

12-18-2020

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Recommended Citation

Hamid, Sarah Michal (2020) "The Power of Pu‘uhonua o Pu‘uhuluhulu: Intersections of Gender and Justice Work on Mauna Kea," *Horizons*: Vol. 5 : Iss. 1 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://kahualike.manoa.hawaii.edu/horizons/vol5/iss1/2>

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The Power of Pu‘uhonua o Pu‘uhuluhulu

Intersections of Gender & Justice Work on Mauna Kea

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Women Studies 418 (Women and Work)

Mentor: Dr. Monisha Das Gupta

To organize is to live and breathe the struggle of struggle. Kia'i on Mauna Kea, and across all of Hawai'i know this. Organizing is a line of labor that commands all of a person, their life, their genealogy, their love. I learned this from kia'i on Mauna a Wākea. While protecting the Mauna brings many lessons, its lessons are work. The way we work often shapes the way we understand the world. In a perfect world the kind of labor you do and the profit you make does not constrict you from life giving services and resources. Unfortunately, we do not live in a perfect world, in fact we live far from it. But, workers' movements and justice movements at large seek to transform these harmful societal dynamics of labor. While wage labor or paid work is often examined with nuanced understandings of the intersections between gender, race etc., we often forget that these dynamics also play out through justice work, or activism. Justice movements often tend to replicate the very unhealthy power structures that they seek to destabilize and deconstruct. Movement building requires organization, and with organization often comes division of power. Without clear intentions and mechanisms to prevent oppressive power structures within justice work, the gendered element of justice work can, and does become harmful. Pu'uhonua o Pu'uhuluhulu on Mauna Kea currently represents a site of justice work where these power dynamics are taken into account, and are actually addressed.

Historically, labor movements in the form of union organizing and other justice work, have sought to restructure power dynamics by collective organizing (Staples, 2012). Unions do so in the form of union representatives and members, and other justice based organizations do so in the form of members and coordinators (Dickinson, 2001). Though not expressly linked to labor organizing, the gendered division of la-

bor, or the division of tasks and social responsibilities on the basis of gender, has played an integral role in the modern workers' rights movement (Love et al., 2018). By shaping the discourse on maternity/paternity leave, social assistance such as welfare, and the gender pay gap, the gendered division of labor has demonstrated that it does indeed impact relatively all aspects of life (Duffy, 2007). Those who seek to reconstruct



Sarah Michal Hamid is a Women's Studies and Sustainability Studies student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and wrote this final oral history paper in her WS 418 Women and Work course with Dr. Monisha Das Gupta. During this class, Sarah learned about the rich and complex history of the gendered division of labor and labor organizing in the US context. While taking this course, the ongoing protection of Mauna Kea was an issue heavily impacting Sarah's life and subsequently her academic work too. Wanting to honor the kia'i tirelessly protecting the Mauna, Sarah decided to explore the role of labor and gender on the Mauna. Sarah is incredibly honored to have worked with such wonderful wāhine, and looks forward to all future endeavors that center women and land.

these power dynamics typically engage in what is described as justice work, or work rooted in theories of social justice (Love et al., 2018). Utilizing social identity theory and standpoint theory, we can observe how justice work is shaped by individual and collective identities, and is often rooted in many intersecting identities (Love et al., 2018). This is the case on Mauna Kea, where the intersections of multiple identities yield a movement where there is one specific goal, but no one specific type of organizer working towards that goal (Long, 2019).

