

00:00:00 LEXIE STURM: All right. Okay. So, hi, Alike. Before we get started I'm just going to break down exactly what to expect from this interview so there's no surprises, and we're going to start from the very beginning to get a sense of who you are, your life growing up in Hawaii, and then we're going to touch on questions like about the ocean, coral reefs, your experience and expertise, and if that all sounds good we'll get started. All right.

00:00:31 ALIKA GARCIA: Sounds wonderful.

00:00:32 LEXIE STURM: Awesome. All right. Well, as a reminder, I'm Lexie Sturm. I'm a Knauss Fellow with NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program, and we're on the line with Zack Mason who is a data management specialist for NOAA's Coral Reef Information System, and today is Tuesday, May 2, 2023. It's 3:00 p.m. eastern standard time and 9:00 a.m. in Honolulu. Can you please state your name, your affiliation, your title, and where you're coming from?

00:01:03 ALIKA GARCIA: Sure. My name is Alike Garcia, the Executive Director of Kuleana Coral Restoration. We're based here. Our community-based coral restoration group is based out of Honolulu, Hawaii on the island of Oahu.

00:01:19 LEXIE STURM: That's awesome. Thanks. So starting just kind of from the very beginning, my first question that I had for you was, is fishing really important to your family?

00:01:30 ALIKA GARCIA: Is fishing important to my family?

00:01:32 LEXIE STURM: Is fishing important to your family? I guess growing up, like, were you kind of surrounded by fishing? I saw that you came from, like, a subsistent fishing, multigenerational family, and so I just wanted to hear about that experience growing up especially.

00:01:46 ALIKA GARCIA: Yeah. I mean, it's not overly, I guess, exaggerated, like, you know, my family was, you know, strictly surviving off of eating fish or anything like that, but in Hawaii it's just so much a part of our culture, and our family's no different where we grew up, like, I guess the old Hawaii for our generation was,

like, kind of plantation style, like my neighbors would be the best example growing up. And this has to do with the fishing culture, is on our left we had a Japanese family, on the right we had Filipino family, and we had Puerto Ricans across the street, and then Chinese next to them, and then we were kind of like, you know, the Hawaiian and the white, you know, white family kind of mixed up.

00:02:35 So that's very typical of, like, how a lot of places used to be in Hawaii, you know, plantation villages, and it's a part of how we got our slang. But even with that, like, the slang that we have in Hawaii, you know, our pidgin dialect is from that kind of social interactions, but with that is a fishing culture too, so it's kind of been cool with this project. Fishing is very important to our family where we would go fishing with our Chinese neighbors, our Japanese neighbors. The Japanese culture is dominant, the dominant fishing culture here, like, they come from a strong fishing culture themselves, so it just made it really mesh well with Hawaiian culture where we, yeah, we love fish, and it's just a big part of our life.

00:03:17 And I was a commercial fisherman before, so, I mean, me personally coming from a subsistence side, and I wouldn't call...I know, like, some of the terminology on the federal side is, like, recreational fishery, so that's a weird one here, and I know even American Samoa and some other, you know, nations have that issue, right, where it's like, yeah, we do it for fun, but it's not like a hobby, right? It's a lifestyle, like, it's just what we do. So I always thought that was a weird one, is like the designation of recreational fisheries, but, yeah, anyway, so I've kind of transitioned from that to commercial to pay my way through college, which I did not complete, but, yeah, I used that to kind of just build up my life that I live now, and I'm still doing it as a fisherman, but now in conservation. It's still a big part of my life.

00:04:07 LEXIE STURM: That's awesome. Thanks for sharing.

00:04:08 ALIKA GARCIA: Sorry. Do you want shorter answers, like, I can go on crazy tangents.

00:04:11 LEXIE STURM: Go on as long, as crazy as you want. That's why we're here. It's really informal, so, like, talk as much as you want about anything that interests you, and then we'll just kind of go from there. So, cool. That's really

awesome, and it's really cool to hear about all the different, like, cultures, and just people from different cultures that live right in your neighborhood and that you guys all got to interact with growing up. So what else would you do for fun besides fishing when you were growing up?

00:04:44 ALIKA GARCIA: For fun? It's all pretty much all ocean stuff. You know, I grew up on an island. Surf. I don't surf anymore. I mean, I'll get out there every now and then, but, I mean, it went from, like, five or six times a week to, like, five or six times a year. So, yeah, I mean, mostly ocean stuff, surfing, swimming, snorkeling, free diving, but that's also a part of fishing, right, like three pronging fish and stuff like that. Again, it's like you go to the beach, and you just have like a truckful of stuff, and it's just like, whatever, whatever goes.

00:05:20 Yeah, I mean, that's kind of it. I don't think I had any other hobbies other than ocean-related stuff, paddling, like canoe paddling. I did that a lot growing up. I can't think of anything else.

00:05:33 LEXIE STURM: So you grew up on the ocean. I mean, you grew up with the ocean involved every day. That's amazing. That would have been my childhood dream for sure.

00:05:42 ALIKA GARCIA: Yeah. It was good. It was fun.

00:05:45 LEXIE STURM: You grew up, and you became a commercial fisherman, and then you became a firefighter? Can you tell us kind of about that process and how that happened?

00:05:54 ALIKA GARCIA: Yeah, so I graduated high school. I didn't have a plan. Parents asked me, "What's your plan?" "I don't know. Aren't you guys supposed to tell me?" But I just went to community college at first and started taking classes to, you know, find yourself or whatever. Still active, like, fisherman on the, you know, whatever you want to call it, subsistence or recreational level. Got into marine science. I hooked up with aquaculture. I was always into fish tanks, so I miss that one. As a kid growing up I was always into fish tanks, so I had ponds at

my house, like, I would scavenge old bathtubs and make ponds. Anything I could get my hands on, any fish tanks.

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So that was a big part of transitioning into aquaculture at the community college level, and then from there it just, like, blew up to freshwater aquaculture to, like, you know, saltwater which is still a developing thing. And during that I found aquarium trade, so, again, kind of a unique position to be in, and conservation is I came from the commercial fishery side. We did a bunch of, like, food fishery stuff too, but the primary focus of my career was aquarium fish. So I know a lot of conservationists really hated them. We had battles and wars for years with them here in Hawaii, and now it's illegal throughout the whole state. So we'll get to that part later that actually transitions into how Kuleana formed.

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But, yeah, basically at community college I got into just that aquarium aquaculture stuff which got me more into that, and then I started, I was like, oh, I like fishing, I like diving, so we started collecting aquarium fish just to basically pay for school. And then from there I got into the regular university, the University of Hawaii, like, so the community college system is like a pathway to the four-year program or beyond here, and then I was already scuba diving quite a bit with no rules, like, it was cowboy stuff, and I'm surprised I survived. I had a

lot of close calls between, you know, in my, I don't know, 20 years or whatever I've been doing it, but I'm surprised I survived.

