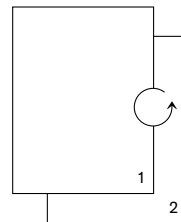


Shifting Landscapes Film Series

Engagement Guide

INTRODUCTION

This *Engagement Guide* is a companion to our four-part Shifting Landscapes documentary film series, which explores the power of art and story to orient us amid the darkness of our time. Following a musician, a poet, a writer, and a filmmaker who are each embracing the alchemical power of story to connect and transform us, this series opens ways of being that hold both catastrophe and love as our landscapes change and disappear. Responding to great changes within their landscapes—the vanishing song of the nightingale in southern England, the desecration of a sacred mountain in Hawai'i, a melting glacier in Iceland, and a traditional way of life threatened by development in Cambodia—they create art that can help us understand the changes beginning to affect the places we call home; and offer stories that open us to our connection with the Earth. In four corresponding guides, we invite you to explore the pathways illuminated by these storytellers and a depth of relationship with your own shifting landscape. Through spaces of reflection, discussion, and practice, each guide offers ways to weave these stories with your own; to open a dialogue and share values within your community; and to cultivate a living connection with your landscape.



For hard copies, print the following two pages double-sided to save paper.

HOST A FILM SCREENING

Interested in hosting a screening of the film series?
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Shifting Landscapes

Film Series

Engagement Guide No. 2

REFLECTION

This section invites you to reflect on the themes explored in Aloha 'Āina. To engage with these prompts, you could write responses to them in a notebook, sit and contemplate them, or take them with you to a quiet outdoor space.

ALOHA 'ĀINA

(1)

In the film, Jamaica introduces us to *aloha 'āina*—a cultural principle and practice of love for and of the land that is central to Native Hawaiian cosmology. How does *aloha 'āina* resonate within the framework of your own worldview? In what ways do you feel love for your landscape? What has led you towards, and helped you nurture, that feeling? How does this concept help you understand the importance of having the spiritual relationship between people and landscape centered within culture?

(2)

Jamaica shares the belief that any place that has nurtured us is sacred, and *aloha 'āina* is the recognition that we should respect that and act accordingly. Consider the ways your landscape provides for your well-being. How does it care for you physically and feed you spiritually? What elements of this relationship feel sacred to you? Jamaica also says that “when we love the land and we are connected to the land, She teaches us how to love each other better.” How is your treatment of the land linked with how you treat people around you? Why do you think these are reflective of each other?

(3)

We learn in the film that visitors to Hawai'i often talk about feeling something special there. Jamaica says that this experience is actually *'āina* (land) still trying to speak to us, because the sacredness of this land has not been forgotten as it has in many places around the world. Think about a time when you felt a special feeling-quality within the land or sensed something sacred or transcendent in a place. How do you think the land might have been speaking with you in that moment? Did this experience change the way you saw the land? How did it shift the way you engaged with it?

(4)

Consider how Jamaica's poetry is a form of activism. What do you feel her poetry brought to the movement to protect Mauna Kea? What can poetry offer to people and land that other forms of traditional activism cannot? How did her ancestral relationship with the landscape allow her to realize that the inspiration for her poetry came not simply from within her, but from a deeper source and was a gift from the Mauna itself?

(5)

Jamaica speaks about the power of the imagination to transform dominant and destructive ideologies. When we dream, envision, and articulate a different way of being, we take the first steps toward making it real. She goes on to say that it's not well-worded arguments or data that change this imaginative space, it's the resonance created by the right poem or the right song. Reflect on a poem that you have heard or read that opened you to an imaginative space where you could contemplate and envision a way of being that is different to our current dominant beliefs and ways of being. What impact did this have on you? Did it help you see beyond ideologies that seem rigid or unwavering? What different way of being were you able to glimpse?

In this film, Native Hawaiian poet Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio invites us into the Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) concept and practice of *aloha 'āina*—a love for and of the land. The film traces the ways *aloha 'āina* flows through the themes, intention, and delivery of Jamaica's poetry, her work in defending and restoring the sovereignty of Kanaka Maoli, and her involvement in the movement to prevent a thirty-meter telescope from being constructed at the summit of Mauna Kea—the most sacred mountain in Hawai'i.

