

*“The Portuguese were to the Atlantic as the Polynesians were to the Pacific:
Great Explorers, Adventurers and Navigators.”*

(Dr. Marlene Hapai, January 2016 HIPCC Newsletter)



Bom dia and Aloha Friends in Hawaii and Worldwide!

On behalf of the Hawaii Island Portuguese Chamber of Commerce (HIPCC), our ancestors who came before us, and those who want to share the rich history and culture of Portugal and its people that emigrated to Hawaii, we ask for your support to help fund the building of a Portuguese Cultural and Educational Center in Hilo, Hawaii.

Almost 140 years ago, immigrants of Portuguese ancestry from the islands of Madeira and the Azores, off the coasts of Morocco and Portugal faced the challenges of overpopulation, failing crops, poverty and the need to sail for up to five months, more than half way around the world to find a better life.

Having close to 400 years to perfect sugar production in their countries, their expertise coincided with the need of the Kingdom of Hawaii to find employees for their growing sugar industry.

Between the years of 1878 and 1913, approximately 25,000 Portuguese emigrated to Hawaii leaving families and friends behind expecting never to see them again. With them they brought their skills, a love for the land and animals and a family orientation which honored their women, all qualities sought to enrich Hawaii's workforce and culture.

Established in 1982, the Chamber formed a 501(c)3 to build a center to preserve their culture being lost at an alarming rate. Land was donated by Frank DeLuz III in 2006 and in 2016 Fred Erskine Architects donated renderings for building and landscaping while Dr. Marlene Hapai created an exhibit storyline sharing Portugal's rich history during the Age of the Discoveries, the Portuguese emigration to Hawaii and their assimilation into Hawaii's multiethnic fabric, making funding the final challenge.

Using today's technology, family reunions held at this center will also link Hawaii's people of all ethnicities with their families and friends throughout the rest of the world.

The need to build this center has grown as the Portuguese language spoken by those who came in the late 1800's and early 1900's, along with their music and dance is almost gone. It is said when you lose your language, you lose your culture. The Chamber would also like to celebrate the 140th anniversary of the arrival of the first Portuguese immigrants to Hawaii by opening its doors in September of 2018.

The proposed cost of the 7500 sq.ft. center is \$4.3 million. We are thankful to have just received a \$1,000,000 grant from the State of Hawaii to help. Naming opportunities for various rooms, exhibits, center features and the Center itself are also possible. For more information contact Marlene Hapai at (808) 966-9894, mhapai@aol.com or visit our website, hipcc.org for updated information or to make a donation. Please may we ask for your support. Any contribution large or small will be most appreciated.

Munta obrigada (thank you).

Dr. Marlene Hapai, President, and Board, Hawaii Island Portuguese Chamber of Commerce