

April 20, 2014

1. Do you think the Hawaiian government and the Board of Health acted ethically in enacting and enforcing the 1865 Act to Prevent the Spread of Leprosy?

At the time that the Act was passed, people were desperate to stop the spread of the disease. They had seen other diseases, like small pox, wipe out thousands in a short time. They also did not know things we know now – for example, how the incubation period for leprosy can be up to 20 years. So they didn't know what they were dealing with. They really felt that isolation would stop the spread of the disease within a short period of time. They studied what was being done in other countries and felt they were doing what they had to do.

2. Do you think the government acted too rashly in segregating the leprosy and those who were suspected of having it?

I think that they felt they were doing the right thing. They also didn't realize how really remote Kalaupapa was because there was a large Native Hawaiian population living there. However, they weren't thinking about how the people who they were sending there were very sick and unable to undertake the physical labor needed to provide themselves with food and shelter. One of the biggest problems was the Board of Health's inability to provide the people with poi. This was not remedied until the early 1900s.

3. If the government didn't separate those afflicted with the disease, what do you think would have been the best alternative in containing leprosy?

From the beginning, the people who had leprosy and their families asked the Board of Health and petitioned the Legislature to have hospitals for leprosy established on each island. The people were willing to come in for treatment – what they weren't willing to do was have family members taken away to a place where they would never see them again. They felt that if there were hospitals on each island, they could still see their families.

The Kakaako Branch Hospital was the first real attempt to establish an alternative to Kalaupapa. Princess Liliuokalani visited Kalaupapa in 1881 and was overcome with emotion. After she went back to Honolulu, she immediately worked with the President of the Board of Health to establish Kakaako as a branch hospital. In 1884, an act was passed that authorized the establishment of leprosy hospitals on different islands. Unfortunately, this never happened. (However, some people isolated themselves – such as in Kalalau Valley on Kauai and Hamakua on the Big Island –until the government wouldn't allow this anymore.)

Under the leadership of Mother Marianne Cope, the Kakaako Branch Hospital was turned into a state of the art facility and increasingly people were kept there instead of being sent to Kalaupapa. This trend was drastically reversed when King Kalakaua was forced to sign the Bayonet Constitution. At that point, the Board of Health changed and decided that Kakaako

was too visible to ships, etc. In 1888, the largest number of people ever was sent to Kalaupapa. Kakaako was officially closed in 1889.

4. Do you think the American government or the state government learned anything from the history of this settlement or the perspectives of the patients?

I think that people are learning more and more that the perspective of the people sent to Kalaupapa is an integral part of this history and the overall history of Hawai'i. Perhaps the greatest acknowledgement of the importance of remembering all the people who were sent there is the fact that President Obama signed legislation authorizing Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa to establish a memorial at Kalaupapa with the names of everyone sent there who had leprosy. This is an important recognition of the value of each individual to this history.

Several years ago, the State Legislature issued an apology to all the people sent there and their families for the pain and separation.