

## Island girl brings writers together for low-key retreat at Mokuleia - Hawaii News - Honolulu Star-Advertiser

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### Island girl brings writers together for low-key retreat at Mokuleia

By Mindy Pennybacker

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Although she lives and works in California, journalist and author Constance Hale is still a local girl, as anyone can see in her smile when she performs a welcoming hula for guests at her Mokuleia Writers Retreat.

Like all homesick expatriates, Hale, 57, is always seeking ways to come back and stay engaged with Hawaii. That's why she founded the bucolic, low-key retreat, which will have its third annual session May 3-9.

"I feel great empathy for writers in Hawaii because even in California it's sometimes hard to be far from New York, from what seems the center of things," she said in a phone call from her Oakland home. Her mission, she said, is to "bring editors, writers and publishers to Hawaii in a small, intimate setting where you get to interact with each other."

Participants stay in cabins by the beach at Camp Mokuleia, attending workshops and seminars led by faculty from Hawaii and the mainland.

Hawaii residents are also invited to attend afternoon sessions, and there are free public evenings of music by Kupaoa and readings by the retreat faculty and local writers on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 7-8 p.m.



COURTESY ANDRIA LO

**Kathryn  
Ma:**

*The award-winning  
novelist will share her  
knowledge with writers*

COURTESY BRUCE  
LOWELL BIGELOW

*Author Constance Hale  
and professor of  
Hawaiian language  
Puakea Nogelmeier  
spoke about Hawaiian  
culture at the Mokuleia  
Writers Retreat last  
year.*

This year's theme is the meaning of place. "How do you write about Hawaii, say, in a way that's true to the place but appeals to other audiences?" Hale said.

"The importance of geography in the way we write our fiction" will be explored in her workshop, said Kathryn Ma, award-winning novelist whose "The Year She Left Us" is out in paperback this month, in a phone call from her San Francisco home.

Her novel centers on an adopted Chinese girl who returns to her birth country. A lawyer who excelled at legal writing before she gave it up to write fiction, Ma, 58, said that at first "she had a big cold bucket of ice water poured on me. ... It turned out to be very, very hard."

Ma hopes that her students will "walk away from the week feeling they are reset for the work to come."

The Pennsylvania-born writer, who first visited the islands at the invitation of college classmates and has vacationed here with her family for years, said she sees her voice- and character-driven writing as "a kind of letter to the world that goes out."

Both Ma and Hale will also be speaking at the Hawai'i Book & Music Festival on Saturday.

Oahu as well as mainland residents can use a North Shore retreat, said Hale, who was born and raised in Waia-lua, where her family still lives. "I have a recurring dream where I'm a child in a small boat on the ocean and I'm looking back at the deep green Wai-anae Range at the end of the road in Moku-leia. It's an honor to be able to bring people to that place where the colors are so rich and you hear the waves, wind through ironwoods, rain on leaves."

"Mokuleia" literally means isle of abundance, Hale added. "It feeds your senses."

Writers who are hungry for replenishment, take heed.

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### **On the Net:**

» For more information, go to [campmokuleia.com/retreats/writers](http://campmokuleia.com/retreats/writers).

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