My experience on the Mauna was one filled with transformation, and through my service-learning engagement and the sharing of stories and experiences at Pu'uhonua o Pu'uhuluhulu through oral histories of two wāhine kia'i, it became evident that the way labor is regarded on the Mauna veers away from capitalist and Western understandings of productivity. It also became evident that the dynamics of labor within this justice movement are particularly unique, however, this is not to say that problems do not arise. Labor looks different at Pu'uhonua o Pu'uhuluhulu, and therefore dynamics differ. This paper explores the notion of 'labor of love' in an Indigenous Kanaka Maoli, Mauna Kea context and examines the gendered division of labor with justice work at Pu'uhonua o Pu'uhuluhulu. Drawing primarily upon two oral histories of wāhine kia'i, Presley Ke'alaanuheha Ah Mook Sang and Cameron "Māhea" Māhealani Ahia, in leadership positions at the Pu'uhonua, this paper seeks to better understand the ways in which work impacts these wāhine, and the ways in which Pu'uhonua o Pu'uhuluhulu is reconfiguring what work means and why it is important. By examining these two oral histories at Pu'uhonua o Pu'uhuluhulu, it is clear that the notion of 'labor of love' is more complex and not necessarily harmful, and while the gendered division of labor may be apparent, it is not necessarily divisive, rather it is illustrative of the way wāhine are valued. Additionally, by examining the oral histories conducted with wāhine kia'i, it became apparent that the somewhat glamorized perception of being a kia'i is, is a facade, as even those in leadership positions also engage in somewhat "mundane" labor, highlighting the importance of all labor on the Mauna.

I come to this issue by no accident. As a settler in the Hawaiian Kingdom, I have become engaged in various movements across the pae 'āina. I do so not because of settler guilt, but because I know that this is the only way to even attempt to rectify the violence that is inflicted by the violence of settler colonialism. When I started studying at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa I became involved with the Kū Kia'i Mauna Movement at UH, and later got involved directly on the Mauna after July 2019. The two wāhine that I conducted oral histories of were two wāhine that I have looked up to for quite some time. They are two wāhine that I had been trained by, and had kuleana to. Being able to help document their stories was simply another extension of my kuleana to honor them. Because of these two wāhine, a movement was sustained, hearts have been ignited, and a nation was awoken.

Protect Mauna Kea Movement

The Kū Kia'i Mauna Movement, or Protect Mauna Kea Movement is not new, but this particular iteration of it is (Long, 2019). Re-ignited on July 10, when Governor David Ige announced that the construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) would resume, kia'i (protectors) gathered at the base of Mauna Kea in Hilo, Hawai'i to organize and stop construction (Long, 2019). Mauna a Wākea is the most sacred place in Hawai'i to Hawaiians, but the Mauna encapsulates much more than a sacred place. Representing the piko, or genealogical connection of Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians) to 'āina (land) in Hawai'i, Mauna Kea is a literal ancestor to the Hawaiian people (Ho'omanawanui et al., 2019). However, as much of Hawai'i has endured through occupation and settler colonialism, Mauna Kea has been desecrated in the name of science, solidifying the importance of settler profit and interest over Hawaiian lives and livelihood (Salazar, 2014). The construction of telescopes on Mauna Kea, and particularly the potential construction of the TMT represents "peaceful violence", and yet another pillar of targeted violence against Kānaka Maoli (Trask, 2004, p.12).

On July 13, 2019 Pu'uhonua o Pu'uhuluhulu was established by The Royal Order of Kamehameha as a place of refuge for kia'i on Mauna Kea (Long, 2019). It has since evolved into a place of refuge, cultural revitalization, political praxis, and community education, which will be detailed throughout the paper (Ahia, 2019). As time went on, after the initial few high action days, roles at the Pu'uhonua became more solidified, with clear organizational units emerging (Ah Mook Sang, 2019). Everyone at the Pu'uhonua works in some capacity, but the level, intensity and area differs (Ah Mook Sang, 2019). While this is what our contemporary capitalist society looks like, the stratification of labor often leads to the stratification of class (Duffy, 2007). This is not the case at Pu'uhonua o Pu'uhuluhulu, you will always be taken care of regardless of the position you work in (Ah Mook Sang, 2019).

Gender and Labor

Work and labor historically have acted as oppressive and controlling forces for women, particularly BIPOC (Black and Indigenous People of Color) and poor women (Love et al., 2018). Women tend to experience a plethora of issues both in and out of the workforce that place them at a severe disadvantage compared to their male counterparts (Duffy, 2007). Under capitalist patriarchy, women are often tasked with fulfilling caregiving and reproductive roles in their families and communities, typically limiting their long term career mobility (Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010). By recognizing this care work or reproductive labor as necessary and valuable, many feminists argue that

