



Sustainable Hawaii Youth Leadership Initiative's Youth Leadership Forum Opening Remarks by Kynan Kawai

Lately we've been hearing the word "sustainability". Many people talk about it, but my generation wants to really take action.

David Fuertes, my mentor from Ka Hana No' eau, Partners In Development with the Sustainable Hawaii Youth Leadership Initiative (SHYLI), are **helping us turn our ideas into action**. Thanks to David, I learned about sustainability in middle school. He opened my eyes to see the importance of sustainable agriculture for our community. I also discovered the benefits it represents as a business, for our whole state and country.

I'm also grateful to David for nominating me to serve as a Hawaiian delegate to the Stone Soup Leadership Institute's 8th Annual Youth Leadership Summit for Sustainable Development. It was held last June on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts for Island youth from across the country.

As I prepared for my presentation at the Summit, I discovered just how committed my community of North Kohala is to sustainable agriculture and sustainable business. The North Kohala Community Development Program (CDP) set a goal of producing at least 50% of the food we consume. Before the arrival of foreigners to North Kohala (and all the Hawaiian Islands), we were 100% sustainable! Our whole population was able to satisfy its needs with the resources on our Island. Today we import 85% of our food -- while 80% of the land in North Kohala is actually zoned for agriculture use.

At the Summit I joined the four other delegates from our island and made presentations on different aspects of sustainable initiatives on Hawaii: Sustainable Agriculture, Architecture, Culture, Environment and Education.

This opportunity was a true blessing! Traveling to Martha's Vineyard and sharing my findings with youth from Martha's Vineyard and Vieques, Puerto Rico motivated me to share what I learned to our community members and to involve them into our sustainability in action projects.

I know this is a big goal, but not an impossible one! This **Youth Leadership Forum** is the first step. This is our chance to present our beliefs and action steps towards creating a more sustainable Island. We hope to inspire many more Hawaiian youth to join with us as well as our leaders to support our Sustainability-In-Action Projects.

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I've taken this very seriously, because it's something really important for my future, your future, and our future. That's why I invited people like you to be here with us to join in this special occasion.

We are here to celebrate the lives of people like Guy Toyama who contributed so much to our Island. We are here to join forces to make Hawaii a more sustainable place and to guarantee this paradise to the ones after us.

The experience of creating this Youth Leadership Forum has changed my life. I have grown so much. For the last few months I've been learning how to develop public-private partnerships and invite people to sponsor us so we can realize this dream. I feel so great when I'm able to honor at Senator Inouye and meet people like Danny Akaka Jr., Mr. Barry Taniguichi, or Monty Richards.

I feel inspired to stay focused on our dream. I don't want to stop for even one minute. I'm convinced that initiatives like these need to be replicated, in our country and on the whole planet.

Thank you for coming to our Youth Leadership Forum. Thank you for supporting the youth of Hawaii. Thank you for making the effort to demonstrate that you care about your future, our future. If no one takes a step forward, there will be no tomorrow.

We are the beginning.

We are the change.

We are the future.

We are the hope of the humanity!

Thank you.