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I did, and that got me into the marine biology field, so I started doing scientific diving because I was already scuba diving very aggressively, and then they were like, "Oh, why don't you, like, get certified so you don't die?" and I was like, "Oh, what a great idea." So the University of Hawaii had a dive program that I entered. I got scuba certified and did all that stuff, and, yeah, with that I was a scientific diver, so I got to, like, hang out with all the scientists. I did not intend to go that route. That was not my plan, but I just loved it. I was like, oh, it's like another reason to go into the ocean and, like, so the scientific diving program, and, yeah, all the meanwhile I was just doing commercial fishing for aquarium fish and then here and there food fish, but not a lot.

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Even that's a weird one here, like, we say commercial, but it's like you go, you get fish, and you bring it to, you know, your friends and family, but, you know, they give you, like, gas money, so it's not like you're bringing in, like, king crab by the ton or, you know, like these big bluefins going for \$10,000 a pop. It's like you get gas and beer money, and college, college money came from the aquarium side because that was a lot better. So that kind of formed even more of where we were headed with, like, my perception of conservation was battling with the

people that were very anti-aquarium. I felt as a fisherman my whole life is that we were the best advocates for conservation. Even though we were taking, we were also giving, which is the concept of Kuleana, right? It's like you find that balance.

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But I think where we saw it go hectic, and I completely see why people were upset, is that some people took it to another level, right, like where it was strictly a commercial enterprise not against making money, but it, like, it just took on an ugly head that ran away from, like, a fisherman providing for his family, right? Anyway, so that was happening the whole time during the aquarium fishery. While I'm going to school, you know, talking to scientists about it they had mixed feelings. They were actually more supportive of the fishery, but then I got a call right before I kind of finished my four-year degree, so I shifted to marine biology at the time just because I was stoked on it, but then, yeah, I got the call from the city and county, and I took the fireman department test.

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My roommate at the time was a fireman. I lived right before the university in some, like, cheap little room I could rent, but he was a fireman, and I was renting the room and he was like, "Oh, just take the test, you know?" And I didn't want to do it. I was like, "I don't want to run in fires. It sounds terrible. I want to run in the ocean." So total opposite. But, yeah, so I took the test, and then that kind of amplified both my commercial fishing kind of, like, capacity because all my dive

partners were firemen, so we were just kind of, like, all diving together at that time. And, yeah, I was doing that. I think I got in when I was 23, so I never did go back and finish my degree in marine biology, and, again, it's like a weird thing. I find myself now in this organization where we're doing so much cool stuff, like, with the university, and people that were my classmates are my professors, and it's like, "Oh, man. You made it. You took a weird route, but, like, we're still back together." So, yeah, that's kind of neat.

00:11:13 ZACK MASON: Can I ask a couple questions about the aquarium fish? It's really fascinating to me, and you alluded to kind of a bigger conflict, and it sounds like maybe you were part of more of like a group of, like, ad hoc, you know, people like going out and not really a big commercial enterprise so much, so was that, like, the conflict? Was it, you know, like, smaller groups of fishers wasn't really the problem, but was there a bigger, like, commercial enterprise that was kind of unsustainably, like, harvesting these fish?

00:11:46 ALIKA GARCIA: Yeah, so our problem just geographically speaking to give you some context, and maybe, I don't know, I'm making up numbers, so don't quote me on this, but, like, let's say 90% of the fish for the aquarium trade would come out of the Big Island, right, the island of Hawaii, and so I live on Oahu which is several islands over, and we made up about the rest, so maybe 10% or, you know, maybe it's 80/20. I don't know. But the bulk was coming from the Big Island, so our thing was that we would kind of, like, you know, like farming, right, like any fishing spot you would kind of, like, take stuff and move, take stuff and move. And I'm not saying the other guys didn't do that because Big Island is such a different type of island. I mean, it's so big. I mean, that's the name, right?

00:12:30 But they had the ability to take, say, hundreds of thousands of fish. Whether it's sustainable or not, I think there's a lot of research. That's a whole other thing that does say that's a sustainable yield, but whatever is culturally there, you know, there are, like, conflicts about taking that much, and a lot of the heat kind of came from that side. So Oahu is mellow, but because there are statewide rules it's like every county, every island gets the same effect, and that just kind of rolled over to us.

00:13:00 But, yeah, I think what happened was when more restrictions came the prices started going up, and then you saw your regular, you know, local, I mean, if you want to call them an artisanal fisherman or whatever—again, I don't know all the terms—but, you know, like the smaller, kind of fishing groups that were going out two or three times a week, you know, and it's like generational stuff, to people coming in from, you know, the U.S. mainland and even China and basically just...it's a free...you know, it became a free-for-all. It's like, "Hey, like, they're

going to shut it down in five years. The price is going up, like, let's take as much as we can as quickly as we can," and that's where, like, it conflicted with me. It was like, okay, this is no longer, you know, a lifestyle that's sustainable. Like, this is just extraction...I don't know, industrial scale, and that's where, yeah, I had some differences of opinion we'll say.

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ZACK MASON: Gotcha. And you talked a little bit about when you became a firefighter and, you know, you just decided to take the test and see what happened, and, I guess, you know, it didn't seem like you were super into it at first, but did it...did you end up really falling in love with it, and that was kind of the reason why you didn't finish your classes, or can you elaborate on that a little bit?

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ALIKA GARCIA: Yeah. Yeah, it's kind of a weird relationship, I guess. I loved it when we...I still love it. You know, you hear this from guys in the military, right? It's like, it's not a job, the mission, or, you know, like, some people want to say, it's like, "Oh, save the world. Public service," and that's a part of it, but it's like, you know, you hear...yeah, again, military guys say this right? It's like the guys that you're with, and, you know, the men and women that are on our department, that part is not hard to fall in love with, though. We've got just some of the best people in the world working for the Honolulu Fire Department, so

being at that level, and, again, that translates to what we do at Kuleana too, our operations, and, you know, that level of professionalism that the fire department has, like, that's just something that's hard to come by.

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And I think it's super beneficial, some of that structure and some of that behavior, that sense of urgency, that conservation could benefit from. And that's why some of the things I see, like, with, you know, like red tape, I know...I'm new to conservation, so, like, it freaks me out like, what the hell? You know, why are these permits taking so long? Why do we need this and that? And it's like, all right, slow down, like, you know, the building's not on fire. But, yeah, so I did fall in love with it. It's a good gig, but the reality is, living in Hawaii, catching some fish is not going to pay for college. It's not going to get you a house. You know, like, that's, like...that was the sad part about the loss of the fishery. Some people, they lived on it, but they weren't getting rich, you know, and they were the first ones that got pushed out is the artisanal, local fishermen.

