

# Life resistance

Activist “Bumpy” Kanahale and his Aloha First organization have been toiling steadily for 20 years

The bad boy of the Native Hawaiian sovereignty movement celebrated two recent milestones inside the 45-acre compound that serves as the Waimanalo headquarters for the Nation of Hawaii.

during the administration of former Gov. John Waihee.

Waihee now considers Kanahale a good friend and ally who did what no other Hawaiian has been able to do.

“Bumpy’s going to go down as one of the great leaders of the contemporary Hawaiian movement,” said Waihee, who is now chairman of Kana’olowalu, the Native Hawaiian Roll Commission that’s gathering signatures of Native Hawaiians to form the basis of a new Hawaiian government. “There’s nobody else who actually created an entity that could actually be called self-governing and kept it intact all these years later. It’s quite an achievement.”

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The outlaw may be older and perhaps even mellowed. But he’s still an activist at heart.

During the Department of the Interior hearings on Oahu, Kanahale testified in a T-shirt that read on the front, “Hawaiian By Birth.” On the back it said, “American By Force.”

Kanahale’s organization has a wide selection of the shirts in various colors, and he showed up for his interview with the Honolulu Star-Advertiser wearing a black one on top of shorts and rubber slippers as he opened the gate block-

ed that he uses mostly for storage.

But his son, Weston Kanahale, lives at Pu’uhonua o Waimanalo with three of Kanahale’s grandchildren, in a house with a window that flies an upside-down Hawaiian flag, the symbol for distress.

**LIFE IS PRETTY** basic for the residents who live in 24 modest structures of various designs. Some 98 percent of them are Hawaiian, by Kanahale’s estimate. And most have jobs that take them outside the compound.

Their 30 or so children attend nearby public schools.

Everyone chips in to pay for water and electricity and the rules for getting along are “real simple,” Kanahale said.

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rest, Kanahale is learning to manage native taro that Kanahale is learning to manage.

“Those invasive species,” Kanahale said with a smile to a non-Hawaiian visitor, “they never go away and keep coming back.”

John Kirkley, 70, is one of the few non-Hawaiians living at Pu’uhonua o Waimanalo. He’s from Alabama originally and was drawn from his then-home on Maui to the Makapu’u Beach occupation “because something wasn’t right.”

Kirkley has lived at Pu’uhonua o Waimanalo since 1995 and now serves as chief financial officer of Aloha First, which Kanahale formed to hold

meeting area at Pu’uhonua o Waimanalo that carries the lu’e petition signatures of eight of Kanahale’s direct ancestors and several distant relatives.

It is a reminder to Kanahale that he was born into a life of resistance.

“It started over 100 years ago for me,” Kanahale said. “I’m just an extension of that. For us, it’s a way of life.”



Dennis “Bumpy” Kanahale, a grandfather 12 times over, turned 60 on Tuesday. And last month, Kanahale and the 70 residents of Pu’uhonua o Waimanalo — or “Refuge of Waimanalo” — celebrated the 20th anniversary of the date in June 1994 when Kanahale ended his 15-month occupation of Makapu’u Beach Park in exchange for a lease on a spectacular swath of state-owned land that he continues to govern.

A generation ago, Kanahale was called all kinds of names by Hawaiians for starting — and then abandoning — a series of occupations in exchange for a 55-year lease on state-owned land.

“I was told I was a sellout, li’ dat,” Kanahale said matter-of-factly. “I’ve also been called an outlaw. That’ll never leave me.” Later, Kanahale drove a golf cart to the highest point in what’s commonly referred to as “Bumpy’s Village.” Framed by the Koolau Mountains behind him, Kanahale looked out over a gorgeous view of the ocean and Manana (Rabbit) Island in the distance.

“Look what happened to us outlaws,” he said.

Unlike Kanahale’s Makapu’u Beach Park occupation that drew international attention, what’s happened on the mauka side of Waimanalo over the past 20 years has largely been hidden behind a gate that guards the entrance to Pu’uhonua o Waimanalo.

Asked why state officials gave him and his nonprofit Aloha First organization a lease for \$3,000 per year, or \$250 per month, Kanahale said the government’s philosophy toward his sovereignty efforts back in 1994 was,

"Throw 'em in the corner, hide 'em from the public and we'll deal with 'em later." Well, 20 years have passed. And Kanahale has re-emerged as an elder statesman of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement at ongoing hearings by the U.S. Department of the Interior over the question of whether the federal government should begin a process that could lead to a government-to-government relationship with a future Native Hawaiian government, which Kanahale insists will be formed late this year or in early 2015.

Kanahale also has earned the respect — and friendship — of the state's first Hawaiian governor, even though Kanahale's series of occupations drew unwanted media coverage during a slump in Hawaii's tourism-reliant economy during the administration of former Gov. John Waihee.

