

Growing Up: Lahaina

As a child growing up in David Malo Circle, low income housing complex, I have witnessed many negative instances that weren't and shouldn't be a part of the West Maui community. I have known of children being raped, seen illegal drug distribution and watched gang violence take place in my struggling community. My family and me were living in David Malo Circle and yet we had no idea who David Malo was or why he was important to the history and culture of Lahaina. All the cultural experiences of Hawaii were being drowned out because of the negative ones that were being introduced. It is important to learn as much as one can about his or her environment's culture and past because it is what makes everyone an individual; to know where they came from. And over time this information becomes diluted and very blurry. So it is essential that as much people know about West Maui's past as possible so that the information can be regenerated for Lahaina's future successors.

One of my most lasting memories from fourth grade was when my mom, Sophie Mataafa, ran for Congress. She told me that she was running so that she could show our neighborhood more positive cultural experiences. She wanted to initialize community activities that would make not only my neighborhood but West Maui as a whole realize the urgency to learn about our history. I admire my mom for wanting change that would drastically change my neighbors view of Lahaina. And even though she had lost the election she still tries to make the Lahaina a more historic place by writing letters to the Lahaina News asking people to be a better citizen of Lahaina. My mom inspired me and over the next few years I took it into my own hands to learn about my historic Lahaina.

It started when I was curious about David Malo, in my seventh grade Hawaiian History class. I decided to do a project on David Malo himself, finally learning that he was an advocate

for education. What really surprised me about him was that he accomplished in converting some of the Hawaiian language into something foreigners could read. I shared some of the information with the neighborhood kids, who thought I was crazy at the time, but at least they heard the information I passed on to them.

Even though I don't live at David Malo Circle anymore, I still respect, teach and learn as much as possible about Lahaina. Sometimes even reciting some of the information to random tourists on Front Street. I consider it quite an honor to be able to play the role of David Malo at Lahainaluna High School's Annual David Malo Day play. Teaching everyone attending about my Lahaina.