

“Oceanian Perspectives on Human Dignity”

Human Dignity Initiative Conference

April 23–25, 2024

Brigham Young University–Hawaii, Lā‘ie, Hawaii

Participant Directory



Mena Antonio, Chief Executive / Kaiwhakahaere Mātua, Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand

Mena Antonio, the Chief Executive of Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand, is eager to share her Oceanian women's perspective on Human Dignity, a subject close to her heart. With over 25 years of experience, she has been instrumental in supporting capability building and governance frameworks in Samoa, Fiji, and Aotearoa New Zealand. Mena, who runs her own governance-focused consultancy business, has a deep personal connection to Oceania and its people, being a child of the Pacific Migration to NZ and a first-generation New Zealander. Her roots trace back to early missionary Catholics in Samoa and Tokelau. A trained lawyer with expertise in constitutional law, Mena is also a dedicated mother of two daughters, married to Richard, and emphasizes the significance of faith, family, and social justice in her life, along with her love for her two schnauzers.



Reverend James Shri Bhagwan, General Secretary, Pacific Conference of Churches, Fiji

Rev. James Shri Bhagwan, born and raised in Fiji, is a dedicated ordained minister of the Methodist Church. He is serving his second term as the General Secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches, where he leads the Oceania region's foremost ecumenical organization consisting of 35 member churches and 11 national councils of churches spanning 20 Pacific Island countries and territories, including Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, and Hawai'i. Rev. James holds a Bachelor of Divinity in Ecumenical Studies (with honors) and a Master of Theology in Christian Social Ethics which he obtained from the Methodist Theological University in Seoul, South Korea. His roots trace back to the laborers brought to Fiji under the British indenture system, shaping his commitment to social and ecological justice. He is passionate about coastal and ocean protection, climate justice, and gender issues. He actively

engages in Christian activism, serving as a chaplain, trustee, and volunteer crew member for the Fijian Traditional Voyaging canoe, Uto Ni Yalo. Rev. James' multifaceted contributions extend to his roles as Secretary for Communication and Overseas Mission in the Methodist Church in Fiji and as acting General Secretary of the Fiji Council of Churches. Despite his busy schedule, he aspires to complete his PhD, reflecting his unwavering dedication to faith, justice, and community well-being.



Dr. Rand Blimes, PhD, Associate Professor in the Faculty of Business and Government; Advisory Board Member for the Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, United States

Rand Blimes is an associate professor in the Faculty of Business and Government at BYU–Hawaii. He received a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Michigan, a Master of Arts degree from the University of Colorado at Boulder, and a PhD from the University of

Colorado.



Reverend Dr. Peter Loy Chong, Archdiocese of Suva, Fiji

Archbishop Peter Loy Chong, pursued theological studies at the Pacific Regional Seminary, culminating in his priesthood ordination in 1992. Throughout his ministry, he served as Parochial Vicar and Parish Priest at various locations, actively engaging in youth ministry and the Worldwide Marriage Encounter Movement. Archbishop Chong furthered his education with post-graduate studies at the Jesuit School of Theology, earning a licentiate and a doctorate in Sacred Theology with a dissertation focused on

Towards a Fijian Contextual Theology: A Catholic Response to Fiji's Coup Culture. Ordained as the Archbishop of Suva, Fiji, on June 8, 2013, his special theological interests encompass Ecclesiology, Contextual and Liberation Theology, Ecumenism, Interreligious dialogue, and Ecology.



Dr. Brent Cowley, PhD, Visiting Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Arts and Letters, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, United States

Dr. Cowley holds a PhD in Communication and Media Studies from the University of Oregon's School of Journalism and Communication. Since beginning teaching in higher education in 2009, he has taught dozens of courses in a wide array of media areas, including film, television, journalism, PR, advertising, and documentary. Dr. Cowley's interdisciplinary research draws on critical, cultural, and industrial

approaches to media regulation, including global regions such as the Asian Rim, Oceania, and Europe. Combining interests in media arts and communications, he has contributed to some of

the earliest studies on the sanitization of movies for digital streaming services. Other studies include alterations to films for prisoner populations, international airlines, home video, and television. His research reflects global industries' trend of modifying objectionable or insensitive content based on religious and cultural policies as well as correcting racial and gender stereotypes due to more recent progressive movements.



