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## Local News

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Posted on: Monday, August 7, 2006

### '06 'heroes of forgiveness' honored

By [Rod Ohira](#)  
Advertiser Staff Writer

In a different place and time, Les Iczkovitz, a Jew, and Husamuddin Akhras, a Palestinian, probably would not be friends or business associates, but enemies.

Iczkovitz owns Volcano Joe's Island Bistro. His father's family — parents, seven brothers, a sister and 19 nephews and nieces — were Holocaust victims. Iczkovitz met Akhras, now Volcano Joe's dairy-free and meatless chef, at a peace-promoting Muslim-Jewish discussion group, and they found a shared belief in forgiveness.

Both attended yesterday's standing-room-only Hawai'i International Forgiveness Day program at Central Union Church's Parish Hall on the 61st anniversary of the atomic bomb attack on Hiroshima. The Hiroshima attack preceded a second atomic bomb drop on Nagasaki by three days.

The Hawai'i Forgiveness Project presented The Makaha Sons, the late Honolulu police chief Michael Nakamura, Diann Boone, Masago and Tokiko Asai, and Malakai Maumalanga and Jane Tampon with awards as Hawai'i's 2006 "heroes of forgiveness."

Iczkovitz and Akhras believe the key to forgiveness lies in letting go of the past to live in the present.

Despite the horrors of the Holocaust, the late Hugo Iczkovitz taught his son not to blame all Germans.

"He transcended that (Holocaust) experience and believed that life is now," Les Iczkovitz said. "You can't hold on to the past and judge or identify people to a group, like saying 'all Palestinians are terrible.' It's about getting rid of pride, ego, the need to be right. To know about love and peace, you need to let go of the past."



On Hawai'i International Forgiveness Day, Lizbeth Grote performed to Iona Contemporary Dance Theatre's "Passage Into Tomorrow," which is about horrors of war juxtaposed by the impression of peace.

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Akhras believes many of the barriers to forgiveness lie within individual families and their respective cultures. "You have to look beyond the blood line," he said, "because every moment is an original moment."

Linda Friedman, a Jew from Long Island, N.Y., who knows both Iczkovitz and Akhras, said based on her upbringing, she would never have chosen a Palestinian for a friend.

"Getting rid of preconceived ideas I was brought up with has made my life so much bigger than before," said Friedman, a Kapi'olani Community College teacher and therapist at Unity Church's Healing Arts Center.

Roger Epstein of the Hawai'i Forgiveness Project added, "The real idea behind forgiveness is to accept what happened and don't hang on to the past in an emotional, physical, spiritual and mental way that holds you back. Forgiveness is the key to living life in the present moment."

Carol Nakamura, wife of the late Honolulu police chief who died in April, recalled yesterday how her family has been touched by news of the difference her husband's forgiveness has made in the life of Anthony Pearce II.

Pearce was the hit-and-run driver who hit Nakamura, who was in a motorized wheelchair, in September 2004 near the Town Center of Mililani. Nakamura suffered two broken legs in the accident and was unconscious when Pearce tried to visit him in the hospital to apologize, after turning himself in to police.

About a year after the accident, Carol Nakamura recalled Pearce and his father came up to her and introduced themselves. Pearce's father told her his son had turned his life around since the accident because of her husband's forgiveness. Her husband finally met Pearce and gave him a hug a short time before his death.

"It's wonderful to know that just from a small act, (Pearce) is going to become someone who can contribute," said Carol Nakamura, whose family worships at Leeward Grace Bible. "Now he's part of Mike's legacy. The disease never took away from who he was and until the very end, he was always thinking about someone else."

## **2006 HEROES OF FORGIVENESS**

- The Makaha Sons: Inspiration of Moon Kauakahi and brothers Jerome and John Koko toward the Conversion on Forgiveness for Youth project with the aloha-forgiveness message on the video from their 1996 Na Hoku Hanohano reunion with the late Israel Kamakawiwo'ole.
- Michael Nakamura: His forgiveness of Anthony Pearce II, the hit-and-run driver who injured him in 2004, turned a life around.
- Diann Boone: Her forgiveness of childhood abuses committed against her by a priest, whom she has never identified so as "not to hurt his good name with her parents."
- Masago and Tokiko Asai: Masago, 46, is an American citizen from Nagasaki whose mother, Tokiko, is suffering from cancer, the same disease that claimed the life of her father six years ago. Masago believes that "if each one of us knows how to purify our mind and soul no matter what happens in life, our world could be a better place." She adds Buddhists see it as compassion and Christians as forgiveness by love.
- Malakai Maumalanga and Jane Tampon: Once part of rival gangs in Kalihi, they are involved in human service work with Adult Friends for

Youth. Maumalanga works at Farrington High School, while Tampon is the coordinator of AFY's student transition program.

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