more regularly in February 2014. The following are speeches that I wrote in preparation for events that I participated in in Honolulu from 2014-2015 which capture my evolution in understanding as I continue to learn more and interface more with these questions. Ellen-Rae Cachola, Kim Compoc, Grace Caligtan, Shannon Cristobal, and Reyna Ramolete have also written speeches for the various forums that we’ve found ourselves in based on our shared mission and vision. I hope we get a chance to put these all into an archives in the near future to capture this pivotal moment in time as we find ourselves on the precipice of a new Hawai‘i.

With our first official event in March of 2014 of what was to become Decolonial Pin@ys, we gave thanks to our predecessors Women’s Voices, Women Speak, Urban Babaylan, Pukengkeng Liberation Front, Passionista! Fashion Show Project, Hawai‘i Peace and Justice, Nakem Youth, FOB Project, Gabriela Network, AF3IRM, and we began to meet. We eventually decided to organize an event with AF3IRM in March 16, 2014.

Logic of Empire/Empire on Trial at University of Hawai‘i at Manoa. Closing Remarks
March 16, 2014

From a Facebook group of about 26 Filipinas in Hawai‘i, 10 of us met in January and shared the story of our lolas. We each could have gone on and on about our lola's herstories, and we each would have stayed to listen all day...if we had thought to bring food and to meet somewhere that didn't have a time limit! The joy of being able to tell our stories, and to have an eager audience wanting to know more, was a powerful experience. For us all growing up as Filipinas in the diaspora, we have been separated from our homeland - some for only 1 generation, others for 3 generations. As our homeland had also been colonized by the US, and prior to that, Spain, most all of us, except one, have been separated from our indigenous ancestors and land for multiple generations.

Empire, on the side of the imperialists, is about acquiring power and resources. The more divided our colonized populace, the easier to conquer, the easier to erase our culture, and to eradicate us through disease and guns. And with that power, and emboldened by their own stories of superiority, we became the victims in those stories which quickly replaced our own. We were made to feel savage and less than, manipulated into thinking the conqueror had the superior technology, religion, system of governance, familial, social and economic structures. Our land, our means of production and subsistence, was taken from us and we were forced to take menial agricultural/industrial jobs, mass produce products, and to earn a meager income, so that we could buy food and pay rent to our conquerors. And thus, we were absorbed into the imperialist capitalist matrix.

Hawaiians know the power of stories, the power of mo'olelo or their place-based stories to their identity and belonging on the island. And despite the missionaries' attempt to erase Hawaiian culture, and an American educational system which devalues anyone else's stories, these stories are being told again to the next generations of Hawaiians; and they serve as a powerful means of resistance to the matrix.

Being Filipinas here in Hawai‘i, our identities are shaped by a number of stories, many of which are not told by us, but rather about us. Not only is there a documented history of the lynching of Filipinos in the 1st half of the 20th century here in Hawai‘i, there is an accompanying history of racist portrayals of Filipinos in Hawai‘i in the media, by local comedians, and encoded in ethnic jokes throughout the 20th century. These painful stories of inferiority, compounded by the white-washed American education system, are what cause Filipinos growing up here to want to distance themselves from their own culture. It also underpins the institutional racism which continues to keep Filipinos low in the economic ladder here in Hawai‘i.

*It is our responsibility as Filipinos to take back our pride, to create stories that help us make sense of our presence here in Hawai‘i. But given the systemic racism in the society here in Hawai‘i which oppresses Hawaiians, Filipinos and other immigrant Pacific Islanders, we also need to support each other in creating stories that help us **all** make sense, that empower us, that give us roles and a sense of purpose and therefore, belonging. How do we make stories that disrupt the current power structures?*

Khara Jabola in her afternoon remarks, opened our eyes to pivotal parallel moments in the colonial histories of the Philippines and Hawai‘i. And did you know that there were 6 Filipinos in the Royal Hawaiian band? And two of them had applied for citizenship to the

Hawaiian Kingdom? Did you know that the Philippines also had sea voyaging canoes and that our friend Elena Clariza is working with Farrington High School youth to build a canoe? Our colleague Lane Wilken recently came out with a book positing that the Philippines may also have legends of Maui as they do throughout Oceania. We are part of the Pacific and must take our place in the narrative. Indigeneity is all about connection. Remembering that we are not separate from each other, from the 'āina/the land, the sea, from our ancestors, from our future generations.

