



Film Review

I am Kanaka

October 14, 2023

Genevieve, Hi!

Hawaii, a paradise island, one of the best known and one of the most visited in the world. A land which has major economic importance for the United States because one in eight tourists going to the United States visit it. However, by watching this documentary, I discovered the other reality of this place, the Kanaka people, the natives of the island who suffered segregation from the start of the colonial period.

After a reminder of the economic importance of Hawaii for the United States, accompanied by a dramatic but also relaxing musical theme, we quickly let ourselves be absorbed and seduced by the aerial shots which expose the sumptuous beauty of the island to us. It is then that we realize that behind this heavenly setting hides this other reality, the Kanaka. The drama of a formerly colonized people whose roots the invader deprived the island of its cultures, its customs and its ancestral beliefs in first for invaders geostrategic and then economic interests.

The stages of the dissolution of the Kanaka culture are explained chronologically. This allows us to understand how the Kanaka were methodically deprived of their ancestral customs such as the Hula dance in 1830, then of the language of their ancestors until only 5% remained who could speak it. To perpetuate a culture to future generations, each people must speak the language of their ancestors. Kaina Makua took charge of this sacred task and for several years have been trying to perpetuate the culture to new generations.

The theme addressed in this documentary is the sociological problem encountered on the island by new generations who do not know their culture enough. Problem linked to the colonization of the island which began in 1778. This problem described in the documentary makes us discover the situation of the natives of the island who are herded into ghettos. This unhappiness highlights an identity crisis present among natives because they are deprived of their cultures. It'll be interesting to treat more the problem other old people who suffered of this situation.

The identity crisis treated in this work is undeniable a contemporary problem present almost everywhere in the world. A theme that will remain relevant for centuries to come for the rest of the world, which makes the theme of the documentary quite universal.

The structure of the documentary is skillfully handled with a well-respected chronology. He first takes care to give us the importance of the Island both economically and geographically for the United States. Then gives us an historical reminder to understand how the natives were deprived of their culture. Then shows the damage this has brought to new generations by involving specialists giving historical facts, then explains how they tries to remedy this with new generations. For examples activities carried out within the framework of the association which aims to familiarize new generations with the history of the island and its ancestral customs.

Concerning the technical side, from the start, we are absorbed by the sumptuous aerial shots. A heavenly land, an introduction that makes you want to see what happens next. He will also return from time to time to these aerial shots to serve as a reminder of the beauty of island who makes it so important. He also uses different angles like medium shot during interviews, moving shots when presenting activities on the island or also aerial shots to present the beauty of the island. The shots are well processed and the fact of varying them gives dynamism and freshness to the frames. There is good image quality that has been calibrated and processed correctly. The visual

design and subtitles used to present the people interviewed work very well. However, during the transitions it would have been interesting to keep the same design or vary it depending on the theme. Concerning the sound, it is important to say that there is a fairly good mastery of sound recording. The sound is clean, there are no defects that disturb the ear, the voice-over blends very well with the main voices. We let ourselves be lulled by the narration. The relaxing musical themes go perfectly with the visual timeline.

This documentary is very well handled, it allowed me to discover the tragedy suffered by the Kanaka people, the natives of the island of Hawaii. It is certainly the most famous island in the world, even a TV series has inherited the name "Hawaii Five-O". As I said it'll be very interesting to expose the social side of the native people suffering in the ghettos of Hawaii.

Finally I can end my review by saying that this documentary can be summed up by the beautiful words of Kaina Makua: "Being able to think like one Kanaka and then speak like one Kanaka"

Congratulations, I watched several times your work and it was a great pleasure.

Review by Gazanfer BIRICIK,
Screenwriter, Producer and Director