



KĪPUKA

Home is worth fighting for.

DIRECTED BY **JIM TUTTLE**

2025 / UNITED STATES / ENGLISH / DOCUMENTARY SHORT
DIGITAL / 16X9 / 5.1, STEREO / 26 MIN

KIPUKAFILM.COM

PRESENTED BY



PRESS & BOOKINGS: films@findhelp.com or agordona@findhelp.com

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director of photography
ALEX LANCIAL
music
JOE FOURNIER
produced and edited by
JIM TUTTLE & ALEX LANCIAL

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associate producer
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featuring
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KIMBERLY JONES
RAINBOW ULI'I
RYLI KALAHIKI
DARLING KUKAHIKO
HUNTER T.
LILY B.
WAI H.
JOHN REPPUN
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KEY PROJECT
THE FAMILIES OF THE JULY 2023
HO'OPILINA YOUTH PROGRAM
PAPAHANA KUALOA
KĀKO'O 'ŌIWI
HUILUA FISHPOND
KO'OLAU MOUNTAINS WATERSHED
PARTNERSHIP

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special thanks
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MOKU O LO'E
KUA'ĀINA 'ULU 'AUAMO
KUALOA REGIONAL PARK
THE PEOPLE AND CITY OF
HONOLULU, HAWAI'I
THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY OF
KAHALU'U, HAWAI'I

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colorist
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"KU'U HOME 'O KAHALU'U"
Written by Jerry Santos
Performed by Jessica Goodhue-Souza
and Rainbow Uli'i
Courtesy of Jerry Santos
"HE MELE NO KAHALU'U"
Composed by Mailani Makainai
Performed by Rainbow Uli'i
Courtesy of The Mountain Apple Company
www.mountainapplecompany.com

findhelp finance support
CHAD DENTON
RYAN BROEKE

THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY OF
KANE'OHE, HAWAI'I
THE PEOPLE AND DISTRICT OF
KO'OLAUPOKO, O'AHU
STAFF AND EXECUTIVE BOARD OF
FINDHELP



The cost of living index for Hawai'i far exceeds any other state, according to the World Population Review. The index is almost 30% higher than the next highest cost of living states, Massachusetts and California.

ABOUT THE FILM

LOGLINE

Amid a changing Hawai'i, a community holds fast to land, culture, and belonging, creating a living sanctuary where the spirit of aloha endures.

SYNOPSIS

Amid a rapidly changing Hawai'i, where soaring costs and rapid development threaten to push local families from their ancestral lands, one community is standing firm. Kīpuka tells the story of KEY Project, a grassroots community center in Ko'olaupoko, O'ahu, that offers more than resources — it offers belonging. In a world that often sees Hawai'i only for its beaches and sunsets, this film reveals a deeper truth: The real beauty of Hawai'i lives in its people, their traditions, and their commitment to protecting what matters most.

Through the voices of youth, elders, and community leaders, Kīpuka shows how cultural education, environmental stewardship, and access to basic needs like food and shelter create a living sanctuary where the spirit of aloha endures. As Native Hawaiian families struggle to stay rooted in their homeland, KEY Project becomes a lifeline — offering not just support services, but a powerful sense of connection to place, history, and one another.

Kīpuka shows that true sustainability is not just about resources — it's about relationships, responsibility, and resilience. It is a call to look beyond the postcard image of Hawai'i and recognize the communities fighting every day to protect their land, their identity, and their future. In the shelter of one small but mighty community center, generations find strength, purpose, and the enduring power of home.

MEET THE CREW



JIM TUTTLE

DIRECTOR, PRODUCER, EDITOR

Jim Tuttle is an award-winning documentary filmmaker with Findhelp's storytelling initiative. Based in Austin, Texas, he has more than 10 years of journalism experience, having worked internationally for news outlets, for nonprofit organizations, and in higher education. His work has been published by The New York Times, The Player's Tribune, The Dallas Morning News, National PublicRadio, and Texas Public Radio, among others. He enjoys traveling, camping, and exploring roadside oddities.

