

Cc: Reverend Eitaro Hayashi
Pete Tingstrom

May 18, 2024

Aloha e Mr. Ramon Maui Quizon ~

On behalf of BOYCOTTshinnyo-en, I deeply thank you for reaching out to our organization. Your words are touching and true. Appreciate your spirit and enlightenment. Let me first address Paul and Lori Wessel. They wrote, "Many other Gold Star families have floated lanterns on Memorial Day over the years." Beautiful. If Floating Lantern was held on Sunday, Gold Star families could honor their lost sons or daughters on that day. We need not trample on Memorial Day, which is NOT purposed for civilians.

The Lee Ohana wrote, "we pay homage on Memorial Day to those who paid the ultimate sacrifice in defending our country's freedom AND to our dearly departed family and friends..." EXACTLY!!! This is the issue confronting us. Black women suffering deep pain and loss did not honor the graves and memory of civilians on Decoration Day, ONLY the graves and memory of White and Black soldiers who died to secure their freedom.

They did not honor their lost mothers, fathers or relatives. Could have. They FOCUSED their reverence specifically on those in uniform, who had served in combat and died in battle. They ELEVATED these deaths above family members and friends — because these deaths occurred due to sacred sacrifice to the greater whole or community or nation.

James Olsen wrote, "It is also worth noting that a significant portion of the American population tends to view Memorial Day as a day off, engaging in activities such as sports, beach outings, or barbecues. Unfortunately, many individuals fail to fully grasp the true significance of this day. However, those who have served, along with their families, hold a deeper appreciation for the opportunity to commemorate the sacrifices of those who never returned home."

EXACTLY !!! Our society drifts further from honoring the sacrifice of the FEW who gave ALL so the MANY can live FREELY. About 7% of Americans serve. The 93% or so take much for granted. Our effort seeks to hold the line on this vital tradition. We battle apathy and a nonchalant attitude about ultimate sacrifice for others.

This is the ONLY area where we do not agree. Memorial Day is not for observing civilian deaths and loss. The sacrifice of giving one's life in service to the whole must be honored at a higher level. The burden is so high; price so costly. Losing a young man or woman at 18 in service to our nation — for all of us — is far more traumatizing than losing a loved one at 68, 75 or 97, due to advanced age. Latter individuals lived a full life. Lives of the former were cut short.

Created in 1868, this year's Memorial Day represents 156 years of tradition. Shinnyo-en is breaking with this American tradition. We have asked your organization politely for five years to cease trampling on the memory and honor of those who sacrificed so greatly.

Maybe to you this seems inconsequential. I ask you respectfully why a Japanese Buddhist Order feels justified to redefine an American tradition? To us, this behavior appears arrogant and disrespectful.

We believe such action runs counter to the teachings of Buddha. Why is Shinnyo-en opposed to shifting Floating Lantern to Sunday (or Saturday), rather than Memorial Day Monday? Sunday in America is considered a solemn day of worship for most citizens. Hosting Floating Lantern for civilians on Sunday would not offend any parties. Participants reported they would prefer a Sunday event.

Pete and I do not own Memorial Day. You do not, nor does Shinnyo-en. It is a shared tradition. The tradition however was established in 1868 for a specific reason — to honor the loss of men and women in uniform who died in service to ALL of us. The FEW died to PROTECT the MANY.

Memorial Day is the day when WE give back to them. Shinnyo-en claims the “right” to honor others on this day. There is no right or wrong. This question is one of moral and ethical examination. Americans do not host civilian observations for 45,000+ participants on Memorial Day. Such behavior would run counter to our “common sense” reason for Memorial Day. We collectively reserve such civilian observation for other days. Our behavior is driven by respect for the underlying spirit of Memorial Day.

Shinnyo-en is deviating from our common cultural practices. Shinnyo-en is Japanese influenced. Shinnyo-en is not respecting the 156-year American expectation for Memorial Day. Let me give an example. February 14th is considered Valentine’s Day around the world, as well as in USA and Japan. In Japan, White Day is celebrated on March 14th. Participants give reciprocal gifts to those who gifted them on Valentine’s. If I gave you a gift on Valentine’s, and then on White Day, it’s not wrong ... but it would seem weird ... kind of like I did not understand Japanese culture or respect Japanese practices. We would laugh at the childish mistake.

Memorial Day is similar but more formal. America goes to great lengths to preserve our traditions to honor our fallen brothers and sisters. For Japanese Shinnyo-en to host a ceremony for civilians on this day seems weird ... kind of like Shinnyo-en does not understand the significance of this day or have respect for American practices. Do you see what I mean?

