



An Aura of Greatness: A Reflection on Governor John A. Burns

Brendan P. Burns

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“There was an ‘aura of greatness’ about him,” said observers. How did John A. Burns—a man who came from humble origins—develop this distinctive quality and become one of the greatest leaders in Hawaii history? Through a career in law enforcement, and politics that culminated in one of the most revered governorships in Hawaii history, John A. Burns displayed leadership abilities that brought commitment from supporters, commanded respect from adversaries, and led a political revolution at a time when transformational change in Hawaii was desperately needed. Out of the divisiveness of a Hawaii riddled by class warfare, racism, and economic division, arose a new Hawaii of greater unity, equality, and opportunity for all spearheaded by Burns’ leadership. His accomplishments are all the more extraordinary given his personal trials and tragedies that would have proven hindrances to others. *An Aura of Greatness: A Reflection on Governor John A. Burns* explains the core principles that defined Burns throughout his life and career written from a family member’s perspective, and provides revealing insights that will serve today’s leaders well as they strive similarly to develop their own auras of greatness. “If figuratively many of Hawaii’s leaders grew up on John A. Burns’s knee, Brendan Burns did so literally. Grandson Brendan is an educator who writes in a warm authentic voice. For our time, he refocuses Grandpa Burns’s core message: that all of the striving, all of the conflict, was about the development of Hawaii’s people.” “From the time Burns intersected with history in early 1941 until his passing in 1975, he talked bluntly but eloquently about the central importance of individual and community development and the potential of Hawaii’s multiethnic people to inspire the world. We see here that what Burns did with his life mattered; and what we do with ours matters.” -Tom Coffman, Author, Renowned Journalist, and Long Time Chronicler of Hawaii Honolulu Star-Advertiser calls *An Aura of Greatness*: "A timely and touching revisiting of the legacy of the former Hawaii congressman and governor, written by his grandson, salutes not only the visionary John A. Burns, but how he felt about the state and its people. To Burns, achieving equal social and economic opportunity required not only political and educational, but individual attitudinal change. A champion of the political aims of Japanese-American veterans of World War II, Burns in his 1969 State of the State speech famously asked all Hawaii citizens to reject the 'subtle inferiority of the spirit' fostered by the plantation system. The former policeman and military officer, born in Montana and raised in Kalihi, had made the upward climb he encouraged in others. Brendan Burns, principal of Aina Haina Elementary School, reminds us that the late governor had a dream of Hawaii as the Athens of the Pacific governed by its diverse people. With a foreword by former Gov. George Ariyoshi, 'An Aura of Greatness' includes many photos of Burns with his family and other political leaders."

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