ALEX LANCIAL

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY, PRODUCER, EDITOR

Alex Lancial is a production coordinator at Findhelp, leveraging 15 years of experience in visual storytelling across documentary filmmaking, marketing production, and narrative development. As a former Emmy-winning Video Producer at The Boston Globe, Alex also shared her expertise as a professor at Arizona State's Cronkite School. There, she mentored students whose projects garnered multiple national accolades, including Robert F. Kennedy, Edward R. Murrow, and Online News Association awards. Beyond her professional endeavors, she co-founded Huckleberry Studios with her husband Jim. Together, they specialize in creating distinctive, character-driven wedding films, celebrating the unique stories of wonderfully quirky couples.

JOE FOURNIER

MUSIC COMPOSER

Joe Fournier is an award-winning composer for film and media based in Los Angeles. Born and raised in New England, Joe grew up with a love for the distinct rural beauty of Maine. Inspired by Mainely Teeth and the unique sounds of the Pine Tree State, his score for Filling the Gaps blends cinematic score with folk instruments like the Banjo and Mandolin, found in both Acadian and Americana folk music.

FINDHELP FILMS

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Findhelp is leading the modernization of the social safety net, as part of that mission, the storytelling initiative fosters greater understanding and conversation about Americans' access to basic needs.. Findhelp Films are the flagship content of the initiative, with a goal to share inspiring documentaries about community leaders who are taking action and making change.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Kīpuka was created as part of Findhelp's storytelling initiative. At Findhelp, we believe that a strong safety net is built not just through technology, but through the everyday work of people and organizations faithfully serving their communities. KEY Project, a grassroots community center in Ko'olaupoko, O'ahu, embodies that spirit.

I was drawn to this story because KEY Project has stood at the heart of its community since 1968, offering more than essential services. It offers belonging, dignity, and connection. It's a safe place where people can find food assistance, youth programs, cultural education, and, perhaps most importantly, a sense of home.

Before making this film, I had visited Hawai'i as a tourist. Returning to work alongside this community was a profoundly eye-opening experience. Hawai'i's natural beauty is undeniable, but the deeper reality is often overlooked: many local families, especially Native Hawaiians, struggle against the pressures of an extremely high cost of living, housing scarcity, and cultural displacement. Tourism remains vital to the economy, but as several voices in the film, including Rainbow Uli'i, reminded us, visitors can and should give back, whether by volunteering at restoration sites or supporting local efforts to protect land and culture.

Kīpuka also carries a message that reaches beyond Hawai'i. As Joe Wat said during filming, the true measure of belonging is found in connecting with and serving the place you live. I hope viewers come away not only with a deeper understanding of Hawai'i, but also with an invitation to engage meaningfully with their own communities — wherever they call home.

I'm profoundly grateful to the staff of KEY Project, the youth participants, the families, and the kūpuna who shared their stories and welcomed us with open hearts. Their generosity showed us the true meaning of aloha. As Keilee, the Kūpuna Program Coordinator, put it best: "We're not in this for the money. We're here to help the people who we care about the most. This is the place that I grew up in. And there's nothing more that I would rather do than to serve my community."

Sincerely,

JIM TUTTLE

DIRECTOR, 'KĪPUKA'



Jim Tuttle and Alex Lancial, producers of the film, walk on the wall of an ancient fishpond while capturing Key Project's Ho'opilina Youth Program visit.



KEY Project was founded in 1968 in response to development that "muscled its way into communities" like Kahalu'u, said community elder John Reppun. "The doors kind of got blown off."

PRICED OUT OF PARADISE: THE STORY BEHIND ‘KĪPUKA’

To the rest of the world, Hawai‘i is paradise: a place of endless blue skies, lush mountains, and beaches that stretch forever. But beyond the postcard images, a different story is unfolding — one of families struggling to stay connected to land that grows more expensive, inaccessible, and fragile with each passing year.

