

Revised Nov. 2022

*Transcript of 1990 gubernatorial inaugural speech by Governor John Waihe'e, delivered on December 3, 1990. Transcribed from the Honolulu Star-Bulletin (12/03/1990) by Perry Arrasmith, 2022, under the auspices of the School of Communication & Information, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.*

## **The 1990 Inaugural Address of John Waihe'e December 3, 1990**

Today, I ask you to imagine the discovery of these islands by brave Polynesian men and women facing an unknown sea hundreds of years before the beginning of European open-ocean exploration. Picture in your minds' eye what they saw from their canoes on the day of discovery. The white tip of a mountain graced by a god-given Pacific dawn. A volcanic torch in the solemnity of night. Even closer, a rainbow, a valley, a shore, a new home.

The miracles of that moment more than a millennium ago, binds us together today. More than a finding of land, it is a tribute to human ingenuity and mutuality. It is a testament to the universal quest for a better life, success in the face of enormous adversity, and an inseparability with the oneness of nature.

It is the best of what discovery can be: The marriage of our will and knowledge, the fusion of our spirit and the flame of new hope.

Discovery for the people of Hawaii did not end the day the canoes touched here. It never ends.

Its seeds are as deep as the human soul. Every one of us, every day, is a discoverer. It is the heritage of all who make Hawaii home. It is the common ground of an uncommon people.

And so, let this inauguration day be a launching of new voyages and new discoveries in the oceans of our society and in the turbulent seas of change.

Let us discover together.

Let us start with one another. Let us face what is different without fear. Let us discover and understand one another for who we are, not what we may appear to be.

In a world where the greatest divisions seem to grow from the smallest differences, let us chart the moral course of human dignity and equality.

For if we don't show the way, who will?

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If we are not the ones, who is?

Let us rediscover our inseparability with nature. We are islands, the sky and the sea. We need to ask ourselves how our ancestors did so much with so little, and why we are able to do so little with so much. Answer the question with action which breathes life into the natural world around us.

Our is an oceanic covenant. We kept it when we called for the destruction of the drift-grill-net ocean walls of death and rallied others across the world to our cause. We kept it when we called for national sanity in the use of Johnston Island, and our Pacific island neighbors came to our side. We keep it with Kahoolawe. She will return to us and we will return to her, proud and peaceful.

When it comes to our environment, let others discover what we already know—that our Earth is a precious and glorious island of the universe, and humankind is her guardian.

Let us remember that our children are the greatest discoverers of all. My mom will tell you that as a youngster, I ‘discovered’ by the minute. And although it sometimes tests us as parents, the joy of discovery in the faces of our children radiates directly to our hearts. It is the essence of hope and the fiber of our future, here and everywhere.

Let us make school reform our community voyage. From the living room to the classroom, from the corporate boardroom to the Board of Education. Hold fast to the goal of public education second to none, and we will get there.

Finally, let us challenge the status quo. Let us shake and shape the system. When the old maps don’t work, we must make new ones.

We live in a world of exciting opportunities. Human will is breaking down the walls of totalitarianism. Old enemies are new friends. Telecommunications leap the barriers of distance in an instant, linking people as never before. The opportunities are boundless and ours to grasp.

We are also a world in dangerous waters. Staggering federal budget deficits, cities crumbling under their own weight, global warming, the daily threat of a desert war and a growing national self-doubt. The news is that the federal government is increasing taxes and cutting services and that the days of the big state surpluses are behind us.

The headlines tell us, but they don’t heal us. We must do that ourselves.

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Over the last four years we have created a winning formula and accomplished good things. Yet the world of the next four years may barely resemble the world of the last four. It is time to go beyond the winning formulas. The 21st century is our horizon.

Let us discover our greatness, not by anchoring ourselves to old mindsets, but by breaking free and challenging a society to be its very best. Therein lies the greatest discovery of all—the fulfillment of our complete potential. Homes for our families; universal health care; a Pacific people defining our destiny with the courage of that very first canoe.

My fellow voyagers, we can shirk from the torment of the world around us or we can lead it to a better place. We can close our own eyes or we can open the eyes of others. We cannot change history, but we can make it.

Let us lead the way—in harmony with each other, in oneness with nature, with a love for learning and joy for life. We are the discoverers.

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