A Few Hawaiʻi Poems

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Poem #1– I have come to love Māma-ki ever since I’ve learned and am still learning more about it. This is one of the la‘au lapa‘au that were used by my Hawaiian ancestors. It is still used today for medicinal purposes, and is known for its healing values.

Mother and Student Rowena Rojo was born and raised in O‘ahu, Hawai‘i. The seventh of eight children born to Betty and Juan Rojo, Rojo received her Associates Degree at the University of Hawai‘i in the process of pursuing her Baccalaureate Degree. She enjoys Malama ‘Āina and her area of concentration is la‘au lapa‘au medicinal plants. Her goal is to create a la‘au lapa‘au program at a community garden to engage in hands-on learning experiences and projects to pass on. Rojo has formerly worked as an Administrative Specialist for Honolulu City and County, Department of Human Resources, and as an Outreach Community Outreach Worker for Ke Ola Mamo, Native Hawaiian Health Care Systems. She was an assistant coach for Police Activity Leagues for baseball and basketball. She has four children, Ho‘opono, Pu‘unui, Kahiau, and Ke‘alii and has one granddaughter, Kaupali. This is Rojos’ first poem book.
THE USE OF MĀMAKI TEA IN ANCIENT HAWAI‘I

Passed down through many generations, my ancestors used Māmaki tea
It lowers our blood sugar and high blood pressure to help us feel at ease
Also, relieving cramps and joints from swelling for you and me
The benefits of Māmaki Tea help the mind, blood and body
to circulate better and live happily
This wonderful plant counteracts the negative effects of stress and supports the healthier way at living at best
Kapa cloth made from the bark, and the berries to relax oneself, which it left that positive mark
To help a newborn from a mother’s birth,
the Māmaki berries were used to relax her muscles,
which has great worth.

Poem #2 – Embracing this beautiful Māmaki and seeking other words to define it with hints were challenging. The outcome of it has made me realize how Māmaki is a warrior plant that stands strong against the wind, like how it wants us to be when we need to be.

WHO ARE YOU

Who are you, a beautiful sight to behold
Your beauty attracts me
Leaving me always wanting to know you more
I come closer to look at your face
Your length and your fiber
That reflects your strong stature
I admire your keiki with tiny little hairs and brown freckles
That so elegantly adorn the glow of you
Your offspring that is so beautiful
Invites me to embrace you
Your roots grounding me to my kūpuna
Connecting me to my ancestors
I listened with my naʻau
Look with more than just my eyes
I hear Tūtū calling out to me
“You ask, who might you be?”
Oh my love one, this beautiful friend is Māmaki
A dear old friend of mine for many years
Māmaki gives the gift of life
A gift that keeps on giving
A life steeped with healing energy
With mana that flows endlessly
Māmaki is ʻohana
Māmaki is ʻohana where we unite as one
Your strength keeps families together
That’s who you are, you’re my ʻohana
We are one great big ʻohana
Mahalo e kuʻu tutu for being here with me spiritually
And teaching me that Māmaki is our family.
Poem #3 ~This is how I feel whenever I am around my other love, Awapuhi Melemele. She makes me feel vibrant and wholesome inside and out whenever she allows me to smell her natural essence of life, and is always thanking me when she blooms.

**MY ALOHA**

What is Love  
Love is my Aloha  
My Aloha is giving life to the beauty of the Awapuhi Melemele  
As I lay her tenderly in the bed on a bright Hoku moonlight  
She gleams back at me in her youthfulness, while the ‘Ua blessing fall upon us  
Awapuhi my love  
She’s simple and pure  
Innocent of what is to come in her growing days, that bring her blooms  
As months come to pass  
she embraces my love to her through my nurturing and nourishing touch she holds dearly  
From her tan baby roots come her long reaching stalk of green  
holding her ginger Awapuhi Melemele  
Her makana of gratitude is in her bloom  
Its beauty radiates her love back to me  
That is love, that is my Aloha
Poem #4—Children are our next generation to carry on what our ancestors have left behind for us to teach them; they are our future.

**KEIKI O KA ʻĀINA**

Absolutely…
All children are beautiful,
They are our future.
I truly believe that the next generation will have a great effect for regaining our unused ʻĀina for our HAWAIIAN people.
Each generation is getting smarter, more intelligent with technology which will greatly help our cause in regaining our unused ʻĀina back.
We cannot get all of our lands back, we already know that,
When I was growing up I remember my tutu saying to me,
We have a lot of unused lands that must be given back to our people.
“IMUA KEIKI O KA ʻĀINA….WIN OUR LANDS BACK!”
Poem #5 ~Au‘e is a poem of our Hawaiian people that gives so much and does not expect anything in return. Yet there are people that take more than what they need, for their own greed.

**AU‘E**

How dare you come before me?!
I gave you so much,
I fed you,
I sheltered you and kept you from raging waters.
I’ve grown to monstrous heights,
where I can see all of my beautiful people,
and now you want to build on me so you can look away from my ‘Āina.
You sell a part of me for your own profit, to whom I’ve never known,
The lands of my ancestors are forever lost.

Au‘e

Who are you to deceive me?
My people know me, they love me, they know my joy,
they see me happy when the colors of the Pua are seen from the Awapuhi Melemele to Māmaki, after the ‘Ua blessings come
how will my keiki ever know?

I am enriched with love that feeds the ‘ohana and animals that graze upon me,
The theft brings pain to my people who love and care me for me.
The pain of my ancestors hurt deeply for generations to carry on,
I can only hold so much.

Au‘e

Poem #6 ~Kawelo is a typical Hawaiian boy growing up in a traditional Hawaiian fishing “village” practicing one form of traditional Hawaiian Fishing, that is, the gathering of ʻōpelu. Kawelo seeks the kōkua of a dear friend, whom his father helped him raise and train for this specific task. The barracuda, or kākū, would then be called, “ʻōpelu māmā” was Kākū Nui, a great connection to the lawai‘a.

**KAWELO, THE BOY OF THE SEA**

This is my poem, I write to you from me,
E aloha mai, Kawelo of the sea.
Darting swiftly through the water,
Mother of the land, and the sea, his father.

Ka lā i ka hikina, dawn of a new day,
Gathering of sustenance, he seeks, he prays.
Knowledge to lawai‘a, from generations past,
Summoning kākū, for our lāhui to last.

He knocks on his canoe, familiar call to a friend,
Silvery slivering in the ocean, kākū brings to no end.
Chewed kuku, net descend.
Palu offered, amen.

Mahalo to Kawelo, boy of the sea,
ʻŌpelu māmā, and the sustenance for you and me.
Poem #7-We need to listen to our ancestors of long ago and never forget what they did for us, showing us the ways in which it is in our DNA and is our Feast of Knowledge.

FEAST OF KNOWLEDGE

Take a bite of the feast of knowledge.
Open yourself to listen to our ancestors,
through the flowing winds, and through the trees that speak plainly.
The pools of knowledge are etched into our memories from ancient times, that are ignited upon the winds that flow constantly all around us.
The substance of knowledge about our ‘ĀINA to those chambers are above us,
Waiting to be accessed by the vibrations that flows upon the winds to our ears, to our minds and to express the knowledge of our ancestors to pass on to future generations so we will never forget who we are, where we come from and what we represent.
Time will be our salvation to regain our ancient Hawaiian lands.

Note: all photos supplied by author.