In the 2000 census, it was found that Hawaiians here had the lowest mean family income. Filipinos were second. We know that in terms of health disparities, Filipinos and Hawaiians vie for the highest rates of incidence and mortality. What are the stories that will heal us? What are the stories that will help us to find common ground, to help us decolonize our minds and empower the minds of our children?

What we are holding in one hand as Filipinas in Hawai'i is that many of us know we are settlers to a stolen nation and we choose to, and only want more of our people to decolonize their minds, to join in being allies to Hawaiian independence. On the other hand, we hold our own identity crisis, our own need to recover our stories and to resist this need to assimilate because we think it will help us to belong - only to find out that we end up with a profound sense of disconnection to our own culture, Hawaiian culture and American culture.

We created this day as a highly interactive one, because we knew we were onto something - the power of sharing our stories to help us connect. We hope to continue this process, so that we can create stories that will empower our children for a decolonized and independent Pacific. Who else needs to be in on these conversations? Who wants to join us in shaping these conversations? Who wants to get more involved in changing the future of Hawai'i? Please sign up before you leave.

I would like to end with this song by Grace Nono called Dosayon. It is a Kalinga song sung in Tagalog which calls for peace and unity. The song after that is Salidumay, a song that gives thanks for our abundance.

After this event, we came up with a working name for our group and created a secret Facebook page Decolonial Pin@ys in March of 2014. With this new identity, we went out into the world to practice what it meant to be a decolonial Pin@y. Below is a list of events that we organized up to summer of 2015.

Women's Voices, Women Speak Retreat on genuine security & genuine sovereignty – June 2014. See Kim Compoc and Shelley Muneoka's article on RIMPAC articulating WVWS stance: <http://hawaiiindependent.net/story/we-need-to-ask-hard-questions-about-rimpac>

Merienda for the Mind (Talk Story Session) with longtime activist Uncle Johnny Verzon – August 2014

Growing Solidarity: Food sovereignty, Farmworkers and Organizing film night with HCFS & Food+ – October 2014

Memorial for Jennifer Laude / Transgender day of remembrance – November 2014

Testimony to support Army Downsizing on O‘ahu – January 2015

Merienda for the Mind and bike ride with Filipino environmental lawyer Tony Oposa – February 2015

Respect Labor, Respect Land #protectmaunakea and AiKea Academy workshop & button campaign in support of Aloha 'Āina Unity March – July/August 2015

While this was all happening, we were part of a collective milieu of events happening in Hawai‘i. We were acutely aware in June 2014 of Hawaiian sovereignty activists who were resisting and educating Hawaiians around the US Department of Interior and Department of Justice’s inquiry into the interest of Hawaiians in reestablishing a government to government relationship and in assisting the Native Hawaiian community in reorganizing its government. Years of Hawaiian charter school organizing, and more recent research and education by Hawaiian legal and academic scholars articulating that Hawai‘i continues to be an illegally occupied nation, came to a head as many in the sovereignty movement came out of the woodwork to testify against reestablishing a government to government relationship on the US DOI’s terms. We had just participated in a joint Filipina – Hawaiian activist retreat organized by Women’s Voices, Women Speak. We as Decolonial Pin@ys listened to and attended these forums in allyship and to take responsibility for standing alongside native Hawaiians in a future independent Hawai‘i.

Women’s Voices, Womens Speak was invited to be part of an event looking at racism and militarism in Hawai‘i in November 2014. Some of our members were part of that group and Decolonial Pin@ys asked if we could speak about Jennifer Laude’s case to their audience. Jennifer Laude was a transgender woman who was allegedly murdered in October 2014 by a US marine in Olongapo, Philippines. It was on us to make the linkages between her case and that of the murder of Kollin Elderts, a Kanaka Maoli shot and killed by a US federal agent in Waikiki in 2011. I wrote the opening statement to our memorial event honoring Jennifer Laude.