00:16:09 And the fire department was just, like, a means to an end almost, right? It was like a survival mechanism. It's like, I know that the fishery will be shut down, and I know that, you know, the, you know, people are really gunning for this, and, you know, it's changing. We can't do this forever. I'm going to have to move to the mainland, which I don't want to do. No offense, you know, to you guys. I was born and raised here, like, I don't know anything else, you know? But it's so expensive here. The first department was also that lifeline where it's like you know you have a career for 25 years as long as you don't kill anybody, right, or, like, do anything blatantly illegal or, like, you know, dumb. Like, you got a job with a pension for the rest of your life, so that's...that was really what I was looking at at that age not having a plan. You know, 23 years old, and it's like, man, like, all my friends are moving to Vegas and, you know, like, California and Texas just because they can't...their families can't afford to keep them here.

00:17:09 And, yeah, that's why I really...that was why I made the decision. But, yeah, in that process, again, I got 15 years now in the fire department, so it's been a little while. I got 10 more to go for full retirement, and, yeah, I think about it every day that we're in the ocean. It's like, man, I just want to do this full time and leave the fire department, but at the same time, like, the gang that I've got, we're so tight, like, when we're not fighting fires together we are fishing together, like, for fun, you know? So it's, like, just the people I work with, like, why would I leave, right? Like, yeah, so, yeah.

00:17:51 ZACK MASON: Sorry to derail you there, Lexie.

00:17:55 LEXIE STURM: No, no. That was awesome. That was awesome. Thank you so much. Yeah, so you kind of touched a little bit on it, but how...where did you get the idea to, or how did you start Kuleana Coral, and can you tell us a little bit about the organization?

00:18:13 ALIKA GARCIA: Yeah. The reason it started was, yeah, like, we kind of, like, all of that I just said really was what led up to us starting was, like, seeing the end of the fishery. I was in a fortunate position that, you know, I through the fishing

business I had we built up our assets, I guess you can call, right, like, we had multiple boats, scuba compressors, like, 50 scuba tanks. We had a team of people that know the water better than anybody in the world in Hawaii, and, you know, I say that, and it sounds arrogant, but, you know, like, with some humility, but also what was a conflict I saw that motivated Kuleana even more was, like, sometimes people with degrees or PhDs and, you know, like, would come in and, like, tell us what is the deal, and it's like, I don't know, man. Like, you can print all the graphs you want, but, like, I've been diving this reef for 20 years staring at that coral head.

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Like, I'm not saying you're wrong, but, like, I thought we were being dismissed on a very regular basis. And it became, like, where science turned into this thing where it's like, you know, like wokeness or whatever, right? It's like, oh, yeah,

we're going to consult the new Hawaiian population like, "What do you think? What should we do? Oh, thanks for telling us your opinion. We're not going to do that. We have a plan already, but we've checked our box and we've consulted you. Thank you very much for your time." And it's, like, it's insulting, to be honest. It was extremely insulting, and it was, like, so sly, like, you wouldn't pick up on it unless you grew up with it and you've been getting it your whole life.

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And it came from multiple directions, in science, resource management, and I just thought, like, you know what? The fishery isn't dead yet, but I see the way it's going. I don't like it. It's not something that I...you know, like, my grandparents would want me to pursue, and we have all this stuff, like, we have this knowledge, we have the resources, like, we have all these assets. Like, why don't we just...the whole concept of Kuleana, right, is, like, responsibility. It's, like, it's our responsibility that we've taken, and it's provided so much for us in our livelihood. Why don't we use that to give back?

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And at the same time, you know, like, while we're giving back and we're, like, assuring our resources for the future offsetting any impact that we had as fishermen into the positive by a lot, right, like for fish production, but at the same time we can start to have conversations and have a seat at the table with these people making decisions for us where it's not like...because, again, it's very

insulting to be, like, you know, like, to be consulted, right? It's like, "Oh, thank you for your opinion." Like, "What do you have, a fire science degree? I'm not listening to you. I have a PhD," right? And it's like, "Okay."

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But now, I think we have an amazing relationship with a lot of researchers, scientists, resource managers where it's not perfect, it's still a work in progress, but I think we're getting there. I don't know if we'll ever have an equal seat at the table, to be honest. I don't think it will happen, but the more that we do and the more that we bring to the community I'm hoping that, yeah, like they take it a little bit more serious like fisherman knowledge, right? Yeah. So, and I think we have a lot to offer. I think that we're only three years old, Kuleana, and that's been the secret, I think, to our success. It's like, we know the waters really well. You know, we're water people. We...I would like to say that you can't drown us, but I shouldn't say that because then I might drown.

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You know, like, we're in the water everyday whether it's we're fixing coral, we're fishing, we're surfing, so, you know, we're seeing these patterns emerge on a, you know, a long-time scale. So we're getting a lot of good partnerships with the universities that I think, you know, are coming around, and that goes for the federal government too, with NOAA. U.S. Fish and Wildlife, same. I actually find

the federal government a lot easier than the state government here. The federal government, I feel, like, has an understanding, and although there is still that thing like, "Let's check the box where we talk to a Hawaiian, and then we talk to a fisherman," but I see a change happening, and that's been inspiring Kuleana from what we started, and, again, like that momentum in three years is, like, I see the change where we are having a big impact with our values, right, like that concept of Kuleana. Yeah.

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ZACK MASON: And so what do you think is causing that change, like at, like, the governmental level, like, people are starting to listen a little bit more? Why?

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ALIKA GARCIA: I don't know. You know, we're so disconnected. You guys been to Hawaii before?

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ZACK MASON: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

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ALIKA GARCIA: Okay. So it's different. We are within, you know, the American...we fly the American flag, but it's almost its own little country sometimes. You know, we're...I don't know if that's true, but it's a different world, different culture. I'm pretty disconnected because I don't go to the mainland. I mean, I'll go there for, like, a week at a time, and then, like, you

know, get out as quick as I can, but, again, I love it. Like, I love the snow, I love snowboarding there, I love, you know, the people, but this is my home, and I don't really know what America is up to these days. Like, I think America is losing its damn mind on a bigger scale, right, like, with...again, we talked about, like, wokeness, right, and, like, environmental compliance.

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Like, it's beautiful to see, and a part of that is also, you know, respect for indigenous cultures and colonialism and its effects, so that's the good stuff I see coming from America, but I don't know what's driving the change. It's a confusing puzzle to me what's happening just globally, and, again, America is a part of that, so I don't know the answer to that. I'm hoping it's the recognition, and, again, that's why I think the change I hope is coming is that it's a real genuine recognition that indigenous cultures...and fishing I lump into culture, right, for my context. It's a genuine, like, understanding that, holy crap, we are ruining the world. Like, maybe these guys...like, let's not just check a box and say we talked to a brown person.