Gavin Cranney, Executive Student Lead for the Oceanian Perspectives on Human Dignity Conference, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, United States

Gavin Cranney is from San Diego, California. He graduated from BYU–Hawaii with a double major in cultural anthropology and intercultural peacebuilding, complemented by minors in psychology, legal studies, political science, and international relations. He is a teaching assistant for the legal studies certificate at BYUH, where he also serves as the Prelaw president. Cranney is a J. Reuben Clark Law Society Religious Liberty Fellow and a rising-generation committee member for the International Religious Freedom Initiative. He is a 2027 JD candidate at Emory University School of Law.



Dr. Jenny Te Paa Daniel, PhD, Acting Director, National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Otago, New Zealand

Dr Jenny Te Paa Daniel (Te Rarawa) obtained a theology undergraduate from the University of Auckland, becoming the first Maori in the world to obtain a university degree in theology. She holds an Auckland University Master's degree with Honors in Education, and a PhD degree from the GTU in Berkeley, California, writing on Race Politics and Theological Education. She served for almost thirty years, first as a lecturer and then as Principal within St Johns Anglican Theological College in Auckland. She is the first indigenous lay woman to hold such a leadership position in the worldwide Anglican Communion. Highly respected globally and nationally for her scholarly fearlessness in critiquing injustice and her relentless advocacy for women's leadership within the Church, she has been awarded five international honorary doctorates and two prestigious Distinguished Alumni Awards from her respective alumni universities. These have been awarded in recognition of her prolific scholarship, her leadership, and her unflagging commitment to the pursuit of peace with justice for oppressed minorities and indigenous peoples throughout the world. Dr. Te Paa Daniel lives now in Aitutaki enjoying a perfectly balanced lifestyle which prioritizes affinity with and affection for, faith, whanau (family), whenua (the land), and moana (the ocean).



Nemani Delaibatiki, Former editor of Fiji Sun and Fiji Daily Post, Fiji

Nemani Delaibatiki, a stalwart in journalism since 1972, retired from his career in 2022 as the Managing Editor - Training at the *Fiji Sun*. With a diverse background, he contributed significantly to media organizations, serving as a reporter/sub-editor at the *Fiji Times*, chief reporter and editor at the *Original Fiji Sun*, and a sub-editor at the *Waikato Times* in New Zealand. He also played a pivotal role as the founding editor in chief of the *Fiji Daily Post*. Beyond editorial roles, Delaibatiki served as the former president of the Fiji Journalists Association and Fijian Media Association, reflecting his commitment to media advocacy. As a fellow of the Commonwealth Press Union, he showcased international engagement. His leadership extended to community involvement as the former General Secretary of the Hamilton Fijian Association and a board member on various Pacific Advisory Councils. Delaibatiki faced legal challenges, notably as the only Fijian journalist charged under the Official Secrets Act, prevailing in court in 1986. Additionally, during his tenure as editor of the *Original Fiji Sun*, he confronted the closure of the newspaper by the military regime in 1987, led by Fiji's current Prime Minister, for opposing their coup and defying media censorship laws. His journey stands as a testament to resilience, commitment to journalistic principles, and advocacy for press freedom.



Honorable Linda Folaumoetu'i, Attorney General, Tonga

Linda Simiki Folaumoetu'i is a Tongan lawyer and civil servant. Since 2019 she has served as Attorney General of Tonga. Her journey in law and public service began with her education at the University of Auckland, the University of the South Pacific, and the University of Melbourne. She worked as a legal officer for Tonga's Crown Law Department from 1993. In December 2006 she was appointed Solicitor General of Tonga. From 2008 to 2014 she worked as a litigation advisor to the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands. After returning to Tonga in 2015 she was appointed chief executive of the Office of the Commissioner for Public Relations. In 2016 she was appointed to Tonga's Electoral Commission. In June 2017 she was appointed to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council of Tonga as a Law Lord.