The Buddhist seeks harmony, peace and enlightenment. We respect these pursuits. Hosting Floating Lantern on Memorial Day is offensive — maybe not to all ... but to many. We live in a world ... some call PC or politically correct ... where we try not to offend others. Hosting on Memorial Day offends Americans. It offends Veterans and families of those who lost loved ones. Not all. Some will have other views. America is a free and open society.

However, we are asking Shinnyo-en politely not to be disrespectful. We ask only that Shinnyo-en select a day other than Memorial Day. We even suggested creating Memorial Weekend together “laulima” to double the beauty of Shinnyo-en’s example. One day is awesome; two would be double awesome. We aren’t trampling on each other. We are enhancing love, healing, connection and renewal of spirit. TWO is better than ONE.

Recently it was suggested that I attend Floating Lantern this year and ask participants to sign petitions to block Shinnyo-en from using this day in the future. First, I do not like engaging participants during this event in what might be perceived as disruptive. I respect the intent of Floating Lantern and do not wish to bring conflict or negativity into this positive spiritual space.

Second, and most importantly, why should I however be required to collect signatures? Did Shinnyo-en circulate petitions amongst Americans to obtain permission before hosting the first Floating

Lantern in 1999? Who gives permission? Who is justified to be offended? With national traditions such as Memorial Day, our expectations are understood commonly through years of tradition. Shinnyo-en is violating a long-standing cultural value.

We can end these negative negotiations immediately if Shinnyo-en kindly and humbly agrees that 2024 will be the final Floating Lantern to be hosted on Memorial Day. We would love to announce that next year will become Memorial Weekend in the Purple Heart City of Honolulu, and Americans and Japanese people can merge our interests into one loving multi-day event.

If Floating Lantern next year is held on Sunday, Gold Star families like Paul and Lori Wessel can still honor their sons and daughters. Military losses are not precluded. The Lee Ohana could also honor civilian and military losses on that day. Nobody is offended or inconvenienced. We have peaceful and harmonious relations.

And, concluding with respect to Dr Olsen's concern about increased apathy, we agree. That's why we have proposed Floating Lantern Hawai'i on Sunday; Lantern Lighting Punchbowl on Monday. The example set by Shinnyo-en is innovative. We would like to expand on their enlightenment. Let's do more together; not trample on each other in such painful times.

Can we ENLARGE LOVE between our two groups, cultures and nations? Pete and I lovingly and respectfully hope you'll agree to join with us.

Mahalo Ke Akua

Scott Goold

BOYCOTTshinnyo.com

May 17, 2024

Dear Mr. Scott Goold and Mr. Pete Tingstrom:

I am writing officially on behalf of Shinnyo Lantern Floating Hawai'i.

As Memorial Day approaches, I am reminded of the profound significance of this day beyond its traditional observance as a time to honor and remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. As a 35-year veteran of the U.S. military, Memorial Day holds a unique place in our hearts, not only as a day of remembrance for our fallen heroes but also as a time to reflect on and honor the memory of all our loved ones who have passed away, regardless of their service to our nation.

Memorial Day is a poignant reminder of the preciousness of life and the deep bonds we share with those who have touched our lives, leaving indelible marks of love, sacrifice, and memories. It is a day to honor not only the brave men and women who served in the armed forces but also our cherished family members, friends, and community members who have left us.

I am particularly inspired by organizations like the Nā Lei Aloha Foundation's Shinnyo Lantern Floating Hawai'i, which provides a beautiful and meaningful platform for individuals to express

their feelings of loss and grief while honoring the memories of their loved ones. The annual lantern floating ceremony offers a powerful and cathartic experience for participants to come together, reflect, and send their heartfelt messages of remembrance and gratitude into the waters of Ala Moana Beach.

Through the symbolic act of floating lanterns, participants, including myself, find solace in the collective embrace of shared emotions and memories. For two years, my father bravely fought a difficult battle against lung cancer. While he didn't serve in the military himself, he took great pride in my service to our armed forces; and on Memorial Day 2013, Shinnyo Lantern Floating Hawai'i gave me and my family the chance to memorialize my dad. The serene and contemplative atmosphere of the ceremony provided a space for healing, connection, and renewal of spirit, reminding us that my father – and all our beloved ones – live on in our hearts and memories.