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Let's, like, you know, let's actually hear what they have to say and what do they know, and that can contribute to a global, you know, like, success for, you know, us sustaining our civilizations and our species. I hope that's what's turning it. Again, I feel like the federal government has been, like, really proactive on it,

more than our state by a lot, and maybe that's from, you know, the administration pushing their, you know...yeah, I don't know. The politics stuff, I'm not too sure about. I hope it's that other stuff I said.

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ZACK MASON: And then one more thing on that theme. I really want to talk more about the specifics of Kuleana, but what do you think are some of the most important things that these organizations like the state, local, and federal government can learn from Native Hawaiian communities?

00:25:37 ALIKA GARCIA: Yeah, the biggest one, and this is, like, really our work is based in this is traditional land management systems. Again, it's like, it's scary because I've been seeing it my whole life where, like, it was always this thing that people talked about and, you know, printed a shirt about or something, but it wasn't really being done where you're actually following through with these practices because it conflicts so heavily with some Western scientific ideologies, right?

00:26:08 I shouldn't say they conflict, the way that they are practiced, but, anyway, the best way is the traditional land management system, and that's basically the Ahupua'a and everything...you know, they call it...what do they call it now, the watershed stuff? It's like ridge-to-reef kind of thing? That's...Hawaii's been doing that for thousands of years, and we got away from it with a different type of land management system that has basically destroyed that Ahupua'a kind of flow of water, of, you know, of nutrients, and I think that is what we have to offer the most with that to the state, federal, you know, county level.

00:26:54 And, again, it's happening. It's slow. Everything happens slow in Hawaii, but I think it is happening, and it's because of grassroots groups that are pushing their watershed, you know, projects, their wetland restoration, and that's why, again, we've had such a unique niche. It's, like, we're coming in at that same grassroots kind of, like, level, but not for coral reefs, which I don't think really existed. We had a lot of groups that we would hear say, "Oh, we do this, that, and the other, because if we don't it will affect the coral reefs negatively," and then you're like, "Oh, well, what's happening on the coral reefs?" "Oh, I don't really know."

00:27:32 Like, so we really aim, and we partner with people across the state now to how can we help them because...and that's where federal partners have really been amazing. It's the...you know, again, another buzzword is "capacity building," and that's really what we're doing right now. It's like they have given us the ability through, you know, with funding and just, like, support, like, helping us with logistics and permitting that we can come in with boats, dive teams. Insurance is the crazy one that I didn't even expect. Insurance is like the number one, like, you

know, like half of my brain is, like, destroyed from. The other is permitting. You would think that just dealing with the ocean and climate change and coral is enough, but, no. It's permitting and insurance.

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But, yeah, we bring that to these other grassroots groups and be like, "Hey, you guys work on the shoreline, and, like, we are kind of the Navy where we will come in and support you with dive teams, boat teams, whatever you guys need for your management, and we'll do this." And, again, back to your original question, that's what I think the government needs to do, and I did a talk for, like, that NOAA conference that was a few weeks ago, and that's one thing that I said. It's like I know it's not easy, but, like, these...not anarchists, but decentralize a little bit, right? Like, I call Oahu Rome because the island I'm on is that we are the heart of, like, the government. Our state capital is here, like, all the legislatures from all the counties, and we're islands, right, so they've got to fly in, and we're all here. So this is Rome, and even in the sense in Oahu, west of Oahu where we're based out of does not get any attention from Rome. Very little, and that was another reason we started. It was like the government does not put resources here. They put it where the tourists go.

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And you cannot compare where the food supply, you know...and, like, now we're talking coral protection. That's a huge federal thing, right? It's like critical

infrastructure, coral reefs. Nobody thought of it like that before, but if we're only protecting these tourist zones, like, are we doing...like, is that justice, and I think no. So I think that's where the government should be looking. It's like, give us all the money they got—of course that's number one—but grassroots groups are, like, decentralizing some of the control a little, and I think that's what they're scared of. And, again, this isn't a federal thing. I think the state is scared to give up control. For what reason, I don't know because...again, the reason we started Kuleana was that we saw stuff happening that we thought was either unfair or, like, why is all this money...there's an impact site, for example, on a coral reef in West Oahu, so they do a survey, the assess a fine, right, so the Coast Guard to these other commercial military entities destroying our reefs with their big old anchors.

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They assess a fine, the fine goes to Rome, they fix the coral in Waikiki where the tourists are, but the community, West Oahu, is the one that's impacted, and it just

blew my mind. Again, it's a question of, like, who's at the table? Not us, right? Like, and this is, like, a lot of communities throughout our state, so I think the government needs to see it as not like a loss of control, but like we keep hearing this thing, this co-management principle, right? Again, it's a buzzword that we need to turn into a reality, and I'll keep saying it, the federal government is doing great at it. It's like, they're killing it. Like, NOAA and U.S. Fish and Wildlife are crushing it. The state, they got to, I don't know, embed some of your people in the state.

00:31:08 ZACK MASON: You mentioned you were based out of West Oahu. Was that intentional?

00:31:16 ALIKA GARCIA: West Oahu is where I grew up fishing probably the most, and then when I shifted to the commercial aquarium fishery, when I first started, like, my mentor that taught me kind of the way, he was from West Oahu, so a lot of their spots are...yeah, it's all West Oahu, so it just became my...I mean, it's been my playground for a long time, but then on the commercial side. So, one, I know the reefs really well, so it's like, that makes sense, like, I know where the Coast Guard keeps dropping their anchors, so I know where we can fix. I know where...you know, there's no moorings, so the tourist boats are dropping their anchor. You know, so we just kind of know this stuff, like I know where the hurricane wiped out a huge spot of the reef, so it's just more of that. It was just like it just made sense and was a perfect fit.

00:32:10 I know the other was, like, the...again, the concept of Kuleana, right, is, like, our responsibility as fishermen. It's like, we take, but we also have to give. I've taken a lot from West Oahu, and I don't think we've taken enough...you know, like,

again, on that industrial scale, like, we're wiping out the reefs and, like, we're very, very careful, like, half of our team are, like, both marine scientists and, like, professional divers, so, you know, like, we were very careful with what we did. But at the same time, it still provided our livelihood, so I felt that strong need to give back to this area first. I knew it well. The other that just kind of happened organically—everything is happening organically for Kuleana, right, and we've been so fortunate—is our relationship with the resort which is the last thing we ever really thought because we're talking about all this, oh, it hurts with boats

dropping anchors and military boats dropping anchors and, you know, tourism gets all the money, and this and that, but in West Oahu Kuleana Resort is the only game in town.

