

For Immediate Release

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Mellon-Hawai‘i Doctoral and Postdoctoral Fellows announced
Program fosters development of Native Hawaiian intellectual leadership

KAMUELA, Hawai‘i—August 15, 2016—The Kohala Center has selected three Native Hawaiian scholars for the ninth cohort of its Mellon-Hawai‘i Doctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowship program. The fellows join 32 Native Hawaiian scholars who have pursued original research and advanced their academic careers through the program.

The Kohala Center, an independent, community-focused nonprofit organization based on Hawai‘i Island, launched the [Mellon-Hawai‘i Doctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowship Program](#) in 2008 with support from [The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation](#) and [Kamehameha Schools](#). The program recognizes and supports the work of Native Hawaiian academics early in their careers, and others who are committed to the advancement of knowledge about the Hawaiian natural and cultural environment, as well as Hawaiian history, politics, and society. Fellowships provide stipends and mentoring to enable doctoral fellows to complete their dissertations before accepting their first academic posts, and to afford postdoctoral fellows the opportunity to publish original research early in their academic careers. The 2016–2017 cohort is supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Kamehameha Schools, and the Deviants from the Norm Fund.

The research topics being pursued by this year’s fellows, while diverse, all focus on supporting the health and well-being of Hawai‘i’s modern-day communities by examining and harnessing ancestral knowledge and practices.

Kealoha Fox is pursuing a Ph.D. in clinical research at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UH Mānoa). Her dissertation investigates uplifting health in Native Hawaiian communities by reconnecting with the traditional Hawaiian health system and revitalizing ancestral assessment, diagnostic, and treatment practices. Her mentor is Dr. Kamana‘opono Crabbe, chief executive officer of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

Fox’s research is inspired in large part by her family and a genuine desire to contribute to positive health outcomes for Hawai‘i’s people. “When I look at my son, I am constantly reminded that the next generation of Native Hawaiians deserves improved health

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strategies that command positive systemic shifts and reinvest well-being back into our ‘ohana (families) and kaiāulu (communities),” she said. “By tracing our traditional practices of medicine and creating a comprehensive resource inventory, my research seeks to rebuild Hawaiian assessment and diagnostic processes that are largely absent from contemporary healthcare delivery.”

No‘eau Peralto is a Ph.D. candidate in the indigenous politics program in the department of political science at UH Mānoa. A resident of Pa‘auilo, Hāmākua, Hawai‘i Island, Peralto’s research focuses on the continuity and resurgence of Native Hawaiian ‘āina (land) restoration and stewardship practices in two ahupua‘a (ancestral land divisions) in Hawai‘i Island’s Hāmākua District. Through his research, Peralto seeks to contribute to deeper understandings of indigenous, place-based land tenure practices and governance structures as models of ea—community resurgence and independence. His mentor is Dr. Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, herself a Mellon-Hawai‘i doctoral fellow in 2010-2011 and associate professor of political science at UH Mānoa.

“My work is inspired by my kuleana (responsibilities) to my ‘ohana, my community, and my kulāiwi (homelands),” Peralto said. “One of those kuleana is the telling of our mo‘olelo (stories). Mo‘olelo give birth to our values, beliefs, and practices, so it is important that we tell our mo‘olelo of truth in ways that empower our people.” Peralto hopes to fill significant gaps in the historical records of Hāmākua and Hawai‘i by re-telling past and present mo‘olelo of those who mālama ‘āina (care for the land) and aloha ‘āina (love the land) in the region, and evaluating how these accounts and efforts contribute to the resurgence of place-based mālama ‘āina systems and the enactment of sustainable self-determination in Hawai‘i.

Dr. Kiana Frank received her Ph.D. in molecular cell biology from Harvard University in 2013. Her postdoctoral fellowship will enable her to focus on manuscripts exploring the intersection of ancestral and contemporary science by investigating the biogeochemical drivers of microbial processes in Windward O‘ahu’s He‘eia Fishpond and correlating them to the pond’s cultural history and management practices. Frank is being mentored by Dr. Davianna McGregor, professor of ethnic studies at UH Mānoa.

“I study microbes in our ‘āina—who they are, what they are doing, and their importance in traditional management—to enhance the productivity, sustainability, and resilience of Hawai‘i’s aquacultural and agricultural resources,” Frank said. “I believe that science is an important tool in our community, not only to drive data-based policy, but to advance our understanding of our place and how we fit into that place. It is important to recognize that science is not separate from our culture and our identity, but rather that science is a strength of our indigenous culture.” Frank hopes that her work will help inspire a shift in

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how science is perceived in both indigenous and scientific communities by demonstrating how place-based knowledge and traditional management practices can complement and enhance contemporary technology and scientific knowledge systems.

Since its inception, the Mellon-Hawai‘i Doctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowship Program has awarded \$1.48 million in fellowship support to 35 Native Hawaiian scholars. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which initially agreed to underwrite the program for three years, extended its support for two additional three-year periods. The 2016–2017 cohort represents the final year of The Foundation’s support.

“The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation’s investment in this fellowship program has had a profound impact not just on the lives of Native Hawaiian scholars, but on future generations of keiki (children) who will be inspired by these intellectual role models to pursue meaningful careers and strive for excellence—for Hawai‘i and the world,” said Robert Lindsey Jr., a member of The Kohala Center’s Board of Directors and chairman of the program’s selection committee. “We are deeply grateful for The Foundation’s support over the past nine years, and we are hopeful that new partners will join with Kamehameha Schools and the Deviants from the Norm Fund and enable us to continue to offer these fellowships to Hawai‘i’s emerging intellectual leaders.”

About The Kohala Center

Founded in the year 2000, The Kohala Center (kohalacenter.org) is an independent, community-based center for research, conservation, and education. We turn research and ancestral knowledge into action, so that communities in Hawai‘i and around the world can thrive—ecologically, economically, culturally, and socially.

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