

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Native Hawaiian scholar awarded Allan Nevins Prize for dissertation

KAMUELA, Hawai‘i—[April 13, 2010]—Dr. Noelani Arista, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Assistant Professor in History and 2008 Mellon-Hawai‘i Doctoral Fellow, has been awarded the prestigious Allan Nevins Prize by the Society of American Historians for the best-written doctoral dissertation on an American subject.

Arista’s dissertation, “Histories of Unequal Measure: Euro-American Encounters with Hawaiian Governance and Law 1793-1827,” focuses on the early connections between Hawai‘i and New England and addresses questions of law and jurisdiction in early nineteenth-century Hawai‘i. As the Prize-winning dissertation, this groundbreaking work will be considered by university presses for publication as a book.

"Arista has a capacious and original intellect, and a knack for seeing familiar sources and problems in wholly new ways," said Dr. Jane Kamensky, professor of history and women and gender studies at Brandeis University and Arista’s mentor for the dissertation.

“Her stunning dissertation, ‘Histories of Unequal Measure,’ expands the boundaries of early American history, reaching into the Pacific, to London, and beyond. ‘Histories of Unequal Measure’ forces us to rethink the ways North American history and Hawaiian history have intersected with and shaped one another over time,” Kamensky said.

Kamensky compared Arista’s work to an earlier Nevins Prize winner, Willie Lee Rose, who won the prize in 1963. “Rose’s pioneering ‘Rehearsal for Reconstruction’ brought African-American history into the mainstream of modern American thought. Her book was a finalist for the National Book Award and won the Francis Parkman Prize when it was published in 1965. The Allan Nevins Prize launched Rose’s brilliant career, one of the most important of the 20th century. I expect we’ll say the same thing about Arista in the 21st century,” Kamensky said.

Arista received her doctorate in American History from Brandeis University in December 2009. She also holds a master’s degree in Religion from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, where she is now an assistant professor of American and Hawaiian History. Arista has extensive experience in both Hawaiian and English newspaper archives and is an experienced and published translator.

She was among the first cohort in Mellon-Hawai‘i Fellowship Program, which was established by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Kamehameha Schools, and The Kohala Center in the

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academic year 2008–2009. The Kahiau Foundation has joined in supporting the program for the academic year 2010–2011. The program supports Native Hawaiian scholars who are early in their academic careers and others who are committed to the advancement of scholarship on Hawaiian cultural and natural environments, Hawaiian history, politics, and society. It provides Fellows the opportunity to complete their dissertations or to publish original research.

“Thanks to the trustees of Kamehameha Schools and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and to Dr. Hamabata and the rest of the diligent staff at The Kohala Center, I was able to finish my dissertation in time in order to qualify for this prestigious national history prize,” Arista said. “I think this bodes very well for mainstreaming Hawaiian scholarship into broader fields and disciplines, like American History. It speaks volumes about the support that the Mellon-Hawai‘i Fellowship and The Kohala Center can provide in supporting up and coming scholars such as myself, who are seeking their education beyond our shores, and in disciplines that do not, at first glance, seem to support a space for Hawaiian scholarship!”

“Arista’s award is testament to the new fellowship program’s success,” said Matthews Hamabata, Ph.D., staff director of the Mellon-Hawai‘i Fellowship Program and executive director of The Kohala Center.

Robert Lindsey, Jr., chairman of the Fellowship’s Senior Advisory Board said, "The granting of the Allan Nevins History Prize for the best doctoral dissertation on an American subject validates our interest in supporting the development of intellectual leadership from Hawai‘i—for Hawai‘i and the world. It is extremely rewarding to see young Hawaiian thinkers and writers enliven the academy with the vitality of indigenous perspectives and indigenous scholarship."

Arista was awarded the Prize in a ceremony on April 10 at the Organization of American Historians Conference in Washington D.C.

The Kohala Center is an independent, not-for-profit center for research and education. As an institution committed to expanding educational and employment opportunities by caring for and celebrating Hawai‘i Island’s natural and cultural landscape, The Center supports efforts at developing island leadership for Hawai‘i’s research and educational institutions. See www.kohalacenter.org.

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[photo caption]

Dr. Noelani Arista, Allan Nevins Prize recipient