Reverend Siotame Drew Havea, Board Chairman, Civil Society Forum of Tonga

Siotame Drew Havea has extensive experience working with communities and the civil society sector. As a founding member of the Tonga National Youth Congress and the Tonga National Leadership Development Forum, he has played a pivotal role in shaping platforms that empower youth skills and has been very instrumental in setting up the Civil Society Forum of Tonga. In 2017, Havea received the Harris Wolfford Global Citizen Award from the United States National Peace Corps Association for his extensive work in supporting

youth, democracy, civil society, and leadership in Tonga. Havea served as a board member of the Pacific Island Association of Non-Government Organizations for twelve years, including eight years as the Board Chair serving the region for a better Pacific, advocating for space and dialogue, and the elimination of poverty in the Pacific. Havea represented the Pacific in the Commonwealth Foundation Board of Governors in London advising on matters of civil society for 6 years. Mr. Havea is passionate about community development looking at communities from inside and promoting local governance and resilience. Currently, he is working with farmers and youth farmers promoting organic farming with a vision for the Kingdom to be fully certified organic by 2030 and setting up social enterprises for the export market in organic virgin coconut oil and organic vanilla to employ young people in the Kingdom.



Dr. Keakaokawai Varner Hemi, PhD, Assistant Vice Chancellor, University of Waikato, New Zealand

Dr. Keakaokawai Varner Hemi is a member of Na ‘Ohana o Kalama o La‘ie, O‘ahu, Hawai‘i. She is the first Assistant Vice-Chancellor Pacific appointed by the University of Waikato and a former Associate Dean at Te Piringa Faculty of Law. Dr. Hemi's teaching and research include human rights, indigenous rights, constitutional law, and Pacific Island people and the law. Her recent research explores wicked challenges that test equality and non-discrimination such as climate change, education, and health. She is currently an author on the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade-funded Pacific Ocean Climate Crisis Assessment contributing to the UN IPCC's Global Stocktake. She was part of the Pacific Peoples Review Panel at the NZ Ministry of Education from 2020-2023 and was the chair of Komiti Pasifika at Universities New Zealand, a statutory body, from 2022-2023. She is the co-editor of *In Our Language: Journal of Pacific Research*, an open access journal dedicated to making research about the Pacific and Pacific people available in Pacific languages. She also sits on the Board of K‘aute Pasifika, a Christian-based Pacific Island charitable organization delivering innovative health, education, employment, and social services.



Father Francis X. Hezel, Society of Jesus, Micronesia

Francis X. Hezel is a Jesuit priest who has worked in Micronesia for over fifty years. His journey has been marked by diverse roles, including teacher, principal, and director at Xavier High School in Chuuk. For many years, he held the esteemed position as director of Micronesian Seminar, a research-pastoral institute deeply involved in extensive community education initiatives across the Pacific. In his capacity as the director of Micronesian Seminar, Father Hezel played a pivotal role in organizing numerous conferences on pressing issues, facilitating crucial dialogues that addressed social change and its profound impact on island societies. He has also published over a hundred articles and eleven books on Micronesian history and culture, including *The First Taint of Civilization and Strangers in Their Own Land*. He produced over 70 video documentaries for local broadcast, including a seven-hour series on the history of Micronesia.



Dr. Alohalani Kaluhiokalani Housman, PhD, Dean and Associate Professor, Faculty of Culture, Language, and Performing Arts and Jonathan Napela Center for Hawaiian and Pacific Studies, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, United States

April Alohalani Kaluhiokalani Housman is an alumna of BYU–Hawai‘i, where she received her bachelor’s degree in education. She earned a second bachelor’s degree in Hawaiian Studies, a master’s degree in education, and a PhD in Hawaiian and Indigenous Language and Culture Revitalization at the University of Hawai‘i in Hilo. The Hawaiian language was banned from the public school system in 1896 after the illegal overthrow of Queen Lili‘uokalani in 1893. Ninety years later, Housman testified at the State Legislature to reverse the law. In 1987, she was invited to become the first Hawaiian language immersion teacher in the Hawai‘i state public school system on the island of O‘ahu. She taught 14 years in the immersion program before being hired in the College of Hawaiian Language at UH Hilo, where she taught 14 years while also serving as the Director of the Hale Kuamo‘o Hawaiian Language Center for seven years. She has been at BYU–Hawai‘i since 2015 as an associate professor of Hawaiian Studies and has been serving as the Dean of Culture, Language, and Performing Arts for the past two years. She has been honored with awards for excellence in teaching including the Native Hawaiian Education Association Educator of the Year, the State of Hawai‘i Senate Award, the ‘Ahahui ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Award, and the Leeward District Teacher of the Year.