00:33:10 They have a private marina that's very secure, and it's perfectly located to hit both south shores and west shores of the island. And it was just perfect timing that Covid happened, and I don't say that if anyone's family or, you know, loved ones were affected negative about it, but I'm just saying for this situation because that caused a pivot in our tourism thing to understand the impacts. When tourism stopped here, you would see wildlife. It was like it became the National Geographic Channel, and it was...I can't believe that.

00:33:51 That was one of the things, like, I didn't even...we say it, but you don't understand it until everything shuts down. The dolphin population, like, I don't think they just automatically started spawning, but it's like now they're coming to shore, you know, like, and that's probably where they were before all these boats were chasing them down freaking throwing snorkelers on their head. Anyway, so Kuleana with that, along with our whole state, and, like, this is a whole thing that's still happening, and it's, like, very political. There's all kind of this drama going on at the legislature. There's huge funding issues. Tourism is our number one economic driver in Hawaii, but Kuleana really recognized that...and I don't know if it's just good business or good PR—it's both, which is perfect—but they also have an impact, and they have the ability to contribute to this new field that's, like, in Hawaii. Coral restoration is very new.

00:34:47 You know, I know in Florida it's been going on for a while, but in Hawaii it's very new. We are probably the newest in the world I think, like, to kind of jump into it, so they really recognize that. And, again, they're just so perfectly located on the tip that where the south shore meets the west side we can cover so much area. And, yeah, so that was the other reason we chose it is they basically were like arms open and said, "Hey, we support you guys. We'll give you guys office space. We'll give you guys storage for your scuba tanks." They don't fund us

financially, but a storage locker and a boat slip is immensely impactful, like, I don't know if...like, I'll take that over the money any day, and that's allowed us to really have another advantage to, like, operate on West Oahu.

00:35:36 And, again, nobody is doing it. The government doesn't really come out here, and that's a part of the beauty that we're seeing. Again, it's like now UH, like, researchers, now they're coming to us and they're like, "Okay, you guys aren't as dumb as we thought, and you guys have boats, you guys have insurance." We have AAUS dive program. We did that now, right, like, now we're kind of speaking their language like, "Hey, we want to get some projects going on West Oahu, like, can we partner with you? What do the communities want, and how can we help?" That's all we wanted, right, like, that's all we really wanted, like, not come in and tell us what your research project is and you force it down our throat because that doesn't work in Hawaii.

00:36:18 I think we talked about briefly on our talk, Lexie, about the monk seal thing? Did I bring that up? The monk seal thing is a perfect example of that, and, again, how Kuleana operates, so it's like the failure of the federal government to recognize those community kind of, like, issues, right? Anyway, that's getting a tangent off of your question, but, yeah, so West Oahu is just, like, it just made sense for so many reasons.

00:36:45 ZACK MASON: Awesome. And then maybe we can go back to Kuleana and exactly what you all do. I was looking through your website, and it mentioned, well, a bunch of things I'd love to talk to you about, but first is mapping. So can you tell me a little bit about how and why you map corals?

00:37:10 ALIKA GARCIA: Yeah. So, where do I start? It's a lot. We can start with climate change stuff. I mean, so we're doing a lot of, like...the basis of our monitoring program is photogrammetry, right, so structure for motion, orthomosaics, so two dimensional and both three dimensional photogrammetry, and the climate change kind of part of it is, like, we really want to get as many as we can just so if we have bleaching events, disease, invasive species we have a baseline. Because, again, that's what we were hearing from a lot of communities is like, "Oh, yeah, we're doing this watershed work, blah, blah, blah." You know, all this, like, really good stuff, like, to protect the reefs like, "Oh, what's happening with the reef?"

00:38:00

So we needed a way to capture that, and SfM, structure for motion, just, like, was the perfect tool to do it because you could...it didn't cost a lot of money to get started. We had really amazing technical advisors from the Coral Restoration Foundation from Florida. I might have left that out on kind of the way we started, but when we started we had no idea. We started out doing invasive fish stuff, so

we don't do that now as far as, like, our work, but invasive fish monitoring and collection, like removal, was the first thing I started where it was like, okay, we're fishermen, like let's...what can we do to have a positive impact? Let's get rid of all these invasive fish. Kind of like the lionfish thing in Florida, but we have three species here, and what...they're all pretty bad, but one in particular is really bad.

00:38:49

Anyway, so we started with that, and then at the same time it was like, all right, what else can we do, like, nobody cares about invasive fish, but everyone is, like, cares about coral, and we care about coral for habitat production, so I love...I dive on the artificial reefs to collect food fish, like spear fish, so we have an artificial reef program here that died in, like, the '80s. Don't quote me on that, but, say, the '80s or '90s, but it was so...it was old style of thinking. It was just drop blocks, drop tires, drop anything you can. Sink boats. You know, find the airplane and drop it, and they're not...they're okay for a little while, but they're not living ecosystems, and that's one of the beautiful things I like about combining monitoring with, like, the fishermen knowledge.

00:39:33

It's like I can explain it, like, in ways that I think...at least the researchers that I work with don't understand, and they are showing me through the orthomosaics and photomosaics in the ways that I don't understand, and that's the beautiful middle ground that we need to find to solve our problems, right? It's like, drop the

ego, and, like, care. And that's like my partner in crime, he's not here today, Danny DeMartini. He's a PhD professor out of BYU. He's my fishing buddy, and it's just, like, crazy perfect that we had these conversations of, like, how can we do this? So we're already doing fish monitoring, and then he reached out to Coral Restoration Foundation in Florida, and they were just so...they sent us, like, a bunch of epoxy...a bunch of, like, just their whitepapers. They helped get him...I can't...I don't do photomosaics just so that's clear, like, I can barely turn my email on and check, you know, all of that stuff. But, yeah, anyway, so they got

that, and then we just kind of adapted it for Hawaiian, you know, style and Hawaiian reefs a little bit.

00:40:35 But, yeah, so the monitoring is really important for just baseline data collection, you know, obviously, and then it's really to gauge, did we make an impact after restoration interventions? So right now the monitoring is kind of two part. One is we mosaic as much stuff as we can around the state, so we're just getting ready to start ramping up on other islands, but really, like, also the second kind of part is, like, on our restoration side because there's no better way to really catch that. You know, is the coral growing? Is it even alive? Is it staying planted? All of that stuff.

00:41:08 ZACK MASON: Awesome. And then the other thing that I thought was super interesting was that it looks like you're conducting your own oral history interviews on your website. It said that you're interviewing, you know, elders and other fishers...

