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Forgiveable

Forgiveness Day in Hawai'i a part of international effort

by *Patricia Chang* / 8-6-2008

"B4343."

To many it may only be a jumble of letters and numbers, but for Henri Landwirth, it was the only identity he had for the first five years of his life. Honored August 3 as one of the 2008 Hawai'i Forgiveness Heroes at the Sixth Annual Hawai'i International Forgiveness Day, Landwirth spent his childhood in five different concentration camps after the Nazis invaded his native Belgium when he was 13 years old.

Landwirth's experience is not one many people can relate to, but his ability to forgive those responsible for the years of suffering and cruelty he endured is a story that The Hawai'i Forgiveness Project, the organization behind this event, hopes others can learn from.

The Hawai'i Forgiveness Project was launched in 2002 in order to offer opportunities for conversations on forgiveness at all levels of the community and to teach the life skill of forgiveness using the example of the Worldwide Forgiveness Alliance. The international organization is working to establish a Forgiveness Day in every city in the world by the year 2025 and promotes the practice of forgiveness through education workshops and seminars.

In Honolulu, Forgiveness Day stresses aspects of traditional Hawaiian culture, such as the spirit of aloha and the practice of



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ho'oponono, to resolve conflicts, to make things right and to lead a fulfilling life of forgiveness.

Husband and wife duo Gerald Jampolsky and Diane Cirincione, co-founders of The Forgiveness Works Project, hosted this year's program at the East-West Center. Those who attended were able to share a spectrum of emotions in solidarity with those honored.

The story of Andrew Sato, 17, who died this year of leukemia, particularly resonated with the attendees. The 'Aiea High School graduate was abandoned in the park at age eight by his drug addicted mother. Before he passed, Sato met and forgave his birth mother for the pain and abandonment she had caused him. To accept the award on his behalf, his birth mother, foster mother and father and school counselor stepped on stage together to honor his memory. Children from Communities In Schools, an organization that practices and promotes Hawaiian cultural values, also made a presentation to honor Sato.

The story of Brooklyn-bred Brenda Adelman, also honored as a Forgiveness Hero, reflected this year's theme of "Forgiving the Unforgivable." Adelman's father shot and killed her mother, and shortly after married her mother's older sister. Angry at her father but afraid to lose him, Adelman lived in denial until she realized she needed to establish some healthy boundaries. She finally allowed herself to forgive her father for what he'd done but not allow him back in her life.

"Forgiveness isn't a one time thing, but a way of life," explained Jampolsky. "When we don't forgive, we hold on to anger. It separates us from God and each other. It behooves us." He describes how people should make forgiveness as important as breathing.

To find out more about the international Forgiveness Day, visit [\[hawaiiiforgivenessproject.org\]](http://hawaiiiforgivenessproject.org) and [\[forgivenessalliance.org\]](http://forgivenessalliance.org).