



## POETRY



## INDIGENOUS INTERNATIONALISMS

SPECIAL SECTION



*This poem is part of the Special Section: Honouring Indigenous Land and Water Defenders, edited by Jeff Ganohalidoh Corntassel.*

## Call to Prayer

Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio

### About the Art

“Call to Prayer” is a poem that attempts to capture and portray the experience of standing in the malu (shade and protection) of the sacred. Whether that malu is cast by monument, an altar, or a mountain, the poem depicts the kuleana (responsibilities and privileges) of recognizing our pilina (intimacy and relationship) to that which is kapu (sacred). The poem travels through the knowledges of faith, courage, devotion, fear, and aloha via the perspective of a Kanaka Maoli wahine who lives in the malu of our kupuna (ancestors) while continuing to endure the ongoing wake of settler colonialism, displacement, and alienation.

Call to Prayer stands in the malu of the Mihrab, Shangri La’s most sacred stolen artifact. And in her magnificent shadow we come face to face with the violence that resulted in her displacement to Hawai’i. We cannot look away, not from her outstanding beauty, and certainly not from the generations of brutality that has allowed us to be in her company. The Mihrab powerfully calls us back to our own sacred places, and in that moment we are invited into a mutual recognition, an unexpected intimacy between peoples, ‘āina (lands, or that which feeds), and mo’olelo (stories and histories).

While this original poem was written in 2021, the most recent genocidal attacks on our Palestinian ‘Ohana in Gaza by the State of Israel have further deepened and expanded its meaning. While our loved ones face genocidal extermination, we stand, around the world, insisting on a critical truth: all life is sacred, all ‘āina are sacred. We condemn any oppressive regimes that would attempt to exterminate our peoples (whether kanaka or Palestinian) and contaminate, bombard, and settle our lands. Any national project that requires wholesale extermination and displacement of Indigenous peoples is an affront not only to justice, but to life itself. Our commitment to each other will not allow us to be silent. Our duty to our shared histories, will not allow us to stand idly by. May all our akua (gods and elemental forces) and kūpuna (ancestors) gather around us, may they cast their malu of protection upon us, may they strengthen us in this lifelong pursuit of liberation, justice, and freedom for all occupied and oppressed peoples. Amamua noa.

### About the Artist

Dr. **Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio** is a Kanaka Maoli wahine artist / activist / scholar / storyteller born and raised in Pālolo Valley to parents Jonathan and Mary Osorio. Jamaica earned her PhD in English (Hawaiian literature) in 2018 from the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa. Currently, Jamaica is an Associate Professor of Indigenous and Native Hawaiian Politics at the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa. Jamaica is a three-time national poetry champion, poetry mentor and a published author of the award winning book *Remembering our Intimacies: Mo’olelo, Aloha ‘Āina, and Ea* which was published in 2021 by the University of Minnesota Press. For more information, visit <https://jamaicaosorio.wordpress.com/>

### Call to Prayer

If I have *Faith*  
It is only because  
I know what it means  
to stand at the foot of a mountain  
my whole body a prayer  
the whole island a monument  
and to see  
the piko  
shining through the mist  
I still feel her before me  
Even from hundreds of miles away  
Anytime I have the strength to look to the horizon

If I have *courage*  
It is only because  
I have watched our mo'olelo remake themselves in my generation  
I have seen an island born from pō  
From a whisper in the quietest parts of ourselves,  
Here  
A promise that we refuse to forget or forsake  
That this place is ours  
Only so much as this place is us  
And I have held it in my hands,  
The birthing of our worlds  
Pō, turned light, turned pūko'a, turned slime turned gods in a time of mere men  
I have watched the call of the intrepid summon Manaeakalani  
every morning  
in the hands of our kua'ana  
Maui, fishing us each  
One by one from the dark sea of this forgetting

If I have *devotion*  
it is only because  
I have traveled into the poli of our akua  
I have crossed the piko  
from wākea to wākea  
and sailed upon the dark and shining road of kāne  
deep into the realm of our ancestors  
and I have returned,  
with the knowledge that to lay in the bosom of our kūpuna  
is to commit yourself to the prayer of memory  
to cast your eyes upon Kuehaelani  
and to pull her shimmering body from the skin of the sea





If I have *anger*  
It is only because  
I know the stories of our loss  
Ki'i burnt to ash  
Stones and ko'a removed  
Now the foundations of Billionaire estates  
I am aware  
That nearly anywhere we walk  
We are trampling upon the 'iwi of our kūpuna



I know the mo'olelo of the hundreds of thousands dead and dying  
I have seen the signs of the separating sicknesses  
Born again, like Haumea, in every Hawaiian generation  
I know the names of the thieves  
The crooks in finely sewn suits  
Praying to their capital  
As they pillage  
And loot our holy cities  
Leaving us with nothing  
But a whisper of what we once believed



And yet I still have *aloha*  
But only because  
I am still here  
With all my kūpuna beside me  
And when I stand in your malu  
You  
Tower over me, like a recollection  
Like a mountain  
With so many stories I will never know  
In languages I will never speak  
Thousands of miles away from your home  
And the 'āina and alchemy that made you  
The hands that formed you  
Like an island, consecrated  
You are here  
Pointed even in the wrong direction  
A desecration  
And still your kaumaha  
Is not foreign to me  
You feel more family  
Than stranger  
And in your magnificent shadow  
I hear our calls to prayer

