



DANIEL K. INOUE  
INSTITUTE

June 24, 2025

Aloha Friends,

We're excited to share recent events involving the Daniel K. Inouye Institute (DKII).

On March 14, the Daniel K. Inouye National Center for the Preservation of Democracy, a program under the [Japanese American National Museum](#), kicked off the inaugural Irene Hirano Inouye Distinguished Lecture—an annual event dedicated to Irene's lifelong commitment to preserving the Japanese American history, advocating for the importance of sharing stories thru museums, and building bridges between the U.S. and Japan.



The inaugural lecture featured Secretary Lonnie G. Bunch III, the 14th Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, who spoke about the vital role cultural institutions like JANM and the Smithsonian play in shaping democracy by encouraging all voices to be heard. He was joined by Lisa Sasaki, Smithsonian's Deputy Under Secretary of Special Projects. Together, they reflected on Irene Hirano Inouye's lasting legacy and her influence in the museum world to include as a member of the Smithsonian's Board of Governors as well as in the realm of philanthropy. Sasaki also shared her personal reflections on Irene's mentorship during her time as JANM's director of program development.



Jennifer Sabas, DKII Director, was on hand and gave remarks at the reception. She shared personal memories of Irene as Senator's wife and the happiness she brought him in his autumn years, as well as their work together to establish the DKII Institute to honor his legacy. It was a powerful night of conversation, connection, and inspiration, especially given the tumultuous times brought on by the current administration.

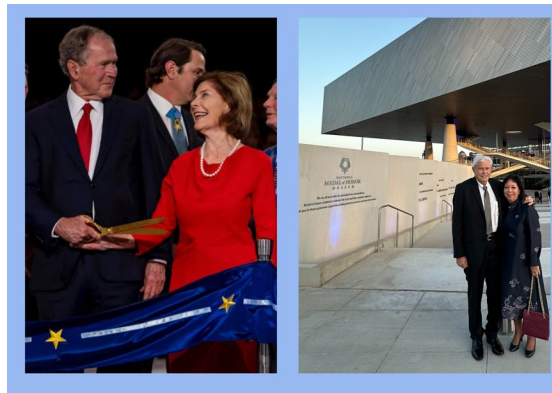
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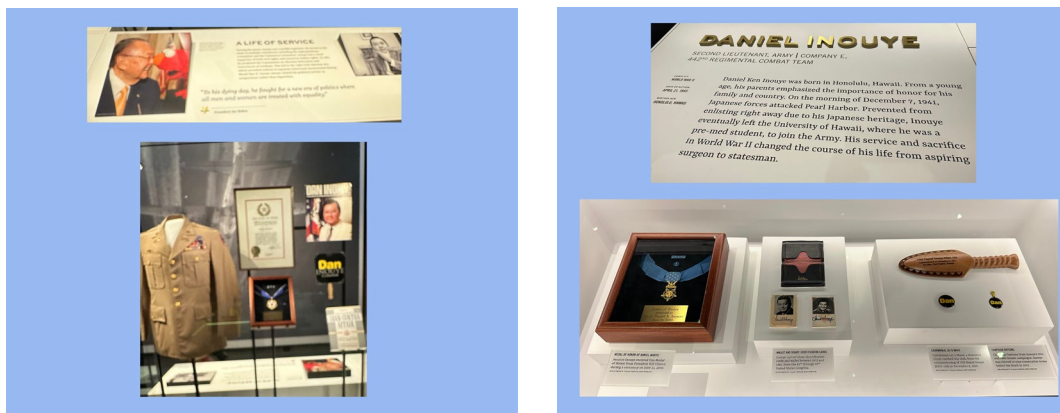
[www.danielkinouyeinstitute.org](http://www.danielkinouyeinstitute.org)



On Saturday, March 22, Jennifer represented DKII at the grand opening of the [National Medal of Honor Museum](#) in Arlington, Texas. The museum sits between the Dallas Cowboy stadium and the Dallas Rangers stadium, encouraging steady visitor traffic. President George Bush did the honors of cutting the ribbon at the opening ceremony which was large and grand in the best of Texas' traditions. More than 30 Medal of Honor recipients were on hand for the celebration.



