

CULTURE

ADV 4/20/98

Hawaiians value green sea turtles

It is absolutely stunning in this age of awareness to read the remarks of two letter writers regarding the cultural taking of green sea turtles.

It appears both perceive modern Hawaiians as mindless, wanton killers hell-bent on slaughtering and causing the extinction of the honu. Nothing can be further from the truth. Most of us are responsible people who deeply cherish the natural resources left to us by our ancestors.

Our role as stewards of the land and sea is a deeply ingrained tenet of our culture. Please be assured we fully understand that the elimination of the honu from our waters is not in our best interest. So much so, that many of us have taken active roles and dedicated part of our lives to help facilitate the resurgence of sea turtles.

Make no mistake, the perpetuation of the species is of utmost importance to us Hawaiians. Thus, come the time when the population of turtles is judged

stable enough to tolerate a limited harvest, we ask simply to be allowed to resume our millennia-old relationship with this cultural entity.

If you think the uniqueness of our Hawaiian culture is of some value to the state, then you must be willing to allow it to occur. It is unprincipled to restrict Native Hawaiians to only Merrie Monarch festivals and Kamehameha Day parades because you've decreed these practices acceptable. It is not fair for you to pigeonhole us into a box for your convenience.

Just as Native Hawaiians over the centuries have accepted you and all your idiosyncrasies, so, too, we ask to be accepted — here in this, our very own home.

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