

We're All Hawaiians Now: Kanaka Maoli Performance and the Politics of Aloha

by

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Dedication

For my ‘ohana and Kānaka Maoli everywhere.

Acknowledgements

I did not plan any of this. Six years ago I did not even know what graduate school was or where Michigan even was on a map. I never dreamed of being a scholar, being in academia, or writing a dissertation, but in the words of Jujubee, *I'm still here!* This was all made possible and at times even enjoyable because of so many people.

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Introduction

We're All Hawaiians Now

*A-L-O-H-A, a little aloha in our day, spread a little aloha around the world.*¹

-- Mana'o Company, "Spread a Little Aloha"

*What ideological forces are there, if any, that would enable the individual representative of an ethnic minority to move beyond, or believe she could ever move beyond, the macro sociological structures that have already mapped out her existence—such as, for instance, forces that allow her to think of herself as a “subject” with a voice, as a human person? What makes it possible for her to imagine that her resistance-performance is her ultimate salvation, her key to universal humanity, in the first place?*²

-- Rey Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic*, 32

On August 8, 2008, Barack Obama declared before a crowd in Honolulu, a few months before he won the U.S. Presidency, that Hawai'i's greatest contribution to America is the “spirit of aloha.”³ He greeted the crowd with the often heard and somehow not yet clichéd drawn out greeting of “Aloooooooha”, and the crowd responded with excitement. A walking advertisement for Hawai'i's diversity, the crowd was composed of

¹ “Spread a little aloha” originally sung by Mana'o Company. Mana'o Company, *Spread a Little Aloha*, (Honolulu: Navarre Hawaiian, 2001), CD. The song was also featured prominently in an Aloha Airlines commercial.

² Rey Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). 32.

³ “Aloha” is defined in the *Hawaiian Dictionary* (online at <http://www.wehewehe.org>) as love, compassion, sympathy, mercy, kindness; greeting, to hail. The “spirit of aloha” invokes the aforementioned feelings, it is a phrase that was popularized through tourism advertising in the latter-half of the twentieth century. It is invoked frequently throughout Hawai'i.

mostly haole⁴ (literally foreign, currently used to refer to Caucasians) and Asian settlers.⁵ As Senator Daniel Akaka introduced Obama as a “keiki o ka ‘āina” (child of the land), the crowd roared as though its moment had finally arrived. I secretly felt it too. Obscuring over five hundred years of American colonialism on the U.S. continent and over a hundred years of colonialism in Hawai‘i, on this day, the seductive rhetoric of multiculturalism emerged triumphant. Celebrating the inclusion of once-excluded Others, the buried histories and voices of those deemed culturally different were now fully incorporated. Obama made sure to acknowledge several Asian ethnic groups—Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Korean—but did not say the word “Hawaiian” once, which seemed odd, but strangely predictable. Once again Kanaka Maoli—Native Hawaiians—were erased.⁶ And so, Kānaka Maoli were erased yet again through the invocation of their own cultural concept of aloha. In the interest of foregrounding a vision of unquestioned inclusion, aloha was deployed, as it usually is, at the expense of the Kanaka Maoli

⁴ I have chosen not to italicize or underline Hawaiian words because Hawaiian is the original language of Hawai‘i and of Kānaka Maoli. Each Hawaiian word will be followed with a translation the first time that it is used. The Hawaiian term “Haole” literally translates to the term foreigner, although some have translated it to mean “without breath” (it would be hā‘ole instead, which is a separate term). Early foreigners, usually white Europeans, were called “haole,” although Asian immigrants were also referred to as haole in the early days of the Hawaiian Kingdom. In modern usage it is common to refer to someone as haole if they are white, even if they are not a newcomer to the islands. It is not always derogatory, although it certainly can be.

⁵ I will use the term “settler” to refer to anyone in Hawai‘i who is not of Kanaka Maoli descent. “Settler” centers the processes of settler-colonialism in Hawai‘i. For more on Asian settler-colonialism in Hawai‘i, see Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Y. Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008).

⁶ The state of Hawai‘i distinguishes between the terms “Hawaiian,” and “Native Hawaiian,” each of which has a contested legality based on blood quantum. For details, see the work of J. Kēhaulani Kauanui. In this dissertation, I will use the term “Kānaka Maoli” to refer any person descended from the indigenous people inhabiting the Hawaiian Islands before 1778. The term has been adopted in recent years by Kānaka Maoli; it translates into “true people” or “real people” in relation to Hawaiian indigeneity. “Kanaka ‘Ōiwi” has also been used by scholars, it translates as “real bones,” but because it is not widely known, I have chosen not to use the term. “Kānaka Maoli” with the macron over the “ā” is the plural of “Kanaka Maoli.” Please also note, I will use the term “Hawaiian” to refer to categories such as “Hawaiian music” or “Hawaiian performance” and will refer to legislation under their official names, like “Native Hawaiian Governmental Reorganization Act” and the phrase “Native Hawaiian entitlement” because of its common usage.

people. Alas, this was not surprising or even new; in Hawai‘i such a maneuver is simply a way of life.

This moment of Obama coming home was significant. He was welcomed by a cross-section of Hawai‘i, and everyone in attendance appeared to share a sense of pride that one of Hawai‘i’s own, even if a Black man, was going to change U.S. history. There may have been a tinge of skepticism in all of us, but Obama and all the hope he stood for still had us holding on. As Obama used aloha to mobilize us all, it felt like a mainland-influenced trope, one that locals rarely deploy (because we don’t have to), but tourists and politicians often do. I felt uneasy even as I picked up on the sense of collective hope everyone felt that afternoon, so rare in Hawai‘i crowds. In the distance, I tuned out the Samoan Flag day music on the other side of the park as I gazed curiously at t-shirts reading “Hawaiians for Obama”. There was clearly Kanaka Maoli support for Obama present in the crowd, and yet, no mention of Hawaiians or Kānaka Maoli.⁷ I felt nauseous—and not because we waited for nearly five hours at Ke‘ehi Lagoon on a sweltering August afternoon.

In the midst of this, in my mind flashed an image of something I had read in *Shoal of Time* (1968), in which historian Gavan Daws painted a scene of a “local” man sitting in a bar in downtown Honolulu on August 19, 1959, as Hawai‘i became a “State.” The man stared into the mirror behind the bar and said, “Now we are all Haoles.”⁸ Recalling this moment while standing among the flag-waving crowd of Obama supporters, my heart sank. Much as I wanted to believe the hype, my na‘au (guts) reminded me, in the

⁷ I was later quoted in the *Honolulu Advertiser's* coverage of the event, the only person to say anything remotely critical about Obama. See Dan Nakaso and Mary Vorsino, "For crowd, short visit was worth long wait," *Honolulu Advertiser*, August 9, 2008 2008.

⁸ Gavan Daws, *Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands* (Honolulu, HI University of Hawai'i Press, 1968). 391.

words of Dead Prez, “It’s politikks time again, it’s bullshit time again.”⁹ What I felt was more than mere cynicism; my mind linked these historical moments together and I shuddered, thinking about the implications of the idea that “we are all Hawaiians now.”

Obama’s subsequent election marked a peaking moment of U.S. exceptionalism’s supposed promise and ever-changing character, that this Black man from Hawai‘i could be U.S. President. I thought to myself that Hawai‘i made this possible. *Aloha made this possible*. The dispossession of Hawaiian lands made this possible. The uneasiness remained as discourses of multiculturalism so prevalent in Hawai‘i swirled in my head, with the haunting presence of the aloha spirit lurking in the distance, performing aloha’s constant extraction from the Kānaka Maoli people.¹⁰ Everyone could be “Hawaiian” because of aloha, but at the expense of Kānaka Maoli. It had all come full circle. Through statehood, everyone in Hawai‘i was made a haole and with the election of Barack Obama, Americans became “Hawaiian.”

Visibility is a Trap

Since the landing of Captain Cook in the Hawaiian Islands in 1778, representations of Kānaka Maoli have been circulating globally through multiple discourses. Stock imagery of the hula maiden, the surfer boy, the savage queen, and the lazy native, among others, are well known in the American colonial imaginary.¹¹ Representations in sailor and missionary journals, artistic renderings, photographs, films, non-fictional or fictional literary works, and other formal performances contribute greatly to

⁹ “Politikkks” on Dead Prez, *Politikkks*, (Dead Prez Inc., 2008).

¹⁰ Deloria explains a similar practice, wherein the Indian is held in place as its essence is constantly extracted from it. Phil Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999). 185.

¹¹ Houston Wood, *Displacing Natives: the Rhetorical Production of Hawai‘i*, Pacific formations (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999); Patty O'Brien, "The Pacific Muse: Exotic Femininity and the Colonial Pacific," (2006).

the perception of Hawai‘i and Kānaka Maoli. In recent years, however, a growing library of works in the Kanaka Maoli academic and activist worlds have labored to push back against these representations, offering a rewriting of Hawaiian history.¹² The excavation of purposefully overlooked primary source documents, (e.g., Hawaiian-language newspapers and memoirs) and changes in academic and legal discourses have brought institutional and mainstream legitimation to the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, showing that many Kānaka Maoli have never consented to the occupation of our homeland, and that Kānaka Maoli are so much more than how they are stereotyped. Acknowledging and telling this story of resistance, resilience, and revitalization have propelled numerous Hawaiian nationalist projects in both academic and community-activist circles. However, while these theorizations have produced much-needed changes to Hawaiian historiography, this dissertation examines how these narratives (while productive) can sometimes work in the service of hegemonic forces that aim to incorporate, and thus contain, manage, and even exploit Hawaiian indigeneity. I **aim** to honor the critical work of the scholars that came before me while also exploring and critically analyzing the strategies by which Kanaka Maoli performers engage aloha against the backdrop of liberal multiculturalism.

Aloha, loosely translated since the mid-nineteenth century, as “welcome” or “love” has been harnessed and disarticulated from its Hawaiian cultural context and used to the detriment of the Kanaka Maoli people, which was part of the historical, cultural, and political process that Jonathan Osorio describes as the “dismembering” of the lāhui—

¹² See, for example, Lilikala Kame'eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires/Pehea La E Pono Ai?* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1992); Jonathan Osorio, *Dismembering Lahui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002); Noenoe Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

the nation.¹³ Still, aloha is something we Kānaka Maoli continue to believe deeply in. This dissertation analyzes the manner in which Kānaka Maoli negotiate their relationship with aloha, in order to examine the contradictions and complexities of Kanaka Maoli indigeneity and to map how indigeneity itself is performed into existence.

This dissertation therefore asks: how is Hawaiian indigeneity performed? How is performance itself indigenous? How is indigeneity performative rather than performed? Specifically, how is Hawaiian indigeneity performed through aloha? What does the performance of aloha by Kānaka Maoli do to our identities? Finally, how does the Kanaka Maoli performance of aloha challenge ideas about indigeneity in general?

How to do Things with Aloha

The implications of aloha's appropriation, as I explore and explicate in-depth in Chapter One, is undoubtedly a source of concern. The historical appropriation and commodification of aloha has been justifiably criticized.¹⁴ This dissertation, however, shifts the focus away from disparaging the appropriation of aloha and looks instead at the conditions that require Kānaka Maoli to perform aloha and how Kānaka Maoli themselves engage with aloha through performance. To say that aloha is appropriated and that such activities are problematic is, well, easy (but still important!). As J.L. Austin wrote in *How to do Things with Words* (1975), speech acts are performative and they perform an action—they do things.¹⁵ Using theories of articulation and performativity, I examine key moments of how Kānaka Maoli differentially articulate and perform Hawaiian indigeneity in multiple and competing relations with aloha and for very specific

¹³ Osorio, *Dismembering Lahui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887*.

¹⁴ Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i*, 2 ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999).

¹⁵ J. L. Austin, *How to do Things With Words*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

reasons.¹⁶

According to Stuart Hall, articulation works like hegemony, as a process. Articulation operates at multiple levels—the epistemological, the political, and the strategic. As Jennifer Daryl Slack (1996) notes, articulation engages the concrete in order to change it, to rearticulate it with other things.¹⁷ Articulation is not just a thing, but a process of creating connections, much in the same way that hegemony itself is not domination, but rather the process of creating and maintaining consensus among coordinating interests. The so-called “unity” of a discourse is never final or absolute; it is really the articulation of different and distinct elements, which can be rearticulated in different ways. Hawaiian indigeneity and the performance of aloha exemplify the ways articulation works with certain kinds of performances that cohere at critical historical moments and in everyday life.

In other words, a theory of “articulation” is a way of understanding how ideological elements come together within a discourse. As Hall explains, the theory of articulation asks how an ideology discovers its subject, rather than how the subject comes

¹⁶ Scholars have used the concept of articulation to add complexity to the category of the Native; see Ty Kawika Tengan, *Native Men Remade: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Hawai'i* (Durham, NC: Duke, 2008); Andrea Smith, *Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008). By the late 1990s, a new movement self-identified as Native Pacific Cultural Studies (Diaz and Kauanui 2001) resignified the category of Native or the indigenous subject in the Pacific, in order to convey its deep entrenchment in colonial and postcolonial discourse while also acknowledging its frequent movements and innovations outside of those very discourses. Teresia Teaiwa's work especially contributed to an understanding of Native in terms of diaspora and shifting traditions, an identification with the land and fluid kinship systems that confound colonial, nationalist, and postcolonial representations. See Teresia Teaiwa, "Native Thoughts: A Pacific Studies Take on Cultural Studies and Diaspora," in *Indigenous Diasporas and Dislocations*, ed. Graham Harvey and Charles Johnson (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2005).

¹⁷ Jennifer Daryl Slack, "The Theory and Method of Articulation in Cultural Studies," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (New York: Routledge, 1996), 114.

into being;¹⁸ it enables U.S. to think about how an ideology sometimes empowers people, while also locking them as subjects into a spot within a given oppressive discourse. Such articulations can also iterate. The process of articulation starts all over again, so that just when we think that something is locked in a discourse, its meaning may change; ideologies are always struggling internally. This theorization of articulation offers us opportunities to think critically about the ways that Kānaka Maoli articulate Hawaiian indigeneity with aloha, and gets us out of discourses that posit Kānaka Maoli as simplistically performing aloha as duped by colonialism.

Articulating Performance and Performativity

Performance will be to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries what discipline was to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: an onto-historical formation of power and knowledge.¹⁹

--Jon Mckenzie, *Perform or Else*, 18

Alongside articulation, I rely on theories of performance and, by extension, performativity, to critically assess the making and remaking of Hawaiian indigeneity. As McKenzie writes in *Perform or Else* (2001), “the power of discourse to produce what it names is linked with the question of performativity.”²⁰ In Performance Studies (as well as in Queer theory and linguistics), the concept of “performativity” is frequently used to examine social reality as it is constructed through performances of subjectivity or identity. As Judith Butler explains in her foundational text, *Gender Trouble* (1990), “Just as bodily surfaces are enacted as the natural, so these surfaces can become the site of a dissonant and denaturalized performance that reveals the performative status of the

¹⁸ Lawrence Grossberg, "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morhey and Kuan-Hsing Chen (New York: Routledge, 1996), 135.

¹⁹ Jon McKenzie, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001). 18.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

natural itself.”²¹ “Performance” as a concept refers to both staged performances (e.g., theatre) and the enactment of everyday life. Performance in the latter sense focuses on how social forces structure the perceived behaviors of certain groups. Broad sociological categories such as sexuality, gender, age, race, class, and the like are performed as well as lived realities. Sociologist Erving Goffman was especially concerned with how people perform everyday life. Performances, he argued, vary greatly by environment and the perceived appropriateness of certain behaviors. Goffman differentiates between “front stage” and “back stage” behavior, where front stage is the performance of expected behaviors and back stage is where people supposedly stop performing.²² Later works in Performance Studies have asserted that people never stop performing. It is the constant performance of expected behaviors and their repetition that create “performativity.”

“Performativity” as an analytical framework comes from Post-structuralism, an intellectual movement rooted in the study of language, literature, and culture. It facilitated debunking of the supposed binary oppositions that constituted the stability of linguistic and discursive meanings in particular, or any fundamental essential stability or totality that underlay such signs in general, including the supposedly stable and essential content of identity and subjectivity. Post-structuralist theorists like Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler built upon these ideas. They argued that every act, utterance, or idea is performative. For example, among other ideas, Derrida has written extensively on “presence,” the theory that all citations come from a signature, and that all utterances must build upon a previous utterance in order to succeed. He theorized that no “pure”

²¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990). 146.

²² Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959).

speech acts exists and, therefore, there are no pure texts because they are all built upon something pre-existing. Most of the writings on performativity cite Derrida's article, "Signature Event Context," in which he argues the contingent nature of iterability.²³ For Derrida, meaning is dependent upon a context that is predetermined by a prior event, but the new iteration of that event or idea through a new utterance also brings a new context, a reproduction or a new "inscription" which necessarily still retains a trace, a "signature," of the old.²⁴ In other words, the signature, is a repetition that always retains traces of its previous context, and although it is a reproduction, it changes because of its new context, but it still has the residue (haunting, ghosting) of its previous iteration(s).²⁵ As such, repetitious acts are reiterated under and through a constraint of its referent, existing only as a fiction. This allows us to begin deconstructing copies of the copy. In short, there are no originals.

The notion that there are "no originals" has alarming consequences for indigenous peoples, who often base their identities upon the resiliency of their cultures, with culture being understood as ancient, deep, solid, original, stable, essential foundations. This seems to be confirmed in the general tendency for Native Studies scholars to dismiss postmodern and post-structuralist theories. I would contend, however, the concerns of Native Studies and post-structuralist theories are not fundamentally incompatible; theories of performance and performativity are still helpful for theorizing Hawaiian performativity, identity, and subjectivity. Indeed, much of the scholarship in Hawaiian Studies is predicated on accessing an essence about Kānaka Maoli that is related to an

²³ Jacques Derrida, *Margins of philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982). See also Austin, *How to do Things With Words*.

²⁴ Derrida, *Margins of philosophy*. Austin, *How to do Things With Words*.

²⁵ See Phelan (1993), on how performances do not transcend the live event. Roach (1996) wrote about haunting and effigy. Taylor (2003) calls them "events" or "scenarios" rather than performances.

“authentic” past. Using Butler’s logic exposes how Kanaka Maoli identity is performed in a formal sense as well as in everyday life (and in very strategic ways), might allow us to conceptualize alternate ways to construct and analyze performances of Kanaka Maoli identity. As Nigel Thrift echoes, the theorization of performance necessitates attending to the processes of something that does not presume a realm of representation (as an imaginary secret place) as distinct from a realm of the real.²⁶ Performance theory attends to how identities are constituted by performance itself, rather than searching for a subject that existed before the performance.²⁷

Understanding that identities are constituted through performance makes possible a critique of how Hawaiian indigeneity is defined vis-à-vis performances of aloha. Throughout this dissertation, I analyze performances to complicate the very definition of Hawaiian indigeneity and common perceptions of aloha. The goal of this dissertation is to unpack the material conditions of Kanaka Maoli performances of aloha, whether in its “real” cultural form or as a cultural commodity, and to explicate how such conditions structure contemporary Hawaiian performance and identity. By assessing how performativity informs what is considered “Hawaiian,” we are able to look more closely at the structural elements that frame Hawaiian performance in particular and indigeneity more generally. We must view such expressions as part of a system of culture that is actively produced, contested, and articulated, as Obama’s invocation of aloha described above illustrates. Performance and performativity are thus articulated in specific contexts, at times to normalize a discourse—like aloha—or, as the performers in this dissertation

²⁶ Nigel J. Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*, International library of sociology (London; New York: Routledge, 2008). 124-25.

²⁷ There is a saying “it’s turtles all the way down”, referring to the idea that the truth is elusive and that origins are difficult to find. The saying comes from Stephen Hawking’s *A Brief History of Time* (1988).

exhibit, to enable a rethinking of how Kanaka Maoli identity is performative. In short, theories of articulation and performativity can work together productively to help us to examine cultural performance in new ways.

It's Your Funeral: Multiculturalism and the "Death of the Subject"

Contemporary Kanaka Maoli cultural performances are the products of over two hundred years of Hawaiian culture actively resisting, incorporating, and expanding literary, musical, and dance repertoires.²⁸ The Hawaiian sovereignty movement (in a broad sense) has transformed Hawai'i's cultural terrain since the 1970s, creating performance spaces that openly contest the ongoing effects of American colonialism.²⁹ These expressions draw from and build upon the American civil rights movements that followed World War II, a period characterized by the agitations of African Americans, Asian Americans, Chicanos, Latinos, and Natives, who demanded an acknowledgement of their distinct political and cultural histories and identities.³⁰ This section will look at recent scholarship, especially in Critical Ethnic Studies and Native Studies that critiques the inclusionist aspirations of liberal multiculturalism—borne out of the civil rights movements—connecting the performance (and sharing) of culture to a long history of anthropological knowledge-gathering and practices of colonialism.³¹

²⁸ Amy K. Stillman, "Remembering the History of Hawaiian Hula," in *Cultural memory: Reconfiguring History and Identity in the Postcolonial Pacific*, ed. Jeannette Marie Mageo (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001); Adrienne L. Kaeppler, "Acculturation in Hawaiian Dance," *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council* 4, no. 25 (1972).

²⁹ Burl Burlingame, Robert Kamohalu Kasher, and Mary Poole-Burlingame, *Da Kine Sound: Conversations with the People who Create Hawaiian Music*, 1st ed. (Kailua, Hawaii: Press Pacifica, 1978). Jonathan Osorio, "Songs of Our Natural Selves: The Enduring Voice of Nature in Hawaiian Music" (paper presented at the 8th Annual Pacific History Association Conference, Mangilao, Guam, 1992).

³⁰ Mark H. Lytle, *America's Uncivil Wars: the Sixties Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

³¹ Path-breaking scholarship by Denise Ferreira Da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. For more about the critique of colonial anthropology and its relationship to empire, see Ann

A key component of the civil rights movement was the desire to see the histories of “the other” acknowledged and validated. Especially in university spaces, non-white students demanded that their histories be included in narratives of American identity, exceptionalism, and progress. However, as Denise Da Silva contends, this acknowledgement of “the other” in academic discourse occurred in an environment of deep analytical suspicion toward universalist claims of subjectivity, which in turn could dismiss specific claims about identity and experience as nothing more than “identity politics.” Furthermore, this search for validation did not result in the hoped-for “death of the subject” or the death of the non-white “other”.³²

In her blistering critique of post-Enlightenment thought, Da Silva (2008) warns that while recuperative histories based on claims of cultural difference appeared to challenge the canons of mainstream knowledge, in fact, they merely served to reinscribe or reconsolidate the ideological claims of western science and rationality with new content or material. For Da Silva, the real recuperation involved neoliberal embracing of this new non-white content and material of “cultural difference” through celebrations of “multiculturalism.” In short, the rewriting of history and voicing of cultural difference was only another method of producing new content for scientific tools of “reason.” The histories of “the other” were then (and still are) used to “re-write history” and in turn, is cited as evidence of the liberal multiculturalist embrace of non-white others.

Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995). Also, Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002). And recent work by Native anthropologists, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Zed Books, 1999). Audra Simpson, "On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, "Voice" and Colonial Citizenship," *Junctures: The Journal for Thematic Dialogue* 9(2007).

³² Da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*.

Following Da Silva, this dissertation will make evident how the incorporation of such histories have operated in the Hawaiian context, and how this influences Hawaiian performance and Kanaka Maoli identity. Still, in the process, we must not grant the settler-state³³ or predominant discourses more power than they already have, nor lose sight of the extent to which there are alternative—including defiant—forms of cultural and identity performances that are not entirely “recouped.” Indeed, there are forms of identity and cultural performances that the settler-state cannot even *see*.

Liberal multiculturalism has been characterized as a mode of governance that came into being following the social movements in the 1960s.³⁴ The creation of affirmative action programs, equal employment opportunities for women and racial/ethnic minorities, and the emphasis on diversity, were all federal responses to the resistances of minority groups who charged the U.S. government with ongoing Eurocentricism and discrimination.³⁵ Liberal multiculturalism then, if not yet the norm, was definitely promoted by the U.S. settler-state. Certainly, the active assimilation of non-white bodies into the so-called “melting pot” was thus required in order for the U.S. to claim that the injustices which founded it were a thing of the past.³⁶ The contributions of minorities were subsequently celebrated, but as scholars have noted, while this might have been “progress” for American ethnic minorities and women, this was not so for

³³ I use the term “settler-state” rather than “the State” to refer to the processes of settler-colonialism that perpetrated the systematic removal and dispossession of Native lands and in many cases elimination of a Native population. For a discussion of settler-colonialism, see Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: the Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event*, Writing past colonialism series (London; New York: Cassell, 1999); ———, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006).

³⁴ James Davison Hunter, “Culture Wars: the Struggle to Define America,” (1991).

³⁵ Chow, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*: 12.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

indigenous groups who have legal claims to sovereignty that differ greatly from immigrant groups.³⁷

While the “multicultural” was dealt with through statecraft, with often noble intentions of granting access to those typically excluded from the halls of power, it also involved a liberal emphasis on unencumbered freedoms, which meant that access to power would be achieved through market participation. Miranda Joseph’s *Against the Romance of Community* (2002) argues that the additive model of multiculturalism that is supported by capitalism depends on and generates community by inserting the history of the oppressed into the national narrative.³⁸ The liberal multicultural project thus involved political and economic assimilation and incorporation by way of acknowledging and accepting cultural, ethnic, racial, and gender difference.

At this time, as university programs began allowing recuperative histories to challenge the canons of mainstream knowledge, the cultural products of “ethnics” were also being actively consumed in ways that reproduced prevailing structures of power.³⁹ It became a way for the conquerer to reproduce itself by consuming the conquered. As Ann Stoler (1995) has explained, anthropological knowledge acquisition exists in a broad network of knowledge production that continually gathers information about “cultural difference” in order to incorporate and manage “the other.”⁴⁰ Such processes are not a

³⁷ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge, 1986); Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i*.

³⁸ Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota, 2002).

³⁹ Da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*.

⁴⁰ See Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*: 8. Stoler explains that droves of anthropologists (along with other “scientists”) traveled to the far corners of the earth to record the histories of the supposedly dying cultures of the world, to document the truth of the “other” for the new disciplines. Through these types of colonial encounters and

thing of the past, but because of the ways that liberal multiculturalism is articulated through contemporary knowledge production, the conquered think that they are advancing some kind of emancipation when they speak their “truth.”⁴¹ Furthermore, while both anthropological and liberal multicultural discourses require that cultural or ethnic difference be defined in non-fixed and unbounded ways, Da Silva insists that the sum political effect of such management techniques is actually to “double” or reconsolidate how subaltern subjects are culturally “bounded.”⁴² The subaltern other is therefore always racially encoded, always prisoners of their own cultural difference, and never self-determining. For Da Silva, such forms of reinscription are also aided and abetted by subject populations that are determined to “speak our truths.”

This form of incarceration, of double-fixing and double-binding, occurs through discourses of culture rather than through discourses of race, which discriminated subjects sought to overcome. While understandable as a reaction to histories and processes of racial discrimination and disempowerment, and inasmuch as it is an effort to prove ourselves worthy and important to global humanity, the imperative to “speak our truths,” from the vantage point of “cultural differences” only means that it is “culture” and not “race” that now (doubly) disempowers us⁴³ This critique has substantial implications for Kānaka Maoli, whose primary form of identification is through the performance of “culture,” (e.g. hula, seafaring, music, relation to land) and, as this dissertation explores, is exceptionally tied to cultural values like “aloha.”

the representations that sprung from it, bourgeois identity and racial difference in both the colony and the metropole redrew the frontiers of national belonging that divided the citizenry.

⁴¹ Da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

Put another way, in an age of neoliberal embrace of multiculturalism, certain identifiable discourses of culture and especially of aloha—both deploying and deployed by Kānaka Maoli and non-Kanaka alike—become the modes by which Kānaka Maoli may seek emancipation, but find themselves colonized once again albeit in new cultural forms. To the extent that such cultural forms are posited as having historical depth, that reaches into “precolonial” contact, there is also an identification or a bonding that is constructed between the pre-colonial Kanaka Maoli subject and the contemporary Hawaiian nationalist. This cultural connection may be seen by the latter to legitimize and authorize the struggle to “reclaim” Hawaiian nationhood through the forms of its cultural differences from the settler-state. However, culture also runs the risk of constituting the form by which Kānaka Maoli will once again be shackled. Furthermore, one of the ways that the invocation of Hawaiian culture can be oppressive is in how it is represented as exceptional or special in what it can teach and offer the world (i.e. “aloha is Hawai‘i’s gift to the world”).⁴⁴ It is in the combination of culture as the basis of specific identity as well as culture as having intrinsic value for everybody that Hawaiian culture and identity can be so easily commodified and appropriated. This is why everybody wants to be or can be Hawaiian. It is a potent discourse of difference that performances of aloha personify.

Scholars have criticized liberal multiculturalism as a discourse that depoliticizes or merely aestheticizes difference by emphasizing a surface-level or shallow celebration of cultural diversity, rather than a full grappling with the transformative struggle against

⁴⁴ Along with aloha, surfing has also been referred to as Hawai‘i’s gift to the world, just as the ‘ukulele has been as well. Hawaiian Host Chocolates a candy company based in Hawai‘i also calls itself Hawai‘i’s gift to the world.

racism and white supremacy.⁴⁵ Liberal multiculturalism allows us to enjoy the culture of the “other” without forcing us to be transformed by it. One can experience aloha and even be changed, but an understanding of the political implications of aloha’s appropriation are not necessary. Aloha as the representation of liberal multiculturalism thus embodies the authentic cultural logic of multinational or globalized capitalism, wherein white subjects are able to consume the cultures of others freely. Non-white cultures are subsequently viewed as the “spice” that must always perform their difference.⁴⁶ Culture is privatized through the performance of difference, in a way that it is locked, contained, and put onto the market.⁴⁷ Such management practices are strategies through which resistance is co-opted and incorporated into the very state it is critiquing.

The incorporation of subaltern histories as part of the very fabric of liberal multiculturalism is also about reconsolidating white supremacy. Rey Chow (2002) has theorized that “the ascendancy of whiteness” is a process by which white hegemony is rearticulated through liberal multicultural inclusion. In this sense, liberal multiculturalism can also operate as a tokenizing process: in ways that are recognized as apolitical and conform to some kind of narrative of universal affect that contribute to American democracy. Whereas in the past the state worked actively against emancipatory claims, nowadays, according to Chow, “... it effectively appropriates them.”⁴⁸ The ascendancy of whiteness, then, operates with liberal multiculturalism to use the inclusion of some

⁴⁵ Bell Hooks, *Black looks: race and representation* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992); Tricia Rose, *The Hip-Hop Wars* (New York: Perseus, 2008).

⁴⁶ Da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*. Also, Hooks, *Black looks: race and representation*: 21-26. This narrative is linked to white western conceptions of the dark Other, not to a radical questioning of those representations.” (hooks 26).

⁴⁷ E San Juan, *Racism and Cultural Studies: Critiques of Multiculturalist Ideology and the Politics of Difference* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

⁴⁸ Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism*: 14.

ethnics as representative of the possibilities of a “better life” or of being closer to whiteness, positioning those who are excluded as inferior and fracturing coalitions across communities.⁴⁹ The story of liberal multiculturalism is one that erases or cancels out material institutions, as explained by E. San Juan: “It cancels not only the problematic of domination and subordination but also reconstitutes this social relation in a political economy of difference...”⁵⁰ In the case of Hawai‘i, the Kanaka Maoli performers that I examine here are forced to participate in this political economy of difference, using their indigeneity to their advantage in some cases, and in other moments, actively seeming to disavow Hawaiian indigeneity altogether. The performers which I examine later in this dissertation, Krystilez and Cocoa Chandelier, engage in representational practices like aloha and other modern discourses of being “Hawaiian” that are messy and contradictory.

The Remix to Recognition

In the late twentieth century, multiculturalism became the schema for measuring so-called “equality,” guiding the agenda for global justice, whereby international governments and nongovernmental organizations are expected to endorse multiculturalism in the name of social justice.⁵¹ Recent scholarship in Native Studies by Andrea Smith (2008, 2010), Audra Simpson (2007), and Glen Coulthard (2007) in particular, have argued that it is problematic to posit the celebration of multiculturalism as the solution to inequality, especially for Native peoples.¹⁵ These scholars critique the desire for “recognition” or “visibility,” which promises some form of redress or liberation

⁴⁹ Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalisms in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007). 31.

⁵⁰ San Juan, *Racism and Cultural Studies: Critiques of Multiculturalist Ideology and the Politics of Difference*: 9.

⁵¹ Da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*: xxiii.

by the majority.⁵² To wit, the resilience of Natives in the face of colonial efforts to exterminate them has resulted in settler-states creating neocolonial forms of management via public policies that employ the language of “reconciliation,” “recognition,” and (let’s not forget) “apologies.” Within this conception of liberal multiculturalism, settler-states publicly disavow the genocidal policies of yesteryear and advocate for Native recognition as state policy. Glen Coulthard has theorized that recognition has been hegemonized as a means to disguise how colonial power operates, and I would add that allowing Natives entrance into a settler-state via “recognition” is also the very embodiment/perfect encapsulation of neocolonialism.⁵³ Whereas in the past repressive state practices and colonial domination were exercised through brute force, they are now veiled in conciliatory language that emphasizes recognition and accommodation. Thus, the power dynamic in the relationship still remains fundamentally colonial, because the state remains in control, and the Natives consent to that control. As Kēhaulani Kauanui explains in *Hawaiian Blood* (2008), recognition is similar to the concept of “usufruct”: the contractual (juridical) arrangement where an owner transfers to another the rights of use, but retains the right to revoke the transfer at any time.⁵⁴ Essentially, this concept allows the Native to use specific lands (and its “fruits”), but this usage is only possible if granted by its “true” owners, i.e., the settler-state. Therefore, this relationship is always unstable, with the settler-state calling the shots. The genocidal logic of disappearance is therefore tied to this project of selective assimilation where only “authentic” Natives, i.e.,

⁵² See also the work of Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism*.

⁵³ Glen Coulthard, "Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the 'Politics of Recognition'," *Contemporary Political Theory* 6 (2007).

⁵⁴ J. Kehaulani Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

ones that perform properly before the eyes of the settler-state, are recognized. When Natives are not recognized they are regarded as “inauthentic,” which in turn facilitates Native dispossession in the service of settler-colonialism.⁵⁵ Ergo, the implications for “recognition” or “inclusion” are predicated upon a settler-colonial logic that requires the demise of the Native.

Elizabeth Povinelli connects the desire for recognition to performance. In *The Cunning of Recognition* (2002), she documents how the process of recognition forces different aboriginal groups to performatively enact and overcome their respective “repugnant” traditions as a condition of recognition.⁵⁶ As such, the moral obligation and responsibility that the liberal multicultural settler-state feels towards its indigenous subjects is rooted in its desire to understand “the Native”, because it wants to contain “the Native” by demarcating what types of Natives are permissible through the law, and thus worthy of recognition by the settler-state. These acts, in sum, allocate modes of normativity that in turn determine the distribution of rights, sympathy, and resources at both state and federal level.⁵⁷ As Povinelli explains, the settler-state sanctions aboriginal cultural practice through a multicultural imaginary that forces Natives to perform their culture in particular ways. The multicultural imaginary in this sense defuses struggles for liberation and ensures the functioning of the modern settler-state.⁵⁸ Attempts by the State of Hawai‘i to contain the Hawaiian sovereignty movement is evidence of this kind of state-sanctioned acknowledgement of Hawaiian culture and identity. The latter is most observable in arguments that support Native Hawaiian federal recognition, which for

⁵⁵ Ibid., 25.

⁵⁶ Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism*.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 27.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

nearly a decade have been at the center of serious public debate in Hawai‘i. The content of the Native Hawaiian Government Reorganization Act, popularly referred to as the “Akaka Bill” is not directly analyzed in this dissertation, but chapters two and three call attention to the discourse around its genesis and impact on Kanaka Maoli identity and cultural production. The performance of aloha, as I will show, is deeply embedded in the latter and is now intrinsic to Hawaiian indigeneity itself.

Hawaiian History

*The dance at the edge of empire
Left my feet cold
The rhythms are too hard to keep
To the sounds of our bodies being sold.*⁵⁹
-My Ex is Dead, “Writing from Nowhere”

Prior to contact with Europeans, Kānaka Maoli lived in a highly stratified subsistence economy that was able to sustain many ‘ohana (multigenerational families) who lived in villages across the Hawaiian Islands. Hawaiian culture focused on maintaining and nurturing relationships with the natural world, characterized by stewardship of the land and ocean.⁶⁰ It has been documented extensively by anthropologists and archaeologists that pre-colonial Hawaiian life was a self-sufficient, highly organized and stratified caste-like system.⁶¹ It is not my intention here to romanticize a pre-colonial Hawaiian world that was devoid of problems, because surely they existed, and battles for power were certainly common, but rather, this summary

⁵⁹ From My Ex is Dead, “Writing From Nowhere,” on *Ex = Nation*. Independent, 2005. I was the lead singer of this band and wrote these lyrics.

⁶⁰ Davianna McGregor, "Na Kua'aina: living Hawaiian culture," University of Hawai'i Press.

⁶¹ Abraham Fornander, "Selections from Fornander's Hawaiian antiquities and folk-lore," (1959); Patrick Vinton Kirch, "Feathered gods and fishhooks: an introduction to Hawaiian archaeology and prehistory," (1985); ———, *The evolution of the Polynesian chiefdoms*, 1st paperback ed., New studies in archaeology (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Samuel Manaiakalani Kamakau, Dorothy B. Barrère, and Mary Kawena Pukui, *Ka poe kahiko; the people of old*, Bernice P Bishop Museum Special publication 51 (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1964).

serves to note the radical changes that occurred since the late eighteenth century. The first foreigners stumbled upon Hawai‘i’s shores in 1778, when Captain Cook arrived at Waimea, Kaua‘i. He brought with him tuberculosis, guns, alcohol, and tobacco. In *Before the Horror* (1989), David Stannard estimates that prior to contact with haole people, the population of Hawai‘i numbered roughly eight hundred thousand.⁶² Cook’s seamen and other haoles brought epidemics such as measles, whooping cough, and influenza that decimated the Kanaka Maoli population throughout the nineteenth century, resulting in an estimated 80-90% population decrease of Kānaka Maoli by the end of the century. In 1810, Kamehameha I (affectionately known as “Kamehameha The Great”) united the islands into one unified Kingdom of Hawai‘i.

The kapu system was abolished in 1819, breaking the traditional power base of the Hawaiian priesthoods.⁶³ After Kamehameha I died, Ka‘ahumanu and Keōpūolani⁶⁴ decided to break the ‘aikapu (restrictions on food) by sitting down with the men to eat. At the same time, Ka‘ahumanu and other high chiefs destroyed many of the old temples and no longer paid homage to the old gods. Afflicted by venereal disease and tuberculosis from contact with haoles, Kānaka Maoli lost faith in the gods. When the first Calvinist missionaries arrived in 1820, introducing Christianity to Kānaka Maoli, Ka‘ahumanu, the “favorite wife” of Kamehameha I and an ali‘i nui (high-ranking chief), led the conversion to Christianity in 1824.⁶⁵ In 1830, Ka‘ahumanu also banned the public performance of

⁶² David E. Stannard, *Before the Horror: the Population of Hawai‘i on the Eve of Western Contact* (Honolulu, HI: Social Science Research Institute, University of Hawaii, 1989). 79.

⁶³ “Kapu” is defined as taboos, prohibitions, and things that are forbidden. The “kapu system” is used to denote the religious system.

⁶⁴ Ka‘ahumanu is famous for breaking kapu and long hailed as the “favorite wife” of Kamehameha I. Keōpūolani is the mother of Liholiho (Kamehameha II), the most sacred and high ranking of Kamehameha’s wahine (“wives”).

