

**HARD LABOR:  
SCARED WORKERS, EXHAUSTED  
EMPLOYEES, AND DECLINING STANDARDS  
AT A HAWAI‘I HOTEL**

**Report of the Commission to Investigate  
Labor and Management Practices  
at the Pacific Beach Hotel**

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*October 2009*

# Introduction

**T**he Pacific Beach Hotel, on Waikīkī Beach in Honolulu, has been the site of labor conflict for much of the past decade. In recent years, the hotel has attracted regular protests, demonstrations and picket lines, and has become the focus of an international boycott, with the hotel's labor practices targeted for protests in the U.S., Canada, Japan and the Philippines.

Tourism is the most important industry in Hawai'i. This means that the ability of the local population to earn a decent living as hotel workers is critical to our state's economy as a whole. It also makes us particularly sensitive to anything that may degrade the image of Hawai'i as a tourist destination.

For the past several years, the public has heard conflicting accounts of what's going on at the Pacific Beach Hotel. Hotel employees and their union, International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 142, have charged that the hotel has created a climate of fear by threatening, intimidating and firing union supporters; and has increased workloads to the point of exhausting workers and undermining the quality of service. Hotel managers, on the other hand, contend that everything is fine, the hotel is fairly run, and the accusations against it are politically motivated and baseless. Many in the local community have heard both sides and wondered: What is the Truth?

The task of our Commission is to provide the public—both in Hawai'i and throughout the world—with an answer to that question.

The Commission to Investigate Labor and Management Practices at Pacific Beach Hotel is an independent Commission of religious, academic and community leaders. We are not paid by anyone and have no interest, financial or otherwise, in the Pacific Beach Hotel. The Commission does not have legal authority over the hotel. The federal Labor Board has charged Pacific Beach Hotel with 15 counts of violating federal labor law, and after a long trial both sides are awaiting a judge's ruling in the case. Our Commission does not aim to second-guess that judge's legal authority. Rather, our goal is simpler: for independent citizens to conduct their own investigation, and present the truth as they find it, in everyday language, to share with the public.

The Commission was formed in early 2009, and has worked over a period of many months to uncover a clear picture of conditions at the hotel. We surveyed news reports, legal filings, surveys, and online data, but we relied most on first-person testimony. We invited all employees of the Pacific Beach Hotel—both pro- and anti-union—to tell their own stories and provide their own evidence about conditions at the hotel. We also invited union and management representatives to share any documents they thought might shed light on the matter. Unfortunately, despite repeated invitations both by phone and in writing, the Hotel's owners and managers chose not to meet with the Commission nor to provide any evidence in writing.

We were fortunate to have Commission members fluent in Ilocano and Japanese as well as English, and offered to take testimony in any of those

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languages. Finally and most importantly, we arranged for testimony to be taken in a manner that could guarantee the complete confidentiality of employees. Many employees worried that their testimony might be used against them, if their identities were revealed. For these individuals, we conducted interviews under strict secrecy, so that neither management, the union, friends or co-workers could know who said what.

Over a period of months, we interviewed or received statements from thirty-eight employees of the Pacific Beach Hotel. The witnesses represented virtually every department of the hotel and included both pro- and anti-union employees. A number of the witnesses had lost their jobs as part of the mass terminations of December, 2007 that are at the heart of the Labor Board trial; the vast majority of witnesses, however, are current employees of the Pacific Beach Hotel. Finally, the witnesses we spoke with had a tremendous amount of experience between them; those whose evidence is reflected in this report have worked at the hotel an average of 15 years, with 10 witnesses having spent 20 or more years at the Pacific Beach.

The facts we discovered in the course of our investigation are extremely disturbing. The report that follows is divided into sections that address the issues of fear, intimidation and coercion of hotel employees; decline in real wages; economic discrimination against union supporters; problems associated with increased workloads and under-staffing; and finally, the impact on the hotel's quality of service and its reputation in the tourism industry. We believe these issues are critical for our community, and we hope that all of us can come together to finally forge a just solution to this crisis.

***Unfortunately, our investigation reveals management's claims to be false. Employee after employee described working under a pervasive atmosphere of fear, intimidation, and surveillance, in which the most outspoken supporters of the union can expect to be punished.***

## A Pervasive Climate of Fear

One of the key questions debated about the Pacific Beach Hotel is the extent to which the hotel's employees are free to voice their opinions about unionization. Hotel managers have insisted that their employees are free to engage in activities either in support or in opposition to unionization without fear of coercion, intimidation or reprisal. Management asserts that the near-total absence of current employees in union rallies since December 1, 2007 does not represent fear of reprisal, but rather is a sign that workers have stopped supporting the union. Further, in August 2008, the Hotel issued a press release announcing that a majority of its employees had signed a statement declaring their opposition to the ILWU, or indeed to any union at all. Again, this was described as an uncoerced poll of employee sentiment.

