



INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY FOR  
MULTICULTURAL COOPERATION

February 21, 2023

TO: Interfaith 'Ohana of Hawai'i

FROM: Audrey E. Kitagawa

RE: EVENT REPORT: 2023 "Gift of Aloha"  
NIU NOW: Reconnecting to the Tree of Life

Aloha,

I would like to express my appreciation to the *Interfaith 'Ohana of Hawai'i* for your commitment to the annual "Gift of Aloha" event, a part of the United Nations' World Interfaith Harmony Week. The concept of *aloha* and the traditions surrounding it are a beautiful expression of the values of interfaith harmony. This year's "NIU NOW" film premiere was a special way to honor the values, traditions, and spirituality of our island home.

It is my pleasure to provide the attached report on the 2023 Interfaith Ohana of Hawai'i "Gift of Aloha" event, which includes:

- Event flyer – "*NIU NOW: Reconnecting to the Tree of Life*"
- Recap report on the webinar, including attendance statistics
- Links to the NIU NOW official Trailer and the Event Video
- Screenshot images from the webinar

I look forward to working with you on future events. Thank you.

Warmest regards,  
Audrey E. Kitagawa  
President and Founder  
International Academy for Multicultural Cooperation  
Email: [dmaudrey@ae9.net](mailto:dmaudrey@ae9.net)  
Mobile: (646) 712-1772



INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY FOR  
MULTICULTURAL COOPERATION



**NIU NOW**  
Honoring Our Coconut Heritage

INTERFAITH 'OHANA OF HAWAI'I  
THE GIFT OF ALOHA (LOVE)

— Premiere Showing —

**NIU NOW: RECONNECTING TO  
THE TREE OF LIFE**

February 20, 2023

8:00 AM HST | 10:00 AM PST | 1:00 PM EST

REGISTER HERE: <https://bit.ly/niu-now>

Will be livestreamed on



**Indrajit Gunasekara**  
Financial Aid Officer,  
University of Hawai'i,  
West O'ahu



**Dr. Manulani Aluli Meyer**  
Associate Specialist,  
Student Affairs,  
University of Hawai'i,  
West O'ahu



**Audrey Kitagawa, J.D.**  
Moderator  
Founder/President,  
International Academy for  
Multicultural Cooperation



## Interfaith 'Ohana of Hawai'i – The Gift of Aloha

### World Interfaith Harmony Week Event Report

#### Film Premiere

### *NIU NOW: Reconnecting to the Tree of Life*

On Monday, February 20, 2023, the International Academy for Multicultural Cooperation and NiU NOW! presented the world premiere of a short film, "***NIU NOW: Reconnecting to the Tree of Life.***" The film premiere was a featured presentation of the Interfaith 'Ohana of Hawai'i's "Gift of Aloha" event, part of the United Nations' annual World Interfaith Harmony Week.

The event was well-attended with hundreds of views and forwards through other networks that carried the program and Zoom attendees for **a total of 1,140 views** on the day of the premiere. Attendees were from 10 countries:

- Bulgaria
- Canada
- Democratic Republic of Congo
- Italy
- Kenya
- Mexico
- Netherlands
- Saudi Arabia
- United Kingdom
- United States

#### LINK TO THE OFFICIAL FILM TRAILER:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1chFJ15HkUY>

#### LINK TO THE WEBINAR VIDEO:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVsNLHVkfFM>

The film was produced by the International Academy for Multicultural Cooperation (IAMC) and NiU NOW! – a Hawai'i-based group that is tackling the challenge of food security by cultivating coconuts for food and contributing to the resurgence of the spiritual and cultural heritage of the islands. As an island community that imports most of its food, Hawai'i is at great risk for food insecurity. NiU NOW! provides a sustainable solution based on indigenous wisdom and practices. The film demonstrates how planting coconuts and reconnecting to "the tree of life" reinforces important values – love of the land, love of one another, love of oneself, and service. According to co-founder Dr. Manulani Aluli Meyer, one of the goals of NiU NOW! is "sharing food so we can be of service to others."

Following the film's screening, Audrey Kitagawa, President and Founder of IAMC, moderated a discussion with NiU NOW! co-founders Dr. Manulani Aluli Meyer and Indrajit Gunasekara. Both of them emphasized the importance of recognizing the differences in people and cultures, the strength in the differences, and the power of shared purpose. This philosophical understanding of "differences" is reflected in the

diversity of the coconut itself, according to Gunasekara, who noted that understanding the different coconut species puts the right trees into the right hands to be planted in the right places. Ms. Kitagawa acknowledged the importance of respect for differences, as it allows people to “realize the fullness and beauty of their potential.” Dr. Meyer quoted an ancient Hawaiian proverb: *“Hahai no ka ua i ka ululā`au – plant a forest and the rains will come”* – which she interpreted as “share purpose with others and live a life of meaning.”

The NiU NOW! project’s renewal of coconut practices in Hawai’i can effect meaningful change in people’s consciousness by increasing understanding of our sacred connection to the Earth and the necessity of honoring and respecting our precious natural resources and cultural heritage. The NiU NOW! project is a beautiful example of how the knowledge and wisdom of Indigenous Peoples and their ancient practices are part of the spiritual foundation of life itself.

*“Love land, serve people – serve land, love people.”*  
~ Dr. Manulani Aluli Meyer

## SCREENSHOTS FROM THE EVENT

The poster features a teal background with a subtle geometric pattern. At the top, the logos for the International Academy for Multicultural Cooperation (IAMC) and NiU NOW are displayed. The central text reads: "INTERFAITH 'OHANA OF HAWAII THE GIFT OF ALOHA (LOVE) — Premiere Showing — NIU NOW: RECONNECTING TO THE TREE OF LIFE". Below this, the date "February 20, 2023" and times "8:00 AM HST | 10:00 AM PST | 1:00 PM EST" are listed. Three circular portraits of the speakers are shown at the bottom, each with their name and title below it.

**INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY FOR MULTICULTURAL COOPERATION**  
**NIU NOW**  
*Honoring Our Sacred Heritage*

INTERFAITH 'OHANA OF HAWAII  
THE GIFT OF ALOHA (LOVE)  
— Premiere Showing —  
**NIU NOW: RECONNECTING TO THE TREE OF LIFE**  
February 20, 2023  
8:00 AM HST | 10:00 AM PST | 1:00 PM EST

**Indrajit Gunasekara**  
Financial Aid Officer,  
University of Hawai'i,  
West O'ahu

**Dr. Manulani Aluli Meyer**  
Associate Specialist,  
Student Affairs,  
University of Hawai'i, West O'ahu

**Audrey Kitagawa, J.D.**  
Moderator  
Founder/President, International Academy  
for Multicultural Cooperation





**Audrey Kitagawa, Indrajit Gunasekara, and Dr. Manulani Aluli Meyer**



**MODERATOR: AUDREY E. KITAGAWA**  
**President and Founder, International Academy for Multicultural Cooperation**



**DR. MANULANI ALULI MEYER**  
Associate Specialist, Student Affairs, University of Hawai'i – West O'ahu;  
Co-Founder, NiU NOW!



**INDRAJIT GUNASEKARA**  
Financial Aid Officer, University of Hawai'i – West O'ahu;  
Co-Founder, NiU NOW!





**Indrajit Gunasekara and NiU NOW! volunteers**



**Dr. Manulani Aluli Meyer with NiU NOW! Volunteers**





**NiU NOW! Team members planting coconuts**



**Young Coconut plants**





Hula Dancers honoring *Pele*



Dr. Manulani Aluli Meyer at Iolani Palace