All Souls Day-November 2, 2014

Revolution Books

Dia de los Muertos: In memory of Jennifer Laude / Remembering Lost Beloveds / Honoring our Continued Survivance.

Framing statement about the intersections and why we gather.

Before we formally start today’s remembrance, we want people understand how and why we chose to gather. The event that preceded this one centered on racism and militarism in Hawai‘i, specifically focusing on the Kollin Elderts case.

We chose to meet after this event because we saw a parallel between Jennifer Laude’s murder, and the murder of Kollin Elderts. Kollin was murdered in 2011 by a US federal agent. This agent was in Hawai‘i as part of the heightened security forces here to protect world leaders and global corporations who were meeting for the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation summit. On the agenda were discussions of the secret Trans Pacific Partnership, which provisions include elevating foreign corporations to equal status with

sovereign nations. Military grade weapons and tools were supplied to local police to ensure the safety of those participating in this global capital convergence.

Jennifer Laude was murdered by a visiting US marine in Olongapo, a town near a former US naval base. The marine was there as part of 4000 US troops that had just finished joint military exercises in the pristine areas of Zambales and Palawan. It was a murder that Filipino activists feared would happen as a result of the newly renewed Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement between the US and the Philippines allowing US greater access to Philippine military installations in exchange for support during times of calamities and in the ongoing territorial dispute against China in the West Philippine Sea.

Kollin and Jennifer are collateral damage at the hands of increased militarization of our islands in the face of global capital protecting its own interests. The military and the state are interested in protecting those considered most valued in our society, at the expense of those most vulnerable, and most marginalized. The military is conditioned, trained as walking weapons. They must dehumanize others in order to justify their right to enact violence.

This violence is a violence that aggressive imperial powers have been using for hundreds of years. In the Philippines, as in Hawai'i, we also have traditions of katalonan/babaylan - our priestesses/shamans, who were women as well as transgender women, were vilified by Spanish priests. In Quezon, in the 17th century, transgender katalonan were driven into the mountains and, if they came into town, were forced to wear yellow, to distinguish them as transgender. (This is similar to The Glades in Honolulu, who were forced to wear "I am a boy" buttons in the 1960s). The babaylan were called witches, and became the fabled Filipino monsters we know today like the aswang. Babaylan were fed to the crocodiles in order to completely eliminate their bodies so they wouldn't "come back." These feminine spiritual leaders were a threat to the new colonial powers and their violent suppression reflected just how intensely important it was to subjugate this powerful class of people.

These kind of violent divisions have become ingrained in our colonial consciousness. Even though these events have occurred 300 years or even 100 years ago, our societies have become indelibly divided and marked by these actions. We buy into them, because we know that we win in this system by moving up at the expense of others.

In the Philippines, a universal anti-discrimination law which seeks to penalize profiling and other acts of discrimination based on ethnic origin, religious affiliation, and beliefs has been waiting to pass since 1998. This law included protections not only for lgbt people but for indigenous peoples in the Philippines, the elderly, etc. Due to its lgbt provisions, conservative religious elements had stopped this bill from passing. Jennifer Laude's death has been a touchstone for progressive movements, who have been building relationships across movements in the interim, and it has reinvigorated people's energy to try to pass this bill.

We know that these bills don't change a culture overnight. It is our work of building kinship, reciprocity and love that does that. We come here today to honor the lives that have been lost due to the consequences of violence and militarization and racism, and hetero-patriarchy, and in particular, Jennifer Laude's life.

After this intro, we had Ashliana Hawelu a mähū of Hawaiian and Filipino descent, co-founder and Executive Director of [Kulia Na Mamo](#), a non-profit started in 2003 to serve Hawaii's most disadvantaged mähūwahine (transgender) community speak. And she said that Jennifer Laude's story was her own. Except that she lived to tell the story.

Indigeneity is all about connection. Colonization is all about disconnection.

I was particularly happy about that event because we were able to speak to a wider audience than the usual folks who might attend the vigil of yet another transgender women killed in this world. In building on our relationship with peace activists and Hawaiian sovereignty activists, we were able to share a story of shared struggle and resistance between Filipinos and Hawaiians and to expose peace and sovereignty activists to the particular hardships that transgender islanders face.

