

Prince Kūhiō



March 26th is the day Hawai‘i honors the birthday of Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana‘ole, Hawai‘i’s second delegate to the U.S. Congress. Born at Kōloa, Kaua‘i, in 1871, Kūhiō was the youngest of three sons born to high chief David Kahalepouli Pi‘ikoi, the grandson of Kaumuali‘i, the *ali‘i nui* who ceded the sovereignty of Kaua‘i without bloodshed to Kamehameha I in 1810, and Kinoiki Kekaulike, a descendant of Maui chiefs Kekaulike and Pi‘ilani. After the death of his parents, Kūhiō and his brothers were cared for by King Kalākaua, his cousin, and Queen Kapi‘olani, his aunt. He and his brothers were declared princes by a royal decree in 1884 and he was trained to take over the monarchy, but those plans ended with the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893.

In 1895, Kūhiō joined other Hawaiians in an unsuccessful attempt to restore the Queen back on the throne. He was arrested and charged with treason for his part in the counter-revolution and spent nearly a year in prison.

Educated at St. Albans (‘Iolani) and Punahou School, Kūhiō was an outstanding athlete. He attended college in San Mateo, California, and at the Royal Agricultural College in England. On his return to Hawai‘i from England, he was employed at the ministry of the interior and the customs service.

Kūhiō served as the second Territory of Hawai‘i delegate to Congress from 1903–1921. He helped organize the first Hawaiian Civic Club in 1917 to encourage civic efforts and education within the Hawaiian community and to preserve the Hawaiian culture. As an elected representative to Congress, he orchestrated and was successful in his efforts to have Congress pass the 1920 Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, which set aside approximately 200,000 acres of public lands for agricultural, pastoral, and residential homesteading by Native Hawaiians.

Kūhiō died in January 1922 at the age of 50 and was buried at Mauna‘ala, the Royal Mausoleum, in Nu‘uanu Valley on O‘ahu. In 1949, the legislature designated March 26 a territorial holiday. Today, festivals, parades, and special ceremonies still take place across the Islands in honor of Hawai‘i’s prince.