

Living Nations, Living Words: A Map of First Peoples Poetry  
Poem commentary by Brandy Nālani McDougall, 2020

Speaker: Brandy Nālani McDougall

Date of recording: August 3, 2020

Location: 'Aiea, O'ahu, Hawai'i, poet's home

Length: 6 minutes, 36 seconds

START OF RECORDING

[Brandy Nālani McDougall reads "This Island on which I Love You"]

Brandy Nālani McDougall: Aloha mai e nā kūpuna, nā aloha 'āina, nā mamo, nā hoa. Aloha mai kākou. 'O Brandy Nālani McDougall kēia. 'O Kula ma ka mauna o Haleakalā ma Maui a Kama ku'u kulāiwi aloha, a noho au ma 'Aiea ma O'ahu a Lua. Aloha everyone. My name is Brandy Nālani McDougall and I was raised on the slopes of Haleakalā in the town of Kula on the island of Maui. I live now in 'Aiea on O'ahu.

I wrote the poem, "This Island on which I Love You," as a love poem to show the refuge of love and family amidst the ongoing trauma of U.S. militarization and settler colonialism in Hawai'i and the experience of having to bear witness to the violent devastation of our lands and waters. The island in the poem is of course O'ahu, the most populated island in our pae'āina, our archipelago, and also the most militarized, with over twenty-five percent of the island occupied by military bases, firing ranges, housing and other installations. Even in areas not occupied by the military, however, you may still be subjected to loud aircraft drills, unexploded ordinances, and toxic contaminants in our soil and waterways. Aside from militarization, overdevelopment from tourism and luxury properties for the very wealthy which sit vacant most of the year, have created severe infrastructural problems in Waikīkī and other parts of O'ahu. When we have a heavy rain or a storm on O'ahu, there is simply not enough green land to hold the water in places that are overdeveloped places like Waikīkī mean that the rain washes trash, pesticides and other chemicals down toward the ocean creating brownwater that is unsafe for swimming as well as brownwater that is toxic for marine, plant, and animal life.

In this way, I chose in this poem to make everyday intimate experiences of our 'ohana visible to show that we are vulnerable alongside the ways that we must live with another member of our 'ohana, our island, being subjected to horrible violence. At the same time, I hope that the poem

also shows our persistence as a people to continue to love and hope, to continue to protect our āina, and following our island's lead in acknowledging its strength and healing.

END OF RECORDING