Honorable Tamatoa Jonassen, Secretary, Ministry of Justice, Cook Islands

Tamatoa Jonassen is currently serving as the head of the Ministry of Justice in the Cook Islands, assuming the role in December 2018, and is instrumental in overseeing a significant organizational restructuring. His responsibilities include supporting the Judiciary in administering justice, managing the land and tribal title system, and overseeing national registries ranging from births and deaths to marriages, companies, incorporated societies, and personal property securities. Prior to his current position, Tamatoa served as the CEO of the Cook Islands Financial Services Development Authority from 2015 to 2018, where he demonstrated leadership in the financial sector. With a diverse professional background that includes roles as a legal counsel in offshore finance, Deputy Prosecuting Attorney in Honolulu, and experience in the IT industry, Tamatoa's legal expertise extends to both the State of Hawaii, USA, and the Cook Islands. He holds a Juris Doctor from the University of Hawaii, a Law Certificate in Pacific and Asian Legal Studies, a Graduate Certificate in Conflict Resolution from the Matsunaga Institute for Peace, and a Bachelor of Science in Information Systems and Political Science from Brigham Young University–Hawaii. Tamatoa is statutorily appointed as the Registrar General of Births, Deaths, and Marriages under the Birth and Deaths Registration Act 1973 and Marriages Act 1973, and as the Chief Registrar of Electors under the Electoral Act 2004. Tamatoa also served a mission in Taiwan-Taipei, Chinese-mandarin speaking and is the

former District President of the Cook Islands, part of the Auckland New Zealand Mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He also served on the Cook Islands national interfaith religious organization called the Religious Advisory Council (RAC) from 2022 until handing the reins over to the new District President last month.



Tēvita O. Ka‘ili, PhD, Professor of Anthropology and Cultural Sustainability in the Faculty of Culture, Language, and Performing Arts, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, United States

Maui-TāVā-He-Akó Professor Tēvita O. Ka‘ili is the author of the book *Marking Indigeneity: The Tongan Art of Sociospatial Relations* (2017). He is originally from Nuku‘alofa, Tongatapu, with ancestral ties to Tonga, Sāmoa, Fiji, and Rotuma. He is a descendant of Moana Oceanian deified ancestors Tangaloa, Māui, and Hina. He is a professor of Cultural Anthropology in the Faculty of Culture, Language, and Performing Arts at Brigham Young University–Hawai‘i. He teaches courses in Cultural Anthropology and Pacific Islands Studies. Tēvita received his PhD in Sociocultural Anthropology from the University of Washington in 2008. He is a leading proponent of the Indigenous Moana-based Tā-Vā TimeSpace Philosophy of Reality, a philosophy formulated by the noted historical anthropologist Hūfanga-He-Ako-Moe-Lotu Professor ‘Ōkusitino Māhina. Tēvita specializes in the cultural arrangement of tā-vā (timespace), Indigenous anthropology, Oceanian mythologies, Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies, and language revitalization. Tēvita and his wife, Liz (Māori, Ngāti Hine, Ngā Puhī), live on the Ahupua‘a of Kahuku, O‘ahu, Hawai‘i.



Dr. Natasha Khan, PhD, Lecturer and Coordinator, Leadership, Governance and Human Rights, The University of South Pacific, Fiji

Natasha Khan is the Coordinator for the University of the South Pacific's Leadership, Governance, and Human Rights programme; she started the program in 2012. Since then, she and her team have taught approximately 6000 students. Natasha was born and raised in Suva, Fiji, and completed her bachelor's in arts in Sociology and Demography at USP before pursuing a Master's in Social Policy at Swansea University (UK) as a Commonwealth Scholar and a PhD in Politics/Law from University of York (UK) as a Gavron Scholar. Her PhD focused on *Utilising Transitional Justice Strategies in preventing the recurrence of Coup's*. Her research interests are Small Island Developing States conflicts, security sector reform, impunity and amnesty, coup d'états, human rights and development, human rights defenders, corruption, women and child rights, development, faith, culture, and human rights. Natasha is passionate about empowering women and children and works closely with some schools and faith groups on these issues. She was appointed Chair for Pacific Human Rights Defenders Network in early 2022 and is also a member of The Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crimes.