⁶⁵ Kame‘eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires/Pehea La E Pono Ai?*

hula. At this time, Kānaka Maoli were undergoing unprecedented population collapse from foreign diseases, but the spread of disease was blamed on Kanaka Maoli promiscuity, not the foreigners who were bringing the diseases. Following the lead of their ali‘i, many Kānaka Maoli turned to Christianity in hopes that they would be saved from physical death. Alas, Christianity did not prevent the spreading of diseases that decimated the Kānaka Maoli population.

The impact of foreign influence increased as people turned to missionaries for spiritual and political guidance. Other foreigners were beginning to make their presence known in various types of industry, including fur, sandalwood, and whaling. Foreigners were also becoming advisors to the ali‘i (chiefs), helping the Kingdom adopt a Western system of law to make it appear “civilized” to European nations, who were all eyeing the Pacific for its natural resources (people included). The legal and governmental institutions put in place to aid Kānaka Maoli in retaining sovereignty also depended on foreigners to run them.⁶⁶ Foreign advisors thus became necessary to the implementation of Western laws and they were critical to the functioning of the Hawaiian Kingdom, participating directly in the dispossession of Kanaka Maoli lands, particularly among the maka‘āinana (commoners).⁶⁷ In short, the “civilizing process” protected the sovereignty of the Hawaiian Kingdom in a world of empires, but it also demanded that the Kanaka Maoli people radically transform their entire society.

Through conversion to Christianity and adoption of Western law, Kanaka Maoli transformed relationships—how they related to the land, to haoles, and to each other. By

⁶⁶ Osorio, *Dismembering Lahui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887*.

⁶⁷ Daws, *Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands*; George Cooper and Gavan Daws, *Land and Power in Hawai‘i: the Democratic Years* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1990); Kame‘eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires/Pehea La E Pono Ai*; Osorio, *Dismembering Lahui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887*.

the late 1820s, as argued in Sally Engle Merry's *Colonizing Hawai'i* (2000), new laws were carried out on the bodies of Kānaka Maoli through the passing of laws regulating sexuality and marriage.⁶⁸ The missionary desire to regulate marriage predated the plantation economy, but it was rooted in a desire to restrain the inherent licentiousness of the Natives.⁶⁹ In addition to controlling what missionaries felt was sinful behavior (what missionaries defined as prostitution and adultery), such Western laws were intended to ready the Kanaka Maoli subject for wage labor and capitalist farming, modes of production that were alien to Kānaka Maoli, who before contact lived in a communal subsistence-based economy.

Later, in 1848, "The Great Mahele" instituted a reform in land tenure, overhauling traditional understandings of space, place and land, laying the foundation for the imposition of capitalism in the islands.⁷⁰ For the first time, private ownership of land was allowed, dividing Hawai'i's lands among the ali'i (leaving little for the maka'āinana). By 1850 foreigners were allowed to purchase land as well.⁷¹ In the shift from a subsistence-

⁶⁸ Technically, Hawaiian law did not have a formal "marriage" ceremony. "Divorce" and "Marriage" did not really exist, although there is evidence to show that people had long-term lovers. Kame'eleihiwa characterizes sexual relationships as "moe aku, moe mai" which translates to "sleeping here and there." Kame'eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires/Pehea La E Pono Ai?*: 160-61. Relationships were easily initiated and ended without much repercussion in the community. The birth of a child solidified family relationships moreso than did any type of sexual relationship, and even then, the birth of a child did not restrict the sexual behaviors of the parents of the child, it just solidified the relationship of families to one another. Among the ali'i, however, sexual behaviors carried more prohibitions because of the high rank and mana (power) the ali'i had. It was feared that the mana would be lost if sexual relations—and births—were out of control. It seemed that the relations between ali'i and commoners were frowned upon more than anything else. Also see, Sally Engle Merry, *Colonizing Hawai'i: the Cultural Power of Law* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000). 228.

⁶⁹ ———, *Colonizing Hawai'i: the Cultural Power of Law*: 221-58.

⁷⁰ Cooper and Daws, *Land and Power in Hawai'i: the Democratic Years*; Kame'eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires/Pehea La E Pono Ai*; McGregor, "Na Kua'aina: living Hawaiian culture".

⁷¹ The adoption of the Alien Land Ownership Act on July 10, 1850 granted foreigners the right to own land. Later in August 6, 1850, The Kuleana Act allowed commoners to petition for land title that they lived and worked on, but the land claim process proved difficult for many Kānaka Maoli to understand because land ownership was a new concept. For more, see Jon M. Van Dyke, *Who owns the Crown lands of*

based economy to one involving monetary capital, the maka‘āinana found themselves severely disempowered. Large tracts of land were bought up by haole people, prominently among them the descendents of the first missionaries. The maka‘āinana were forcibly removed from their lands, where sugar and pineapple plantations were eventually propagated. As a solution to a shortage of labor, the first contract laborers came to Hawai‘i in 1852 as immigrants from China and later Japan, Portugal, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Korea.⁷²

In response to growing Kanaka Maoli dispossession and to combat marauding colonial powers, King David Kalākaua ratified the Reciprocity Treaty in 1875⁷³ with the U.S. He also actively pursued foreign policy with other nations to emphasize the status of Hawai‘i as a fully independent nation and initiated a revival of the hula, which had been banned since 1830.⁷⁴ At Kalākaua’s coronation (1883) and fiftieth birthday Jubilee (1886), hula was publicly performed as narratives of the Hawaiian Kingdom—underground and official—that haole people couldn’t understand.⁷⁵ The birthday Jubilee involved proud displays of the Hawaiian Kingdom, including a lū‘au (party), an independence day celebration, a “historical tableaux,” and of course hula performances that brought together the Kanaka Maoli people.⁷⁶ However, as Kalākaua attempted to hold onto the Kingdom’s sovereignty, he became increasingly powerless as colonists

Hawai‘i? (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008); Jon J. Chinen, *The Great Mahele: Hawaii’s Land Division of 1848* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1958).

⁷² Noel Kent, *Hawai‘i: Islands Under the Influence* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1983), 35.

⁷³ The Reciprocity Treaty of 1875 gave the U.S. market access to products grown in the islands, notably sugar and pineapple. It also gave the U.S. usage of Pearl Harbor.

⁷⁴ See also the work of Kealani Cook, who documents Kānaka Maoli relationships with other Pacific Island nations in the late nineteenth century as part of Kalākaua’s attempts to project a modern image of the Hawaiian Kingdom. Kealani Cook, "Kahiki: Native Hawaiian Relationships with Other Pacific Islanders 1850-1915" (Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2011).

⁷⁵ Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*: 89.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 118.

usurped his power as King. The Bayonet Constitution in 1887 forced Kalākaua to sign away his powers, leaving him in place as a figurehead ruler with no actual power. The Bayonet Constitution stripped the king of power, giving power to the legislature and to the elected government. Voting powers were restricted to those who met income or property requirements, severely limiting who could vote. Americans and Europeans—haoles—notably were able to vote, while many Kānaka Maoli did not meet requirements, and Asians especially were excluded from voting rights, which allowed haoles to take political control. When Queen Lili‘uokalani succeeded Kalākaua, she attempted to draft a new constitution in response to petitions from the common people who were opposed to the Bayonet Constitution. However, before she was able to get the new constitution passed, on Lili‘uokalani was overthrown January 17, 1893, by a conspiracy of American businessmen with the support of the U.S. Marines. After the U.S. military-backed illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom (1893) and the subsequent establishment of the Territory of Hawai‘i in 1898, haoles ascended into formal positions of power, led by Governor Stanford B. Dole, of Dole pineapple fame. In the early territory period, laborers were racially stratified on plantation camps, and business relationships between haole elite and the U.S. government created an environment wherein the common people (Asian settlers and Kānaka Maoli) were systematically alienated from any hopes of transcending their current positions. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, as immigration increased, plantation hierarchies fell into place while Kānaka Maoli gradually lost their lands.

During the early territory period, the descendants of Hawaiian monarchy were especially concerned with the plight of the Kanaka Maoli people. In efforts to advance

some form of reparations, the 1920 Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA) affirmed the special relationship between the U.S. and Native Hawaiians. In this act, two hundred thousand acres of land were set aside for Native Hawaiian homesteads. The intent of the act, presented by Congressional Delegate Jonah Kūhiō Kalanianaʻole and Senator John H. Wise (two Kānaka Maoli of chiefly rank at the time) was to allow Kānaka Maoli to support themselves, to “preserve” Kānaka Maoli, to “rehabilitate” them through self-sufficient farming.⁷⁷ Such noble intentions aimed to save the “dying Hawaiian race” did so through eugenic logic that qualified Kānaka Maoli who could meet a fifty-percent blood quantum requirement. The HHCA thus began a process of returning select Kānaka Maoli to the land, but not the land itself.⁷⁸ This is a prime example of Kauanui’s explanation of “usufruct,” as the federal government granted Kanaka the land stolen from them. When Hawai‘i became a state in 1959, the administration of these lands moved from federal hands to a state-level agency that has since been plagued with mismanagement. Chapters two and three explore in detail the ways in which the Kanaka Maoli rapper Krystilez reconfigures narratives about place and space on the homestead, offering a re-imagining of Hawaiian diasporic connectivity that relies on blood quantum policies.

⁷⁷ Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity*: 7.

⁷⁸ However, according to a 2003 report, 20,416 applicants applied for residential or pastoral lots, with almost 6,000 applicants who had been waiting over twenty years. To qualify for Hawaiian homesteads, applicants must be of at least 50% blood quantum to qualify, or be the descendant of someone on the waiting list. Annual lease rent is \$1 per year with a ninety-nine-year lease, and a lease term can be extended for an additional hundred years. There is seven-year exemption from property tax, no tax on land, with minimal property tax after the first seven years. Office of Hawaiian Affairs, *Native Hawaiian Data Book* (Honolulu: Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 2006). 130-35; SMS Research, "Department of Hawaiian Home Lands Applicant Survey Report," (Honolulu 2009), 9.

Fake State

During the early years of the Cold War, Hawai‘i had ideological value. As Dean Saranillio has argued, proponents of Hawai‘i statehood advanced an image of Hawai‘i as devoid of racism, using Hawai‘i’s majority Asian and Pacific Islander population as a representation of America’s multicultural promise. The new face of America was that of a multicultural democracy, which after statehood, provided uninhibited access to Hawai‘i as a staging ground for American military might and economic dominance, assisting with the maintenance of U.S. military bases and working to secure resources and markets throughout Asia and the Pacific.⁷⁹ Alongside the growth in American military presence, the plantation economy thrived during the late-nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. Throughout the plantation era in Hawai‘i, Asian settlers or working class people were subjugated on racially hierarchized plantations that were later re-stratified in the tourism service industry.⁸⁰

Hawai‘i’s multi-ethnic population, a legacy of multiple generations with roots in plantation labor immigration primarily from Asia, has given rise to a so-called “local culture,” which overlaps with Kanaka Maoli culture in precarious ways. The term “local” is used in Hawai‘i to differentiate between Hawai‘i—born residents—and newcomers, while the latter are commonly imagined to be White or “haole,” although not always. Within this usage, Kānaka Maoli are almost always “local”. Haole people born and raised in the islands are technically “local,” but haole identification as such is highly

⁷⁹ Dean Itsuji Saranillio, "Seeing Conquest: Colliding Histories and the Cultural Politics of Hawai'i Statehood" (Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2009), 10.

⁸⁰ Kent, *Hawai'i: Islands Under the Influence*; Ronald Takaki, *Pau Hana: plantation life and labor in Hawaii, 1835-1920* (Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1983); Edward D. Beechert, "The Political Economy of Hawai'i and Working Class Consciousness," *Social Process in Hawai'i* 31(1984).

contextual. “Local” is politically linked most obviously to the legacy of land dispossession and ownership in the islands, where its history was and continues to be most blatantly played out in plantation and tourist economies.⁸¹ The discourse of “local” identity in Hawai‘i has recently been theorized by academics who contend that Asian settlers have colluded with haole people and are also to blame for the disempowerment and displacement of the Kanaka Maoli people.⁸² As I explained earlier, this dissertation uses the term “settler” in Hawai‘i to refer to anyone that is not Kanaka Maoli in order to center the processes of settler-colonialism that have systematically disempowered Kānaka Maoli and marked them as unfit for self-government.⁸³

Hawai‘i’s “local” political history is widely understood as a liberal democratic revolution that involved working class (primarily Asian) overthrow of a white political and business oligarchy in the mid-to-late twentieth century. The Democratic Party came to power through an alliance with labor, long associated with local descendents of Asian plantation workers. Their victory is also touted as inaugurating a litany of progressive reform in Hawai‘i and in the U.S. This was later heralded as proof of Hawai‘i’s exceptionalism as a multicultural state, to form what Fujikane and Okamura have described critically as “harmonious multiculturalism.”⁸⁴ Asian settlers in Hawai‘i achieved political and economic “success,” ascending into local government positions, employment outside of the plantation system, educational success, and business and

⁸¹ Jonathan Okamura, "Why There Are No Asian Americans in Hawai'i: The Continuing Significance of Local Identity," *Social Process in Hawai'i* 35(1995).

⁸² Saranillio, "Seeing Conquest: Colliding Histories and the Cultural Politics of Hawai'i Statehood."; Fujikane and Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai'i*.

⁸³ For more on settler-colonialism in Hawai‘i see Saranillio, "Seeing Conquest: Colliding Histories and the Cultural Politics of Hawai'i Statehood." And, Fujikane and Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai'i*.

⁸⁴ ———, *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai'i*: 3.

home ownership. And yet, only some Asian settlers were able to “make it,” namely the Japanese in Hawai‘i, while Filipinos, alongside Kānaka Maoli and other Pacific Islanders, have not experienced similar success.⁸⁵ The suppression of the latter is part and parcel of an Asian settler success story that obscures the differences in the cultural and political histories of Asian migrants and the material conditions of life in Hawai‘i, particularly on the plantations. Asian diligence, however, is only possible because of the “spirit of aloha,” which is crucial to any narrative of multiculturalism in Hawai‘i, whereby through the natural presence of Kānaka Maoli and their welcoming culture, other cultures were happily incorporated. As a result, Hawai‘i’s diversity has been historically hailed as an international model of harmony, often invoking the image of the melting pot, where the mixing of ethnicities and cultures has produced a model of how the intermingling of peoples is not only possible but successful.⁸⁶

In the 1960s, as the civil rights movement took hold of American society, similar struggles found traction in Hawai‘i, particularly among Kānaka Maoli, who, in the spirit of the American Indian Movement and the Black Panther Party, began to publicly vocalize their opposition to the American presence in Hawai‘i. Community struggles against various types of development collided with state and corporate efforts to generate capital in the islands, which in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries remain, in large part, construction projects that often (but not always) contribute to tourism in some way.⁸⁷ Since then, tourism in Hawai‘i has become the subject of growing public

⁸⁵ Jonathan Okamura, *Ethnicity and Inequality in Hawai‘i* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008).

⁸⁶ Ibid; ———, "Why There Are No Asian Americans in Hawai‘i: The Continuing Significance of Local Identity."

⁸⁷ Robert H. Mast and Anne B. Mast, *Autobiography of Protest in Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996); Dana Naone Hall, "Preserving Hawai‘i as a Hawaiian Place: Tourism,

opposition. As explained in *Land and Power in Hawai'i* (1990), the Democratic Party who fought against the white-colonialist plantation-owning oligarchy promised to redistribute power and capital in the islands, but such hopes relied upon a narrative of “development.”⁸⁸ In reality, such development contributed to the further dispossession of Kānaka Maoli from Hawaiian lands, the oppression of most of Hawai'i's people, and a growing distrust of government officials and big business. Land struggles against rampant development in the 1970s resulted in the coalescence of a working-class local identity, juxtaposed and often in coalition with the emergent Hawaiian cultural renaissance.⁸⁹

The aforementioned land struggles against urban development were products of a rising political consciousness in Hawai'i. The Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana (PKO) was one of the most visible activist groups at the time, protesting the U.S. military's usage of the island of Kaho'olawe for bombing practice from 1941-1990. PKO's first landing on Kaho'olawe in 1976, was of particular importance, with many Kānaka Maoli (and locals) rallying around the return of the island to Kānaka Maoli, or at the very least, an end to the

Development and Destruction of the Environment," in *Islands in captivity: the record of the International Tribunal on the Rights of Indigenous Hawaiians*, ed. Ward Churchill, Sharon Helen Venne, and Lilikala Kame'eleihiwa (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2004); Patricia Tummons, "From Fertile Fields to No-Man's Land: The Transformation of Waikane Valley," in *Islands in captivity: the record of the International Tribunal on the Rights of Indigenous Hawaiians*, ed. Ward Churchill, Sharon Helen Venne, and Lilikala Kame'eleihiwa (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2004); Haunani-Kay Trask, "The Birth of the Modern Hawaiian Movement: Kalama Valley, O'ahu," *The Hawaiian Journal of History* 21(1987).

⁸⁸ According to Arturo Escobar, a discourse of development emerged in the early post-WWII period. The discourse of development believed that social and economic problems could be solved through the design and implementation of ambitious urban and countryside building plans. However, most people's conditions did not improve and instead were colonized by development discourse itself. Arturo Escobar and ebrary Inc., *Encountering development the making and unmaking of the Third World*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995). 4-6.

⁸⁹ Okamura, "Why There Are No Asian Americans in Hawai'i: The Continuing Significance of Local Identity."; Mast and Mast, *Autobiography of Protest in Hawai'i*.

bombing of the island.⁹⁰ Community opposition to the bombing of Kaho‘olawe and military presence in the islands, alongside unchecked tourist development, tended to stretch across native and settler groups, although the latter’s opposition has waned in recent years. By this time Hawai‘o, became a prime example of what Teresia Teaiwa calls “militourism,” that is an environment wherein military force “ensures the smooth running of a tourist industry and that same tourist industry masks the military force behind it.”⁹¹ In other words, the severely embedded industries of both the military and tourism in Hawai‘i have created a cultural environment that is heavily influenced by both forces—the fantasy of pleasure that comes from consuming native culture and the violent presence of the U.S. Pacific Command which is predicated on the dispossession and removal of the natives. This juxtaposition of pleasure and violence foregrounds Kānaka Maoli and displaces them at the same time. The struggles over Kaho‘olawe, Waiahole-Waikāne, Sandy Beach, the fight against the Superferry, and ongoing struggles against land usage, express a legacy of community activism that rubs up against capitalist (and military) business ventures.⁹²

The 1978 Hawai‘i Constitutional Convention created the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA), a semi-autonomous state-entity, to lobby on behalf of the Hawaiian

⁹⁰ In 1976 members of the PKO filed suit in Federal Court, which ruled partially in its favor, requiring the U.S. Navy to conduct an environmental impact statement and to produce a survey of the historical sites on Kaho‘olawe and to protect such sites. By 1980 the Navy was ordered to begin soil conservation, re-vegetation programs and to limit impact training on the island, allowing PKO access to the island for religious and cultural purposes. In 1990 the military discontinued use of Kaho‘olawe and began the process to transfer the island from federal jurisdiction to the State of Hawai‘i, finalized in 1994. In 1995 a Cultural Resources Management Plan was ordered for Kaho‘olawe, in which the island would be preserved for the practice of Hawaiian cultural, spiritual and subsistence purposes.

⁹¹ Teresia Teaiwa, "Reading Gauguin's *Noa Noa* with Hau'ofa's *Nederends*: Militourism, feminism and the 'Polynesian' Body," in *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics and Identity in the New Pacific*, ed. Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 251.

⁹² Jerry Mander and Koohan Paik, *The Superferry Chronicles: Hawai'i's Uprising Against Militarism, Commercialism, and the Desecration of the Earth* (Kihei, HI: Koa Books, 2008).

people, to hold in trust Hawaiian claims to ceded lands, and to administer Hawaiian Homesteads. This convention also included an amendment for the protection of traditional Hawaiian customs pertaining to subsistence, culture and religious purposes. OHA is governed by a nine-member elected board of trustees, and holds in trust all property set aside or conveyed to it for “native Hawaiians” (defined by a category of identification requiring at least 50% blood). OHA is also supposed to collect revenue derived from a portion of the trust established for lands that were earlier granted to the state. However, the state still has not transferred these revenues. There has been considerable debate over whether or not the OHA is colluding with the State of Hawai‘i. The creation of OHA occurred in tandem with the “Hawaiian Renaissance” in the 1970s, a time that ushered in the public revival and display of Hawaiian culture and politics, in ways unseen since the days of Kalākaua’s Jubilee. Revitalization in the world of cultural performance (music and dance), the Hawaiian language, and Hawaiian traditional voyaging were emblematic of a renewed sense of Hawaiian pride and political consciousness, which included growing support for Hawaiian sovereignty and self-determination.

Following the political activism of the late 1970s that continued throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Asian-settlers and a select group of Kānaka Maoli became further assimilated into Hawai‘i politics—i.e., in local government—and Kanaka Maoli aspirations for political autonomy became mainstream discourse in Hawai‘i. The intersection of race and class struggle that motivated opposition to development began to fall apart with the advent of “political correctness” and “identity politics” that celebrate

multiculturalism without accounting for the role of political economy, especially racial inclusion over class critique.

By the early 1990s, Hawaiian sovereignty had made considerable gains in the realm of public awareness. In 1993, to commemorate the centennial anniversary of the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom, numerous Hawaiian activist groups held one of the largest marches in Hawaiian history, with over fifteen thousand people demonstrating. The public display of Kanaka Maoli aspirations for, some kind of acknowledgement of the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom resulted in the Apology Bill, signed into law by President Clinton in 1993, which explicitly references Kanaka Maoli rights to self-determination. The “Apology Bill,” however, received mixed reactions, as activist Haunani-Kay Trask poignantly wrote, “... all our dead and barely living, rejoice. For now we own one dozen dirty pages of American paper to feed our people and govern our nation.”⁹³

By the turn of the twenty-first century, Hawaiian sovereignty had become mainstream discourse in Hawai‘i. *Aloha Betrayed* (2004), the first extended study of the twenty-one thousand signatures of Kānaka Maoli opposed to annexation in 1896, rewrote Hawaiian history. Silva’s work affirmed that Kānaka Maoli actively resisted U.S. annexation. Drawing on Hawaiian-language texts that were overlooked by haole historians (like Ralph Kuykendall and Gavan Daws), Silva’s work documented the vibrant Hawaiian language print culture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁹⁴ Silva contends that to understand Hawaiian history and to truly honor the work of Kānaka

⁹³ See Haunani-Kay Trask’s poem “Apologies” in Fujikane and Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai‘i*: 66.

⁹⁴ Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom* (Honolulu,: University of Hawaii, 1938).

Maoli in print media, Hawaiian language newspapers must be vigorously analyzed because they speak volumes about the ways in which Kānaka Maoli navigated the anti-annexation struggle.⁹⁵ As a result of Silva's book, the Kū'ē Petitions have been reproduced in multiple venues. The Kū'ē Petitions were displayed at the state capitol, Bishop Museum, across the Hawaiian islands as a traveling exhibit, in printed book form, in the University of Hawai'i's digital archive available online, as well as on other websites dedicated to helping people find signatures of their kupuna (ancestor). The petitions, without a doubt, continue to infuse and inspire efforts for Hawaiian self-determination. The strength of such changes in discourse raised public awareness but also produced a backlash against Hawaiian entitlement programs. A 1996 lawsuit, *Rice v. Cayetano*, was filed by haole Big Island rancher, Freddy Rice who charged the OHA and the State of Hawai'i with racial discrimination because he could not vote for OHA trustees. Rice was financed by the Campaign for a Color-Blind America, a neoconservative think-tank. Another lawsuit filed in 2000, *Arakaki v. State of Hawai'i*, resulted in a ruling that federally administered programs with explicit preference toward Kānaka Maoli were equally discriminatory against settlers.

The language used in the lawsuits invoke the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments to argue what has become increasingly common, that civil rights is no longer necessary. Such rulings have ushered in a so-called "post-civil rights" era, based on the logic that the protection of civil rights for minority groups is no longer deemed necessary; thus by adhering to the needs of the minority, the majority suffers. As a result, OHA elections were made open to all registered Hawai'i voters and Kanaka Maoli genealogy no longer

⁹⁵ Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*.

served as a pre-requisite to running for a seat in the OHA Board elections. In response to these lawsuits, OHA, along with Kamehameha Schools, and other Hawaiian civic clubs and organizations (and some corporations) have advocated strongly for federal recognition of Native Hawaiians to protect against legal assaults on Hawaiian “entitlements.”

This hostile context provided considerable support and momentum for the Akaka Bill, a bill that proposes federal recognition of Native Hawaiians similar to that of Indian tribes in the lower forty-eight states and Alaska, but with prohibitions on gaming, deferred settlement of land claims and does not authorize civil and criminal jurisdiction. The bill’s origins come from the 1993 U.S. resolution that formally apologized to Native Hawaiians for the U.S. involvement in the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom. The Akaka bill was first introduced into U.S. Congress in 2000 and has undergone numerous changes. The Akaka Bill would put in a motion to create a Hawaiian governing entity that would eventually enter into negotiate with the U.S. government in a government-to-government relationship.

In any case, notwithstanding the support of Hawai‘i state legislators, congressional representatives, Governor Neil Abercrombie, and President Barack Obama, the Akaka Bill has also seen the ebb and flow of federal opposition to it. In 2011, Hawai‘i Governor Neil Abercrombie sponsored legislation (Act 195) that offered state recognition of Hawaiian self-determination to put in place at the state-level a process that can be subsequently presented at the federal level. At the time of writing, U.S. Senator Akaka has vowed to present the Akaka Bill one more time before the end of his last term in 2012.

Hawaiians at Heart and Other Wannabees

Scholars in American Studies have argued that the historical abstraction of Native concepts and practices from their cultural contexts, and their appropriation by non-Native Americans are not merely common fare in society, but constitute the basis of distinguishing American from European identity. As Rayna Green writes in her article “The Tribe Called Wannabee: Playing Indian in America and Europe” (1988), “...the living performance of ‘playing Indian’ by non-Indian peoples depends upon the physical and psychological removal, even the death, of real Indians.”⁹⁶ For Green, moreover, what is ostensibly a performance that is supposedly done out of love for Indians also constitutes a “deadly performance genre called ‘genocide’.”⁹⁷ Likewise, as Phil Deloria has elaborated, the continual appropriation of native culture is rooted in a complex set of white guilt, nostalgia, and a spirit of the land, reflecting a postmodern global age that manages to turn all these expressions into marketable commodities.⁹⁸ Something similar operates differently in Hawai‘i, and is most evident in how many non-Hawaiians confuse their understanding (or misunderstanding) of Hawaiian culture with deep self-identification as akin to being Kānaka Maoli. Lisa Hall’s article “Hawaiians at heart and other fictions” (2005) criticizes this offensive practice with an argument that also diverges from Green and Deloria’s “playing Indian.” Hall explains that Hawai‘i’s distance prohibits Americans from claiming an ancestral link to a “Hawaiian grandmother” in the same way they make the proverbial claim to having a “Cherokee

⁹⁶ Rayna Green, "The Tribe Called Wannabee: Playing Indian in America and Europe," *Folklore* 99, no. 1 (1988): 31.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Deloria, *Playing Indian*: 179.

grandmother.”⁹⁹ Nevertheless, they are not precluded from claiming to be “Hawaiians at heart.”¹⁰⁰ This ubiquitous expression, according to Hall, fuses an appreciation and knowledge of Hawaiian culture with Hawaiian ancestry. With such a customization in the Pacific, this version of “playing Indian” dispossesses Kānaka Maoli of cultural authority and also promotes tourism through love and embrace of native culture. It is also in this sense that the appropriation and commodification the pre-eminent cultural referent of aloha can be understood also to naturalize the processes of colonialism under the sign of aloha. The appropriation of native (Hawaiian) culture remains a technology of American colonial power, one that has reinvented itself in the form of liberal multiculturalism. Nothing expresses multiculturalism more than the phrase “the aloha spirit.”

Indeed, the “aloha spirit” is what makes Hawai‘i special, the source of its supposed exceptionalism. So commodified is the phrase, so frequently is it expressed by policy-makers, business-owners, the local media, and well-meaning “locals,” that the aloha spirit has supposedly spawned an entirely unique and desirable local culture of multiple diasporas mixed with Hawaiian culture in peaceful, harmonic co-existence. Hawai‘i continues to be the poster-child for American racial diversity and acceptance, and one that would also serve to confirm America’s exceptionalism by producing its first non-White President in Barack Obama. This is why and how it is that Barack Obama and his supporters can proudly proclaim themselves to be “keiki o ka ‘āina,” children of the land.

⁹⁹ Lisa Hall, ““Hawaiian at Heart” and Other Fictions,” *Contemporary Pacific* 17, no. 2 (2005): 410.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Aloha is also Hawai‘i’s most valuable resource, whose protection from harm is the State’s top priority, especially given Hawai‘i’s dependence on tourism.¹⁰¹ Consequently, Hawai‘i lawmakers, business-owners, and residents are also constantly worried about Hawai‘i’s image to potential visitors. It may be the fiftieth state of the union, and it might lie a considerable distance from the U.S. continent, but Hawai‘i’s charm also gives it an intimately familiar status within the U.S. popular imagination, what Adria Imada calls an “imagined intimacy.”¹⁰² This imagined intimacy, as is evident in its value for presidents from Kennedy to Obama, also has potent political value in America.¹⁰³

Methods and Chapters

This dissertation takes an intentionally interdisciplinary methodological approach. I offer an examination of two Kanaka Maoli performers—Krystilez and Cocoa Chandelier. I analyze the cultural productions of Krystilez—his album *The “O”* (2006), his music videos, YouTube videos, and live performances. Alongside this, I employ performance theory to read Cocoa Chandelier’s live performance at the 2008 Universal Showqueen Pageant as well as her other performances in Honolulu clubs, bars, and performance spaces. I also perform a close reading of the 2001 film, *Ke Kulana He Māhū*. From 2007-2010, I attended live performances in Honolulu where I saw Krystilez and Cocoa Chandelier perform multiple times, among other local acts. In addition I

¹⁰¹ James Mak, *Developing a Dream Destination: Tourism and Tourism Policy Planning in Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008).

¹⁰² Adria Imada, "Hawaiians on Tour: Hula Circuits Through the American Empire," *American Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (2004): 114.

¹⁰³ Indeed President John F. Kennedy has been quoted as saying “Hawaii is what the rest of the world is striving to become.” I’m not sure when this was said, but it is quoted on the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation host website, <http://www.apec2011hawaii.com/islands-hawaii>. Accessed January 18, 2012.

conducted interviews and email exchanges with these performers. Employing discourse analysis, ethnographic research, performance theory, and recent theories in Native Studies, I conduct a study of contemporary Kanaka Maoli music, theatrical performance, and film.

I grew up in and around the “underground” Honolulu music scene, frequenting punk and hip-hop shows from 1997 to 2005, performing in bands and promoting shows, until I left for graduate school in 2006. At one time I considered myself an “insider” in these spaces, but leaving to attend graduate school in Michigan for six years produced a relative distance from these scenes, despite my annual visits. However, due to the smallness of Hawai‘i’s non-mainstream music and performance scenes, I would argue that both Krystilez and Cocoa Chandelier are known within these small scenes and overlap in unpredictable ways. That said, Krystilez and Cocoa Chandelier emerge from very specific communities that I am not a member of, although I have some knowledge of, but let me clear, this dissertation does not provide an ethnographic investigation of these communities either. Still, I draw on Kanaka Maoli anthropologist, Ty Kawika Tengan’s perspective, “...self-identifying as a native ethnographer is not done as a non-critical privileging endeavor.”¹⁰⁴ I approach my analysis of these performers with an awareness of the legacies of colonialism and anthropology that gaze upon “the Native” in particular ways and the responsibility I have as a Kanaka Maoli scholar to critique the positioning of Natives in the stagnant slot of “the other” while also encouraging Natives to internally evaluate ourselves.

¹⁰⁴ Ty Kawika Tengan, "Hale Mua: (En)Gendering Hawaiian Men" (Dissertation, University of Hawai'i, 2003), 25.

I have chosen to write about these performers and their contexts because it is imperative to challenge what we consider “Native” performance and to write about Hawaiian performances that exceed what has been written before. Whereas earlier scholars of Hawaiian performance (or indigenous performance in general)—were disciplinarily bound to study indigenous performances that existed only in “traditional” forms this dissertation takes Hawaiian performance a step further by investigating the work of performers who disrupt what we understand to be “Hawaiian performance” itself.¹⁰⁵

“We’re All Hawaiians Now” is divided into three parts—The Call, The Refusal, and The Confession. Part One, *The Call*, provides a historical and theoretical mapping of the significance of aloha for Kānaka Maoli. The first chapter, “Fuck you aloha, I love you: Answering the call of Aloha” is an expansion of the theoretical concerns of this Introduction. Chapter one weaves together Marxist, post-colonial, and performance theory, to theorize why Kānaka Maoli still answer aloha’s call through performance despite its commodification and often detrimental effects. I argue that it is through an attachment to aloha and its continual performance that Kānaka Maoli have been able to survive even if believing in aloha contradicts their material realities. The rest of the dissertation explores how Kānaka Maoli performers respond to the appropriation of aloha. Part Two, *The Refusal*, contains chapters two and three. In chapters two and three, where I analyze the *refusal of aloha* in the narrative of Krystilez, a Kanaka Maoli rapper from a rural Hawaiian Homestead who performs in urban Honolulu. I offer a reading of Krystilez’s musical releases, performances, music videos, and online persona. Building

¹⁰⁵ See the work of Faye Akindes, Leilani Basham, Ku‘ualoha Ho‘omanawanui, Adrienne Kaeppler, Joyce Linnekin, Noenoe Silva, Amy Stillman, Elizabeth Tatar.

upon work in Cultural Studies and Hip-Hop Studies, I situate Krystilez vis-à-vis the spread and appropriation of hip-hop in the post-Fordist global economy to scrutinize the gendered contradictions and possibilities within Hawaiian hip-hop. The woven narratives in these musical texts exhibit what I call “defiant indigeneity,” a form of practicing indigenous identity that speaks against U.S. hegemony in Hawai‘i, while also utilizing settler-state logics of racialization to claim legitimacy. Krystilez presents a place-based, anti-citizenship narrative of indigeneity with growing implications for Kanaka Maoli diasporic connectivity in the digital age.

While chapters two and three foreground Hawaiian indigeneity, Part Three, *The Confession*, focuses on the seeming absence of Hawaiian indigeneity in the work of another Kanaka Maoli performer, Cocoa Chandelier. I consider Cocoa Chandelier’s performances and aversion to self-confession as exemplary of the tensions between Kanaka Maoli subjection and visibility. In chapter four, I expose and interrogate “the confession” as the predominant approach in Ethnic Studies and Native Studies scholarship, which fetishize the narratives of minorities, particularly Natives. I provide a critique of the film *Ke KulanaHhe Māhū* (2001) to analyze the possibilities and dangers of “the confession.” Cocoa Chandelier is also featured prominently throughout the film, thus making her staging of “Cocoa Chandelier’s Confessional” eight years after the film’s release all the more compelling. Chapter five offers an extensive analysis of Cocoa Chandelier’s live performances and strategic uses of Hawaiian indigeneity. I contend that Cocoa Chandelier’s performances unsettle and queer attempts to appropriate the indigenous subject. I explore Cocoa Chandelier’s performance of *aloha in drag* as evidence of alternative formations of aloha and a particular kind of potentiality for

Kānaka Maoli that centers community identification. My in-depth readings of these performers and their articulations of indigeneity is an attempt to take seriously the ways that cultural performances reformulate how Kānaka Maoli perform, embody, relate and sustain *who we are*. Rather than a work that upholds a binary distinction between colonizers and the colonized, with Kānaka Maoli as the ever-victimized subjects of history, I examine both how aloha was and is exploited and most significantly, I will show that Kānaka Maoli find innovative ways to retain aloha's cultural strength, sometimes even at our own expense.

Aloha can make you feel uneasy and comforted at the same time. When I see bumper stickers that say “No Hawaiians No Aloha,” I shrug, but also believe it to be true. When I think about aloha, I cannot quite explain what it is and why it matters without colliding into the ways that aloha has been exploited. For this reason, I think like many Kānaka Maoli, we resist talking about it. Aloha has been imprinted in our minds, on our bodies, and in our entire world. Sometimes, as Kānaka Maoli, we often do not want to deal with “aloha.” This is profoundly disturbing to me. As I looked at most of the literature coming out of the field of Hawaiian Studies, I found this to be quite true. No one was talking about aloha. And furthermore, when among Kānaka Maoli, we only ever said “aloha” when we initially greeted one another with a kiss, although we do often say, “I don't have aloha for that person,” as a way to express distrust or disgust. We almost never engage in conversations about “aloha” proper. When asking myself why and when asked why by others, I just thought to myself, because we don't have to.

Aloha is who and what we are as Kānaka Maoli, but how? And more, why? Why, when we know that aloha is constantly exploited for tourism? The simple answer would

be that we have been colonized or are engaged in some kind of false consciousness—the notion that people are duped into believing the ideology of the State. This dissertation is about why we believe in aloha—in spite of ourselves. In the following chapters I will elaborate how aloha is not *who we are* in a historical sense, but *what we have become* in a performative sense as Kānaka Maoli. But, “who we are,” as I will attempt to show in this dissertation, occurs through processes of negotiation, tricksterism, strategy, and yes, to some extent, complicity.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ See Osorio, *Dismembering Lahui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887*. Also, Cook, “Kahiki: Native Hawaiian Relationships with Other Pacific Islanders 1850-1915.” Cook’s work considers Native Hawaiian-initiated missionary projects in the greater Pacific and the ways that Native Hawaiians viewed themselves as superior to other Pacific Islanders, based on Euro/American norms (23-26). Through these discourses of Kanaka Maoli superiority over other Pacific Islanders, Kānaka Maoli sought to strengthen their cultural alliances with Euro/American empires.

PART I.

The Call

Chapter 1

Fuck You Aloha, I Love You: Answering *the call of Aloha*

“There are these things that are important to me and they speak of how all is not right with the world yet still all is right.

At the hardcore show the singer was screaming fuck-you-aloha-I-love-you-fuck-you-aloha-I-love-you.” – “Things” by Juliana Spahr¹

This excerpt from a poem written by Juliana Spahr, a haole woman from Ohio and a former University of Hawai‘i English professor (1997-2003), encapsulates what I argue is the current paradox of the aloha spirit. Moving from stating the significance of “things” and then to an acknowledgement of how those things expose something not being “right with the world,” yet, still, somehow, things are “right,” the lines of this stanza flag a somber contradiction. Followed by the lines “fuck-you-aloha-I-love-you,” the poem takes the spirit of aloha head-on and expresses the complexities of the investment in and relationship to aloha. Kānaka Maoli experience this contradiction in especially deep, personal ways at the limits of discourse. As a seminal Hawaiian concept of love and

¹ See Juliana Spahr, *Fuck you, Aloha, I Love You*, Wesleyan poetry (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001). 11.

inclusion, aloha, ironically serves to obscure troubling lived realities that Kānaka Maoli experience, such as increasing poverty and homelessness, low-educational attainment, and overall poor health.²

This chapter serves as a historical and theoretical grounding for how I use aloha throughout this dissertation. I track the proliferation of aloha in capitalist maneuvers (Christianization, the State, multiculturalism, tourism) and the consequences the articulation of aloha in this manner has had for Kanaka Maoli subjectivity. I assess how aloha achieves the disciplining, management, and encouragement of particular kinds of Hawaiian cultural expression. At the same time, I demonstrate how aloha constructs and informs modern Kanaka Maoli indigeneity. Drawing on Marxist (Max Weber, Louis Althusser), post-Marxist (Slavoj Žižek), post-colonial (Rey Chow) and performance theories (Butler), I contend that aloha represents both a necessary and innovative approach to understanding Hawaiianness that affirms Kanaka Maoli indigeneity. I outline the latter to assess the political stakes of Hawaiian performance. In the chapters that follow, I analyze two Kanaka Maoli performers: Krystilez, the rapper who defiantly refuses aloha, and Cocoa Chandelier, the drag queen who performs aloha in drag as a

² See Office of Hawaiian Affairs, *Native Hawaiian Data Book*. Like many Native populations across the U.S., Kānaka Maoli have median incomes far below state and national averages, high unemployment, lack of educational attainment, drug abuse, and increasing risk of homelessness or unstable living conditions. All of these compromise a healthy quality of life. Also, Kānaka Maoli suffer disproportionately from high rates of cardiovascular disease, hypertension, cancers, diabetes, obstructive lung diseases (asthma, bronchitis, emphysema), chronic kidney disease, metabolic syndrome, and obesity, with the highest rate of diabetes amongst ethnic subgroups in Hawai'i. Kānaka Maoli also have a lower life expectancy and higher rates of cardiovascular-and diabetes-related mortality. Additionally, Kānaka Maoli have more behavioral risk factors for diseases, with higher rates of tobacco use, alcohol consumption, methamphetamine use, and dietary fat intake, compounded by lower fruit/vegetable intake and decreased physical activity. For more information on Kānaka Maoli houseless population, see Janis Magin, "For 1,000 or More Homeless in Hawaii, Beaches are the Best Option," *New York Times*, December 5, 2006 2006; David Yamane, Steffen G. Oeser, and Jill Omori, "Health Disparities in the Native Hawaiian Homeless," *Hawai'i Medical Journal* 69, no. June 2010 (2010); Will Hoover, "Homeless population on Oahu rises 28.2%," *Honolulu Advertiser*, June 17, 2007 2007.

means to hide aloha from public consumption. I argue that by analyzing the ways these performers engage aloha, we can understand aloha's profoundly transformative possibilities for the Kānaka Maoli people and why Kānaka Maoli are still attached to aloha.

