

# West Hawaii Today

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## Kulana Huli Honua to host 24-hour prayer vigil

### Group aims to increase awareness about stewardship of temple

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A group that has staked its claim as rightful guardians of Ahuena Heiau has invited "1,000 Hawaiians" to gather Saturday at Kamakahonu Bay for a 24-hour prayer vigil.

Members and supporters of Kulana Huli Honua will begin the "hoowehewehe," or informational, at 6 p.m. Saturday along with the Priests of Lono at the temple fronting the King Kamehameha's Kona Beach Hotel.

Kale Gumapac, "alakai," or spokesman, for the Kanaka Council, said the peaceful gathering is meant to focus attention on the site and issue.

"It's important for everyone to recognize that Ahuena is like any other church," Gumapac said. "Therefore, the rights of practitioners are protected under the freedom of religion amendment of the U.S. Constitution."

Officials of Kulana Huli Honua said they refuse to be evicted from their office in the lobby of the hotel and removed as guardians of the restored Ahuena, which served as the personal temple of Kamehameha the Great.

Mikahala Roy, president of Kulana Huli Honua, accused new hotel owners, Santa Barbara, Calif.-based Pacifica Hotel Co. and Hawaii-based Black Point Capital Advisors, as "faceless, shameless profiteers who ... plan to make even more money off our culture and this sacred site."

Mike Barnard, president of Pacifica Hotel Co., did not return a message left by West Hawaii Today.

Kulana Huli Honua has filed suit against the owners of the 460-room hotel and the state. A hearing to grant a temporary restraining order until the merits of the case can be argued is scheduled for 9 a.m. Aug. 28 in Third Circuit Court.

Robert Kim, attorney for the group, said his clients believe the hotel has taken the position that it owns Ahuena Heiau.

"That is ridiculous," said Kim, who said Pacifica has never once contacted him to attempt to resolve the dispute despite repeated requests. "This is one of the most, if not the most, religiously significant sites in Hawaii."

Kulana Huli Honua said it also takes exception to the location of the hotel's luau grounds, which are adjacent to the heiau, a number of burials and the hale lua, where Kamehameha's body was prepared for burial.

"Clearly, the time has come to create a buffer to protect this sacred site from being completely inundated by tourists and corporate commodification," he said.

Kim said the lawsuit seeks to clarify Kulana Huli Honua's stewardship of the heiau. In a past interview, Barnard said the hotel never had any written agreement with Kulana Huli Honua.

Instead, Barnard said the new management prefers Ahuena Heiau Inc., a nonprofit organization established in 1993 for the stewardship of the heiau.

According to the lawsuit, David Kahalemauna "Mauna" Roy restored the temple in the mid-1970s, and the first kahu was Kaimi Spinney, who provided stewardship until his death in 1993.

Ahuena Heiau Inc. then assumed the duties, but the lawsuit claims its services faded in the late 1990s. That's when Mauna Roy created Kulana Huli Honua for the same purposes.

Kulana Huli Honua operated under an oral agreement with former owners HTH Corp. to provide upkeep, security and educational programs at the Ahuena Heiau in exchange for space in the hotel.

On May 30, Kulana Huli Honua was notified by hotel management that the hotel was changing hands and its new owner was asking the organization to vacate the space by June 21.

Kim said the fight is not about the organization trying to retain its space in the hotel lobby.

"The room is one small aspect of this issue," he said. "The hotel said the room is terminated, and with proper notice and communication, this can be resolved."

But Kim said the overriding issue is the recognized kahu and all the programs created by Kulana Huli Honua. "We don't know if they are attempting to terminate those, too."

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