

Disney's *Moana* highlights Polynesian culture

Moana, a new film from Walt Disney Animation Studios, sails into theaters on Wednesday, November 23. The animated adventure follows a spirited teenager who sets out on a daring mission to prove herself a master wayfinder and fulfill the unfinished quest of her ancestors. The film highlights the voice talent of newcomer Auli'i Cravalho, a native of Hawai'i, as the film's title character. Cravalho is joined by actor Dwayne Johnson, who has Samoan roots, as the voice of demigod Maui — a charismatic character inspired by the varied tales and legends about him throughout the Pacific — who assists Moana on her quest.

The film opens with Moana's Gramma Tala, the mother of Chief Tui and Moana's greatest confidante, sharing the tale of Te Fiti, the mother island, with toddlers on the island, including young Moana. Gramma Tala's story culminates with details about Maui, demigod of the wind and sea, who steals the heart of Te Fiti, unleashing a terrible darkness that threatens the life and habitat of islanders throughout the region.

As young Moana grows up, a very special presence in her life — the Ocean — is introduced. She is drawn to the ocean, but voyaging beyond the safety of the reef that lies just beyond their shores is forbidden by Chief Tui, Moana's father. After realizing the livelihood of the island is threatened by a terrible darkness, however, Moana breaks her father's rules, setting sail on an epic trip to save her people and find the answers she's been searching for her whole life.

Moana eventually finds the mighty demigod Maui, a charismatic character as well as a larger-than-life trickster and shapeshifter. Maui, who is on his own journey of self-discovery, reluctantly guides Moana in her quest to become a wayfinder and save her people on an action-packed voyage where they encounter monsters and impossible odds while sailing across the open ocean.

Oceania

The story told in the film is inspired in

FBI: Hate crimes against Muslims up by 67 percent in 2015

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election.

At the same time, a videotaped assault in Chicago showed black men beating a white man as onlookers screamed, "You voted Trump!"

Trump had said he hadn't heard reports that some of his supporters might be harassing minorities.

"I am so saddened to hear that," Trump said during an interview with CBS's "60 Minutes." "And I say, stop it. If it, if it helps, I will say this and I will say right to the cameras: Stop it."

According to the FBI report, the majority of hate crimes were motivated by bias against race or ethnicity. Of the 4,216 victims of a hate crime motivated by race or ethnicity, 52 percent were black, 18.7 percent were white, and 9.3 percent were Hispanic or Latino. Crimes against Jews increased about nine percent, while bias incidents involving sexual orientation were up 3.5 percent.

Civil-rights groups have expressed concern that a Trump administration could radically reshape the U.S. Department of Justice, particularly when it comes to policing, but also in terms of the priority placed on hate crimes. Those concerns were compounded after Trump named as his chief White House strategist Steve Bannon, who came to his campaign from Breitbart News. Under Bannon's leadership, the Breitbart website became



OCEAN EXPLORATION. *Moana*, a new film from Walt Disney Animation Studios, follows spirited teenager Moana as she ventures beyond the safety of the reef that lies just beyond their island's shores after realizing their livelihood is threatened by a terrible darkness. Breaking the rules of her father, Chief Tui, she sets sail on an epic adventure to save her people and find the answers she's been searching for her whole life. The film opens November 23 in theaters nationwide. Pictured is Moana (right) talking to Gramma Tala (left) on the beach. (Image courtesy of Walt Disney Animation Studios)

part by oral histories of the people and cultures of Oceania. For centuries, the greatest navigators in the world masterfully travelled the vast Pacific, discovering the many islands of Oceania. But then, around 3,000 years ago, their voyages stopped for a millennium — and though there are theories, no one knows exactly why.

"Navigation — wayfinding — is such a big part of Pacific culture," said director John Musker. "Ancient Polynesians found their way across the seas, wayfinding island-to-island without the use of modern instruments, using their knowledge of nature, the stars, the waves, and the currents."