This is Aloha (no kēia ke aloha)

In Hawai'i, the commercialized spirit of aloha is pervasive, its invocations are deployed to sell everything from hula skirts to fantasies of diversity to plumbing to spiritual enlightenment to my personal favorite, Aloha Exterminators, a termite and pest control company. To supplement aloha's prevalence in commerce, the State of Hawai'i actively cultivates aloha to encourage residents to behave in a way that honors aloha. Shortly after statehood, Hawai'i was officially named "The Aloha State" in 1959, and ever since, aloha has operated as the state's favorite cultural affect that is harnessed to express and solicit positive feelings.³ As an "affect," aloha is an emotion that is displayed through behavior and can often be felt in physical spaces, moving between individuals and their physical environments. In such instances, aloha is omnipresent.⁴ Thus, aloha operates like an ideological discourse, as I will explain later in this chapter. Aloha is defined in the Hawaiian dictionary as love, affection, compassion, mercy; to love, to venerate, to show kindness; and as a salutation, to greet, and to hail (I will return to the latter).⁵ According to Puku'i (1983) and Kanahale (1986), aloha is reciprocal as well.⁶ In

³ Hawai'i was named "The Aloha State" in 1959, Haw. Rev. Stat. 5-7.

⁴ The term affect is loosely defined as the experience of feelings or emotion. For more see Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean O'Malley Halley, *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007). For a discussion on how subjects transmit feelings in groups and spaces, see Teresa Brennan, *The transmission of affect* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

⁵ *Ulukau On-line Hawaiian dictionary*. University of Hawai'i Press. 2004. <http://wehewehe.org/>

everyday life, aloha is used in Hawai‘i (and arguably elsewhere), to say both “hello” and “goodbye.”

In everyday speech, these multiple definitions and usages promulgate unchecked. Taglines and brandings like “Live Aloha” (a bumper sticker campaign) and “The Aloha State” (which is on every Hawai‘i license plate) are commonplace. Hawai‘i state law even sanctions aloha, advising public officials to consider the “aloha spirit” in the workplace.⁷ One would be hard-pressed to deny aloha’s affective power and commercial significance for Hawai‘i.

Although aloha has emerged as a marker of Hawaiianness, aloha was just one aspect of precolonial Hawaiian life and it came from a philosophical matrix of Hawaiian ideas and values.⁸ Put best by Puku‘i, Haertig, and Lee (1983), “...eating, drinking, singing and talking together, the ties of man to fellow man are strengthened in the mutual regard and love summed up as aloha.”⁹ Aloha meant kindness and sharing, especially in the family or ‘ohana setting, people are welcomed and all is shared, with the understanding that people gather to provide mutual helpfulness for collective benefit.

⁶ George Kanahale, *Ku Kanaka, Stand Tall: a Search for Hawaiian Values*, Kolowalu book (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press: Waiaha Foundation, 1986); Mary Kawena Pukui, E.W. Haertig, and Catherine Lee, *Nana I Ke Kumu (Look to the Source) Vol 1* (Honolulu, HI: Hui Hanai, 1983).

⁷ See Hawai‘i State Law, (L 1986, c 202, § 1). [§5-7.5]. It reads: “‘Aloha Spirit’. (a) “Aloha Spirit” is the coordination of mind and heart within each person. It brings each person to the self. Each person must think and emote good feelings to others... These are traits of character that express the charm, warmth and sincerity of Hawai‘i’s people. It was the working philosophy of native Hawaiians and was presented as a gift to the people of Hawai‘i. “Aloha” is more than a word of greeting or farewell or a salutation. “Aloha” means mutual regard and affection and extends warmth in caring with no obligation in return. “Aloha” is the essence of relationships in which each person is important to every other person for collective existence. “Aloha” means to hear what is not said, to see what cannot be seen and to know the unknowable. (b) In exercising their power on behalf of the people and in fulfillment of their responsibilities, obligations and service to the people, the legislature, governor, lieutenant governor, executive officers of each department, the chief justice, associate justices, and judges of the appellate, circuit, and district courts may contemplate and reside with the life force and give consideration to the “Aloha Spirit”.” [L 1986, c 202, §1]

⁸ Kanahale, *Ku Kanaka, Stand Tall: a Search for Hawaiian Values*: 480.

⁹ Pukui, Haertig, and Lee, *Nana I Ke Kumu (Look to the Source) Vol 1*: 3.

This understanding of aloha alongside ‘ohana reiterates the importance of community and the responsibility that comes with membership. Additionally, as Kanahele infers, loyalty to family might have been more important than aloha in precolonial Hawaiian life.¹⁰

The core of this chapter, then, is about how aloha transformed from its precolonial definitions and usages to become a widely disseminated universal marker of love.

Further, I will theorize why Kānaka Maoli, in spite of aloha’s commodified nature, still turn to aloha to ground our indigeneity. I argue that such a grounding works to sustain Kanaka Maoli histories and futures. Aloha thus represents those very histories and impending futures in a manner that transcends the machinations of commodification belabored in this chapter.

Aloha Transformed

Ngugi Wa Thiongo’s concept of the “cultural bomb” has been employed to explain how colonization transformed Hawaiian cultural practices and discouraged the use of the Hawaiian language.¹¹ Thiongo’s posits that a cultural bomb is necessary to solidify the supremacy of those in power: colonizing powers deploy the bomb to annihilate the culture of the colonized so that the colonized lose faith in their culture and look to the colonizer as a savior.¹² Aloha made the colonization of the islands easier, because colonizers could easily take advantage of aloha and appropriate it to their ends (namely, material and human conquest and exploitation of Kanaka Maoli land). This section will analyze how aloha was transformed to support Christianity, multiculturalism, and tourism.

¹⁰ Kanahele, *Ku Kanaka, Stand Tall: a Search for Hawaiian Values*: 478-79.

¹¹ Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*: 2-3.

¹² See Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind* (Heinemann, 1986). 3.

While many Hawaiian cultural practices were in fact criminalized throughout the mid-nineteenth and twentieth centuries (e.g. restriction on hula, burning of temples), the cultural value of aloha was valorized and elevated as what was special about Kānaka Maoli and what made them different.¹³ In the article “Aloha Spirit and the Cultural Politics of Belonging” (2008) Keiko Ohnuma provides a genealogy of “aloha,” tracking its metamorphosis into the widely disseminated signifier it is today. Ohnuma explains that early ideas about aloha were documented extensively by European and American writers and adventurers (i.e. Mark Twain, Robert Louis Stevenson, Jack London), who wrote at length about the edenic landscapes and peoples of Polynesia.¹⁴ Such exoticized imaginings of the Pacific can be traced back to classical western ideas about gender, sexuality, and nature. The influence of the Enlightenment and the emphasis on classicist themes, attributed to Greece in particular, accompanied European travelers. As Patty O’Brien (2006) has argued, imperialist encounters in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and the Americas (and their resulting cultural products) influenced sailors and missionaries long before they arrived on Hawai‘i’s shores.¹⁵ When Christian missionaries first arrived

¹³ The public performance of hula was banned between 1832-1851, causing hula to go underground. In 1851, public hula was allowed, but only if the performance was part of a hula school who had paid the “hula tax.” Hawaiian spiritual beliefs and language were also actively discouraged if not completely outlawed. Between 1825-1850 the Kingdom of Hawai‘i transformed its system of governance, based on sacred laws, rank, and religion, to one based on Anglo-American common law. As a result, many people were arrested and sentenced for social and sexual practices that had previously been accepted in Hawaiian communities, due to the codification of sexual morality in the new legal system. For detailed analysis, see Merry, *Colonizing Hawai‘i: the Cultural Power of Law*; Noenoe Silva, “He Kanewai E Ho’opau I Na Hula Kuolo Hawai‘i: The Political Economy of Banning the Hula (1857-1870),” *Hawaiian Journal of History* 34(2000).

¹⁴ See also, Keiko Ohnuma, ““Aloha Spirit” and the Cultural Politics of Sentiment as National Belonging,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 20, no. 2 (2008): 368; O’Brien, “The Pacific Muse: Exotic Femininity and the Colonial Pacific.”; Wood, *Displacing Natives: the Rhetorical Production of Hawai‘i*; Jane Desmond, *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

¹⁵ O’Brien, “The Pacific Muse: Exotic Femininity and the Colonial Pacific.”; Lenore Manderson and Margaret Jolly, *Sites of Desire, Economies of Pleasure: Sexualities in Asia and the Pacific*, The Chicago series on sexuality, history, and society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

in Hawai‘i in the 1820s, Kanahale explains, aloha was a good word for the missionaries to “find to express their central ideal of love.”¹⁶

What changed in this translation of aloha was that aloha was no longer about reciprocity. The reciprocity of aloha involved an exchange and expectation of goodwill that the missionary translation deleted. In any case, following the lead of their ali‘i or chiefs, Kānaka Maoli quickly adapted to Christianity and took to reading and writing with widely documented vigor.¹⁷ The spread of Christianity in Hawai‘i occurred alongside the rise of the printing industry that circulated Christian teachings extensively. Through this translation of aloha and circulation of Christian-infused teachings, aloha was given what Kanahale describes as an “impersonal and altruistic dimension” that required no reciprocity.¹⁸

The translation and implementation of aloha as not requiring reciprocity had devastating consequences for the Kānaka Maoli people. As aloha came to represent the highest form of giving and when aloha is understood in this way, it puts Kānaka Maoli in the position of having aloha and giving it freely, not because they wanted to, but because God required it for salvation. As such, aloha is impossible to turn away from. When aloha

¹⁶ George Kanahale, "The Dynamics of Aloha," in *Pacific Diasporas*, ed. Paul Spickard, Joanne Rondilla, and Deborah Hippolyte Wright (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002). Kanahale is also quick to dismiss the notion of a missionary conspiracy to make aloha fit their definition of love when the missionaries first devised the syllabary for written Hawaiian and wrote the first Hawaiian dictionaries. Kanahale contends this is not a missionary conspiracy because a similar feeling of aloha means the same thing in Polynesia languages across the Pacific (482-483).

¹⁷ Manulani Meyer, *Ho'oulu: Our Time of Becoming* (Honolulu: 'Ai Pohaku Press, 2003). 23; Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*: 55.

¹⁸ Kanahale, "The Dynamics of Aloha," 206.

is manipulated into mandatory submission, aloha supports a colonialist narrative wherein Hawaiian lands, cultural concepts, and people, are “there for the taking.”¹⁹

In Ohnuma’s critical genealogy of aloha, she argues that the emergence of print culture played a large role in “inventing” a “tradition” of aloha.²⁰ The “invention of tradition” is defined by Hobsbawm and Ranger as “traditions” that claim an ancient origin but are sometimes invented by a group in power or by communities, especially in the project of nation-building.²¹ In Hawai‘i during the mid-nineteenth century emerged a vibrant print culture wherein aloha became circulated as a “tradition” that was supposedly indicative of Hawaiian culture as a whole, when it was really just one aspect of Hawaiian episteme.²²

The dispossession of aloha from Kānaka Maoli took place as aloha became the foundation for Hawai‘i’s racial coexistence and tolerance. Throughout the territory period (1898-1959), Asian settlers began to stake their place in Hawai‘i’s racial hierarchy as part of a “local” community to differentiate themselves from haole people. As aloha was celebrated as an expression of “Hawaiian values of love, generosity, and open-mindedness,” it was then promoted as the central value of Hawaiian culture and island

¹⁹ Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai‘i*: 144. In this quotation Trask emphasized that Kanaka Maoli women were “there for the taking” especially, but I would add that all Kānaka Maoli were subject to this “taking”.

²⁰ Ohnuma, ““Aloha Spirit” and the Cultural Politics of Sentiment as National Belonging,” 369.

²¹ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Rangers (Cambridge, UK: University of Cambridge, 1983). The “invention of tradition” concept was taken up by historians and anthropologists, which caused much controversy, especially in Hawai‘i. In Hawaiian academic discourse, it became a topic of debate when Jocelyn Linnekin (1983) inferred that Hawaiian communities “invented tradition,” which Haunani-Kay Trask (1991) rebutted, noting that Linnekin was an anthropologist who had no authority to write about what constitutes Hawaiian identity and that Linnekin was exercising discursive authority over Hawaiian culture.

²² Ohnuma, ““Aloha Spirit” and the Cultural Politics of Sentiment as National Belonging,” 369.

life.²³ Hawai‘i, as a place, and its residents, because of aloha, marked the distance between Hawai‘i’s residents and the continental U.S.²⁴ Aloha in this sense indexes the difference of Hawai‘i for all its inhabitants. Buttressed by Hawaiian culture, aloha is honored at the expense of Kanaka Maoli claims to sovereignty and self-determination because aloha makes Hawai‘i available to everyone in a way that dispossesses Kānaka Maoli of cultural authority.

The ideal of aloha as somehow emblematic of inclusion and racial harmony has been referred to as the “Hawai‘i multicultural model,” and it has served as a model for American race relations and the world since the mid-twentieth century.²⁵ Hawai‘i’s multicultural population was imagined to reflect the biological diversity of the natural environment and was celebrated by sociologists and historians who characterized Hawai‘i as a “racial melting pot” and posited that Hawai‘i’s multiracial population lived in harmony in a way unmatched anywhere in the world.²⁶ At this time, Asian settlers clung onto aloha to negotiate their sense of belonging in Hawai‘i.²⁷

In combination with Asian political and economic ascendancy and the supposed lack of racial violence, Hawai‘i’s exceptional multiculturalism is cited as evidence of the

²³ Lori Pierce, ““The Whites Have Created Modern Honolulu”: Ethnicity, Racial Stratification, and the Discourse of Aloha,” in *Racial Thinking in the United States*, ed. Paul Spickard and G. Reginald Daniel (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 128.

²⁴ Rona T. Halualani, *In the Name of Hawaiians: Native Identities and Cultural Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); Kanahele, “The Dynamics of Aloha.”

²⁵ Jonathan Okamura, “The Illusion of Paradise: Privileging Multiculturalism in Hawai‘i,” in *Making Majorities: Constituting the Nation in Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey and the United States*, ed. Dru C. Gladney (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 266-68.

²⁶ Scientists received funding through a Rockefeller Foundation grant (1927-1937) to study the effects of racial blending in the islands. Sociologists and anthropologists subsequently rendered Hawai‘i as a racial melting pot, see Romanzo Adams (1926, 1934), Robert Park, and Andrew Lind (1938, 1967), Fuchs (1961) and more recent work by Glen Grant and Dennis Ogawa (1993).

²⁷ Ohnuma, ““Aloha Spirit” and the Cultural Politics of Sentiment as National Belonging,” 374-79.

aloha spirit at work.²⁸ The multicultural model, as Okamura explains, is highly limited because it ignores ongoing institutional discrimination, racism, prejudice, and ethnic hostilities that are common features of everyday life in Hawai‘i.²⁹ Through academic discourse, journalism, and literary works, tales about the “power of aloha” and Hawai‘i’s multiculturalism proliferated throughout the post-WWII era.³⁰ The foregrounding of Hawai‘i’s multiculturalism was critical to the statehood project, and after statehood in 1959, aloha as an expression of goodwill, love, and inclusion for all, became coterminous with the promotion of Hawai‘i as a tourist destination.³¹

Subsequently, throughout the territorial and post-statehood period, aloha had to be nurtured and preserved for tourism. There was an heightened emphasis on aloha’s so-called natural presence in the islands, but through the changes taking place—urban development, increased commercialization, and an influx of tourists, people began to express anxiety in newspaper articles and editorials, calling for the need to “save aloha”

²⁸ Fujikane and Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai‘i*: 3. As cited in Okamura (1998), the history of Hawai‘i over the last century shows evidence of ethnic conflict, such as the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893, the numerous sugar and pineapple workers’ and dockworkers’ strikes from 1909 through 1958, and the emergence of the anti-Japanese backlash in the mid-1970s (272). See also, Dean Itsuji Saranillio, "Kewaikaliko's *Benocide*: Reversing the Imperial Gaze of *Rice v. Cayetano* and its Legal Progeny," *American Quarterly* 62, no. 3 (2010): 463; ———, "Seeing Conquest: Colliding Histories and the Cultural Politics of Hawai‘i Statehood."

²⁹ Okamura, "The Illusion of Paradise: Privileging Multiculturalism in Hawai‘i," 274.

³⁰ The “Power of Aloha” is former Hawai‘i Lieutenant Governor, Duke Aiona’s so-called program of positive thinking (www.powerofaloha.org). According to their website, “The Power of Aloha” exists to transform the State of Hawai‘i by living, perpetuating, promoting and integrating important cultural core values into the business, education, government and community sector of society. The key to making this a reality is the private and public partnership of strategic leadership throughout the State of Hawai‘i committed to working together in the true Spirit of Aloha to transform our island home.” “The Power of Aloha” is yet another example of the ways that aloha serves to gloss the histories of racism and colonialism in Hawai‘i. Aloha is clearly still invoked. For more, see Fujikane and Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai‘i*.

³¹ Daws, *Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands*.

and rhetorically posed the question: “Is aloha dead?”³² In letters to the editor, aloha is marked as necessary to the promotion of tourism, emphasizing that aloha is what makes Hawai‘i distinct from other tropical destinations.³³ Letters from residents also bemoan the recession of aloha from the quotidian, posing questions about aloha’s diminished significance, expressing a nostalgia for a rural and simpler time, when aloha was expressed among residents in a supposedly more “authentic” form, away from the machinations of mass-tourism, what people refer to locally as “hanabata days.” This expression is used in Hawai‘i to refer to childhood, an invocation of idyllic simpler times. Its prominence in the discourse in Hawai‘i is frequently rearticulated in local literature circles.³⁴ These two perspectives on aloha—the need to save it *for* tourism and the need to save its authenticity from commodification *by* tourism—exemplify aloha’s discursive status, whereby aloha is actively reiterated and policed, albeit for divergent ends. Nevertheless, the success of mass-tourism caused aloha to evolve from its previous manifestations in multiculturalism to become the so-called “spirit of the islands” that is available to Kānaka Maoli, settlers, and potential tourists.³⁵ In other words, aloha becomes available to the whole world.

³² Kanahele, "The Dynamics of Aloha."; Ohnuma, "'Aloha Spirit' and the Cultural Politics of Sentiment as National Belonging."

³³ Mak, *Developing a Dream Destination: Tourism and Tourism Policy Planning in Hawai'i*.

³⁴ “Hanabata days” rose in usage in the late 1980s-1990s, coming from the rise of Bamboo Ridge, a printing press dedicated to local literature in Hawai‘i. Bamboo Ridge has been critiqued for their upholding of Asian-settler struggles on the plantation at the expense of an analysis or documentation of Kanaka Maoli disappearance and almost total absence from contemporary Hawai‘i literature. For more see, Candace Fujikane, "Between Nationalisms: Hawaii's Local Nation and Its Troubled Racial Paradise," *Critical Mass* 1.2, no. Spring/Summer (1994). Ohnuma, "'Aloha Spirit' and the Cultural Politics of Sentiment as National Belonging," 370-71.

³⁵ Aloha is often referred to as the “spirit of the islands.”

Aloha State Apparatus: How Aloha became “Hawaiian”

In the previous section I examined how aloha was transformed by (Christianity, multiculturalism, and tourism). This next section examines how aloha functions through ideology and discourse to produce subjects and Kanaka Maoli subjects in particular. In other words, I also examine how aloha has been attached to what is understood to be “Hawaiian.”

Contemporary Kanaka Maoli scholars have argued that aloha is a distorted version of Hawaiian culture which was used to justify the colonization of Hawai‘i and the continual subjugation of the Kanaka Maoli people.³⁶ Critiques of the ways in which aloha has been appropriated by the tourism industry are rather common among Kānaka Maoli, and one of the most vocal critics of these processes has been Haunani-Kay Trask. In her most cited work, “Lovely Hula Hands” (1993), Trask argues that the State of Hawai‘i pimps Hawaiian culture through tourism.³⁷ Of course, the State has always been in the business of promoting tourism. In 1903, just a few years after Hawai‘i was declared a U.S. territory, the new government set up the Hawaii Promotion Committee--which became the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority in 1915--to begin marketing Hawai‘i as a tourist destination. In Trask’s scathing critique of tourism and American colonialism, she writes, “Our country has been and is being plasticized, cheapened, and exploited. They’re selling it in plastic leis, coconut ashtrays, and cans of ‘genuine, original Aloha’. They’ve raped us, sold us.”³⁸ Narrating the prostitution of the Hawaiian culture, Trask’s insights lay bare the ways in which aloha has become so distorted, as representative of what Rona

³⁶ Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i*; Halualani, *In the Name of Hawaiians: Native Identities and Cultural Politics*; Kame'eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires/Pehea La E Pono Ai?*

³⁷ Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i*: 1.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

Halualani describes as “a hegemonic political relationship of power,” which produced the idea that aloha personifies a “cultural essence of Hawaiianness.”³⁹ It is this political relationship of power that then transformed aloha into an ideology for the development of tourism.

Aloha’s Ideological Discourse

The terms “ideology” and “discourse” are sometimes used interchangeably despite their roots in distinct intellectual traditions: “ideology” invokes Marxism and “discourse” often refers to the study of language, signification and the power relations laden in linguistic practice. In “Discourse, ideology, discourse, ideology...” (1993), Trevor Purvis and Alan Hunt propose that ideology supplements discourse theory, rather than opposing it. In this article, they explain how discourse supplements ideology by allowing power relations to be conceptualized in a way that is not bound by a structuralist framework of base and superstructure.⁴⁰ At the same time, ideology grounds the often nebulous nature of discourse by marking very clearly the ways in which discourse is indicative of material power relations where domination and subordination are at play. Like ideology, discourse informs how people comprehend and make sense of their social world, which in turn, influences how people act or don’t act. Following the work of other scholars, I look at aloha through the lens of both ideology and discourse to fully comprehend aloha’s tentacles in every aspect of Kanaka Maoli indigeneity.⁴¹

The concept of ideology, the subject of much theorizing in Cultural Studies, has been defined by Stuart Hall as the languages, concepts, categories and systems of

³⁹ Halualani, *In the Name of Hawaiians: Native Identities and Cultural Politics*: 28.

⁴⁰ In structuralism, base and superstructure was understood as follows—the base (the material relations) informs or produces the superstructural realms, like religion, ideas, culture, and art.

⁴¹ See: Alan Hunt and Trevor Purvis, "Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology..." *British Journal of Sociology* 44, no. 3 (1993): 474.

representation which different classes and social groups deploy to make sense of their social words.⁴² Or as Louis Althusser wrote in his now canonized piece, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” (1971), ideology is a system of ideas that dominate the mind of an individual or group that is dependent on the history of social formation and modes of production.⁴³ In sum, examining ideology brings to light the ways that the subjugated masses internalize the ideology of the dominant class and consent to their domination without overt coercion. Kanaka Maoli participation in our own subjection (e.g. in performing aloha) has typically been attributed to colonization or what Marxists call “false consciousness,” and while colonial projects are certainly designing and implementing these processes, the story is much more complex.⁴⁴

To this end, Louis Althusser’s theory of interpellation is useful, for his work on interpellation continues to inform contemporary debates about subject formation. Althusser wrote that ideological state apparatuses, that is, arms of the state that work to produce ideology, operate by creating subjectivities favorable to the ruling classes.⁴⁵ ISAs hide systems of domination to normalize (oppressive) modes of power in everyday life. In this landmark article, he explains that state institutions create subjectivities through a process of “interpellation,” an act that hails subjects into the ideological apparatuses of the state. Returning to one of the definitions of aloha, “to hail,” it is

⁴² Stuart Hall, "The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees," *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (1996): 26.

⁴³ Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 151.

⁴⁴ “False consciousness” is a concept derived from the Marxist theory of social class, although Marx never used the phrase. It references the ways that subordinate classes have “false consciousness” about their lives and subsequently, this misrepresentation allows the dominant group or the group in power to remain that way. Thus, false consciousness is a way to conceal exploitation. Unfortunately, the idea of false consciousness also suggests that people are duped easily, a proposition that I do not accept.

⁴⁵ An example of a repressive apparatus in Hawai‘i would be the “aloha spirit law” that requests that city employees greet the public using the words “aloha” and “mahalo.” See L 1959, JR 1, § 1; Supp, § 14-5.1; HRS §5-7.5.

provocative to consider the ways that the state hails or interpellates subjects through modes of address, like aloha. In this interpellating process, aloha creates forms of common sense that naturalize the hegemonizing effects of a given discourse.⁴⁶ As Butler explains in *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997), ideology is established through a religious metaphor of being “called” (i.e. hailed or interpellated). Furthermore, being “called” happens in a voice that is impossible to refuse—the voice of God.⁴⁷ This voice of God called Kānaka Maoli and required their submission to aloha to insure their salvation. In modern times, this voice hails subjects in a state or secular voice and is harnessed by ISA’s that in turn interpellates subjects into believing in aloha.⁴⁸

In Hawai‘i, aloha was translated through Christian teachings to manifest a selfless and non-reciprocal expression of love and giving. Later, the State of Hawai‘i would seize upon this definition to foreground Hawai‘i’s multicultural population. The latter is evidenced in Hawai‘i’s reputation of cultural diversity and by extension, kindness toward one another. This reputation, which I would argue is in most cases, *real*, is also personified in state-craft, like the “Aloha Law” (see footnote 7), which is then used in the Foucauldian sense to discipline the self and others.⁴⁹ In contrast to repressive state apparatuses like the government, the police, or prisons (which function by violence and through public institutions), ISAs operate in both public and private spheres to normalize the hegemonizing forces of a given discourse.⁵⁰ Hawai‘i residents are constantly reminded of the aloha spirit—in public, to express it at work and in private, to “live

⁴⁶ Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses."

⁴⁷ Judith Butler, "The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection," (1997).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁴⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977).

⁵⁰ Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 138.

aloha.” In short, ISAs proliferate through individual subjects’ internalization of a given ideology that we then use to discipline one another. For this reason it is particularly compelling to consider how aloha “hails” Kanaka Maoli subjects specifically.

A Brief History of Kanaka Maoli Hailing

The Christianization of Hawai‘i translated aloha into the Hawaiian concept of unconditional love and selflessness, a translation that, as I have argued, has operated to the detriment of Kānaka Maoli. Certainly, the high literacy rate of the Kānaka Maoli population was noteworthy—by the mid-nineteenth century, eighty percent of the population could read and write, an exceedingly high number for any population at the time.⁵¹ Instruction in Western ways of communicating as well as in the Hawaiian language was fostered by Hawaiian royalty, but by the late-nineteenth century, shortly after the illegal overthrow of the Kingdom by American businessmen (referring to themselves as the “Committee of Safety”), Hawaiian-language schools steadily declined; In 1896, the Republic of Hawai‘i named English the official language of Hawai‘i and closed all Hawaiian language schools. The decline of the Hawaiian language continued as English was emphasized as a language of economic opportunity, which solidified the so-called superiority of Western knowledge and the delegitimation of Hawaiian ways of knowing and being.⁵² Aloha remained a prominent element of Hawaiian indigeneity, as other concepts and practices went underground or were stopped altogether. An example of this is the practice of ho‘oponopono, which is described by Puku‘i, Haertig, and Lee (1979) as a form of Kanaka Maoli conflict-resolution or peace-making, practiced when

⁵¹ Meyer, *Ho‘oulu: Our Time of Becoming*: 23-24; Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*.

⁵² ———, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*.

necessary to make sure that antagonisms would not grow. This practice involved making peace and restoring harmony with the gods, and thus, with Christianization had to be discontinued.⁵³ It has, along with other cultural practices, found revival in recent years.

Another example is the Aikāne. The Hawaiian word “aikāne” describes a Hawaiian pre-colonial relationship between two men or two women that is both homo-social and homosexual. Aikāne comes from the roots “ai” (to have sexual relations) and “kane” (male). Aikāne were known for their positions within Hawaiian Kingdom affairs. Aikāne were often kept lovers of the ali‘i, who were known for having many aikāne and concubines who traveled with their entourage and held a relatively high level of social status as a result. In fact, aikāne was a status often competed for, as it often led to access to ali‘i nui (high chief), both male and female. The aikāne were eventually translated out of existence and “aikāne” has since been translated to mean “good friend.” The Christianization of the Kanaka Maoli people required negative attitudes towards all non-marital sexual relationships—most certainly, homosexual ones.⁵⁴ As these examples show, Hawaiian cultural practices and identities were transformed and in some cases actively policed by the power of the church. In modern times, the church has been replaced by the public education system and the domestic nuclear family unit, both of which are crucial arms of state-power that reproduce capitalism.⁵⁵

Julie Kaomea’s study of modern Hawai‘i public schools also examines the role of ISAs—in particular, public education—in reifying Hawaiian stereotypes and affirming

⁵³ Mary Kawena Pukui, E.W. Haertig, and Catherine Lee, *Nana I Ke Kumu (Look to the Source) Volume 2* (Honolulu, HI: Hui Hanai: Queen Lili‘uokalani Childrens Center, 1979). 230-31.

⁵⁴ The status of “aikāne” was thus delegitimized under colonialism and is no longer used to refer to same-sex desiring individuals. See “Kame‘eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires/Pehea La E Pono Ai*; Robert J. Morris, “Aikane: Accounts of Hawaiian Same-Sex Relationships in the Journals of Captain Cook’s Third Voyage (1776-1780),” *Journal of Homosexuality* 19, no. 4 (1990).

⁵⁵ Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” 146.

state-power. According to Kaomea, Hawai‘i’s centralized education system is poorly regulated, which allows teachers a fair amount of instructional autonomy in classrooms and individual schools (within financial constraints).⁵⁶ Kaomea found that educators promoted negative depictions of Kānaka Maoli in textbooks and curricula, wherein Kanaka Maoli chiefs are depicted as merciless rulers and Hawaiian life is unjust and scary (as a product of this school system, I can attest to this).⁵⁷ The texts work to obscure the realities of American colonialism by discrediting Kanaka Maoli rulers of the past and present, which in turn continues to justify the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom and undermines modern Hawaiian sovereignty struggles.⁵⁸ Kaomea also adds that these standardized textbooks look like tourist “appreciation kits” that manufacture Hawaiian culture as naturally giving and entertaining.⁵⁹ Textbooks subsequently serve the economic interests of the state by producing cheap labor and docile Kānaka Maoli as willing and able “ambassadors of aloha.”⁶⁰ It is not surprising that in a state where tourism is the pre-eminent industry, school curriculums reflect the desires of the state to duplicate power relations--producing behavioral expectations that both Kānaka Maoli and settlers internalize to support aloha as an ideology--to promote and reinforce the image of Hawai‘i as a paradise in every sense.

⁵⁶ Julie Kaomea, "A Curriculum of Aloha? Colonialism and Tourism in Hawai'i's Elementary Textbooks," *Curriculum Inquiry* 30, no. 3 (2000): 323.

⁵⁷ ———, "Indigenous Studies in the Elementary Curriculum: A Cautionary Hawaiian Example," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2005): 31.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 34; ———, "A Curriculum of Aloha? Colonialism and Tourism in Hawai'i's Elementary Textbooks."

⁵⁹ ———, "A Curriculum of Aloha? Colonialism and Tourism in Hawai'i's Elementary Textbooks," 335.

⁶⁰ As Kaomea explains, textbooks promote a curriculum that supports the tourism, in which textbooks are full of photographs credited to the Hawai‘i’s Visitors Bureau (2000: 323-324, 2005: 38). Textbook examples include, *Hawaii the Aloha State* (Bauer 1982), *Hawaii Our Island State* (Potter, Kasdon, and Hazama 1979), and several others. See Kaomea (2000). Interestingly, the last time I was in Hawai‘i (August 2011) I saw adolescent men wearing shirts that said “Ambassadors of Aloha” and they were not working for any kind of tour company.

These brief examples exhibit just some of the ways that aloha functions with ISAs in Hawai‘i to reproduce and discipline subjects. The Christianization of Hawaiian life-worlds, the imposition of capitalism, adoption of Western law, and now, global tourism, consequently requires Kānaka Maoli to continue giving aloha through everyday acts of kindness. Negative ideas about Kānaka Maoli and expectations of aloha reflect pre-conceived notions of how Kānaka Maoli should behave, which are reproduced through a set of discursive practices and a discourse about aloha. This discourse about aloha structures what is possible and what is possible is sustained by the state’s use of aloha as an ideological force. As Edward Said explains in *Orientalism* (1978), discourses work to produce what they describe.⁶¹ For this reason, texts about aloha create not only a discourse about aloha, but also the very reality that they are narrating. So, while aloha is thought to embody benevolence, generosity and love—surely all positive things—I am hesitant to say that is aloha’s “truth.” Aloha has been historically marked as the personification of a Hawaiian “truth” or “essence,” which in turn produces a discourse of aloha. Michel Foucault explained that truth is always linked to power relations.⁶² Power works to construct a discourse about aloha, along with disciplinary measures and standards by which “Hawaiianness” is reproduced and reified by governments, public institutions, academics, and well, everyone else. Aloha’s “truth” is subsequently subjected to constant economic and political demands.⁶³ Aloha and Hawaiianness are then collapsed in the interest of quieting political dissent and facilitating capitalist development.

⁶¹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978). 94.

⁶² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.

⁶³ ———, *Power/Knowledge: selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980). 131.

Today this Hawaianness proliferates through tourism. The tourism industry in Hawai‘i continues to be Hawai‘i’s largest industry (along with the U.S. military). With tourism as Hawai‘i’s primary economic base and aloha as its so-called gift to the world, the performing bodies of Kānaka Maoli (Hawaiian)—or whoever can pass as “Hawaiian”—became necessary. The production and dissemination of such performances of “aloha” and imagery that promoted tourism thus became deeply intertwined with what gets defined as “Hawaiian” by Kānaka Maoli and settlers alike. Hawai‘i’s so-called primary resource and export—“the aloha spirit”—is thus sustained through ideas about aloha, which enables the tourism industry to capitalize on ideas about Hawai‘i, which Hawai‘i residents internalize, in a way that naturalizes the exploitative nature of tourism and makes tourism appear to be the only way that Hawai‘i can sustain its economy. This all happens *through* aloha. In these instances, aloha performs and is performed, constituting its own discursive formation, disciplining those who deviate from the meaning of aloha as “unHawaiian” because aloha has “taken on the semblance of a Hawaiian origin or interiority that seems native.”⁶⁴ Through tourism, aloha becomes bound to Hawaianness and Kānaka Maoli become bound by aloha. To be Kanaka Maoli then, is to *be* aloha.

Resisting the Discourse of Aloha

Lori Pierce explains in “The Whites Have Created Modern Honolulu” (2004) that the “discourse of aloha” in Hawai‘i was created as a strategy to ignore institutional racism, to turn a blind eye to the injustices suffered by Kānaka Maoli and the subjugation of Asian laborers on plantations. Achieved through civic celebrations that featured

⁶⁴ Halualani, *In the Name of Hawaiians: Native Identities and Cultural Politics*: xiv.

ethnically diverse people living together in harmony, the “discourse of aloha” made it appear that America’s mythical melting pot had succeeded in Hawai‘i, in spite of ongoing racial tensions. Most importantly, the celebration of ethnic diversity did not threaten haole hegemony.⁶⁵ Similarly, as Heather Diamond explains in *American Aloha* (2007), the approval and sponsorship of certain types of performance resulted in the promotion of a depoliticized, aestheticized, and hybridized culture that catered to tourists.⁶⁶ This is a clear precursor to modern day liberal multiculturalism where the cultures of “the other” are celebrated in a manner that detaches cultural difference from political ideologies that might challenge the interests of those in power.⁶⁷

Aloha may work in ways that uphold haole hegemony, as Pierce explains, but the ideological hold of haole hegemony is never a done deal, and most certainly not in Hawai‘i.⁶⁸ Kānaka Maoli have always resisted colonization, for throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Kānaka Maoli expressed agency against colonial forces, as exemplified notably by the Wilcox Rebellion (1895), the Kū‘ē Petitions (1897-1898), opposition to statehood (1950s), the Hawaiian renaissance in the 1970s, and the rise of Hawaiian sovereignty movements in the 1990s. In each of these movements, Kānaka Maoli fought back against American hegemony. Such public displays of resistance and, in many cases, of sovereignty, can work to exacerbate racial tensions between Kānaka Maoli and settlers because, as Okamura expounds, Hawaiian

⁶⁵ Pierce, "The Whites Have Created Modern Honolulu": Ethnicity, Racial Stratification, and the Discourse of Aloha," 128.

⁶⁶ Heather A. Diamond, *American Aloha: Cultural Tourism and the Negotiation of Tradition* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008). 25.

⁶⁷ A theorization of this is found in Wendy Brown’s *Regulating Aversion* (2008), which posits that liberalism neuters politics (21).

⁶⁸ Daws, *Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands*; Tom Coffman, *Island Edge of America: A Political History of Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2003); Osorio, *Dismembering Lahui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887*.

sovereignty questions the very underpinnings of the settler-state. In turn, the ethnic identities of certain groups, namely “local” Asians, are destabilized because Hawaiian sovereignty works to illuminate discrepancies in power, privilege, and status in contemporary ethnic relations.⁶⁹ As an “ethnic pressure point,” Hawaiian sovereignty continues to be perceived as a threat to other ethnic groups.⁷⁰

As Native Studies scholars have explained, indigenous peoples have a relationship to the nation-state that differs considerably from that of settler groups. Rather than seeking equal treatment via civil rights, indigenous peoples must grapple with issues concerning territory, sovereignty, nationhood, treaties, land claims, and even radically different epistemologies and ontologies or cosmologies.⁷¹ When Kānaka Maoli pursue formal sovereignty claims, they issue a warning to “The Aloha State”—a challenge to the very legitimacy of the American political infrastructure in Hawai‘i. In government, economy, law, and education, Hawaiian indigeneity pervades the public sphere in Hawai‘i.⁷² The ongoing agitations of Hawaiian sovereignty activists thus burn holes in the idyllic multicultural quilt that has been woven around Hawai‘i’s past.

Given this threat, Kanaka Maoli sovereignty activists are framed as racist separatists who betray aloha in their aspirations for Hawaiian sovereignty or

⁶⁹ Okamura, “The Illusion of Paradise: Privileging Multiculturalism in Hawai‘i,” 278.