by understanding domestic work as its own legitimate form of work, rather than in comparison to paid labor, we can expand our understanding of how and what work is valued (Duffy, 2007). The term “labor of love” is often cited as the expressions of unpaid labor by which typically women and women of color provide feminized labor, but also often engage in justice work (Danziger Halperin, 2020). In the case of many Black women, such as Rosa Parks and Fannie Lou Hamer who lived along the intersections of racial and economic justice, protest and demonstration became an integral part of their quest for justice (Harley et al., 2002). This “labor of love” is often described as an act that you do unpaid but simply because you love it, but this definition becomes much more nuanced when the labor of love that you perform is tied to your literal liberation. Labor in Hawai'i is uniquely situated, in the sense that labor was not always extractive, but through the imposition of Western understandings of labor and productivity, combined with settler colonialism, labor has undergone significant transformations (Beechert, 1985). Under the Kingdom, the workforce has transformed from a very mixed labor to plantations as a territory, and now tourism and the military as sources of labor as a “state” (Beechert, 1985). While we know that the ways “people work shapes the ways they participate in politics” (Dickinson & Schaffer, 2001, p. 23), at Pu'uhonua o Pu'uhuluhulu this phenomenon is reciprocal too, the community's politics are shaping the ways in which people are working and engaging with labor. Many note that the Protect Mauna Kea Movement serves as an opportunity to “unmake the relations of settler colonialism and imperialism” (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, 2017, p.185), and while often overlooked, the dynamics of labor are one key element that upholds the relations of settler colonialism and imperialism. In fact, Pu'uhonua o Pu'uhuluhulu is demonstrating that we can work towards a world where many toxic understandings of labor and leadership within justice work are challenged and transformed.

For instance, the gendered division of labor at the Pu'uhonua looks different than most work environments. Wāhine lead all head roles of the divisions at the Pu'uhonua (Ahia, 2019). This is not to say that somehow all issues of gender and labor are solved. They are not. In fact, it may point to a rising problem of overworked wāhine kia'i in leadership capacities. However, it does begin to unravel the colonial and patriarchal thread that kāne (men) should control decision making, which has been woven into the lāhui and Hawai'i at large. This is perhaps one of the most prevalent themes throughout the oral history conducted with Māheha Ahia, who notes that labor often done by wāhine and mähū goes unseen and unrecognized (Ahia, 2019).

Additionally, justice work often involves many forms of violence, whether it be physical or emotional (Love et al., 2018). Mauna Kea and the Protect Mauna Kea movement is not an exception, experiencing surveillance, arrests of community members, and looming state violence, kia'i are familiar with

trauma (Ah Mook Sang, 2019). There is no denying this, being a kia'i on Mauna Kea is an emotionally intense venture, but because community resources have been carefully constructed to provide spaces to heal and debrief, we can see that cultural trauma is being unpacked rather than compounded. This did not happen randomly, as community members and organizers have been preparing for this moment for many years, carefully listening and observing other movements such as Standing Rock and looking for ways to create systems that support each other (Ahia, 2019).

Methods—Oral History

Oral histories were conducted with two wāhine kia'i who hold significant leadership and organizing positions at the Pu'uhonua. As stated previously, the method of oral history was chosen specifically because it paints a very rich picture of the experiences and events in a person's life. McGregor describes oral histories as encapsulating someone's life “from the bottom up and inside out”, which also helps readers understand a person's life in the context of the entire social context in which they lived (McGregor & Mizukami, 2019). Oral histories provide readers with deeper understandings of the individuals life and how their entire life led to a specific moment, which in this case is the Protect Mauna Kea Movement (Ahia, 2019). Historically, oral histories have been used as a means to preserve and document histories that may have been left out of mainstream media (McGregor & Mizukami, 2019). This was one reason why oral history was utilized, as these stories should be told, but may not have otherwise been told through conventional media platforms. By utilizing this method, the stories from these two wāhine become more than just stories, they become a part of history.

Oral history as a technique involves documenting the life and experience of a singular person. Though other narratives may be included, oral history typically seeks to record one specific person's journey throughout their life, usually emphasizing certain sociocultural themes. Methods for conducting oral histories vary, however the commonplace practice is to create a timeline of one's life before the interview, then create guiding questions based off of the timeline. Once proper consent is obtained, the recording element begins, and the interviewee will engage in a semi-structured conversation about their life. This conversation is then transcribed by the interviewer, and if any additional questions exist a follow up interview may be conducted. When the fully transcribed document is compiled, the interviewee will be shown the transcript and may decide to omit certain parts of the transcription, especially if the material is intended to be published publicly. While the practice of conducting oral histories in the academy has specific guidelines, many conduct oral histories to protect and preserve cultural or ancestral knowledge (McGregor & Mizukami, 2019).

