

July 21, 2021
Thomas Grande
Public Justice
Trial Lawyer of the Year
Kalima v State of Hawai'i

Aloha

Thank you very much. It is an honor to accept this award on behalf of our clients.

Congratulations to our fellow finalists. Their hard work, dedication and results in their cases make them equally well-deserving of this award.

Congratulations to the other nominees, as well the thousands of public interest attorneys at this gala and across the country who are guardians of and advocates for the public good.

We want to thank our class representatives and our trial witnesses. They have sustained us for the past twenty-two years.

As non-native speakers, we are careful in our use of the Hawaiian language. There are a number of Hawaiian words that we use as part of everyday speech, like Aloha.

And there are other words that we use more judiciously.

One of those is the word 'onipa'a.

'Onipa'a means steadfast, set, solid, immovable.

"Like the 'opihi on the rocks, she stays 'onipa'a when the large waves crash upon her."

[An 'opihi is like a small abalone that clings to the ocean-facing cliffs in the wash of the roughest waters.]

The word 'onipa'a was part of the motto of Queen Lili'u'okalani, who was steadfast during her imprisonment in Iolani Palace after the overthrow of the monarchy.

"E'onipa'a i ka 'imi na'auao." Be steadfast in the pursuit of knowledge.

AY – ONEE – PA -AH – EE – KA – EE – ME – NA -AH - WHOAU

'Onipa'a is what describes our clients as they are faced with repeated injustices.

'Onipa'a is a trait that public interest lawyers must have.

It is what distinguishes us from those who do injustice through intent, greed or neglect and those who seek to protect and defend the wrongdoers.

'Onipa'a is what gives us the reserve to keep fighting in the face of extreme obstacles, or every day challenges, such as those we faced in this case:

When your expert witness changes his opinion on direct examination.

'Onipa'a

When the judge rejects your primary theory of liability, but finds liability based in part on trial testimony you inadvertently elicited from a state official.

'Onipa'a

When the judge accepts a classwide measure of damages, but then requires plaintiffs to independently verify dates and data from 4,300 paper files.

'Onipa'a

In closing, when you are next facing a midnight filing and it's 11:50 pm;

or when your class representative tells you just before their deposition, it was their sister who actually purchased the product you are suing about;

or when the bad guys are just giving you a hard time and you are feeling down...

Think of 'onipa'a – the steadfastness of these clients in the face of this struggle.

Like the 'opihi on the rocks, stay 'onipa'a when the large waves crash upon you.

Be steadfast in your pursuit of justice.

Aloha.