⁷⁰ Odo and Yim 1993:225, qtd in Okamura 1998: 273

⁷¹ For work specifically about settler-colonialism in Hawai‘i, see Fujikane and Okamura (2008), Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood* (2008), and Saranillio (2009).

⁷² In government, aspirations for Hawaiian sovereignty produced federal response in the form of the 1993 Apology Resolution (see explanation in introduction). Similarly, numerous Hawaiian sovereignty groups claim to be rightful inheritors of the Hawaiian Kingdom and have created their own structure and process of governing. Several sovereignty groups have even lobbied for redress at the United Nations, and there have even been a few court cases brought forward by Kānaka Maoli against the state and the U.S. government. In addition to government and politics, Kanaka Maoli cultural and spiritual practices are protected by the law (i.e., gathering rights and subsistence activities). Hawaiian-language immersion schools are also increasingly common. These activities are evidence of the ways that Kānaka Maoli are asserting their cultural identity in a manner that reaches beyond the Hawaiian community and aspires to influence if not completely transform Hawai‘i politics.

independence.⁷³ The most salient iteration of aloha's power is when it is used against the very people (Kānaka Maoli) from whom aloha originates.⁷⁴ The fervent backlash against activists in the 1990s was a result of friction between Kānaka Maoli and settlers in Hawai'i. These backlashes represented Kānaka Maoli as having forfeited their authentic "Hawaiianess" on account of their lack of aloha, as evidenced by their political agitation and criticism. Thus, these backlashes framed Kanaka Maoli activists as betrayers of aloha and their betrayals as much more dangerous than when committed by members of other ethnic groups. When Kānaka Maoli betray or resist aloha, they defy their subject positions as the embodiment of aloha, which is crucial to Hawai'i's image.⁷⁵ Even worse, when Kānaka Maoli betray aloha, they become no longer "Hawaiian," and to no longer be "Hawaiian" is to no longer have a place in Hawai'i. In an island environment where belonging is tantamount, inclusion is very serious business.⁷⁶ This helps explain why social protest in Hawai'i is often devalued, because it is considered a violation of the

⁷³ Halualani, *In the Name of Hawaiians: Native Identities and Cultural Politics*: 24; Okamura, "The Illusion of Paradise: Privileging Multiculturalism in Hawai'i." For an example of this rhetoric, see the writings of Ken Conklin, who has written extensive critiques of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement. He especially targets Kanaka Maoli activists and academics, calling into question their "authenticity" and charging them with racial separatism. See Conklin, K. (2007). *Hawaiian Apartheid: Racial Separatism and Ethnic Nationalism in the Aloha State*, E-booktime. Conklin also heads "Aloha for All," a multi-ethnic group committed to promoting aloha for people, regardless of background. The group believes Hawaiian sovereignty is a Hawaiian supremacist project. The groups' founders are involved with the lawsuits against Hawaiian entitlement programs.

⁷⁴ For detailed analysis of the backlash against sovereignty, see the work of J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, especially her article "Colonialism in Equality" where she describes how the lawsuits against Hawaiian entitlements are indicative of a backlash against Hawaiian sovereignty, as well as a conflation of the distinction between indigeneity and race. J. Kehaulani Kauanui, "Colonialism in Equality: Hawaiian Sovereignty and the Question of U.S. Civil Rights," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 017, no. 4 (2008).

⁷⁵ An example of a Kānaka Maoli defying their subject position is personified in Trask's (1999) account of a controversy at the University of Hawai'i, see the chapter "The Politics of Academic Freedom as the Politics of White Racism" where she explains the threats she received when she spoke out against a white student. See also, Haunani-Kay Trask, "Racism against native Hawaiians at the University of Hawaii: a personal and political view," *Amerasia Journal* 18, no. 3 (1992). Indeed, Trask was the subject of much vilification during the 1980s and 1990s in Hawai'i media. In many respects, she was represented as the face and voice of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement.

⁷⁶ Ohnuma, "'Aloha Spirit' and the Cultural Politics of Sentiment as National Belonging."

aloha spirit.⁷⁷ Violating the aloha spirit is blasphemy in Hawai‘i, betraying aloha is akin to losing your “local” status, in a sense, betraying aloha is a grounds for excommunication—*they will vote you off the island*. The potential for ostracism or excommunication exhibits the ways that aloha disciplines behavior in Hawai‘i and polices Kānaka Maoli specifically, whose social identities hinge on articulating our identity with aloha.

Undoubtedly, there are many forces at play in maintaining aloha’s discursive power. Multi-national corporations, the state and federal government, and huge landowners control much of the local media and have carefully manipulated what the people of Hawai‘i think about tourism, occluding a longer-range vision of alternatives. Developers and investors continue to erect high-rises on sacred lands, displacing the native people, raping the natural resources in exchange for profits from the tourism industry and, increasingly, producers of genetically modified foods.⁷⁸ These realities can push many residents—Kānaka Maoli and Settler—into feeling apathetic about Hawai‘i’s future.⁷⁹

Still, I am compelled to defend aloha. Similar to other types of ideology and discourse, aloha is subject to internal conflicts and contradictions that reform and reproduce its power. Aloha is promoted as what is “Hawaiian” and the thing that binds

⁷⁷ Halualani, *In the Name of Hawaiians: Native Identities and Cultural Politics*: 128; Pierce, "The Whites Have Created Modern Honolulu": Ethnicity, Racial Stratification, and the Discourse of Aloha."

⁷⁸ The island of Moloka‘i is now one of the largest producers of genetically modified corn for Monsanto, a multi-national U.S.-based biotechnology corporation. Similarly, there are ongoing protests against development of Honolulu’s Kaka‘ako waterfront development, the rise of gated communities on the Big Island, and increasing high-rise development in Waikīkī (including a new Trump Tower).

⁷⁹ See Kame‘eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires/Pehea La E Pono Ai*; Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai‘i*; Halualani, *In the Name of Hawaiians: Native Identities and Cultural Politics*; Kanahēle, "The Dynamics of Aloha."; Pierce, "The Whites Have Created Modern Honolulu": Ethnicity, Racial Stratification, and the Discourse of Aloha," 151; Ohnuma, "“Aloha Spirit” and the Cultural Politics of Sentiment as National Belonging."

us, and it does. Aloha shields violence and encourages inclusion, supposedly producing good feelings for all of humanity. As the previous section explained at length, aloha is promoted as the essence of Kānaka Maoli and by extension, the islands. This is the story Hawai‘i tells itself and the world; I would be lying if I said I didn’t believe in aloha too.

Aloha Calling

“Aloha is the intelligence with which we meet life.” – Olana Ai⁸⁰

Hawaiian culture is exploited in the tourism industry, at the behest of aloha and Christian undertones that work in the service of promoting a type of benevolence that obscures the material realities of tourism. Yet I still believe in aloha and feel that it is real. I am not sure why. Maybe it is real because we believe in it, even when we know that aloha can be a violent hailing force. Maybe we believe in it because our kupuna or elders did and by believing in aloha we are somehow honoring them. The epigraph by kumu hula (hula master/teacher) Olana Ai forces me to *feel* the Kanaka Maoli investment in aloha. Taken from an interview in *Ho‘oulu: Our Time of Becoming* (2004), a book about Hawaiian epistemology and education by Manulani Aluli Meyer, the words are so simple and beautiful that they put me in diasporic tears, ironically after I write page after page about aloha’s exploitative impacts. It is this response that personifies aloha’s power for Kānaka Maoli. Aloha is thus embodied by Kānaka Maoli in these moments of affect that depend on the very performance of aloha. Through a reading of Althusser, Butler, and Chow, this section will map how Kānaka Maoli are interpellated into aloha. I outline how aloha contributes to Hawaiian performativity and by extension perceptions of “Hawaiianess.” I contend that through performances of aloha, aloha itself became a type

⁸⁰ Meyer, *Ho‘oulu: Our Time of Becoming*: 4.

of ritualized performance of Hawaianness that capitalism later required Kānaka Maoli to embody for tourism.

Curiously, other contemporary Kanaka Maoli scholars or specialists do not engage aloha in their knowledge production.⁸¹ In many respects, it's not that aloha is being dismissed; it just isn't publicly spoken about or written about in Kanaka Maoli academic discourse. In fact, as documented by Ohnuma (2008), the most cited works in Hawaiian Studies, notably Kame'eleihiwa (1992) and Osorio (2002), make no mention of aloha at all. Noenoe Silva's game-changing book *Aloha Betrayed* (2004), while not about aloha per se, boasts a provocative title that gestures towards the idea that there is this thing called "aloha" and that the colonial conspirators who overthrew the Hawaiian Kingdom betrayed that aloha.⁸² And of course, Trask's work openly analyzed aloha's exploitation and its consequences.⁸³ It follows then that aloha's hyper-commodified and arguably over-determined status almost requires a gutting of the term or in some cases a total avoidance of it. *Fuck you Aloha, I love you*. This phrase seems to embody the tensions at the heart of aloha. Kānaka Maoli, Hawai'i residents, and anyone else who might have a bonafide stake in aloha must acknowledge that aloha has been commercialized and continues to be a justification for the ostensible dispossession of Hawaiian lands and culture, but we do so even as we inhabit a contradictory space of

⁸¹ Also noted by Kanahale (1986) and Ohnuma (2008).

⁸² Furthermore, by saying "aloha betrayed," Silva is inferring that Kānaka Maoli were betrayed. It may just be a provocative book title, but the reason it is so compelling as a title is precisely because aloha holds so much power in the way that it is attached to what is understood to be "Hawaiian" and that betraying aloha is akin to committing a crime.

⁸³ Recent works in Native/Hawaiian/Pacific Studies have not addressed aloha. Notably, Kauanui (2008) and Tengan (2008), whose scholarship has received considerable acclaim and attention, do not broach the topic.

believing in aloha. I am frequently tortured by the “why.” Each time I think I can turn away from aloha, something continues to call me back.

To answer this question of why I come back to aloha, I return to Althusser’s doctrine on interpellation or this idea of being “hailed” that is enacted when subjects answer “the call” of ideology to affirm their subjectivity. There are numerous critiques of Althusser’s theory. Critics argue that his theorization of interpellation is too monolithic and that it does not give the subject any agency for resistance.⁸⁴ Such critiques, Chow claims, rest on a conception of the subject which is able to resist interpellation because they are somewhere outside of discourse, drawing on a transcendental quality or a pre-discursive resistant subjectivity to do so.⁸⁵ According to Chow, Althusser’s “interpellation” has gaps in its analysis because it does not fully account for how or why the subject comes to be actually interpellated or how it internalizes his or her subject position. Foucault’s critique of ideology is a little different, arguing that Althusser’s understanding of ideology posited a “truth” that needed ideology to interpellate it into a state-formation of power. In other words, ideology was only necessary because the subject possessed an essential “truth” that needed to be interpellated. And that “truth,” was related to a subject that had an “origin,” which as I explained in the Introduction is antithetical to post-structuralist theory, a school of thought that questioned the essential composition of identity and subjectivity.⁸⁶

Butler also critiques Althusser’s concept of interpellation for similar reasons as Foucault, because to explain why the subject submits or comes into being presumes a

⁸⁴ Stuart Hall, "Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates," *Critical Studies Mass Communication* 5, no. 2 (1985).

⁸⁵ Chow, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*: 109.

⁸⁶ Hunt and Purvis, "Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology..." 488; Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*: 118.

grammatical subject prior to its own creation.⁸⁷ Mladen Dolar takes a different approach in “Beyond Interpellation,” (1993) arguing that Althusser’s theory of ideology is missing the contributions of psychoanalysis and subsequently cannot explain why interpellation sometimes fails.⁸⁸ I take these critiques to heart, and rather than condemn Althusser to the structuralist ghetto, I draw on his theory of the “call” of the State and the “calling” invoked in Protestantism (the call from “God” to faith and service) to attempt to narrate why Kānaka Maoli continue to answer aloha’s call.

Max Weber’s, *The Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism* (1904) provides the blueprint for thinking about the relationship between religion and capitalism in the West. Weber outlines how religion has helped to develop and grow the spirit of capitalism. Weber describes the “calling” as a divine ordinance and the only way of living acceptably to God, wherein man was to ensure salvation “...solely through the fulfillment of the obligation imposed upon the individual by his position in the world.”⁸⁹ As a product of the Reformation, “the calling” was also defined as a skill or task that a person would perform to his or her fullest capacity, such as working hard in order to earn a place in heaven. This Protestant and then Calvinist approach to living became significant to the building of capitalism. In Chow’s reading of Weber, she finds that the drive toward material gains via capitalist enterprises is more than a product of human greed. On the contrary, it should be seen as an outcome of internal disciplining forces that accompany a secularizing West.⁹⁰ In other words, with the rise of the secular West, one’s calling by God was replaced with interpellating practices of the State. Reading Weber’s theory of

⁸⁷ Butler, "The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection," 111-12.

⁸⁸ Mladen Dolar, "Beyond Interpellation," *Qui Parle* 6, no. 2 (1993).

⁸⁹ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, [Student's ed. (New York: Scribner, 1958). 80.

⁹⁰ Chow, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*: 43.

“calling” alongside Judith Butler’s analysis of “the call,” I am haunted and moved by the subjects’ desire to answer the call of the State because it presents an opportunity to consider how subjects willingly submit to their own subjection.

In her reading of Althusser, Butler unpacks how interpellation is buttressed by theological metaphors. She ponders if “the call” and all its divine power can be resisted at all. Following Butler’s understanding of how “the call” is answered, when Kānaka Maoli perform aloha, we announce that we are innocent and no longer guilty, we “confess our innocence” to God or the law.⁹¹ She speculates that answering the call is the subjects’ submission to “the Law,” which the subject does out of guilt over something that can only be corrected through the disciplining forces of the Law--refusing the call would only further intensify the guilt. When the subject turns toward the voice of authority in an act of interpellation, it is a moment of self-recognition that also offers the possibility of acquittal or forgiveness. Butler argues that when we turn toward the Law, it is because we want to become its subject, because it provides us with an identity and security, even if that security is temporary. But, as she reminds us, this desire for secular recognition and security is also a desire to be recognized by God. In either the secular or religious instance, the turn toward the Law promises an identity because it names the subject and satisfies its desire to be validated by authority.⁹² This is what Butler refers to as a “passionate attachment” to what subordinates us, a bonding that serves as the basis of our very subjectivity and also represents a narcissism toward our continuing existence.⁹³ On the other hand, according to Butler, the recognition by God, is also an ongoing

⁹¹ Butler, "The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection," 117-99. I explain the ramifications of “the confession” more explicitly in chapters four and five.

⁹² Ibid., 107-12.

⁹³ Ibid., 113.

condemnation, which is also another form of reaffirming the subject's subjugation. In effect, and paradoxically, these attachments produce the possibilities and limits of who we are.⁹⁴

Read in the Hawaiian context, this theory helps us understand the consequences of how aloha had been attached to Hawaiianness. In the early nineteenth century, aloha was used by Calvinist missionaries to “call” Kānaka Maoli. Throughout the early to mid-nineteenth century, Kānaka Maoli answered the call of aloha by converting to a belief in a Christian God, which required the acceptance of a Christian translation of aloha as unadulterated altruism. Soon after, the transition to capitalism restructured the entire Hawaiian Kingdom.⁹⁵ Submission to capitalist enterprise and answering a “call” eventually became attached to performing a task, as part of a mission or a “calling” that was specifically made for Kānaka Maoli. The call of aloha through Christianity and then capitalism was realized in the Kanaka Maoli capacity to “perform” aloha, i.e., sharing Hawaiian culture.

To come into “modernity” Kānaka Maoli had to then “perform” aloha.⁹⁶ Althusser contended that the subjects' acts are practices that are governed by rituals and these

⁹⁴ Butler explains in *Psychic Life of Power*, “...only by occupying—being occupied by—that injurious term can I resist and oppose it, recasting the power that constitutes me as the power I oppose.” Thus, we are attached to this kind of subjection because it is our resource and it conditions the environment in which the resignifying of interpellation becomes possible” (104).

⁹⁵ “The Great Mahele” was enacted in 1848 and is generally regarded as the start of capitalism in Hawai‘i. The mahele—defined as division—changed communal land tenure to private ownership, which eventually dispossessed many common people of access to their lands. Land was divided into crown lands, chief lands, and government lands. The mahele legislation was one of the modernizing projects of the Hawaiian Kingdom at the time, including the drafting of a Bill of Rights (1839) and Constitution (1840). For details see Cooper and Daws, *Land and Power in Hawai‘i: the Democratic Years*; Van Dyke, *Who owns the Crown lands of Hawai‘i?*

⁹⁶ Let me be clear, I am not saying that Kānaka Maoli were not “modern” or a people with an ever-changing and evolving culture and character. I am saying that in the eyes of the West, Kānaka Maoli were representative of that backward and stagnant “other” and thus, through conversion to Christianity and through the adoption of capitalism, were thus seen as possible for civilizing and modernity.

rituals are defined through material ISAs that create subjects.⁹⁷ Put another way, interpellation happens through bodily movements and through the performance of skills that have a material basis. Citing seventeenth century French mathematician, physicist and Catholic philosopher, Blaise Pascal, Althusser asserted that physical gestures, attitudes, and beliefs are material practices that form through habit. He draws on Pascal's description of religious belief captured in the injunction, "kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe," to show how interpellation is a corporeal practice.⁹⁸ Pascal's example of kneeling to pray in order to produce belief emphasizes the automated nature of performing a ritual, and what Butler later claims is the basis for "performativity." This performativity occurs for the purposes of both constituting and sustaining the subject, but the performance also "becomes the occasion for further making."⁹⁹ As Butler expounds, performance produces belief through repetition that is incorporated into performance and its subsequent operations.¹⁰⁰ It is through this process that Kānaka Maoli continue to believe in aloha.

As early as the mid-nineteenth century, Kānaka Maoli were being encouraged to perform hula for money for high-ranking visitors. As the cornerstone of Hawaiian religious culture, hula was shunned by Calvinist missionaries, who pressured Hawaiian Royalty to discourage (and later criminalize) hula's public performance. Noenoe Silva has clarified that the legal restrictions put on hula in the mid-nineteenth century were not simply about controlling Kanaka Maoli sexuality and spiritual practices. Silva notes that the problem with the practice of hula was twofold—that it was the very life of the people,

⁹⁷ Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 158.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Butler, "The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection," 99.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 119.

that it possessed the histories of Kānaka Maoli (which the missionaries sought to erase) and that it was so enjoyable, so important, that Kānaka Maoli were dancing hula rather than working. Even the settlers (particularly Asians) demonstrated strong interest in hula through dance or as spectators, both of which lured them away from working on the plantations.¹⁰¹ In public, hula dancing bodies were not considered to be “productive” and so had to be transformed into something productive so that capitalism could expand. To this end, hula dances were subjected to disciplinary institutions that ensured its functionality for commercial purposes.¹⁰² For example, in 1859 licenses became required for the public performance of hula and anyone dancing without a license had to pay a fine up to five hundred dollars or perform six months hard labor. Such harsh measures inhibited many people from dancing hula in public. Notably, these licenses were only available to hula hālau (hula schools) and places where hula shows were generating a paid audience (like in Honolulu and Lahaina). Plainly put, hula in these spaces was considered productive because it generated a paying audience, marking very clearly that the public display of hula was rife with economic opportunity, which the Kingdom was invested in regulating. The restrictions on hula of course had a huge impact on its everyday practice. Hula subsequently went underground until the 1880s, when King David Kalākaua revived it. In the face of increasing European influence, Kalākaua sought

¹⁰¹ Silva, "He Kanewai E Ho'opau I Na Hula Kuolo Hawai'i": The Political Economy of Banning the Hula (1857-1870)," 33. Also, since the early 1850s, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints or the Mormon Church was actually supportive of traditional practices of Polynesians, including hula. They worked to tolerate practices as long as they were not in conflict with Mormon teachings. For more see Adrienne Lois Kaeppler, Judy Van Zile, and Elizabeth Tatar, *Hula Pahu: Hawaiian Drum Dances*, 2 vols., Bishop Museum bulletin in anthropology (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1993).

¹⁰² Gillian and Simon J. Williams Bendelow, "Bodily 'order': Cultural and historical perspectives on conformity and transgression," in *The Lived Body*, ed. Gillian Bendelow and Simon J. Williams (New York: Routledge, 1998).

to revitalize hula to show the resilience and greatness of Hawaiian culture.¹⁰³ Similarly, as Kānaka Maoli had become Christian and hula became secularized (e.g., the need for hula licenses, and the criteria of recreational rather than spiritual performances), the stage was set for transforming hula into a potent symbol of Hawaiian aloha for tourism.¹⁰⁴ The latter is evidence of colonialism and capitalism working together to transform and co-opt Hawaiian culture, which was achieved through the disciplining and exhibition of Kanaka Maoli bodies in a process that has become naturalized.

By the early twentieth century, after the overthrow, aloha became one of the few cultural practices that Kānaka Maoli had left and as they were encouraged to perform it for money (by dancing hula and expressing aloha), giving aloha came to be a skill that Kānaka Maoli were imagined to be good at (and they were). This process produced social recognition in the eyes of the missionaries and later, in the eyes of the state. It also provided one of the few sources of financial benefits. Through these processes and their consequences, aloha became the Kanaka Maoli calling. The remainder of this section will examine how performing aloha transformed from our “calling” to our “skill” that is attached to Hawaiian identity.

In spite of its commodification, the aloha spirit in Hawai‘i is recognized both as a product of tourism and as the centerpiece of Hawaiian culture that is held dear by Kānaka

¹⁰³ George Kanahale, *Hawaiian Music and Musicians: An Illustrated History* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1979). Diamond, *American Aaloha: Cultural Tourism and the Negotiation of Tradition*. Kalākaua held a celebration, referred to as a “jubilee,” to celebrate his fiftieth birthday, which involved proud displays of the Hawaiian Kingdom, including a lū‘au, an independence day celebration, a “historical tableaux,” and of course hula performances that brought together the Kanaka Maoli people. For more, see: Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*: 118. For more on hula see, Amy K. Stillman, *Sacred Hula: The Historical Hula'ala'apapa* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1998); Kaeppler, Van Zile, and Tatar, *Hula Pahu: Hawaiian Drum Dances*.

¹⁰⁴ Christopher B. Balme, "Dressing the Hula: Iconography, Performance and Cultural Identity Formation in late nineteenth century Hawaii," *Paideuma* 45(1999): 243; Diamond, *American Aaloha: Cultural Tourism and the Negotiation of Tradition*.

Maoli and non-Native settlers alike. Indeed, the dissemination of “aloha” in the American colonial imagination occurred most prominently through the visibility of Kānaka Maoli performing our “culture”. In *Staging Tourism* (2001), Jane Desmond argues that the public display of bodies and their materiality (how bodies look, what they do, where they do it, who watches, and under what conditions) are profoundly important in structuring identity categories and notions of subjectivity.¹⁰⁵ Following MacCannell, Desmond also argues that tourist shows are forms of “staged authenticity,” where the audiences believe that what they are seeing is an extension of natural behaviors.¹⁰⁶ Further, Desmond shows that performances for tourists are coded as cultural or national conservation that shields the conditions of production in such a way that audience members do not have to engage their own complicity in the subjugation of “others” that they are watching perform.¹⁰⁷ Through this process, bodily difference becomes marked, measured, and mobilized politically to naturalize social hierarchies.¹⁰⁸ In the normalization of these hierarchies, aloha was utilized to lock Kānaka Maoli into the position of having aloha and sharing it with the world. This is precisely how aloha got attached to the definition of Hawaiianness and the production of aloha as a skill. The transformation of Hawaiian culture into an aptitude, in other words, the transformation of aloha into a “skill” became necessary under capitalism. Kānaka Maoli subsequently became the representatives of aloha.

Again, that is not to say that Kānaka Maoli were duped completely as they “performed” aloha. In “Hawaiians on Tour: Hula Circuits Through American Empire,” (2004) Adria Imada discusses how Kānaka Maoli were called upon to be “ambassadors

¹⁰⁵ Desmond, *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World*: xiii.

¹⁰⁶ Dean MacCannell, “Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings,” *American Journal of Sociology* 79, no. 3 (1973).

¹⁰⁷ Desmond, *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World*: 231.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, xix.

of aloha,” Kānaka Maoli were actively recruited to promote Hawai‘i’s charms on the U.S. continent throughout the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁰⁹ It is imperative to mention that Kānaka Maoli exercised agency through these networks under conditions that were increasingly out of their control.¹¹⁰ Through various hula tours and hula revues in big U.S. cities, many Kānaka Maoli secured a measure of freedom and pleasure, sustaining cultural production, pursuing employment and educational opportunities, and creating diasporic communities.¹¹¹ At the same time, the hula tours also solidified the relationship between Hawai‘i and the U.S., producing an imagined sense of intimacy between Americans and Hawai‘i because of the feminized version of Hawai‘i that Kanaka Maoli women performed onstage (i.e., offering “aloha”).¹¹² This created a fantasy of reciprocal attachment that made it seem unimaginable for Americans to part from “their” colony: Hawai‘i. Kanaka Maoli women offering aloha promised intimacy and affection to the U.S., making U.S. military and tourist expansion appear “benign.”¹¹³

When tourism became Hawai‘i’s primary industry after statehood, Kānaka Maoli became valued because of what their culture could offer the U.S., especially during the Cold War, as a representation of America’s multicultural character. So, as capitalism became normalized in Hawai‘i and was practiced as the predominant form of “production,” when living sustainably off the land was no longer possible because many

¹⁰⁹ Imada, "Hawaiians on Tour: Hula Circuits Through the American Empire," 112.

¹¹⁰ Osorio explains in *Dismembering Lahui* (2002), nineteenth century Kānaka Maoli who sought to modify traditional Hawaiian systems of governance into “respectable” democracies always adapted themselves to changing times. See also Silva (2005) and Balme (1999).

¹¹¹ Imada, "Hawaiians on Tour: Hula Circuits Through the American Empire," 113.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 112.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 114. Also in Imada (2008), she notes that through “imperial hospitality,” hula dancers and hostesses offered “aloha” to military officers, notably white men. Through the staging of military lū‘au’s, the U.S. military scripted Hawaiian hospitality and leisure, embodying a highly mediated form of performance that made visible and available islander bodies, translating Hawai‘i into a safe sanctuary for the US military and for Americans (352).

Kānaka Maoli lost their lands, to cope and adapt to this subjection, many Kānaka Maoli found opportunity and agency through the performance of culture.¹¹⁴ The hula tours are a prime example of this. However, participation in such activities lent credence to the notions that the only value of Kānaka Maoli was their ability to perform aloha and that such performances were “natural,” indicative of who we used to and should be. Aloha, then became through a process of ritualized performance, an expression of Hawaiian cultural difference. Applying this to modern day practice, it could be posited that over time, performing aloha was ritualized and is now a type of ritual that sustains a relationship to Hawaiian culture.

Through the constant performance of aloha as a natural extension of Kanaka Maoli identity, aloha became ritualized and internalized by Kānaka Maoli. When Kānaka Maoli perform aloha as our “skill” then, we are properly performing as Kānaka Maoli. So, while many Kānaka Maoli obviously are called to perform various skills, working in all types of professions, aloha has come to represent an unwavering internal character trait of Kanaka Maoli identity, regardless whether we earn money for it directly. In fact, as this chapter has shown, the material consequences of a belief in aloha have been negative for Kānaka Maoli. This theorization of Kanaka Maoli interpellation through aloha can certainly be paralyzing, but Slavoj Žižek’s theorization of the subject’s agency via interpellation is helpful in recuperating the subject’s agency. In the next section I explain how Žižek and Chow provide a surprisingly hopeful perspective of why Kānaka Maoli subjects still answer the call of aloha.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

Aloha's just another word for nothing left to lose

In the *Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989), Žižek formulates a different theory of how we become subjects of ideology. According to Žižek, interpellation cannot be explained; it is an irrational act that the subject engages in. Through interpellation, the subject takes a leap of faith that allows ideology to patch over the fissure or fill the gap between ideology and the subject, pulling together the subject and the ideology into which the subject is hailed. In Žižek's theory, we take a leap of faith as a result of a traumatic kernel that itself cannot be interpellated by the law.¹¹⁵ This "traumatic" kernel is the leftover or remainder that cannot be interpellated, what cultural nationalism cannot resolve.¹¹⁶ The kernel is the motor of ideological structure because ideology promises a refuge from it; The kernel is the traumatic unknown, it is the chaos within us. We do not know what this unknown is, hence the trauma. Ideology is supposed to provide a refuge from this kernel—a cover—but ideology is always insufficient because the kernel cannot be fully covered or integrated, otherwise, ideology would be unnecessary.¹¹⁷ This unknowable thing is always with us. Furthermore, for Žižek, to not answer "the call" is to resist an open field of association and to engage the traumatic kernel, the unknown. So, when the subject answers the call, the subject affirms itself by resisting a "radically open field of signifiatory possibilities" and the *terror of complete freedom*, rather than resisting institutionalization.¹¹⁸ Whereas other theories construct a resistant subject that is

¹¹⁵ Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Phronesis (London; New York: Verso, 1989). 42.

¹¹⁶ Tomo Hattori quoted in Chow (110), Tomo Hattori, "Model Minority Discourse and Asian American Jouis-Sence," *differences* 11, no. 2 (1999).

¹¹⁷ Dolar, "Beyond Interpellation," 92.

¹¹⁸ Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism*: 110; Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*.

able to withstand the temptation of the call, Žizek flips it and focuses on the resistance to the unknown. The resistance is then, against ontological terror.

Now, while it is beyond the limits of this dissertation to advance a theory of Hawaiian ontology, I do find Žizek and Chow's interpretations fruitful for my analysis of why Kānaka Maoli answer the call of aloha. Chow builds on Žizek's theory to explain that the subject takes a leap of faith as it becomes interpellated. This leap is unconscious and senseless and interpellation succeeds precisely because of it.¹¹⁹ For Kānaka Maoli this means submitting to the State's ideology, an aloha state apparatus that positions Kānaka Maoli as the natural repositories of aloha, destined to welcome visitors and perform our aloha for them. So, why then, would a Kanaka Maoli participate in this economy of subjection? The Kanaka Maoli subject answers aloha's call when we take this leap of faith (through the process of being interpellated) to affirm our subjectivity as a Kanaka Maoli. Not answering the call would leave us lost in an ocean of associations, which can leave the Kanaka Maoli subject "lost at sea," lost in its own place.¹²⁰ Kānaka Maoli, in short, internalize aloha to retain our identities and to resist the unknown.

Now, let me be clear, our belief or faith in aloha is not easily dismissed, nor is it a simple evasion of the unknown or the traumatic kernel that interpellation shields us from. I depart from Žizek and contend that the leap of faith is not senseless or irrational to Kānaka Maoli. Following Chow, I argue that Kānaka Maoli unconsciously answer the call of aloha because it is necessary for us to participate rationally in the modern world.

¹¹⁹ Chow, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*: 112-13.

¹²⁰ Diaz and Kauanui (2001) propose that locking indigeneity in discourse ignores indigenous flexibility and innovation over time. The idea of being "perilously lost at sea" is explained by them as a state of losing one's place, to not know where one's island is or to no longer be possessed by an island. "The islands may move, but one must always know their location at any given time, as indexed by their signs in the natural and supernatural world." (317).

In other words, it is an act that is unconscious and rises out of a survival instinct, to secure our social life through the Law, to guarantee our existence.¹²¹ Because, what happens when Kānaka Maoli give up aloha? What happens when we don't answer its call? In our leap of faith (to believe in aloha, and in turn to be Kanaka Maoli), we retain what it is that we imagine makes us Kanaka Maoli, engaging in what Chow posits is an automation that gives identity legitimacy and security, as well as a sense of "potentiality and empowerment."¹²²

Performing aloha keeps us alive; Kānaka Maoli answer aloha's call as an act of survival. Under capitalism, it is a form of automation, whereby performing aloha is no longer a choice we make; it is the way that we remain connected to Hawaiian indigeneity. Not answering aloha's call becomes a kind of social death with material (lack of capital) and psychological (lack of identity) effects. If we deny aloha too much, we run the risk of full erasure or native absence. We run the risk of no longer being Kanaka Maoli. As such, aloha is the crux of Kanaka Maoli potential, empowerment, and survival, even if it has also become the means of disempowering us. Indeed, while many Kānaka Maoli openly critique the way tourism and multiculturalism has bastardized aloha, you'd be hard pressed to find a Kanaka Maoli that would utter the words "Fuck you, aloha" without extensively qualifying such a statement. Instead, we wax poetic—"*Aloha is the intelligence with which we meet life.*" And it is true, aloha is very real for Kānaka Maoli today. To think that we approach life with a perspective that, by virtue of our being Kanaka Maoli, is intelligent, aware, cognizant, and ready to face experiences as Kānaka

¹²¹ Butler, "The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection," 112-13.

¹²² Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism*: 110.

Maoli, profoundly shapes the way we move in the world.¹²³ The presence of aloha reminds Kānaka Maoli that we still exist, that we existed, that we “meet life” with intelligence and will continue to, no matter what.¹²⁴ Perhaps aloha is not the cultural concept we would choose to describe ourselves, given the way its been used, but aloha is, for better or worse, tied to “Hawaiianness” and “who we are.”

And it is this latter point that gets at the tensions existing at the heart of Hawaiianness: we fight with ourselves. We want to believe in aloha because, deep down, we believe it connects us to our ancestors, to who we are. So we choose to retain aloha because it affirms us, even in its contradictions.¹²⁵ For Chow, this contradiction manifests in cultural representations, specifically in the performance of the ethnic self. Returning to the ways that Kānaka Maoli are attached to aloha, as I stated earlier, to be Kanaka Maoli is to *be* aloha. I therefore must surrender to this necessary contradiction—to get paid, to be recognized and identified as Kanaka Maoli—to live. But, our belief in aloha will only survive through its constant performance. All performances have the possibility of failure, so survival through performance is indeed precarious. The frequently cited adage

¹²³ As Ohnuma notes, an ideology of aloha—an ideology of love—is preferable to an ideology of fear (2008: 387-388).

¹²⁴ Not all Kānaka Maoli have access to knowledge about other Hawaiian concepts, like “kuleana” or “pono,” which recent work in Hawaiian Studies have documented were equally important, if not more important than aloha. Kuleana is defined as right, responsibility, property. Pono is defined as righteousness, correct, moral, balance. Recent work in Hawaiian Studies has labored to document the significance of other terms, like pono or kuleana. Kame‘eleihiwa (1992) addresses both terms in her work. Leilani Basham has an article on pono, see Leilani Basham, “Mele Lahui: The Importance of Pono in Hawaiian Poetry,” *Te Kaharoa: The e-Journal on Indigenous Pacific Issues* 1, no. 1 (2010). See also writings on kuleana, Sam L. Noeau Warner, “Kuleana”: The Right, Responsibility, and Authority of Indigenous Peoples to Speak and Make Decisions for Themselves in Language and Cultural Revitalization,” *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (1995). Kanalu Young, “Kuleana: Toward a Historiography of Hawaiian National Consciousness, 1780-2001,” *Hawaiian Journal of Law and Politics* 2, no. Summer (2006). See also, Noelani Goodyear-Kaopua, “Kuleana Lahui: Collective Responsibility for Hawaiian Nationhood in Activists Praxis,” *Affinities* 5, no. 1 (2011). Ku‘umealoha Ho‘omanawanui, and Noelani Arista both supposedly have forthcoming work on kuleana, as well.

¹²⁵ Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism*: 111. Chow explains that ethnic subjects are forced into believing in a contradiction in order to exist rationally in the modern world, sometimes even at their own peril.

that performances only succeed because of their reiterability has considerable significance here.¹²⁶ Rather than pretending that we need to go beyond aloha or get back to aloha's real meaning, the remainder of this dissertation will show how performers negotiate with aloha and perform aloha in divergent ways. The rapper Krystilez and the drag performer Cocoa Chandelier narrate the challenges in this space of contradiction by criss-crossing messy discourses while affirming and undermining aloha's ideological power.

As Butler contends, resignificatory possibilities of any performance always rework and unsettle subjects' passionate attachment to subjection and thus provides ways to rethink subject formation and reformation through performance.¹²⁷ For example, in chapters two and three, I will show that Krystilez refuses aloha altogether through performances of defiant Kanaka indigeneity which upset multicultural fantasies of belonging in Hawai'i. Similarly, in Chapter five, I show that Cocoa Chandelier also exhibits complicated performances of aloha. Cocoa Chandelier performs aloha in drag—aloha is strategically hidden—at times to comment on something larger than the actual performance of aloha itself. These examples point towards the divergent ways that performers are grappling with aloha, but also raise questions about the future of aloha, Hawai'i, and of course, Kānaka Maoli.

For this reason, this dissertation looks closely at these performances and their performances of aloha in these very contradictory and yet productive spaces. As Lowe and Lloyd assert, these contradictory spaces enable rethinkings through alternative

¹²⁶ Austin, *How to do Things With Words*; Derrida, *Margins of philosophy*; Butler, *Gender Trouble*.

¹²⁷ ———, "The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection," 105.

formations.¹²⁸ In these spaces, Kānaka Maoli are committed to aloha, to meeting life with intelligence, because even as we are told that aloha now belongs to the world and that we gave it away, we still know that, deep down, aloha belongs to us. We are hailed to retain aloha's dynamism and resilience, and this keeps us moving forward. It is in this space of contradiction that this dissertation finds its thrust; this place where things are "not right" but "yet still all is right." *Fuck you, Aloha, but I still love you.*

¹²⁸ Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd, *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*, Post-contemporary interventions (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997). 8.

PART II.

The Refusal

We are not American.
We are not American.
We are not American.
We are not American.
Say it in your heart,
say it when you sleep.
We are not American.
We will die as Hawaiians
We will never be Americans
– Haunani-Kay Trask¹

Refusal of aloha

Haunani-Kay Trask’s now iconic speech at the centennial of the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1993 is perhaps the most articulate declaration of what I refer to as a “refusal of aloha.” In her speech, Trask defiantly disavowed American colonialism and affirmed her living-Hawaiian resistance. This beautiful moment has been replayed, retold, relived, and reaffirmed throughout the Hawaiian community for nearly two decades. I return to Trask’s words when Hawai’i feels far away from me, when I feel my understanding of aloha waning, when my access to aloha feels blocked, like I’ve lost it—as if I ever could. When I return to Trask’s words, I feel aloha again, despite the fact that

¹ This speech was originally delivered at the 100th anniversary of the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom on January 17, 1993. Video footage of this speech appeared in the film *Act of War* (1992). Sound clips of this speech has also been played in a recent piece on Hawai’i, “The Other USA” on Aljazeera news network (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gIq8x9vnLf4>). Most recently, this speech was referenced repeatedly at “For a Native Daughter” an event held to honor Haunani-Kay Trask on August 11, 2011 in downtown Honolulu.

she never utters the word at all. Her words, however, speak to aloha's unspeakable power, they speak to what aloha is fundamentally about, living and dying as Hawaiians, as Kānaka Maoli. Not as Americans. *Living and dying as Hawaiians*.

While chapter one addressed the problematic, yet necessary, ways that Kānaka Maoli perform aloha in order to retain their connection to who we are as Kanaka Maoli people, this part of the dissertation theorizes how Kānaka Maoli perform aloha through a refusal. As the Trask example shows, aloha can be refused and still be used to express a deep connection, to express our aloha for Hawaiian culture and our commitment to survival as a people. How aloha is clung to and how this clinging and attachment is “performed” varies considerably. To explore this in more depth, I turn to the work of one Kanaka Maoli rapper in particular, Krystilez. In a *refusal* of aloha, Krystilez does more than assert a resistant Kanaka Maoli identity that refuses to be compromised or subdued by colonialism, his performances also unsettle discourses about land, blood, and authenticity, which were intended to dispossess Kānaka Maoli of cultural claims, autonomy, and preeminently, their lands.