The practice of oral history documentation in Hawai'i is one that is genealogical for Kānaka Maoli (McGregor & Mizukami, 2019). Though the formal academic process of conducting and transcribing an interview may not have been commonplace, mo'olelo, or a practice of storytelling and telling stories, is a historic Hawaiian tradition (Hopkins, 2019, 231). Mo'olelo is also not a stagnant entity, it is full of life, especially when describing the story of one's life (McDougall, 2016). The use of mo'olelo is particularly significant because of the banning of 'ōlelo Hawai'i (Hawaiian language) that resulted in deep generational gaps in fluency, thus forever altering the ability of future Hawaiians to understand mo'olelo in 'ōlelo (Hopkins, 2019).

Oral histories have also served as a means to preserve mo'olelo while utilizing modern technology (McGregor & Mizukami, 2019). These very intentions were utilized throughout the process of conducting and transcribing these two oral histories. Seeking to connect both the practice of recording stories, and the praxis of recording these particular stories, these two oral histories are meant to act as an extension of a larger mo'olelo about what happened on Mauna Kea in 2019.

Oral Histories

Presley Ke'alaanuhea Ah Mook Sang is the Chancellor of Pu'uhuluhulu University, established out of a need for community engagement and interaction on the Mauna. Cameron "Māhea" Māhealani Ahia serves as Presley's assistant and is also the kahu (keeper) of Hale Wāhine, the women's tent. For these wāhine, their work is deeply tethered to who they are as Kanaka Maoli wāhine, thus complicating the somewhat binary understanding of 'labor of love' and labor for profit that is often highlighted throughout understandings of women's work.

Coming from a slightly mixed educational background of attending public school in Pauoa as well as Kamehameha schools for high school, Presley ended up attending the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and earning degrees in Hawaiian Studies and Hawaiian Language. She initially planned on studying to become a lawyer, but ended up taking the route of education, and earned her master's in Hawaiian Language at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Presley now teaches Hawaiian studies classes, particularly HAW 100 which focuses on the impact of colonialism on Indigenous languages and culture. This is largely what motivated her to take up such a large role at Pu'uhonua o Pu'uhuluhulu, having stated that she wants people at the Pu'uhonua to "take back that narrative of what education is" (Ah Mook Sang, 2019). In addition to working as the Chancellor at Pu'uhuluhulu University, Presley also teaches a full course load at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

Presley serves in a capacity that requires intense organizational skills. While the University may be limited in material resources, the wealth of knowledge is abundant. Typically, Pres-

leys tasks include finding kumu (teachers) and classes to teach, cleaning the University space, creating the University schedule, and organizing proper media for popular classes. She also helps out in other places at the Pu'uhonua with cleaning toilets and serving and cooking food if she can. After initially founding the University, Presley laments how she was scheduling, organizing, and offering a "full schedule of classes every single day of the week without a break. . . I had to cut back because I realized that that was just something that we were incapable of continuing on with, or myself" (Ah Mook Sang, 2019). At this time Presley was the only person tasked with University duties, so Māhea decided to step in as her assistant in order to share the workload more evenly. This demonstrates the ethic of care that is practiced at the Pu'uhonua; if someone is struggling, you help them. By asking for help in this instance it also demonstrates engagement with community.

The type of community education or popular education that Presley contributes to can also be analyzed as a form of deconstructing class barriers to education. Classes offered at Pu'uhuluhulu University are free and open to the public, and often include professors and kumu that are regarded highly. This eliminates many of the class barriers to seeking education, and instead posits education, the process of both teaching and learning, as something that is deeply ingrained in the community. Modeling Pu'uhuluhulu University after an academic institution that exists like no other, Presley seeks to remove the expectations of Western education systems. Presley does not view this as a chance to preach Western academia to "uneducated" community members, but rather to share community resources with those who have never existed in a higher educational environment. Noting how Western academia functions, how "we have been so ingrained to believe at this is what education is supposed to be", Presley utilizes Pu'uhonua o Pu'uhuluhulu as a site of sharing of different kinds of knowledge, both ancestral and academic (Ah Mook Sang, 2019).

