TIARE LAWRENCE  
*Owner and Designer of Otaheite Hawai‘i*

**A Grand Design**

Tiare Lawrence has experienced some pretty big thrills in her young life.

She has charged 20-plus-foot waves at Mākaha, was the first woman to compete in a big wave standup-paddleboard competition, performed hula at the Merrie Monarch Festival, and tumbled down the silks as an aerialist at the ‘Ulalena show at Maui Theatre. What tops her list of most ecstatic Hawai‘i moments, though, was feeling the energy of the island as 5,000 people marched down Lahaina’s Front Street in the Aloha ‘Āina Unity March earlier this year.

Called a “beautiful day of activation,” the march marked the culmination of months of work for Tiare, its lead organizer.

“To see our ‘ōpio, our youth, come out to lead the march was awesome,” she says. “This event was about raising awareness of the threats facing our ‘āina (land).”

Thoughtless exploitation of the island is an issue Tiare battles with the same strong spirit that drives her to cross the 28-mile Kaiwi Channel, between Moloka‘i and O‘ahu, on a standup paddleboard.

Born in Lahaina, Tiare and her three younger siblings grew up surfing in Lahaina Harbor, swimming at Olowalu, exploring cane haul roads, riding bikes and fishing. Her father John Lawrence and his wife Sharon were the founders of the clothing line Otaheite, which featured *aloha* shirts, dresses and leisurewear made with fabrics they designed. Despite its popularity, the line was eventually discontinued. When Tiare was a teenager, her father passed away.

Almost 30 years later, with her indomitable go-for-it spirit, Tiare decided to relaunch Otaheite. She made up for her lack of fashion design and retail knowledge with a strong business sense and a deep love and understanding of Hawai‘i that fueled her designs. After a few years of selling her pieces at pop-up shops, Tiare opened an upscale boutique in Wailea where her new lines sold out as soon as they were released. Tiare’s version of Otaheite is now an unquestionable success.

“I love the opportunity to be creative with my designs,” she says.

Tiare adorns the soft fabric of her breezy beach wraps, flowing dresses and off-the-shoulder tops with her own prints, just as her dad did with his. But Otaheite’s new style is all her own.
Fiercely independent, she is a newly single mom to her 5-year-old daughter and 3-year-old son – no small challenge for someone pursuing a thriving career in fashion design and retail, and many other interests. A skilled water woman, Tiare has also excelled at and competed in a range of ocean watersports including stand-up paddle boarding; outrigger canoe paddling (she’s a former coach at the Hawaiian Canoe Club); long boarding (like her idol Rell Sunn); tandem surfing (which she learned at a young age from her mentor, renowned waterman Brian Keaulana); and surfing big waves at Mākaha and Honolua Bay.

“I was born to be in the ocean,” she says.

Tiare is a professional hula dancer, hired out of high school to dance hula at Tokyo Disneyland. She honed strength and flexibility skills at a cirque school in Montreal prior to joining ‘Ualena as a featured performer. In 2011, Tiare danced at the Merrie Monarch Festival in Hilo as part of Hālau Ke‘alaokamaile – under the direction of kumu hula (hula instructor) and musician Keali‘i Reichel – which went on to win the event’s overall title that year.

Tiare’s love for Hawaiian culture is always entwined in everything she does. Whether leading a vibrant march of thousands or designing a simple island-printed pareu, she is eager to share the story of Maui with others. The “Tiare” version of the story, that is.

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