In a *refusal* of aloha, Krystilez performs aggression, stakes territory, and polices membership throughout his self-representation in photographs, video, and music. This refusal constitutes the opposite of what “aloha” has come to signify in the popular imagination. Krystilez refuses aloha through performances of defiant Kanaka indigeneity, which upset multicultural fantasies of universal belonging in Hawai‘i. Krystilez’s narratives of Kanaka Maoli resilience on Hawaiian homesteads are about Kanaka Maoli presence on these lands and defending to death those lands against outsiders. In this way, Krystilez’s music is explicitly against what many have defined as the essence of aloha—

inclusion. But, simultaneously, because of Krystilez's indigeneity, he can claim a relationship to the land and express his aloha for that land, in ways that are unquestionably about performing aloha. This simultaneous expression and refusal of aloha confounds conventional discourses of aloha, which discourage dissent and maintain the status quo. Indeed, in refusing aloha, Krystilez presents an alternative formation of aloha, one that is exclusively for Kānaka Maoli.

Chapter 2

Defiant Indigeneity and Hawaiian Hip-hop

On August 19, 2005, Black-nationalist rap group, Public Enemy performed before a small crowd at Kapi‘olani Community College on the island of O‘ahu. Diamond Head Crater loomed in the distance, looking like a picture postcard, dwarfing the stage, and framing the half-empty field in which the concert was held. It was Admissions Day, a day to commemorate Hawai‘i’s statehood, but no mention was made of statehood by any of the local opening acts.² The event was billed as “The First Annual Hawai‘i Hip-hop Festival” with Public Enemy headlining, supported by local opening acts J-Bird, Spookahuna, Parc Cyde, Emirc, and Krystilez. Even though the concert was held on a day to celebrate Hawai‘i’s official admission into the U.S. and featured a group renowned for politically astute Black nationalism, the field was largely empty, causing my friend to proclaim, “Hip-hop is dead!” as the opening acts rapped about chasing “*punanis*” (a slang term for vagina) and living in the HI-state (pronounced high state, a reference to marijuana use in Hawai‘i). I yawned and sighed as I watched these young Pacific Islander men jump and gesticulate across the stage.³ I wondered how the political messages central to Public Enemy’s music could somehow evaporate into the Diamond Head

² Hawai‘i became a state on August 21, 1959. For details on the debates regarding Hawai‘i’s status as a state, see Saranillio, "Seeing Conquest: Colliding Histories and the Cultural Politics of Hawai'i Statehood."

³ Commonly used in Caribbean patois and popularized by rap music. Punani is used frequently in Hawai‘i because in Hawaiian, pua nani translates to “beautiful flower.” It is often used to refer to female genitalia.

Crater situated behind us. Perhaps it was the lapse in time since Public Enemy's heyday or simply poor publicity, but the weak crowd felt indicative of hip-hop's mainstreaming impulses, in which political consciousness and misogyny, alongside the contradictions and possibilities of hip-hop, were laid bare on stage. It is easy to dismiss these men as inauthentic sexist hip-hop wannabes who are damaging and undesirable as representatives of Pacific masculinity or hip-hop writ large. That said, it is equally easy to celebrate the adoption of hip-hop by these men as an expression of their modern indigenous resistance. This chapter endeavors to complicate the analysis of these expressions by investigating the conditions that bring into being such performances, the most important of which are the corporatization of hip-hop and the Hawaiian sovereignty movement. Throughout this chapter, I move beyond criticism and celebration to look closely at these performances of modern Kanaka Maoli indigeneity as performed through Hawaiian hip-hop.

Hip-hop came to Hawai'i as quickly as it spread across the continental U.S. Since the early 1980s (as hip-hop rose to prominence in mainstream American media), hip-hop films, music videos, television shows, and concerts by prominent performers all came to Hawai'i, and the youth responded with excitement.⁴ With the globalization of mass media in the era of late-capitalism, Black-identified American popular culture has proliferated all over the world.⁵ Hip-hop's mainstream prominence has produced the adoption and

⁴ As Osumare notes, a hip-hop scene started to coalesce in Honolulu during the early 1980s, evidenced in mainstream acknowledgment on a local television show called "Breakin Hawai'i" in 1984. For more see Halifu Osumare, "Props to the Local Boyz: Hip-Hop Culture in Hawai'i," in *The African Aesthetic in Global Hip-Hop* (New York: Palgrave, 2007), 16.

⁵ See Robin D.G. Kelley, "Foreword," in *The Vinyl Ain't Final: Hip-hop and the Globalization of Black Popular Culture*, ed. Sidney Lemelle and Dipannita Basu (Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2006); Sidney Lemelle and Dipannita Basu, eds., *The Vinyl Ain't Final: Hip-Hop and the Globalization of Black Popular Culture* (Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2006); Tony Mitchell, "Kia Kaha! (Be Strong): Maori and

creation of hip-hop by disenfranchised youth around the world through what Halifu Osumare has referred to as “connective marginality,” a social and historical context that informs youth participation in hip-hop outside the U.S.⁶ Youth in places like Palestine, Japan, Ireland, Cuba, and even Hawai‘i share experiences of cultural displacement, a connection with Black-identified culture, and the desire for self-representation. Yet the existence of hip-hop in Hawai‘i or Hawaiian hip-hop may come as a surprise to many people.⁷ As one of the most geographically isolated places on earth, Hawai‘i is structured by an archive of fantasies containing grass shacks, palm trees, hula girls, beautiful beaches, and, most recently, Barack Obama.⁸ In stark contrast, hip-hop is understood as the expression of marginalized brown youth struggling in deindustrializing cities. Conceptualizing how Kānaka Maoli identify with hip-hop might appear hard-pressed to some.

In the late-twentieth century, however, Kanaka Maoli visibility and self-representation has increased considerably. Innovative Kanaka Maoli representations in the realms of visual arts, music, dance, and film attempt to increase visibility through narratives of resistance, resilience, and revitalization.⁹ But, as evidenced by Krystilez and

Pacific Islander Hip-Hop in Aotearoa/New Zealand," in *Global Noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the U.S.*, ed. Tony Mitchell (Middlesex, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001); Neal Ullestad, "Native American Rap and Reggae: Dancing to the Beat of a Different Drummer," in *Ethnomusicology: A Contemporary Reader*, ed. Jennifer Post (New York: Routledge, 2006).

⁶ Halifu Osumare, *The Africanist Aesthetic in Global Hip-Hop: Power Moves*, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). 69.

⁷ I differentiate between “Hawai‘i hip-hop” and “Hawaiian hip-hop”. “Hawai‘i hip-hop” can be any hip-hop coming out of Hawai‘i. I use “Hawaiian hip-hop” to refer to artists who explicitly identify themselves as Kanaka Maoli and feature references to Hawaiian life and history in their music.

⁸ Wood, *Displacing Natives: the Rhetorical Production of Hawai‘i*; Desmond, *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World*; O'Brien, "The Pacific Muse: Exotic Femininity and the Colonial Pacific."

⁹ Since the early 2000s, Mana Maoli has been a collective of educators, artists, musicians, cultural practitioners, community organizers, and families committed to sustainability, community-based education, and the sharing of resources. A group of musicians has been a critical part of the organization, hosting several benefit concerts. For more see www.manamaoli.org (accessed June 29, 2011). The Mana Maoli

the other performers at the Hawai‘i Hip-hop Festival, the internalization of hetero-patriarchy is business as usual, and it reenacts Kanaka Maoli subjection in gendered and other problematic ways. To push back against commodified and feminized versions of Hawaiian culture, the discursive performances of Kanaka Maoli men attempt to reaffirm Kanaka Maoli identity, but this often occurs through patriarchal discourse.¹⁰ Scholarship in Pacific Studies has been attentive to these gendered dynamics, analyzing representations that render Kanaka Maoli or Polynesian men as nothing more than hyper-masculinized professional athletes or, in the case of military service, as modern-day “warriors.”¹¹ However, there is lack of scholarship on masculinity in hip-hop in the Pacific with a sophisticated gender analysis. This chapter explains my concept of defiant indigeneity and outlines the rise of global hip-hop as it relates to ideas about Blackness and realness in Hawai‘i. I interrogate Hawaiian hip-hop through the lens of Native feminism and my aim is to map out the ways in which these performances of Kanaka Maoli identity can be both liberating and deeply contradictory.

To this end, I reconsider and expand popular notions of Kanaka Maoli cultural

collective is just one example of the numerous Kanaka Maoli artists and performers who contest the stereotypical imagery of themselves.

¹⁰ Tengan, *Native Men Remade: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Hawai‘i*: 66.

¹¹ Work in Pacific studies has been especially attentive to the way that Pacific masculinity is figured. In sports, see the work of Vicente M. Diaz, "'Fight Boys til the Last': Football and the Remasculinization of Identity in Guam," in *Pacific Diasporas*, ed. Paul Spickard, Joanne Rondilla, and Deborah Hippolyte Wright (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002); Brendan Hokowhitu, "Tackling Maori Masculinity: A Colonial Genealogy of Savagery and Sport," *The Contemporary Pacific* 16, no. 2 (2004). Ty Kawika Tengan and Jesse Makani Markham, "Performing Polynesian Masculinities in American Football: From Rainbows to Warriors," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 6, no. 16 (2009). In terms of military service, see also Tengan, *Native Men Remade: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Hawai‘i*; ———, "Re-membering Panala‘au: Masculinities, Nation, and Empire in Hawai‘i and the Pacific," *Contemporary Pacific* 20, no. 1 (2008); Jennifer Nez Denetdale, "Securing Navajo National Boundaries: War, Patriotism, Tradition, and the Diné Marriage Act of 2005," *Wicazo Sa Review* 24, no. 2 (2009). Denetdale also notes how the word *warrior* is used to motivate Navajo participation in US wars. Denetdale raises questions about how Navajo participation in U.S. wars becomes aligned with a Navajo warrior tradition, making the link between family values and recent legislation, such as the Diné Marriage Act of 2005.

production by focusing on the conditions of Hawaiian hip-hop production and the performance of Hawaiian identity through the production of Hawaiian hip-hop music. I study how one Hawaiian hip-hop performer—Krystilez—navigates these conditions and the media he employs to do so. Krystilez is a Kanaka Maoli hip-hop artist from a Hawaiian homestead on a rural part of O‘ahu who performs in urban Honolulu. Krystilez (“legally” known as Kris Ancheta) is one of Hawai‘i’s most well-known and respected MCs. In 2006, his first release, *The Greatest HI*, won the Hawai‘i Music Award for Best Hip-hop Album, and in the same year, it was nominated for a Nā Hōkū Hanohano Award for Best Hip-hop/R&B Album. Krystilez is a disc jockey on a popular local radio station (owned by media conglomerate Cox Radio) and is also recognized on the underground hip-hop freestyle circuit. His second album, *The “O”* (2006) features thirteen professionally recorded original tracks with lyrical content that reflects Krystilez’s desire to be respected as an MC on a U.S. national level. His songs range in content from aspiring “club banger” hits to stories about Hawai‘i that differ greatly from the one in the global imagination. Throughout *The “O,”* Krystilez emphasizes his humble beginnings of growing up on a Hawaiian homestead.¹² Through a close reading of Krystilez’s album *The “O”* (2006) and his visual representations, I offer a critically informed examination of contemporary Kanaka Maoli cultural production, articulating the intersection of indigeneity and performance in modern Hawai‘i.

¹² The 1920 Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (hereinafter referred to as HHCA) affirms the special relationship between the United States and Native Hawaiians. Two hundred thousand acres of land are set aside for Native Hawaiian homesteads. Annual lease rent is \$1 per year with a ninety-nine-year lease, and a lease term can be extended for an additional one hundred years. As of 2009, over 20,122 applicants remained on the waiting list. Applicants must be of at least 50% blood quantum in order to qualify or be the descendant of someone on the waiting list. I discuss the HHCA in more detail later in this chapter.

Defiant Indigeneity

I'm Filipino.
I'm Hawaiian.
Who are you to judge what the fuck I am?
This is what I am. Defiant.
– Krystilez, “Who I am”¹³

Krystilez performs what I refer to as “defiant indigeneity.” This is a configuration of indigeneity that constantly deconstructs, resists and re-codifies itself against and through state-logics. Krystilez represents where he comes from, but he does so in a way that explicitly engages state-logics of racialization: by crafting a narrative based on blood that (paradoxically) operates with and against the Kanaka Maoli epistemological belief that we are genealogically descended from specific places. In the song “Bloodline,” Krystilez performs a tribute to Hawaiian homesteads, remaking homestead space through listener identification with bloodlines in order to traverse, as I will explain later, the colonial taxonomies that demarcate homestead space. By shouting out multiple homestead names and referring to them as “bloodlines,” Krystilez invites Kanaka Maoli to “rep your bloodline.” Even if listeners are not from the homestead, the deep connections remain. Krystilez’s greatest defiance is a narrative based on the legacy of this legislation, which was intended to manage a declining Kanaka Maoli population, and the manner in which his narrative subverts it.

The 1920 Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA) affirmed the special relationship between the U.S. and Kānaka Maoli by sanctioning two hundred thousand acres of Hawaiian homestead land—lands that belonged to the Hawaiian Kingdom before it was illegally overthrown in 1893. Passed by the U.S. Congress in 1921, when Hawai‘i

¹³ “Who I am” is yet to be released. Krystilez emailed this song to me and others in December 2009.

was a territory, the HHCA conferred the responsibility of administering the homestead lands to the state of Hawai‘i when it was admitted to the Union in 1959. In 1978, responsibility for homestead lands was transferred to the newly created Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA), a semi-autonomous state agency that manages Hawaiian entitlements.¹⁴ The administration of these lands has come under considerable scrutiny because of the fifty percent blood-quantum requirement that prevents many Kānaka Maoli from qualifying for lands.¹⁵ Kauanui has argued that the blood-quantum requirement for Hawaiian homesteads was created because the U.S. government thought that high rates of intermarriage would eventually cause the number of Kānaka Maoli who could qualify for lands to dwindle (and it did). Within this logic was the hope that the “pure” or “real” Kānaka Maoli would eventually disappear. The elite Kānaka Maoli who supported the act underscored the connection between access to land and to the U.S. government’s moral obligation to the Kanaka Maoli people.¹⁶

The language used at this time was that of “rehabilitation.” Kānaka Maoli were encouraged to return to the land, participate in agriculture, and re-embody their “natural” state rather than navigate the worlds of technology and industry.¹⁷ Framed in such a

¹⁴ The Office of Hawaiian Affairs was created in 1978 to develop, coordinate, and watch over programs and activities relating to Kānaka Maoli.

¹⁵ Administration of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, created by the US Congress during the territory period, was later transferred to the state of Hawai‘i in 1959 as a precondition of statehood. Since 1959, the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands has administered the program, verifying applicants’ eligibility based on 50% blood quantum. You may also qualify for lands if you are descended from someone who is no longer living but was on the list and the name comes up. In addition to this requirement, because obtaining the necessary documents and making a formal claim is mired in various levels of bureaucracy, many Kānaka Maoli have difficulty qualifying for these lands and are deterred from the application process, with thousands still on the waiting list.

¹⁶ Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity*: 80.

¹⁷ J. Kēhaulani Kauanui’s work focuses on Hawaiian blood quantum, see *ibid*; ———, “For Get Hawaiian Entitlement: Configurations of Land, “Blood”, and Americanization in the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1921,” *Social Text*, no. 29 (1999); ———, “Diasporic Deracination and “Off-Island” Hawaiians,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 19, no. 1 (2007).

manner, Kānaka Maoli were (and continue to be) viewed as welfare recipients, not as genealogical descendants of the lands in question, or as citizens of the Hawaiian Kingdom (some argue it was an independent “nation-state”) seeking redress from an illegal occupier.¹⁸ Advocates of the HHCA did not question U.S. annexation itself and such an oversight contributed to the layered contradictions that continue to plague homestead administration.¹⁹ The narrative Krystilez presents in “Bloodline” walks a fine line by basing itself on an identity claim, based on land claims, rooted in scientific discourses embedded in settler colonial processes aimed at displacing indigenous peoples.

The blood-quantum regulations built into the HHCA are particularly damaging for Kānaka Maoli because, in contrast to U.S. policies and understandings about race and blood, it is genealogy that connects us to each other, to place, and to land.²⁰ Just as Christian morality became law during nineteenth-century Hawai‘i, the early twentieth century saw the adoption of the so-called truth in the science and technologies of the body, which influenced the blood-quantum laws that were deployed to racialize Kānaka Maoli. These laws in combination with a slew of new regulations intended to modernize the Hawaiian Kingdom, included huge shifts in land tenure, relegating Kanaka Maoli bodies to particular lands, places, and spaces.²¹ The HHCA thus imposed a quantification

¹⁸ Keanu Sai argues that under international law, the US government is an illegal occupier of Hawai‘i because the Hawaiian Kingdom never signed a treaty of cession. His website explains this in detail, <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~anu/> (accessed July 19, 2011). See also, Keanu David Sai, "American Occupation of the Hawaiian State: A Century Unchecked," *Hawai‘i Journal of Law and Politics* 46(2004).

¹⁹ Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity*: 85.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Merry, *Colonizing Hawai‘i: the Cultural Power of Law*. “The Great Mahele,” which instituted a Western system of land ownership had serious implications for Kanaka Maoli identity. In 1848, the “Great Mahele” overhauled “traditional” understandings of space, place, and land, laying the foundation for the imposition of capitalism in the islands. For the first time, private ownership of land was allowed, dividing Hawai‘i’s lands among the ali‘i (leaving little for the maka‘āinana or commoners). Eventually, foreigners

of Kanaka Maoli identity through blood quantum rather than through Kanaka Maoli cultural affiliations and genealogy, which worked to exacerbate land dispossession and the devaluation of Kanaka Maoli epistemologies. Situated in the discourse about blood and authenticity that permeated the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the blood quantum restrictions imposed on Kānaka Maoli were similar to the “one-drop rule” imposed upon African Americans and the blood quantum requirements exercised by many indigenous tribes in the U.S. today.²²

Despite this troubled history around blood quantum, many indigenous groups still use blood to claim identity. My intent is not to criticize how other indigenous people use blood quantum, but I seek to acknowledge its problematic origins in colonial discourses even as I acknowledge the dilemmas that blood quantum poses for contemporary Natives who are defined according to its criteria. Part of this dilemma has to do with the need (and the right) to regulate membership and to protect diminishing resources and claims that belong to members. Nevertheless, it is also clear that Native groups have not blindly internalized externally imposed racialized or blood-based definitions of identity. In Hawai‘i’s case, for example, Kauanui explains that Hawaiian concepts of genealogy do not automatically or necessarily preclude the metaphorical uses of blood and genealogy

were allowed to purchase land as well. In the shift from a subsistence-based economy to one involving capital, the maka‘āinana found themselves severely disempowered in the process. Large tracts of land were bought up by haoles, notably the descendents of the first missionaries, and the maka‘āinana were forcibly removed from their lands where sugar and pineapple plantations were eventually propagated. For more see, Kame‘eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires/Pehea La E Pono Ai*; Davianna McGregor, *Na Kua‘aina* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2006); Cooper and Daws, *Land and Power in Hawai‘i: the Democratic Years*.

²² For more on the complexities of the one-drop rule and Native American blood quantum policies, see Tiya Miles, *Ties That Bind: the Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom*, American crossroads (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). Also, Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity*.

for the purposes of collective self-identification.²³

Krystilez's narrative provides a prime example of this blood-based self-identification, when he raps: "What's the color of my skin? What's the color of your blood?," to mock reductive racialized logics.²⁴ I argue that throughout "Bloodline," Krystilez challenges the politics of recognition that are based on race and blood even as he claims and defends a "Bloodline." Indeed, he sings, "bloodline is all I need."²⁵

Defiant Indigeneity at the Horizon of Death

To engage these acts of lyrical defiance, I utilize Da Silva's concept of the "horizon of death" to posit how Krystilez performs defiant indigeneity. For Da Silva, the "horizon of death" is a place where subjects are marked for death, in contrast to the horizon of life where subjects are granted full-subjecthood.²⁶ Subjects that stand before the horizon of death are engulfed through the act of naming. The act of being "named" is a form of recognition, one that incorporates subjects. Subjects are only incorporated if their "truth" has something to offer universal humanity. Recognition, as I have explained in the introduction, is of utmost concern in contemporary Native politics, insofar as "recognition" has become the liberal multicultural model for addressing modern Natives. Natives are always situated at the horizon of death, the place where we must prove our "truth" as worthy of incorporation. The horizon of death then, is where Native "truth" is engulfed into the "universal" which promises full-subjecthood.

In the Hawaiian context, the horizon of death is personified in the quest for federal recognition of Native Hawaiians. At the state-level in Hawai'i and for some in the

²³ ———, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity*: 41.

²⁴ "Won" by Krystilez, *The "O"*, (Honolulu: Tiki Entertainment, 2006), CD.

²⁵ "Bloodline", *ibid.*

²⁶ Da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*: 29.

Kanaka Maoli community, federal recognition has garnered widespread support because it is imagined as the only way to protect Hawaiian entitlements that have come under legal attack since 1996. As explained in the Introduction, these lawsuits targeted Native Hawaiian entitlements by invoking the Fifteenth Amendment and Civil Rights Acts, arguing that institutions like the Kamehameha Schools, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, and Department Hawaiian Homelands discriminate against non-Natives on the basis of race. As we have seen, these lawsuits reveal a new era, called the post-civil rights era—that regards civil rights for minorities as no longer necessary. More precisely, the post-civil rights rhetoric and actions involve a confusion and conflation of “minority” peoples and indigenous peoples, whose claims, histories, and political struggles are categorically different from each other. As a result of this (willed) ignorance, the legal assaults (as well as the U.S. Courts) continue to misconstrue Kānaka Maoli as just another racialized or ethnic “minority” whose claims to special treatment and “entitlements” stemmed from earlier efforts to redress episodes of racial discrimination and other forms of civil inequalities. Beyond revealing ignorance, these assaults demonstrate feelings of anxiety and fear toward Hawaiian projects of politicized cultural revitalization and political empowerment. Krystilez’s narrative emerges in response to these “debates” in public discourse.

Under the guise of “saving” Hawaiian culture and addressing the right to self-determination, there also emerged in this milieu a Federal initiative to recognize Native Hawaiian “rights” which has come to be known as the “Akaka Bill.” As previously explained, this bill aims to federally recognize Kānaka Maoli as an indigenous group of the U.S. along the lines of a Native American tribe. Federal recognition gestures toward

the incorporation and management of Kānaka Maoli in the future, *on the horizon*. Krystilez stands at this horizon of death, mocking incorporation in an oppositional b-boy stance. Rather than go towards it, Krystilez turns away from the horizon of death and demarcates his own boundaries, even as he employs state-logics to found his identity claims. However, he does not need the State to recognize him—Krystilez makes no apologies for who he is, where he came from, and where he hopes to go. Moreover, Krystilez makes no claim to offer anything to universal humanity, which the horizon of death requires. Krystilez’s overall self-representation certainly allows for a critique of colonialism that destabilizes stereotypical perceptions of Kanaka Maoli identity (i.e., the hula girl, the beach boy, the Native warrior). But more than critiquing stereotypes, Krystilez performs on multiple planes of meaning-making, and moves through multiple circuits of cultural production in Hawai‘i, in ways that resignify both racialization discourses and indigenous epistemologies. For example, he wins Hawai‘i mainstream music awards (the Nā Hōkū Awards) and continues to hold court on the underground freestyle rapping circuit.²⁷ Moreover, his songs clearly draw upon the post-civil rights discourse associated with U.S. hip-hop, but also presents a place-based narrative about indigeneity that advocates for neither federal recognition nor Hawaiian independence. Indeed, Krystilez is difficult to place in terms of audience, genre, and politics. Compounding this level of defiance is the fact that performers like Krystilez (and their audiences) also characteristically seek (and find) opportunities for self-representation that are not always directly mediated or policed by formal institutions (i.e., the State of Hawai‘i, Office of Hawaiian Affairs, and other cultural organizations).

²⁷ According to Krystilez MySpace page (www.myspace.com/Krystiles), he has won countless freestyle emcee battles.

Thus, while Krystilez uses the logics of blood and is not averse to commercial circuits to root and route his indigeneity, his narrative also challenges the stereotypes of blood logic even as he asserts his connection to the homestead, while his connection to the homestead is set in motion in multiple media and performance circuits.²⁸ Debunking stereotypes of happy and loving Natives, he also dismantles long-held notions about indigenous groups as being unable to travel or change inasmuch as indigenous groups especially are expected to replicate popular preconceptions about themselves as “traditional” and unchanging. Such perceptions of indigeneity, when internalized, keep communities demobilized, contained, and static. As Chow has explained, when Natives step out of the frames made for them, they are subject to attack, having their authenticity and backgrounds evaluated.²⁹ This idea of an unchanging authentic indigenous subject has been disputed by Native Studies scholars who explain that indigeneity may have always been about movement and innovation in spite of colonial efforts to affix it in time and space.³⁰ This intervention disrupts the narrative of a pre-modern authentic indigenous subject that is stagnant and exists somewhere outside of historical processes. Certainly, traditional practices may have always been in a state of flux to make themselves relevant to new generations. The metaphorical horizon of death, in the case of Krystilez, is the point at which he pushes back on debilitating and belittling stereotypes and tropes. Krystilez’s defiant indigeneity moves us past this horizon, thereby creating new cultural spaces out of old problematic ones, for himself and future generations.

²⁸ See also, Teaiwa, "Native Thoughts: A Pacific Studies Take on Cultural Studies and Diaspora."

²⁹ Rey Chow, "Where Have All the Native Gone?," in *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993).

³⁰ Vicente M. Diaz and J. Kehaulani Kauanui, "Native Pacific Cultural Studies on the Edge," *The Contemporary Pacific* 13, no. 2 (2001); Graham Harvey and Charles D. Thompson, eds., *Indigenous Diasporas and Dislocations* (Ashgate Publishing, 2005).

Krystilez, in this sense, presents the possibilities that exist at the horizon of death. In “Bloodline,” Krystilez articulates a cultural identification with homesteads in a manner that centers recognition in community rather than in state-based forms, even as his invocation of the “homestead” itself is a product of the state. He performs this in what is actually a *tribute* to Hawaiian homesteads and Kanaka Maoli endurance on these lands. Through a complex combination of nostalgia for a romanticized precolonial Hawaiian past and a tributary performance of community resilience, “Bloodline” lyrically and visually reiterates an old narrative about identity through place and pride in spite of nearly two centuries of attempted genocide. This is what we might now recognize as “the iteration” of Krystilez’s defiant indigeneity. It is also an extremely messy one, exhibiting his investments in heteropatriarchy, the glamorization of violence, and appropriations of blackness, all of which make him complicit with circuits of power that can be oppressive. In other words, defiant indigeneity, contains contradictions of its own. It is not innocent, for instance, in its disturbing depictions of Kānaka Maoli as criminal, homophobic, sexist, and, as some might interpolate, unfit for self-government.³¹ As I will show in the next section, such depictions can be linked to the story of the rise of “global hip-hop” as well as how it has been grounded by Kanaka Maoli performers in their own quests for new forms of expressing Hawaiian indigeneity. At the same time, it is also important to keep in mind the extent to which the misogyny and homophobia of contemporary Hawaiian hip-hop might also be fed through specifically indigenous forms as they are bound up with other cultural practices like Christianity or governance. In the section that

³¹ A 2010 report noted that Kānaka Maoli are overrepresented in the prison system. Within the executive summary, it is also noted that Kanaka Maoli women are disproportionately represented in the prison system. Kānaka Maoli are also more likely to be incarcerated out-of-state, are more frequently convicted and face longer sentences. For details, see Office of Hawaiian Affairs, “The Disparate Treatment of Native Hawaiians in the Criminal Justice System,” (Honolulu, HI2010).

follows, I explain the cultural terrain—the conditions of hip-hop’s circulation—in order to follow the multiple political stakes, and in order to lay the foundation for the lyrical and musical analysis in the next chapter.

Don’t Believe the Hype: Global Hip-hop Conditions

Hip-hop music and culture, once dismissed as a passing fad, now produces profits for large multi-national corporations in the business of selling more than just music. As a result of the corporate consolidation of new technologies and global media markets, hip-hop has found droves of fans around the world that both adopt hip-hop culture and transform it as their own. Hip-hop’s origins come from the creativity of African American and Latino/a youth growing up in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Harlem and Queens in the 1970s in the midst of massive deindustrialization and government disinvestment from social welfare programs. Hip-hop’s inception and rise are testaments to capitalism’s destructive realities and the radical potential that manifests through youthful innovation.

Hip-hop music and its influence on groups outside of the continental U.S. have garnered considerable academic interest.³² The focus has tended to be on how hip-hop gives voice to marginalized groups around the world as well as on trying to account for the complexities of globalization and its impact on cultural identity. In *The Vinyl Ain’t Final* (2006), Robin Kelley *performs* a, “Hold up! Wait a minute!” by contending that hip-hop has not in fact “gone global,” but that it has always been international given the racial and ethnic diversities of the originating neighborhoods of the South Bronx, Washington Heights and Harlem, whose hip-hop pioneers descended from Cuban, Dominican, Haitian, Jamaican, and Puerto Rican immigrants displaced by the movement

³² See Lemelle and Basu, *The Vinyl Ain’t Final: Hip-Hop and the Globalization of Black Popular Culture*. Also, Tony Mitchell, “Global Noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the USA,” *Music/culture* (2001).

of global capital.³³ Kelley's point thus centers the workings of capital in any accounting of hip-hop. Moreover, he compels us to ask why we think global hip-hop is remarkable at all, given the movement of transnational capital over the past twenty years. Corporate ownership of media sources, such as AOL/Time Warner, Disney, Viacom, and Sony, all influence what types of hip-hop are desired, produced, and circulated on the world's stages. Similarly, in 1991 the wide-scale implementation of Sound Scan point-of-sale technology transformed the music industry by allowing precise reporting of album sales to record companies. This shift was then reflected in Billboard charts, which revealed rap and country music as viable mainstream markets in contrast to the "niche" markets the industry initially thought they occupied. As Reebee Garofalo (1993) explains, transnational record companies continue to seek expansion into new markets, now armed with a plethora of information technology tools that make the notion of a unified "global culture" (i.e., market) all the more possible.³⁴ When we consider structural conditions affecting hip-hop's worldwide circulation, such as the transformation of the music industry's commercial environment and practices, or hip-hop's global recognizability and subsequent international marketing clout, and finally, technical or aesthetic innovations in rap's musical form and lyrical content, we are all the more able to recognize how hip-hop so quickly become corporatized and commoditized. This critical recognition in turn helps account for the power that hip-hop presents to disenfranchised youth around the world.³⁵

³³ Kelley, "Foreword."

³⁴ Reebee Garofalo, "Whose World, What Beat: The Transnational Music Industry, Identity, and Cultural Imperialism," *World of Music* 35, no. 2 (1993): 17.

³⁵ Murray Forman, *The Hood Comes First: Race, Space and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2002). 107. The 1996 Telecommunications Act initiated the rise of Clear Channel communications, a corporation that owns over 1,200 radio stations nationwide. This consolidation has devastated independent radio stations and performers who gained recognition through their community connections and accountability. The corporatization of radio has resulted in a flattening of

The emergence of hip-hop outside of the continental U.S. registers themes of cultural displacement, the desire for self-representation, and an identification with Black-identified culture, but my interest is in the ways that Natives in settler-states (i.e., in the U.S., Aotearoa, Australia, Canada) use and repurpose hip-hop. Often, Natives are accused of betraying their “traditional” indigenous culture or “acting Black” when they adopt hip-hop. Accordingly, much of the scholarship on Native hip-hop has focused on debunking these charges by situating Native hip-hop as a wholly modern expression of indigeneity. According to Neal Ullestad (2006), for example, Native American artists use hip-hop to narrate positions at the crossroads of time and place, where rhymes contest staid ideals of cultural preservation in favor of radical (re)visions of the future.³⁶ Similarly, April Henderson describes how Samoan rap in Aotearoa can be understood as new forms of traditional “gifting” that ply the circuits in the Samoan diaspora.³⁷ In how they are produced and consumed, such “gifted flows” continue to help connect diasporic Samoans to each other even though Samoans consume rap produced by other Pacific Islanders as well. Finally, Tony Mitchell sees Maori hip-hop as an example of a syncretism of indigenous Maori and modern musical forms.³⁸

Though Hawaiian rappers are sometimes accused of betraying tradition and “acting Black,” their productions are of course much more complex than such charges can account for. Since hip-hop arrived in Hawai‘i, there has existed an underground

regional differences, repetition of chosen songs, thereby limiting the options for listeners and in many cases, playing only automated programming. For more details, see Ben Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly* (1997).

³⁶ Ullestad, "Native American Rap and Reggae: Dancing to the Beat of a Different Drummer."

³⁷ April Henderson, "Gifted Flows: Engaging Narratives of Hip Hop and Samoan Diaspora" (Dissertation, University of California Santa Cruz, 2006); ———, "Dancing Between Islands: Hip Hop and the Samoan Diaspora," in *Vinyl Aint Final*, ed. Dipannita Basu and Sidney Lemelle (Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2006).

³⁸ Mitchell, "Kia Kaha! (Be Strong): Maori and Pacific Islander Hip-Hop in Aotearoa--New Zealand," 281.

scene, especially focused around hip-hop's less prominent elements—graffiti, turntablism, and b-boying (breakdancing). Actually, any popular musical production in Hawai'i that is outside of the Hawaiian music industry is considered underground, since independent and local artists who do not easily fit into radio formats rarely receive any media attention.³⁹ But somehow, in the mid-1990s, the group Sudden Rush was able to receive relative local success and notoriety.⁴⁰ This is remarkable, considering that they rapped in Hawaiian and English, expressed fervent calls for Hawaiian independence, and advanced critiques of American colonialism, akin to the Afrocentric Black cultural nationalism expressed in groups like Public Enemy in the early 1990s. What was most remarkable, however, was their local popularity, given their critiques of colonialism. Hailed as the first Hawaiian hip-hop group, Sudden Rush has been the subject of a number of academic articles and with good reason, for they exemplify the ways that a political movement can influence local music circulation that is relatively outside mainstream networks, and of course, the significance of Sudden Rush's rapping in both Hawaiian and English cannot be overstated. The academic work of Faye Akindes and Ku'ualoha Ho'omanawanui presents fruitful analysis of Sudden Rush and Hawaiian hip-hop and the ways that Hawaiian hip-hop expresses contemporary Hawaiian identity and

³⁹There are many layers to consider. Most radio play in Hawai'i is either mainstream U.S. hip-hop and R&B or Hawaiian music. There are many "scenes." In terms of hip-hop scenes, there is local underground hip-hop that fits with mainstream U.S. hip-hop, that aspires mainstream radio play. Then, there is non-mainstream underground hip-hop that might aspire mainstream radio-play, but generally only gets recognition within smaller underground local networks or on college radio stations. The conglomeration of independent radio in the mid-90's was detrimental to all genre-crossing musical endeavors. Hawaiian music has three different radio stations, one is known to be more "traditional" and the others fit under the genre of "Island Music" which also includes "Jawaiian" and reggae artists.

⁴⁰Sudden Rush formed in 1994 and was composed of three Kanaka Maoli men from the town of Kailua-Kona on the island of Hawai'i. They released three studio albums, *Nation on the Rise* (1994), *Kū'ē!* (1998), and *Ea* (2002), respectively, before their break-up in 2003. They also performed at the Nickelodeon 2002 Kids Choice Awards and have sold over fifty thousand records (that's a lot by Hawaiian music standards). At a performance in August 2008 at the Mai Tai Bar at Ala Moana Center on O'ahu, they announced that they were working on a remix album.

nationalism and is linked to a tradition of Hawaiian poetic composition. But neither they nor Halifu Osumare or Adria Imada examine the gendered dynamics of Hawaiian hip-hop or move beyond the music of Sudden Rush. They also ignore—forgive the expression—the Black elephant in the room. I build upon their work by interrogating the implications of Hawaiian hip-hop and the racialized and gendered appropriations of “blackness.”⁴¹

Appropriating Blackness

Some say that I’m trying to be Black because I sag my pants, spit the tightest of raps. Well, I thank y’all for providing us rap so I could define who I am on this track.

– Krystilez, “Who I am”⁴²

“Global hip-hop” in non-U.S. locales has produced new expressions and inventive networks among the youth, but the networks being built are never even or innocent. Networks always operate through sticky layers of commodification and identification with “blackness” that yield new cultural formations, which often come with profound political implications, even as they retain “traces” of their originating cultural “signatures” as earlier theorized. Within the body of global hip-hop scholarship there has been a lot of focus on how non-Black folk identify with “Blackness” and its attendant histories of slavery and oppression, but much of this scholarship does not interrogate how such identifications with “Blackness” translate into politics. An analysis of the latter is important, particularly in places where Black people are uncommon or in places where

⁴¹ See Faye Y. Akindes, “Sudden Rush: Na Mele Paleoleo (Hawaiian Rap) as Liberatory Discourse,” *Discourse* 23, no. 1 (2001); Ku’ualoha Ho’omanawanui, “He Lei Ho’ohenoho no na Kau a Kau: Language, Performance and Form in Hawaiian Poetry,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 17, no. 1 (2005); *ibid*; Adria Imada, “Head Rush: Hip Hop and a Hawaiian Nation ‘On the Rise,’” in *The Vinyl Aint Final*, ed. Dipannita Basu and Sidney Lemelle (Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2006); Ku’ualoha Ho’omanawanui, “From Ocean to O’Shen: Reggae, Rap, and Hip Hop in Hawai’i,” in *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Osumare, “Props to the Local Boyz: Hip-Hop Culture in Hawai’i.” Osumare’s work differs from other scholars who have written about Hawaiian hip-hop, for it is largely ethnographic, focusing on the dynamics of a hip-hop scene in Honolulu (heavy dance analysis) and the adoption of hip-hop in rural Pahoehoe on the Big Island, HI.

⁴² “Who I am” is yet to be released.

anti-Black racism is the norm. What does it mean then, for Krystilez to define and perform *who he is* through hip-hop, given the ways in which racialized and sexualized ideas about Blackness are reinscribed through such performances?

In *Appropriating Blackness* (2003), E. Patrick Johnson explains that blackness is unpredictable, as soon as it goes one way, it changes course, and is therefore always transforming. He continues, explaining that the tension between attempts to pin down “blackness” and actual “black culture”—the constant avowing and disavowing—is what constitutes “Black culture” itself. More to the point, “authentic” blackness is often supported by economic or social clout.⁴³ Thinking about iterations of Blackness in hip-hop reveals that certain types of Blackness are tentatively authenticated through hip-hop at specific political moments. “Authenticity”—especially as raised in the phenomenon of the global spread of rap and hip-hop—is always contingent on context and always implicates class, gender, and sexuality in circuits of global capital and transnational consumption. For example, in a post-civil rights American political landscape that reverberates across the globe via the consumption of corporatized versions of hip-hop, there is an appetite for racially stereotypical entertainment that venerates violence and sexually explicit cultural products.⁴⁴ The corporate rise of hip-hop and the proliferation of representations that portray blackness as correlative to tropes of the drug addict, the dealer, the inmate, and the hustler signal that there is a consumer desire for them (in and outside of the U.S.). So, while we might be compelled to applaud hip-hop’s pop culture juggernaut status, Craig Watkins reminds us that this ascension is accompanied by an

⁴³ E. Patrick Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). 2-3.

⁴⁴ Rose, *The Hip-Hop Wars*.

entire industry that rests itself on its ability to sell Black death.⁴⁵ That is, these representations frequently work in the service of white supremacy, wherein global commodity culture circulates ideas about Blackness that allows it to be possessed, owned, controlled, and shaped by the consumer.⁴⁶ Identification with Black culture and its struggles might be evident in Hawaiian hip-hop, but it bears noting that the spread of hip-hop also signals a consumption of Black culture that does not require the consumer to change their beliefs or behaviors.