In the beginning of 2015, we decided to develop our vision and mission statement. We worked with Mila Anguluan Coger, a PhD in expressive arts therapy and board member of Center for Babaylan Studies, as part of our process of connecting to our individual and collective stories. Our core participants throughout the process, in addition to myself were: Ellen-Rae Cachola, Grace Caligtan, Kim Compoc, Nicki Garces, Maiana Minahal, Shannon Cristobal, and Sonya Zabala. We completed our statement in March of 2015.

Decolonial Pin@ys is a group of diasporic Filipin@s in Hawai'i committed to demilitarization, decolonization, healing and creative liberation.

We believe that Filipinos can tap into their lakas ng loob (inner strength) to build allyship for a free and independent Hawai'i.

Like the Banyan tree with multiple roots, Filipinos in the diaspora remember our own resistance traditions in the Philippines to globalize love, liberation and connection.

Demilitarization means

- *Transforming our economies to be independent of war, base infrastructure, and militarized police. This includes restoring land that has been contaminated.*
- *Addressing the long-term consequences for war-torn nations including mass killing, refugee crises, environmental destruction and intergenerational trauma. Equally important is raising awareness about the consequences of war for veterans including PTSD and suicide.*
- *Creating opportunities for youth to have careers that promote human dignity, environmental restoration and peace.*

Decolonization means

- *Providing economic and political frameworks that challenge US empire, which consolidated itself in the Pacific in 1898, and continues through the "Wars on Terror" and the "Pivot to Asia." This includes providing educational*

opportunities for Filipinos in Hawai'i to broaden their historical understanding of what it means to be "American."

- *Bringing the lessons of Philippine independence struggles to Hawai'i's movement for genuine security and genuine sovereignty.*
- *Releasing our dependence on all empires and their cultures of domination. This means recognizing the ways that colonial hierarchies of power insinuate themselves into all levels of human interaction, for instance in domestic violence and sexual abuse.*

Healing means

- *Ending internalized self-hate and shame; building self-confidence and belonging to a beloved community; attaining ginhawa (well-being) to embrace the sum of who we are as Filipin@s.*
- *Shedding our colonial mentality to achieve bayanihan (collective heroism). This means learning how to relate to each other beyond hierarchies of skin color, class, gender, religion, age, tribe, sexuality, language, ability, and citizenship, etc.*
- *Valuing systems of wisdom that support the body's self-healing abilities, such as our hilot and babaylan traditions. This also means decolonizing our diets and reclaiming ancestral traditions of respecting and honoring nature.*
- *Nourishing the spiritual dimension of our activist work, which is necessary for long-term commitment and sustainability.*

Creative Liberation means

- *Seeing art and creative expression as core to nurturing the spirit and to building a dynamic learning community.*
- *Increasing opportunities for understanding Philippine history, learning our cultures, and speaking our languages.*
- *Respecting the indigenous cultures that exist in the Philippines, Hawai'i, the Pacific and around the world, and supporting the perpetuation of indigenous values and technologies.*
- *Gaining 'āina (land)-based skills towards increasing individual, family and community sovereignty.*

March 2015 Decolonial Pin@ys talk to Dr. Ellen-Rae Cachola's ethnic studies class, Social Movements in Hawai'i, UH Manoa. Kim Compoc and Grace Caligtan also participated. In debuting our new mission statement, we were each asked to convey how we relate to one of Decolonial Pin@ys points of commitment.

In April 2015, Professor Vernadette Gonzalez facilitated a workshop at the Philippine Studies Conference on "Filipinos in Occupied Hawai'i" with Ellen Rae Cachola, Kim Compoc, and Manongs John Verzon, Ben Manuel and Ray Liongson at UH Manoa. Decolonial Pin@ys hosted a post conference gathering at Jesse's Coffee Shop in Kalihi.

Aloha at Mabuhay!

Welcome everyone to Jesse's Coffee Shop, specializing in down home Ilocano cooking. Welcome to the ahupua'a of Kalihi. An ahupua'a is the Hawaiian form of land division and management which parsed the island into wedges that went from mountain to ocean. Where Sand Island is now used to be a wealth of fish ponds that are no longer. Farrington High School, just up the road, is where transgender activist Janet Mock and the first Filipino governor in the US Ben Cayetano graduated from.

