

THE 17th ANNUAL LANTERN FLOATING HAWAII CEREMONY IS THE LARGEST MEMORIAL DAY OBSERVANCE IN THE U.S.

*50,000 People & 6,000 Lanterns Illuminate Honolulu Shoreline;
Special Prayers Honor Lives Lost In Nepal's Recent Earthquakes And Other Disasters*

HONOLULU, OAHU, HAWAII— The largest Memorial Day observance in the United States happens on the beach in Honolulu, Hawaii with the Lantern Floating Hawaii 2015 ceremony, presented by [Shinnyo-en](#), an international Buddhist community with Japanese roots, and the locally based Nā Lei Aloha Foundation. The ceremony takes place on Memorial Day, May 25, 2015. It is non-denominational and free to the public to attend. More than 50,000 participants will set afloat 6,000 candle-lit lanterns that bear remembrances and prayers to illuminate the shores of Honolulu's Ala Moana Beach at sunset. Themed "Many Rivers, One Ocean," the annual Lantern Floating Hawaii ceremony provides an opportunity for thoughts and prayers from around the globe to create a moment of collective remembrance, harmony and international friendship.

As a result of the recent earthquakes in [Nepal](#), prayers will be offered for the thousands of lives lost in that tragedy and for all afflicted people who struggle every day. Shinnyo-en's presence in Asia allowed them to quickly come to the aid of the Nepalese moments after the earthquakes, providing an ambulance, donating relief supplies, and coordinating with international and local organizations.

The lantern floating ceremony is observed from dusk to sunset on Memorial Day, and is officiated by the head priest of the Shinnyo Buddhist community, Her Holiness Shinso Ito. The ceremony starts with the sounding of the conch shell to the North, East, South and then West and includes diverse cultural and spiritual rituals and entertainment such as traditional Taiko drums, hula dance and orchestral music. Leading up to the mass lantern floating, Shinso Ito performs a ceremonial lighting of the Light of Harmony with honorable guests.

Shinso Ito shares ancient traditions in ways that are relevant in modern society, she explains, "The light of the lanterns that we see before us connects us with our loved ones who came before us. The act of floating lanterns symbolizes our intentions to put our thoughts into actions. The light of the lantern symbolizes wisdom, water is a symbol of compassion."

Participants come from all over the world, to honor past lives and witness the peaceful beauty of thousands of lanterns quietly bobbing in the water as it makes its way toward the ocean. It is an emotional event with families, friends and strangers hugging each other on the shoreline once their lantern is set free.

Lantern Floating Hawaii is the culmination of a year of planning with the help of hundreds of volunteers. People who cannot attend have the opportunity to have a lantern float on their behalf through an [online submission](#). Volunteers hand-transcribe and affix to collective remembrance lanterns. For those wishing to personally float a lantern, individual lanterns are available on site, on the ceremony day. Volunteers retrieve the lanterns from the ocean following the ceremony and clean and refurbish the lanterns for use in coming years.

The first Lantern Floating Hawaii ceremony was held in 1999 at Ke'ehi Lagoon on Memorial Day and has grown each year in response to community demand. Shinnyo-en, meaning "borderless garden of enlightenment," is a growing international Buddhist community with temples and centers throughout the United States (and world), the Shinnyo Center for Meditation and Well-Being is located in New York City.

For more information on the event, visit www.lanternfloatinghawaii.com, e-mail info@naleialoha.org or call (808) 942-1848. For more information about Shinnyo-en visit www.Shinnyoen.org