It is within these contested cultural terrains that youth around the world identify with hip-hop music and culture. This identification is not harmless, for it illuminates the dangers, opportunities, and contradictions encompassed by the post-industrial global economy. While identifying with Black-American popular culture may operate as a means to resist white supremacy, it also runs the risk of reinscribing white supremacy inasmuch as the production and consumption and marketing of popular culture (in this case, of hip-hop) are major structural expressions of white supremacy.⁴⁷ The popularity of hip-hop speaks to the logics of slavery that literally commodified Black bodies and how this commodification continues its work through cultural performance, where Black hearts and souls manifest in culture are bought and sold.

By the mid-1990s, hip-hop had gone mainstream, and the big moneymakers were the infectious sounds of West Coast gangsta rap, which was characterized by the

⁴⁵ Watkins 2005, 1425

⁴⁶ Sut Jhally, "bell hooks: Cultural Criticism and Transformation," (Media Education Foundation, 1997).

⁴⁷ See Andrea L. Smith, "Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy" in *Color of Violence Anthology* Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, *Color of Violence: the Incite! Anthology* (Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 2006). She explains how people of color participate in the subjugation of one another in three interlocking logics—colonialism/genocide, slaveability/capitalism, and orientalism/war.

“danceable grooves and hummable hooks” favored by radio programmers because they distracted listeners from the “deeply ingrained misogyny and sexual violence that throbbed throughout the music.”⁴⁸ The changes in representation signal the effects of media mergers in a marketplace which facilitated the demise of numerous types of hip-hop, only to be replaced by representations of hip-hop that allow privileged identities to degrade women and perpetuate stereotypes about black people.⁴⁹ Whereas mainstream U.S. hip-hop’s portrayals of sexuality and violence receive wide circulation, similar productions by underground artists do not. This latter point exhibits how corporate control of hip-hop production and circulation in the late 1990s to the early 2000s began to foreclose options for local performers, regardless of the musical content, because of increasing corporate restrictions, specifically in the realm of radio airplay. In the wake of the 1996 Telecommunications Act, for example, Hawai‘i Radio was gutted. Currently, Salem Communications and Cox Radio own nearly two-thirds of radio stations on O‘ahu.⁵⁰ During this time, radio “pay-for-play” arrangements, wherein record companies pay radio stations to get certain artists in circulation, became increasingly common.⁵¹ The impact of these consolidations are undoubtedly felt in the marketplace, in which mainstream consumers were presented specific types of representations to choose from—a practice that encourages portrayals that are more likely to produce profits.

Case in point: in contrast to Sudden Rush, the Hawaiian hip-hop of the late-1990s and early 2000’s began to shift towards more sordid portrayals of sexuality and violence,

⁴⁸ S. Craig Watkins, *Hip-Hop Matters: Politics, Pop Culture, and the Struggle for the Soul of a Movement* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005). 50.

⁴⁹ Rose, *The Hip-Hop Wars*.

⁵⁰ Clynton Namuo, "Radio Ownership, Formats Changing Fast," *Pacific Business News* May 27, 2004 2004.

⁵¹ Watkins, *Hip-Hop Matters: Politics, Pop Culture, and the Struggle for the Soul of a Movement*: 135-38.

much like the mainstream U.S.-based hip-hop of the time, but these artists received much less attention than Sudden Rush. This point is, at first, curious, because of the broader context of media mergers and consolidations in the mid-1990s. The latter reveals how mainstream hip-hop is influencing particular kinds of place-based articulations of Hawaiian hip-hop (for example, through the increase of misogynistic portrayals and violence in Hawaiian hip-hop), but as a result of media consolidation, these artists cannot even get played on the radio.

Hawaiian hip-hop deserves the praise it receives, but it is still imperative to be critical of how hip-hop gets adopted and expressed. We must do more than celebrate the oppositional stance of these artists (and no doubt, it is important!) and look at how, when a certain type of hip-hop is adopted and expressed in these local communities, it can also infuse racist stereotypes and normalize misogyny. An identification with hip-hop does not happen in a vacuum. It is not merely about resistance and claiming power through music; resistance is never that simple. The hierarchical inequities that plague “mainstream” society are undeniably present: sexism, heteronormativity, and internalized colonization are replicated, endorsed, and normalized within these discourses, sometimes to an alarming degree. As Hall writes in his influential article, “Notes on Deconstructing the Popular” (1981), “The danger arises because we tend to think of cultural forms as whole and coherent: either wholly corrupt or wholly authentic. Whereas, they are deeply contradictory; they play on contradictions, especially when they function in the domain of the ‘popular.’”⁵² I say this not to completely discredit the voices of the margins, but to urge us to be vigilant and document the complexities of hip-hop in new locations, rather

⁵² Stuart Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing the Popular," in *People's History and Socialist Theory*, ed. Raphael Samuel (London: Routledge, 1981), 233.

than just celebrating their existence.

Sudden Rush and other performers are wonderful examples of Hawaiian (musical) innovation, but as I've noted, scholars and cultural critics have not been adequately attentive to the cultural politics of appropriation. Many Kānaka Maoli grew up listening to hip-hop and many find it to be the type of music most relevant to the way they chose to express themselves. This occurs through performative and aesthetic clothing choices, language, and on a deeper level, a complex identification with Black culture and perceived marginalization because of the ways both groups experience various levels of cultural displacement, violent racialization and other discriminatory practices.⁵³ Particularly, the rise of Hawaiian hip-hop occurs as a way to rebel against mainstream White and Asian political control in Hawai'i. I flag this to honor a history of identification, respect and alliance between Kānaka Maoli and African-Americans, but also to acknowledge that the colonial processes by which Kānaka Maoli have been fetishized, Othered, and made into commodities, do not absolve them when they participate in the subjugation of other groups in the same way. What is to be made of Hawaiian hip-hop performers like Krystilez, who take their cues from the misogynistic and gratuitous violence in gangsta rap? Sadly, corporate hip-hop favors such misogynistic and violent portrayals, encouraging performers who aspire to "success" to reproduce such representations. This in turn necessitates the constant performance, appropriation, and consumption of a stereotypical blackness present in hip-hop.⁵⁴ Thus, Kanaka Maoli self-

⁵³ Imada, "Head Rush: Hip Hop and a Hawaiian Nation 'On the Rise.'"; Osumare, "Props to the Local Boyz: Hip-Hop Culture in Hawai'i."; Akindes, "Sudden Rush: Na Mele Paleoleo (Hawaiian Rap) as Liberatory Discourse." Ho'omanawanui, "From Ocean to O'Shen: Reggae, Rap, and Hip Hop in Hawai'i."

⁵⁴ See E. Patrick Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). He notes that blackness is a material way of knowing and that

representation in the form of Hawaiian hip-hop generates cultural resistance that rests its “performance” on gendered and racialized tropes of “Hawaiianness” and “blackness.” Understanding Hawaiian hip-hop as a locus of power is about acknowledging and challenging it as elusive, divergent, sometimes oppressive, and always productive for contemporary life in Hawai‘i that is never harmonious.

Keeping it Maoli

Before had England
Even before had
 Jesus!
There was a voice
and the voice was
Maoli.
 -‘Īmaikalani Kalāhele, 1998⁵⁵

The desire to be “recognized”—in both formal statecraft and everyday life—is as much a reaction to heavily mediated (mis)representations of Kānaka Maoli as it is to deep existentialist determinations as presented in the Introduction to this dissertation. In sharing his experience, Krystilez explains, “...it’s about respect, to be proud of where you’re from. I feel that way about us locals. It’s not just about being agro [*aggressive*]. We just want respect.”⁵⁶ Krystilez’s desire for respect speaks to a need amongst Kānaka Maoli, one that seeks to move beyond stereotypes and one that acknowledges our varied articulations. Indeed, the ever-present tourist gaze marks Kānaka Maoli as happy natives and the “justice” system positions Kānaka Maoli as criminals, as the media oscillates

a fantasy of blackness in which people identified as black exist in a liminal space between both places. That is to say, there is no definitive thing that can be called “blackness.” (8).

⁵⁵ 'Īmaikalani Kalāhele, "Before Had England," in *Oiwi* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), 33. Also quoted in Jonathan Goldberg-Hiller, *The Limits to Union: Same-Sex Marriage and the Politics of Civil Rights, Law, meaning, and violence* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002). 152.

⁵⁶ Gary C.W. Chun, "Nanakuli's in the House," *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, January 26, 2007.

between the two in its own representations of Hawaiian indigeneity.⁵⁷ At the same time, the future of Native Hawaiian entitlements are being argued on the floors of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives with little representation coming from Kānaka Maoli themselves, particularly the youth.⁵⁸

As a reaction to disempowerment, Kanaka Maoli (youth) have turned to the Internet to create their own spaces. With the exception of Hawaiian music radio stations (which played Sudden Rush in the 1990s) and the college radio station (KTUH at the University of Hawai‘i), it is rare that a local hip-hop artist would be played on the radio—no matter who he or she is. Despite not being played on the radio or performed regularly in live-music venues in Hawai‘i, Hawaiian hip-hop continues to grow through digital social networking like YouTube, MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter, where users can create their own spaces to represent themselves. To be sure, Kanaka Maoli youth are not waiting for the government to recognize them or to define who they are. Krystilez’s posting of “Bloodline” provides a good case in point, as it presents an example of the ways that Kanaka Maoli youth are asserting their identities, on their terms, in the face of legislation—like the Akaka Bill—that seeks to federally “recognize” them.

⁵⁷ Office of Hawaiian Affairs, "The Disparate Treatment of Native Hawaiians in the Criminal Justice System."; Tengan, *Native Men Remade: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Hawai'i*: 61.

⁵⁸ Most recently, on July 6, 2011, Hawai‘i Governor Neil Abercrombie signed into law state recognition of Native Hawaiians in Act 195, giving the Governor the power to appoint a five-member Native Hawaiian Roll Commission that will build the foundation for self-determination.



Figure 1 Screenshot from “Bloodline” video

Indigenous Realness

Indigenous authenticity (or realness) is a complicated, necessary, and messy response to representations that posit Natives as somehow less-Native when they perform in ways that defy dominant representations of themselves. Hence, Krystilez’s unapologetic “thug” persona, at its core, is an assertion of indigenous authenticity. This “thug” persona is supported by visual imagery. The video for “Bloodline,” posted on YouTube, begins with Krystilez in front of a black background singing, “I can’t deny it I’m fucking Hawaiian none of y’all can’t beef with me.” As the lens pulls back, Krystilez also steps away from the camera, as a crowd walks up behind him. The effect is to distance himself from the viewer and to move the community into the foreground. In the meantime, he continues, maintaining the centrality of his position or persona, but in the appropriate locale or context: “Muthafucka got the streets with me, so you best believe in

me.”⁵⁹ The video is set in the evening, and the predominantly male crowd members—for the most part, the community is male—behind him are holding shirts that say “Made in Nānākuli.” Others wear “3RD” shirts, in reference to Nānākuli Third Road Homestead housing, and make a “W” with their hands to represent the west side of O‘ahu as well as the number three, for their homestead road. As the video continues, Krystilez (and the others in the video) look directly at the viewer, sporadically punching the air and pointing at the camera.

Throughout the video, the crowd makes visible the community that Krystilez is representing. They sing,

*Seein through a thug’s eyes
We ride all night till sunlight
All because I love my muthafuckin bloodline.
I rather die on my feet than ever live on my knees
till I face defeat bloodline is all I need.* —Krystilez, “Bloodline”

The crowd sings along with him, and IZ Real, who is particularly aggressive in his rapping style, frequently steps forward, using his hands to articulate his lyricism. IZ Real is shown during the daytime in the parking lot of what appears to be a warehouse setting, behind a chain-link fence. He is remarkably smaller in stature than the other men in the video (in “Bloodline” he mentions being 5’6”), wearing long shorts and a black “Kamehameha the Great” shirt⁶⁰ that many of the other people in the video are wearing.

⁵⁹ The video for “Bloodline,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXJKsvGiS5Y> (accessed February 24, 2011). These lyrics are sung in the same rhythm as Tupac’s song, “Ambitionz Az a Ridah” (1996).

⁶⁰ “Kamehameha the Great”, in brief, is in reference to the Hawaiian chief, Kamehameha I, who united all the islands in the late eighteenth century. The Hawaiian “monarchy” that resulted in his consolidation of power reigned throughout the nineteenth century and has a genealogy that is still present today, although in obviously less public ways and very different from in the past. Kamehameha as an icon of Hawaiian strength is personified in various cultural productions—paintings, architecture, statues and clothing. The shirt I am referring to draws on these histories. There has also been a surge in Hawaiian related designs in clothing, especially among some folks in the hip-hop scene who have started their own clothing labels, which is beyond the scope of my analysis here. The prevalence of Native imagery as a

In his verse he explains how he is trying to leave beefing (fighting) behind, but people keep calling him out and he has no choice but to assault them. He is shown always moving, shaking his head back and forth, bulging his eyes, performing a sort of mental instability. The video ends with Krystilez and IZ Real in a boxing ring, as a thin, brown woman in tiny black shorts, tube top, and platform stilettos—and whose face is never shown—circles the ring holding a sign in the air that says “bangers 4 bangers.” As the camera fades out, Krystilez and IZ Real jump around the ring shouting, “Nānākuli Bloodline,” “Wai‘anae Bloodline,” and “Waimānalo Bloodline” in reference to some of the more well-known homesteads.

Throughout the video for “Bloodline” there are overt references to these representations being “reality” and “truth,” as Krystilez proclaims, “This is reality, this is not a movie!” and “That’s the truth, please try us, we’ll fight to the end.” Krystilez and other Kānaka Maoli must always contend with fantasies about Hawai‘i and it is this context that in many ways forces Krystilez to insist upon his authenticity when he raps “Is he real? Yes, he is. Fucka!” (“The ‘O’”). The entire album is about putting Hawai‘i on the map, through the homesteads, and on the streets, getting it recognized, letting its voice be heard. Krystilez pulls no punches in “Bloodline,” lyrically and visually. Conveying social realism may be central to hip-hop, but let’s be *real* this also presents troubling portrayals. The video for “Bloodline” features misogynistic and aggressive

source of pride is certainly present in the proliferation of independent clothing labels run by Krystilez and other Hawaiians. These examples show what Linnekin described in the 1990s as an expression of consumerism that is indicative of a “rootedness in a primordial homeland” (236). See Jocelyn Linnekin, “Consuming Cultures: Tourism and the Commoditization of Cultural Identity in the Island Pacific,” in *Tourism, Ethnicity, and the State in Asian and Pacific Societies*, ed. Robert E. Wood and Michel Picard (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1997).

imagery throughout.⁶¹ Looking at this video (and his videos for “Won” and “Shake”) within the larger genre of Hawaiian hip-hop, it is striking that most of the older Hawaiian hip-hop groups or performers have barely mentioned women at all, whereas the newer crop of Hawaiian hip-hop performers (I.A., Big Teeze, Parc Cyde) explicitly talk about women, some times honoring them and others—in the hip-hop tradition—reducing them to the perks of “success.” As such, violence is explained as being part of the “game.” In defense of these representations, rappers have explained that an important facet of urban street culture are illicit economies where “there are bitches and hos,” and that they’re just keeping it real. However, it behooves us to remember how “keeping it real” is frequently used as a justification for voyeuristic fantasies that position women as objects and glamorizes violence.⁶² Also, as Forman explains, “the real” is an example of racist ideas about authenticity that relegate youth of color to inner-city or ghetto environments to segregate minority youth from the social mainstream.⁶³ As Johnson explains, authenticity is a trope manipulated for cultural capital.⁶⁴ “Keeping it Real” should be understood as an effect of media mergers in the marketplace, where representations of hip-hop allow privileged identities to perpetuate stereotypes about Black people and degrade women under the auspices of “realness.” I wonder, how then, is this “real” a type of resistance?

Hip-hop Studies has labored to frame the debate about “keeping it real.” Michael Eric Dyson in *Know What I Mean?: Reflections on Hip-hop* (2007) frames this debate differently, rather than depict artists as helpless MC’s who have no choice but to capitulate to the desires of record executives or the dominant white public who, in theory,

⁶¹ “Tiki Entertainment Presents “Bloodline”, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXJKsvGiS5Y> (accessed July 8, 2011).

⁶² Rose, *The Hip-Hop Wars*.

⁶³ Forman, *The Hood Comes First: Race, Space and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*: 126.

⁶⁴ Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity*: 3.

prefer negative portrayals of Black life, Dyson asserts that the street between Black artists and record companies goes both ways and that many artists are sophisticated about the politics of representation.⁶⁵ He defends the sensationalism of the genre, citing its redemptive traits, as a public medium that provides compelling portraits of real social and iconic suffering.⁶⁶ Tricia Rose is less sympathetic, explaining that once a product enters a widely distributed and promoted popular celebrity driven culture, it is not merely a reflection of life, it is also an agent of creation and reproduction.⁶⁷ I am compelled to agree with Rose here because, although many fans recognize hip-hop's mass-commercialization, audiences are still very much attached to a real, authentic hip-hop that existed before or exists somewhere outside of capitalist production and often insist upon the realness of particular performers (people hold onto real "native" this way too) and artists play on consumer desires in this way. Indeed, the realness of "the Street" has become romanticized and used by the market, but is still revered as the official source of hip-hop's authenticity and cultural value. "Realness" has become normalized in mainstream hip-hop, in a manner that parses out only some aspects of life in the "ghetto," ignoring the full range of cultural experiences within these enclaves.⁶⁸ That said, it should be remembered that artists may be communicating the realities of their existence, but they are also aware that some things sell and others do not.

As such, Krystilez's performance of the "savage" or criminal native man can be read as counter-hegemonic in contrast to the "happy native," or this might be a re-telling of the realities surrounding him, or the "savage" is actually aware of the representation he

⁶⁵ Michael Eric Dyson, *Know What I Mean? Reflections on Hip Hop* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2007).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Rose, *The Hip-Hop Wars*.

⁶⁸ Forman, *The Hood Comes First: Race, Space and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*.

is presenting. To work through the colonial processes at play within these counter-hegemonic representations can feel like chasing one's tail, but what these representational moves do show us, is that there exists a system that normalizes both these representations and limits other more nuanced expressions. It is this system that needs explicating. Reconciling these conflicts or finding the "truth" of Krystilez's narrative is beside the point, understanding that once a performer enters the circuits of power through which these representations move, we need to assess the terms of their agency, and how they become complicit with the forms of power that are at work. At the same time, we must look at the larger social conditions under which artists claim their histories, contest despair and dispossession to generate cultural resistance. In this sense, "Bloodline" and *The "O"* can be viewed as an example of resistance without guarantees. The critical project here, moreover, is tricky, because, as critics have noted, hip-hop thrives because it offers something "real" or "authentic" in a materialistic world. Hip-hop's magic is its ability to connect with the powerless and give them a voice in a world that sees little, if any, value in them.⁶⁹

As I've shown, indigenous authenticity is a slippery slope littered with preconceived notions of how Natives are supposed to act, which Krystilez upsets in various ways through his performances of defiant indigeneity. Krystilez openly engages with stereotypes in his lyrics, in many respects, because he has to. This is necessary to set a reference point for those not familiar with the issues he's talking about and for listeners who identify with homesteads and the articulations of sovereignty that he is putting forth. Krystilez's indigenous authenticity is representative of Johnson's theory about the lived

⁶⁹ Watkins, *Hip-Hop Matters: Politics, Pop Culture, and the Struggle for the Soul of a Movement*.

experience of blackness. Building off Patricia Williams (1997), Johnson has written that blackness becomes a material way of knowing, one that combines the theatrical fantasy of blackness in the white imaginary that is projected onto black bodies, as well as the lived racial experience of black people.⁷⁰ Kānaka Maoli must also constantly balance social expectations and cultural identity amidst the legacies of the colonial imagination that frequently mark Kānaka Maoli as nothing more than carefree surfers and hula maidens.

This lived experience of Kānaka Maoli rubs up against the massive archive of visual imagery that marks Kanaka Maoli subjectivity as inherently harmonious and pleasant, which Kānaka Maoli internalize in multiple ways. Because hip-hop is predicated on representing some kind of real or authentic street (hood) experience, and those conditions are not thought to exist in Hawai‘i, Hawaiian hip-hop is easily dismissed as an inauthentic expression of hip-hop (and Hawaiianness). Hawaiian hip-hop performers, like Krystilez are often criticized for trying to “act Black.” At the same time, it has been proposed that “Blackness has become contingent, while the ghetto has become necessary.”⁷¹ Put another way, race may no longer be a hip-hop prerequisite, but a relationship to the “ghetto” or some kind of lived struggle is. Hawai‘i seems like a far cry from the “ghetto” or “the street” and such sentiments are even expressed by Kānaka Maoli, particularly older generations who take issue with young Kānaka Maoli who

⁷⁰ Patricia J. Williams, *Seeing through a Color-Blind Future: The Paradox of Race* (New York: Noonday Press, 1997); Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity*: 8. Originally in Patricia J. Williams, *Seeing through a Color-Blind Future: The Paradox of Race* (New York: Noonday Press, 1997);

⁷¹ Qtd in Raquel Rivera, *New York Ricans from the Hip-Hop Zone* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003). 248. Originally quoted in Christopher Holmes Smith, "Method in the Madness: Exploring the Boundaries of Identity in Hip-Hop Performativity," *Social Identities* 3(1997): 346.

according to them, don't know who they "really are."⁷²

Behind such criticism of Hawaiian hip-hop, especially when expressed by Kānaka Maoli, is a psychic evasion of the material realities that frequently limit Kanaka Maoli lives. Indeed, centering a Kanaka Maoli "struggle" is not difficult. As explained in the introduction, sugar and pineapple plantations were transformed into tourist-driven economies, as plantation holdings became hotels, resorts, golf courses, shopping malls, and suburbs in the late-twentieth century. This kind of unchecked real-estate development has resulted in Hawai'i's astronomical cost of living—the third highest in the U.S.⁷³ Krystilez and his contemporaries express in song these harsh economic realities, commonly referred to as "the price of paradise," that accompany life in Hawai'i. Kānaka Maoli, like many Native populations across the U.S., experience the brunt of this economic tyranny, with median incomes far below state and national averages, high unemployment, a lack of educational attainment, drug abuse, and increasing risk of homelessness or unstable living conditions.⁷⁴ Such conditions compromise a general quality of life. Hawaiian hip-hop provides a crucial forum in which to talk about these realities, but also to destabilize and unsettle old tropes about Hawaiian indigeneity to

⁷² An earlier version of this article was presented as a conference paper at the 2008 Pacific Worlds Conference in Salt Lake City, UT, where it received considerable criticism by the audience, particularly from older Kānaka Maoli who were in attendance. One woman was in tears, expressing concern for the younger generation who, in identifying with hip-hop, forget who they really are. Henderson (2010: 300) also explains how Samoan elders criticized Samoan hip-hop artists for trying to act "Black".

⁷³ According to the Economic Development & Tourism Hawai'i Department of Business, *State of Hawaii Data Book* (Honolulu, HI2009). Hawai'i has the third-highest cost of living in the United States, following San Francisco and New York (table 14.11). Hawai'i also averages a \$712,500 single-family home price (table 14.12) and ranks globally as the 41st most expensive place to live. Not surprisingly, Hawai'i has the second-highest credit debt in the nation, for more see http://www.staradvertiser.com/business/20101130_Credit_card_debt_on_rise_in_isles.html (accessed January 27, 2011). Also, the homeless population in Hawai'i has skyrocketed 90% from 1999-2003, many of whom are Kanaka Maoli, see Magin, "For 1,000 or More Homeless in Hawaii, Beaches are the Best Option." And, Yamane, Oeser, and Omori, "Health Disparities in the Native Hawaiian Homeless."

⁷⁴ Office of Hawaiian Affairs, *Native Hawaiian Data Book* (Honolulu: Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 2003); S.M. Kana'iaupuni, N.J. Malone, and K. Ishibashi, "Income and Poverty Among Native Hawaiians: Summary of Ka Huaka'i Findings," (Honolulu: Kamehameha Schools, 2005).

make space for new articulations which center indigenous concerns—respect and love for the land that you come from.

The final section of this chapter explains in greater detail how Hawaiian hip-hop has become an avenue through which indigenous self-determination is being performed at the expense of a deeper critique of capitalism and heteropatriarchy. Academics have been very attentive to the cultural production of Kanaka Maoli men in musical forms like hip-hop and reggae, but little has been written to critique how these expressions glamorize sexism and violence in spaces where decolonization is part of the discourse. I aim to examine the latter by building on scholarship by hip-hop and Native feminists. I argue that it is crucial to leverage such a critique because Krystilez's lyrical and visual representations speak to much deeper concerns that permeate Hawaiian communities.

The Double-Colonization of a Hawaiian Hip-hop Feminist

Kanaka Maoli women have labored hard to ensure the survival of Kānaka Maoli, but this work has often been criticized, especially when Kanaka Maoli women are publicly critical of men. This section is going to look at how the public assertions of Kanaka Maoli women have produced a backlash against women, which is performed in Hawaiian hip-hop. In order to frame my analysis of Krystilez's often misogynistic portrayals of women, I outline the messy nature of these representations and hip-hop feminisms' attempts to situate them as part of a larger system that rewards portrayals of sexism and violence. All of this is necessary to assess the real stakes of Krystilez's narrative for Hawaiian decolonization and sovereignty.

Historically, Kānaka Maoli women were noted for their powerful roles. In precolonial Hawaiian life, women wielded a considerable amount of power and later

played key roles in the Hawaiian Kingdom affairs. During annexation, women were organizers in the Hui Aloha ʻĀina and other Hawaiian civic organizations that assembled the anti-annexation petitions in the late nineteenth century.⁷⁵ Throughout the twentieth century as well, some Kanaka Maoli women found agency performing on “hula circuits,” while others voiced opposition to statehood during the territory period.⁷⁶ And, as the Hawaiian Renaissance germinated in the 1970s, Kanaka Maoli women were active organizers in the Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana. Not surprisingly, throughout the 1980s and 1990s Kanaka Maoli women were among the prominent leaders within the Hawaiian sovereignty movement.⁷⁷ Media attention to these realities, often depicting Kanaka Maoli women as forces to be reckoned with, in some ways fractured public assertions of Kanaka Maoli masculinity and I would argue that it has also produced an anti-feminist backlash that gets expressed in cultural productions, Hawaiian hip-hop being a key example.⁷⁸ The backlash is noticeable in unambiguous and covert ways.

Whereas early Hawaiian hip-hop appears to circumvent women altogether by not addressing them at all, similar to the ways that, as Kauanui explains, “gender issues” within Kanaka Maoli political organizing tend to be seen as unnecessary and

⁷⁵ Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*.

⁷⁶See Imada, "Hawaiians on Tour: Hula Circuits Through the American Empire." Saranillio also talks about Alice Kamokila Campbell's agency as she testified before the Hawaii Statehood Commission. Saranillio, "Seeing Conquest: Colliding Histories and the Cultural Politics of Hawai'i Statehood."

⁷⁷ Kame'eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires/Pehea La E Pono Ai*; Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*; Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i*.

⁷⁸ In *Native Men Remade* (2008), Ty Tengan remarks that while the Kanaka Maoli activist woman was perceived as most vocal, which obscured male voices, it is also worth mentioning that Kanaka Maoli men in the movement were publicly sought out for criminal charges while the women leaders were not for the most part. Surely the Kanaka Maoli women's Ph.D.'s and law degrees made a difference in the way women were not criminalized for their actions (61). Male leaders didn't display the same kind of educational authority as women, which in some ways contributed to male criminalization. There are numerous articles about Hawaiian sovereignty in Honolulu dailies that were prominent in the 1990s, *The Honolulu Advertiser* and the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*. For example, see <http://archives.starbulletin.com/2000/10/06/editorial/viewpoint.html> (accessed July 21, 2011).

superfluous.⁷⁹ This is curious, yet perhaps understandable, considering that in the realm of Hawaiian music and performance, the voices of women are overwhelming. Within Hawaiian hip-hop, however, the voices of women are absent, and interestingly, whereas early Hawaiian hip-hop neglected to mention women at all, recent Hawaiian hip-hop openly expresses sexism. Krystilez and his contemporaries, remarkably Big Teeze, has a song dedicated to “808 Hoes” wherein he details the sexual acts performed on him by girls across Hawai‘i.⁸⁰ Krystilez is especially poignant, “I’m one of the best when it comes to peaches jumping on my penis. Just ask Jaz Trias damn near broke my dick, pussy so tender.” (Krystilez “Come On Get It”). This song references Jasmine Trias, Filipino-American recording artist and aspiring actress from Hawai‘i, who was the third place finalist on the third season of American Idol in 2004. At the time, she was only seventeen and quickly rose to local stardom and has found considerable success in the Philippines. Krystilez’s reference to her in “Come On Get It” is troubling on multiple levels. This is just a snapshot of some of the more sexually disturbing lyrics. Turning a blind eye to these expressions, perhaps because they do not explicitly express something “Hawaiian,” ignores that these cultural productions are generated in Kanaka Maoli communities. Krystilez is expressing corporate hip-hop’s enduring investment in hetero-patriarchy, which also articulates sentiments that circulate within Kānaka Maoli lives, where women are reduced to their body parts and are subject to the fantasies of men.

Haunani-Kay Trask’s landmark article, “Fighting the Battle of Double Colonization: The View of a Hawaiian Feminist,” is instructive for my project of

⁷⁹ J. Kehaulani Kauanui, "Native Hawaiian Decolonization and the Politics of Gender," *American Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2008): 281. Kauanui explains that attention to gender issues are seen as unnecessary because of the historical prominence of Kanaka Maoli women in Hawaiian Kingdom politics and in contemporary struggles for self-determination.

⁸⁰ Big Teeze “808 Hoes”, www.youtube.com/watch?v=FaUIY3Ih34k (accessed July 8, 2011).

critically analyzing Hawaiian hip-hop.⁸¹ In this article, she explains the conflicts she faced as a woman in the Hawaiian nationalist movement and the racism she experienced among white women in feminist circles. The genus of her argument is similar to that of arguments advanced by feminists of color who call out the racism expressed in some feminist groups and the hetero-patriarchy constitutive in many nationalist movements, civil rights movements, and community struggles. Ignoring the absence or misogynistic portrayal of women in Hawaiian hip-hop is a current manifestation of these conflicts. Even as I write this critique, I find myself torn—wanting to praise Krystilez for his resistant narrative. But, I cannot turn away from the imagery so prevalent--where women are lyrically possessed, where women are ornamental in videos, where women are praised for their tender pussies.

The latter has been common in public critiques of hip-hop by women of color. Black women especially have felt themselves put in the awkward position of having to defend hip-hop. Critical Race theorist Kimberle Crenshaw's article "Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black feminism and 2 Live Crew" addresses the persecution of the rap group 2 Live Crew in the 1990s, which cuts to the heart of this issue. She writes that splitting up multiple identities (like being female and Black) are counterproductive and enact their own type of psychic violence. Defending the misogyny in hip-hop, for example, normalizes the fragmentation of identities that privileges race over gender, sexuality and class.⁸² Crenshaw specifically addresses the "outlaw" or "badman" figure, stating that

⁸¹ Haunani-Kay Trask, "Fighting the Battle of Double Colonization: The View of a Hawaiian Feminist," *Annual Journal of Ethnic Studies* 2(1984).

⁸² Kimberle Crenshaw, "Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black Feminism and 2 Live Crew," in *Feminist Social Thought: A Reader*, ed. Diana T. Meyers (New York: Routledge, 1997). In this article she takes on Henry Louis Gates who defended 2 Live Crew and hip-hop because it drew on Black vernacular traditions of toasting and playing the dozens.

while these figures may draw on a shared Black vernacular and literary tradition, defending them shields the violent misogyny found in lyrics, which women of color are most injured by. As stated by a young woman in the film, *Beyond Beats and Rhymes* (2006), being in love with hip-hop feels like being in an abusive relationship, whereby a woman has to defend the person abusing her.⁸³ Hip-hop feminists interject into this discourse to grapple with the larger societal issues that contribute to sexism. Hip-hop feminists note that the violent sexism in lyrics and visual representations are indicative of a larger hetero-patriarchal hyper-masculinist culture.⁸⁴ And more importantly, hip-hop feminist analyses aim to hold performers accountable for the violence they are reenacting. I draw from their analysis and relate it to issues that effect Native lives—decolonization and sovereignty struggles.

Recent writings by Native feminists and Kānaka Maoli feminists in particular, have insisted on the necessity of critiquing hetero-patriarchy when working towards decolonization.⁸⁵ Native feminists work to show how colonial power, racism, and sexism are replicated within Native communities.⁸⁶ Working towards decolonization requires not only an interrogation of how racism, sexism, and other types of violence are lived realities, but it also involves a radical reimagining of how we are to build and sustain communities that do not replicate it. As such, Native feminism questions the nation-state as the ultimate goal for nationalist struggles, explaining that the nation-state is fundamentally colonial and hierarchical. As posited by Smith, Native feminism aspires to

⁸³ Byron Hurt, "Beyond Beats and Rhymes," (USA2006).

⁸⁴ See Gwendolyn D. Pough, *Check it While I Wreck it: Black Womanhood, Hip-hop Culture, and the Public Sphere* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004).

⁸⁵ Andrea Smith and J. Kehaulani Kauanui, "Native Feminisms Engage American Studies," *American Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2008).

⁸⁶ Joyce Green, ed. *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism* (Zed Books, 2007), 25.

build nations that are not hetero-normative, patriarchal, or advocate the nuclear family as their building block.⁸⁷ Thus, to thoroughly assess the lasting influence of Western ideas about gender roles and how Kānaka Maoli have internalized these norms (and then perform them in hip-hop), it's critical to call out male domination and sexism when doing the political work that insures the collective survival of Kānaka Maoli.⁸⁸ This perspective applies directly to a critique of Hawaiian hip-hop, because the aspirations for sovereignty or nationhood that is in music such as Krystilez's does not overshadow the rampant sexism in the music. The popularity of his music vocalizes that certain artists are still benefiting from male privilege and that there is a system in place that both normalizes and rewards their sexist behavior.

Sexism and violence is not always so straightforward—as I've explained, Krystilez performances are often complicated and messy. For example, when Krystilez implies in "Bloodline" that he will beat someone like a "fag," he exhibits his own entrenchment in hetero-patriarchy: he threatens to brutalize a man physically who steps on his land, but does so by invoking one of the most emasculating slurs. Krystilez is not alone in this performance. Shown with him in "Bloodline" is a crew of "bangers," personified in his lyricism and in the video's visual imagery. This could be read as an assertion of sovereignty, in which a Native man is warning possible intruders (settlers) that he will defend his land—or the homestead—to the death. He raps, "I know what I'm dying for" ("Bloodline"). Krystilez articulates sovereignty or cultural pride through violent misogynistic homophobic discourse. By not critiquing this discourse, we normalize the violence that we enact upon one another—even when that violence might

⁸⁷ Smith and Kauanui, "Native Feminisms Engage American Studies."

⁸⁸ Kauanui, "Native Hawaiian Decolonization and the Politics of Gender."

be done in the name of “sovereignty” or protecting one’s homestead.

In another song, he raps, “Where we raise bangers. Where the mähūs will fuck your ass up and suck your cock too” (“The ‘O’”). Mähū is a Hawaiian term that describes everything from gay men to drag queens to transwomen, and although Krystilez’s reference to the mähū seems homophobic at first, something else is going on.⁸⁹

Krystilez’s lyricism perpetuates violence on anyone who does not heed the masculinity that he promotes—one that is fundamentally linked to male-gendered bodies with little space allowed for a diverse gender expression of masculinity, but then he flips it. In this lyric, Krystilez is allowing mähūs a space of agency in their performance of a feminized masculinity, something unexpected in hip-hop. Krystilez actually recognizes mähū in Hawaiian culture and modern Hawaiian society as forces to be reckoned with. In the phrasing, the mähū is part of “The ‘O’” and is crucial to its setting. The mähū will “fuck your ass up” too, along with “the bangers.” The mähū in this song also have a serious stake in protecting Hawaiian lands and indigeneity. In some ways Krystilez is acknowledging the contributions that mähū could also have to protecting the homestead with him. It should be remembered that within Hawaiian music, despite the presence of LGBTQ performers, the topic of non-heterosexual identities is almost never broached. That is not to say that Krystilez should be let off the hook for the kind of homophobia that he is presenting. Krystilez certainly treads on charged terrain when he exhibits the ways in which hetero-patriarchy and homophobia is built into these expressions. Don’t get me wrong, the reference to beating someone like a “fag” should not be dismissed, but does it mean that Krystilez necessarily beats fags? Being a “fag” and being a “mähū” are

⁸⁹ Mähū was a hermaphrodite in precolonial Hawaiian society. Contemporary usage generally refers to gay men, transgender male-to-female, and drag queens. Very rarely does it refer to lesbians.

not the same thing, although in everyday usage, it could be. These expressions are highly contextual and the critique, well, is complicated. His mention of the mähū is brief and in passing, but he also creates space for a different kind of gender performance, through an engagement of non-heteronormative gender roles that can be linked to Kanaka indigeneity.

Tengan examines these complicated assertions of Kanaka Maoli masculinity in his book, *Native Men Remade* (2008). Here Tengan documents the ways in which Kānaka Maoli men transform their lives through performative enactments of “revitalized culture.” Through projects of decolonization, revitalization, and reclamation, Kanaka Maoli men rework and remake subjectivities of culture and gender. These reclamations work to produce new political and social identifications to contest the feminized, domesticated and commodified representations of Hawaiian culture, land, and bodies.⁹⁰ This work, however, as Tengan explains, tows a very fine line between cultural renaissance and resistance and internalized patriarchy and Western ideas about normativity. I extend Tengan’s analysis of Kanaka masculinity as well as Native feminist critiques of sexism onto Hawaiian hip-hop and call for a more interrogative approach to analyzing Kanaka Maoli cultural production. Throughout this chapter, I have praised Krystilez, but as I’ve attempted to show, he repeatedly characterizes women in his songs as disposable and makes derogatory remarks about queer behavior.⁹¹ Consequently, because Krystilez performs much of mainstream hip-hop’s hetero-patriarchal capitalist agenda, it is imperative to call him out. This music is not only influenced by Hawaiian

⁹⁰ Tengan, *Native Men Remade: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Hawai’i*.

⁹¹ Krystilez makes numerous derogatory comments about male homosexual behavior, notably that he will beat his opponents like fags. The usage of “Fag” and “Fudgepacker” are commonplace in Krystilez rhymes.

sovereignty, it also reproduces sovereignty in imaginative, albeit problematic, ways. Neglecting to analyze these processes critically thus sustains a heteronormative and patriarchal vision of Hawaiian sovereignty. Moreover, the significance of community, collective-belonging, and nation cut across all of Krystilez representations and if we neglect to examine the ways heteropatriarchy is deeply entrenched in his cultural production and by extension, Hawaiian communities, we run the risk of merely replicating oppression, which impacts all of us.

