

Wai'awa

Wai'awa also known as "bitter water" is a place where I and many others grew up at. Generations of my family have been calling Wai'awa our home since before we could walk.

First of all I'd like to talk about some background information about Wai'awa. It is located in the Kona *ahupua'a* that stretches from the Mānā flats to the edge of the Waimea canyon. Wai'awa is made up of four streams; Ka'ohē which means "The Bamboo." The second stream is called Ka'pue after the lobelia plant (*Lobelia gaudichaudii* var *Kauaiensis*) only found on the slopes near the stream. Kukuipuha is the third stream which means "hollow *kukui* nut". The fourth stream is called Kukae'iole after the plant rat pellets found surrounding the stream. The first and second stream connects and forms Kahoana and the third and fourth forms Hō'ea where there is said to be a *heiau* somewhere. Both of these streams form Wai'awa.

The interview I did was of Marvaleen Ku'uleialoha Vidinha, my grandmother who grew up around Wai'awa. Here is how my interview went,

R: So Grandma Ku'ulei could you tell me your earliest memory of Wai'awa, as in during your youth?

K: I remember how much green there was. I was with my siblings and there were men working at the springs there at the time.

R: What do you remember about the different species there at the time?

K: Well there were a lot of wild horses and cattle, as well as pigs and goats. Quails were always around at the time and plenty deer.

R: How about now? The animals you once saw, do they still inhabit the area?

K: There are still wild horses and cattle, pigs too. Not much deer, goats and quails. Many people liked to hunt after work.

R: Is the climate or weather any different?

K: Well it's warmer than before.

R: What about the streams anything to compare to today?

K: Before the streams were a lot clearer and uncontaminated by rusted machinery. We could swim in them now the waters red and brown from the erosion of the bank and people's trash.

R: Wait you guys got to swim in the streams.

K: Yes, make sure your getting this down Makaanalena.

R: Yes mama, that concludes our interview.

A lot of information about Wai'awa in two different times is unbelievable. What I learned from my grandma is that the ecosystem of Wai'awa and the area is not what it use to be.

Learning now this huge difference in Wai'awa I've come up with a few ideas to help preserve our '*aina*. First off, we could start by cleaning up trash and any rusted and broken down machinery. I recently took a trip to Wai'awa with my family. As we walked around we saw broken down cars and trucks. Second of all, bringing back native plants and planting them so they can flourish once again. Lastly, my uncle Tresten has been helping to clear out Wai'awa by cutting down invasive trees that kill all native plants already living there. Tresten has a house in Wai'awa and has already started planting taro and other plants. We've taken some children around in Wai'awa and educated them about the land. Due to the wild cattle the men rode on horses on both sides of the children. Educating the future generations about our land and stressing to them the many things that can destroy the '*aina* could influence them to keep our '*aina* clean and thriving.

Wai'awa has been a part of my life since before I could remember. It's a part of our history as Hawaiian people and is sacred to us. We may have problems but we also have solutions. Helping our '*aina* is helping us and future generations, what would you do for your home and for your people? I know what I would do, although it may just be an essay it is also a way for me to educate others about our land and how to keep it healthy.