Unfortunately, our investigation reveals management's claims to be false. Employee after employee described working under a pervasive atmosphere of fear, intimidation, and surveillance, in which the most outspoken supporters of the union can expect to be punished.

## **Nakaam-amak Ti Agsarsarita (It is Scary to be Talking)**

**A**n incredible 88 percent of all workers testifying to the Commission described intimidation, fear, threats, surveillance, or reprisals taken against union supporters—a pattern of intimidation going back to employees’ first attempts to organize a union in 2002 and continuing to the present day. Indeed, many of those interviewed asked that their identity be kept secret—for fear that they would be fired if hotel managers knew they provided testimony to this Commission.

Testimony suggests that intimidation of Pacific Beach Hotel employees began as soon as the workers organized to create a union, in 2002. At this point hotel management brought in tough-looking, oversized “security guards”—dubbed by employees “strong arms” or “the men in black”—who were ever-present in the hotel: watching employees, noting who participated in union activities, stationing themselves in break rooms and clock-in areas, and conveying a sense of physical intimidation to pro-union employees. In the years since, employees reported that managers would watch and photograph union rallies, and that the hotel installed cameras in the employee cafeteria and break room, interpreted as means of spying on pro-union employees. Several employees stated that known or suspected pro-union workers were watched or followed in the hotel.

### **Attendance at Rallies**

**M**any employees reported that they want to participate in union rallies and other activities, but do not out of fear that their jobs are at risk. This fear has been greatly heightened since December 1, 2007, when 32 workers were summarily terminated—including most of the employees’ elected negotiating committee.

Several of those fired testified to this Commission, and each of them believes they were fired because of their union activism. One fired employee, a member of the bargaining committee, had previously been named “Employee of the Year” and was told by his immediate supervisor that he was terminated over her objections. Another terminated employee had a “perfect attendance” record and had been elevated by management to a leadership position in his department, but was let go after he became an outspoken union supporter. For the most part, those terminated were never given a reason for losing their jobs. But employees report that union supporters with high seniority and spotless work histories were terminated, while anti-union employees with lesser seniority or less positive track records were kept on. As Commission members, we are not attempting to pass legal judgment on the terminations of December 1, 2007. What we can say, however, is that this mass firing was widely understood as retaliation for union activity, and the legacy of these firings continues to strike fear into employees throughout the hotel.

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Following the termination of these 32 employees, all remaining employees were required to sign a form stating that they are “at will” employees—a statement that has been challenged by the federal Labor Board, but that employees nonetheless remember as a warning that they can be fired at any time.

The specter of watching 32 co-workers fired—including long-time employees, well respected by fellow employees, some of whom had previously received management accolades for their performance on the job but who had been identified as union leaders—has created a bone-deep climate of fear for the remaining employees. “I am a supporter of the union and the workers in the fight for better pay and working conditions,” explained one long-time employee. “But we are afraid of what can happen to us—like those who lost their jobs because they were active in the union. So I stopped joining the rallies.” “There are many employees who like the union,” explained another employee, “but they were silenced after the firing of the 32 workers.” It is a violation not only of labor law but of the most basic principles of freedom of speech for employees to have their jobs threatened for participating in a union rally while off the clock. Yet this is the reality that governs life at Pacific Beach Hotel.

Even inside the hotel, many employees stated that they and their co-workers are afraid to speak openly. “Nobody talks about the union in my department,” explained one long-term employee. “Everybody is scared because of the firing of the 32 workers.” Even beyond the specific issue of the union, employees report that they are afraid to raise *any* opinion critical of management practice. “If you complain, you’re out,” explained one employee.

## **Management’s Petition: Employees Sign Under Duress**

In July 2008, Pacific Beach Hotel issued a press release stating that a majority of employees had signed a petition declaring their opposition to unionization. The hotel presented this petition as representing the uncoerced free will of employees. But employees tell a different story. Multiple employees testified to this Commission that they and their co-workers signed this petition under duress.

“We were told that we might be terminated if we do not sign the decertification,” explained one employee. One veteran Filipino employee was told in reference to not signing, “*kaasikayto pay nga awan trabahona* (pitiful you who may lose your jobs).”

