

## COMMENTARY

KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS TEACHERS SPEAK OUT:

# Faculty must participate in decisions

*The following statement is by Na Kumu o Kamehameha, an organization of faculty at the Kamehameha Schools.*

As members of Na Kumu o Kamehameha, 200-strong, we wish to express appreciation to the community for its overwhelming support and aloha.

At a time when our institution is in crisis, it has been particularly meaningful to receive encouragement from fellow educators, staff members, alumni, parents and students, and members of the community in general.

Our commitment to our students, the true beneficiaries of our beloved Ke Ali'i Pauahi, compels us to act as she would have: to maintain an open line of communication with all who care about the welfare of Kamehameha Schools and the children.

Our four designated representatives — Carolyn Kehau Abad, David Kawika Eyre, Charlene Hoe, and Gary Obrecht — have worked tirelessly on behalf of Na Kumu o Kamehameha.

In September they were individually reprimanded by the administration and were threatened with dismissal if they made any further public statements.

It must be noted, for the record, they have made no public statements as individuals. The letter published over their names in the Honolulu Advertiser on July 13 was written at the direction of and on behalf of Na Kumu o Kamehameha. In support of our representatives, 160 of the 200 signed Na Kumu members have published their names in-house under a statement which attests to this fact.

Since their reprimand, others, including trustees and administrators, have presumed to speak for the faculty by presenting their interpretations of faculty issues and faculty morale. The purpose of this article is to update the community by speaking out on our own behalf.

### Trustees haven't responded

As educators, our focus has never wavered from our allegiance to the education of Pauahi's children and our understanding of her vision. We feel privileged to be the teachers of her children.

Last May the news of unrest at Kamehameha Schools Bishop Estate first became known to the public. The Kamehameha community cared deeply enough to respond dramatically through the May 15 march. At that time, members of the faculty and staff gathered to discuss their concerns and decided to initiate dialogue with the board of trustees.

On several occasions we have sent formal letters to the board requesting a private, in-house forum for the purpose of resolving issues. As of this writing, the trustees as a board have not responded to any of these letters. Consequently, the majority of the faculty of Kamehameha has organized as Na Kumu o Kamehameha. We were then informed that because we were

## What's this about?

The Bishop Estate is trustee for the lands of Bernice Pauahi Bishop, great-granddaughter of Kamehameha I, who willed that they be managed to provide for the perpetual maintenance of Kamehameha Schools. About 3,200 Hawaiian children are enrolled.

Frustration over the five-member Bishop Estate Board of Trustees' management of the \$10 billion charitable organization boiled over last spring.

On May 15, hundreds of parents, students, alumni and supporters marched to the state Supreme Court and to the offices of Bishop Estate to present their complaints (see box below). In August, five prominent citizens published a scathing essay, "Broken Trust," reviewing activities of the trustees.

Three independent investigations are now under way. One concerns campus management. Two others concern the trustees' handling of Bishop Estate investments and the estate's tax-exempt status.

This is an update by Kamehameha faculty concerning management problems at the schools.

organized, we would be treated as "outsiders."

Ironically, the administration forbade our use of a campus meeting place on July 22, when we met with trustee-chosen and court-appointed fact-finder Patrick Yim and Beadie Kanahele Dawson, attorney for Na Pua o Ke Ali'i Pauahi.

### We seek permanent solutions

Na Kumu members are not interested in rushed and superficial solutions to the problems at Kamehameha Schools. Instead, we are seeking lasting changes. We need to revisit our schools' mission. The closing of collaborative and outreach educational programs that benefited thousands of Hawaiian children was grievous. As educators, we were shocked as we learned about the dismantling of these programs and the treatment of those terminated, many of whom had given years of service to KSBE. We pray for the day when leaders with vision and heart will again offer these educational opportunities to the Hawaiian community.

### Faculty must have a voice

Na Kumu o Kamehameha is seeking a voice. Until now, the faculty has been treated in a less than professional manner by being repeatedly and systematically overlooked in the schools' planning and decision-making. We have been contained and controlled for years. For the welfare of the schools, this cannot continue. We must be included as active participants in decisions that affect the education of the students of Kamehameha Schools. This is the bottom line. Any quality educational institution would allow nothing less.

Contrary to reports about our feeling "demoralized," or about spirits being low at Kamehame-

ha, members of Na Kumu o Kamehameha are, in fact, extremely energized. There has been a growing sense of collegiality and camaraderie, and we are greatly moved by the degree to which faculty members from preschool through 12th grade have come together to reaffirm their commitment to the education of our students.

Despite the public controversy, our students have been remarkable. They are clearly aware of and concerned about the problems. Their attitude and behavior have been exemplary, reflecting the influence

of the values instilled in them by their families and their teachers. As Pauahi's beneficiaries, our students come first. We pledge to protect them and provide for them at all cost.

### Our inspiration

It has helped us all to look to the history of Kamehameha Schools for clarification, inspiration and guidance. Charles Reed Bishop provided the answer to the significance of the name "Kamehameha Schools" in a speech entitled "The Purpose of the School," which he gave at our first Founder's Day observance, Dec. 19, 1888:

"Bernice Pauahi Bishop, by founding the Kamehameha Schools, intended to establish institutions which should be of lasting benefit to her country; and also to honor the name Kamehameha, the most conspicuous name in Polynesian history, a name with which we associate ability, courage, patriotism, and generosity."

Pauahi received her inspiration from her great-grandfather, Kamehameha the Great. In turn, Na Kumu o Kamehameha receives inspiration

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from both Kamehameha and Pauahi. As educators we embrace Pauahi's charge to her people:

"Your life is before you . . . it will be what you choose to make it. Times will come when you will feel you are being pushed into the background. Never allow this to happen . . . stand always on your own foundation. There will come times when to make this stand will be difficult, especially to you of Hawaiian birth; but conquer you can . . . if you will."

(Pauahi was quoted in an address delivered by Mrs. Pierre Jones, Founder's Day, Dec. 19, 1923.)

We are attaching a copy of our "Statement of Concern" to the trustees of Kamehameha Schools Bernice Pauahi Bishop Estate. This statement was handed to Trustee Chairman Richard Wong by a Na Pua a Ke Ali'i Pauahi spokesperson at the culmination of the May 15 march. (The faculty was not allowed to have a representative deliver this document.)

The situation at Kamehameha Schools has not changed in regard to the top-down management, the unilateral decision-making, and the intimidation intended to create a climate of fear. What has changed is faculty morale. We are energized. We are determined. We look to the future. Things will change.



Advertiser library photograph / May 15, 1997

Expressing their frustration, members of the Kamehameha Schools community marched from the Royal Mausoleum in Nu'uano to the Supreme Court and to the offices of Bishop Estate on May 15. They stopped at Iolani Palace (above) on the way. (The Supreme Court appoints the five Bishop Estate trustees. Kamehameha Schools founder Bernice Pauahi Bishop is buried at the mausoleum.)