Dr. Gregg J. Kinkley, PhD, Former Deputy Attorney General and Lecturer of Religion and Classics at University of Hawaii, United States

Gregg Kinkley teaches Classical Tibetan in the Department of Religions and Ancient Civilizations at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. He also conducts elementary and advanced classes in Talmud at Congregation Sof Maarav in Honolulu. Before retiring from his legal practice at the end of 2022, Gregg served as a Deputy Attorney General for the State of Hawaii (since 2004). Before his tenure at the Department of the Attorney General, Gregg served as the Executive Director of the Division of Consumer Advocacy, Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, State of Hawaii, and as a Commissioner at the Hawaii State Public Utilities Commission. Before that, he was a partner at Goodwill Anderson Quinn & Stifel, in Honolulu, and an associate securities and corporate attorney at the Chicago law firm of Sonnenschein, Carlin, Nath, & Rosenthal. He has a BA, MA, and PhD in linguistics, as well as a JD from the Indiana University Maurer School of Law in Bloomington, Indiana.



Loukinikini Vili Lewaravu, Director, Fiji Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission, Fiji

Loukinikini Lewaravu is the Director of the Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission of the Republic of Fiji; she assumed her role in November 2023. Prior to this, she played crucial roles at the National Human Rights Institution/Office of the Ombudsman in Samoa, starting as a legal officer from November 2014 to February 2016, and eventually becoming the Director from February 2016 to September 2023. Loukinikini's legal expertise extends to her tenure as a State Solicitor at the Government of Samoa's Office of the Attorney General from November 2007 to November 2014, focusing on civil litigation, legal opinions, commercial, and international law. She holds a Bachelor of Law from the University of the South Pacific. She was admitted as a lawyer to the Samoa Supreme Court in 2008 and is an active member of the Samoa Law Society.



Jennae Matenga, Senior Solicitor, Burgess Law, New Zealand

Jennae is a senior solicitor whose practice has covered a broad range of corporate commercial, property, and estate planning. Currently, she is focused on assisting clients in New Zealand with property-related aspects of their Te Tiriti/Treaty settlements and Māori land matters. Jennae was born and raised in Hamilton, New Zealand, and grew up speaking Te Reo Māori. She attended high school at the Church College of New Zealand and earned a Bachelor of Law degree from the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand. Jennae and her husband, Kaea Matenga have four children. They are active members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and currently serve in the New Zealand, Hamilton Mission.



Jaimee Macanas Neel, Senior Advisor, Office of International Religious Freedom at the U.S. State Department, United States

Jaimee Macanas Neel is a U.S. diplomat and Foreign Service Officer with the Department of State. She is currently a senior advisor for the Office of International Religious Freedom, and her overseas assignments include Shanghai, Cairo, London, Beijing, Nairobi, and Athens. She has extensive experience on U.S-China foreign policy in mainland China, the Mediterranean, Southeastern Europe, the Western Balkans, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Jaimee holds a Juris Doctor and a Bachelor of Arts from Brigham Young University, and a master's in liberal arts from Harvard University. Her thesis research focused on Iosepa, a Hawaiian immigrant community in Utah from 1889 to 1917, of which several residents were her Hawaiian ancestors. Prior to the Foreign Service Jaimee was a schoolteacher with Teach for America in Washington D.C. and New York City. Jaimee was born in Kahuku and is married to fellow Foreign Service Officer, James Neel. They have four children and two Persian cats.



Moana Numanga, Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Business and Government, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, United States

Moana Numanga, originally from Aotearoa, New Zealand, has ancestral connections to the Ngati Kahungunu, Rangitane, Waikato-Tainui, and Ngati Koata tribes. She is a proud alumna of BYU–Hawaii, where she made meaningful connections and danced at the Polynesian Cultural Center. Moana pursued a law degree at the University of Waikato and furthered her legal expertise with a Master of Laws and Juris Doctor from the University of Hawaii–Manoa's William S. Richardson School of Law. Before her current academic role, she worked at BYU–Hawaii as the Manager of Employment, Training & Development. Currently, Moana teaches courses in Organizational Leadership, Business Law, and Human Resources within the Faculty of Business and Government at BYU–Hawaii. Outside of work, she enjoys the ocean, strength training, and spending time with her husband, William, and their five children.



Honorable Matt Salmon, former U.S. Congressman from Arizona; former member of the Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific; Special Advisor to the President of Arizona State University for International Affairs, United States

Matt Salmon served for ten years in the U.S. House of Representatives. There he served on the House Foreign Affairs Committee and chaired the subcommittees on the Western Hemisphere and on Asia and the Pacific. He also was a member of OSCE for 6 years where he chaired the subcommittee on Human Rights. He served a mission in his youth for The Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter-day Saints in Taiwan where he became fluent in Mandarin. He is currently advising the President of Arizona State University on international matters. He has a bachelor's degree from Arizona State University in English Literature and a master's degree from Brigham Young University in Public Administration.