One employee reported that HTH Vice-President Robert Minicola and HR Director Linda Morgan told employees that if they supported the union, they would lose their jobs and be unable to find another job at the same wage. Another recounted a departmental meeting in which employees were told that “if you want to keep your job,” they should go to HR Director Morgan’s office and sign what she gave them. “They would scare us,” explained a long-term employee, “saying that ‘those who do not sign the union decertification will lose their jobs.’”

Finally, more than one employee testified that they were asked to sign a petition “to support the company,” but when they agreed to sign—out of fear of retaliation—they were asked to sign a blank sheet of paper, with text to be inserted later—presumably by management.

Again, it is not our place to pass legal judgment. But we have no reason to question the testimony of those who shared their experience with us. Based on everything we have learned, we believe the petition presented by management can in no way be taken as a free expression of employees’ will. On the contrary, the process through which signatures was collected was, apparently, just one more in a long chain of deeply disturbing strategies to intimidate hotel employees and silence their feelings about their workplace.

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## **Fear in Context**

**T**hroughout these interviews, we asked employees about their experiences of intimidation or coercion at the hotel. Some gave specific examples of direct threats; others described more indirect forms of intimidation, or simply a general atmosphere of hostility toward pro-union employees. But the power of even such vague forms of hostility was driven home for us by one veteran employee who is still working at the hotel.

When we asked if this person would feel comfortable wearing a union button to work, the employee laughed as if we were crazy. “Of course not—I don’t want to lose my job.” We would guess that all the employees we interviewed would have this same response if we’d asked them this question. And in this simple question of wearing a button, we see the intensity of the fear that governs the Pacific Beach Hotel. Wearing a button in support of one’s political views is such a simple, commonplace act—such a basic right of citizens in any democracy. The notion that one would have to worry about being fired for wearing the “wrong” button is something we expect in totalitarian countries, not in America. It is shocking to discover that people from our own community carry this fear with them every day when they walk into work.

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# Going Backwards: Increasing Costs, Frozen Wages

***Indeed, multiple employees testified that they went 10 years without a pay increase, with wage increases coming only after their union was established. This was a period in which hotel room rates increased significantly—increasing by nearly 50 percent between 1998-2005—as did the general cost of living.***

**T**he tourism industry is the single most important source of jobs in our state. The ability of hotel workers to support their families at a dignified standard of living is the key to maintaining the health of our community. Unfortunately, it appears that conditions at the Pacific Beach Hotel threaten to drag down standards in this most important industry.

Where employees report that wages at most Hawai'i hotels are regularly increased every 6-12 months, at the Pacific Beach Hotel wages were frozen for years on end. One recently hired employee insisted that "it's a lie that we are underpaid," and accused the union of "protecting the lazy employees." But overwhelmingly, employees across departments complained that, no matter how hard they worked, their wages never rose to industry standards. Indeed, multiple employees testified that they went *10 years* without a pay increase, with wage increases coming only after their union was established. This was a period in which hotel room rates increased significantly—increasing by nearly 50 percent between 1998-2005—as did the general cost of living.

With their wages frozen, Pacific Beach Hotel employees found themselves going backwards—finding it harder and harder to provide for their families. One 15-year employee recalled that, when he first started, his wages were higher than his wife's, who worked at a separate business. With his wages frozen, she slowly caught up and surpassed him; by 2007 he was making \$4 per hour less than she.

The impact of this long-term wage freeze is still felt by current employees. Housekeepers earn more than \$2 an hour below their counterparts at nearby hotels, a difference of nearly 15 percent based on wages workers reported. Indeed, hotel employees have had little or no opportunity to move up despite giving years of work to the hotel. One employee complained that after working more than 15 years, her coworkers earn virtually the same wage as recent hires.

## Discrimination on the Job

**A**part from the fear, surveillance and intimidation that so many Pacific Beach Hotel employees reported, our Commission found a widespread practice of on-the-job discrimination against employees suspected of being union supporters.

Nearly 80 percent of the employees we heard from described wide-ranging discrimination in hiring, firing, job assignments and hours of work. In a hotel, there are many forms of preferential treatment, and many opportunities for

managers to single out favorites for reward. Workers may be given more or less hours. They may be given better or worse days off. They may be punished for problems that management ignores in other employees. They may be assigned to customers who are harder to take care of or less likely to leave tips. Unfortunately, our Commission has found that all of these forms of favoritism and discrimination have been practiced at the Pacific Beach Hotel.

