

# ABUNDANT LAND

SOIL, SEEDS &  
SOVEREIGNTY





# Synopsis

ABUNDANT LAND is a documentary about a Hawaiian community on Moloka'i opposing the biotech industry's use of the island to test genetically engineered seeds. Biotech corporations including Monsanto and Mycogen are depleting Moloka'i's topsoil and fresh water while contributing to dust storms that spread pesticides into the surrounding communities and ocean. ABUNDANT LAND also offers a historical look at the political underpinnings of chemical-intensive farming in Hawaii while portraying the rich legacy of traditional Hawaiian land management. The documentary follows a group of dedicated residents as they seek transparency about the testing being done on their island and use permaculture techniques to restore an integrated food system based on ancient Hawaiian farming practices.

[Click here to view the trailer](#)

## ESSENTIAL INFO

**RUN TIME** 60 mins

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## CONTACT

Director | Natasha Florentino

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# Characters



**Dr. Vandana Shiva**, author, environmental activist and food sovereignty advocate.

**Walter Ritte**, Native Hawaiian Rights Activist and Educator. Walter is well known throughout Hawaii as taking an active stance against the US military, overdevelopment and agro-chemical corporations operating in Hawaii. He is also a homesteader and manages a fishpond restoration project on Molokai.



**Malia Akutagawa**, Co-Founder of Sustainable Molokai, Assistant Professor of Law with both the University of Hawai'i' William S. Richardson School of Law and Hawai'i inuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge.



**Mercy Ritte**, Molokai Resident, mother of three and founder of Molokai Mom on a Mission (Molokai MOM). She began the organization to raise community awareness on the potentially harmful effects of the experimental GMO seeds grown on Molokai and the pesticide exposure.

**Geoff Lawton**, Permaculture consultant, designer, and teacher. Lawton's 'master plan' is to see aid projects being replicated as fast as possible to help ameliorate the growing food and water crisis.



**Dr. Hector Valenzuela**, Professor and Crop Specialist at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources. A supporter of organic and ecological-based farming systems, Dr. Valenzuela continues to raise questions about the safety and science of crop biotechnology.



# Director's Statement

I was born and raised in New York City. During my last year of film school, I visited a relative in Hawaii. When I arrived in Oahu, I was shocked by the overdevelopment of Honolulu and Waikiki. The commercial development I had seen in New York didn't prepare me for seeing high-rise towers and fast-food chains juxtaposed against majestic Hawaiian mountains. Something about Waikiki and downtown Honolulu clashed against the environment and culture. How had this development impacted the Native Hawaiian community? I was particularly interested in learning about Native Hawaiian culture: if it was still being practiced, how Honolulu used to be and how it became what I saw, and whether there were alternatives to better manage the island.

My research led me to the island of Molokai, nestled between Oahu and Maui. Of all the islands in Hawaii, Molokai has the highest percentage of Native Hawaiians. I also learned that Molokai's community has successfully maintained its culture for decades. I read that Molokai's residents had fought a huge development project that would have turned a large part of the island into an upscale exclusive resort for the wealthy. Having just finished co-directing a documentary about a controversial rezoning in Harlem, New York, I knew the real estate industry was a powerful force. That Molokai had stopped a multinational real estate corporation meant it had much to share about effective strategy.

As I reached out to non-profit organizations on the island and spoke to locals, I learned about the island's people, their history, and their deep love for the land. I was fascinated by the complexity of the traditional Hawaiian land management system called the Ahupua'a, and horrified with the history of colonialism that led to its demise. I learned about the environmental damage caused by the sugarcane and pineapple industries, alongside ranching, which have maintained a stronghold on Molokai's economy since the early 1900's.

After learning that agrochemical companies today grow genetically engineered seed crops on the island, I knew I had a story to tell.

Many people on Molokai opposed using their island as an open-air test field for genetically modified seeds. I wanted to capture the response of community members who were working so diligently to protect the island. In the process, I learned that locals worked with experts such as Geoff Lawton and Andrew Jones to remediate degraded land, using permaculture techniques. Permaculture is an agricultural design system that works with the natural ecosystem. I and others on Molokai were amazed to discover that these techniques were rooted in ancient Hawaiian land-management systems. I was also amazed to see and document Molokai residents taking an active role in the larger statewide movement to oppose GMOs, demand transparency from the agrochemical companies, and articulate alternatives to chemical-dependent farming.

The making of Abundant Land has been a transformational process for me as a director and as a person. The community members I followed taught me the importance of being connected to the earth, why challenging powerful business interests has to be a part of our collective strategy, and that building a strong community and protecting those resources we cannot replenish are critical objectives.