Serving in other community education capacities in the past, Presley has always expressed that her intention in doing justice work is not to gain fame, stating "I just don't think that it's necessary to give myself attention", but rather contribute to the lāhui (Ah Mook Sang, 2019). When thinking of the complicated nature of the 'labor of love', or labor that women often do for no compensation or reward such as mothering, many view this kind of labor as coercive and controlling. This can be the case, as 'labors of love', such as mothering, should absolutely receive compensation rather than penalization. However, in the context of the Pu'uhonua, Presley actually sees a 'payment' or 'reward' through "watching the younger generations become so involved, and I like, someone couldn't pay me to stop this because that's more rewarding than anything that I'll ever be able to get otherwise" (Ah Mook Sang, 2019). Māhea also mentions the importance of the ability to "mentor the next generation" as a form of reward for her labor. While this can be analyzed as an extension of 'community' children who are

often beneficiaries of the 'labor of love', this can also be read as both the labor of cultural and genealogical connection. The ability to carry on the legacy of Wākea as Kānaka Maoli and protect Mauna Kea is a practice that not just anyone can pick up, and that requires dedication and genealogical connection, as Presley and Māhea have demonstrated.

Differing from many other workplaces, Presley does not have a 'boss' in the traditional sense, and notes how this is actually quite liberating. Receiving scrutiny from her wage employer at the University of Hawai'i because of her involvement in the Mauna Kea movement, Presley details how this actually was harmful, "I feel like I have to watch myself more, which makes me focus on that more than my actual teaching, which I think can be damaging" (Ah Mook Sang, 2019). Perhaps, because Presley is working in a capacity at the Pu'uhonua where her boss is the community, the power dynamic is shifted from one that is hierarchical to one that is commensalistic and mutual. This in effect fundamentally changes the experience that she has working at the Pu'uhonua, because she is constantly being reminded of why she is engaging in this work, and why it is so important.

Māhea on the other hand handles many different tasks related both to the University and the Hale Wāhine tent. Working as an instructor and a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in the English Department, Māhea is a *kia'i* of Haleakalā, where she gained her initial experience with justice work in Hawai'i. It was at Haleakalā during a ceremony where she saw the need for spaces to be created for wāhine and mähū, through her own personal experience with her partner and her sister's partner. Seeing the lack of discussion around such issues, she initiated the creation of Hale Wāhine on Mauna Kea, in order to prevent further divisions surrounding gender and sexuality, and instead, create a space for discussion and sharing. As the *kahu* of the Hale Wāhine tent, Māhea engages in a different kind of work at Pu'uhonua o Pu'uhuluhulu, one that entails much more personal elements with the gendered and sexual experiences of being on the Mauna. Perfectly encapsulating some of the complexities of being on the Mauna, Māhea reminds us that "the Mauna is like a giant family reunion, with our greatest tūtū's, the actual Mauna right there, and then everyone in our extended family" (Ahia, 2019). Our families also have perpetrators, violent people within them, and so sometimes people will come up and encounter their perpetrators that they haven't seen in a long time, and so that can kind of create a PTSD trauma" (Ahia, 2019). This trauma that Māhea mentions is one that is unpacked and worked on through women's circles, talk stories, and individual debriefing sessions at Hale Wāhine. Māhea's mission with Hale Wāhine is to "make the wāhine tent a really nurturing space without like devolving of the cliché essentializing of women, but I do think it's really important for the main reason we're dealing with a lot of cultural trauma" (Ahia, 2019). So often, women's cultural trauma regarding colonial-

ism, occupation, and community violence goes unseen and unheard. Many carry these stories for generations, normalizing these acts of violence. Allowing for the Hale Wāhine tent to act as a "pu'uhonua within a pu'uhonua" Māhea creates and facilitates space for wāhine, mähū, and other LGBTQIA+ folks to talk about all stories related to their gendered and sexual experience as a person (Ahia, 2019). Hale Wāhine also acts as a space to discuss tension from experiences with law enforcement, within the camp, or with visitors. Movements and sites of justice work, just like many other spaces, rarely have designated places and resources set aside to allow for trauma to be shared. This is not just transformative in existence, but in practice too, as Hale Wāhine facilitates the process of communities beginning to find mechanisms that do not rely on the carceral state, but rather accountability and care.