As we observe Memorial Day this year and every year, let us not only pay tribute to the brave soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice for our Nation but also take a moment to honor and remember each and every one of our loved ones who have passed away, leaving behind legacies of love, courage, and resilience. May their memories continue to inspire us and serve as guiding lights in our lives.

Please see the attached letters of support from our active duty, veteran, and very importantly our Gold Star families who are grateful for Shinnyo Lantern Floating Hawai'i fostering moments of reflection, healing, and remembrance within our community.

In the future, if you would like to contact someone regarding Shinnyo Lantern Floating Hawai'i, please direct your correspondence to myself at inquiries@naleialoha.org.

Sincerely,

//SIGNED//

Ramon Maui Quizon

Senior Master Sergeant (Retired)

United States Air Force - Hawaii Air National Guard

Shinnyo Lantern Floating Hawai'i, Official Communications

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Letter from James Olsen, MD COL (Ret) Gold Star Dad (1page)
2. Letter from The Lee Ohana (1page)
3. Letter from Paul and Lori Wessel (4pages)

To Whom it May Concern:

I would like to share my perspective on the matter at hand. The crux of the issue lies in determining whether we should adopt an inclusive or exclusive approach.

Memorial Day serves as a day of remembrance to honor the brave men and women of our armed forces who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our country. It is a day of solemn reflection and gratitude. In Hawaii, the Shinnyo-en Buddhist Lantern Floating Ceremony is also held on Memorial Day. This ceremony does not exclude military families from participating; in fact, many military families choose to take part in this event. Additionally, prominent figures such as politicians and senior military officers are often invited to attend.

It is important to note that the Lantern Ceremony is not intended to overshadow or replace the significance of Memorial Day. The traditional Memorial Day ceremony at Punchbowl, along with numerous smaller observances across our islands, continue to be held as a means of commemorating this special day. The Lantern Ceremony simply provides an additional opportunity for families to honor and remember their loved ones. Furthermore, the timing of the ceremony, typically held closer to dusk, does not conflict with the official Memorial Day ceremonies, which usually take place before noon.

Many of those honored during the Lantern Ceremony are veterans of recent or past wars. It would be insensitive and disrespectful to deny military families the chance to honor and remember their deceased relatives on this day of remembrance. The official Memorial Day ceremonies provide one avenue for commemoration, while the Lantern Ceremony offers an additional opportunity for families to express their gratitude and respect for the sacrifices made by their loved ones.

It is also worth noting that a significant portion of the American population tends to view Memorial Day as a day off, engaging in activities such as sports, beach outings, or barbecues. Unfortunately, many individuals fail to fully grasp the true significance of this day. However, those who have served, along with their families, hold a deeper appreciation for the opportunity to commemorate the sacrifices of those who never returned home.

In my opinion, there is no inherent conflict in holding the Lantern Ceremony on Memorial Day. Instead, it offers a synergistic effect by providing an additional avenue to honor our fallen heroes on this special day of remembrance. While others may hold differing views, I do not perceive this as an act of disrespect; rather, it is a matter of choosing inclusivity over exclusivity.

Sincerely, James Olsen, MD COL (Ret) Gold Star Dad

April 26, 2024

Na Lei Aloha Foundation
Shinnyo Lantern Floating Hawai'i
2348 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96826

Aloha kākou,

Makemake au e hā'awi aku i ko'u mahalo pono'i a me ka mahalo nui i ka ho'ola'a 'ole 'ana o kāu hui i ka hā'awi 'ana i ka manawa kūpono o ko kākou mau mokupuni 'āina e 'ākoakoa me ka na'au a me ka na'au maluhia 'oiai mākou e ho'omaika'i nei i ka lā Ho'omana'o i ka po'e i uku i ka 'ālana hope loa i ka pale 'ana i ke kū'oko'a o ko mākou 'āina. a me ko mākou 'ohana a me nā hoa aloha i ha'alele, ma kahakai o Magic Island ma ka Shinnyo-en Lantern Floating Ceremony.

I would like to extend my personal gratitude and sincere appreciation to your organizations unyielding dedication in providing the opportunity for our island communities to gather with peaceful hearts and minds as we pay homage on Memorial Day to those who paid the ultimate sacrifice in defending our country's freedom and to our dearly departed family and friends, on the shore at Magic Island at the annual Shinnyo-en Lantern Floating Ceremony.

