



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 2, 2025

I am pleased to join in posthumously honoring the service and sacrifice of the courageous members of the Hui Panalā`au.

From day one, my Administration has been committed to acknowledging the good, the bad, and the truth of our past so that we can begin to remember and heal. A part of that effort includes recognizing the immense contributions and sacrifices of a little-known group called the Hui Panalā`au.

From 1935 to 1942, 135 young men, most of whom were Native Hawaiian, were sent by the United States Government to colonize the uninhabited Pacific equatorial islands of Howland, Baker, Jarvis, Enderbury, and Canton. During this time, these young men recorded weather conditions and marine life, cultivated plant life, and prepared landing strips, deepening our understanding of the islands' ecosystems. To this day, these islands are surrounded by some of the most diverse and remarkable marine life on the planet. Their successful occupation enabled President Roosevelt to issue Executive Orders proclaiming the islands under the jurisdiction of the United States.

The other side of this story is one of deep personal sacrifice and hardship. The Hui Panalā`au endured harsh living conditions, had limited access to emergency medical care, and were attacked at the onset of World War II—resulting in the death of three Native Hawaiians: Carl Kahalewai in 1938 and Joseph Keli`ihananui and Richard Whaley in 1941.

For thousands of years, Indigenous peoples have persisted and survived—defined by strength, survival, and a deep commitment to their heritage. The Hui Panalā`au are a testament to this resilience and pride. I extend my deepest gratitude to each of the 135 members of the Hui Panalā`au and their families, especially those who made the highest sacrifice. Their courage and service helped to advance the security and stability of our Nation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Biden". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".