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Harassment Unchecked at Army Hotel

By [Kari Lydersen](#)



The military has ignored sexual harassment charges at the Hale Koa Hotel in Honolulu.

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For active and retired military members and their families, the U.S. Army-owned Hale Koa Hotel in Honolulu is a place to relax in a tropical paradise at affordable rates.

For hotel parking manager and veteran John “Jack” Lloyd, it appears to be a place to touch and proposition female workers, mostly Filipina—according to complaints filed with the military’s Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) office and testimony from several workers.

When Ernestine Gonda worked for Lloyd in the garage in 2004 and 2005, she says he constantly harassed her—rubbing her back, offering to take care of her financially and even giving her an Easter card depicting a man with an erection.

Gonda, 39, complained to a human resources manager, but to no avail.

“They said, ‘Are you sure you didn’t go out with him?’ I said, ‘Do you really think I would go out with an old man like that?’ They said I didn’t have enough proof. But I had a perverted card with his signature on it. That’s not proof?”

She later complained to EEO officials at the Army’s Fort Shafter in Honolulu. They told her it was too late to take action—even though she told them the harassment was ongoing. The Army Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command, which owns at least four military hotels worldwide, did not respond to questions.

Remarkably, if Gonda had followed the hotel’s stated policy, she would have had to report her grievances to Lloyd himself, formerly the EEO counselor at the hotel. (A Hale Koa spokesman confirmed that Lloyd was formerly the EEO counselor but declined to comment further.)

When nothing was done, Gonda took a pay cut to become a cashier so she wouldn’t have to work directly with Lloyd. But she says he still managed to harass her, and she later left the hotel altogether.

“It was so stressful, it took a toll on my physical health,” she says.

Joyce Alcover, a Filipina immigrant who has worked at the hotel since 2002, says she endured similar harassment.

“Jack would make lewd jokes and lewd comments, he would kiss my hand and grab me, things that weren’t conducive to a work environment,” says Alcover, 30.

According to documents filed with the EEO, Lloyd told Alcover he loved her and badgered her to take a vacation with him. He also mocked her for “wiggling too much” with her husband, and said she was tired at work from “too much action with your husband last night.”

Despite repeated complaints to the hotel’s general assistant manager and human resources department, Lloyd remained at his job in the garage, and—according to Alcover and Gonda—retaliated against them for reporting him. They say that after they

came forward, he would reprimand them for being minutes late, while letting other employees slide.

Alcover was pregnant at the time and suffering severe morning sickness, but she says Lloyd wouldn't let her switch shifts or reduce her workload.

"Every time I worked the graveyard [shift] I was throwing up, so because I couldn't function well, he was telling me I was a bad supervisor," she says.

Lloyd was eventually reassigned, but Alcover says he continued to visit the garage and taunt her and other workers.

At an event organized by the interfaith group Faith Action for Community Equity (FACE), which works on a variety of justice and labor issues in the state, Alcover met the Rev. Stanley Bain and told him about the problems with Lloyd.

"She was afraid at first to do anything. She didn't want to lose her job and she was worried what her husband would think," Bain says of Alcover. "But then when she did come forward, it helped others come forward too."

Meanwhile, organizers with the union UNITE-HERE!, which has represented more than 800 hotel workers at Hale Koa since 2006, were also hearing multiple complaints against Lloyd.

In the last six months, seven female workers have filed complaints with Fort Shafter's EEO office about Lloyd's alleged harassment and the hotel administration's failure to adequately respond.

Four workers have filed a class-action complaint, the precursor to a class-action lawsuit, alleging sex and race discrimination. (One of the women is Vietnamese and the others are either Filipina immigrants or of Filipina ancestry.)

"It's very hard for these women to speak out," says Amy Agbayani, former chair of the Hawaii Civil Rights Commission, who has become a vocal advocate for the workers. "The majority of them are not native English speakers, and because of the special military status, dealing with a very powerful institution and not being familiar with how it works, they are especially intimidated and vulnerable."

Sexual abuse and rape in military culture—and a lack of action by military authorities—are long-standing problems, brought to light with the Tailhook scandal in 1991, when 83 women and seven men reported being sexually assaulted during a bacchanalian conference of naval officers at the Las Vegas Hilton.

The organization Stop Military Rape reports that 66 percent of women in the military report sexual assault and 27 percent report being raped, with only 2 percent to 3 percent of alleged perpetrators ever court-martialed.

“Cases of sexual harassment that are difficult to bring anywhere are even more difficult within a military structure,” says Linda Fischer, author of *Ultimate Power: Enemy Within the Ranks*, a book about her rape at Fort Shafter while she was in the military.

In early September, Army officials held a sexual harassment awareness workshop for hotel employees. Community interfaith leaders asked to have a role in shaping the agenda, but the military refused, organizers say. So instead, FACE held a vigil outside the hotel.

“The specialists giggled through most of the training,” says Kim Harman, an organizer with UNITE-HERE! “They did their best to make it sound like the people who make complaints are just strange people having a bad day.”

Kari Lydersen writes for the *Washington Post* out of the Midwest bureau and just published a book, *Out of the Sea and Into the Fire: Latin American-US Immigration in the Global Age*.