

CLYDE MAURICE "KALANI" OHELO / 1950-2018

Activist led protests that presaged

By Gary T. Kubota
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Clyde Maurice "Kalani" Ohelo, who grew up in a public housing project in Palolo and became an early symbol of the Native Hawaiian political movement in the 1970s, died April 7 of diabetes-related illnesses at his home in Waimanalo. He was 67.

Ohelo was among 32 people arrested May 11, 1971, for protesting evictions in Kalama Valley — a bellwether of the Hawaiian Renaissance.

Former Hawaii Gov. John Waihee said Ohelo was an

articulate and effective speaker.

"He was up from the streets. He could describe what life was," Waihee said.

Lawrence Kamakawiwoole, a friend of Ohelo's who taught ethnic studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, said, "He overcame a lot health-wise, and people really listened to what he had to say."

Born blind, with club feet and a cleft palate, on July 8, 1950, his family said Ohelo's vision was restored at age 5 after his grandparents took him to a church service in Kalihi where ministers prayed for healing miracles.

In prior interviews, Ohelo recalled how he read the entire Encyclopedia Britannica while recovering at home from several corrective surgeries and undergoing physical therapy. He developed his verbal skills through speech therapy.

As a teenager living in low-income housing in Palolo, he was recruited by VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) to motivate high school dropouts to obtain a high school equivalency diploma, or GED. Ohelo was paid a stipend of \$80 a month to become a community organizer, which is how he came to meet

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other activists such as the late John Kelly of Save Our Surf, Randy Kalahiki of Key Canteen, and Kamakawiwoole, who was organizing Kokua Hawaii to fight the evictions in Kalama Valley.

Kamakawiwoole said he and Ohelo were frequently invited to speak to various groups, including prison inmates, about the Kalama Valley struggle.

"Kalani knew how to speak to those who lived on the edge of society. He was very bright intellectually," Kamakawiwoole said. "He came from that background."

Kokua Hawaii helped to

stop several evictions in minority communities, including Ota Camp in Waipahu and Waiahole-Waikane in Windward Oahu, and also led a sit-in to preserve ethnic studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa in 1972.

Ohelo is survived by his wife Radine Kawahine Kamakea-Ohelo; his children, Atta Ohelo, Kamaluonalani Williams, Sanoë Murry, Ryan Kamakea, Pamai Fita, Oheloula Hewett, Ahonui Ohelo, Ku'ike Kamakea-Ohelo and Kaleopa'a Kamakea-Ohelo; 15 grandchildren and a great-granddaughter.

Services are scheduled



COURTESY PHOTO

Clyde "Kalani" Ohelo:

"He was up from the streets. He could describe what life was," former Gov.

John Waihee said of the activist

for 10:30 a.m. April 28 at Windward Community College in Hale A'o.