Employees report that pro-union workers are likely to get worse schedules and fewer hours of work. It is standard practice in Hawai'i hotels that work opportunity is offered according to seniority. At Pacific Beach, by contrast, employees report that managers have penalized union supporters by cutting their hours and giving the work to anti-union employees, even with lesser seniority.

In mid-2008, when the hotel asked employees to sign an anti-union petition, they created a clear distinction among employees that could be used as the basis for scheduling. "I did not sign," recalled one long-term employee. "As a result, I get less work time, and as a result, less pay."

Even when they are scheduled to work, known or suspected union supporters are sometimes given harder or less desirable assignments than their co-workers. It was reported, for instance, that pro-union housekeepers are more likely to be assigned to clean the cheaper rooms, where guests generally tip less and create more mess (thus making them harder to clean up after), while anti-union staff get the higher-tipping, easier-to-clean rooms.

The recent downturn in the economy has hurt the hotel industry throughout Hawai'i. But the Pacific Beach Hotel has suffered from problems above and beyond those of the economy as a whole, and its occupancy rate has consistently been significantly below that of average Honolulu hotels. This has led to a significant cutback in hours, and has apparently been the grounds for further discrimination in hiring and scheduling. Recently, many longtime employees have been scheduled for as little as one to two days per week of work. Yet at the same time, the hotel has hired new employees in the same job classifications and given them preferential hours. Numerous employees single out the executive housekeeper, stating that this supervisor "appears to favor [a few new] workers over us who have been working with the company for so many years already." While the Commission cannot verify this fact, it is a common belief among employees that this supervisor and other managers have hired relatives or others with whom they share personal connections, and whose opposition to unionization they believe is reliable. "There is much favoritism," stated one housekeeper. "They hired new anti-union, pro-management workers and kept us at home," stated one long-term housekeeper. "It is not fair."

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# Understaffed, Overworked, and Too Scared to Complain

***Employees at the Pacific Beach Hotel are not only paid less than at other Hawai‘i hotels—they are also required to work more. Of the employees we interviewed, 56 percent reported that their departments were understaffed, and that employees were being forced to take on a level of work that threatened their health and the quality of service they could provide.***

Employees at the Pacific Beach Hotel are not only paid less than at other Hawai‘i hotels—they are also required to work more. Of the employees we interviewed, 56 percent reported that their departments were understaffed, and that employees were being forced to take on a level of work that threatened their health and the quality of service they could provide. Such problems were reported in multiple areas of the hotel—including the restaurants, room cleaning, the front desk and the maintenance department. And nearly everyone reported that their workloads were significantly increased after the hotel broke off union negotiations on December 1, 2007.

“What used to be done by two people is now performed by one,” explained one employee. “I have to eat late lunch due to extra job. Sometimes, we workers would miss our lunch.” “Work condition after the [terminations] became really hard,” agrees another worker. “There were less people to do more work . . . As a reduction of workers, we now have to pick up more work . . . We can hardly keep up with work demand.”

In the kitchen, the hotel terminated its contract with an outside firm that cleaned the grills, stove and kitchen, and insisted that this work be taken on by kitchen staff, on top of their previous duties. Further, a number of cooks who left the hotel have not been replaced. Thus employees are now doing both the cooking and cleaning—with a reduced staff and no pay increase.

The most dramatic increase in workload was in the Housekeeping department. Prior to December 2007, the union had negotiated an agreement that Pacific Beach Hotel housekeepers would clean 15 or 16 rooms per day, depending on which wing of the hotel they were in. After the hotel broke off negotiations, management unilaterally increased the required workload: those who previously cleaned 15 rooms were now required to clean 17; those who did 16 are now required to clean 18. Further, there is no limit on the number of checkouts. Because rooms require much more intensive cleaning after a party checks out, other hotels often limit the number of checkouts per employee, or cut back their regular room quota to make checkout cleaning possible. But Pacific Beach does neither. The increase in work quotas has had a dramatic impact on the workforce.

Housekeepers are scrambling, running from one floor to another, cutting short their breaks or skipping them altogether, and exhausting themselves to try to meet the increased room quotas. Team cleaning—where two housekeepers would work together to clean a room—has become a thing of the past.

