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Troubled Paradise







## " T R O U B L E D   P A R A D I S E "

### Brief Description

"The time has come to realize that there is a native people on this land, and we are quickly passing away along with other native species."

-- Mililani Trask, Ka Lahui Hawaii

"There are important things that have to stay with this race of people and spirituality is the most important. If you kill the spirit of an indigenous person, then you really have killed the person."

-- Palikapu Dedman, Pele Defense Fund

"They keep stepping on our land, they keep stepping on our culture. Stop it. Enough already."

-- Olga Nauka, Protect Kohanaiki Ohana

Three activists, each fighting different battles but focused on the same cause, the survival of their culture.

TROUBLED PARADISE, a new film by Academy Award-winning filmmaker Steven Okazaki, is both a celebration of the richness of Hawaiian culture and a compelling look at the social and political problems its indigenous people face. Set on the Big Island of Hawaii, the youngest island in the world, the film explores a Hawaii that mainland films and television never depict and most tourists never see.

Native Hawaii is in a state of crisis. 210,000 pure and part-Hawaiians make up 19 percent of the population. They represent the state's highest percentages of those unemployed and

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in prison. They have the lowest life expectancy in the state and the highest infant mortality rate in the nation. On each of the islands, the native people struggle to survive, many living in what most Americans would call dire poverty.

Since the demise of the sugar and pineapple industries, which moved to the Philippines and South America, Hawaii has seen rampant development in the form of extravagant luxury resorts and condominiums financed by American and Japanese companies. On the Kona or west side of the island, we meet Olga Nauka and Stephen Martin, part of a coalition of Native Hawaiians and surfers fighting to stop a local developer and a Japan-based company named Nansay Hawaii from building its 325 million dollar resort on a popular beach called Kohanaiki.

More than 2000 Native Hawaiians live in cardboard boxes, rusted cars or tents on the beach. Although Congress created the Hawaiian Homes Commission in 1921 to provide land for the native population, 21,000 people, 80% of the applicants, are still waiting for their promised lands. On the Hilo or east side of the island, we meet Skippy Ioane and his band of nine Hawaiian families who have ignored the law and threats of eviction, and created a homestead near the Hilo Airport called King's Landing.

The film then visits Waipio Valley on the northern tip of the island where a Vietnam veteran named Kia Fronda is teaching young people traditional values through the planting and harvesting of taro, the staple of the Hawaiian diet.

Today, the most controversial issue in Hawaii is geothermal energy. The state government has embarked on a 2 to 4 billion

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dollar geothermal energy program which calls for tapping into the Big Island's volcanoes, harnessing the hot steam and generating electricity for the islands. Many Hawaiians believe in Pele, the goddess of the volcano. We meet a group called the Pele Defense Fund, which along with the Rainforest Action Network, is fighting the state's plan, calling it a potential environmental disaster and "a brutal violation" of Native Hawaiian cultural rights.

The film offers the rare chance to see the islands' finest hula group, Halau o' Kekuhi led by Pualani Kanahele and Nalani Kanaka'ole, performing near the edge of the Kilauea Crater. Also featured is the smile-provoking Ray Fonseca's Children's Hula Group, and performances by three of Hawaii's most gifted musicians, George Kahumoku, Diana Aki and Dean Kaahanui.

TROUBLED PARADISE was produced and directed by Steven Okazaki whose films include the low-budget comedy LIVING ON TOKYO TIME and the acclaimed PBS documentaries SURVIVORS, UNFINISHED BUSINESS and DAYS OF WAITING which won an Academy Award in 1991.

"All of the conflicts in film are unresolved," noted Okazaki. "The Native Hawaiians lose most of their battles, they stop one hotel development and ten more spring up, but they are starting to win a few. I wanted to show that there is hope. For me, the film is about the dignity of the people, their love for their culture and determination to continue fighting."

TROUBLED PARADISE is slated for release in 1992. Major funding was provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

For more information: Zand Gee, Associate Producer









STEVEN OKAZAKI

Producer/Director

The films of Steven Okazaki have garnered international attention, critical acclaim and numerous honors, including a George Foster Peabody Award, an Academy Award nomination in 1986 and an Academy Award in 1991. His varied filmography includes educational films for children, powerful documentaries and independent narrative works.

In 1982, the Okazaki directed SURVIVORS, the first English language film in which survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki gave their accounts of what happened the day the bomb was dropped. The film was broadcast nationally on PBS' "World" and was one of the highest rated documentaries of the season.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS, nominated for an Academy Award for "Best Feature Documentary" in 1986, relates the moving story of three Japanese Americans who resisted and legally challenged the United States' incarceration of their people. The Los Angeles Times called it "the most powerful and comprehensive film yet on the internment of Japanese Americans."

In 1987, Okazaki moved in a new direction with LIVING ON TOKYO TIME, a low budget comedy about a Japanese girl and her somnambulistic rock and roller husband. "CBS Morning" called it "a funny, suprising, enchanting picture bursting with humanity." The film was released theatrically by Skouras Pictures.

In 1990, he made DAYS OF WAITING, the compelling story of artist Estelle Ishigo, one of the few Caucasians to be interned with the Japanese Americans during World War II. The film was broadcast nationally on PBS' "P.O.V." and won the Academy Award for "Best Documentary Short Subject," making Okazaki the first Asian American producer/director to win an Oscar.

Okazaki's latest film is TROUBLED PARADISE, an exploration of native Hawaiian culture and politics on the Big Island. He has also produced and directed several award-winning children's films and documentary shorts. Segments from his works have been featured on "The CBS Evening News," "The NBC Nightly News," ABC News "Nightline," and CNN.

Steven, thirty-nine years old, was born in Venice, California and graduated from film school at San Francisco State University. He lives in Berkeley and maintains a small production office in San Francisco.



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