



# Local Geography: Essays on Multicultural Hawai'i

*Dennis Kawaharada*

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From a review of by Ragnar Carlson, Honolulu Weekly, Vol. 9, June 8-14, 2005: In this collection, Dennis Kawaharada, a noted chronicler of native Hawaiian literature, explores the historical and contemporary terrain of his beloved Hawai'i. From a memoir of boyhood days in Kane'ohe to a travelogue from a recent expedition to the Northwest Hawaiian Islands, each of these essays weaves Kawaharada's experience into something larger, creating a remarkable tapestry of cultural, personal and natural history. Kawaharada is a gifted essayist--in his hands, the book's title piece becomes in equal parts discussion of the Hawaiian calendar, historical biography of Hawaiian literary figures and exposition on "Moolelo o Pakaa a me Kuapakaa," a native Hawaiian chant in which the speaker circles O'ahu, naming each ahupua'a and each wind along the way. The opening essay, "Mango Trees on Kea'ahala Road," explores the alienation and confusion that result when one's identity is rooted in the soil of Kane'ohe but assaulted by a barrage of cultural and political messages from faraway lands. "I found my prime meridian ran not through Greenwich, God, America or the Bank of Hawai'i," Kawaharada writes, "but through the mango trees on Kea'ahala Road." "Personal reflections on home territory" posted on Amazon Book Reviews, January 20, 2014: I really enjoyed and appreciated this very personal account of growing up and seeking a deep understanding of the author's home - Hawaii. The author is of Japanese ancestry and describe what it was like through childhood, college and establishing adulthood on the island of Oahu-how the races related and how he grew to increasingly set roots in his home. The format consists of a series of essays which also include chapters about the voyaging canoe Hokule'a and visits to the tiny, distant NW Hawaiian islands. Some of the discussion of races in Hawaii is quite frank but refreshingly honest from the author's perspective. The book also serves as a guide to important literature on Hawaiian roots. Highly recommended. JW, email, Sept, 29, 2014: Thank you for your wonderful book! That small volume enlightened and educated me in a way that felt very satisfying. My family has lived on the islands since 1972 and I moved here in 2006 from California, (San Francisco born, third generation, UC Berkeley grad). You gave me a way to relate to the multicultural life here, that I couldn't find on my own. Feeling that I appreciated so much, culturally and historically, but didn't understand many aspects of life here, your words taught me, filled a void and gave me a needed friend-your voice and insight, enriched with your dedicated studies, humanitarian concerns and uninhibited expression. Once I complete reading the literature you cite, I know my feet will be planted more firmly on this island ground! DR, letter, April 9, 2005: I just finished reading your recent book, Local Geography. I don't think I'm the typical reader you had in mind while writing. I'm a haole girl from Seattle who's been in Hawaii for a little over two years. Immediately after arriving I noticed how little I knew about Hawaii and it's culture, so I began checking out books at the library to learn more about my new "home." I came across your book on my latest trip to the library. I've read many books about various aspects of Hawaii (history, culture, fiction, non-fiction), but none have made the culture here as real and dynamic as yours. I felt like I was able to look through your eyes and see Hawaii's culture from a Kama'aina's perspective from childhood into adulthood. Your stories that taught me some new things as well as verified some feelings I had but couldn't confirm.

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