The new documentary *Kīpuka*, directed by Jim Tuttle for Findhelp Films, turns its gaze away from the tourist’s experience and into the heart of a community fighting to hold on. Set in Ko‘olaupoko, O‘ahu, the film follows the work of KEY Project, a grassroots community center that provides not only essential services like food support and youth programming, but also something more intangible and vital: a sense of belonging.

“No matter where you come from,” says Kimberly Jones, the youth program coordinator featured in the film, “if you’re going to take up space within these islands, you need to honor the traditions that were here long before you were.”

For many local families, especially Native Hawaiians, the cost of living has become a major challenge. What was once a sustainable island economy now relies on imported goods, with nearly 90% of food shipped in from elsewhere, according to the University of Hawaii. As John Reppun, a community elder, notes in the film, “When Hawai‘i became a state in 1959, the doors kind of got blown off. A lot of development muscled its way into communities like ours.”

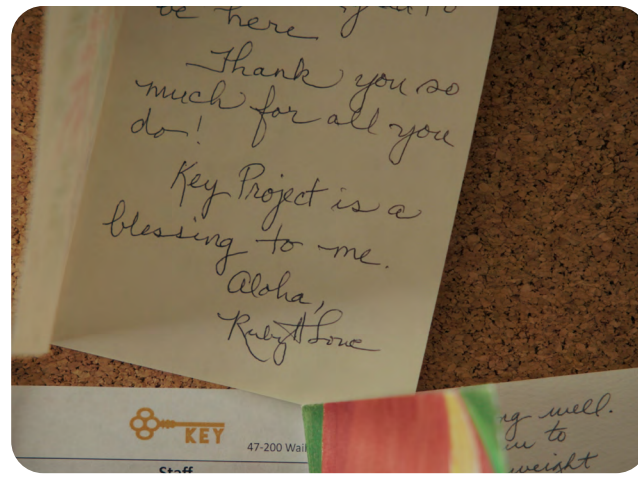
Today, the impact of that development is undeniable. Local grocery store prices rival those of Manhattan. Tourism continues to expand. Once-sustainable communities are reshaped into playgrounds for visitors, even as long-time residents are priced out of their own neighborhoods.

The cost of living index for Hawai‘i far exceeds any other state, according to the World Population Review. The index is almost 30% higher than that of Massachusetts and California, the second and third most expensive states to live in.

At the center of *Kīpuka* is KEY Project’s effort to resist that erasure — not through confrontation, but through restoration. Youth are taught to kilo (observe) the land, to clear invasive species, to rebuild ancient fishponds, and to see stewardship as a living practice. The work is tangible and hard, rooted in hope.

“Restoration is a big thing in Hawai‘i,” says Ryli Kalahiki, one of the youth program assistants. “We have to regain our culture, and we have to regain our ‘āina.”

Beyond the physical labor, the film highlights the emotional labor required to stay rooted in a place that sometimes feels like it’s slipping away. Wai’s mother shares the story of how her daughter, bored and disconnected, fell into dangerous habits. It was KEY Project’s programs, and their deep reconnection to the land, that brought her back. “Every day she came home and spoke about what they did,” her mother recalls. “The friends she made, the knowledge she had, the connection she felt.”



A card on a bulletin board from Ruby Lowe, a participant in KEY Project’s Kūpuna Program, reads: “Thank you so much for all you do! KEY Project is a blessing to me.”



‘Ōpio (youth) and Kūpuna (elders) work together to remove invasive species at a restoration area for the Ko‘olau Mountains Watershed Partnership.

For Rainbow Uli‘i, Executive Director of KEY Project, the mission goes beyond services. It’s about creating a “kīpuka” — a living sanctuary, just like the patches of untouched land that survive lava flows. “Kīpuka are protected spaces where native species thrive,” she explains in the film. “That’s how I imagine KEY Project: A place where people can be safe, feel protected, and thrive.”

