

## **Terminology Guidelines: Language Forms Opinion**

*“The word “leper” should no longer be used to describe a human being. Cancer is also the name of a disease, but we would never refer to anyone who has or who once had cancer as “a cancoid.” Let’s make a promise to the people of Kalaupapa that we will no longer use demeaning words from a bygone era. Let’s respect each other as fellow human beings.”*

**-- Kuulei Bell, first President of Ka ‘Ohana O Kalaupapa**

- Every culture has language that promotes dignity and language that is hurtful. To change the traditional social image of leprosy, it is important to use language that promotes dignity, recognizes a person as an individual separate from the disease and focuses on ability than disability. There are many words that were once common in everyday language that are no longer used because we have come to realize that these words are hurtful and offensive.
- A person should be referred to by their name whenever possible. If it is relevant to indicate that they had leprosy, use the phrase “person affected by leprosy” or “person challenged by leprosy, placing the person first. For those who prefer the term “Hansen’s disease,” use phrase “person affected by Hansen’s disease.”
- Never use derogatory words such as “leper” or words that define a person by their disease such as referring to someone as a “Hansenite” or “Hanseniano.” Do not use labels such as “victim” or “sufferer” which suggests helplessness.
- Always emphasize people, not labels.

*“We refuse to allow others to define ourselves, our humanity, by a disease.”*

**-- Bernard K. Punikai`a, whose vision led to the establishment of  
Ka ‘Ohana O Kalaupapa**