



Island Life

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HONORING THE LEGACY OF WĀHINE

The life story of Princess Ruth Ke'elikōlani will be told at an event on April 26.

Photo courtesy Bishop Museum



Women key to Hawaiian history get their due at museum's celebration

BY ZENAIDA SERRANO
Advertiser Staff Writer

Compared with her royal relatives — great-grandfather King Kamehameha, cousin Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop and goddaughter Princess Ka'iulani — Princess Ruth Ke'elikōlani's life story isn't as widely known.

Ke'elikōlani was a strong-willed public figure with a tragic personal life — she married twice, and her children from both marriages died young. She spoiled her adopted son, Prince Leleiōhoku, giving him the best in education and wealth, only to lose him to pneumonia.

"It is the story of a woman whose own personal wealth amassed over the years is given almost in its entirety to the only loved one left, her cousin Bernice Pauahi Bishop," said Kealoha Kelekolio, a culture educator at Bishop Museum. "So instead of just being a footnote in our history, her legacy continues to serve her people today both in the Bishop Museum and Kamehameha Schools."

Ke'elikōlani will be among nearly 20 Hawai'i women profiled at the second annual Distinctive Women in Hawaiian



Princess Lili'uokalani, left, and Queen Kapi'olani helped shape Hawaiian history.

Hawai'i state archives



Do you have an opinion on women's contributions to Hawai'i's history? Join the conversation; add your thoughts at

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SEE WOMEN, E3

Photo by **JEFF WIDENER** | The Honolulu Advertiser

From left, Myrna Kamae, Patience Bacon, Noelani Mahoe and Mary Judd. Bacon will be honored along with Esther Mo'okini during the presentation "Kūpuna Dedication" at the Distinctive Women event.

Women

CONTINUED FROM E1

History, a daylong event April 26 at the Mission Memorial Auditorium.

The free program, presented by Bishop Museum, examines the lives of women in Hawaiian history in more than a dozen presentations. Cultural practitioners and community history presenters will share these little-known historic contributions using illustrated lectures, chants, traditional Hawaiian storytelling and dramatic performances.

"The goal would be illuminating women's contributions to history and allowing (participants) to take the stories and ... further develop their own curiosity and research," said event founder and coordinator, Jamie Conway.

Other women who will be profiled at the event include Queen Keōpūolani, "sacred wife" of Kamehameha and queen mother of Kamehameha II and III; Mary Brewster, a sailor who journaled her whaling adventures off Hawaiian waters in the late 1840s; and Emma 'A'ima Nāwahī, editor of the Hawaiian language newspaper *Ke Aloha 'Āina* and confidant of Queen Lili'uokalani.

Laurie Woodard, project director of the Hawaiian Quilt Research Project, will do a presentation on women who created Hawaiian flag quilts as expressions of aloha and anti-annexation, among other reasons.

It's important for people of all ages to attend an event that highlights the contributions of women throughout history, Woodard said.

"It's a kind of validation that women did significant things," Woodard said. "We need to know who they were and what they did, and know that we could do it, too."

IN THE BEGINNING

Organizers developed the idea for Distinctive Women In Hawaiian History after attending a Bishop Museum teachers' workshop in January last year. During the workshop's final discussions, it became apparent from the teachers gathered that O'ahu lacked an annual history forum to highlight recent scholarship on women of Hawai'i, Conway said.

They also found that "women (in history) were being described in terms of the men in their lives and not in terms of their personal contributions and their own accomplishments," she said.

The program was developed in the spring and the first event debuted in April last year. The forum is meant to provide an intimate understanding of the paths blazed and the generous contributions bestowed by these women, Conway said.

While many of the presentations will focus on historical figures, living legends will also be

ABOUT THE EVENT

The second annual Distinctive Women in Hawaiian History: He Ho'olaule'a No Nā Mo'olelo o Nā Wāhine — A Celebration of Women's History

8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. April 26

Mission Memorial Auditorium in the Honolulu Civic Center

Free admission; fee for optional meals

Details: 497-3775, info @distinctivewomenhawaii.org or www.distinctivewomenhawaii.org

Registration deadline: Friday. Forms received after the deadline will be considered if space is available.

honored at the event.

Event committee member Leilani Kūpahu-Marino will present "Kūpuna Dedication," honoring Patience Bacon and Esther Mo'okini. The dedication will also acknowledge Malia Craver and three women who recently passed away: Winona Beamer, Genoa Keawe and Keahi Allen.

"For decades, these kūpuna have contributed oral and written primary source information for the (use) by historians, kumu hula, researchers, educational systems and others to establish their foundation of knowledge," Kūpahu-Marino said.

EXPECTED TURNOUT

Three-hundred guests attended last year's event, and organizers expect a larger turnout this year, Conway said.

Leilani Collins, Wai'anae unit manager of the Queen Lili'uokalani Children's Center, attended last year as part of a group of 15. This year, she'll be one of nearly 50 from the children's center attending the event — from kūpuna to keiki, both

men and women, she said.

"The presentations were just excellent," Collins said. She was also impressed by the range of women covered last year, including ali'i, commoners and missionary wives — many of whom have received little recognition in history.

She looks forward to this year's presentations. "This is a great way for our people to learn more about the strengths of the women who will be highlighted, from warrior women to even girls, such as Nāhi'ena'ena (King Kamehameha's daughter), who died very early," Collins said.

In addition to presentations profiling women, the event will include a canned meat and canned tuna food drive, cell-phone recycling drive, and catered lunch by Helena's Hawaiian Food (advanced purchase required with registration).

There will also be a film segment featuring the first public viewing of excerpts from Edgy Lee and Don Brown's yet-to-be released documentary, "Exit to Paradise," about freed black slaves who arrived in Hawai'i in 1819, their formation of the Royal Hawaiian Band in 1836, educator Betsey Stockton's contribution to Lahainaluna School, and others.

Kelekolio, the Bishop Museum culture educator who will be presenting Princess Ruth Ke'elikōlani's story, said he encourages both men and women to attend Distinctive Women in Hawaiian History.

"In the Hawaiian culture, the women play equal, if not more significant roles than their male counterparts," he said. "A man confident in his own being will want to understand how these women shaped Hawai'i today."

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