

## Picking Up the Key

Dear Editor,

I'd like to thank "Daz" Albert for writing several outstanding articles in his column "hoe wa'a". I appreciated reading every article up until his latest one in July 1-15 *HIJ* ("Throwing the Key Away" pp. 9). In this article Daz takes a stance against "Smart Growth." He throws smart growth away as a thinly veiled attempt by corporate developers to make money at the expense of the aina and our communities.

I agree that smart growth in the wrong hands could be misused as yet another "key" that opens the door for more exploitation. However, we shouldn't throw smart growth away because the alternative is stupid growth and we all know that drill.

So is smart growth the best way for us to proceed? It all depends on the amount of aloha involved. Fern White, a well known high school teacher here in North Kohala, said it best: "The question I'd like to ask new comers is, are they going to embrace the culture or erase the culture?"

In other words, are we going to honor the inherent value of a living and vibrant Polynesian island culture, or are we going to erase it with the exploitive mainland practices that many of us fled from? We need to be very aware of those exploitive practices and not use them. For example, no more gated subdivisions. At the same time there are many mainland practices that can benefit our communities, such as farming co-ops, cultural centers, and a myriayd of sustainable and smart growth development strategies.

The biggest obstacle we face now comes from our opinions and past experiences. Many developers aren't experienced in win-win development strategies and many locals no longer trust developers after generations of getting "burned". Part of the reason why developers fall back into parasitic relationships with us is because we enable them to do so. When a developer comes to town certain individuals often sway public opinion by lashing out, which compels the developer to make limited concessions or hire more lawyers and look for more loopholes.

There is another option and it involves exploring the many ways for everyone to make money as a by-product of supporting our culture and our environment. We haven't even scratched the surface yet. It requires that we get creative and start truly working together, and that takes a lot more courage, aloha and smarts than it does to be confrontational or dismissive.

Yes, I'm picking up the key!

– Anthony Colombo, *Hawi*