Talking about Kānaka Maoli resistance and resilience through cultural innovation is without a doubt vital, but it is imperative to advance criticism of Kānaka Maoli as well, rather than constructing a binary logic of colonizer (evil) versus colonized (good). Jasbir Puar writes, “It is easy, albeit painful, to point to the conservative elements of any political formation; it is less easy and perhaps more painful, to point to ourselves as accomplices of certain normalizing violences.”⁹² As Kānaka Maoli, we know that we have always engaged in cultural performance in order to retain our living culture in remarkably innovative ways, but it’s time to discuss resistance and agency alongside deeply embedded forms of hetero-patriarchy, violence, and, dare I say, even racist sentiments found in some forms of contemporary Hawaiian performance. We must confront a Hawaiian cultural production that is as messy and violent as colonization, and force ourselves to assess the costs of the violence enacted through the brand of hip-hop that Krystilez performs—a brand predicated on stereotypical notions of blackness and sexism that are openly advocated and appropriated throughout *The “O.”*

The political realities that face Kānaka Maoli today get interrogated and invigorated

⁹² Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalisms in Queer Times*: 24.

through the performance of various types of cultural resistance that ironically lay bare the legacies of racialized and gendered subjection while reconstituting them. In many ways, the defiant indigeneity personified by Krystilez narrates reality, asserting that Kanaka Maoli identity and cultural productions have no choice but to appropriate the discourse of authenticity in hopes of simultaneously undermining it. “Bloodline” is evidence of the necessity of reclaiming places and spaces when there are laws and policies that prevent you from reclaiming lands. The sentiments expressed in *The “O,”* again, also speak to this deep sense of aloha for the islands and in “Bloodline” for the homestead, an expression of aloha that is for the community that created it. Hence, in an unapologetic embodiment of Kanaka Maoli indigeneity, Krystilez makes visible and possible our ongoing refusal and defiance as we reclaim performance space in our homeland. As Krystilez spits,

This is reality
This is not a movie
Protect my family its my common duty
You like war
Say no more
Bring your drama to me
Third Road Homestead fucka Nānākuli EA!⁹³

⁹³ “Bloodline”, Krystilez *The O*. (Honolulu: Tiki Entertainment, 2006).

Chapter 3

“Bloodline is All I Need”

“Either you know aloha, or you get no aloha” – Krystilez, “Who I am”¹

In this chapter, I offer a rereading of the history of Hawaiian music to argue two points: (1) how Hawaiian music, like Hawaiian culture, has always been a vibrant and innovative field with a political edge that continues to evolve, and (2) how hip-hop by Kanaka Maoli performers ought to be seen as a legitimate articulation of Hawaiian music. More specifically, I contend that Hawaiian hip-hop must be understood in terms of a longer tradition of performances of resistance and defiance known as mele kū‘ē. To this end, I perform close readings of the lyrics of the songs in Krystilez’s album, *The “O,”* and especially of the song, “Bloodline” to illustrate new ways by which Hawaiian hip-hop performers assert Kanaka Maoli genealogical relationship with ‘āina (land), place, and space. The chapter ends with a reconsideration of the lyrics “bloodline is all I need” to theorize Krystilez’s dynamic refusal of aloha.

Remixing the History of Contemporary Hawaiian Music

The fusing of Hawaiian and Western music dates back to at least 1820, with the arrival of Calvinist missionaries. Rather than debate what counts as “traditional” or

¹ “Who I am”, yet to be released on an album. The artist emailed this song to me and others in December 2009.

“contemporary,” I am more interested in analyzing how a song emerges out of, and can help us rethink, prevailing social matrices.² As presented in chapter two, Hawaiian hip-hop emerges from a particular moment in the late-twentieth century when U.S.-based hip-hop began to saturate mainstream media to become one of the predominant forms of music with which youth all around the world identify. Hawaiian hip-hop emerges from these conditions, but is seldom identified as or associated with “Hawaiian music,” even when the Nā Hōkū Hano Hano awards has a category for “Hip-Hop Album of the Year.”³

The term “contemporary Hawaiian music” typically refers to Hawaiian music that incorporates Western instrumentation (i.e. drums, electric guitars, keyboards, bass). The term was first used in the late 1960s with the rise of the rock counter-culture as Kanaka Maoli musicians began to integrate aspects of American rock and roll into Hawaiian music compositions.⁴ The “Hawaiian Renaissance” of the 1970s was marked by an unprecedented public revival and display of “traditional” Hawaiian cultural practices.

During this period, Kanaka Maoli musicians garnered inspiration from songs composed in the early nineteenth century. The flourishing of the “Hawaiian Renaissance” of the 1970s is considered to be the start of the twentieth-century sovereignty movement (which continues through the present) because it coincided with protests against increasing urban development (struggles in Kalama Valley, Waiakāne-Waiāhole) and

² For types of Hawaiian musicological classification, see Amy K. Stillman, “Textualizing Hawaiian Music,” *American Music* Spring (2005).

³ The Nā Hōkū Hano Hano awards are considered the Grammys of Hawaiian music or music produced in Hawai‘i, which started in 1978. Since then the Hawai‘i Academy of Recording Artists have held an annual awards ceremony. While originally determined by votes, since 1982 it has evolved into an industry awards ceremony administered by recording professionals.

⁴ Kanahela, *Hawaiian Music and Musicians: An Illustrated History*. This text has extensive interviews with musicians, see also the music of the Sons of Hawai‘i, for example. Also, George Helm, Gabby Pahinui, Genoa Keawe. See George H. Lewis, “Storm Blowing from Paradise: Social Protest and Oppositional Ideology in Popular Hawaiian Music,” *Popular Music* 10, no. 1 (1991): 63.

efforts to stop U.S. bombing practice on the island of Kaho‘olawe.⁵ Equally important, these protests informed and were informed by similar efforts to revitalize Hawaiian language, culture, and other Hawaiian performance traditions. In line with the fight for Hawaiian sovereignty and cultural rights, many young Kānaka Maoli “rediscovered” their cultural roots in the performance of new music within old traditional forms.⁶ Supported by rural and working-class, blue-collar Kanaka Maoli areas and venues, Hawaiian music became more overt in their criticism of U.S. colonization. Osorio’s article, “Songs of Our Natural Selves: The Enduring Voice of Nature in Hawaiian Music” (1992), situates the Hawaiian music of the 1970s as a political vehicle for community activists to express increasing distrust of local government and disapproval of the massive urbanization and commercialization of Hawai‘i.⁷ From the late 1980s through the early 1990s, Hawaiian music fused with Jamaican-inspired reggae music to create a new genre referred to as “Jawaiian.” The young local population identified with Jawaiian music and, as a result, Jawaiian music was eventually incorporated into mainstream Hawaiian music in a new genre called “island music.” In “Jawaiian Music and Local Cultural Identity in Hawai‘i” (1998), Andrew Weintraub credits the inception of Jawaiian music to popular perceptions that Kānaka Maoli and Jamaicans share experiences as

⁵ Trask, "The Birth of the Modern Hawaiian Movement: Kalama Valley, O'ahu."; Osorio, "Songs of Our Natural Selves: The Enduring Voice of Nature in Hawaiian Music."

⁶ Lewis, "Storm Blowing from Paradise: Social Protest and Oppositional Ideology in Popular Hawaiian Music," 58.

⁷ Osorio, "Songs of Our Natural Selves: The Enduring Voice of Nature in Hawaiian Music." Hawaiian music was also referred to as the “Glue” that held the package together, to help pass laws that protected special Hawaiian rights in 1978 at the Hawai‘i Constitutional Convention, when the Office of Hawaiian Affairs was created. Qtd in Lewis, "Storm Blowing from Paradise: Social Protest and Oppositional Ideology in Popular Hawaiian Music," 64. Also qtd in Kanahēle, *Hawaiian Music and Musicians: An Illustrated History*: 7.

historically oppressed island peoples.⁸

Identification with Black musical traditions—such as reggae—found new life through Hawaiian hip-hop. The first Hawaiian hip-hop album was released in 1994 by Sudden Rush. Sudden Rush blended hip-hop beats with ‘ukuleles and rapping that expressed Hawaiian nationalism in Hawaiian and English. Faye Akindes argues that Hawaiian hip-hop fused with Hawaiian politics is an important form of liberation.⁹ Indeed, musical forms can facilitate certain kinds of political perspectives and conversely, when politics are purposely hidden or evaded, they can also constrain political critiques. As Akindes explains, political messages within Hawaiian music appear to be apolitical too, especially when the form is contrasted with hip-hop.¹⁰ The (erroneous) claim that Hawaiian music is apolitical stems from the prevalence of soft images and harmonious sounds associated with Hawaiian music even if in reality, the music often contains pointed criticism of colonialism, however purposely cloaked such critiques may be. On the other hand, hip-hop has always been associated with politics because of the conditions of urban decay, segregation, and flight of capital that produced it. Almost by default if not by design, these conditions have linked hip-hop to political projects of resistance as well as social and political discontent.¹¹ The fusion of Hawaiian music with hip-hop, then, impacts Kanaka Maoli cultural performance by politicizing and transforming popular perceptions of Hawaiian indigeneity. Further, such fusions rescue

⁸ Andrew Weintraub, "Jawaiian and Local Cultural Identity in Hawai'i," in *Sound Alliances: Peoples, Cultural Politics and Popular Music in the Pacific*, ed. Philip Hayward (New York: Casell, 1998). Indeed, a number of Hawaiian music groups released "Jawaiian" albums during the late-80s to early-90s. Namely Kapena, Brother Noland, Ho'aikane, and others.

⁹ Akindes, "Sudden Rush: Na Mele Paleoleo (Hawaiian Rap) as Liberatory Discourse," 89.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Of course not all hip-hop is political. I make this point to acknowledge the multiple types of hip hop, but still, I would contend that at its core and in the popular imagination, hip-hop is a political form that invokes fears of Black masculinity and its threat to White patriarchy.

Kānaka Maoli from the anachronistic native ghetto while also advocating for Kanaka Maoli sovereignty.

The New Mele Kū‘ē and the Legacies of Kaona

“Hawaiian music” as a genre is constantly evolving, interrogating boundaries, and challenging dominant representations.¹² Musicologists have extensively documented the expansive nature of the Hawaiian music repertoire. Most notably, Amy Stillman has accounted for the different forms of mele that existed and have transformed over the years.¹³ The modern and Westernized genre of Hawaiian music has several subcategories, and because of its content, Krystilez fits into what Stillman has termed a “local song” genre. In contrast to hapa-haole—half-foreign or half-Western—songs that tend to exoticize the islands, a “local song” expresses the concerns of island residents.¹⁴ More provocatively, for this content, and the terms of Krystilez’s kinship to specific places, Hawaiian hip-hop can also be situated within a genealogy of mele kū‘ē (resistance songs).¹⁵ Within mele kū‘ē, kaona, the Hawaiian concept of hidden meanings and subtext, is always present.¹⁶ In this section, I will explain in greater detail why hip-hop is associated with politics. Following this, I map the politics associated with mele kū‘ē and

¹² Akindes, "Sudden Rush: Na Mele Paleoleo (Hawaiian Rap) as Liberatory Discourse," 95. Akindes explains, "... music is continually evolving through a constant cut 'n' mixing of melodies, rhythms, styles and themes".

¹³ Stillman, "Textualizing Hawaiian Music."

¹⁴ Hapa-haole songs are usually sung in the English language and in the 32 bar AA'BA" format. Ibid. 83. See *ibid.* And ———, "Hula Hits, Local Music, and Local Charts: Some Dynamics of Popular Hawaiian Musics," in *Sound Alliances: Indigenous Peoples, Cultural Politics and Popular Music in the Pacific*, ed. Philip Hayward (London: Cassell, 1998).

¹⁵ For more on the significance of mele kū‘ē, particularly during the time of the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom, see Leilani Basham, "He Puke Mele Lahui: Na Mele Kupa'a, Na Mele Ku'e a me Na Mele Aloha o na Kanaka Maoli" (Masters, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, 2002., 2002); ———, "I Mau Ke Ea O Ka 'Aina I Ka Pono: He Puke Mele Lahui No Ka Lahui Hawai'i" (Dissertation, University of Hawai'i, 2007).

¹⁶ The online Hawaiian dictionary (www.wehewehe.org) defines kaona as a hidden meaning or concealed reference, as to a person, thing, or place; words with double meanings that might bring good or bad fortune. Accessed August 21, 2011.

kaona, and finally, I furnish examples of kaona as well as explain how Krystilez plays with these modes of representation. I contend that Hawaiian hip-hop can be understood through its usages of kaona and political critiques that are remarkably similar to mele kū‘ē.

As I noted in chapter two, hip-hop has been hailed as the battle-cry of disenfranchised youth and despite its current commodified form, continues to be associated with politics because of the material conditions that facilitated hip-hop’s emergence. Hip-hop is related to a longer history of discrimination against people of color, particularly poor Blacks and Latinos residing in urban areas. I will provide two examples across time that speak to the systematic nature of these conditions. In the late 1960s, a process referred to as “benign neglect”—a backlash against social welfare and assistance programs that came out of the civil rights movement—neglected many urban populations residing in economically depressed areas.¹⁷ Youth who grew up amidst these conditions went on to create hip-hop, voicing not only their discontent with a system that marginalized them, but also their resilience, as many songs served as a space to assert themselves in an environment that saw little value in their well-being and perspectives. Nearly thirty years later, the emergence of gangsta rap in Los Angeles was also indicative of shifting political and economic priorities. At the end of the Cold War, Los Angeles—

¹⁷ Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005). 14. “Benign neglect” was a strategy proposed by New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan during the Nixon administration, proposing that the issue of race could perhaps benefit from “benign neglect.” This strategy was one that sought to rollback some of the gains made by the civil rights movements. Most pertinent for understanding how this impacted hip-hop was the “neglect” of public services in Harlem and South Bronx where arson was rampant (slum lords were paying gangs to burn down slums for insurance money) and the fire department failed and in some cases stopped trying to put out these fires at all. Moynihan was also known for his report in 1965 that argued that the matriarchal structure of Black culture was holding back the “Negro family” as he saw the lack of male authority figures and nuclear-family structure as hindering progress towards economic and political equality. For more about Moynihan report, see Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

once the site of economic possibility for droves of westward moving working class peoples (particularly European immigrants and African Americans in the early twentieth century)—experienced a shift from a military-based industrial manufacturing economy to information technology industries, thus leaving many working class people out of work or forced to seek employment in low-wage service industries. In the wake of Reaganomics, South Central Los Angeles, the so-called home of gangsta rap, was known for its economic abandonment, repressive policing, and segregated and failing schools, all of which contributed to the frustration, rage, and despair of Black youth. These material realities heavily influenced the hip-hop that was produced. Hip-hop has thus become indicative of a politics that is against institutionalized racism and the marginalization of certain groups—in hip-hop’s case, usually young, poor, people of color.

Indeed, oppressive conditions frequently render new cultural formations and political assertions. In the Hawaiian context, the Hawaiian concept of *kaona*, which involves rich and interconnected systems of signification and hidden meanings, was utilized widely during the annexation era. As a result, students and researchers of Hawaiian music have given *mele* from this period considerable attention. Silva, for instance, explains that during times of oppression (such as following the overthrow in 1893, or before annexation in 1898), *kaona* was used to express individual feelings and to maintain solidarity against “colonial maneuvers.”¹⁸ Shortly after the overthrow, Kanaka Maoli published thousands of *mele* in the Hawaiian language newspapers. In *mele*, meanings, actors, and interpretations constantly shift. For example, a person mentioned in one verse might shiftshape into an animal in the next, and then a mountain, and then the

¹⁸ Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*. Basham, "He Puke Mele Lahui: Na Mele Kupa'a, Na Mele Ku'e a me Na Mele Aloha o na Kanaka Maoli."

rain, in succeeding verses, and throughout the coded performance it might be that only the author of the mele would know the “true” meanings of these transformations.¹⁹

According to Noelani Arista the prevalence of such deep and hidden and shifting systems of thought and the multiple meanings must be taken into account when analyzing any text.²⁰ Hawaiian music—especially mele and oli (chant)—has always served as a site where composers could hide messages, particularly those that contested prevailing systems of power. Then and now, mele composition and performance were potent ways of keeping the nation together, especially when political and social forces tried to sever Kānaka Maoli from their relations.²¹ Mele also communicates in ways that prose cannot, and because of this, mele is a privileged site where composers and performers’ mastery of cultural knowledge and poetic language was exhibited.²²

Perhaps one of the most prominent illustrations of mele kū‘ē is the song “Kaulana Nā Pua,” also known as “Mele Aloha ‘Āina” or the “Stone-eating song.” The song was originally composed by Ellen Keko‘aohiwaikalani Wright Pendergast, who was asked by the Royal Hawaiian Band members to compose a song about their defiance against the provisional government (the one that overthrew Queen Lili‘uokalani). The band had been asked to sign an oath of loyalty to the new government, which as the song expresses, they would rather risk losing their jobs, (and in turn, starve) than to pledge loyalty to a “government” who had overthrown their Queen. When the band refused, they were told that they would soon have to eat rocks because they would no longer be

¹⁹ Noelani Arista, "Navigating Uncharted Oceans of Meaning: *Kaona* as Historical and Interpretive Method," *Modern Language Association of America* 125, no. 3 (2010).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 666.

²¹ Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*.

²² For more on mele classification and poetic themes, see *ibid.* and Amy K. Stillman, "History Reinterpreted in Song: the Case of the Hawaiian Counterrevolution," *Hawaiian Journal of History* 23(1989).

employed.²³ As explained by Stillman, “Kaulana Nā Pua” was a song that was believed to be about the famous and beautiful flowers of Hawai‘i (a metaphor for the people), but the song was actually composed as a protest against annexation. This song was originally reprinted in different pro-royalist Hawaiian-language newspapers—*Hawaii Holomua*, *Ka Lei Momi*, *Ka Leo O Ka Lahui*, *Ka Makaainanana*, *Ko Hawaii Pae Aina*, and *Nupepa Ka Oiaio*.²⁴ As Basham documented, mele lāhui (songs about the nation), due to their often controversial anti-annexationist content, were published multiple times in multiple papers, sometimes under different titles and authors.²⁵ The publishers of those newspapers were seen as local heroes for their resistance to the Republic of Hawai‘i’s new limits on freedom of speech.²⁶ Also, the beautiful and somber melody of the song allowed it to be mistaken as a love song.²⁷ But as Stillman uncovered, changing times transformed perceptions of the song: in 1894, a vibrant hula ku‘i was performed with the song, but in later years, it was felt that performing hula with the song would take away from the solemnity of the song, which expressed sadness about the loss of Hawaiian sovereignty.²⁸ Kaulana Nā Pua continues to be cited and sung as an affirmation of Kanaka Maoli resistance against annexation. It has been performed by Keola Beamer, Nā Waiho‘olu‘u o ke Anuenue, Palani Vaughn, the Peter Moon Band, Three Plus, and the Makaha Sons of Ni‘ihau, to name a few.

²³ See Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*: 134-35. Also, Amy Stillman’s article in *Hawaiian Journal of History* (1989, Vol. 23:1-30) for details about mele kū‘ē. Basham (2002) building on her work with Stillman, also analyzes “Kaulana Nā Pua”. See, Amy K. Stillman, "Aloha 'Aina: New Perspectives on 'Kaulana Na Pua'," *Hawaiian Journal of History* 33(1999).

²⁴ ———, "Aloha 'Aina: New Perspectives on 'Kaulana Na Pua'," 86.

²⁵ Basham, "He Puke Mele Lahui: Na Mele Kupa'a, Na Mele Ku'e a me Na Mele Aloha o na Kanaka Maoli," 101. See also, Stillman, "Aloha 'Aina: New Perspectives on 'Kaulana Na Pua'," 95-96.

²⁶ Basham, "He Puke Mele Lahui: Na Mele Kupa'a, Na Mele Ku'e a me Na Mele Aloha o na Kanaka Maoli," 101.

²⁷ Akindes, "Sudden Rush: Na Mele Paleoleo (Hawaiian Rap) as Liberatory Discourse," 89.

²⁸ Stillman, "Aloha 'Aina: New Perspectives on 'Kaulana Na Pua'," 95-96.

Mele kū‘ē remains one of the spaces where political critiques are leveraged in contemporary Hawai‘i, particularly in Honolulu, where there remains only one daily newspaper.²⁹ Hawaiian hip-hop and mele kū‘ē is much like the “Black CNN,” Chuck D dubbed hip-hop as the news from the “street” that the mainstream media ignores.³⁰ Robin Kelly defends hip-hop and gangsta rap in particular, as a type of music that communicates social realism through the gangbanger, hustler, or working person who provide alternative voices to mainstream journalism.³¹ Poetic metaphors are often embodied in mele kū‘ē, much like in the poetics deployed in gangsta rap, and as history has shown, mele kū‘ē played a prominent role in voicing opposition to mainstream journalism or “news.” The style of storytelling that Krystilez employs in “Bloodline” serves this very function. As Kanaka Maoli poet and literary scholar Ku‘umealoha Ho‘omanawanui explains, Hawaiian poets—present and past—are more interested in the metaphors, images, and kaona of poetry than the form takes or forms they employ.³² Kaona can be extended to the types of metaphorical language that Kelley proposes rappers take up.

Hip-hop music and the rapping that characterizes it have been theorized as a type

²⁹ Patricia L. Gibbs, "Alternative Things Considered: A Comparative Political Economic Analysis of Honolulu Mainstream and Alternative Print News Communication and Organization" (Dissertation, University of Hawai‘i, 1999). As of June 2010, the *Honolulu Advertiser* and the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* merged to become the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*.

³⁰ Public Enemy front man has dubbed hip-hop “Black CNN” and people love to cite it. See Rose (1994), Foreman (2002). Indeed, Sudden Rush was even referred to as the “Polynesia’s answer to Public Enemy”, in Cristina Veran. “Sudden Rush, Kū‘ē.” *Vibe* May 1998 p. 150, qtd in Akindes, "Sudden Rush: Na Mele Paleoleo (Hawaiian Rap) as Liberatory Discourse," 90.

³¹ Robin D.G. Kelley, "Kickin' Reality, Kickin' Ballistics: Gangsta Rap and Postindustrial Los Angeles," in *Droppin' Science: Critical Essays on Rap Music and Hip-hop Culture*, ed. Eric Perkins (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996); Alan Light, "About a Salary or Reality?--Rap's Recurrent Conflict," in *That's the joint!: the hip-hop studies reader*, ed. Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal (New York: Routledge, 2004).

³² Ho‘omanawanui, "He Lei Ho'oheno no na Kau a Kau: Language, Performance and Form in Hawaiian Poetry."; ———, "From Ocean to O'Shen: Reggae, Rap, and Hip Hop in Hawai'i."

of poetic narration set to music. Throughout *The “O,”* Krystilez speaks in overt language about the necessity of expressing the kind of cultural pride and resistance to U.S. colonialism that is present in “Kaulana Nā Pua.” As Krystilez explains in a YouTube video, he uses subliminal messages and welcomes multiple interpretations of his music. *The “O”* he explains, is who he is and what’s in his heart. But *The “O”* can also be a bag of drugs, the circle of life, a freestyle cipher, the island of O‘ahu or also, he says, whatever you want it to be.³³ To the extent that mele kū‘ē incorporates kaona and the metaphors and layers that characterize it, it is also about proclaiming Kanaka Maoli resistance. Evidenced throughout *The “O,”* as I will show in great detail later in this chapter, Krystilez is mixing Hawaiian poetic text composition with hip-hop music. In the next section, I analyze how Krystilez represents himself as “Wanted” in a manner that plays on tropes of Kanaka Maoli criminality (men especially), but is also related to broader practices in hip-hop that invoke Black vernacular traditions.

³³ “6 Days till “The O”... Be even more afraid bitches!”
<http://www.youtube.com/user/tikient#p/u/10/DjX3Yd0-XQM> (accessed August 21, 2011).

“Wanted”



Figure 2 Advertisement for *The “O”*

Influenced by the popularity of gangsta rap during the 1990s and the material realities of life on the homestead, Krystilez’s performance as a “thug” pervades his lyrics and visual representations. In Figure 2 we see that he is “Wanted.” Alluding to the “wanted” outlaw posters made famous by the Western film genre, Krystilez positions himself as inescapably criminal. This criminality references the Western outlaw who is bound up in assertions of American masculinity and the conquering of the Western frontier. What does Krystilez blow up? His homeland. Krystilez is “Wanted” for “Blowing up Hawai‘i.” This begs the question: why would a Kanaka Maoli want to blow

up Hawai‘i, his or her homeland?

The gangsta rap aesthetic of the West Coast appears to have influenced Krystilez in this image. The phrase “Blowing Up Hawai‘i” is derived from the expression to “blow up,” a common hip-hop phrase that usually suggests someone is rising to stardom. The wording also denotes a criminal act of breaking something open through an explosion. This play on words is taken further in YouTube videos of Krystilez proclaiming to “blow up Hawai‘i one way or another” and laughing while saying it.³⁴ In these videos, Krystilez addresses an abstract audience of YouTube users—some are fans and others are part of a wider imagined audience.³⁵ Even if the viewer recognizes that Krystilez is just a performer, the specter of Kanaka Maoli criminality, fears about terrorism, and imagery of Kānaka Maoli activists occupying space (‘Iolani Palace, for example) undoubtedly come into play.³⁶ By invoking this trope, Krystilez pushes against dominant representations of Kānaka Maoli as welcoming, docile, and lazy, but also lends support to the perception that Kanaka Maoli men are unable to survive in the modern world because they are trapped in a cycle of violence, drug abuse, and criminal behavior. This is clearly illustrated in the video, “Tiki’s taking it to the streets,” where Krystilez is shown in Waikīkī selling CDs in the very space where Hawaiian cultural exploitation is most obscene. Krystilez is accompanied by Spookahuna, one of the producers of *The “O”*, and he is gathering a small crowd by freestyling live (with a microphone) about people

³⁴ See “100,000 hits on YouTube,” <http://www.youtube.com/user/tikient#p/u/3/R5COFzi70YU> and in “When it’s on it’s on!,” <http://www.youtube.com/user/tikient#p/u/7/qUwVvWW6GOk> (accessed February 24, 2011).

³⁵ Jean Burgess and Joshua Green, *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009).

³⁶ See Mark Niese, “Native Hawaiians occupy Iolani Palace grounds,” *The Maui News*, May 1, 2008 2008.; B.J. Reyes, “Akaka Bill Opponents Occupy Iolani Palace,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, June 8, 2006 2006.

walking by. The CDs are sold for five dollars along with a Kamehameha the Great t-shirt. Towards the end of the video, Krystilez is approached by a police officer and told to turn down the music. In the middle of Waikīkī, where street performers are a common sight, this is noteworthy. The video cuts and shows Krystilez later receiving a ticket from the police officer, conceivably for disturbing the peace. Krystilez and Spookahuna tell the video audience that even when they are just trying to make an honest living, they are policed as Kānaka Maoli, as brown men taking up space in Waikīkī. The crime here is that Krystilez is taking up public space in a performance genre that is decidedly outside of norm for Kanaka Maoli men in Waikīkī, where they are supposed to be nothing more than happy surfer boys, smiling Hawaiian musicians, or stoic hula dancers.³⁷

In *The “O,”* Krystilez features the descriptive tales of this reality layered over heavy bass aggressive beats. Robin Kelley has pointed out that the violent lyrics found in gangsta rap are not literal. The boasting that occurs in songs should be taken metaphorically for battles on the mic.³⁸ Black intellectuals have been careful in their defense of these metaphors, as I noted in the previous chapter. The metaphors used in hip-hop often have a relationship to Black vernacular traditions of boasting, toasting, and playing the dozens, where the representation being presented, the gangbanger being the prime example, could be read as a form of opposition.³⁹ Krystilez’s performance operates as an oppositional strategy that bucks social conventions by ostensibly embracing them: Krystilez becomes the very “thug” that society tells him (or other Kānaka Maoli) that he should be.

³⁷ See “Tiki’s taking it to the streets,” <http://www.youtube.com/user/tikient#p/u/1/DeHlkA34VB4> (accessed August 21, 2011).

³⁸ Kelley, “Kickin’ Reality, Kickin’ Ballistics: Gangsta Rap and Postindustrial Los Angeles.”

³⁹ Ibid; Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press Published by University Press of New England, 1994).

The precursor to the modern “thug” was the badman or outlaw from Black folklore, which often entails power-laden violent language and subversive tricksterism that is performed to articulate artists’ (masculine) lyrical prowess rather than represent their lived experience. Instead of trying to fit into that society, they chose to operate outside of it and therein lies the resistance. The over-the-top nature of these narratives, it has been argued, reveals the ridiculousness of the boasting itself and that the narratives are exercises in hyperbole.⁴⁰ If you are able to recognize this vernacular tradition steeped within Black cultural traditions—as contingent as it may be—then you can identify that the lyrics are not meant to be taken at face-value.⁴¹ However, fears of the Black outlaw and the racism generated through these fears have real social impacts and are often invigorated through these representations. Such representations, then, can also incite or at least maintain racism and fear.⁴² Similarly, as Rose and Dyson have warned, these forms now circulate on a global scale, where audiences are most likely unaware or ill-prepared to understand or contextualize how Black cultural traditions fit into them.⁴³ These contemporary differences transform how these traditions are drawn upon, performed, and consumed. Therefore, when Krystilez claims he is going to “blow up Hawai‘i,” he is drawing on hip-hop slang and speaking about how he is going to achieve fame through hip-hop, even as he is also commenting on the need to reevaluate the conditions that exist in Hawai‘i, to enlarge it for scrutiny in the public eye, in other words. His insistence on “supporting locals,” which is spoken repeatedly on *The “O,”* and in advertisements, is a veiled criticism of the corporatized music industry as well as State-level politics that

⁴⁰ Kelley, "Kickin' Reality, Kickin' Ballistics: Gangsta Rap and Postindustrial Los Angeles."

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Crenshaw, "Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black Feminism and 2 Live Crew."

⁴³ Rose, *The Hip-Hop Wars*; Dyson, *Know What I Mean? Reflections on Hip Hop*.

favor the perceived desires of tourism, the military, and other economic imperatives rather than the needs of locals in Hawai‘i.⁴⁴ The next section will look more closely at Krystilez’s lyrics and overall representations, first in *The “O”* as a whole album and then specifically in the song “Bloodline”.

The “O”

Where the palm trees is where you want to be
but paradise is not what it seems
This is the O!
Where you get hustled
tourists get mobbed
and if you start a fight
bitch you’ll get mobbed
-- Krystilez, “The O”

Krystilez’s second album, *The “O”* features fourteen original tracks of high quality recording, slick promotional materials, and impressive lyrical content, all of which indicate Krystilez’s desire to be respected as an MC on a U.S. national level as well as in a mainstream Hawaiian music genre. In interviews he is noted for both his humble beginnings on a Hawaiian Homestead and his desire to put Hawai‘i on the hip-hop map.⁴⁵ Here, I attend to the particularities of the narrative crafted by Krystilez throughout *The “O.”* With specific attention to the sounds invoked in various tracks, I analyze how the music itself draws upon Hawaiian music iconography to complicate the representation of Hawai‘i and Kānaka Maoli.

⁴⁴ I use “local” here rather than “settler” because that is the term that Krystilez uses. “Settler” is still not a common term in Hawai‘i.

⁴⁵ Gary C.W. Chun, “Hip-hop for the Masses,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, May 9, 2006 2006; ———, “Nanakuli’s in the House.”



Figure 3 Krystilez next to a poster of himself. Photo by Geroge F. Lee, originally published in the *Honolulu Advertiser*

The “Wanted” poster of Krystilez (right side of image and also Figure 2) was plastered all over O‘ahu streets and lightposts throughout December 2006 to advertise the release of *The “O.”*⁴⁶ In this image, from an interview with the *Honolulu Advertiser*, Krystilez is decidedly laid back, the top of his head and eyes covered with a hood, leaning against a wire fence. The smile, and the image of reclining against the fence conveys the sense of chillin’ next to this “Wanted” image of himself, which could be interpreted in a number of competing or complementary ways: the smile might be a mischievous acknowledgment of his badboy reputation or what it serves to accomplish; he might be tired or bored of having to play the wanted criminal; or maybe he is smirking at the inside joke—that his entire persona is a fabrication and not “real” within a genre that emphasizes the need to keep things real. Whichever it is, this image captures for me

⁴⁶ Produced by Tiki Entertainment, a full-service promotional one-stop shop, that produces music, prints banners, builds websites, and does car detailing.

the doubled nature of Kanaka Maoli existence, especially for performers, who on the one hand, work to produce specific types of representations to confront social expectations of themselves, but must do so in a context that forces them to perform in particular ways to be recognized as “Hawaiian”. As a Kanaka Maoli, he contends with constant representations of who and what he should be. This context raises another possible reading of the image, one of contemplation: leaning back, Krystilez may also well be in the middle of a deep sigh, thinking to himself, “(sigh) *Bloodline is All I Need.*”

For a stronger sense of what he is thinking, we can turn to a series of videos posted on Tiki Entertainment’s YouTube page. Here, we get a strong glimpse into his vision of and for *The “O.”* To generate hype, Krystilez recorded videos of himself counting down the days before the release of the album. After its release, Tiki Entertainment, the company that released the album, claimed that it sold out of stores on the first day and that it was the greatest Hawai‘i hip-hop album to date. The braggadocio and hype aside, *The “O”* is still on point. At first the album appears to imitate stereotypical mainstream perceptions of hip-hop music as the often-misunderstood soundtrack of oppressed groups whose voices are overlooked in dominant U.S. society, but it manages to rise above the violent and misogynist commentary to present a rich tale about contemporary Hawai‘i. While Krystilez in many ways ascribes to the rampant sexism, endorsement of illegal activity, and glorification of violence (particularly on the tracks “Shake,” “How Bad Do You Want It,” and “The Way It is”) that mainstream U.S. hip-hop is known for, he also presents a narrative of life in Hawai‘i that is conveniently ignored or dismissed in Hawai‘i’s dominant discourses of “local” culture. Tracks like “The ‘O,’” “Diamonds,” and “Bloodline” present glaring counter-narratives to the mythic

representation of Hawai‘i as paradise.

The album’s title track—“The ‘O’”—is an homage to O‘ahu and the island lifestyle that differs considerably from the one in the popular imagination.⁴⁷ “The ‘O’” begins with a half note played on a synthesizer. Then, the beat drops as the voice of a chanting woman fades in. The sound conjures the mental and (for the Hawai‘i audience) familiar image of a kumu hula (hula master) in the process of commanding her hālau (troupe) to take the stage. But Krystilez suddenly and forcefully interjects, “Where the palm trees is where you want to be but paradise is not what it seems.” Still, the chant, or more precisely, an oli performed in the ho‘āeae style, remains audible throughout the aggressive rapping style that ensues.⁴⁸ With its signature unmetred style, this oli actually loops throughout the song, and though it fades into the background, it continues to function nonetheless as an important foil or counterpoint to Krystilez’s often-brutal rhymes.

For reasons I will provide, I contend that this indigenously feminized sound is meant to be the island of O‘ahu. As the oli is repeated, Krystilez’s rhymes can be read as performing an ode to her. In this case, the oli narrates her current condition under colonial rule or occupation (somewhat like an oli ho‘ouwēuwē, characterized by funerary wailing). “This is the O!” is repeated over her authoritative voice of tradition as Krystilez vamps into each chorus. In this song, however, the voice of tradition is not simply relegated to the background, and is not monotone. As Krystilez leads into each chorus, the chant rises in prominence to augment rather than counter a slew of charges or

⁴⁷ Krystilez expresses his feelings about The “O” in a video, see footnote #33. See also, Chun, “Nanakuli’s in the House.”

⁴⁸ There could be multiple interpretations of which style of oli is being referenced, but because of the use of sustained pitches and its incorporation of multiple pitches on the same contour through each phrase (as short as this one is), it fits into the ho‘āeae tradition Stillman, “Textualizing Hawaiian Music.”

indictments that make up the chorus lines. In one chorus, it is “Where the locals run the whole show.” In the next, “Where the sex lingers is the best place, where the best bitches are to get laid.” Another: “Where the boys hustle because the crime pays no other road this is the HI-way.” Subsequent lines refer to “making hits,” “hustling,” etc., all of which signify life in urban Honolulu, but especially in a locale identified specifically as “the West.” This “West” refers to the west side of O‘ahu, to places like Nānākuli and Wai‘anae, which have large concentrations of Kānaka Maoli and which are typically perceived to be the “bad” part of the island. Here, the narrative addresses the tourist, “Where you’re told not to go when you come off the plane. At the beaches proceed with caution.”

As I will elaborate shortly, these lyrics invoke a deep and enduring Hawaiian cultural value of reckoning one’s identity and genealogy in specific relation to place and responsibility to it. This idea is captured in the concept of kuleana, which simultaneously refers to one’s responsibility, one’s relations, and one’s land. The same ideas are captured in other key cultural concepts and practices—such as aloha ‘āina—which expresses profound relations of deep love and affection and stewardship to land as a manifestation of one’s reciprocal relations to ancestors and descendents. Thus in keeping with the Hawaiian music, but also, hip-hop traditions of representing where you come from, Krystilez firmly locates himself in his hometown, Nānākuli Homestead. By “mixing” forms, Krystilez can be appreciated as not simply continuing indigenous traditions in new forms, but actually widening the reach of Kanaka Maoli indigeneity through the invocation of the oli and the song’s lyrical content of the specificities of genealogies of

relations to a specific place.⁴⁹ In what follows, I examine a bit further some of these expansive lyrics and accompanying visuals, which are rooted in these places.

Lyrically, *The “O”* is filled with sensationalistic imagery that narrates the positions of power—party promoter, bouncer, rapper, drug dealer, DJ, pimp—performed by Krystilez and his friends. The combined video for the songs “The ‘O’” and “Won,” originally posted on YouTube, presents visuals that, somewhat like the voice of the Hula chanter, offers interesting moments of countering and augmenting the song’s lyrical content.⁵⁰ The video begins with “Won,” and with Krystilez’s voice, intercut with a beat. Early on, we hear the words, “Tiki Entertainment” spoken and looped across the track. The first visual we see is of Krystilez amidst palm trees. The scene cuts to Krystilez in front of a raised SUV, with the iconic Ko‘olau mountain range, green and lush, in the background. The SUV itself sports an advertisement for *The “O”* and for Krystilez and it is also painted green (and blue). In a series of spins, Krystilez and his crew are shown in various positions relative to the SUV: sometimes they are inside, sometimes standing next to it, sometimes hanging out of the side or off the back. One character here is IZ Real, whose name plays off of the wildly popular and beloved Hawaiian vocalist, the late Israel Kamakawiwo‘ole. IZ Real also appears as Krystilez’s sidekick in “Bloodline.” Notably, in this video, IZ Real is shirtless, and is shown kneeling on top of the truck’s roof, singing and punching the air, jerking and snapping his head toward the sky. The truck is driving slowly as “Won” starts. The song has a decidedly more critical tone than the others, expressing the problems in the “melting pot,” in which cultures are supposed

⁴⁹ Place songs are frequent in Hawaiian music, contemporary songs about a particular place such as: Olomana’s “Ku‘u Home o Kahalu‘u,” Ehukai’s “Molokai Slide,” and Bruddah Waltah’s “Kailua-Kona.”

⁵⁰ Unfortunately, the video for “The ‘O’” and “Won” has been taken down from YouTube (originally accessed November 13, 2009).

to blend but are instead continuously in conflict. At one point in the song, Krystilez says that being raised in Hawai‘i means being “raised in the middle of racism.” The song concludes lyrically by calling for peace in the islands because “you only have one home.” Visually, however, “Won” is abbreviated, choppy, and this fast-cutting style also restructures the song’s chorus, in which Krystilez repeatedly sings, “number one” (“Won”) in such a way as to morph suddenly into the phrase, “This is the O!” At this point, a Hawaiian flag fills the screen, and the video transitions to the song, “The ‘O’.” Moving from the “number one” (“Won”) to “The ‘O’,” the camera pans back to the opening shot of the SUV in front of the Ko‘olau mountain range, and where a man in green and brown baggy fatigues holds a Hawaiian flag in the air. Then the camera cuts to Krystilez who now raps the first few lines of “The ‘O’.” The screen suddenly goes blank except for the teaser, “to be continued.” If “The ‘O’” “mixed” Hawaiian and hip-hop traditions of “repping” identity, this combined teaser for “Won” and the “The ‘O’” also “blends” (or blurs) the “enduring” nature of Hawai‘i through the imagery of the Ko‘olau mountain range with iconographic imagery of hip-hop and street culture in the SUV, through the “natural” colors of the advertisement and the camouflaged military garb, which themselves get displaced by (or which set up for transition into) the Hawaiian flag as the central icon of the struggle to fight for and restore the Hawaiian nation or at the very least to convey Hawaiian pride.⁵¹ In this visual narrative, the figure of the shirtless IZ Real atop the SUV signifies success and prosperity in hip-hop culture.

