

Aloha mai kākou,

My name is Angela Chock, and I'm very grateful for the opportunity to share a bit of my perspective on workforce development as kanaka 'Ōiwi and as part of the rising generation entering Hawai'i's workforce. I'm here today not *just* to tell my story, but to share what it means when workforce development works, when it invests in people like me and my family.

To give you all some context about who I am, I want to start off with where I come from. My parents are Rebecca and Thomas Chock. (Yes, the Thomas Chock in this room—hi Dad!) I am the middle of 5 kids, and a proud aunty to 3 nephews and 2 nieces. I was born in Utah and was raised there until I was 13, when we were able to move to Hawai'i—and in my dad's case, move back home. **We've been lucky to find success in that process. Kama'āina and kanaka returning to the islands after a long time away isn't a common story—but it's a happy one!**

Although it was my dad's childhood home, making Hawai'i my home was a different process for me. It was hard to reconnect after having spent my whole life on the continent, disconnected from the 'āina, the mana of this place. Fortunately, I attended high school at Kamehameha Kapālama, where I learned what it meant to belong here. I was given kuleana to be a servant leader to my community. I was taught the culture, language, and history, and I was given tools for professional and educational success in the future. This led me to believe that it is *never* too late for someone to come back and thrive in these islands—and especially never too late for a kanaka 'Ōiwi, a Native Hawaiian.

When I graduated in 2021, I returned to Utah to attend BYU, which is in the same city I grew up in. I completed three semesters and changed my major *three times* in that span of time—from Pre-Music, to Economics, to Accounting, and finally to Sociology! My career “**path**” so far has thankfully been very flexible as to allow me to discover my passions over time, through trial and error. In 2022, I took a break from school to serve an LDS mission for 18 months in West Texas and East New Mexico, and returned to school in 2024.

**I hope that gave an adequate background as to why I feel that I have a unique—yet important—perspective on the things we have learned together today.**

So how did I get here, speaking to you now?

Most summers since graduating, I stayed in Utah to work rather than come to O'ahu; it made more sense financially and socially. But this year, **I felt a strong spiritual pull to return to O'ahu.** Lots of things didn't make sense about it, but I trusted my na'au, my intuition, and made plans to return. During my job search, my dad informed me of the Hele Imua program. In the end, this program—funded by the state legislature and championed by Senator Donovan Del Cruz—is the only thing that made it financially and professionally feasible for me to return.

I'm especially blessed to have been placed with the Workforce Development Council and mentored by Bennette, Evan, and Kelly. My experience so far **has gone beyond my expectations** for my personal and professional growth.

I begin to understand where that spiritual pull to return came from—I **was truly meant to be here this summer**. (Plus, working in an office so close to where my dad works means I get free lunches! He won't admit it, but I **am** his favorite child.)

But truly, it has been such a blessing in so many ways. I have been given a front-row seat on how state-level efforts are shaping Hawai'i's labor future—not just in theory, but in practice. I remember how excited and included I felt when those who were wordsmithing the Generational Commitment asked me—*just an intern*—what I thought and felt! I've sat in meetings and watched *real* conversations and *real* work move forward. It's helped me understand what it takes to make Hawai'i a place I can call home—not only in spirit, culture, and ancestry, but physically, literally.

As a sociology major, I've always chosen to focus my research papers and projects on Native Hawaiian issues. The uniqueness of these islands—our history, diversity, and social complexity—adds depth to every topic I study. But the data is often disheartening: the Native Hawaiian diaspora and “brain-drain,” disproportionate incarceration rates, education gaps, houselessness, health disparities, and more. These issues matter to **me deeply as a kanaka working to uplift the lāhui**.

My most recent research project was about the Native Hawaiian diaspora using 2023 IPUMS USA data. While the results weren't *technically statistically significant due to limited sample size*, I did find a heartbreaking pattern. On average, Native Hawaiians living outside of Hawai'i had nearly *three* times the income of those who remained in-state after accounting for differences in cost of living by state.

But this disparity isn't just a Hawaiian issue. Working with the WDC has helped me see it's not *only* Native Hawaiians who struggle to stay and thrive here—it's anyone *without significant economic privilege*. And from my perspective, that kind of systemic inequality contradicts the very principles this country aims to uphold: **justice, equity, and the general welfare of all people**.

In preparing for this speech, Bennette asked me a powerful question: »When.you.imagine.your.life.in.86.years?.what.kind.of.Hawai'i.do.you.want.to.live.in?«

I tried to visualize it, and it was simple.

In the morning, I'll drive my car from a home—a house—that I own. I drop my children off at school, a school with teachers I trust will teach them their intellectual worth and give them tools to succeed. I walk into a job in which I am treated with respect, where my identity as kanaka is not erased, where I am paid equally to the men who share my same responsibilities. I can buy groceries without anxiety—maybe I run into a classmate from high school at the store that managed to stay home, too. I live comfortably, not excessively. I'm not just surviving—I am happy. **I belong**.

Is this too much to ask for? Can this become a reality?

I hope it can, and I will work to make it such; but **I know now** that I'm not alone in this work.

Through my studies of these various Native Hawaiian issues, I have decided—and am determined—to be one more Hawaiian in Hawai'i, one more voice. I'm here not because I expect economic success, but because it's worth fighting for—even if the journey is hard. **But**, observing the conversations and efforts at the Workforce Development Council has increased my hope in the financial success of my future.

Lastly, I want to reference an 'ōlelo no'eau: *I kanaka nō 'oe ke mālama i ke kanaka*.

**You will be well served when you care for the person who serves you.**

To me, this echoes the idea that a rising tide lifts all ships. Workforce development, when rooted in aloha and mālama pono, can uplift all people of Hawai'i, present and future.

So, for my life in 20 years, I hope to live in a Hawai'i in which we truly take care of each other—on a systemic, social, emotional, and cultural level. A Hawai'i where we love and include each other, pursue meaningful and noble careers, and make intentional efforts to right the wrongs done in the past.

Here, I see those intentional efforts being made every day—to raise the tide, to care for the people who care for us in the past, present, and future.

He Hawai'i au, mau a mau.

Mahalo nui.



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