

ACLU Youth Award Ceremony
Clayton Fujie comments

On behalf of the Department of Education and Superintendent Patricia Hamamoto, I'd like to congratulate the students we are honoring today. We commend: Christen Brown of Kalani High School, Jana Pierce-van Loon of Baldwin High School and Samantha O'Hanlon of Punahou School for their ideals and perseverance in pursuing the rights of minorities and the oppressed, and establishing tolerance in their schools regarding black history, civil rights and gay rights.

May 17, 2004 marked the 50th Anniversary of the landmark Supreme Court decision, Brown vs. Board of Education, a decision that declared "education opportunity must be available to all..." "Separate but equal" was no longer acceptable because, in reality, educational opportunities were rarely equal under racial segregation and the practice was in violation of the Constitution's 14th Amendment, guarantee of equal protection under the law. Now, 50 years later, we can say that much progress has been made and we must continue to improve.

All of you have played a pivotal role in your schools to insure we do not forget this landmark decision and continually remind and educate our school communities to stand up and be counted in our quest to help the oppressed. It takes courage to stand up and get involved with values and ideals you believe in. you have all demonstrated this courage and commitment to get involved and make a difference for the youth of Hawaii.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Hawaii or ACLU recognizes efforts and contributions to civil liberties and the rights of students. To this end, you are all deserving to receive the ACLU awards today. The Department of Education will listen to your ideals and efforts to improve the personal dignity and individual rights of our students and staff.

I want to thank the ACLU for these awards to our students today, and, also for their watchdog approach to keep us on our toes and helping us sort through complicated civil liberty and legal entanglements. We may differ in opinions at times, however, we do want to improve and do what is right for all our students and staff.

Again, congratulations and thank you.

Clayton J. Fujie
Deputy Superintendent
Department of Education