Kalihi is also a site of the Moncadistas, followers of Hilario Moncado, the founder of the Filipino Federation of America, a fraternal/mutual aid society started in 1925 for the California and Hawai'i sakadas. Moncado was known as the "brown" Christ to some. The church in the valley is the first Filipino building on the Hawai'i Historic Register.

But if you look deeper to the indigenous stories of this place, you find that the goddess Haumea, who is thought of as the progenitor of the Hawaiian race, and the mother of the Hawaiian goddess Pele, Kalihi Valley was the first earthly residence of Haumea. In Kalihi Kai there is a shark guardian named Makali'i, known to frequent the waters of Kalihi Kai, particularly near the little islets off Sand Island. In Kapalama where I live, there is a story of a girl Lepeamoā who hatched from an egg and was born as a bird with feathers all the colors of the rainbow. She could turn herself into a beautiful young woman wearing a feather lei. The girl was so beautiful that a rainbow was always present above her. The girl was guarded by her ancestress, Keaolewa ("the moving cloud"). When you know these stories, as a place of the gods, you begin to appreciate its sacredness.

My name is Dr. Christine Teaño Lipat. I'm an activist and holistic chiropractor. My mom is Ilocano from Cagayan Valley, born and raised in Mindanao, and my father is Batangueño from Lipa City. They were part of the post 1965 immigration wave. I am a 2nd generation Filipina, 3rd generation Ilocana, born and raised in NJ and have lived here in O'ahu for almost 5 years.

Coming here, I realized how different it was to be Filipina in Hawai'i. Hawai'i and most of the Pacific Islands, except Guåhan, were not colonized until the mid to late 1800s. When you are surrounded by Native Hawaiians and you learn about the illegal overthrow of their kingdom and the fact that Hawai'i is an occupied nation, when you are surrounded by Pacific Islanders – Micronesians, Polynesians, and Melanesians, and realize that most all identify as indigenous, you realize that Filipinos here are in a very different position than on the continent.

There is a common language and values in claiming indigeneity, and when you want to build, bridge and connect, you are compelled to look into your own heritage in order to connect authentically. My dear friend Grace often mentioned that it is here that she is called to her Igorot heritage in a way that she wasn't being called to as an Asian American on the continent. In NYC, I learned about dances of southern Mindanao and the existence of Philippine indigenous tribes, but I didn't really get it, the importance of story, context and centrality of land and culture embedded in these dances, in the weavings, in the tattoos and ritual clothing until I came here and understood hula, mele (song) and oli (chants) utilized in its full context. That hula and the song, is about story, almost like a prayer, and it is almost always embedded in place. It is core to the dance and song. It is the same for many indigenous expressions. In diaspora, watching our indigenous dance and song out of context and trained in the eye of American material culture, it was about valuing the beauty, trying to widen American's notions of beauty, resisting exoticization, about art appreciation, but ultimately about how consumable, how fundable these dances and their costumes could become.

There are Filipinos, mostly Ilocanos, but also Visayans, who have been here for 3-4 generations, who have ancestors buried here. Many of these sakadas left poverty or came seeking their fortune to work the plantations, the very systems of industrial agriculture, which violently displaced and dispossessed the native Hawaiians of their lands and livelihood. This dispossession is real and to this day. The trauma is ongoing. Mauna Kea the tallest mountain in the world, has been developed by UH with blatant disregard for

their charge, to be stewards of this sacred conservation district. Politicians, in bed with the developers, have conveniently ignored native dispossession since 1898 in the name of technology, progress, job making, etc.

As part of our responsibility to supporting Native Hawaiians, we ask you all to support the call to stop the construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope on Mauna Kea.

Once they develop these industries and make the jobs on stolen land, they figure out how they can pay us the lowest salaries possible, to maximize profits. The Filipinos, we joined with other workers to organize and form unions. As the last ethnic group brought to the plantations and as the brownest of the bunch, we bore the brunt of the racism which still pervades the pecking order to this day. So when the plantations left, we now comprise a higher proportion of the hotel, sales and administrative workers in this state. Filipinos are the third largest racial category in Hawai'i, after whites and Japanese but only 1% of faculty in the university are Filipino and the rates of pursuit of higher education are very low. Today, there was a rally by Local 5 and their movement building arm AiKea outside the Aston Waikiki to support workers 99% of whom are Filipino, to be able to vote to form a union. Although we have the numbers, our disenfranchisement is palpable.

