



Leilani Grace Kealoha

September 29, 1948 - September 3, 2026

Honolulu, Hawaii

Leilani Grace Kealoha died in Honolulu on September 3, 2026. She was seventy-seven. Born there on September 29, 1948, she grew up in a valley that still had taro at the edges and tourist buses in the middle. She learned a laundry cart before she learned a highway. A clean sheet, she said, is a welcome that does not require a speech.

She spent eighteen years in a Waikiki hotel laundry, then another fourteen selling lei near a corner that changed names more than once. She would not let a visitor be rushed toward the plastic kind. She would not let a wholesaler invent a price that made the morning a liar. She taught a niece that a tuberose has a clock, and that you do not string yesterday's flowers and call it aloha.

She married Keoni Kealoha in 1969. They raised a daughter and a son in a house that smelled of starch and coffee. Keoni worked the docks. Leilani packed lunches that could survive humidity. After he died in 2011 she kept the garden of ti and the habit of leaving a plate next door when she cooked too much, which was most evenings.

Grandchildren remember a woman who corrected their Hawaiian gently and their manners less gently, who kept a cigar box of leftover blossoms as if it were a bank, and who did not waste a scrap of leaf or a kind word. She died in Honolulu, in the heat she had always said she preferred to a clean cold. The stand is someone else's now. The care she practiced there is harder to replace than a needle.

Services

A service in Honolulu, then food in the hall. Lei welcome if you pick them with care. A gift to a school garden

or a laundry-workers' fund suits her.

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