



BLACK ROCKS AND RAINBOWS Audiobook Captures The Coming-of-Age Story Of An Adventurer Who Changed Hawaii Forever

The journey of a lifetime told in the audiobook *BLACK ROCKS AND RAINBOWS* begins with a ship: “An enormous canoe, with great white wings like a magnificent bird.” This is the merchant schooner *Triumph* from New England, anchored offshore by what is now known as the Big Island of Hawaii, and in 1807, the sight of it captivates a young Hawaiian boy’s imagination and spirit of adventure. Fifteen-year-old Hiapo Opukahaia, orphaned as the result of a war between two rival island chiefs, has been contemplating his future. He dives into the sea and swims to the ship, where he is invited to stay for dinner. When the captain asks if he would like to go to America, he nods Yes.

The audiobook *BLACK ROCKS AND RAINBOWS*, an historical novel edited and narrated by actress Suzanne Ford, was written by her late mother, Susan C. Riford. The audiobook chronicles the gripping story of Hiapo – renamed “Henry” by his fellow crewmen – whose literal and figurative journey leads to the greatest adventure of all: a hunger for knowledge which ultimately changes Hawaii forever. The title refers to the lava rocks and beautiful rainbows of the Big Island, the vision of which Henry carries with him for the rest of his life.

Working as a cabin boy, Henry does encounter true-life adventures – pirates, storms – during the ship’s year-long voyage, via the Seal Islands and China, back to its home port of New Haven, Connecticut. He also learns to read and write English, unlocking his quest for further knowledge; upon arriving in New Haven, Henry realizes he desperately wants to keep learning, but has no idea how.

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Weeping one day on the steps of Yale College, he is found by a kind student, a relative of the school's president. Taken under the president's wing, Henry becomes a scholar. He wants to translate written works from English into Hawaiian, but at the time, there is no such written Hawaiian language. So he begins to apply the principles in an American spelling book – devised by Noah Webster, of dictionary fame – to the sounds of his native tongue. In doing so, he creates the alphabet-spelling-grammar system that is the basis for the Hawaiian written language in use to this day.

Sadly, Henry dies of typhus fever in 1818 at the age of 26. He is buried in Cornwall, Connecticut, until 1993, when he makes one final journey: a group of Hawaiian residents has successfully crusaded for the return of his remains to the Big Island for permanent burial. Hiapo Opukahaia has come home.

Suzanne Ford was inspired to create the audiobook *BLACK ROCKS AND RAINBOWS* originally written by her late mother, Susan Riford, a prolific author of children's books and plays and founder of what is now known as the Rev Theatre Company in Auburn, New York. Her mother became fascinated with Henry's story when she moved to Maui. "The novel was her final work before she died," Ford says. "I took on the unfinished manuscript, wrote the last chapter, had a few copies printed and recorded the audiobook. The story is such a fascinating and compelling adventure, fun to listen to for anyone, but especially for young adults."

Ford is working on an updated book version of *BLACK ROCKS AND RAINBOWS*. "It's noteworthy that there has never been a full-length historical novel about Opukahaia, who is such a major figure in Hawaiian history and whose story carries a timeless message about the importance of education," she observes. "Especially in this era of the dawning of deeper recognition of indigenous peoples and their heritage, this as yet unfamiliar but universal coming-of-age story is resonant and relevant to youth of any culture."

About the Creator

Suzanne Ford is an actress and writer working in film, television, and theatre. She has performed in more than 100 stage productions in New York and Los Angeles, on tour and in regional theatres around the country. Her many film credits include the Duplass Brothers' recent hit *Manson Family Vacation*; *You, Me and Dupree* and *The Apparition*, and she has appeared on such television shows as *Grace and Frankie*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *Criminal Minds*, *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia* and *Friends*. She has been an advertising copywriter, has written a biography of Mel Gibson, screenplays, and cookbooks, and has ghostwritten memoirs. She and her husband live in the Hollywood Hills.

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Listen to a sample of the audiobook here:

https://www.amazon.com/Black-Rocks-Rainbows-Adventures-Opukahaia/dp/B08S58DNKW/ref=sr_1_1?crd=2250DQNT6KKE5&dchild=1&keywords=black+rocks+and+rainbows&qid=1617483025&srefix=black+rocks+and+rainbows%2Caps%2C208&sr=8-1

And here:

<https://soundcloud.com/user-158936241/black-rocks-and-rainbows>

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