



ISLAND MATTERS *Mufi Hannemann*

Lessons Learned From DOE Selection

The kerfuffle over the recruitment of a new state superintendent of education seems to have quieted now that Board of Education member Darrel Galera has withdrawn his name from consideration for the opening.

Now, I'm not convinced of the reasons for the board's decision to replace current boss Kathryn Matayoshi, given the excellent ratings it gave her for her performance as head of our public schools. And in my opinion, she was and continues to do a credible job. Be that as it may, the search for her replacement should have been a relatively painless process — had the governor and Mr. Galera foreseen the public fallout from an Ige-appointedee applying for the job on the heels of being named to the Board of Education.

The controversy that ensued was avoidable and unfortunate, particularly because Galera has been an outstanding school administrator with solid experience, has a keen understanding of the challenges facing public education, and has demonstrated the courage to speak out about what we need to do to prepare our young people to contribute to our state and nation. It's a lesson learned for the governor and Galera.

While he has withdrawn his name, Galera also demonstrates that we don't have to scour the planet for someone to lead Hawaii's public school system. We have outstanding candidates right here at home.

I've interacted with many a school administrator over the years, and I know there

are plenty of creative, talented, dedicated leaders in our community — within the Department of Education, for that matter — who can take the reins of our public schools and infuse administrators, teachers, students and parents with the energy and commitment we're looking for in a superintendent. I could name a few off the top of my head, but even a cursory look at the schools with innovative programs, high levels of student leadership and participation, and well-deserved public recognition would point to the exceptional leaders throughout our school system.

University of Hawaii could follow this example. How often have we seen one Mainland administrator after another be appointed to helm UH or one of its schools,

only to have him or her leave after a few years without contributing significantly to the progress of UH? Current president David Lassner, who came from within the system, proves that good leaders can be plucked from the ranks of this huge public institution, and they should be given the opportunity to prove themselves in positions of leadership.

The same lesson holds for Honolulu Police Department, which is or will be launching a search for a replacement for Chief Louis Kealoha. The Legislature is considering a measure or two to allow the opening of the search to Mainland candidates. I ask, why?

Given my experience with the City and County of Honolulu in working with our

law enforcement agencies and first responders, I was very impressed with the caliber of administrators within HPD and have the utmost confidence that a top-notch replacement can be found from within the department's ranks. There is absolutely no need to search high and low for a chief when excellent, home-grown talent can be found right here in Hawaii.

Gov. John A. Burns once remarked that many of us locally suffer from a subtle inferiority of spirit. As I've repeatedly said in the past, too many of us are content to believe those words to be true. I view them as a challenge. We in Hawaii have the talents, skills and knowledge to overcome any challenge. We can do anything.

We sometimes may feel

that we do the work but don't get the recognition. At worst, for some there is still the feeling of being a stranger in one's own land. There's sometimes a feeling that if an idea, invention or product is developed in Hawaii, it surely can't amount to much. If it's a person in question, that person had best go away, at least for a time, to gain extra value and experience in order to be considered qualified.

To all of this type of feeling and thinking, and to the search for a new superintendent, I say we can do anything.

In June of last year, Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association and I had supported an initiative to honor Alfred Apaka, a legendary performer who first

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Alfred Akaka Stamp

introduced the world to Hawaiian music, with a commemorative postage stamp from the U.S. Postal Service. Though the Citizen's Stamp Advisory Committee unfortunately rejected the request,



Alfred Apaka's statue at Hilton Hawaiian Village
PHOTO COURTESY HHV

we in Hawaii should not give up. Kudos to former House Speaker Calvin Say and Culture and Arts chairman Ken Ito for reviving the effort through a House Concurrent Resolution requesting a commemorative stamp for Apaka, in concurrence with the 100th anniversary of his birth in March 2019.

The last Native Hawaiian to be honored with a commemorative postage stamp was Olympic gold medalist and original Ambassador of Aloha Duke Kahanamoku in 2002. Duke's stamp request also was rejected in the first go-round in 2000, but the effort succeeded two years later with great support from U.S. Sen. Daniel Akaka. The stamp was issued on Duke's 112th birthday. Some lessons learned from the initial rejection of his stamp could

be useful to the Apaka effort this time around.

Apaka was one of Hawaii's best vocalists and is remembered today as a cultural icon and Hawaiian music legend. He recently was selected as one of the first seven legends in the Hawaiian Music Hall of Fame, who include Gabby Pahinui, Don Ho and Brother Iz. Apaka's son Jeff also is an entertainer who carries on the rich tradition of his father's musical talents as a professional song-and-dance showman, and is a highly active Waikiki community leader.

Jeff, who also has been leading the charge for his dad's commemorative stamp, says, "My father's only surviving sibling is his sister Frances Mahelona. It's as if she's purposely willing herself to hang around till 2019 when she turns 97, so she can bask in the glow of her brother's great achievement on his 100th birthday."

The stamp-selection process is extremely competitive, and the USPS Citizen's Advisory Committee needs an outpouring of support letters to better influence its decision.

Apaka put Hawaiian music in the spotlight with his golden voice and hapa-haole hits. As we approach his centennial anniversary, let's continue our efforts to pay homage to one of Hawaii's greatest entertainers of all time.

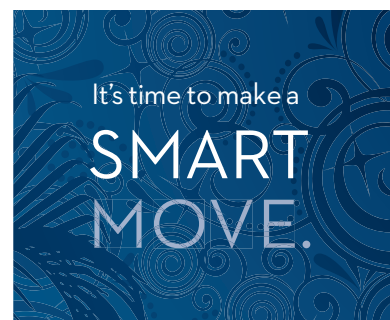
Letters of support can be sent to:

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