As the sun ascends from the east horizon, the heavens begin to illuminate in the early dawn between the hours of four and five after midnight. The waking of souls has already begun as they prepare for their journey ahead on the gathering island (Oahu). Already the elderly are in movement, taking up their morning run around the three-mile loop of enchanted lakes, an area within Kailua, Oahu, which is on the east-most part of the island. The commotion of the day sets off drowned out by the sound of cars, coming and going.

Kailua, Kai meaning water and Lua meaning the Hawaiian martial arts, is known as the fighting waters or two seas, Commonly, Kailua been mistaken as the toilet water city because of the modern definition of lua being toilet. This was a place where several chiefs lived during Ancient Hawaii. Kailua, the former capital of Oahu, has been considered to be one of few country areas on our vastly populated island. Kailua remains “country,” thanks to a large marsh known as Kawai Nui. Kawai Nui is the largest wetlands within the Hawaiian Islands taking up eight hundred and fifty acres and holding numerous plants and wildlife including a Lo’i next to Ulupo He‘iau. One of the oldest Hei’au sites and the second largest, Ulupo is legend to have been built by Menehunes with their caves slightly past this historical site. The waters Kawai Nui come from Maunawili, an area within Kailua, which in turn, gets its fresh water from Ko‘olau: one of two Shield volcanoes that created Oahu. Besides that of Kawai Nui, the greenery within Kailua is frequent and rare to be full of dead floral and fauna. The wilderness still outnumbers the civilization two to one, which makes Kailua the beautiful place it is.

“Staying Local.” is relatively simple with beaches just down the road and only one large attraction, Pali lanes bowling alley. Kailua also holds a shopping center and plaza (full of grocery stores, fast food restaurants, and a few entertainment stores) about two miles away from each other. Though we have been a little modernized, Kailua remains beautiful with wildlife thanks to its weather.

With the Mauka (Mountain) showers and trade winds, Kailua can be sunny in five minutes, then pouring in the next five. After another five minutes Kailua is back to a bright day with a lot of humidity. Other days we’ll have light drizzles all day or blazing heat going up to 91 degrees (but occasionally goes higher). With rapid changing weather, living in Kailua has made me an adaptable person. Being able to change for any situation I have taken up pragmatism (adjusting one’s sails) rather than optimism or pessimism knowing that tomorrow’s another day and that life works how it is. Kailua’s weather is very unpredictable and is a pure reflection of its people. You can’t really judge a person from Kailua by appearance because most of the people here have some kind of hidden talent or specialty that is unique to everyone else. These unique talents are so interesting because its like we come from a variety of places, which we somewhat do.
Kailua has multiple sub-divisions within itself, consisting of about ten different areas. A person is often questioned “Oh, what part?” because Kailua is such a large area. Though each sub-division is titled differently, they all fall under the Kailua area. The difference for me is that instead of growing up in one of the major sub-divisions, I was raised in the town itself. I live in an apartment complex on a private street off of Hamakua called Aoloa (Other words known as Kailua Gardens); for such a narrow street, it holds over five apartment complexes. It really amazes me that the people I bring here say “This place is beautiful!” but I suppose, unlike them, I am used to the scenery. Living there all my life I have adapted to the three-story apartment complex, with a bridge in the middle of the top floor and numerous “mini-gardens,” on the second level. At first sight my apartment complex could be a rather different scene from a normal living area, but it’s the same old home to me. I have seen many people come and go my apartment complex of B, Ko’olau vista. Most of my neighbors use these apartments as a place to rent, while some would call it home. I have seen many new faces come and go, usually not staying for more than three years. Most of them are in the military, which is why they leave after such a short time here, which makes it hard to be friendly with them. The ones that make a living out of these two bedroom apartments know each other and are always willing to express a simple greeting and maybe ask about how life is going. Though one could ask “How isn’t that beautiful,” all things have pros and cons. After my parents divorced, there had been times that we did not have power due to not paying the bills on time since we had a lack of funds. We lack a lot of basic things such as a water heater, television and a computer. A lot of people question how I could survive living like that, but with the lack of entertainment I have come to appreciate the simpler things in life. Knowing that I had a place to live was good enough for me because often we have been threatened for foreclosure since we rarely paid the bills on time. We are entirely dependent on the monthly child support from my dad to pay for the bills and if that runs out, we pay late. We use to have saved funds but due to economic times, that has long run out. Simply living is a luxury to me and I am grateful for everything I have in life, knowing things could be worse. However, I am bothered by the way our house is.

For as long as I could remember, my house has been a mess. I personally call it an obstacle course since there are places where you actually have to climb over things to get somewhere. Getting to my sister and my mom is one of the daily things I do where I have to go through the hallway, over a couple bags, on top of a stool, and up on a mountain of clothes and belongings. The worse place is my living room, which has a wall of “clutter,” about five feet high at the entrance. There are numerous magazines and envelopes coating the floor along with old toys and a ton of movies. Our new living room is my bedroom since I took the initiative to clean it enough for me to have a space large enough for a table. My bed is commonly used as a seat while there is a rocking chair, two plastic bins and the floor as other places to reside. The bed under the one I use holds the napkins as a convenience for storage and use. There are two televisions along the middle of the wall stacked to give more space. The bottom one (about three times the size of me in length and width and half of me in height) is mainly used for video games while the top one (twice the size of me and a third of my height) is used for DVDs and videos since we do not have cable or other networks to watch programmed shows. The right corner of my room has a tower of games, videos and DVDs with the systems slightly to the left for
convenience. With all the things I have in my room, I could hold up to about ten people if it was clean (which still would not be very clean anyway). With all that I could do at home, I do much more than camping on video games and watching movies for hours upon end.