00:41:26 ALIKA GARCIA: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

00:41:27 ZACK MASON: ...to get that story. Are there any themes that are coming up, like, and what kind of picture are you getting, like, how were the reefs, you know, a long time ago?

00:41:38 ALIKA GARCIA: Yeah, there's a bunch of ways to go on that one. They're not formal interviews like this, right? In fact, they're way less formal, like, it's more like just run into them at the harbor and talk story for a little while, right? Like, that's...that's like, you know, like talk stories, like our...that's like the informal catchup, right, like...so it's not a formal, like, interview process because one, that doesn't work well in Hawaii, fishermen especially, and then also cultural people, like if you came and said, "We're from the federal government. Can we interview you," they'd be like, "Wow, who the hell are you?" Like, "No. You're the last guy I want to tell my secrets."

00:42:21 And I was that way too just so you know. I didn't know what NOAA was or what they did. I thought they were just the bad guy trying to make rules. Again, that

goes to the monk seal thing. I didn't trust them at all. I just viewed them as...and that's true to an extent, is people that had come from the mainland U.S. to tell us what to do. I think that's changing a lot, which is good, like, now it's, again, that collaboration is, like, more real than ever. Yeah. Sorry, I lost your question. I was going off again.

00:42:58 ZACK MASON: No, that's okay. I was just wondering if there were, like, any themes of, like, how things have changed over time.

00:43:04 ALIKA GARCIA: Got you. Yeah, so our restoration project that we briefly started, but we're waiting for permits forever...we're going to start up again, like, next...actually this month—we're doing it in a few weeks—is Pokai Bay in West Oahu. So it's adjacent...it's a marine protected area. It's adjacent to, I think, probably the most used boat harbor in the state. Not for commercial, but, like, for just, like, subsistence fishermen. A lot of history there, so we've been working with the communities there, again, doing watershed work and talking to their fishermen. And the cool thing we've been getting, like, the patterns...I mean, it's hard to say. We're so new, you know, like, I'm reluctant to say, you know, patterns after three years, even for our coral survival. Like, that's not enough.

00:43:53 But, I mean, just the stories we're hearing like Mo'olelo, Mo'olelo is like an historical account or story, right, like they can be both literal, kind of like legendary, but what they were were really good stories because Hawaiian was like an oral history, right? Like, we didn't have a written language until, like, the, I think, mid-to-early 1800s, but Mo'olelo was the way that it was done, and what we're getting from some of the community members, both fishermen, like collectors and stuff like that, is, yeah, it's kind of just like stitching it together, but I think we lost so much of it that it's hard to get a complete picture. But some of the patterns we're seeing are...the biggest ones statewide, and this is like every island, which is...it kind of shows you the power of that Ahupua'a system, right, the waterflow and the, you know, the reef-to-ridge whatever.

00:44:49 The commenting we're really getting is fresh water, and I didn't...I didn't dismiss it, but I didn't think it was important as it is for coral reef health because I've always been on the line of thinking that wherever the fresh water comes out, like,

the reef is dead, and it's like, yeah, that's because of the way that we manage our land now. Like, it used to be the opposite where the fresh water came out is where you had the most abundant fisheries and reefs, and the fishponds were located there. So that's the most common theme we're seeing is, like, restoration of, like, streamflow and, like, old water flow is of critical importance culturally, and, again, culturally, but you're talking ecologically, right?

00:45:31

Like it's...we're just hearing that from every single community that we go to, especially fishermen. They're like, "Oh, you know, the fresh water used to come up here," and you'd have, like, say, limu kala, right, a type of macroalgae, and then from there you would have these big herbivores that would, like, keep it in check. You know, it's like a system, and that's been the coolest thing about this project. You know, I talk about the mesh of science and government, and that's great, like, that needs to happen, but the beautiful stuff is with that historical account and Mo'olelo connecting to, like, actual, like, observations that we can collect through our photogrammetry or fish surveys. And it gives us a different approach. We get asked this all the time, and this is a part of it. So I know it's a crazy tangent, but it's a part of how we select our sites.

00:46:20

Everybody asks us, like, "Oh, how do you select your sites?" It's like, you know, "What database are you using, like a modeling system?" and it's like, "No, we go talk to the fishermen." You know, like we get these historical accounts, and it's, like, I learned this through this project that Waianae, the coast that we're on—the west coast—that "Wai" is water, and "anae" is a mullet. It's a type of fish. They called it that because it used to be rich in mullet. It's not anymore. Why, right? And that helps us zero in on where we're going to do restoration rather than looking at all these modeling. I look at that too, and that's another great area that I think...what's it called? The USGS and NOAA have really good partnerships. It's

like you look at their modeling data, but the way that sites have been selected traditionally, you know, like in the past, that's all they're looking at, and I feel like we have to go the other way around.

00:47:13

So that's what we're doing with that, like, what patterns are emerging in the communities, and then, like, they have to trust you enough to tell you. You know, this theme...you guys have heard this before. This theme is common around the world, right, and then work from there. You use the modeling to support that. So,

yeah, that's, again, big time jinx, but that's the biggest pattern we're seeing. If I had to say one thing it's restoration of the fresh water. Statewide. Every community you go to, statewide.

00:47:45 ZACK MASON: And then, Lexie, sorry. I'll pass it back over to you. Sorry. I've been asking a bunch of questions and not giving you any time.

00:47:52 LEXIE STURM: No, totally fine. This has been so interesting. Now, I hear you definitely on the restoration of fresh water. I mean, that's a huge problem that we have here in South Florida with all the water being rerouted where it naturally used to go through the Everglades, now rerouted, and that was an issue I used to work on in grad school was we had a reef where now water was coming from Lake Okeechobee, and it normally would go south through the Everglades and get filtered out, and now it was getting dumped right on a reef. Like, what do you do in that situation? So I hear you on that and fresh water and, like, kind of land-based sources are really, really important to coral reef health. So, I'm trying to see if I have more questions. We've kind of touched on a lot of things we wanted to talk about.

00:48:40 ALIKA GARCIA: It's all over the place.

00:48:44 LEXIE STURM: I guess I would say, what are some of the biggest...oh, that's my dog barking. What are some of the biggest environmental concerns that you think most Native Hawaiians have in general?

00:49:01 ALIKA GARCIA: I think the same, fresh water restoration. The environmental concern is, yeah...so for some historical context, pineapple, you know, everyone thinks pineapple is a Hawaiian food. It's not. You know, big agriculture here—pineapples, sugarcane. They had taken a lot of and diverted a lot of the water, so that's what a lot of communities are fighting right now and getting great success in the courts and stuff to get it from, you know, like, businesses—commercial groups—and making it more equitable. Yeah, so I think the biggest one is definitely water.

