

Kalihiwai, Kaua'i
August 12, 2006

Aloha Kakou

My name is Maui Ola Cook and it is my pleasure to write this letter of support for the Aloha Africa project under the direction of project coordinator Isa Maria.

I am a long time resident of the island of Kaua'i and have been involved in the field of education here in the islands for the last 28 years. I am currently teaching Hawaiian Studies at the Kula Elementary School and have been teaching at that school for the last 12 years. Since 1987 I have taught Hawaiian Studies for the DOE at several schools on Kaua'i including Kilauea, Hanalei and Kapa'a Elementary Schools. I also teach the Creative Arts, particularly Creative Movement at the all of the previously mentioned schools and several others throughout the state. In addition to my work with elementary school students for the last 10 years I have been conducting professional development workshops for teachers in the field of arts education. This work has led to affiliations with the Maui Arts and Cultural Center and the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington DC. I am the only educator from the islands to be on the Kennedy Centers national tour roster of Teaching Artists.

As a dedicated and practicing educator I lend my active support to the Aloha Africa project. I have known Isa Maria for over 10 years and have watched her skill and expertise in African dance and drum blossom over this period of time. She has shown herself to be a committed student and practitioner of African music and dance and has shared her knowledge with many community members including myself. She has participated in bringing African dance and drum masters to the island and successfully organizing classes and performances to sustain their visits. Along with many others I am very appreciative of her efforts to foster the dynamic cultural expression of the African continent on the island of Kaua'i.

Here in Hawai'i we are blessed to live in a culture with a powerful legacy of dance and music. Our children have frequent exposure to the traditions of Hawaiian music and dance. As well, Asian music and dance are often enjoyed by our island communities.

Our children have little or no exposure to African or African American society and culture. In this sense I feel the Aloha Africa project will be of great service to the community of Kaua'i. Isa Maria has demonstrated that she has researched this project thoroughly and has chosen to work with highly qualified African artists who will bring invaluable knowledge to our schoolchildren and the greater community.

As a student of African dance and music myself, and as a concerned educator in our public and private school system I am committed to supporting Isa Maria and the Aloha Africa project in every way that I can.

I currently serve as alaka'i (teaching assistant) to my Kumu Hula Victoria Holt Takamine. Our halau which is based on O'ahu is Pua Ali'i 'Ilima and our Kaua'i class is Papa Laua'e o Makana. Papa Laua'e 'o Makana is very interested in participating in a cultural exchange with the Aloha Africa performers. We have several African dance and drum students in our hula group who are very excited at the possibility of being able to study with the highly qualified teachers in the Aloha Africa project.

Please contact me if I can be of any service in promoting this exciting cultural project.

'O wau no me ka ha'aha'a

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