



## Statement of the University of Hawai'i Committee for the Dan and Maggie Inouye Distinguished Chair in Democratic Ideals on the selection of Alicia Garza

23 September 2020

The committee for the Dan and Maggie Inouye Distinguished Chair in Democratic Ideals, consisting of the deans and faculty representatives from the William S. Richardson School of Law and the Department of American Studies, chose civil rights activist Alicia Garza to serve as the chairholder this fall because of her established record as a leader in the movement for racial justice. We are honored and proud to welcome her voice and insights as our community engages in the same difficult conversations around race and inequality that are now taking place at a national level.

The Inouye Chair is jointly administered by the William S. Richardson School of Law and the Department of American Studies at UH Mānoa. It honors the late Senator and his wife, and its endowment brings artists, intellectuals, and public officials to Hawai'i to share their work and to advance conversations that strengthen our democracy. Since its establishment in 2005, the chair has hosted a wide range of figures, including Citigroup chairman Richard Parsons, national poet laureate W. S. Merwin, Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Viet Thanh Nguyen, White House economic advisor Christina Romer, Native poet Allison Hedge Coke, and many others.

Ms. Garza is a fitting addition to that list of distinguished recipients. She is currently Special Projects Director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance and Principal at the Black Futures Lab. She has received numerous national awards, such as being named, along with Black Lives Matter co-founders Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi, to *Time* magazine's 100 Most Influential People of 2020 list, to *Fortune* magazine's "40 Under 40" list in 2020, and one of *Glamour* magazine's women of the year in 2016. Her forthcoming book, *The Purpose of Power* (Random House, 2020), explores how community organizations can contribute toward building a more inclusive, equitable, and genuinely democratic future for everyone.

Some have raised questions about Ms. Garza's appointment as chair because of her association with the Black Lives Matter movement, which she helped inspire on social media. Some of the questions and criticisms appear to be based on recent disinformation campaigns against Black Lives Matter. Our fact checking has found the inflammatory charges to be scurrilous and false. For example, a [New York Times investigation](#) has debunked an allegation that the Black Futures Lab receives funding from the Chinese government.

Ms. Garza addressed this particular charge on her [Twitter account](#): "These attempts to discredit us are not only false, but a xenophobic, racist attack on the entire racial justice movement. This transparent slander will not deter us from our mission to make Black communities powerful — in politics, our economy and more."

While we recognize that some members of our community will disagree with Ms. Garza's views, we believe that her voice will make an important contribution to the democratic ideals for which this chair was established. We are committed to showcasing engaging, important visitors from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. We look forward to a vibrant conversation about the past, present, and future of our democracy.