

KOKUA HAWAII ORAL HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEW WITH  
**James Ng**

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*James Ng*  
*Photograph courtesy of Ng family*

*Native Hawaiian James Ng had been a member of the California motorcycle street gang Gypsy Jokers, but had left the group to return home to Hawaii with his wife Roseanne. After meeting with fellow Kamehameha School alumnus Soli Niheu, Ng decided to join Kokua Hawaii in its fight against the eviction of farmers and Native Hawaiians in Kalama Valley and was arrested on May, 11, 1971. Ng was interviewed by Gary T. Kubota on March 6 and March 7, 2017, via telephone from his home in Bainbridge Island, Washington.*

GK: When and where were you born?

JN: I was born in 1943 at St. Francis Hospital in Honolulu.

GK: Where were you raised?

JN: I was raised in Nanakuli and later in Kaneohe by my parents James and Catherine Ng. My dad worked as an electrician at Pearl Harbor.

GK: So, when you're growing up, what schools did you go to?

JN: In the beginning, I never went to school that much. I went to the beach. So, my parents decided that I should be going to a school in town in Honolulu. So, they enrolled me in St. Theresa Catholic School in Liliha.

GK: Sounds like a far commute?

JN: Yeah. We were living in Nanakuli. I would wake up early in the morning, 4:30 a.m. My dad would drop me off at St. Theresa, then drive to work at Pearl Harbor. Eventually, we moved from Hawaiian Homestead in Nanakuli to Kailua, then bought a house in Kaneohe. I went to St. Anne's School in Kaneohe. Then later, I went to Kamehameha High School in the 1960s.

GK: Did you know any persons who later became members of Kokua Hawaii?

JN: I knew Soli Niheu. We were in the same ROTC company together at Kamehameha High School. He and I were PFCs (Private First Class).

GK: ROTC was mandatory for students?

JN: Yeah, it was. Soli later became a non-commissioned officer. Later, after graduation from Kamehameha, I moved to California and attended San Jose City College, then San Jose State. Guess who's there too?

GK: Soli?

JN: He was living with his brother David. He was ahead of me in classes. He was studying business administration. The next time I saw him was on Oahu after I got married to my second wife Roseanne. We decided to move to Hawaii, just two months before the Kalama Valley arrest. We were both living in Kaneohe. We were thinking of going back to California, when I ran into Soli at the airport.

GK: What happened?

JN: He asked me what I was doing, and I told him I was just about, going to get on the jet airplane and go back to California. And he says to me, "No, you cannot. We're in Kalama Valley. We're helping Hawaiians and this guy George Santos. He's a pig farmer. They want to evict him to build high-end homes. You should come in the valley with us."

GK: So what did you say?

JN: I asked Soli, "Do the farmers own the land?" He said, "No, it's not the point. It's Bishop Estate land, but Bishop Estate is displacing a lot of people." And I had relatives that were displaced by Bishop Estate. That happened in Waimanalo in the late 1950s and early 1960s. I mean the Bishop Estate was set up to help educate Hawaiians. Yet they were kicking out Hawaiians on the land.

GK: (Chuckles)

JN: So anyway, he tells me how to get to the valley. The entrance is on the opposite side of Sandy Beach. And I said, "OK."

GK: Right.

JN: I think it was Mother's Day, we went in, and they were having a big luau by George's house. The luau was at Moose Lui's house.

GK: Cool.

JN: The normal road was blocked by cops. We got in through side trails. Some guys came

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out on dirt bikes, and I got on one. And Roseanne got on the other. They packed us into the valley. The next morning, the cops were there. They arrested all the demonstrators, all the Kokua Hawaii people.

GK: How were you both arrested?

JN: Roseanne didn't want to go up the ladder on the roof, so she stayed on the porch. I went up on the ladder with Ed Ching.

GK: What was your understanding about why you were getting arrested?