Brett G. Scharffs, Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, and Rex E. Lee Chair and Professor of Law, J. Reuben Clark Law School, Brigham Young University, United States

Brett G. Scharffs is the Rex E. Lee Chair and Professor of Law at Brigham Young University's J. Reuben Clark Law School, and Director of the International Center for Law and Religion Studies. His teaching and scholarly interests include law and religion, legal reasoning and rhetoric, philosophy of law, and legislation and regulation. He graduated from Georgetown University with a BSBA in international business and an MA in philosophy. He was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University, where he earned a BPhil in philosophy. He received his JD from Yale Law School, where he was Senior Editor of the *Yale Law Journal*. Scharffs has been a visiting professor at Central European University and has helped organize certificate training programs on religion and the rule of law in Beijing, Vietnam, and Myanmar. His field-creating casebook, *Law and Religion: National, International, and Comparative Perspectives* (2d edition 2019, with W. Cole Durham Jr.), has been translated into Bahasa Indonesian, Chinese, Hebrew, Russian, Spanish Turkish, and Vietnamese, with additional translations underway. In his 20-year academic career, Scharffs has written more than 100 articles and book chapters and has made more than 300 scholarly presentations in 30 countries.



Honorable Maualaivao Pepe Seiuli, Acting Ombudsman, Samoa

Maualaivao Pepe Seiuli joined the Office of the Ombudsman in 1992 when it was established at the Old Fono House of Parliament. In his role, he collaborates with the Ombudsman in conducting investigations against Government Ministries and agencies, addressing complaints from the public related to matters of defective administration. Maualaivao assumes a crucial role in the overall administration of the Office, ensuring its effective and efficient operations. Before joining the Office of the Ombudsman, Maualaivao held a position at the Office of the Public Service Commission, serving as the Chief Management Advisory Officer. In this capacity, he dealt with Public Service Appeal matters, functioning as an advocate for the Commission in appeals involving non-promotions, appointments, and disciplinary matters. His previous experience includes serving as a Senior Executive Officer for the Inland Revenue Department. Maualaivao's extensive background reflects his commitment to public service and his active involvement in addressing administrative grievances within government agencies.



Aaron Shumway, Director and Associate Professor, Faculty of Religious Education; Advisory Board Member for the Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, United States

Aaron Shumway grew up in Lā‘ie in the shadow of BYU–Hawaii. He graduated from Liahona High School in Tonga, and after an additional year of high school in California, he attended BYU–Hawaii. Following an LDS mission to Taiwan, Aaron returned to BYUH where in Concert Choir he met his wife, May Villanueva, a student from the Philippines. Aaron graduated from BYUH with a degree in English and later attended Washington and Lee University School of Law. He practiced real estate and business law in Honolulu for 12 years before joining the Church Educational System family in Seminaries and Institutes. He served as a coordinator in SandI for nine years, during which time he also taught religion classes at BYUH. He is thrilled to be joining Religious Education full-time.



Hannah C. Smith, Associate Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, J. Reuben Clark Law School, Brigham Young University, United States

Hannah Clayson Smith joined the International Center for Law and Religion Studies as Associate Director in 2023. Hannah brings to ICLRS an unparalleled record of service to religious liberty. As Senior Counsel at Becket Law, she was a member of the legal teams that secured victories in key U.S. Supreme Court religious liberty cases, including *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church and School v. EEOC*, *Holt v. Hobbs*, *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*, and *Zubik v. Burwell* (the Little Sisters of the Poor case). She has contributed to over 25 Supreme Court briefs representing more than 13 major faith groups. Smith clerked at the U.S. Supreme Court for Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel A. Alito, Jr. She received her BA from Princeton University, concentrating in the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, and her JD from BYU Law School, where she graduated Order of the Coif. She served as a full-time French-speaking missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in France and Switzerland. She and her husband John live in Utah with their four wonderful children.