-Natasha Florentino

# THE CREW



## **Natasha Florentino, DIRECTOR & D.P.**

Natasha Florentino is a documentary filmmaker and video producer. In 2014 she was selected to participate in the POV Hackathon, as a director of photography, for the project, RETURN OF THE NATIVE, an immersive, interactive documentary for iPad about Native Hawaiian forests on the Island of Hawaii. In 2008 she co-directed and filmed REZONING HARLEM, a documentary about the opposition to the NYC rezoning of 125th street. Natasha's films strive to capture the strength and resiliency of communities who have come up against enormous odds. She is passionate about documenting the often-conflicting intersection between corporate interests and community needs.

## **Benjamin Moss, EDITOR**

Benjamin Moss is a media artist, editor, and educator. He has produced documentary films, promotional videos and educational videos for numerous educational and arts organizations. His traditional documentary work has been shown at the Mystic Independent Film Festival and the Ailey Citigroup Theater, among other venues. His experimental work has been exhibited at the Sebastopol Center for the Arts, Kala Art Institute, The Stony Brook School and the Berkeley Art Center.

## **Armen Zohrabian, PRODUCER & PHOTOGRAPHER**

Armen Zohrabian is an attorney, cinematographer, and photographer. He has photographed parts of Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Armenia, Georgia, California and Hawaii. He runs a recording studio in San Francisco and was the Executive Producer for turntablist DJ Quest's Questolous album.



## **Ina Adele Ray, Editor/Story Consultant**

Ina Adele Ray is a Vietnamese and American (Scotch-Irish origins), filmmaker. She has worked in film and video production in both the commercial and non-profit worlds as mainly an editor and producer for over 17 years. Her television editing work includes 30, 60, and 90-minute programs about China and Chinese culture for D3 Productions, Inc. that have aired on PBS and CCTV. She recently edited a series of curriculum videos for an ed program called Up to Code Academy, for Black and Latino kids 6-8th grade. Adele is in post-production on a short VR documentary she directed and produced called "The Red Room Project".

# Screenings

April 12, 2018 - Safe Agriculture and Safe Schools in Watsonville, CA.

April 20, 2018 - The International Resilience Film Festival, Nevada City, CA.

April 25, 2018 - Beyond Toxics hosts a screening at the Bijou Art Cinema in Eugene, OR.

May 29, 2018 - The Northwest Arctic Heritage Center in Kotzebue, Alaska will host a screening.

October 6, 2018 - The Eugene Environmental Film Festival

October 16, 2018 - Salt Spring Island Public Library, BC, Canada. - Hosted by Transition Salt Spring.

November 4, 2018 - The New Parkway Theater, Oakland - Indigenous Cultivation of Food & Resistance. Hosted by the Ecology Center, Berkeley.

November 8, 2018 - The Watsonville Film Festival's Healthy Community Film Series

May 26, 2017 - Food Cycles, Missoula, MT.

April 24, 2017 - Global Partners in Sustainability, Cross Cultural Center, UC Irvine, CA.

April 22, 2017 - Six Nations Seedkeepers Gathering, Ohsweken, ON.

April 21, 2017 - Hi-Desert Nature Museum, Yucca Valley, CA. Hosted by Transition Joshua Tree.

April 13, 2017 - The Unitarian Universalist Church, Kelseyville, CA. Hosted by Thrive Lake County.



# Screenings

Nov. 20th and 21st - Hawaii Premiere at the Palace Theater in Hilo, HI.

Nov. 2nd - The Student Environmental Resource Center & The Student Organic Garden Association 102 Wurster Hall, UC Berkeley Campus.

October 10th American Indian Movement West Film Festival, 2969 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA.

October 7th Building Resilient Communities Convergence, Hopland, CA.

October 4th San Francisco Permaculture Guild, SF. CA.

September 30th North West Permaculture Convergence, Vancouver, WA.

September 28th- The Sweet Onion Cinematheque, Walla Walla, WA.

# Press



Click below to read the full article written about the film and featured on the Permaculture News Site.



## ABUNDANT LAND: THE RICH LEGACY OF TRADITIONAL HAWAIIAN LAND MANAGEMENT

SEPTEMBER 7, 2017 BY [MELANIE GRAYSMITH](#) & FILED UNDER [GENERAL](#)



The fragile beauty of Molokai, Hawaii's "Friendly Isle," nestled between Oahu and Maui, belies an environmental stewardship its native Hawaiian residents have fought hard to preserve. More than a century of outsider development by sugar cane and pineapple industries, cattle ranchers, and agrochemical companies developing and expanding genetically engineered seed crops has caused ecological damage and contamination to the island.





CONNECT WITH US



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