What we envision as Decolonial Pin@ys is how do we uplift the stories that help us bridge across the immigrant settler/indigenous divide to create a better Hawai'i for all of us? How can we acknowledge each other's trauma so that we can heal all the different parts of ourselves? There are many Hawaiians who are part Filipino but they do not have the songs, dances, stories that help root us to this place and don't have access the song, dances and stories that root us to our land in the Philippines.

Rather than waiting for sovereignty to happen to us, we need to ask how can we be partners in building towards a free and independent Hawai'i?

Many of us here are at the forefront of these questions. Elena Clariza has been working with our youth in Farrington to develop the FOB project, where youth are fundraising and building a paraw, a boat indigenous to Iloilo as a way to understand that we too are sailors and navigators. Jeff and Ray are doing work building up our youth through education. Women Voices Women Speak is working to uplift our understanding of Genuine Security across the Pacific. DP's are asking the questions and planting seeds, developing relationships with AiKea and Local 5 hotel workers union, with the community, with the University, with Hawaiian groups, with other peace and justice groups to bridge and build towards a future where we all can unplug from the matrix's incessant need to consume and instead to value the land and our ability to grow our own food, value our body's own ability to heal, and learn to share, live in peace and live sustainably together.

The question we want to ask of you is, as diasporic people, how do we heal the colonial violence which suppressed the ways of knowing that connected us to our land? How do we connect to the land that we now live on, wherever you are? How does looking at our relationships in the Pacific, our relationship to American Empire, our role as settlers in Guåhan and Hawai'i, influence your understanding of what it is to be Filipino? How does your work move us forward in healing, decolonizing our minds and empowering our place in this world in a way that repossesses its native peoples alongside our own?

Thank you all for the work you have done for our communities. And thank you all for being here and for listening. If you feel inspired to join us in exploring these issues towards creative liberation, please sign up here!

After 2 years of conversations and participating in AiKea organizing, we were invited to lead a workshop on July 28, 2015 as part of the AiKea Academy for AiKea organizers to articulate how labor should support Hawaiians' campaign to stop the construction of a Thirty Meter Telescope atop Mauna Kea. Decolonial Pin@ys with AiKea staff developed the button campaign, Respect Labor, Respect Land so that workers at the Local 5 hotels hosting visiting astronomy conference participants could wear these in solidarity with the upcoming Aloha 'Āina Unity march. This march was scheduled for August 9, 2015 during the time of the International Astronomers Union conference as a way to build awareness of the opposition to construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope at Mauna Kea. This campaign was actually building upon a victory that Unite Here! Local 5 secured in North Shore in July 2015 which had been years in the making. Unite Here! Local 5 was able to bring Turtle Bay hotel worker wages and benefits up to par with Waikiki rates, offering worker protection from job loss due to condo conversion, while at the same time helping to secure a conservation easement relating to the size and impact of development, which has been important to Hawaiians and those interested in environmental conservation. Unite Here! Local 5 is one of the few unions dedicated to finding ways for labor, environmental and indigenous concerns to intersect to create a better future for Hawai'i for all of us.

Here is the text of the flyer I created for the campaign in collaboration with Reyna Ramolete, Grace Caligtan, and Ellen Rae Cachola:

Corporations, in their relentless pursuit of profit, must be continually reminded to respect our labor and our precious environment. As union workers, we are vigilant in protecting our rights, and we support Native Hawaiians' vigilance in protecting their lands.

We wear this button as a reminder.

Mauna Kea, the tallest mountain in the world, is revered by Hawaiians as an ancestor and is home to many gods and goddesses. It is a place of worship. A public land trust & conservation district, it is a main aquifer for the Big Island.