There are many theories, but no one is certain about what may have led to the 1,000-year gap in exploration before it resumed 2,000 years ago, leading to the discoveries of Tahiti, Hawai'i, and Aotearoa (New Zealand). The rebirth — and the possible explanations behind it — sparked the imaginations of the filmmakers. Said Musker, "In our story,

one of the leading outlets of the so-called alt-right, a movement often associated with far-right efforts to preserve "white identity" and oppose multiculturalism.

Michael Lieberman with the Anti-Defamation League said there have been "unprecedented efforts" to address hate crimes in recent years, from outreach to law enforcement, community meetings, and an emphasis on cooperation among federal agencies.

Any increases, including the ones seen in anti-Muslim crimes, could be due in part to more reporting by victims as well as better reporting and tracking by law enforcement agencies. The number of law enforcement agencies sending data on hate crimes to the FBI decreased by about three percent in 2015.

An AP investigation earlier this year found 17 percent of local law enforcement agencies had not submitted a single hate crime report during the past six years as part of the FBI's tracking program, prompting concerns that an undercount was masking the true scope of hate and bias crimes in the U.S.

"Gaps in participation and incomplete reporting demonstrate materially that this work must continue, and we will be pressing the Trump Justice Department and U.S. attorneys so this important work will be ongoing," Lieberman said.

Associated Press writers Deepti Hajela in New York City and Jay Reeves in Birmingham, Alabama contributed to this report.

our heroine, Moana, is at the heart of the rebirth of wayfinding."

In researching the project, the filmmakers journeyed to the islands of the Pacific to see the places and meet the people in person. "We wanted to, as much as possible, avoid the 'touristy' things, to go deeper," said director Ron Clements. "We wanted to meet people who grew up on islands; we wanted to listen and learn what makes these Pacific Island cultures so remarkable." They spent time within local communities, meeting and sharing stories and meals with elders and chiefs and their families, as well as teachers, craftspeople, farmers, fishermen, and navigators.

One meeting stood out, Clements recalled. "An elder on the island of Mo'orea asked of us something so simple and so revealing: 'For years, we have been swallowed by your culture,' he said. 'This one time, can you be swallowed by ours?'"

Deeply inspired by their time in the Pacific Islands, filmmakers assembled a group of advisors they named the Oceanic Story Trust (OST). OST included anthropologists, educators, linguists, expert tattooists, choreographers, *haka* specialists, master navigators, and cultural advisors who collaborated with Disney's creative team.

"The trust has deeply influenced the look and feel of this film," said producer Osnat Shurer. "The film would not be what it is today without their guidance."

Auli'i Cravalho

While hundreds of talented people from across the Pacific Islands were eager to try out for the lead voice role, Cravalho had her sights set firmly on her sophomore year of high school. "I didn't think I would have a chance," she said. "When I was

little, I used to dance around the house singing at the top of my lungs. In my mind, that was performing and I loved the feeling of it. But I never imagined being in a Disney movie, being Moana — representing my culture in that way."

Fortunately, the film's Hawai'i casting director remembered an unrelated audition Cravalho did as part of an a cappella group, which had been submitted for a talent showcase for a charity. Feeling the local teen would be perfect for the Disney role, she tracked her and her mother down and invited Cravalho to audition. "Her audition was fantastic — she was such a raw talent," said producer Shurer. "Auli'i was among a small number of girls we brought back for a second round of auditions. Then we flew her and her mom over to audition at our studios in Burbank."

"Auli'i demonstrated a certain fearlessness in her auditions and callbacks," said director Musker. "She has a playful, mischievous wit. She can project vulnerability, she doesn't seem intimidated at all by the challenges ahead, and her Polynesian background has helped shape her connection to family, hard work, and music. These are all qualities she shares with Moana."

"Moana is a vibrant, tenacious 16-year-old growing up on an island where voyaging is forbidden," added director Clements. "But Moana has been drawn to the ocean since she can remember and is desperate to find out what's beyond the confines of her island."

Moana opens the day before Thanksgiving, November 23, in theaters nationwide. To learn more, visit <www.facebook.com/disneyamoana>. To buy tickets, visit <www.fandango.com>.

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