

PUBLIC PRESENTATION

EMMA NAKUINA, HĀNAU MA KA LOLO: FOR THE BENEFIT OF HER RACE



by
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12:30 – 2:00 p.m.
KAMA 201

Emma Nakuina (1847-1929) was an extraordinary woman who lived through six monarchs and five governments. She was not a queen, but not a commoner either. She was caught somewhere in the middle: a *kaukau aliʻi*. As the first child of a high-born Hawaiian chiefess and an American Sugar Planter, Emma lived in close proximity to both the Hawaiian monarchy and to those who would later overthrow it. Like her rank, the era she lived in was also caught somewhere in the middle, between Hawaiian tradition and Western modernization. It was a time when all Hawaiians were struggling to live pono in a environment full of unfamiliar influences and importations.

Throughout her life, Nakuina chose to serve out her chiefly duties by being a teacher, historian, museum curator, water commissioner, and judge, and she did so in an era when women were discouraged from holding positions of authority. She was caught in a tumultuous world of underhanded politics, shifting governments, and the reluctant need to transition from a “Hawaiian” way of life to that of the “civilized world.” It is at the apex of this chaotic era in Hawaiian history that her story will be centered, for it is the most difficult times in life when people show their true worth.