In a time when “resilience” has become a buzzword, *Kīpuka* reminds viewers that real resilience is slow, patient, and deeply relational. It’s found in Auntie Kimberly teaching children to oli (chant) before entering sacred spaces. It’s found in Uncle Party Party (Joe Wat) explaining the importance of pulling invasive roots gently, not angrily. It’s found in Hunter, a 11-year-old participant in the youth program who concludes that after working the land, “video games just aren’t that interesting anymore.”

The film doesn’t ignore the gravity of the situation. Rising costs, land loss, and cultural displacement are not small obstacles. But *Kīpuka* offers a vision of hope rooted not in nostalgia, but in action: in teaching, in growing, in fighting quietly but fiercely for the right to call a place home.

As Kimberly tells the group of youth toward the end of the film, “You have power as the future generations on this land. There will be hurricanes. There will be developers. And you have the power to push back.”

In the shelter of one small but mighty community center, a future is being built — not one based on wealth or tourism, but on responsibility, connection, and aloha (love).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What inspired the making of the film?

Jim Tuttle, the film's director and leader of Findhelp's storytelling initiative, learned about KEY Project through their engagement and use of Findhelp, which they use to see aggregate search data of their community. After learning about the history behind KEY Project and their basic needs programming rooted in culture, he was hooked.

Where can I find resources related to the issues raised in the film?

We highly recommend reading the book '[Kuleana](#)' by Sara Kehaulani Goo. She tells the story of her effort to hold on to her family's ancestral lands in Maui. You can find more resources on the film's website at [kipukafilm.com](#).

Do you have any supplemental videos like trailers I can share?

The best way to share new trailers as they are released is to [subscribe](#) to our YouTube channel and [follow us](#) on LinkedIn and Instagram. We also created a short video about how KEY Project uses Findhelp to expand their impact in their community.

Where can I find more information about KEY Project?

KEY Project's mission is to nurture the well-being of people and 'āina by supporting, serving, and sustaining their community. For more information and to donate to the organization, please visit [KEYProject.org](#). If you are a person in need of resources, find KEY Project and other organizations like it on [Findhelp.org](#).

How long did the film take to make?

We started development for 'Kīpuka' in December 2022. Production consisted of a 4-week trip to O'ahu in July 2023. Post-production lasted nearly two years and ended in April 2025.

What is Findhelp Films?

[Findhelp](#) is leading the modernization of the social safety net, and we know our work would not be possible without dedicated people across the United States who are helping their neighbors every day. That's why we created Findhelp Films: to share inspiring documentaries about community leaders who are taking action and making change.

How can I watch the film?

You can watch the film on Findhelp's YouTube [channel](#) and learn more at [kipukafilm.com](#).

How can I host a screening event?

Please fill out a screening request form [here](#) or email films@findhelp.com to host a film screening event in your community.

FILM POSTER



SOCIAL MEDIA DOWNLOADS & GUIDELINES

Thank you for sharing the film on social media. If possible, we do prefer that you reshare from Findhelp’s accounts. You can see our [YouTube](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), and [TikTok](#) channels to find the links. If you do upload to your own channels natively, at minimum we require you to tag Findhelp. The featured organization will be invited to collaborate on all Instagram Reels.

Language

- Please pull any descriptive text from this document or posts we have made
- Please refer to the film as “a short documentary made by Findhelp” or “a short documentary from Findhelp Films” or “a documentary from Findhelp Films featuring [organization]”
- Never refer to the film as a promotion or advertisement for the featured organization

Landing Page

KipukaFilm.com

THEATRICAL TRAILER (2:44)

[Horizontal 3840x2160 \(No closed captioning\)](#)

[Vertical 1920x1080 \(Closed captioning\)](#)

[Thumbnail](#)

[Cover photo](#)

POSTER

[Print Resolution](#)

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