The face that many media sources often present regarding the Mauna Kea movement is one that is masculine and centers the voices of men. However, this is not actually the case within the movement or the Pu'uhonua. Māhea reminds us that, "people think of Mauna Kea they think first Kaho'okahi, Lanakila, Andre Perez, and Kaleikoa Ka'eo, which um, yes! They are very important thinkers, speakers, leaders, uh what they might remember at first though that in the next thought oh yes, Auntie Pua Case and Hāwane Rios" (Ahia, 2019). Regardless of the fact that every unit at the Pu'uhonua is led by women, women have also historically sustained this movement (Long, 2019). As Māhea mentioned, the mother daughter trio, Auntie Pua Case and Hāwane Rios & Kapulei Flores have been crucial in the organization of the Mauna Kea Movement and particularly the Pu'uhonua (Ahia, 2019). This further emphasizes that the gendered division of labor at the Pu'uhonua may not represent a burden of work placed on wāhine, but rather the recognition that wāhine should be in positions of power and decision making within the Pu'uhonua.

One key theme that arose throughout both interviews is the current possibilities for transformation. Presley notes how pride in Hawaiian identity has resurged due to the Mauna Kea Movement, and remembers how "For a long time, were in this like weird era where you're like proud to be Hawaiian now but you don't necessarily know why" (Ah Mook Sang, 2019). The Mauna Kea Movement and success of Pu'uhonua o Pu'uhuluhulu reminds the lāhui why there is pride in being Hawaiian (Ho'omanawanui et al., 2019). On the importance of transforming community treatment and attitudes towards wāhine and mähū, Māhea articulates that "we have the ea to change things now. Our lāhui doesn't have to follow what's been done before, we have that ea and that ability to rebuild our world in whatever way we want to", and that the Pu'uhonua presents a unique opportunity to rebuild and reconstruct (Ahia, 2019). We can see that through the work of these two mana wāhine, that the rebuilding and reconstructing is in action, but it certainly does come at some cost, both Presley and Māhea

commute to and from the Mauna via plane to their day jobs at the University, emphasizing their commitment to spending as much time as possible on the Mauna. When some hear of this intense financial commitment, they may initially conclude that this is unfair. However, both Māhea and Presley have mentioned that because they have the financial resources to be able to sustain such movement, their sacrifices represent “a small bit that I’m giving up for a bigger picture in general” (Ah Mook Sang, 2019).

Conclusion

While it is clear that Pu‘uhonua o Pu‘uhuluhulu is initiating many transformations within the lāhui Hawai‘i, there is always more room for growth. The Pu‘uhonua is positioned as the perfect place to sustain and nurture this growth, in a way that is grounded in community and kūpuna. Examining US-centered understandings of labor, such as the gendered division of labor and ‘labor of love’, demonstrates that women still perform a lot, if not the majority of care work. This research did not indicate otherwise. However, when the work you are doing is connected to the Mauna that your ancestors were birthed from, everything changes. Perhaps in this sense, the labor that Presley and Māhea do at Pu‘uhonua o Pu‘uhuluhulu is not a ‘labor of love’ but rather a labor of lāhui; and a labor that is rooted in community uplifting and rising, just like a mighty wave. While this paper did address many components of gender and justice work at Pu‘uhonua o Pu‘uhuluhulu, this research can absolutely be expanded. Further research could include the other wāhine in leadership positions at the Pu‘uhonua, as well as the relationality and ‘labor of love’ involved with families on the Mauna, such as Aunty Pua Case and Aunty Kekuhi Ohaililani. This experience has been incredibly transformative, as these oral histories are just as much about genealogies and histories as they are about the individuals interviewed. Being welcomed into their world of complicated interactions with community and catastrophe, during such a tumultuous time is something I will always remember. What I have come to find, is that the abundance of labor at Pu‘uhonua o Pu‘uhuluhulu is grounded in the abundance of love for the lāhui and Mauna Kea, a love so deep that there are not enough words in the world to describe such a connection.

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