

Governor David Y. Ige



On December 1, 2014
David Yukata Ige

engraved into history his *uchinanchu* heritage as the first governor of Okinawan ancestry in the United States of America. After taking the oath of office, he expressed with profound gratitude, "I stand here today in the shadow of my parents' and my grandparents' accomplishments because of their willingness to sacrifice and look to my future."

With courage, determination and hope for a better life, David's grandparents left Japan and Okinawa for Hawai'i. Life on the sugar plantations of Hawai'i was harsh, but the *uchinanchu* spirit prevailed. David's father, Tokio Ige, grew up in Ewa Plantation. His mother, Tsurue Miota, grew up in Kahuku Plantation. His grandparents and his parents endured the hardships for the future of their family.

In time, David's parents moved off the plantation and settled in Pearl City.

With five brothers in a modest three-bedroom house, David learned early on that life was not about him, but about the people around him. Family came first.

Family was about being together, sharing even when there was little to be shared, and looking out for each other.

David's parents always emphasized education as a key to a better life. They worked hard and sacrificed everything for educational opportunities.

David believed in their advice and attended the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, earning an electrical engineering degree and a master's degree in business administration.



Building his career in Hawai'i, David worked as an electrical engineer and was first called to serve in state government in 1985 with a seat in the House of Representatives. He was elected Governor after nearly thirty years in public service in the House and Senate.

Looking back, David remembers an unspoken lesson from his father. As a young boy, David enjoyed the Christmas parties and fun family events at Club 100, of which his father was a member. It wasn't

"All of us, no matter where we came from, walk today with one foot stepping out of the past and the other about to step into a future, a future of endless possibilities."

until he got older that he understood that Club 100 was a gathering place for veterans of the 100th Battalion 442nd Regiment. And it wasn't until after David's father passed away that he learned of his father's heroism. Among his father's belongings, the family found a tarnished Bronze Star medal hidden away in an old shoebox. For David, that was the ultimate lesson on true humility and service. In the same way that his father served our country, David continues public service with vision, heart and a servant-leader mindset. As head of state, he makes decisions while taking into consideration the good of the people and what's to come.



In October of 2015, as governor of the State of Hawai'i, David made a diplomatic visit to Okinawa in celebration of the 30th anniversary of sister-state relations between Hawai'i and Okinawa. For the grandson of migrants from the town of Nishihara, it was the first time he set foot in the land of his ancestors. In an official capacity, David sought to expand trade and tourism opportunities, renewable energy partnerships and international student exchange. On a personal level, his understanding of the power of the *uchinanchu* spirit deepened. Just like the aloha spirit, everything is connected and everything makes a difference - family, honor, kindness, perseverance and all that is good.



With a strong, unwavering sense of purpose, David leads by example. David's character is shaped by all the people who have touched his life. His actions and decisions are reflective of the core values ingrained through his upbringing. Treating others with respect, being accountable and striving for excellence are actions that

speak to his character. He upholds these values and works to continue the legacy of his parents and his Okinawan heritage.

Even today, David understands that sacrifices need to be made now for the sake of future generations. As a leader, he looks ahead when he's approving a budget or a bill, collaborating with lawmakers or seeking long and short-term solutions to problems. He wants government to be responsive to the citizens and responsible to the next generation. For this reason, David works to build a better, sustainable Hawai'i.

From his heart, to his parents, his wife, Dawn, and children, Lauren, Amy and Matthew and to his family and friends, and to the people of Hawai'i:

Okage Sama De—all that I am is because of you.

