The subject of the Hawaiian national constitution raises an interesting discussion over which amendment should apply. The Hawaiian Nation, starting with King Kamehameha I has had only one constitution. He basically clarified it in his dying words, E Na`e Wale No Oukou, I Ku`u Pono a`ole pau, I ke kumu Pono O Hawai`i. Our national anthem restates it just by its title, Hawai`i Pono-i. The Hawaiian constitution can be stated in one simple word, Pono.

The subsequent written documents from his son, King Kamehameha III, beginning with the Lua`ehu Constitution of 1839, starting with the Declaration on the Rights of Man (aka the Hawaiian Magna Charter) was a restatement of the underlying constitution of his father, Kamehameha I. Every succeeding amendment was an attempt to restate the expression of Pono. Some people, such as those who forced the constitutional changes upon Kalakaua at the point of bayonets, simply did not have pono in their hearts and souls, and thus deviated from the true course of pono.

Queen Lili`uokalani set her hand at amending the Bayonet Constitution, believing that in the end, it was the voice of her Hawaiian people, the voice of God, who should act as the final arbiter of the constitution of that time. Through the intervention of a small group of individuals and in collusion with the U.S. Minister Plenipotentiary, prevented the unfolding of Lili`uokalani’s constitution. Thus began the trip through the twists and turns under United States of America’s empire building under white superiority concepts of Manifest Destiny into the Pacific and Asia.

We are about to gather in another exploration of what should be the Hawaiian National Constitution? I call for no deviation from the original, Pono. Let us keep our eyes on that guiding principle.

Life today is far more complicated than it had been 120+ years ago. Our conditions have changed under years of colonization under the U.S. Its military occupation has done major ecological damage to our lands which they have used. Its control over our education system has erased fundamental aspects of our national conscious, our native language, our cultural practices, etc. Its monetary system has changed our economic, social, and business climate. Its policy of population transmigration has changed much of the face of these islands’ people make-up.

The constitutional document which emerges from this native Hawaiian convention must meet the high principle of Pono. Yet it must be realistic and address the needs of the people of Hawaii. The constitution need not replicate one of the earlier amendments in our history. The very way in which we look at history must be considered. Hawaii’s history should not act as the chain which pulls us back into replication of the past, but should act as the springboard which cast us off into our future.

The product of the Hawaiian aha must meet four requirements;

1. It must be Pono for our times. We must examine our society’s deep culture, that underlying belief and behavior system upon which we build our environmental, social, economic, health, education, judicial and religious communities. Today, Hawaii’s deep culture is founded on the principles of Domination, Individualism, and Exclusion forming the mnemonic DIE. It is a deep culture which chokes the humanity from the foundational interactions with which we engage to grow our society. It is pervasive in our formal systems – in the courts, in economic transactions, in education, health, churches, . . . It is killing our environment and our society.

In our informal system, we have a counter-deep culture. Rather than Domination, our families, communities, civic organizations, churches, and other non-formal relations use `Olu`olu, a more compatible, comfortable, soft method of relating to people. Rather than Individualism, our informal system substitutes the concept of Lokahi, of working in cooperation with one another, of elevating the importance of the group, the team, the family, the community. Rather than Exclusion, there is a constant refrain of Aloha, both in words and in deeds among many of our people. These three simply Hawaiian terms form the mnemonic OLA (life or health).

We should challenge ourselves to ingrain in any foundational system, the elevation of OLA not only in our informal system but in our formal system as well. We need to bring back `Olu`olu, Lokahi, and Aloha into our society so that it becomes the foundation of our daily living.

1. Inclusion should be the basis of our community, without sacrificing the special place of the native Hawaiian people. Our government should be formed around two tracks – Native Hawaiian whose rights are protected, whose governance is established as a special place in Hawaii, whose place in Hawaii is clearly defined; and a second track – General public, consisting of all Hawaiian citizens of all races, which should have the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, control over the governance of the government in all aspects not specifically set aside for the Native Hawaiian people.
2. An option for independence must be given to the people. No longer should we be pussy-footing around this question. It was independence that was stolen. It is independence which must be offered for restoration. It would seem fair that the option for a native Hawaiian government which is autonomous but operating within the State of Hawaii and of the United States of America, should also be given. The question of choice posed to the Hawaiian people must be one of inclusion rather than exclusion. The common and divisive OR conjunction should be removed and the AND conjunction should be used. We should unify our people by this switch of conjunction, allowing the choice of both integration within the U.S.A. as well as the choice of independence from the U.S.A. We should not limit our sights to U.S. domestic policy as it has treated native Americans, but we should aspire to our rights under international principles of self-determination as protected by the International Bill of Human Rights. The domestic laws of a colonial state cannot eliminate international law and the human rights and fundamental freedoms of a people.
3. A Hawaii Transitional Authority must be formed, a mechanism which will make visible to our people, both native and non-native, how our transition will take place. Many people suffer from the fear of freedom, holding back from embracing a Hawaiian independent nation because of the uncertainty of basic questions such as, what happens to our social security and welfare support from the U.S.A., how will we defend ourselves if not with the help of the U.S. military, how will we survive economically if the U.S. leaves, how are we to manage tourism into Hawaii, how are we to gain international recognition, will we continue to pay taxes to the U.S.? The Hawaii Transitional Authority will be challenged to put courage into our people by showing us specific common sense solutions to such questions and in doing so, removing the fear of freedom which has been a yoke upon our shoulders for too long.