- The Thirty Meter Telescope Project proposed for Mauna Kea does not legally meet strict construction criteria required in this special district. The Board of Land & Natural Resources violated its own mandate of protecting natural resources and preserving customary Native Hawaiian rights by granting consent to begin construction.*
- Moving forward with construction without first resolving pending court cases challenging the legality of the TMT Project will cause irreparable harm to the sensitive ecosystem and desecration of sacred sites on Mauna Kea.*

Dispossessed of our lands and livelihoods by corrupt governments, corporations and foreign interests, we live here in Hawai'i to work and support our families. Our struggles against corporate and foreign entities who steal our labor for profit are the same forces that steal the lands of Native Hawaiians for profit. Our labor is sacred and the land on which we labor is sacred. Both deserve to be valued and protected.

Ultimately, the AiKea Movement demands a new social contract that centers values of aloha 'āina – care for the land and for each other – in decision-making for a better Hawai'i.

Decolonial Pin@ys #AiKea #protectmaunakea

Here is the speech I wrote to open up our workshop at the AiKea Academy:

I'm Dr. Christine Teano Lipat. I'm a holistic chiropractor and have been here in Hawai'i since 2010. I came here because I felt called to serve the communities here with whatever skills I had – before becoming a chiropractor I was a nonprofit manager and an activist in NYC for 12 years.

I will share with you my background because I know in Hawai'i, people want to know your background, who you belong to. In the mainland, it is a loaded question because it comes out of a space of how do you not belong? It is a place of individualism, of nuclear families, where we hardly know our neighbors. Hawai'i, being only colonized the last 120 years, and being a small island, family is huge (literally), everyone knows everyone and so we want to know! During the workshop, we want to know your family's immigration history, so get ready to share.

I was born and raised in NJ – my mom is an Aquino/Teaño from Cagayan Valley, and my dad is an Aranda/Lipat from Batangas, both from the island of Luzon, Philippines. They came to the US after the 1965 immigration law passed which allowed professionals from the Philippines to come – my dad was a doctor, my mom a nurse. Although I grew up middle class, I experienced racism and later homophobia growing up in the mainland. As I learned about injustice in college and later the history and injustices that Filipinos face in the Philippines and in the US, I have ever since been about protecting the rights of those most marginalized in our society.

When I arrived here, you can see that although there is so much money flowing into Hawai'i, that the gap between the rich and the poor is huge. That the public education system is suffering. That Filipinos and Native Hawaiians are at a race to the bottom in terms of health disparities. That many of us are one step away from homelessness and that many are already homeless. You can see that Native Hawaiians are traumatized continually by displacement and wanton development of precious sacred lands. As I began to get more involved in the community, I saw this need for connection between communities.

And each community is dealing with critical questions.

Local 5 and AiKea are asking – how do we achieve economic justice for our communities while also supporting the environment and Native Hawaiian struggles for responsible, sustainable land management?

Native Hawaiians are asking, how do we strive for an independent inclusive multicultural nation without recreating the very same power structures that oppresses our most vulnerable communities? How do we shift current paradigms to realize that 'i has limited resources and that our consumer culture is unsustainable and there might be times when we have to do with less?

Micronesians, Koreans, Okinawans, Filipinos are asking how can we hold the US accountable for abuse/violence committed by the US military in our home countries, for military land grab and interference in our sovereign affairs? In addition, Micronesians want to know how we hold the US accountable for the environmental havoc which has caused many of us to become health refugees to Hawai'i and the US?

Not everyone is asking these questions. Most folks are just trying to survive, taking on 2-3 jobs. But for those who care and see the need to be involved, we want to work with you!

Decolonial Pin@ys has been a place for conscious Filipino/as and our allies to hold all these questions. We realize that we can provide a bridge between our communities. We want to build community knowledge and understanding of how our individual stories intertwine with our collective histories so we can break down barriers. When we can see that the same global forces, multinational corporations that oppress our people in our home countries are the same ones that own Waikiki, that enjoy defense contracts, that grow GMOs, that take Native land, we can take moments out of our week to build and focus on collective energies to change the world so it can be more liveable, more sustainable for all of us. We are here at AiKea because we care about the future of Hawaii.