'O ka manawa pinepine, ua māhele 'ia mākou ma ke 'ano he kaiāulu i ka wā e pili ana i nā pilikia pili kaiāulu a mākou e alo nei, a pōina pinepine mākou he pono mākou i ke kaiāulu e mahalo kekahi i ko mākou 'oko'a a ho'ohanohano i ko mākou kaiāulu i ka ho'oikaika 'ana i ko mākou kaiāulu ma o ka 'ākoakoa 'ana. i ka ho'ohui 'ana i ko mākou na'au a me ka no'ono'o, 'o ia ka mea a ka Lantern Floating Ceremony e hā'awi nei iā mākou, he manawa e no'ono'o ai, ho'ohanohano a ho'ōla.

All too often, we as a community become divided when it comes to the social issues we collectively face, and all too often we forget that we as a community must respect one another for our differences and honor our society in strengthening our community by gathering together in connecting our hearts and minds, which is what the Lantern Floating Ceremony offers us, a time to reflect, honor and heal.

Ma ke 'ano he mea lawelawe i ho'omaha 'ia no 36-makahiki me ka United States Air Force, mahalo nui wau i ka manawa a kāu hui e hā'awi ai i ko'u 'ohana a me a'u i kēlā me kēia makahiki ma ka lā Ho'omana'o e no'ono'o a ho'ōla. Nui na muliwai, hookahi moana.

As a retired serviceman of 36-years with the United States Air Force, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity your organization provides my family and I every year on Memorial Day. Many Rivers, One Ocean.

Me na na'au mahalo,

With grateful hearts,

The Lee Ohana

To Whom It May Concern:

We write on behalf of Gold Star families residing in Hawai'i.

As long time participants of the Shinnyo Lantern Floating Hawai'i ceremony, we are honored to share our story with you. Once again, as that most difficult time of the year for us approaches, we find ourselves looking back on the many years your work has helped us to honor and remember our son, SPC Kevin Wessel. The annual ceremony is one we look forward to, despite the inherent sadness of the occasion. The overwhelming feelings of love and shared emotions are cathartic and healing. We can think of no better way to honor our soldier son than to be on the beach on Memorial Day, surrounded by others who let their grief be washed away by the waters of Ala Moana Beach Park.

We first learned of the Lantern Floating Ceremony during a presentation at a Survivor Outreach Services meeting. (Survivor Outreach Service provides support to Families of the Fallen and is a department of the U.S. Army that falls under the umbrella of Army Community Services). At the time, we were still deep in the inconsolable grief a parent experiences after losing a child to war. I didn't think I could ever look at life without sadness and despair, and yes, even anger...but after attending our first ceremony, our outlook began to change. Feelings of hope returned, albeit slowly. Those feelings grew with every lantern floating we attended, and soon we were able to view the world with a renewed sense of purpose, the same purpose this event perpetuates.

We started volunteering our time to the pre and post efforts towards the Shinnyo Lantern Floating Hawaii Ceremony, so that others may achieve the soul-mending love we experienced. We've reached out to many of my son's military friends, some whom suffer with the long-term effects of war. We shared with them our healing process, and the critical role this event has played in that process. Some of them made

the journey to Hawaii for the express purpose of participating in the annual Lantern Floating Ceremony.

Many other Gold Star families have floated lanterns on Memorial Day over the years. Like us, they have found healing and love through the release of their lanterns. The collective connection of so many gathered in their grief is both therapeutic and soothing. The respectful space provides a means for the release of some tears and a spontaneous burst of comforting hugs to and from those standing next to you. Thank you for providing another avenue to honor our fallen heroes on this special day of remembrance. While others may hold differing views, we do not perceive this as an act of disrespect; rather, it is a matter of choosing inclusivity over exclusivity.

It is said that we die two deaths. The first is when our body breathes it's last, the second when our names are mentioned for the last time. We truly appreciate all the work you do to honor and commemorate our fallen heroes.

With all our heartfelt Aloha,

Paul and Lori Wessel
Proud parents of SPC Kevin Wessel
KIA, April 19, 2005
Baghdad, Iraq

Fe Suyat, mother of SSgt Randy Agno

Col James Olsen (Ret) and Lis Olsen, parents of CPL Toby Olsen

Tia Briggs, widow of SSGT Raymond Allen Briggs

Kristy Balli, widow of CW2 Edward Balli

Sgt. 1st Class Diandra Laplante, widow of SFC Nicholas Alan Laplante

Brandy Williams, widow of Sgt Eugene Williams

CAPT Valerie Lacroix, widow of CDR Matt Lacroix, U.S. Navy