The Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation mourns the passing of Aunty Colette Machado. For more than 50 years, Aunty Colette embodied aloha ʻāina. She was a visionary leader for pono stewardship of Hawaiʻi lands and waters to achieve ʻāina momona and a thriving lāhui. Aunty Colette was a masterful advocate and leader, employing complex strategies to effect change and achieve justice, including more than one legal battle.

“Colette and my dad’s love story began in the late 1970s working for the ʻāina and the lāhui with other grassroots leaders on Molokaʻi. I was that small kid marching and holding protest signs with them and accompanying them to meet with the other OG aloha ʻāina warriors. Mesmerized, I’d watch them strategize the major battles to protect our wai; defend the land from prospective resort developers who wanted to pave our ʻāina like Waikīkī; and stand in solidarity with the lāhui to protect iwi kūpuna when no laws were in place yet to defend them. Colette consistently led the charge as a wahine koa, epitomizing the strength of our women leaders birthed from Molokaʻi Nui A Hina. Over time, I watched her leadership evolve into the arena of community-based economic development, growing organizations that strengthen community capacity and an economy reflective of aloha ʻāina. Her life is a beautiful tapestry of an incredible vision laid out over the course of several decades. From the outpouring of love and testimonies shared with me since her passing, I am reminded of the enormous depth and breadth of her legacy and the numerous lives she touched. For my part, I am completely indebted to her. I’m a lawyer, an advocate, and a teacher of Hawaiian rights and justice today because of her. I will know her as a woman who loved my father; a woman who pushed my limits and challenged me beyond what I thought I was capable of; a woman who took no half-measures; a woman of extraordinary generosity, who both loved and battled tenaciously and ferociously.” Malia Akutagawa, Associate Professor of Law and Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawaiʻi and former NHLC attorney.

Aunty Colette’s legacy includes more than one generation of advocates inspired by her to aloha ʻāina, including all of us at NHLC.

We pray for comfort for Uncle Myron and the Machado ʻohana, and we mahalo them for sharing Aunty Colette with the community.