

Hawaii embraces aloha print masks while fighting coronavirus

By Audrey McAvoy
Associated Press

HONOLULU — Face masks made with the same colorful prints used for aloha shirts — known as “Hawaiian shirts” elsewhere in the United States — are the latest fashion trend in Hawaii as islanders try to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.



Photo by Coty George via AP

This April 3 photo shows Coty George in Waianae, Hawaii, wearing a green cloth mask with yellow and orange flowers made by the Hawaii designer Air South. Face masks made with the same colorful prints used for aloha shirts are the latest fashion trend in Hawaii as islanders try to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

surge in demand as people scramble to adhere to new public health guidelines to cover their mouth and nose. The aloha prints are

avoiding other people and eschewing customary hugs and kisses.

It’s “another way of really showing the love and aloha spirit for each other,” said Candy Suiso, a high school teacher who wears masks made by her sister. “Especially in these times right now, when we can’t see our friends, we can’t see our co-workers.”

As of Tuesday, Hawaii reported 517 people had tested positive for the coronavirus and nine people had died.

Aloha shirts first emerged in Hawaii in the 1930s and became accepted business wear locally in the 1960s. They often come in bright colors, featuring island motifs such

as hibiscus flowers, seashells and palm trees. Or they might show Chinese calligraphy or Japanese carp, reflecting the myriad cultures of immigrants who have shaped Hawaii’s modern culture.

Some of today’s most sought-after designers use fabric drawn with native plants that play a prominent role in Native Hawaiian legends and hula chants.

Suiso wore a bright bird of paradise mask recently when she went to pick up something at her office. Everyone serving free grab-and-go lunches so students can eat while school is closed was wearing masks, most with aloha prints.

Her husband Mark, who works at a bank and thus is still going out daily, wears

one with mangos, in reflection of the mango farm the family runs in the town of Makaha.

“He’s known as the Mango Man, so when he wears his mango mask, it’s a nice topic of conversation,” she said.

Waikiki resident Ricardo Lay said his mother made him an aloha print mask because it’s hard to find protective gear for sale. He likes it because it’s an expression of where he’s from. “People know that I’m from here, right? That’s the primary reason.”

On Monday, Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell declared fabric stores an essential business, allowing them to sell to an onslaught of people wanting to make their own masks.

U.S. relief checks begin arriving as economic damage piles up

■ Worldwide death toll from virus exceeds 128,000

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Government relief checks began arriving in Americans’ bank accounts as the economic damage to the U.S. from the coronavirus piled up Wednesday, and the reopening of stores in Europe and China made it clear that business won’t necessarily bounce right back when the crisis eases.

With lockdowns and closings bringing factories and other businesses to a shuddering halt, American industrial output shriveled in March, registering its biggest decline since the U.S. demobilized in 1946 at the end of World War II. And retail sales fell by an unprecedented 8.7%, with April expected to be far worse.

The government this week began issuing one-time payments as part of its \$2.2 trillion coronavirus relief package, with adults receiving checks of up to \$1,200 each and \$500 per child to help households make the rent or cover other bills. The checks will be directly deposited into bank accounts or mailed to households, depending on how they filed their tax returns in the past.

Meanwhile, the first steps in lifting the economically crippling restrictions in other parts of the world are running into resistance, with shoppers and other customers staying away from the reopened businesses and workers afraid the newly restored freedoms could put their health at risk.

In China, millions are still wary of spending much or even going out. Some cities have resorted to handing out shopping vouchers and trying to reassure consumers

by showing officials in state media eating in restaurants.

“I put off plans to change cars and spend almost nothing on eating out or entertainment,” said Zhang Hu, a truck salesman in Zhengzhou who has gone back to work but has seen his income plummet because few people are looking to buy 20-ton rigs. “I have no idea when the situation will turn better.”

In Austria, Marie Froehlich, who owns a clothing store in downtown Vienna, said her staff was happy to get back to work after weeks of being cooped up at home. But with her business dependent largely on tourism, which has dried up amid the travel restrictions, she expects it will take months to return to normal.

“Until then, we are in crisis mode,” she said.

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It’s not all about coronavirus: Four other things in the news

Associated Press

Warren backs Biden

WASHINGTON — Elizabeth Warren endorsed Joe Biden on Wednesday, the latest of the former vice president’s onetime White House rivals to back him as the Democratic Party moves to project unity against President Donald Trump going into the November election.

“Joe Biden has spent nearly his entire life in public service. He knows that a government run with integrity, competence, and heart will save lives and save livelihoods,” Warren said in a nearly four-minute video announcing her decision. “And we can’t afford to let Donald Trump continue to endanger the lives and livelihoods of every American.”

The Massachusetts senator’s doesn’t carry the political heft it might have if she had endorsed Biden over Sanders weeks ago. Nonetheless, her announcement now could fuel speculation that Biden

may choose her as a running mate.

Chicago pileup closes expressway

CHICAGO — Portions of a Chicago expressway left icy by a wintry blast that brought overnight snowfall led to a pileup involving of dozens of vehicles early Wednesday, sending 14 people to hospitals, officials said.

About 50 vehicles were involved in the 5 a.m. pileup along the Kennedy Expressway, the Chicago Fire Department said. The crash prompted Illinois State Police to close all of the expressway’s southbound lanes near Chicago.

The National Weather Service said temperatures fell below freezing and state police were urging people to stay off local roadways.

NBC’s Peacock launching in July

NEW YORK — NBCUniversal says its video-streaming service Peacock will launch in July as

planned, even though just a handful of its original series will be ready.

The service was meant to have a mix of originals, classic shows and movies, and current NBC programming. Original shows are key to hooking consumers inundated with new streaming services, but the coronavirus pandemic has largely shut down Hollywood production.

Alabama officer charged with murder

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — An Alabama police detective fatally shot a woman as part of a “love triangle” dispute with a colleague, authorities said.

Birmingham police Detective Alfreda Fluker, 39, was charged Tuesday with murder in the Friday killing of Kanisha Nicole Fuller. Fluker was also charged with the attempted murder of Detective Mario Theodore White, her coworker at the Birmingham Police Department.

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