

'Ohana
by Rex Vlcek

The HURT 100 is in the books for 2019. I was once again given the privilege of making the special awards for the top 3 men and women finishers. Given the sacred, familial connection Hawaiians have to the universe, to nature, and to the land that I referenced in these awards, PJ asked me to write a more comprehensive explanation of their significance.



Just a few steps from the bridge on the East side of the Nature Center are the rock walls, banks of earth, and still waters of a restored Hawaiian wetland taro pond- *lo'i kalo* in Hawaiian. More are being restored and are quietly carrying on the purpose they have served for countless centuries. *Lo'i kalo* once dominated the valleys along the HURT trails. These peaceful, unassuming living monuments to the 'ainas Hawaiian roots bless the departure and welcome the completion of each 20-mile HURT loop. Completing the HURT 100 means that you would have passed these tranquil oases ten times. You had the opportunity to experience their sights and sounds just as the original Hawaiian cultivators did. It is likely that you noticed the far-reaching, lush green texture of heart-shaped leaves over a pond of dark water. You may have heard the natural musicality of the Makiki Stream gently irrigating that pond from above then weeping through small openings in the banks of earth back into the

stream below. **Kalo** is the Hawaiian name given to this revered cultivated plant, which is considered by some, to be the world's oldest cultivated crop.

The deep Hawaiian aloha for Kalo is reflected in a tale from the Hawaiian creation Mo'olelo (story.)

“Wakea (Father Sky) and Papa (Mother Earth) had a beautiful daughter named Ho'ohokulani. Ho'ohokulani means “the making of the stars and the heavens.” Wakea and Ho'ohokulani conceived a son named Haloa (Eternal Breath.) Haloa was stillborn and Ho'ohokulani, wailing and chanting, buried him in the ground on the East side of their hale where the morning sun rises. Grieving the loss of her son, she wept daily over his grave and from her tears a plant grew. The stems were slender and long and when the wind blew they swayed and bent, as though paying homage, with their heart shaped leaves shivering gracefully as in Hula.”

The center of each leaf gathers water like a mother's teardrop. When the mother plant matures, it produces a corm, a swollen root, called an 'oha. This 'oha, when removed from the mother plant starts its own life cycle. The word 'ohana, family, comes from the word 'oha to describe human families as kalo plants and their offspring.

“When Ho'ohokulani conceived again, she gave birth to another son also named Haloa. Haloa Naka, the first son and the first **kalo**, became the respected sibling and elder brother of the second Haloa, the first Hawaiian.”

I love this Mo'olelo! I have to tell you, I've been on this Island for 30 years and have never heard this story until this past summer while working with a group of cultural practitioners for a [Board & Stone Series](#) at the Community Learning Center in Mā'ili on the west side of Oahu. We worked the restored lo'i kalo terraces up the mountain at Ka'ala. Using rudimentary tools we made a Pohaku Ku'i ai, a stone shaped to fit the hand to use as a tool for pounding, and a Papa Ku'i ai, a wooden board dug out with a [ko'i](#), to use as the ground for pounding the corm into [Paiai](#).

I drew upon the experience with my Mā'ili 'ohana this past summer, my training and running experiences with my HURT 'ohana, and the Mo'olelo of the Haloa brothers as an inspiration for conceptualizing the objects to be made for the awards.

We commissioned local artist [Jonathon Swanz](#) who, through manipulating molten glass, like lava, made solid glass forms to resemble the Pohaku

Ku'i ai shape I created from stone. The dark, deep-red wood I used to shape the ground came from local miller and conservationist Bart Potter of C. Barton Potter Co. He had some Eucalyptus Robusta from the Nuuanu area lying around that he thought would suit the purpose. You can find it plentifully around the Judd Trail on the way to Jackass Ginger aid station. The lighter, chestnut colored, cedar wood came from a log gifted by a native tribe from Vancouver to the Polynesian Voyaging Society to be used for a traditional voyaging canoe. Bart gave me a small piece some years ago to be used to make an Ukulele- *pronounced "oo-koo-ley-ley."* I didn't realize what kind of wood it was until I started cutting it up and recognized the distinct smell. Three of you scored!

I shaped the wood, carved the center to reference Kilauea's eruption this past year and then burned it to represent renewal/rebirth. I filled the [maar](#) with a layer of clear epoxy to create the depth of the heavens and the earth, then placed the Super Blood Wolf Moon total lunar eclipse, that occurred the evening after the end of the race January 20th, in the center. I then added another layer of epoxy and went over to Paradise Park to play pirate through the night. Once that layer hardened, I carved some stars and a Hawaiian runner petroglyph over the moon and filled them with colored gold, silver and bronze respectively to correspond with the runners finishing order. I added one more layer of epoxy to cover everything and create more depth similar to a dark pond or outer space. I then burnt the HURT 100, 2019 on one side and the runners name and finishing time on the other.

Working with my hands is one way of expressing my love and appreciation for our HURT 'ohana. Maintaining the connections that we make as runners, pacers, organizers and volunteers is another. We are like the 'oha, the offshoots of the corm that make up our HURT family, 'ohana, renewing and recycling life each and every year.

Aloha