Decolonial Pin@ys are made up of individual Filipino/as closely involved in Womens Voices Womens Speak (the Hawai'i Branch of the International Women's Network Against Militarism) who have also been members of Urban Babaylan, AiKea, Hawai'i Peace and Justice, Nakem Youth, etc. Some of us just moved here, have been here for 25 years, or for 4 generations. We are committed to decolonization, demilitarization, healing and creative liberation. We support a free and independent Hawai'i and draw from our own resistance traditions in the Philippines to globalize love, liberation and connection. We support AiKea because we believe in AiKea's platform and want to work with all of you to make this vision a reality!

I learned that one of my skills is convening community and to me, us being and learning together here is wellness. My work with DP's is wellness. Building bridges, breaking down barriers to us connecting, understanding each other and caring for each other is wellness.

Enjoy today's workshop. I hope you find it inspiring!

After this workshop, Ellen-Rae Cachola with Auntie Terri Kekoolani of Womens Voices, Women Speak led an insightful, collaborative DeTour with AiKea of Waikiki. We rallied AiKea folks to join the Aloha 'Āina Unity March, which ended up mobilizing over 10,000 people around protecting Mauna Kea and sacred lands, and protecting our lands and keiki from GMOs and pesticide drift.

Our latest campaigns which happened in the fall of 2015 around the *Land is Life: Action Book for Youth Solidarity with Indigenous Lumad Communities in the Philippines* led by Reyna Ramolete, and the *Tale of Lam-Ang and the Fire Giant* by Grace Caligtan are both decolonial stories that are targeted to the youth. And Ellen Rae Cachola, Kim Compoc, Melisa Casumbal-Salazar and Grace Caligtan's workshop as Decolonial Pin@ys at the North American Indigenous

Studies conference in May of 2016 will be a wonderful story to tell as well. I am so honored to be amongst this group of powerful Pin@ys paving new ground for future generations!

Lipat, means to move or transfer. As I turn 45, I find myself finally planting roots in O`ahu. Living in Hawai`i has been so eye-opening for me, intellectually, and spiritually. The kind of moving that I do now is about digging deeper, about exploring and healing an intimacy with myself, with the land and with others that before I shied away from, being a second generation immigrant kid growing up in a racist NJ suburb.

What have I learned from all these years of organizing, burnout, and living in Hawai`i? I`ve changed my view of time. Whereas in NYC, I burned out thinking we were always behind in how much we could do to help the world, after being underground for 9 years and also being in Hawai`i and listening to Noe Goodyear-Kaupoa`s statement about indigenous views of time which are more long term, thinking 7 generations into the future, I`ve been more forgiving of myself and others as to what I and what we accomplish together. I`ve learned to have moments of down time after intense moments of productivity. I`ve learned to say no and to let go and allow others to lead when I cannot. I`ve learned to trust that the movement for a better world continues on, with or without me, as I allow others to roll the ball, perhaps not exactly how I would roll it but still, it keeps rolling. I appreciate all the different talents that everyone brings and I enjoy how fluid Decolonial Pin@ys is in checking into our energy and enthusiasm as part of deciding what projects to move forward on together. We have resisted applying for funding in exchange for the freedom to flow as we need to, without outside pressures to deliver. Who knows if Decolonial Pin@ys will last past the 2 year mark in its current iteration, or if it will continue to transform as we grow, live and love.

One of our ultimate visions is to create an alternative school, perhaps even a charter school, where children of Hawai`i can learn and grow, valuing their diverse indigenous, immigrant and local backgrounds, learning multilingually and forging a new future of mutual respect and cooperation, of sustainability and community sovereignty.

Many people are drawn to Hawai`i because they seek healing. If you are open to it, to listening to the cries of the land and the indigenous Hawaiians connected to it, if you are open to answering the challenges and contradictions that come with being a settler on stolen land, you might have your own decolonial experience that continues to separate you from the false dreams of US capitalist imperialist globalization so that you can heal and experience a deeper meaning to life than you could ever imagine.

Decolonial Pin@ys continues to weave stories that point empowering ways that we can belong in Hawai`i and in the Pacific that bridge and build our authentic connections to our Pacific family. I hope you are inspired to weave your own stories that break down barriers and build a global solidarity which puts people and the healing of the land at the forefront of a new sustainable future.

Dr. Christine Teaño Lipat, DC

March 2016