A standard shift at Pacific Beach Hotel is eight hours, with a thirty-minute lunch break. That leaves seven and a half hours for actual work. Some of that time must be spent stocking supplies, preparing one’s cart, and going up and down the hotel for lunch breaks, and the start and end of shifts. But even assuming that all seven and a half hours are devoted to cleaning rooms, this leaves housekeepers

with exactly 26 minutes per room—including checkouts as well as regular rooms. This time is reduced even further because housekeepers must scramble from one room to another—often spread across several floors of the hotel. “It is hard moving from one floor to another—it takes up so much of your time,” explains one housekeeper. “We sometimes have nine checkouts a day; average six. It is very hard. I make the beddings, pick up the rubbish, clean the room, bathroom, lanai; vacuum the floor, clean the sink, coffee pot.” In addition, cutbacks in the hotel’s supply budget mean that sheets and towels are not always immediately available, leaving housekeepers running between rooms to find the supplies they need. “It’s too much stress,” said one longtime housekeeper. “Some of my co-workers feel sick. I feel sick too. But I want to go to work even though I feel a little bit sick, so that my record will not be bad.”

In order to keep up with the increased workload, housekeepers often cut their 30-minute lunch breaks to 15 minutes, or work through their break entirely. Housekeepers almost unanimously report that it is simply impossible to clean this number of rooms in an eight-hour shift. Indeed, one employee reported that her co-workers even avoided bathroom breaks, feeling they couldn’t afford to urinate if they wanted to finish on time. At least one housekeeper also reported staying after the end of her shift and working for free—after clocking out—in order to complete her assigned rooms. “They treat us like we are just a machine,” complained one employee, “just there to work, like we don’t have any feeling at all.” Yet even machines break down: one housekeeper was taken away from the hotel in an ambulance after collapsing in the middle of her shift.

This issue of employees finishing rooms after their shift is done is particularly troubling, since it is illegal for employees to be made to work off-the-clock. But housekeeping is not the only department in which we heard of this. In one department, it is policy to never pay overtime, with the result that on particularly busy days workers have to finish their tasks without pay. While disturbing, such practices may not be surprising given the broader conditions at the hotel.

All of the problems housekeepers describe—working to the point of exhaustion; skipping breaks; working through part or all of mealtimes; and working past the end of their shifts to complete quotas—are a direct reflection of the climate of fear and intimidation that pervade the hotel. If there were a union contract with an impartial grievance procedure, such practices would be impossible. If employees had not witnessed the firing of their elected leaders—if they were not so fearful that their own hours could be cut or jobs eliminated—they would refuse to work under such conditions. Unfortunately, the housekeepers who told this Commission of intolerable conditions on the job are too scared to raise these issues with their supervisors—or to any legal authority. The ever-present fear that lays over this hotel is the hand that keeps these workers silent; and the engine that motivates them to do whatever is asked of them—legal or not—to keep their jobs. “We are really hard up,” explains one housekeeper, “but we need a job, so we just have to sacrifice.”

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# Deteriorating Quality of Service

***It appears that the low wages and short-staffing of employees may be part of a broader pattern of corner-cutting and disinvestment that may boost short-term net profits but that will end up threatening both the physical upkeep of the hotel and the quality of service it is able to provide visitors.***

Despite numerous overtures, the management of Pacific Beach Hotel declined to speak with our Commission, or to submit any documents or testimony regarding the issues of our investigation. Thus, it is impossible for us to know exactly what business strategies are driving management practices. However, the available evidence—from both employees and hotel guests—points in a troubling direction.

It appears that the low wages and short-staffing of employees may be part of a broader pattern of corner-cutting and disinvestment that may boost short-term net profits but that will end up threatening both the physical upkeep of the hotel and the quality of service it is able to provide visitors. These issues are, of course, of paramount concern to employees who need the Pacific Beach Hotel to be an attractive, financially successful property in order to maintain their future job security. We believe they are also of concern to our broader community. At a time when the tourism industry is under worldwide stress, none of us want to see a hotel that is alienating guests or degrading the reputation of Hawai‘i as a tourism destination.

Throughout our investigation, we were consistently impressed with employees’ dedication to doing their jobs well, to providing high quality service to guests, and to making the Pacific Beach Hotel a success. We believe that, with proper treatment of employees, reasonable workload quotas, and sufficient investment in the physical hotel, Pacific Beach Hotel can once again become an attractive and prosperous location. But we must begin with an honest assessment of current conditions, which are troubling indeed.

Many employees complain about the poor quality of the hotel’s infrastructure—the carpets, furniture, elevators, showers, bathrooms and kitchen equipment. Although the hotel has undertaken limited renovations, several employees told us that guests complain to them about the quality of the rooms—leaving workers both embarrassed for their product and worried for the long-term viability of their employer.

One night-shift employee reported that he is “frequently” called to move guests from one room to another because of bed bug attacks. “Conditions have definitely gotten worse from the guest’s point of view,” he worried. “We used to see a lot of repeat customers, but not anymore.”

