



Posted on: Sunday, May 29, 2005

ISLAND VOICES

'Talking story' to answer life's basic questions

By Roger Ames

Some 200 philosophers and scholars arrive in Honolulu this weekend from some 30 different countries to — as we say in Hawai'i — talk story.

Indeed, they will join a conversation that has been going on for most of the past century. What is education for? How did Iolani and Punahou "educate" Sun Yat-sen and inspire the Chinese revolution?

What is the difference between education in Hawai'i and indoctrination? Or colonization? Does religion have a role in education, or is it an obstacle to it? What does education have to do with social morality?

What is the role of the emotions in education: Do we have an "EQ" as well as an IQ? Can you have real democracy without education? What is education for the Daoist, the Tibetan, the Maori, the Confucian, the Japanese, the Hawaiian, the Buddhist, the Indian? What does education have to do with power and authority?

What does music have to do with Hawaiian identity? How has astronomy inspired the world's cultures? What is the role of creativity in education?

While there might be many contested conceptions of what the content of education should be, no one would challenge the premise that education — at least education as I conceive it — is a good thing for the future of our children, and that we should continue to invest heavily in it.

This year's conference is dedicated to the singular importance of educations — purposely plural — in the shaping of a pluralistic world in which all cultures must be welcomed to the table.

The 20th century was a holocaust in which tens of millions of people died on its battlefields. Unless this century is different, there will not be another one. The only way the human being will survive as a species is through a revolution in education that will usher in an age of relative peace and mutual accommodation.

Education is the point of departure for the cultivation and reform of human culture in all of its forms. Nearly all of the contemporary issues that people of good will must address ultimately return to education.

It is thereby the focus of this conference to continue the global conversation that enables us, with deliberation, to see where we are going with educations, and why we are going there.

What is the product? Social intelligence.

The East-West Philosophers' Conference series has a long and distinguished history. From its beginnings in the 1930s, it has done much to galvanize the multicultural self-understanding of the University of Hawai'i and its community, and was a primary reason for the choice of the University of Hawai'i as the physical site for the East-West Center.

Visionaries UH President Gregg Sinclair (of Sinclair Library), philosopher Charlie Moore (Moore Hall, the home of Asian studies), and Wing-tsit Chan (who introduced Chinese philosophy to America) sought to bring together some of the best minds from the world's diverse cultures to explore the pressing issues of the day — not the problems of the philosophers, but the problems of the community.

With a long-standing partnership between the University of Hawai'i and the East-West Center, and with the generous financial support of the local business community, the conference will include some 200 participants from more than 30 countries for an intensive two-week engagement.

It is because of the conviction that such an event should include the voices of our local community alongside scholars from around the world that the conference is open and free to the public, and does not require registration fees.

Roger Ames is director of the philosophers' conference and a professor of Chinese philosophy at the University of Hawai'i. He wrote this for

[Back](#)

© COPYRIGHT 2005 The Honolulu Advertiser, a division of [Gannett Co.](#) Inc.

All materials contained on this site are protected by United States copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, published or broadcast without the prior written permission of The Honolulu Advertiser. You may not alter or remove any trademark, copyright or other notice from copies of the content.