JN: We were just against local people being displaced. They had no place to go. We decided we're gonna help fight for their residence in there.

GK: How did you feel?

JN: I didn't like seeing local Hawaiian people being displaced. I saw a lot of that going on. It was just a class issue at that time. I realized that being younger that if you were poor in Hawaii, you were at the mercy of the rich, especially big landowners.

GK: At one point, I know you were with some kind of biker gang or biker club or something. What was that about?

JN: Yeah, in San Jose, at that time, it was the rival club of the Hell's Angels. We were called the "Gypsy Jokers."

GK: How big was it?

JN: We were the second largest bike gang in California, besides the Hell's Angels.

GK: How did you fall into that?

JN: Well, I bought a motorcycle, and I ran into a guy who lived down the road from me in Santa Clara. He introduced me to another guy who was in the Gypsy Jokers, and they helped me rebuild my motorcycle. There were some Hawaiians I knew who were in the Gypsy Jokers.

GK: Once you were in Kalama Valley, how did you feel?

JN: At first, I was kinda skeptical about getting in there. I didn't know how we were gonna get out if the police were blocking the way to keep people out.

GK: Were you afraid of getting arrested?

JN: (Laughing) Oh, I've been arrested before. No, I wasn't afraid of getting arrested. I

figured it was gonna be inevitable.

GK: Did you get a chance to talk to residents?

JN: We talked with Moose Lui, Black and Anne Richards. Moose was explaining to us why the police were out front, blocking the entrance and we talked it over. There was a luau. I was kinda hungry for Hawaiian food.

GK: Did you see Soli?

JN: Roseanne and I finally saw him that night. He introduced us to George Santos. George was nonstop talk about his fight with Bishop Estate.

GK: Did you meet Joy Ahn in Kalama Valley? What did you think of her?

JN: Yeah, Roseanne and I did. Soli took us to meet her because she was an alumna of Kamehameha High School. He said he wanted me to meet his sister that was a little older than us but fighting for the same cause. So, I met Joy Ahn that night.

GK: Did you know she was a former congressional aide to Patsy Mink and a teacher at Waianae High School?

JN: Yeah. It made me think if someone like her was there, you knew the issue wasn't just some Portuguese pig farmer's personal vendetta against Bishop Estate. It had to be a bigger issue.

GK: Where were you when you got arrested?

JN: I was on the top of the roof facing the police officers. In fact, one of the police officers was a 1959 graduate of Kamehameha. He recognized me, and I recognized him.

GK: Did he say anything?

JN: It was kinda hard. He was just motioning like, "What the hell are you doing up there?" (Chuckles)

GK: Then what happened?

JN: I remember we began singing the Kamehameha School Alma Mater. I thought it was ironic. Here we were singing the Alma Mater song of the school that Bishop Estate funded, and we were against the officials of Bishop Estate.

GK: What did you think about the arrest itself?

JN: Just the night before, I asked them what would they charge us with if they arrested

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us? They said trespassing, a misdemeanor, so it didn't bother me about being arrested.

GK: After the arrest and the newspaper articles, did your mom and dad say anything to you?

JN: (Laughter) Oh, yeah. They were upset. "What the hell are you doing and getting arrested for? I thought you were all through with that kind of stuff." (Laughter) Because riding with the motorcycling club, I was in and out of jail all the time in California.

GK: What did you tell them?

JN: I told them, "I'm . . . I'm going to jail because I don't believe what they're doing is right." They said, "But you know the people of Bishop Estate. You cannot fight City Hall. . . It's not the farmer's land. They're leasing. . . If Bishop Estate is gonna sell the land, well, it's their land to sell, not the people's." My cousin who worked at Halawa Prison told me, "You're fighting a losing battle."

GK: It is a big corporation. Do you think the arrests including yours in Kalama Valley made a difference?

JN: Yeah. It made a difference, especially among Hawaiian people who were becoming involved in land issues.

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