While any hotel has problems from time to time, the frequency of complaints about the quality of service at the Pacific Beach Hotel is extremely troubling. A confidential survey of Pacific Beach Hotel employees found that over 40 percent of employees have had guests complain to them about the hotel. Moreover, employees themselves reported a very wide range of problems that stem from understaffing or underinvestment in the hotel. Nearly 80 percent of employees reported that they personally had seen significant problems with the carpeting or

furniture in the hotel. Seventy-five percent reported seeing stained, broken, rusty, or leaking equipment in the bathrooms, sinks, showers or air conditioner units of the hotel's guest rooms. Over one-quarter of all employees surveyed reported broken or non-functioning equipment in the hotel's kitchens; and one-third reported problems with equipment outside the kitchens. Finally, just over 70 percent of employees reported problems with the hotel's elevators that significantly impact both guests and workers.

The scope of problems reported by employees is troubling for anyone who cares about the future of this hotel. What's even more troubling is that employees' complaints exactly mirror those of the guests themselves. A comprehensive review of comments posted on the internet by tourists staying at the Pacific Beach Hotel found that more than half of the reviews included complaints about the hotel's quality. That a majority of guest comments contain complaints suggest that the hotel's labor relations may be part of a broader pattern of underinvestment and mismanagement—treating both the physical and human assets in a manner that wears them out, cutting every corner to the point of ultimately alienating the customers as well as the workers.

Many of the guest complaints focus on the same problems that trouble Pacific Beach employees. "The carpet was so filthy I didn't want to take my shoes off," says one 2008 visitor. "The first thing I did was go out and buy a cheap pair of sandals to walk around the room," says another. In recent months, the hotel has replaced the carpet in some of these rooms, but guest complaints do not stop there. A visitor from London reported that "the bedspread smelled of mold, the windows did not shut properly, the shower was a pathetic piece of cheap plastic, the bed was old and uncomfortable, the hotel lobby and restaurant had a foul fishy smell." A 2007 visitor from Utah complained about the furniture and bed. "We called the first day to see if there were any renovated rooms. The front desk person said 'Well you are staying in the newer tower...'" As workers voiced complaints about the bathrooms, so did guests. "The shower didn't drain properly and there was dirt and hair in all the nooks and crannies," complained one guest. "Bathroom had a rat running around the place," commented a 2007 visitor. "Please don't go. Make a reservation someplace else."

Unsurprisingly, it looks like understaffing and neglect of the property are driving away even the most loyal visitors. "I've stayed at the Pacific Beach Hotel in the past," explained one guest who visited in late 2008, "but each year the quality and cleanliness of the room seems to deteriorate. This year it appears to have hit rock bottom and I will not be returning... The room itself was filthy. There was rust all over the shower curtain hangers and bathroom mirrors were old and chipped. The extra pillows which were stored in the closet had a distinct mildew smell to them. This was because they were stored up against a wall which was experiencing moisture bubbles from what appeared to be sourced from the bathroom in the adjoining room. While the staff ... were all very pleasant... this will be the last time I stay at Pacific Beach."

In part, these problems have been compounded by the hotel's insistence that employees do more work in less time. Standard procedure for cleaning bathrooms, for instance, requires spraying mildew cleaner, then stepping out of the bathroom for a number of minutes to let the cleanser soak in before wiping

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down surfaces. When housekeepers are racing to complete rooms in the shortest time possible in order to complete daily quotas, it gets harder and harder to do this type of cleaning. One long-time housekeeper complained that rooms are dirtier than at any time in the past two decades. Management has cut back on amenities like soap and shampoo, and workers are forced to cut corners—sometimes skipping mildew cleaning, vacuuming or dusting—in order to get to all the rooms they’re supposed to. “Because of the overload,” explained another housekeeper, “it is very difficult to maintain high quality of service in the hotel.”

Despite all these problems, the employees we spoke to were unanimous in their opinion that the Pacific Beach Hotel can be restored to a high-quality, profitable and collegial operation. Employees repeatedly expressed their loyalty to the property, having devoted many years to making it a success, in some cases developing relationship with repeat visitors. Many remarked that they see the effort to obtain a fair labor contract as part of putting the Pacific Beach Hotel back on track. “If workers are happier,” explained one worker, “the guests will be happier, and the hotel will make more money.”