00:49:47 If you guys are familiar with the Red Hill situation going on right now, it's water. It's...it's...we're on an island, and that's something, you know, again...that's one of the unique ones is Red Hill because normally I like to say, like, everywhere but Rome is, like, falling apart, but that one is, like, special because it's right in the heart of Rome. It supplies Honolulu, it supplies the state capital, it supplies all these businesses in Waikiki. I think Waikiki gets from a few aquifers, but it's a huge impact. So, yeah, fresh water, that's the one. In addition to that, I think we're it's starting to happen—and this is well above my pay grade—is, you know, land being returned to indigenous people.

00:50:41 And it's another one of those things, right? It's like, oh, do we want to give up controls or whatever that means, right? It's like I think what we are seeing that we love is that more non-profits that are community based are getting some land back, and they're not turning it into a big development. They're...maybe they're doing some stuff on it to generate a little bit of revenue, but, like, they are basically restoring the land, and through that restoration you get better reefs, you know? But, yeah, just in a larger context with the Hawaiian people it's...I don't...you know, I don't want to speak for everybody. I can't, right? I'm Hawaiian, but I'm not...you know, I'm not particularly culturally involved. Like, I didn't grow up that way. I grew up, you know, again, with all the other races. I

grew up with everybody but Hawaiian, so I'm, like, through this project reconnecting with that which is freaking amazing.

00:51:36 But, yeah, that's the big one is water and land. I mean, but that's like a global thing, right? It's like, oh, why are there wars? Why is there famine? Water and land, same thing.

00:51:48 LEXIE STURM: No, but that's interesting that you touched on Red Hill because I just had an interview with another young woman who is at UH, and that was her number one as well. She was concerned about for herself too because, you know, she's in Honolulu, and she was, like, worried about her own drinking water being affected, and so, yeah, it's horrible. Really crazy stuff.

00:52:12 ALIKA GARCIA: Yeah.

00:52:14 LEXIE STURM: In terms of other questions, so what would you say that sets Hawaii's reefs apart from other reef locations in the world? What makes them special to you?

00:52:29 ALIKA GARCIA: You want special or challenging?

00:52:32 LEXIE STURM: Both.

00:52:33 ALIKA GARCIA: Special. You said special. I mean, I'm not good at remembering stats and stuff, but, you know, endemism is a big thing, right, like I can't ever remember. Like, some people can tell you. We can Google it though later, but, you know, like, Hawaii has this hierarchy of endemism, right? Again, like being a fisherman, and then now the aquarium thing allowed me to zero in because most fishermen, you know, they're collecting the bigger fish, right, the bigger species, and they're not...like, I didn't care about coral at all until I started this project. Again, I was a life-long fisherman, and that's the disconnect that I want to fix, right? It's like fishermen, we need more education to see why it's so important.

00:53:13 But, yeah, back to your question why is it special, endemism. It's like, getting to do the aquarium fishery, you know, like, we're collecting the small stuff and, like, it's really cool to learn about that, right? It's like, rather than just take a class and you learn, but, like, you dive with them several times a week, you know? Like, I think we should do six tanks a day, two or three times a week, so, I mean, we're really interacting with these ecosystems and just how unique they are, right? Like, why, you know, has this fish evolved that way, and nowhere else in the world has it evolved this way? That's another part that I'm really excited about is, like, in addition to the connection of, like, the mauka to makai, but the connection of all these endemic species is, like, teaching us a lot just about the connection. You know, like, everybody's little niche, right?

00:54:07 The biodiversity is, like, another big buzzword here nowadays, but it's like...I don't know. Again, like, I'm not a conservation guy, so it sounds like I don't believe in that stuff, but I do, and I'm seeing it more and more now, like, through that, like, how special are the resources. Like, they're so unique, I think,

compared to the rest of the world, like, we don't have a lot of branching species. We have very few branching species. They're mostly like hard, encrusting, you know, or bouldering species just because our water here is way rougher. So I think I was kind of getting on that, that, like, the challenges, right? It's like, our reefs here, it's thousands of miles of ocean, and then reef. Like, there's no continental shelf to slow that energy down. You know, there's a few, but there's not a lot of, like, bigger barrier reefs outside.

00:54:58

Yeah, so I think that makes us really unique with the challenges, right? Slow growth rates. We have colder water than most places. Hopefully it stays that way. Yeah, so slow growth rates and high wave energy, I think it just creates a different...something different that the world doesn't have, you know? And the

other part that it has is I think just the cultural aspect. I don't know a lot about other cultures and their relationship with coral, but, like, for Hawaiians, like, we...you know, that's in our creation chant, the Kumulipo, right? That was the first thing, so that creation chant is not just a story of all these animals that came out and this and that. It's a genealogy of the Hawaiian people, and their very first thing, our oldest ancestor, is a coral polyp.

00:55:48

So I think that, if you talk about what's unique...I mean, again, I don't know any other cultures. I'm not a scholar or anything or well traveled, but I think that's really what makes Hawaiian reefs special. That's something that I never thought...I don't like teaching per se or talking to kids. I have a kid now, so he's okay, but just telling people that and, like, in a genuine way this is our oldest ancestor, that's a part of our responsibility to take care. They take care of us by providing all these things just like our grandparents did and our parents did. They give us food, clothing, and shelter. The coral reef does the same thing, and that's a cultural thing that I think makes our reefs very special and unique, yeah.

00:56:36

LEXIE STURM: Thank you. I could...I'm sure we could all talk about this forever, but I want to be respectful of your time because I know you have to go soon, but one more question since you talked about your kid and kind of the past to now. Are you hopeful for the future of coral reefs? Loaded question, I know.

00:57:00 ALIKA GARCIA: Well, whenever the permitting and the stress of this project...it's grown way faster than I can handle. We did not intend for our organization to grow this fast or be this big. We're just fishermen that wanted to just do something in our neighborhood. It's growing, and I like it, but every time I think about quitting it's hard. It's a lot of work, and I have a full-time job too and my new son as you alluded to. I just had him. He's only 10 months old. But every time I think about quitting, I mean, I think about him of course, you know, and it's like...I named him Reef too. His first name is Reef, so I'm, like, now I can't quit, like, no. Now I'm committed, like, I got to do it. Like, I put myself in a corner, right, like, you know, like *The Art of War*, like Sun Tzu. I'm on, like, you know, that ground where you can only go forward and not backward.

00:57:54 But, I mean, maybe I'm a pessimist, but I don't have a whole lot of hope that humanity is going to get their act together, and that's why this project...again, this project is, like, where I'm so invested in just personally, emotionally. Globally, I have no...I don't know. People are crazy. The world is crazy. But we hear that other...what is it, like, quote, right, "Think globally, act locally." I believe in that completely, and sometimes when, you know, I feel powerless of all that BS going on in the world, it's, like, fix what's in front of you, right? Like, fix what you can, and hopefully other people will. I don't know if that answers the question.