Dr. Nathaniel Stephens, PhD, Dean and Professor, Faculty of Business and Government, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, United States

Nate Stephens is an accounting professor in the Faculty of Business and Government. Prior to joining the faculty at BYU–Hawaii, Nate spent 13 years on the faculty of Utah State University where he served in several roles, including director of the Master of Accounting program. He graduated in 2008 from the University of Arizona’s PhD program. Prior to his doctoral studies, Nate attended BYU in Provo where he earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in accounting. From 1997 to 1999 he served as a full-time missionary in Australia, Sydney North Mission where he taught the gospel in the Mandarin

language. Nate's research focuses on the external auditor's role in the capital markets, the market for external audit services, and corporate financial reporting quality. His research has been published in top accounting journals including *Review of Accounting Studies*; *Auditing: A Journal of Practice and Theory*; *Accounting Horizons*; *Journal of Accounting, Auditing, and Finance*; and *Issues in Accounting Education*. In February 2000, Nate married Kristie Babcock, who is an alumna of BYUH. They have five children ages 6 to 20.



Suliana Mary Taukei, Principal Legal Officer and Chairperson of the Human Rights Committee, Office of the Attorney General, Fiji

Ms Suliana Taukei is the Principal Legal Officer at the Office of the Attorney-General in Fiji and currently the focal point for Human Rights on behalf of the Fijian Government. She has worked extensively in the area of human rights contributing to the ratification of the Core 9 Human Rights Conventions including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. She was also instrumental in the drafting of Fiji's State Report for the third cycle of the Universal Period Review and was part of the Fijian Delegation to the Human Rights Council in Geneva in 2019.



Honorable Alisi Taumoepeau, Ombudsman, former Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Tonga

Mrs. Malia Viviana 'Alisi Numia Taumoepeau, KC, assumed the role of Ombudsman for Tonga on June 28, 2023. She pursued her legal education at Victoria University of Wellington. She earned an LLB in the same university and was subsequently admitted as a barrister and solicitor of the New Zealand Bar. She also graduated with an LLM (Honors) from the same institution. 'Alisi's career in the Tongan Government legal office, previously the Crown Law Department (now the Attorney General's Office), has been marked by notable achievements. Serving as the Solicitor General from 2002 to 2006, she later held the esteemed positions of Attorney General and Minister of Justice from 2006 to 2009, actively participating in Cabinet, Privy Council, and the Legislative Assembly of Tonga. In addition to her governmental roles, she made significant contributions as the Deputy Chair for Tonga Peace and Unity National Committee from 2011 to 2014. Her accomplishments culminated in becoming the first senior counsel to be appointed to the rank of King's Counsel (KC), a testament to her outstanding legal career and leadership in Tonga.



Jennifer Mie Kajiyama Tinkham, Program Lead and Adjunct Assistant Professor for the Legal Studies Program in the Faculty of Business and Government, and Faculty Chair and Advisory Board Member for the Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, United States

Jennifer Kajiyama Tinkham graduated from BYU–Hawaii as valedictorian in 2002, studying political science and Japanese. As an undergraduate, she worked in the U.S. Senate for the Secretary of the Senate, the Hawai'i Attorney General's Office, the Hawai'i State Supreme Court, and the Hawai'i State House of Representatives. Jennifer also served a mission in the Japan Nagoya Mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Upon her return, she attended the J. Reuben Clark Law School in Provo, Utah, emphasizing international law and alternative dispute resolutions. Jennifer also completed a Master of Public Administration from the Marriott School of Management, specifying her studies in non-profit and human resources management. Jennifer is a licensed attorney and is also a certified court mediator, divorce mediator, and arbitrator. She has worked for several judges and law firms, working on cases ranging from business law to worker's compensation and most recently, family law. Jennifer is the Legal Studies Program director at BYU–Hawaii.



Honorable Robert J. Torres, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Guam

Robert Torres was appointed to the Supreme Court of Guam in 2004 and is serving his third term as chief justice. He is an executive committee member of the Pacific Judicial Council, a past president of the American Judges Association (AJA), a member of AJA's executive committee and board of governors, and the membership secretary for the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association's Judicial Council. Torres received a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Notre Dame and a JD from Harvard Law School. He was awarded a Doctor of Laws (LLD) honoris causa from the University of Cebu and later from Centro Escolar University Makati, both of which are in the Philippines.