***We found those interviewed to be warm and positive employees. They appear to be loyal, faithful workers who really want the best for their hotel and the industry. They should be supported. From everything we’ve seen, we believe that signing a fair contract would benefit management, employees, the general public and the hotel industry of Hawai‘i.***

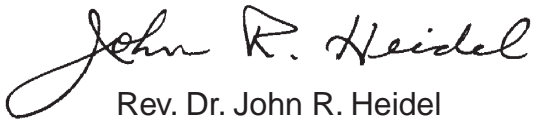
## **Conclusion: Commitment to a Better Future**

**T**he struggle at Pacific Beach Hotel has been going on for seven years. Yet the overwhelming majority of the workers we interviewed remain committed to winning a fair union contract and improving their collective work lives. “Despite the exhaustion from the long fight,” one longtime employee stated, “the workers still want the union to fight for fair treatment.” Moreover, said another, “If ... employees can stick together, better working conditions and better pay will come. This will also be good for the owners.”

In the course of our investigation, we were struck by how these employees—despite everything they’ve been through, and despite their anger at mistreatment—remain committed to helping make the Pacific Beach Hotel a top-quality, successful and prosperous business. One might think that these employees would feel only bitterness and have no dedication to their workplace. The opposite is true. We found those interviewed to be warm and positive employees. They appear to be loyal, faithful workers who really want the best for their hotel and the industry. They should be supported. From everything we’ve seen, we believe that signing a fair contract would benefit management, employees, the general public and the hotel industry of Hawai‘i.



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*University of Hawai'i at Mānoa*



Mari Yoshihara  
*Professor*  
*Department of American Studies*  
*University of Hawai'i at Mānoa*

June 3, 2009

Dear Employees of Pacific Beach Hotel:

We are writing to invite you to offer testimony on your experience as an employee of Pacific Beach Hotel.

As you may be aware, Pacific Beach Hotel has been the subject of one of the longest lasting and most contentious labor disputes in Hawai'i. There have been many allegations made regarding how employees are treated and how the hotel is managed, both in legal proceedings before the federal Labor Board, and in the press and the local community.

In order to get to the bottom of this issue and provide an accurate assessment of conditions at Pacific Beach Hotel, our commission was established. The Investigation Commission on Labor and Management Practices at Pacific Beach Hotel—sometimes referred to informally as “the Truth Commission”—is made up of local community, religious and academic leaders. We are not lawyers or judges and we have no legal jurisdiction related to the hotel. Nor are we attempting to second-guess the legal judgment of Labor Board judges or other legal authorities. Rather, our hope is to serve the Hawai'i community by providing an impartial account of working conditions and management practices at the hotel. The members of the Commission are:

- Rev. Sam Cox, Pastor, United Methodist Church;
- Rev. Dr. John Heidel, former Chaplain of Punahou School and current chairman, Interfaith Alliance Hawai'i;
- Dr. Raymund Liongson, professor of Philippines Studies at Leeward Community College;
- Dr. Robert Perkinson, professor of American Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa; and
- Dr. Mari Yoshihara, professors of American Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa.

Our Commission has only one goal: to get at the truth of what's been happening at Pacific Beach Hotel, and to share that truth with the broader community.

Although some workers have testified before the National Labor Relations Board judge on these topics, other employees have not yet had a chance to tell their stories.

We are writing to invite you to testify before our Commission. We want to stress that testimony from any employee is welcome, regardless of your position on management practices, unionization, or any other issue. Your testimony can be provided confidentially, and your identity can be kept confidential from the public beyond the members of the Commission themselves. We are also happy to arrange to take testimony at a time and place that is convenient for you. Finally, our Commission includes members fluent in Ilocano and Japanese; workers who would be more comfortable providing testimony in these languages will have no problem.

We are hoping to take testimony and conclude our investigation by the end of June 2009. If you are interested in providing testimony, please contact me at 808-779-3606 or by e-mail at [samcox@Hawai'i.rr.com](mailto:samcox@Hawai'i.rr.com) to arrange a date and time.

Thank you, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Rev. Sam Cox, Chair  
*Investigation Commission on Labor and Management  
Practices at Pacific Beach Hotel*

June 3, 2009

Mr. Robert Minicola  
2490 Kalakaua Avenue  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96815

Dear Mr. Minicola,

We are writing to invite you and members of your management team to offer testimony to our Commission.

As you are aware, Pacific Beach Hotel has been the subject of one of the longest lasting and most contentious labor disputes in Hawai'i. Conflicting accounts of working conditions, labor relations and management practice have been given both in legal proceedings and in the media.

