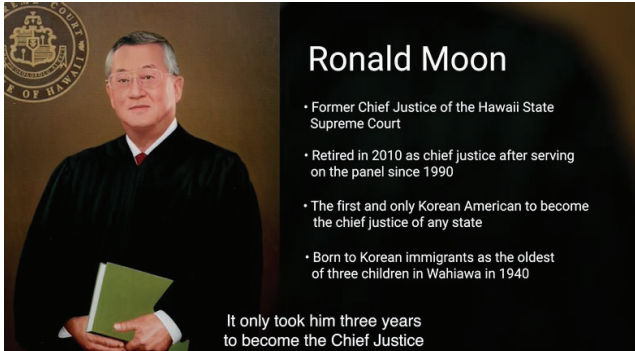


## Ronald Moon

"I believe the most important thing in life is the contribution to society. If you live your life and when you leave, if you cannot point to anything that you left behind, that is so sad. That is what I mean by leaving something. You got to live your life."



### Ronald Moon

- Former Chief Justice of the Hawaii State Supreme Court
- Retired in 2010 as chief justice after serving on the panel since 1990
- The first and only Korean American to become the chief justice of any state
- Born to Korean immigrants as the oldest of three children in Wahiawa in 1940

It only took him three years to become the Chief Justice

## About Ronald Moon

Ronald Moon is the very first and only Korean-American Chief Justice in the United States. He was appointed as an associate justice in 1990 at the age of 49. It only took him three years to become the Chief Justice, and he retired at the age of 70. Commemorating his contributions to the Hawaiian judiciary, the Hawaii State Government named a local courthouse constructed in 2010 the "Ronald T.Y. Moon Judiciary Complex."

## Historical Information



문대양 전 하와이 대법원장 조부, 문정현의 양친점, 1930년대  
Chong Hum Moon's tailor shop in Wahiawa, circa 1930

(©Roberta Chang Collection, Center for Korean Studies, University of Hawaii)

### 1. What was Wahiawa like in the 1920s?

- It had a large Korean population, forming a "Korean Town." The largest military base of the Pacific was in Wahiawa, and Koreans conducted businesses such as laundromats and alteration shops for soldiers. It is recognized as one of the earliest Korean communities in the US.

2. When Hawaiian plantation owners recruited Korean immigrants as laborers, the advertisements stated that they would receive high pay (equivalent to about three months' rice expenses for a family of four per month) and work in favorable conditions, such as free education, medical care, and provided housing. Was this true?

- Laborers used a long and heavy blade to cut the sugarcane, so their hands were always covered in blisters. They had to wear thick clothes in hot weather to protect themselves from the sharp sugarcane leaves.
- The first Korean immigrants left for Hawaii with the hope of a better life, but the reality was quite different from what they had expected.
- The immigrants missed their national food, so they made Kimchi. However, because the plantation owners could not stand the smell of Kimchi, laborers were punished when they were found eating Kimchi.

3. What drove these first Korean immigrants to leave their homeland, where their ancestors were resting?

- Korea suffered significant damage due to the *Sino-Japanese War*.\* The war led to the Treaty of Shimonoseki, which recognized Korean independence from China. This marked the beginning of increased Japanese influence and control over Korea, eventually leading to the annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910. The war also caused considerable economic hardship in Korea. The conflict disrupted trade, damaged infrastructure, and created instability that hindered economic development.

\*Sino-Japanese War: was a conflict between China and Japan that arose from competing interests in Korea. The war primarily took place in Korea.

- The 'Donghak Peasant Movement' (also known as the 'Donghak Revolution' or 'Donghak Uprising') was driven by dissatisfaction with socio-economic conditions and resistance against corrupt practices and foreign influence. It posed a direct challenge to the ruling Joseon Dynasty, weakening the dynasty's grip on power and contributing to internal instability. Moreover, the movement drew the attention of foreign powers, particularly Japan and China, who intervened in the conflict. This intervention further complicated Korea's internal politics and contributed to the eventual erosion of Korean sovereignty.