
Memorial Day Message from the Daniel K. Inouye Institute



DANIEL K. INOUE
INSTITUTE



May 25, 2026

Aloha friends, family, and members of our DKI ohana,

As we move through another busy year, we wanted to take a moment to send out a short note on this most sacred day – Memorial Day – a time to honor the brave men and women who gave their lives in service to our country. For the Daniel K. Inouye Institute, this day carries profound significance as we reflect on Senator Inouye's own extraordinary service with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team during World War II, and the sacrifices made by so many in the years and decades that have followed.

Memorial Day reminds us that freedom is never free. Senator Inouye would often say, that this day is not simply about flag waving, barbecues and taking the day off. The gratitude we feel this day should be carried forward each day to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice so we may enjoy the freedoms of democracy. As we remember those who gave their lives, together with the many veterans in our community whose courage, resilience and patriotism have shaped our nation and community, let us commit ourselves to preserving their stories and continuing the values of service, unity, and aloha that Senator Inouye carried throughout his life.



On May 22nd the USS DANIEL INOUYE (DDG 118) held its Change of Command ceremony at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam. The ship's Matrons of Honor, Jessica Inouye and Jennifer Sabas, attended the ceremony alongside Ken Inouye and Sara Hamakawa.

Outgoing Commander Ryan Kelly concluded his command after guiding the crew through significant operational milestones and readiness exercises. During the ceremony, he reflected on the honor of serving aboard a ship carrying Senator Inouye's name and legacy, praising the crew's unwavering "Go For Broke" spirit.

Incoming Commander Erik Gardner, formerly the ship's Executive Officer, assumed command as the ship's fifth commanding officer. In his remarks, he pledged to continue strengthening the ship's culture of combat readiness, teamwork, and excellence.

We extend our heartfelt mahalo to the officers and crew of the USS DANIEL INOUYE for continuing to honor the Senator's legacy through their dedication and service. We also extend our appreciation to their families for their service as well. It is always heartwarming and a "chicken skin" moment when the crew of about 325 belts out the Ship's motto – "Go For Broke" as they did to close the formal program.



Across the world in Italy, Senator Inouye's legacy carries on through the naming and dedication of Piazza Daniel Inouye. The recognition celebrates the extraordinary contributions and sacrifices of the Nisei soldiers during World War II and serves as a lasting tribute to the Senator's lifelong commitment to public service and international friendship.



Closer to home, the Daniel K. Inouye Institute was proud once again to support Hawai'i History Day, held at Windward Community College on April 25, 2026. DKII has long supported Hawai'i Council for the Humanities' efforts to encourage young people to explore history through research, creativity, and storytelling. Senator would often say that History is an amazing teacher, provided you heed the lessons learned, otherwise, you are likely to repeat them.

This year's Daniel K. Inouye Institute award recipient was Serena Duarte from Kamehameha Schools Kapālama Campus for her documentary, "Nancy Bannick: Honolulu's Battle Between Urban Development and Preservation." Serena's thoughtful project explored advocacy, civic engagement, and the power of individuals to shape their communities for the better.

In her note to DKII, Serena shared her appreciation for the opportunity to participate in Hawai'i History Day and expressed how meaningful it was to receive an award honoring Senator Inouye's legacy. We congratulate Serena and all the outstanding student historians whose hard work and passion continue to inspire us.



You may also view Serena's award-winning documentary here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6NXQAFe5tf0&t=4s>

We are deeply thankful for your support and friendship as we continue to share the Senator's enduring legacy through partnerships, educational programs which remain both relevant and important in these tumultuous times. We are now our own 501(c)(3) nonprofit so every gift — no matter the size — will make a meaningful difference. Online donations can be made using this link: <https://dkii.org/donate>

Aloha,
Jennifer, Sara and DKII Team

As a reminder, the bronze statue of our beloved Senator is located at the United terminal at the Daniel K. Inouye International Airport. Please visit, talk story, take a selfie, and send it to us!

We are also delighted to share some very special photos of Ken and Maggie visiting with Dad/Grandpa Dan during recent travels through the airport.



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