Waihee now considers Kanahale a good friend and ally who did what no other Hawaiian has been able to do. "Bumpy's going to go down as one of the great leaders of the contemporary Hawaiian movement," said Waihee, who is now chairman of Kana'ioloalua, the Native Hawaiian Roll Commission that's gathering signatures of Native Hawaiians to form the basis of a new Hawaiian government. "There's nobody else who actually created an entity that could actually be called self-governing and kept it intact all these years later. It's quite an achievement." the lease on the land.

The lease with the state Department of Agriculture was extended in April 2001 and now expires on March 31, 2056, according to agriculture officials. According to the terms, however, the land will be transferred to a "sovereign nation of Hawaii, established for the benefit of Native Hawaiians" once a new sovereign entity is created.

DURING A 1987 occupation of Makapu'u Lighthouse, Kanahale was arrested on firearms, trespass and resisting arrest charges that sent him to Oahu Community Correctional Center for 11 months. Waihee later pardoned Kanahale for a series of offenses and incarcerations to enable Kanahale to serve on the state sovereignty commission.

"He was always committed to not just the idea of Hawaiian nationalism, he was committed to actually governing," Waihee said. "I've always admired him for that. There are others that are trying, but they're not doing it as successfully because they don't have a land base."

Kanahale got tagged with the nickname "Bumpy" after his father, who survived getting hit in a crosswalk on Maunakea Street. When the bumper of the car that hit him fell off, the older Kanahale was forever known as "Bumper" and his son became "Bumpy."

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The gate swings beneath the white, gold and black flag of the Nation of Hawaii that carries a symbol of a purple kahili. A sign at the entrance proclaims the area as the "Nation State of Hawai'i ... Independent and Sovereign."

Kanahale wanted to be clear that he does not consider Pu'uuhonua o Waimanalo a model for a sovereign Native Hawaiian government.

"I would not call it a model," he said. "This is the home of the movement."

Kanahale actually lives on Hawaiian Homestead land in Waimanalo but has a modest hexagon-shaped studio at Pu'uuhonua o Waimanalo that he uses mostly for storage.

But his son, Weston Kanahale, lives at Pu'uuhonua o Waimanalo with three of Kanahale's grandchildren, in a house with a window that flies an upside-down Hawaiian flag, the symbol for distress.

LIFE IS PRETTY basic for the residents who live in 24 modest structures of various designs. Some 98 percent of them are Hawaiian, by Kanahale's estimate. And most have jobs that take them outside the compound.

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And for the Dennis "Bumpy" Kanahale stands among copied pages from the Petition Protesting Annexation posted on office walls, above. At left, Brandon Maka'awa'awa shows where taro is grown before being transplanted to the lo'i (taro pond). Water in a tank where tilapia swim also circulates into the beds of taro. Below, the land at Pu'uuhonua o Waimanalo was terraced to grow taro and ti leaves on the hills. children, Kanahale said, "if you not doing something right, some auntie gonna get on you."

Otherwise, some residents who have balked at contributing for utilities have been asked to leave and Kanahale sent one woman hooked on crystal methamphetamine into drug treatment.

When Kanahale first arrived at what would become Pu'uuhonua o Waimanalo, the land was overgrown with

groves of eucalyptus, rubber and java plum trees that had to be hacked away with plenty of sweat to reveal the beauty of the land.

It's a battle that never ends and Kanahele and his crews have to keep vigil to prevent the outsiders from overrunning the 50 species of native taro that Kanahele is learning to manage.

"Those invasive species," Kanahele said with a smile to a non-Hawaiian visitor, "they never go away and keep coming back."

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KANAHELE IS learning how to grow both dry and wetland taro at Pu'uhonua o Waimanalo using aquaponics and 3- to 5-pound tilapia that provide fertilizer.

The fish have other purposes, as well. "Ono da fish," Kanahele said. Kanahele insists that he has plenty to learn from the other residents of Pu'uhonua o Waimanalo about working the land — and about Hawaiian culture and language.

"I'm an activist, not a farmer," he said. "We've got some real smart kanakas, some real smart Hawaiians. There's a lot my grandchildren can teach me."

The nonprofit group is now experimenting with selling some of the 50 different types of taro it raises. There are plans for a commercial kitchen and a meeting space capable of holding 500 people.

And Kanahele hopes one day to resurrect long-dormant plans for a 100-foot-radius, circular stone monument that would contain the signatures of every one of the 22,000 Hawaiians who signed the 1897 "ku'e petition" against the U.S. annexation of the islands.

An earlier proposal called for erecting the three rings of stones between the state Capitol and Iolani Palace, but that never went anywhere.

Now Kanahele hopes to give the memorial a home at Pu'uhonua o Waimanalo.

"Every nationality get one memorial but us Hawaiians," Kanahele said. "Everyone but us."

Kanahele talks a lot about those who have come before him. And every day he passes a wall inside a meeting area at Pu'uhonua o Waimanalo that carries the ku'e petition signatures of eight of Kanahele's direct ancestors and several distant relatives.

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