

Keeping Kalaupapa Sacred

Kalaupapa, a tiny community on a peninsula on Moloka'i, may be at risk of turning into a tourist attraction. Recently the news mentioned that once the last Kalaupapa resident passes away, the island will fall under commercial construction and massive public projects will begin. Kalaupapa is a very historical place. In 1866 the Hawaii Board of Health passed a law that stated if you had Hansen's Disease then you would have to be shipped to Kalaupapa. No matter what, all ages that had the disease were separated from their families for the rest of their lives. They ended up at Kalaupapa because at the time it was thought that isolation would prevent the spread of Hansen's Disease. If we don't do anything now to preserve Kalaupapa's sacredness we will lose valuable knowledge of the land and its people.

One solution to keep Kalaupapa sacred is to limit the amount of access to it. If visitors were interested in visiting Kalaupapa, they would be required to do some kind of community service to give back to the land and its people. One community service that they can perform is planting and taking care of native plants. Also, they should help maintain both marked or unmarked grave sites, cultural sites, and historical buildings. Another example of community service which visitors can do is to upkeep the trail that goes into Kalaupapa. These tasks allow people to visit as well as to give back to this sacred place.

A second solution is to direct the people who want to visit Kalaupapa to educational resources. Some educational resources people can refer to are books, documentaries, and websites. By referring to these educational resources people are able to learn about the valuable knowledge found on this island prior to visiting the community.

My last solution of keeping Kalaupapa a sacred place is to preserve the memories of those who lived there. People can join clubs who support Kalaupapa, like Hui Mālama Makanalua. This hui is focused on giving back to the peninsula by placing a lei on grave sites to show respect and to honor those who once spent their banished lives there.

I noticed how Clarence T.C. Ching made an incredible impact on the island of O'ahu. He was a very humble and kind person. Clarence T.C. Ching wanted to give back to his community to show how much he appreciated attending a private school. He donated to a lot of charities and schools in Hawaii. Just by reading about Clarence T.C. Ching inspired me that no matter what you should always give back to your community. I feel very connected to Kalaupapa, Moloka'i because my great grand uncle, Henry Nalaielua was sent to Kalaupapa at the age of nine because he was diagnosed with Hansen's Disease. My family and I went to Kalaupapa before he passed away and he taught us the history of that small close-knit community. He shared stories with us on how it was like living in Kalaupapa, Molokai, with no family members. Kalaupapa is a very peaceful and relaxing place to be and it's not a tourist attraction . I don't want that to change. We need to preserve this site as a reminder of why people were sent there and the hardships they endured. This city should be kept sacred as a commemoration to those who lived in isolation as outcast.