Dr. Mele Tupou-Vaitohi, PhD, Senior Lecturer, Law Faculty, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Mele Tupou-Vaitohi is a senior law lecturer at Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington. She is a formerly lead researcher for the Improving Pasifika Legal Education Project. Mele has worked as Manager of the Parliamentary Law and Practice team of the Office of the Clerk in the New Zealand Parliament, Chief Executive of the Ministry of Justice – Tonga, and a law lecturer at the University of the South Pacific. She has held senior leadership roles in the Tonga public service, particularly in the Ministry of Justice, Crown Law Office, Public Service Commission, and the Legislative Assembly of Tonga. She is a

leading scholar on Tongan constitutional law and has a PhD in law from the University of Otago. She completed her LLM from Queen Mary University, London, and LLB from the University of the South Pacific.



Ramanlal Vallabh, Owner and Reporter, 88.6 FM Radio Nuku'alofa, Tonga

Ramanlal Vallabh is the owner of a radio station in Tonga. He is also a journalist who reports on current news in the Kingdom of Tonga. He and his team provide a current affairs program that tackles social issues in the country. More importantly, he is a loving husband and father of two daughters and two sons.



Elder Taniela B. Wakolo, General Authority Seventy and Counselor in the Pacific Area Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Elder Taniela B. Wakolo was sustained as a General Authority Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on April 1, 2017. At the time of his call, he had been serving as president of the Arkansas Little Rock Mission. He is currently serving as a member of the Pacific Area Presidency. Since joining the Church in 1994, Elder Wakolo has served in numerous callings, including seminary and institute teacher, branch president, high councilor, counselor in a bishopric, counselor in a stake presidency, stake president, president of the Arkansas Little Rock Mission, Area Seventy and president of the Philippines Area. Elder Wakolo studied management and public administration at the University of the South Pacific. In 2007 he received a master's degree in management from the University of Sunshine Coast, Australia. Elder Wakolo was born in Lomaloma, Lau, Fiji, on June 25, 1967. He married Anita Herberta Moimoi in August 1987. They are the parents of two children.



Isaiah Walker, Academic Vice President, Professor and History Department Chair, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, United States

Born and raised in Hilo, Hawai'i, Isaiah Walker joined BYU–Hawaii as a full-time faculty member in 2006. Prior to becoming the Academic Vice President, Walker was a history professor in the Faculty of Language, Culture and Performing Arts, served as the chair of the Faculty Advisory Council, and was previously chair of the History Program. Before his tenure at BYU–Hawaii, Walker was a visiting professor at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo and a lecturer at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. Walker completed a doctorate in history from the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he studied American and Hawaiian history. He earned a bachelor's degree in history from BYU–Hawaii and a master's degree from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. In addition to authoring

Waves of Resistance: Surfing and History in 20th Century Hawai'i, Walker has published several academic articles and book chapters. He has also consulted as the historian on multiple media publications and productions as a leading expert in his field. He joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1990 at age 16. He served a mission in San Diego, California. He is married to Rebekah Matagi and they have five children.



David Whippy, Director of the David O. McKay Center for Intercultural Understanding, Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Culture, Language, and Performing Arts, and Faculty Advisor for the Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, United States

David Whippy is an assistant professor of Intercultural Peacebuilding at BYU–Hawaii and the Director of the David O. McKay Center for Intercultural Understanding. In this role as an assistant professor, he teaches undergraduate courses on transformative mediation, nongovernment organizations and peacebuilding, peace education, and peace ecology. David has a bachelor's degree in psychology from BYU–Hawaii, and a master's degree from the School of Government, Development, and International Affairs at the University of the South Pacific in Diplomacy and International Affairs. He is currently working on his PhD dissertation through the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Otago. His dissertation is centered on peace education in Fiji as a non-violent means of addressing the reoccurring conflicts in the islands. He continues to work as a trainer and facilitator in the field, as well as consulting NGOs and facilitators on programs, projects, and curricula.



John Zenger, Student Lead for the Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative, Brigham Young University–Hawaii, United States

John West Zenger was raised on a small hobby farm in rural Idaho, USA. With both parents as university professors, academic curiosity was instilled in him at a young age. After graduating from high school, John spent some time serving a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Washington, DC. Following his mission, he attended BYU–Hawaii to study music and composition, where he discovered his passion for Intercultural Peacebuilding and Law. John currently serves as the Student Lead for the Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative at BYUH and is a fellow at the J. Reuben Clark Law Society. He graduated summa cum laude from BYU–Hawaii in April 2024 with a BA in Intercultural Peacebuilding and Music. He looks forward to pursuing his JD as a candidate in 2027.