I have weekly visitations to my dad’s house and spend time with him every other weekend (originally it was every other two weekends but that has changed since). There, I would do many things such as riding a bike, skateboarding, rollerblading, riding a scooter, running and using a computer. I also hiked up the mountain behind his house to see a view of Kailua behind me, and Bellows beach park on the other side of the mountain. There was more luxury here since there was hot water for showers and Internet access. The only problems were that there were limited places to sleep, which usually led me to sleeping on the ground, acting as an obstacle for little crawlers during the night. I think one of the cool things about my dad’s house is that on top of their mountain, the military used to do live fire training so every now and then we would find a bullet shell on the ground. It seemed useless to a lot of people since all they saw it as was trash, but one mans trash is another mans treasure. I knew I was born and raised in a ghetto but it made no difference to me. I may have lived a rough life at home, but I was a different person whenever I got out.

Outside of my home, I would be a quiet, but caring person. I didn’t say much but when I did it usually had some good to it. I am well known for my advice and being really mature. I acted like this because I knew the damage that could be dealt from being around my family for most of my day and I wanted to be better than that. For example, we have a homeless man that is known as Mango man around Kailua. Mango man had come to Hawaii before I was born but could not return to where he came from because he could no gain access to his funds. Word around town was that he was a millionaire in some foreign country but the story tends to change a lot. I try to talk to him on occasion because I see him around town a lot. He doesn’t say much either and he smells really bad but I try to be as nice as possible, knowing that could be me. Although people cannot spare him the money he needs, they leave meals for him along with their best wishes. Some people do not know him at all, but they would still be willing to help if they were able to perform it. The people in Kailua were almost always friendly and with good ethics (such as simple greetings or checking if your alright when you get hurt), having little bad influences around.

Conveniently, Kailua is a small town where getting anywhere does not take long. I would be walking about ten miles daily just between seeing people, doing things and of course, school. I went to Kailua schoolings from elementary to high school graduating class of 2009. Since we do not have much to do out here, most of my time would be spent at school. I grew up with the YMCA A+ after-school program and continued on in middle school as a program aide. I was a choreographer during the summer for about two hundred kids, teaching them their end of summer celebration dance. I also was charged with teaching them the summer song, which was previously choreographed. I would take about three days watching the video so I could learn it from front to back, being able to do any part of the song on the spot. During these years I also played AYSO (American
Youth Soccer Organization) up until my sophomore year of high school. Within my four years at Kailua high school, I joined air riflery, cross-country, track, Japanese club, go club, air band, honor guard, saber team and drill team. I was top of my class in AFJROTC HI 821*, commanding about sixty other students for a semester. Here I was taught helpful life skills such as management and communication. I also picked up one of the jobs I am currently in called HROG (Hawaii Royal Order of Guards), which has played a large role in my life in taking appreciation of my Hawaiian ancestry. Along with all that I did, I also gained a reputation of the Ninja and Superman (better known as Super Ninja).

At first, I would dress up as a ninja and run around school for the day because it was Halloween. The walks cleared at the sight of me, giving me a straight path to my destination as everyone watched in awe and entertainment as I ran without concern of what others thought of me. After a while, I became the Japanese club mascot and aside of that, if people asked me to, I would dress up and run around. Since I had that reputation, I was asked to dress up as Superman for my senior year homecoming. I bought a bunch of different parts from Savers and created a suit that was close to the superman suit. After our Air band (dance group) performance in our homecoming assembly, I threw the costume on and with the rep. I already had, began my adventure throughout the school. These four years have definitely shaped me to be who I am today. My first years of high school I was timid and quite anti-Kailua being rather anti-social as well. By the end of senior year I had so much appreciation for the school and for the people in it. Since I am a freshman once again, I am starting off almost similar to the way I did then with the exception that I am not as anti-social and I do not entirely dislike UH.

Though Kailua has been the center of my upbringing, I cannot deny the rest of this island or the rest of the islands. From each area that I have been at I have learned that they each possess their own unique lifestyle. Some of these can include Kalihi, Hawai‘i Kai and Nanakuli. Each of these areas has taught me something of great value to me. These things include break-dancing, friendship qualities and a greater love for people. Similar to the different areas of the island, the other islands I have been to also have unique things about them. From traveling to other islands, have come to see how modernized Oahu has become and that many things done here is for commerce. The Big Island and Maui have shown me a deeper spirituality to my Hawaiian heritage and has made me much more articulate in what I see with things that relate to the Hawaiian culture and society as a whole. Similarly, I have become the person I am today from Kailua, Oahu and all the Hawaiian Islands.

Hawaii was where I was born and raised. Everything I have been through has shaped me to be an extremely adaptable person giving time for any situation as long as it is within good ethics or seemingly good intentions. My appreciation for the simple things in life has given me much to be thankful for and my experiences have molded me to the person I am today. Though all that I am needed to take place somewhere and Kailua has contributed a major part in making who I am. Not only the land, but the people I have encountered as well have taught me the lessons I now teach and the welcoming arms I give to everyone that I come across. Being raised by such beauty has lifted me above the
stars and beyond to an independence from the material thing in life and that the things truly worth living for is that from our history as a person and that of where you live.

As the day comes to a close and twilight falls upon us, the hectic aura of the day returns back to the peace of the night. Families come together for their dinner as they discuss the topics of the day and the students begin homework. Young adults now fill the sidewalks with their daily running, taking their trip around the three-mile loop of enchanted lakes. Slowly, the residents of people trickle off to dreams until the day begins again early the next morn.
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