Senator Inouye's Medal of Honor — once proudly displayed in his office — is now showcased at the museum as a poignant reminder of his military service to his country. His story will now reach new generations, reminding visitors of the courage, integrity, and the resilient strength of the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team at a time when our nation forced Japanese American citizens into internment camps simply because of the color of their skin. 442<sup>nd</sup> RCT warriors demonstrated their loyalty with their blood and their lives.



The items donated for display include his Medal of Honor and certificate, his Presidential Medal of Freedom and certificate, his military dress uniform jackets and a garrison cap with this Captain's rank insignia pins, a 442<sup>nd</sup> E Company guidon flag that he proudly displayed in his office, his 1944 Honorable Discharge certificate, two official U.S. Senate ID cards, memorabilia from the USS Daniel Inouye, and some campaign swag.



Now in its seventh and final year, the DKII continued its partnership with the [Hawaii International Film Festival](#) (HIFF) to support the Future Filmmakers program, which empowers youth to use their creativity and voices to tell amazing stories.

This year's theme, "Together We Thrive," is rooted in Senator Inouye's belief about power of bipartisanship, compromise and fairness.



Middle and High School students from across Hawaii and Alaska submitted thoughtful, powerful short films that explored what it means to work together toward a better future. On April 13, as part of HIFF's Opio Festival, the films were shown at Kahala Consolidated Theaters. Following the screening, students also enjoyed a special session with writer and producer Phil Chung moderating alongside HIFF Ambassadors -- Sydney Agudong (Kauai native, playing Nani in Disney's soon-to-be-released *Lilo & Stitch*) and Kaipo Dudoit (Oahu native, playing David in *Lilo & Stitch*). The panel took questions from students and shared lots of great advice. Past Ambassadors include Eric Bauza, Auli'i Cravalho, Phillipa Soo, Destin Daniel Cretton, Harry Shum Jr., and Jacob Batalon.



Then came time for the award presentations. The first-place high school and middle school films received Amazon gift cards worth \$500 for their school and \$250 for each student. The second-place films received \$400 for their school and \$150 per student.

Here are the 2025 winners:

### High School

- 1<sup>st</sup> place -- *It Takes A Forest* – by Kainoa Thole from Alaska
- 2<sup>nd</sup> place -- *Hanai Kaiaulu: Weaving Hope from Waste* – by Nanakuli High School students Jeremiah Magallones, Khiara Kaleiwahea, Keola Mahoe, Taryn Taniguchi, & Keara Kilakalua-Aguir

### Middle School

- 1<sup>st</sup> place -- *Driving Thru the Storm* by Maui Waena Intermediate students Eliana Viernes & Layla Magsayo
- 2<sup>nd</sup> place -- *Racing for the Cause* – Highlands Intermediate students Jude Darby & Royal Hartford

Two DKII Special Awards were also presented

### DKII Special Award for Creative Capture of a Civics Lesson about Conflict

- *United We Sip* by Iolani School students Lauryn Jim On, Evangeline Cu, Finley Fujikake, Oliver Fujikake, Kainoa Kelly & Yumi Ricalde Harada

### DKII Special Award for Documentary Storytelling –

- *Healing Thru Time* by Angel Jack, See Stories and Angoon High School in Alaska



DKII thanks HIFF staff—Becki Stocchetti, HIFF Executive Director, Anderson Le, Artistic Director, and a very special thank you to Jen May Pastores, Education Director -- for their hard work, which has supported and mentored up-and-coming future filmmakers!

As a reminder, when you are at the HNL Airport, please visit the statue of the Senator near Gate G2 (United flights). There is enough room on the bench for you to sit, “talk story,” and take a selfie, too. Be sure to share your photos with us! Here are some recent photos with former staff members Richard Collins, Peter Boylan and Sara Daly Hamakawa.



We hope you enjoyed this update.

Aloha,  
Jennifer and Sara