This film examines how the concept of *aloha* was appropriated, commodified, and severed from its essential understanding of people and land as part of the colonization of Hawai'i, and how people and land continue to suffer when Western ideas of progress are imposed upon Indigenous lifeways. The film looks at the intimacy between people and place that emerges when a love and gratitude for the land bridges together a culture's social, intellectual, and spiritual frameworks. Through poetry that helps both the speaker and listener understand the ways they are connected to each other, and to the land that sustains them both, Jamaica envisions and articulates a promise of guardianship for *any* land that has fed and held us.

Ahead of the discussion prompts below, feel free to share what within the film and/or Jamaica's work as a storyteller resonated with you most.

(1)

Jamaica says *aloha* has been transformed from an idea and practice that is rooted in the land and people's relationship with it to a word that has been oversimplified so that it can be marketed and sold. Discuss how the commodification of words like "aloha" or practices like hula by colonial societies impact the integrity of their purpose within Indigenous communities. How does the spirit of *aloha āina* help reawaken and reclaim Indigenous sovereignty, and challenge Western notions of property, ownership, and progress?

(2)

Unpacking the dominant narrative around Hawai'i's colonization, Jamaica warns against the danger of a single story of "history and progress, from savage to paradise tourist destination, with no gray area between that." Discuss the harm of this story. What has been omitted and erased? How does this story shape how we collectively see and engage with Hawai'i today? How has this story impacted not just the people of Hawai'i but also the *āina*?

(3)

In the film, Jamaica contemplates how she can tell stories today that create a cultural continuum for the future, and that also include the new and very different experiences of colonial occupation that younger Native Hawaiian generations are experiencing. Discuss what you think poetry opens within us that speaks across generations and experiences. What is the importance of poetry or stories that entwine the cultural experiences of generations past, present, and future, particularly when our physical landscapes are changing or threatened?

(4)

Jamaica shares that she has a *pilina* (an intimacy) with her history which shapes the way she experiences the present in Hawai'i. She says this connection comes with a responsibility to not lie idle when her home is depicted and imagined in an irreverent way. Discuss how a relationship—whether ancestral or new-found—with the history of a landscape influences a sense of responsibility for its present and its future. How is this idea an extension of *aloha āina*?

(5)

A revelation of the Mauna Kea movement, Jamaica says, was the understanding that the mountain was far more powerful than anything we could protect. Ultimately, the movement recognized that the mountain was the *apu* (the water basin) or container that brought together and held the community's *aloha* for the land and for each other. How is *aloha* a form of resistance against development and destruction of sacred lands? What is the importance of reawakening a love for the Earth at this time of ecological unraveling? When we recognize this love, how can we work with it and offer it back to the Earth?

In Aloha 'Āina, Jamaica says the work of her poems is to help the speaker and the listener understand their relationship to each other and their relationship to the place they stand in that very moment. This practice is designed to explore this idea. Make sure you have ample space and time to allow yourself to engage deeply with each prompt.

(1)

Equipped with a notebook, head outdoors to a place that holds personal significance for you. It could be a space that holds special memories for you, or a place where you feel in close connection with the land. Once you arrive, spend some time sitting or walking quietly through this place, letting your body and mind become fully present there by paying attention to the rhythm of your breath and orienting your senses to the sights, sounds, and smells around you.

(2)

After a while, begin to focus on how this place nourishes you. Consider what it offers you physically (e.g., do you eat produce from this place; does it provide you access to water, sunshine, or a place to exercise or relax?), emotionally (e.g., does this place inspire creativity, happiness, a sense of peace?), and spiritually (e.g., do you sense something sacred here; does this place bring you into relationship with something larger than yourself?). In your notebook, log as many of these gifts from the land that you can think of.

(3)

Opening to a new page in your notebook, start jotting down the words, phrases, and images that come to you as you become present in this place. If you feel stuck around language, what comes to mind when you think about the feeling-quality, smells, sights, and the past and possible future of this place? What feelings arise in you when you think again about what the land offers you? Using the language and images you have just evoked, take some time to write a poem. It can be long or short and can follow any structure that suits. It doesn't matter if you don't deem the poem to be "good," the purpose is simply to articulate a gratitude for, and connection with, the land.

(4)

Once done, share your poem with a friend who is familiar with the place you've written about. Prompt them to express how the poem connects them in new ways with both you and the place the poem is centered on. Share with each other what the poem affirms and alters about your perception of this place.

(5)

Jamaica also says in the film that "the composer, the artist, never owns their composition. The song or the poem or the chant belongs to that which it was composed *for*." One way to reciprocate the inspiration and nourishment that the land gave you in the writing of your poem is to offer the poem back to the land. You might do this by returning to the place and reciting it or offering it to the land in prayer.