In order to get to the bottom of this issue and provide an accurate assessment of conditions at Pacific Beach Hotel, our commission was established. The Investigation Commission on Labor and Management Practices at Pacific Beach Hotel—sometimes referred to informally as the “Truth Commission”—is made up of local community, religious and academic leaders. We are not lawyers or judges and we have no legal jurisdiction related to the hotel. Nor are we attempting to second-guess the legal judgment of Labor Board judges or other legal authorities. Rather, our hope is to serve the Hawai'i community by providing an impartial account of working conditions and management practices at the hotel. The members of the Commission are:

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- Dr. Robert Perkinson, professor of American Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa; and
- Dr. Mari Yoshihara, professors of American Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa.

Our Commission has only one goal: to get at the truth of what's been happening at Pacific Beach Hotel, and to share that truth with the broader community.

We recently sent a letter to employees of Pacific Beach Hotel inviting them to offer testimony to the Commission. In addition, we would like to extend a personal invitation to yourself to meet with one or more members of the Commission and provide your own testimony on the subject. We would of course likewise be happy to take testimony from any other members of your management team.

We are hoping to take testimony and conclude our investigation by the end of June 2009. If you are interested in providing testimony, please contact me at 808-779-3606 or by e-mail at [samcox@Hawai'i.rr.com](mailto:samcox@Hawai'i.rr.com) to arrange a date and time.

Thank you, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Rev. Sam Cox, Chair  
*Investigation Commission on Labor and Management  
Practices at Pacific Beach Hotel*

Rev. Sam Cox, Chairperson  
*United Methodist Church*

Rev. Sam Cox is an ordained minister with the United Methodist Church. Previous to retirement 1998, he was the Executive Director of Hale Kipa for Runaway and Homeless Youth for 23 years and before that Moili‘ili Community Center for nine years.

Although he is officially retired, he serves as the Visitation Pastor for Kailua United Methodist Church. He serves on the Board of Kokua Council for Senior Citizens, the Interfaith Alliance Hawai‘i and is the Coordinator for The Interfaith Open Table.

He was declared a Hawai‘i Living Treasurer in 2008 by the Honpa Hongwanji Buddhist Mission for his work with runaway youth and interfaith understanding.

Rev. Dr. John R. Heidel  
*Interfaith Alliance Hawai‘i*

Rev. Dr. John Heidel is the President of The Interfaith Alliance of Hawai‘i. He served as the Chaplain of Punahou School for 32 years until his retirement in June 2001. He also spent five years as Minister of Youth at Central Union Church in Honolulu. He is an ordained United Church of Christ minister.

He is a member of the Hawai‘i Conference of Religions for Peace; a member of Christ Church Uniting Disciples and Presbyterians, Kailua; and a founder of Religious Leaders for Assisted Dying. Dr. Heidel is also a member of the Executive Committee for the Hawai‘i Council of Churches, and on the Board of Directors for Family Promise Hawai‘i.

Dr. Raymund Ll. Liongson  
*Professor, Arts and Humanities  
Leeward Community College*

Dr. Raymund Ll. Liongson is professor and coordinator of the Philippine Studies program at UH-Leeward Community College, and lectures at the University of Hawai‘i West O‘ahu. He is Project Director for a new initiative, *Sulong-Aral*, a federally funded project to help Filipino students at Leeward CC advance in their academic careers. He is a faculty senator at Leeward CC and the chair of the International Education Committee at the College.

Dr. Liongson is an active community worker and volunteer. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Filipino Community Center. He is involved in community issues, particularly those relating to labor and human/civil rights. Dr. Liongson is past president of the University of the Philippines Alumni Association and the Filipino Coalition for Solidarity. He was appointed by then Governor Benjamin Cayetano to serve as one of the commissioners in the Filipino Centennial Celebrations Commission.

Robert Perkinson  
*Associate Professor*  
*Dept. of American Studies*  
*University of Hawai'i at Mānoa*

Robert Perkinson is an associate professor and graduate chair in the Department of American Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

He grew up in Jackson, Wyoming and has his PhD from Yale University. He conducts research on U.S. political history and foreign policy and has just finished a book on the history of imprisonment and race in American history, *Texas Tough: The Rise of America's Prison Empire*. He serves on the board of the Drug Policy Forum of Hawai'i.

Mari Yoshihara  
*Professor*  
*Dept. of American Studies*  
*University of Hawai'i at Mānoa*

Mari Yoshihara is Professor of American Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. She is a bilingual and bicultural scholar and writer who specializes in U.S.-Asian relations, U.S. social and cultural history, and gender studies.

She is the author of "Embracing the East" and "Musicians from a Different Shore," as well as many books and articles in Japanese. She has previously served on the Board of the University of Hawai'i Professional Assembly.