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Cultural Anthropology

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### Job Corps

There are over 120 Job Corps sites in the United States. One of them is in Waimanalo, on the island of Oahu. Job Corps is a no-cost education and vocational training program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor that helps young people get a better job, make more money, and take control of their lives. At Job Corps, students enroll to learn a trade, earn a high school diploma or GED, and get help finding a good job.

As a recent student at Job Corps I got to do participate in the classrooms, recreational room, and a few outings. I also did informal and formal interviews with ten staff members; which included the Directors, teachers, and counselors of the program. Interviewing randomly enrolled and prior students that were from other parts of Oahu, Marshall Islands, American Samoa and the Mainland gave different perspective on how everyone thought and acted in Job Corps.

Many of the people that in this program were between the ages of 16 to 24 years old. About a fourth of the students didn't get their high school diploma because they dropped out of high school before or their parents sent them to Job Corps (they were minors so they didn't have a choice). The students that were forced to come to Job Corps didn't take the program seriously. One of the teachers said there was never an orientation class that everyone went through the entire program (they either got kicked out or quit). The more focused ones were the mother's. They tended to have one mind set which was to complete the entire program as soon as possible. As one of the counselor states, "Get in and get out" is their motto. There were a lot of Marshallese; which dominated the population at Job Corps. There were also students from the Mainland from other Job Corps sites and people from American Samoa and Locals from the island. Some of the students lived on campus and others lived off campus with their parents, but within a 20-mile radius of the site. Job Corps take is like a job and like a job setting the appropriate work attire is needed and report time is at eight sharp from Monday to Friday. If the rules were broken, there were consequences like privileges taken away or pay would be deducted. This was to

teach everyone to be responsible and know that every action has a good or bad consequence.

Monday meetings are held in the morning at the recreational hall to inform the students about what happened during the weekend, accomplishments people attained, and upcoming events. Everyone loved when Gene the Director of Finances came up because it meant that everyone is going to be paid that day. No one really remembered his name; they just knew him as the “money man”. After the meetings, everyone would return to their classes.

Job Corps offer many different classes, but there are only two types of training: educational and vocational. In the educational programs, there are classes like Career Preparation I/II and Communications class that are required and which prepared the students for the workplace. If the student didn't get their diploma from high school they can take classes part of the day that will prepare them for the GED test. There are also ESL classes that are required for the students for whom English was not their first language. The ESL classes were made mostly for the Marshallese because they are required to speak English during the hours of classes. If they are caught speaking Marshallese, they had to wear a sign that said “English spoken here”. It wasn't to embarrass them, but encourage them to speak English more so they can use it in the workplace.

Many of the Marshallese socialized with only the other Marshallese. They were relatively quiet and soft-spoken compared to the other students (especially the locals). The English is generally poor and had a hard time explaining some things, especially if they can not find the right word.

The vocational trainings teach trades. Students pick their trades after they complete Career Preparation I/II, which are like orientation classes. Students could pick from Health Occupation, Automotive, Business, Culinary, Painting, or Facility and Maintenance. All of the females with children usually went to Health Occupations or Business. It was said that all the “Chronics” (drug addicts) went to painting then they can get high off the fumes, but Job Corps is strict about drug use. Job Corps tests illegal drugs when you enter the program. If caught with drugs a month is given to clean up. After the month, a retest is

given so if the test isn't past the student exits the program. If a staff member feels the student is under the influence of drug a test maybe administered.

Job Corps Hawaii is known for its culinary program. One student who completed the culinary program did the advance training in San Francisco and now is working for a top hotel in Las Vegas as a chef's assistant. This student's success motivates other students to do well in the program then they will be successful too. There is also advance training for the other trades but Culinary is the most successful. Many of the other trades go straight to work. Many of the Health Occupation and Business students want to further their education so Job Corps sends them to college and pays for tuition and books. Job Corps gets the money from the Federal taxpayers and the college student receives a lot more than other students do. The Director of Education said that Job Corps spend about 27 to 29 thousand dollars on each college student a year; which includes tuition, books, and other expenses like lunch money.

If a student has a child the child can't stay with the parent at Job Corps. The student must live on the windward side with family. One single mother who lived in Kailua that completed her trade is now going to Kapiolani Community College for Nursing. She drops her daughter off every morning at Job Corps day care; which is on campus in Waimanalo then drives to college. Job Corps pays for half of the day care for students who have kids under three years old. Having the day care on campus is good because during breaks the mothers can see how the kids are doing. Job Corps is flexible with the mothers. All students with children live off campus. If their child is sick they have two weeks of excused absents. There was a mother at Job Corps were her child was really young and she continuously got sick, so the mom had to stay home with her child because no one else could watch her. The student eventually was kicked out because she was not showing up to class. She ended up moving to Washington with her husband.

Another mother who was from the Marshall Island and her baby was four months old living on Maui with family. She couldn't bring her baby because she lived on campus and it was against regulations for the baby to stay on campus. She wanted to be transferred to Maui's Job Corps then she could visit her on the weekend. She never transferred to Maui, but she visits her baby on vacation time.

Job Corps also teaches students on other cultures. Every month they have a new diversity. One of them was on Palau. The students that did the presentation showed dances and the wedding ceremony. The female that was getting married had to be bathed in coconut oil. The students got in trouble because the oil got into the students eye.

Hawaii Job Corps is ranked the number one compared to the other locations. The campus is well taken care of by the landscaping, Facility and Maintenance trade. Plus the staff is caring and motivated to see the students succeed. Job Corps is a good program to go into if you are eligible. The students who live on campus enjoy the freedom away from their parents. The program gives the students a choice to go home on the weekend. The students living on campus allows them to focus on their training and learns responsibility. The minors who didn't graduate high school takes the distractions away like bad influences their peers have were they use to live. This program helps the students if they want to be helped (the ones that don't want to be there and take the program seriously doesn't complete the program). Overall, the entire program is there to motivate students who want to be successful and take the program seriously.