

Testimony in favor of City Council Resolution 19-235
RENAMING KANEHOE BEACH PARK TO NĀONEALA‘A PARK

October 21, 2019

To: Council Member Heidi Tsuneyoshi, Chair
And Members, Committee on Parks,
Community Services & Intergovernmental Affairs

From: Māpuana de Silva
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Re: Renaming Kāne‘ohe Beach Park to Nāoneala‘a Park – Res. 19-235

Aloha Chair Tsuneyoshi and Committee Members:

As Kumu Hula of Kailua’s Hālau Mōhala ‘Ilima, as president of the Kailua Hawaiian Civic Club, and as the executive director of Kailua’s Hawaiian cultural 501c3 non-profit Hika‘alani, I would like to express my and my three organization’s complete support for our neighbors and *hoa aloha* of the Ko‘olaupoko Hawaiian Civic club and their Resolution 19-235, which calls for the renaming of Kāne‘ohe Beach Park (KBP) to Nāoneala‘a Park.

We are hula people, ‘āina advocates, and culture educators. The restoration of the original, history-steeped name – Nāoneala‘a (The Sands of La‘amaikahiki) – to what is now KBP (a name whose only significance is that it has erased our storied past) is exactly what we support and practice in all three organizations. Please allow me to review, below, a little of Nāoneala‘a’s storied past:

Oral tradition recounted for us by the 19th century historian Samuel M. Kamakau tells us that the *pahu hula* (the coconut-log drum with which our most revered chants and dances are accompanied) was brought to Hawai‘i in the mid-13th century by the voyaging chief La‘amaikahiki when he returned to O‘ahu after a lengthy stay in Kapa‘ahu, Tahiti.¹

When La‘a’s double-hulled canoe approached Hanauma Bay, the sound of his drum Opuku, as played by his drumming-master Kupa, carried across the water to captivate an O‘ahu man named Haikamalama who then ran along the shoreline in pursuit of the canoe as it sailed to Kāne‘ohe. As he ran, Haikamalama repeated to himself the words of Kupa’s *mele* (chant) and mimicked the “voice” of Opuku by drumming his fingers on his chest. By the time the canoe rounded Mōkapu point and entered the Kawahaokamanō channel at Kāne‘ohe Bay, Haikamalama had committed Kupa’s repertoire of chants and drumbeats to memory.

When La‘a came ashore at Waihaukālua, Kāne‘ohe, he scattered at his feet the sands he had brought from his Tahiti home, “and this place has been called, ever since, Nāoneala‘a (The-

¹ The version on which this account is based appears in Kamakau’s “Ka Moolelo o Kamehameha I,” *Nupepa Kuokoa*, January 12, 1867.

sands-of-La‘a).” This is also the place where La‘a and his lieutenants first took notice of the *kanaka* (man, native) who stood nearby, drumming his chest in unison with Opuku and chanting the voyagers’ names in ceremonial welcome. “E Kai–e–kai–kupo–lo. E Ku–pa–e–kupa–e. E Laa e hooheihei ana i ka moana.”

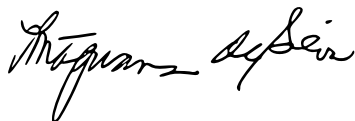
Because he was impressed by Haikamalama’s apparent familiarity with the pahu and the protocols of landing, La‘a brought Opuku ashore and allowed Hai to examine the drum’s sharkskin head, *‘umeke* (sound chamber), and lashings. After a time, La‘a continued his journey along the Ko‘olaupoko coast and made his home at Kualoa, but the beat-patterns, playing techniques, construction, and *loina* (rules, customs, principles) of the pahu had already taken hold at Nāoneala‘a thanks to the genius of Haikamalama and the foresight of the returning chief.

The passing of 800 years has drastically altered the physical and cultural landscape of the Kāne‘ohe to which La‘amaikahiki returned. Much of the old coastline has been graded, dredged, filled, hardened, or washed away. Most of the once pristine reef lies buried under several feet of silt. Many of the old place names survive in name only; we can no longer attach them to actual locations. Luckily – if this word can be used in so dire a context – our 19th century Hawaiian language newspapers provide us with enough information to identify two of the most important “placeless” place-names in the story of La‘a’s landing: 1) Waihaukālūa is the site of what is now Waikālūa fishpond, and 2) Nāoneala‘a is right next door to the fishpond at what is now Kāne‘ohe Beach Park.

Kamakau tells us that the place at which La‘a first landed was given the name Nāoneala‘a in commemoration of the sands (*nā one*) that he scattered there. Kamakau also tells us that Nāoneala‘a has been the name of that section of shoreline ever since. This no longer holds true, and it has not held true for many decades. Resolution 19-235 provides us with the opportunity for pono, for redress, for the honoring of our own history and historians. Na‘ōneala‘a, not KBP, is the origin point of our hula pahu traditions. It lies at the very piko of anything to do with the drums, drumming, and drum dancing of our people. It has meaning; it triggers stories, teaching, and pride of heritage.

We urge you, then, to give new life to Nāoneala‘a, to a place that has, for too long, been un-named.

Me ka ha‘aha‘a,



Māpuana de Silva