00:58:46 LEXIE STURM: No, it definitely does, and you're doing more than your part, so I think definitely we can think about that.

00:58:52 ALIKA GARCIA: And then, I guess back to the concept of Kuleana, right, is, like, some of my mentors through this project, again, it's been beautiful. I've got to connect more with people that I've known for years, but I didn't know in this context, like, of conservation and culture, so some mentors kind of, like, ask about Kuleana. And taking that name, by the way, is, like, a serious thing, like, so we've been called out on that by others, and, like, once they got to know us they're like, "Oh, yeah, you guys are legit." But they're so used to people taking these Hawaiian words and concepts that are so loaded, right? I mean, they're huge. It's a burden to bear. People are abusing it all the time, just taking names, but, anyway, so that's like one of the nicest things I've heard is, like, people tell us like, "Oh, you know what? Yeah, you guys live up to your namesake." It's like, you know, it hits right here.

00:59:42

But back to your question, Kuleana, one of my mentors just kind of told me this concept, and I think Native Americans have a similar one. It's like that seventh generation thing, right, where we have that responsibility of Kuleana to seven generations behind us, our ancestors, that laid the foundation for what we have, so we honor them in the work that we do. We learn from them through the local

level, through stories, values, right, and then we have seven generations we're thinking about ahead. Again, I'm a bit of a pessimist. I mean, I've been in the fire department for 15 years, and the most busy...nah, maybe not the most, but we're right next to it. We're a really busy metropolitan area, and you just see what humanity does to each other. It's disgusting, so I'm jaded. I'll tell you that right off the bat, so I bring that into conservation.

01:00:35

It's like, I'm totally jaded, like, to see what people do to each other and we do to the planet, right? It's heartbreaking sometimes. But, yeah, I mean, I think about that and those seven generations, and now that I have a son it's like, you know, we got to do it. You know, we got to do it. And then the middle one that a lot of people miss is, like, with that seven generations back and forward is the now, right? It's, like, what we do now, and that's, again, think global and act local. That's what Kuleana is doing here. It's like we're...we keep that stuff in mind, but, like, it has to be followed through with action, and, again, that's where a lot of my frustration comes from sometimes with policymakers and, you know red tape stuff.

01:01:17

It's like, it's better...and I said this at the NOAA thing. I don't know if they got a good...I don't know if it was welcome or not, but, like, I said this about the

government at this government meeting, right? It was like, oh, man, wrong crowd, but they were cool about it. It's the analogy of the burning house, right, and, like, again, I bring the fire department stuff into this. We can analyze it all we want, right? We can have engineers, we can have chemists to talk about the way the fire behavior is going to be. We can have structural engineers to tell us about the building. By the time they're done with their report, that building is going to be ashes on the ground.

01:01:54 Sometimes what you need is people...you know, I say dumb people, like, sometimes firemen are dumb, but they're not. They're action takers. You know, it's like sometimes it's more important to make a wrong move than no move, and sometimes I see that in the policy. It's like, just stalemate, and that's, again, why I'm doing this. It's like I can't wait for them, you know? Like, but, yeah, it's like we can't wait because if we keep waiting the house is on fire. They might not be fully involved. Maybe with Florida reefs they are, but with us it's like it's getting close to ashy over there. But, you know, like, we still have hope, but we've got to do something now. Yeah, that's kind of our concept and my daily motivation. Yeah, not getting any sleep.

01:02:48 LEXIE STURM: Yeah, if the 10-month-old doesn't keep you up, worrying about...

01:02:52 ALIKA GARCIA: No he's...I'm so blessed. He sleeps all night. He doesn't cry. He's super happy. Everyone tells us not to have another one because we'll be...you know, we're going to get a nightmare child.

01:03:07 LEXIE STURM: Yeah, you think that if you have a second.

01:03:08 ALIKA GARCIA: My son is so easy. I mean, not that it stays that way and he's not a pain in my ass when he's a teenager or whatever, but as a baby, I don't know. If I knew I could have more and they're all going to be exactly like that, like, temperament, which I know isn't going to happen, I'd have, like, 10. Like, he's...yeah, I'm spoiled, and his mom, my fiancé, she works from home a lot, so she gets to take care of him on days, and she really lets me come to the office and, you know, pursue these Kuleana dreams that our team has faced. So I'm blessed with all of that.

01:03:45 LEXIE STURM: That's amazing. That's so good to hear. Well, Zack, do you have anything else to ask or add?

01:03:52 ZACK MASON: Oh, man, I could probably talk for another hour, but I think we kind of, like, came full circle there, you know, back to responsibility and, you

know, talking about the next generation and stuff, and I think that's probably a good place to end. But, yeah, congrats with the wonder kid. That's awesome. Yeah, I have an 18-month-old right now, and when he was 10 months there was quite a bit more screaming. Yeah.

01:04:26 ALIKA GARCIA: What did you say? Eighteen months?

01:04:28 ZACK MASON: Yeah. Yeah, just turned a year and a half, so, yeah, it's fun, but, yeah, it's tough, man. It's tough.

01:04:36 ALIKA GARCIA: It is. Yeah, it is even though he's easy. I mean, you know, I'm preaching to the choir then. It's like, even if they're the easiest it's still just the time commitment and, like...but it's been good for me, like, I stopped drinking as much as I used to drink. Like, you know, I don't go out much, but, like, I'll barbecue at home. Like, I don't know. I definitely meandered on the excess side a little more than I should, but he's...yeah. It's...you know, it's a change, and it's awesome.

01:05:05 ZACK MASON: Yeah.

01:05:07 ALIKA GARCIA: And it's like, again, like you said, we kind of came full circle, and we can close on this idea, but, yeah, it's really...he's really changed my conviction. I already had it, but, like, it's like another level now of what we're doing and why.

01:05:24 LEXIE STURM: That's awesome. Well, thank you so much for your time and everything. This has been great. And just next steps, we're going to download the transcript. I'll go through it, I'll clean it up, and I'll send it to you. Whenever you get a chance, if you can send the form, that would be great, and, yeah, we'll go from there.

01:05:44 ALIKA GARCIA: Alrighty.

01:05:46 ZACK MASON: Yeah, thank you so much for taking the time to meet with us. We really appreciate it, and really enjoyed meeting you and speaking with you, so...

01:05:52 ALIKA GARCIA: Oh, thank you guys for your time, and thank you guys for telling the story. I hope however you guys use it it really advocates for Hawaii and our, you know, our people here and our reefs. So thank you guys for what you do as well.

01:06:06 LEXIE STURM: Definitely. All right, have a great day.

01:06:07 ALIKA GARCIA: Okay. Good luck.

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