To be sure, the SUV and the shirtless thuggery clearly denote the bad boy image of defiant urban and street culture that informs and saturates hip-hop, just as “The ‘O’,”

⁵¹ On the “enduring nature” of Hawaiian music, see Osorio, “Songs of Our Natural Selves: The Enduring Voice of Nature in Hawaiian Music.”

“Bloodline,” and “Won” signify Hawaiian hip-hop’s referencing to other Kanaka Maoli locales, places, and peoples who are commonly associated with criminality. Indeed, other songs on the album reference drug use and trafficking, with Krystilez implying his participation in such activities. In “Diamonds” and “The Way It Is,” Krystilez takes a pensive approach by referencing illicit economies that exist in Hawai‘i, calling it the “meth capital” (in “Won”), and affirming that “hardcore crime pays” (in “The ‘O’”). In “Diamonds,” Krystilez laments one man’s crystal meth addiction and his subsequent murder. But in “Won” his demeanor is playful and mischievous: “Hawai‘i has the best sex, these prostitutes are taxing you.” This is in fact one of several recurring moments in this album when Krystilez’s self-identifies as a gangbanger (“a banger”). Even lighter in tone are songs like “Shake” and “How Bad Do You Want It,” which are polished, bass-thumping, soul-infused songs, seemingly intended to be club hits. These songs feature formulaic mainstream hip-hop lyrical content about Krystilez’s sexual prowess and getting drunk or high, and are usually set inside night clubs (“Shake” and “Tha Word”).⁵² “Shake,” especially, mimicks mainstream hip-hop videos in which the primary MC is shown rhyiming in the back of the club, surrounded by women who serve as adornments to his actual physical space as well as to the rest of the club. Everyone in the scene appears to be his friend, as he shouts them out at various moments. Though set in an urban environment and saturated with hyper-sexist sentiment, these songs are also quintessentially about pride and about supporting one’s own community (however broadly construed it may be). Here, Krystilez uses Hawaiian hip-hop to carve out a space

⁵² Krystilez video for “Shake,” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lc-VK-7g7eE&feature=player_embedded (accessed February 17, 2011). Also posted is a video for “Tha Word,” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IS0dFmUyapY&feature=player_embedded (accessed February 17, 2011).

not meant for tourists, a place and space for Kanaka Maoli (or “local”) performers. Moreover, he reminds us that indigeneity is not to be incarcerated in the space of “nature” even if nature continues to be an enduring space for indigeneity.

‘Āina, Place, and Space

As the indigenous people of the Hawaiian archipelago, Kānaka Maoli are genealogically descended from the land, referring to ourselves as people of the land or ka po‘e o ka ‘āina.⁵³ As people of the land, Kānaka Maoli bear the privilege and responsibility of caring for the ‘āina. ‘Āina means that which feeds, the ‘āina is a source of nourishment and sustenance. As noted by Kame‘eleihiwa, communal access to land, sharing of food, and the collective responsibilities among the people, land, and sea were all connected to the ‘āina.⁵⁴ Caring for the ‘āina was about relationships with all that was around you—the ali‘i, the commoners, ancestors, the plants, the animals—‘āina was never bought or sold, it is vibrant, something to be shared, cared for, and honored.⁵⁵ As I’ve indicated above, Krystilez’s well-known song, “Bloodline” honors the ‘āina in such a way—it is a Hawaiian hip-hop representation of cultural values like kuleana, a genealogical relationship and custodial relationship to the land, and to aloha ‘āina, the Hawaiian philosophy of loving and caring for the land.

Aloha ‘āina is a Hawaiian epistemological perspective and political position that has endured since time immemorial. Like the meanings that undergird kuleana, aloha ‘āina speaks to the familial relationship Kānaka Maoli have to the land that gives life to

⁵³ As well as within mainstream discourse in Hawai‘i—this also marks Kānaka Maoli as being unable to move.

⁵⁴ Kame'eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires/Pehea La E Pono Ai?*: 9.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

the love of nation in Hawai‘i.⁵⁶ As Silva has documented, during the time of the overthrow, Kānaka Maoli mobilized politically to retain the sovereignty of lāhui (nation) through organizations like the Hui Hawai‘i Aloha ‘Āina, which worked to gather signatures on the anti-annexation petitions and offered testimony to U.S. Commissioner James Blount who was investigating the overthrow in 1893.⁵⁷ As we have seen in previous chapters, aloha ‘āina reemerged in the 1970s during the Hawaiian Renaissance when members of the Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana began protesting the ongoing military use of the island.⁵⁸ Aloha ‘āina has thus survived as vital part of Kanaka Maoli political consciousness, as an alternative practice of loving the land to oppose tourism development, military occupation, and suburban growth. As Trask poignantly asserted, “Our philosophy as nationalist Hawaiians must be aloha ‘āina, an alternative to tourism and militarism. It means a profound cultural belonging to the land as our ‘ohana.”⁵⁹ In this sense, aloha ‘āina works to “take back” aloha from capitalist exploitation and alienation and re-centers it for Kānaka Maoli.⁶⁰ “Bloodline” is a descendant of aloha ‘āina as well and provides a new soundtrack for aloha ‘āina, representing ka po‘e ke aloha o ka ‘āina (the people who love the land) when calling out the homesteads. Obviously, the imposition of colonialism and capitalism in Hawai‘i has transformed how

⁵⁶ Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism*: 130-31.

⁵⁷ The Blount Report was a foreign relations committee report regarding the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893. President Grover Cleveland appointed James H. Blount to investigate the activities of the overthrow. Blount concluded that the U.S. was complicit with the overthrow and called it an “act of war.”

⁵⁸ The Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana is a grassroots organization that has been at the forefront efforts to stop bombing on the island and provide stewardship of the island’s natural and cultural resources. Since 1980, the organization has led cultural access trips to Kaho‘olawe for thousands of students, community organizations and volunteers.

⁵⁹ Video clip of Haunani-Kay Trask on “Journey to Justice: A Conversation with Haunani-Kay Trask” on <http://www.hegemonystudies.org/journeytojustice/2010/07/a-conversation-with-dr-haunani-kay-trask/> (accessed August 23, 2011). Original footage by Nā Maka o Ka ‘Āina, Ho‘oku‘oko‘a 1985.

⁶⁰ Ohnuma, ““Aloha Spirit” and the Cultural Politics of Sentiment as National Belonging,” 380.

Kānaka Maoli relate to the ʻāina in multiple ways. But, in “Bloodline,” Krystilez narrates again the ongoing relationship between ʻāina, place, identity, and blood. “Bloodline” thus has profound resonance with Hawaiian history, the politics of authenticity, and modern Kanaka Maoli identity.

As we have also seen in previous chapters, the 1920 Hawaiian Homes Commission Act affirmed the special relationship between the U.S. and Native Hawaiians. In this act, two hundred thousand acres of land were set aside for Native Hawaiian homesteads. Annual lease rent is \$1 per year with a ninety-nine year lease term that can be extended for an additional hundred years. As of 2009 there were 40,084 applicants total across the islands for either a residential, agricultural or pastoral lot. Of those applicants, 20,112 are on a waitlist for a residential lot, where they could stay for years.⁶¹ According to a 2008 report, twenty-three percent of homesteaders waited more than twenty-five years before they were “awarded” their plot.⁶² Not surprisingly, the administration of these lands have come under considerable scrutiny. Applicants must be at least fifty percent blood quantum to qualify for lands or be the descendant of someone on the waiting list. In addition to this requirement, because obtaining the necessary documents and making a formal claim is mired in various levels of bureaucracy, many Kānaka Maoli have difficulty qualifying for these lands. They are further deterred from the application process as they see how many people, spanning several generations, remain on the waiting list. Another obstacle is the fact that one might be awarded a homestead plot located in an unfavorable site, for example, far away from one’s

⁶¹ Department of Hawaiian Homelands, "Department of Hawaiian Homelands 2009 Annual Report," (Honolulu2009), 26.

⁶² ———, "DHHL Applicant Survey, DHHL Beneficiary Surveys Update," (Honolulu: State of Hawai'i Department of Hawaiian Homelands, 2008).

workplace. Some awards have even been located on an island different from where the awardee currently resides. While the history and policies that went into the creation and administration of “homestead lands” are undoubtedly problematic, Kānaka Maoli nevertheless continue to generate mo‘olelo (stories) and mele about those places.⁶³ This generative process exhibits how the meanings of lands are constantly remade by historical conditions, including racist colonial policies, and by the people who inhabit these lands. The song “Bloodline” is case in point.

Coded as “homestead,” these places have inherent meaning, as well as other types of significance that existed before homesteads were created. They will continue to exist even if and when the policies of homesteading terminate. Hawaiian lands are “storied places” that have always played a crucial role in narrating Hawaiian traditions that are still active today. Many places in Hawai‘i possess stories about land, depicting the land as living entities. The localized, animated, specific, and emotionally-charged narratives in “Bloodline” exemplify the backbone of Kanaka Maoli narrative traditions.⁶⁴ Mo‘olelos are woven to narrate the history of these lands in a dialogue that enacts a transformative recognition of place. As Bacchilega writes, Kānaka Maoli produce “Nā wahi pana” or “storied places” that draw on cultural memory and activate history in the present moment and location.⁶⁵

Henri Lefebvre (1991) explains how places and spaces are created through social relations to them. Physical spaces generate reality through the energies that are deployed

⁶³ Kauanui has written extensively about the problems with Hawaiian homestead policies, particularly blood quantum, see Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity*.

⁶⁴ Cristina Bacchilega, *Legendary Hawai‘i and the Politics of Place* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007). 8-9, 36.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

within them.⁶⁶ As Kānaka Maoli negotiate the ways in which they have been dispossessed of their lands, they recreate homestead spaces. “Bloodline” does this by producing new forms of cultural memory through Krystilez’s narration of what his homestead means to himself and possibly to other listeners as well. Rather than telling a story about economic decline, racial segregation, and criminal activity, hip-hop can explore the ways in which these spaces and places are made meaningful.⁶⁷ Hawaiian homesteads are often called “ghetto” because they are recognized as profoundly Kanaka Maoli spaces and, by extension, are perceived as economically depressed and ridden with crime. The story Krystilez tells throughout *The “O”* draws on hip-hop’s desire to represent place as well as contributes to nā wahi pana, which offers a narrative of the homestead that, although grim, asserts pride in Kanaka Maoli resilience. In “Bloodline,” this is represented visually in the YouTube video and particularly in the lyrics, “till I face defeat, bloodline is all I need.”

Kanaka Maoli relationship to homesteads, the blood quantum rule and the resulting identifications with “place,” have a lasting impact on contemporary Kanaka Maoli claims to self-determination, particularly in a climate where questions of Hawaiian self-governance are gaining federal deliberation.⁶⁸ Krystilez’s visual and sonic recreation of homestead space in “Bloodline” allows Kānaka Maoli to identify with homesteads through song and more importantly, it encourages Kānaka Maoli to claim homesteads as their own—even if they cannot qualify for a homestead plot. “Bloodline” returns the homestead to Kānaka Maoli, to all Kānaka Maoli. Returning the homestead to Kānaka

⁶⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1991). 13.

⁶⁷ Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal, *That's the Joint!: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

⁶⁸ Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity*.

Maoli through song marks events, memories and emotions for listeners, connecting them to homesteads, to Hawai‘i, to each other. Hawaiian music, surely, has always served the purpose of honoring place and the lāhui, a need that is amplified in the present as the Kanaka Maoli diaspora continues to grow. To feel a connection to a place, whether you have spent all or none of your life there, is increasingly negotiated through cultural production and the global digital-media formats through which hip-hop circulates. This is evidenced in the number of Hawaiian music artists and groups that now frequently travel to the U.S. West Coast to perform at cultural festivals and venues that cater to Hawaiian communities in those areas or more broadly to Pacific Islander communities. As this diaspora grows, thinking about indigeneity as “belonging to a place” rather than “belonging in a place” might better contextualize the lives of the Kānaka Maoli.⁶⁹

In this vein, as Diaz and Kauanui have noted, indigeneity is both routed and rooted, moving, evolving, and gesturing toward its past and its future.⁷⁰ In a capitalist economy that has pushed many Kānaka Maoli off-island out of economic necessity, this is crucial. Kanaka Maoli indigeneity, therefore, must allow movement. As Kauanui has pointed out, one of the biggest problems facing the Kanaka Maoli diaspora is that Kānaka Maoli living off-island are invisible to each other and isolated from Kānaka Maoli living in Hawai‘i.⁷¹ As I will elaborate shortly, the call and response at the end of “Bloodline” combats this. When IZ Real shouts “Rep your bloodline! Nānākuli Bloodline!” a

⁶⁹ Harvey and Thompson, *Indigenous Diasporas and Dislocations*.

⁷⁰ Diaz and Kauanui, "Native Pacific Cultural Studies on the Edge." James Clifford builds on Diaz and Kauanui, see Clifford's *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1997).

⁷¹ According to the OHA, *Native Hawaiian Data Book*. Population forecasts show that the Kānaka Maoli population living outside of Hawai‘i continues to increase due to the cost of living and limited economic opportunities. Sixty percent of the Kānaka Maoli population lives in Hawai‘i, followed by large populations in California, Washington, Nevada, and Texas (17). Kauanui, "Diasporic Deracination and "Off-Island" Hawaiians."

cacophony of voices replies, “Nānākuli get!” The song slowly fades out as a long list of places on O‘ahu—all communities with large Kanaka Maoli populations—are “called out” and the appropriate “response” repeated.⁷² Notably, after the actual places are shouted out in “Bloodline,” the last few shouts are “H-I Bloodline” and “Tiki Bloodline” in reference to Hawai‘i and Tiki Entertainment. This can be interpreted in several ways, on the one hand, they are merely representing their record label, but on a deeper level, it could be interpreted as a shout-out to their label and the sense of community it provides for them and for possible listeners who may have a different relationship to the places shouted-out (i.e., being in the Hawaiian diaspora and not being familiar with actual homesteads).

Thus, “Bloodline” pays tribute to homesteads and to the other places mentioned, thereby expressing a longstanding tradition of Kanaka Maoli connectivity to place. This rearticulated connection is all the more crucial in an era in which many Kānaka Maoli wherever they live may no longer meet the stringent blood-quantum requirements. By shouting out these places, “Bloodline” makes visible an affirmation of pride in the homestead that viewers can experience in spite of the tension that exists between the Kānaka Maoli who can make claims to homestead land and those who cannot. Rather than showing a “refusal,” Kānaka Maoli answer the call when called by another Kanaka Maoli, to “rep your bloodline,” to show your love or aloha for that place. Hawaiian homesteads thus continue to serve as sites of cultural ownership and pride, even if these sentiments are experienced alongside highly charged political debates, including those

⁷² The comments section for the “Bloodline” video is telling of the different interpretations that the video yields. Some comments aim to represent their own “bloodline,” or where someone is from, whereas other comments mock Krystilez and others in the video as gangsta wannabes or shameful examples of Hawaiianness.

that seek to quantify indigeneity through blood count.

Supporting Locals Since Day One

As previously mentioned, Hawaiian music is an ever-shifting and evolving musical form. Unfortunately, it is also a form that, because of a colonial legacy that associates and defines Nativeness in organic, pristine terms linked to nature, a Kanaka Maoli performer that deviates from that specific inheritance will be considered suspect as an “authentic” Native. This is why Kanaka Maoli performers who stick out from “Hawaiian music” must create their own spaces and networks. In Hawai‘i, there exists multiple levels of musical cultural production: a mainstream Hawaiian music scene that caters primarily to tourists (and residents or locals); a mainstream hip-hop scene that aspires mainstream radio play and success (much like the hip-hop heard on the U.S. continent); and an underground hip-hop scene that focuses on hip-hop culture as a whole and celebrates all its elements of b-boy/b-girlin’ (breakdancing), graffiti, turntablism, and freestyling (rapping). Krystilez circulates in the latter two scenes. Moreover, in the broader musical scene, opportunities for live performers are limited, as many of the venues prefer Hawaiian music that caters to tourists and locals, military personnel, or others interested in other genres (like American rock music). Spaces for the live performance of hip-hop are few and far in-between.

In what follows I will explain some of the differences in the spaces that local hip-hop performers must create to perform live. In the chapter two, I recalled feelings of detachment, even boredom, when I saw Krystilez perform at the first Hawai‘i Hip-Hop Festival. I felt that I wasn’t alone in my boredom, as I saw other attendees roaming around, checking out the booths, eating, drinking, or just getting high in the parking lot

(no judgment) as we waited for Public Enemy to take the stage. As an opening act for an iconic rap group, Krystilez and the other opening acts were offered an opportunity to perform for a crowd that might have otherwise never been exposed to them. At the same time, as an opening act, they were subject to the disinterest of a crowd who is waiting for the main act to go on. The latter seemed to be the sentiment of the crowd. Also, the hypermasculinity of the opening acts seemed to turn off some of the women in the crowd as well as those who came to witness the politicism of Public Enemy, not what they perceived to be the masculine posturing of young Pacific Islander men.

Other spaces like Pipeline Café necessitate more direct crowd contact because of its size (in contrast to the hip-hop festival which was in an open field). Pipeline Café, a converted warehouse in a semi-industrial part of Honolulu, was a venue known for hosting mainland musical acts and larger local acts. Krystilez held his release party for *The “O”* there to a nearly sold out crowd of fifteen hundred people (big by island standards).⁷³ At this release party, Krystilez arrived in a SUV stretch limo with women on each of his arms, further contributing to his “pimp” or “banger” persona. The space was thus constructed as one in which to celebrate Krystilez’s success as a local performer, which, given Krystilez and Tiki Entertainment’s insistence on “supporting locals since day one,” was also about the creation of a space that honored locals, not tourists.

I have also watched Krystilez perform in smaller spaces, such as a freestyle cipher where a number of MC’s stand in a circle and battle each other lyrically. On one particular occasion, at the B-Boy Reunion held in 2007 at University of Hawai‘i at

⁷³ Pipeline Café was known throughout the islands as one of its premiere hot spots, but was shut down in February 2011. Live music and dance venues in Honolulu have a rather quick turnover. Venues often change names and owners or they just shut down completely.

Mānoa's campus center ballroom, I witnessed his freestyling skills. The B-Boy Reunion creates a different kind of space. Many of the people there are consumers and producers of hip-hop culture. The B-Boy Reunion is also primarily a brown space, like the CD release party held at Pipeline Café. You could count the number of white people on your hand (believe me, I tried). It is an event that is focused on hip-hop as a culture, not just a paycheck. Young brown people, mostly boys, were in matching shirts in impromptu breaking circles—doing head-spins, shoulder rolls, helicopters, and other breaking staples. Despite the prominence of young men in the space, it did not feel like a “male” space; it seemed like a space for people who loved hip-hop in Hawai‘i. The day was split up into various showcases and competitions—DJ-battle, MC-battle, and graffiti. The latter was noticeable, people were spread out all over the ballroom drawing with their friends, and most notably, watching folks draw large-scale murals on the walls outside of the ballroom. There, I saw Krystilez. He stood next to MC Big Mox in a miniature freestyle cipher. A freestyle cipher consists of rhyiming MCs and onlookers who form a circle and evaluate the overall lyrical skills of participants. It was a smaller-scale cipher where Krystilez and Big Mox were battling with two younger MC's. Krystilez was having them for breakfast, but his demeanor was light, he knew he was easily outperforming them, yet he was doing so in a way that presented himself as a bit of a role model for them, so that they would put more work into their skills, to develop them on their own. He was not trying to publicly shame them, when he easily could have. Ciphers are considered to be the heart of underground scenes because all styles, norms and values of the scene have to come together for a person to properly represent and earn the respect

of their peers.⁷⁴ Krystilez is known for his freestyle skills throughout the islands because of the sharpness of his lyrical prowess, earning him a prominent place within the hip-hop community. Though Krystilez performance in both these spaces may seem somewhat contrasting—arriving in a stretch limo to denote “success” versus participating in a miniature freestyle cipher with novice performers—it shows his ability to navigate both spaces as well as again, a commitment to local hip-hop culture, one that is decidedly on the periphery of “mainstream” culture in Hawai‘i.

The lack of physical spaces to perform in the modern age is supplemented with the proliferation of interactive digital spaces to foster a local underground scene. Through the writing of songs and their performance, in the age of YouTube, MySpace, Facebook, and the like, there are a myriad of spaces in which counter-hegemonic discourse is being communicated in ways similar to the past. Videos of Krystilez on YouTube and MySpace feature him speaking directly to the viewer, hence providing an opportunity for him to be in direct dialogue with his fans—whoever or wherever they may be. Often, participation in these online groups is organized with reference to geographical location, as a space to discuss pertinent local issues.⁷⁵ The comments sections or posting walls of many of these online-interfaces involve posts by fans who represent where they come from, praise Krystilez, call him out, critique him, and often post to promote their own agendas (albums, clothing lines, events). The very same technology (and referent corporate controllers) that produces these commercialized conditions also possess its radical promise. And, because Krystilez does not get mainstream attention on local radio or

⁷⁴ Marcylienna H. Morgen, *The Real Hip Hop: Battling for Knowledge, Power, and Respect in the LA Underground* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009). 59.

⁷⁵ Nancy K. Baym, *Personal connections in the digital age*, Digital media and society (Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity, 2010). 76.

television, and there are a limited number of opportunities for him to perform, he has to promote himself in these spaces, both online and in the streets. In all of these instances, Krystilez's performance exhibits the different ways that 'āina, place, and space are manifested through Hawaiian hip-hop. In the case of the 'āina, "Bloodline" presents an opportunity to tell a mo'olelo about contemporary Hawaiian life and offers Kānaka Maoli in the diaspora a chance to identify with homesteads. Making this connection to homesteads is an example of the ways that places are made meaningful through Hawaiian hip-hop, exhibiting these creative and interactive spaces, whether through online media or in a freestyle cipher. Krystilez's narrative presents an opportunity to examine the multi-layered nature of Hawaiian hip-hop and more importantly contemporary Kanaka Maoli life.

Answering Aloha's Call in "*Bloodline is All I Need*"

We gave our people aloha 'āina
An original indigenous Hawaiian alternative
Not democracy
Not Jeffersonianism
Not Reaganism
But aloha 'āina
There isn't a single western country in the world that can beat aloha 'āina!
They don't love their land.

– Haunani-Kay Trask⁷⁶

Til I face defeat. Responding to the call to "rep your bloodline," Kānaka Maoli affirm their ongoing presence on lands that were taken from them. It is the land as a material entity and as our ancestor that is the discursive terrain upon which current battles over land tenure are waged amongst Hawaiian nationalists, private landowners, the state

⁷⁶ Video clip of Haunani-Kay Trask on "Journey to Justice: A Conversation with Haunani-Kay Trask" on <http://www.hegemonystudies.org/journeytojustice/2010/07/a-conversation-with-dr-haunani-kay-trask/> (accessed August 23, 2011). Original footage by Nā Maka o Ka 'Āina, Ho'oku'oko'a 1985.

of Hawai‘i, and the federal government. *It was always about the land.* The call and response in “Bloodline” is about aloha ‘āina, about the enduring connection to the land and this is precisely when listeners respond to aloha’s call. Aloha’s call is buried in the shout out or call to “rep your bloodline.” When listeners respond with their bloodline, their homestead or place that they are from, they are affirming their aloha for that place. They are answering aloha’s call. When they respond, they place themselves, they become grounded, they sustain their Kanaka Maoli identity in a way that is again, about community belonging and recognition. The emotive power of answering aloha’s call exceeds the bounds of the state’s gaze because this aloha is being performed through a refusal. Answering this call is both private and public, it can be done in the privacy of one’s headphones, nodding quietly and screaming on the inside “Nānākuli get!” or in a group, at a concert, defiantly representing who you are, “HI Bloodline!” This defiance is heard in Hawaiian place songs, seen on car decals, worn on t-shirts and in tattoos, held in our hearts. *Bloodline is all I need.*

Defiant indigeneity, ultimately, is about this refusal. At the same time, looking closely at Krystilez’s defiant indigeneity also requires an understanding of the ways that Kānaka Maoli were made into disciplined subjects by looking to the spaces in which marginal voices get co-opted and recolonized into a unitary discourse. It also necessitates a consideration of how spaces are remade through Kanaka Maoli assertions (i.e., in songs like “Bloodline”). Critique is equally important, as Krystilez could be easily praised for his modern Kanaka resistance just as quickly as he could be dismissed because of his hyper-masculinist hetero-patriarchal assertions of indigeneity. Thus, the refusal of aloha can manifest itself in problematic ways. It is not perfect, but the refusal is a strategy, and

while it may not have clear means, it has astute intention: survival.

So when Krystilez says, “either you know aloha or you get no aloha,” he is stating, either you are already part of the community or you aren’t. Either you have a bloodline or you don’t. There is an implicit understanding of aloha that marks membership through “knowing” aloha and about having a bloodline. Through his lyrical defiance, he is critiquing the very knowability of indigeneity itself. You have to be one of us to get it. As people of the land, we have a responsibility to the land, to the ‘āina. The ‘āina, like our bloodline, is all that we need as Kānaka Maoli. It is saying, all I need is my blood, all I need is *Who I am*. This is what connects me to the land. This is *my aloha* and it will not be compromised. In this sense, the refusal is in turning away from the State and returning to the land and to expressing aloha for the land in a different manner, in a way that is connected to the past but is wholly modern and does not need the settler-State. *Bloodline is all I need*, reminds us of our ongoing refusal, of our aloha for Hawai‘i and our fight to continue being Kanaka Maoli.

Part III.

The Confession

Bless me father for I have sinned.

The first two parts of the dissertation explored the reasons why Kānaka Maoli believe in aloha and the dynamic ways that we perform aloha to retain its cultural strength for ourselves and to be recognized as Kānaka Maoli. In Part I, I theorized the ways that Kānaka Maoli perform aloha by answering aloha's "call" as an act of survival. Part II, "The Refusal", shifted the answer to the call by examining some instances where the answer appears to be an act of defiance—a refusal to perform in the forms that have been outlined for Kānaka Maoli, and most importantly, a refusal that encapsulates an understanding of the limits of answering the call itself. In refusal, we create and reconfigure Kanaka Maoli life through performance.

Part III is about the call to "confess." I build upon recent scholarship that critiques "the confession," the processes of subjectification that compel subjects to confess about their lives. This chapter therefore exposes and interrogates "the confession" as a paradigmatic epistemological framework in Ethnic Studies and Native Studies scholarship in particular, a framework that sometimes fetishizes the narratives of minorities, especially Natives. In chapter four, "Cocoa Chandelier's Confessional," I begin with an explanation of the chapters' methodological approach, explaining the

significance of “the confession.” Following this, I focus on the 2001 film, *Ke Kulana He Māhū*, a film that documented the existence of a vibrant māhūwahine culture in Hawai‘i and the impact of American colonialism on non-Western, non-heteronormative populations. Chapter five, “Hung up at the Feet of Orientalism,” maps out my theory of Hawaiian cultural performativity. I depart from the dominant tendency in studies of Hawaiian performance that focuses on the documentation of hula repertoire and interpretation of mele or song texts, to explicate the ways that “Hawaiian performance” is deeply tied to capitalist logics and our understanding of “Hawaiianess” itself and how this understanding is fraught because of its links to the discourse of aloha.

Chapter five also examines more closely how Cocoa Chandelier performs aloha *in drag* and the importance of this evasive mode of performance. As an example, I conduct a close reading of Cocoa Chandelier’s winning performance at the 2008 Universal Showqueen Pageant (USQ) to map some of the ways that her material suggests a new approach to Hawaiian Studies scholarship and knowledge production. Performing aloha in drag reinvents Hawaiian cultural performativity to deconstruct and make possible a renewed sense of Kanaka Maoli indigeneity that is not overdetermined or inhibited by its widely circulated performances.

In these final chapters, I draw from performance theory, heavily influenced by post-structuralism, to conduct a discursive analysis of Cocoa Chandelier’s performance strategies.¹ Rather than a study of how this artist identifies as “queer” or how this artist is “queer,” I explore Cocoa Chandelier’s body of work in order to “queer” the scholarship

¹ Post-structuralism is an intellectual movement rooted in the study of language, literature, and culture, which facilitated the debunking of binary oppositions, the unquestioned quest for absolute truth, and the deconstruction of “the subject.”

on Hawaiian performance. My study of Chandelier critiques the practices of ethnographic entrapment that makes Natives into objects of study.² Rather than tell Cocoa Chandelier's life-story or examine her cultural performance as a means to comment on the natural essences of Kanaka Maoli indigeneity, I offer a critical reading of her body of work to meditate on the state of Hawaiian performance.

² Andrea Smith, "Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16, no. 1-2 (2010): 42, 60.

Chapter 4

Cocoa Chandelier's Confessional

Living in a Material World

In an old Chinese restaurant converted into a hip “loft” nightclub that overlooks N. Hotel and Maunakea Street in Honolulu’s Chinatown, Cocoa Chandelier³ staged a confessional. “Cocoa Chandelier’s Confessional” (on August 14, 2009, Madonna’s 49th birthday) featured Cocoa Chandelier and friends in an ode to the material girl. Blondes were granted free entrance and audience members were encouraged to donate money to confess.⁴ Cocoa Chandelier performed a series of numbers from Madonna’s body of work, as did other performers. Numbers featured were “Erotica,” “Justify My Love,” “Cherish,” “Hung Up” (my personal favorite), and many more.⁵ Cocoa Chandelier’s greatest costume feat of the evening was a blue and green mermaid suit for “Cherish,” complete with bare-chested brown boys in towels who carried her onto the stage, and a pink leotard and blonde wig for “Hung Up.” It made sense that this evening would be dedicated to Madonna, the ultimate cultural appropriator.⁶

³ As a point of clarification, I will refer to Cocoa Chandelier with female pronouns because in drag culture, drag queens generally refer to one another that way. I am analyzing Cocoa Chandelier as a performer and therefore will refer to her in the gender pronoun she performs as.

⁴ A fundraiser for travel to a drag competition.

⁵ “Erotica” (1992), “Justify My Love” (1990), “Cherish” (1989), “Hung up” (2005).

⁶ At the “confession”, Cocoa Chandelier signified Madonna, known for her appropriation of Black cultural forms and known widely for popularizing various forms of dance, notably voguing and crumping. Madonna has also been known widely to perform “Oriental” markers, such as henna tattoos in the music

The loft space was adorned with candles and pillows. Audience members sat on the floor, on pillows, small couches, or stood around the periphery of the room. Throughout the room, red and white candle wax dripped on the cool cement floor à la *Body of Evidence* (1993).⁷ Italian food (included in the \$10 pre-sale ticket price) was laid out, but Italian food seemed out of place in the heart of Chinatown, where quality local food is available on every street corner for less than six dollars. In contemporary Hawai‘i, there isn’t much available at that price, although in this part of town, anything is possible. A few blocks away from Chinatown’s “revitalization,” the backdoor economy of Chinatown still exists to titillate the senses despite efforts to “weed and seed” the area of drug trafficking, homelessness, and prostitution. Stigmatized like those in other cities, Honolulu’s Chinatown is known for its seediness, but in recent years, gentrification has turned these once-avoided streets into a hotbed of artist activity.⁸ While Chinatown undergoes uneven levels of urban renewal and redevelopment, performance spaces like The Loft pop-up (and go out of business), offering momentary opportunities for artists to add new narratives to Chinatown’s littered streets and histories lining Hotel, Bishop, Maunakea, and Pauahi Streets. With namesakes who ring prominently in Hawaiian history, these streets are now obscured by maps and bus schedules that highlight

video for “Frozen” (1998) and dressed as a Geisha in “Nothing Really Matters” (1999). Madonna continues to be an icon in queer communities.

⁷ The film was Madonna’s fourth acting attempt and received negative reviews from critics. The film was noted for its dark themes and sadomasochistic sexual storyline. There is a notable scene in which she drips candle wax on a man’s chest.

⁸ Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown*, American crossroads (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). 43. Chinatowns were historically noted as havens for illicit behavior, most notably drug use, illegal immigration, prostitution, and diseases of all kinds. In an article the rise of the artist community in Chinatown, Ragnar Carlson writes, “Now, a new generation of urban pioneers is remaking the street. Just steps from thriving Nu‘uanu Avenue, artists, musicians and entrepreneurs—savvy with experience gained elsewhere and driven by passion for the street—are looking to help the strip step out of its rough-and-tumble past and into a new life as an artistic and cultural mecca.” Ragnar Carlson, “Hotel Street: From Skid Row to Pacific Soho,” *Honolulu Weekly*, June 15 2005. Chinatown is also known for its mähū sex workers.

Hawai‘i’s booming multicultural arts scene. Considered “ultrahip” signs of “progress,” these scenes also unfortunately naturalize the forces of colonialism and capitalist expansion.

People were asked to confess, but not many did. Cocoa Chandelier herself did not confess. Another prominent drag queen, serving as the host of the evening, circled the room with a microphone and a shoebox and asked for confessions and donations, slightly unnerving the audience. A room full of butchies and muffies greeted her with silence and snickers, which seemed odd considering most drag shows involve lots of shouting bitchy commentary, reading, and screaming directed at the performers.⁹ To be sure, this was not a drag show per se, and I was somewhat frightened by the silence. There were many performers in the crowd, in drag or not, but in spite of this, no one seemed to be trying to be in the spotlight. Most people made their comments or confessions from where they were seated on the floor or from the periphery of the space, preferring not to speak on the microphone and to be heard by everyone. A prominent drag queen/māhū named Kaina Jacobs, walked to the front of the show, donated a handful of money, and walked away without confessing anything.¹⁰ As the evening progressed, most people declined the call to “confess,” seemingly aware of the cost of their visibility. I surely was. I could hear in my head, “visibility is a trap.”¹¹ I wondered, given the seemingly intimate space

⁹ “Butchie” is a term often used in Hawai‘i to refer to lesbians, it does not necessarily refer only to lesbians who appear “Butch” or masculine. “Muffie” is a word used to describe gay men. To “read” someone in drag pageant culture is to examine someone’s performance. This sometimes involves verbal assaults about someone’s physical presentation or other times it involves elaborate hand gestures and dancing. The practice was popularized by Madonna in the song “Vogue.” In the video and later on tour, Madonna appropriated “voguing” from African American and Latino drag ball culture prominent in urban centers, notably Harlem and Brooklyn. She continues to do so, most recently with “crumping” in the video for “Hung Up” off her *Confessions on a Dance Floor* release in 2005.

¹⁰ Kaina Jacobs was Universal Showqueen 2001.

¹¹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*: 200.

comprised of friends and family members, what was the justification for the silent response to Cocoa Chandelier's call to confess?

This chapter interrogates "the confession," the predominant approach in Ethnic Studies and Native Studies scholarship that fetishizes the narratives of Natives, who feel compelled to make our "truth" known against the historical silencing and belittling effects of colonialism. The focal point of this interrogation is *Ke Kulana He Māhū* (2001), a critically acclaimed film that brought much attention to the existence of a vibrant transgender māhūwahine culture in Hawai'i. Technically, a māhū was a hermaphrodite in pre-colonial Hawaiian society. Contemporary usage generally refers to gay men, transgender women (male-to-female), and drag queens, but rarely to transgender men (female-to-male) or lesbians.¹² This film illustrates the limits of a liberal discourse of inclusion and the minority desire to be included. Like aloha, this film is beautiful, but it is also fraught.

As in previous chapters, I return to and build upon the work of Rey Chow and Elizabeth Povinelli, and in Native Studies, the work of Andrea Smith, Audra Simpson, and Glen Coulthard, all of whom critique the desire for "recognition" or "visibility" that underwrite collective efforts to achieve liberation from, or at least redress, by the majority.¹³ As Chow explains, the self-referential nature of the confession, which aims to find a way out of the "errors of self-representation," is also "a symptom of collective

¹² Very rarely does it refer to lesbians, although recently there has been more attention to a māhūkane female-to-male transgender community in Hawai'i that traces their modern identities to Hawaiian antiquity. Less frequently noted are the "aikane," usually male lovers to male ali'i (chiefs), who were active members of Hawaiian pre-colonial society.

¹³ See Coulthard, "Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the 'Politics of Recognition'"; Smith, *Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances*; Simpson, "On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, 'Voice' and Colonial Citizenship." Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism*; Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism*.

subjection” that the protesting ethnic subject is consistently engaged in.¹⁴ My objective, then, is to challenge the idea that Ethnic—specifically, Natives—ought to “speak our truth,” “share our culture,” and “let our voices be heard” as prerequisites to liberation. I critique these processes in this chapter to set up my analysis of Cocoa Chandelier’s performances in chapter five.

Cocoa Chandelier is a performer and choreographer working in urban Honolulu. She engages in ambivalent and complicated performances that do not register on the Kanaka Maoli radar. Cocoa Chandelier’s body of work, in various groups and under various aliases, has dazzled (and baffled) audiences in venues ranging from the backdoor industrial warehouses of the mid-90s rave culture, to the Waikīkī gay nightclub Fusions’ Paper Doll Show Revue, to the Iona Pear dance company.¹⁵ She choreographs most frequently with Giinko Marischino, an avant-guard troupe that performs in urban Honolulu and specializes in experimental *butoh* dance.¹⁶ Cocoa Chandelier has also appeared in numerous stage productions around Honolulu, has been an artist-in-residence

¹⁴ Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism*: 114-15. Rey Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 114-15.

¹⁵ Cocoa Chandelier also appeared as Hawaiian mythological character, Lohi’au, Pele’s lover, in Iona Pear’s rendition of Hawaiian mythology. For more, Catherine Kekoa Enomoto, "Modern Myth: Hawaiian legends wax eclectic," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, May 27, 1997 1997.

¹⁶ Giinko Marischino is a collective of dancers specializing in the collaborative process as a method of participatory art making. With a base in *butoh* and modern dance, Giinko includes other realms of art such as drag, comedy, installation, music and video in its eclectic performance events. Since its inception in the mid-1990’s, co-founders Sami Akuna (Cocoa Chandelier), Summer Partlon and Malia Oliver. The intent was to take their dance training off the formal stage and out into the world where the intersection of dance and art was alive with invention. The concept of *ohana* (family) and social inclusion is the unique process by which the group works. Respect for and recognition of the individual within the group is the foundation for the ongoing success of this dance collective. Information taken from Giinko’s facebook page, <http://www.facebook.com/pages/GIINKO-MARISCHINO/81348636162#!/pages/GIINKO-MARISCHINO/81348636162?v=info> (accessed January 13, 2011). Giinko specializes in *Butoh*, a form of dance that originated in Japan by Tatsumi Hijikata in the late 1950s. *Butoh* is a rebellion against Western and Japanese dance traditions, incorporating many influences, involving playful and sometimes grotesque imagery, absurd movements in slow motion, sometimes in white body make-up. *Butoh* is a form of dance about darkness, haunting, and evading definition. See Sondra Horton Fraleigh, *Dancing into Darkness* (1999) and *Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy* (2010) for more.

at Leeward Community College theatre, and teaches theatre and performance workshops for youth.¹⁷ In addition to her presence in the local drag community, Cocoa Chandelier regularly competes in national drag competitions. Despite this (local and national) notoriety in drag and performance communities, Cocoa Chandelier's prominence in *Ke Kulana He Māhū* (2001) is probably what she would be most known for outside of Hawai'i.

A theme that stretches across all of these performances is Cocoa Chandelier's refusal to engage in what Chow calls "coercive mimeticism," a process by which marginal groups in Western culture—specifically, ethnics—are expected to replicate the preconceptions about themselves and objectify themselves according to dominant imaginings.¹⁸ Hawaiian performance (and Hawaiian life) is thus queered when Cocoa Chandelier does not perform anything that can be identified as "Hawaiian."¹⁹

Confessions (on a dance floor)

As any Catholic (recovering, active, or in denial) will tell you, the "confession" is nothing to sneer at and should not be taken lightly. I have recurring memories of my mother taking me to confession around Easter, to repent for bad things that I had done. This is similar to scenes on television or in film, of sinners in a confessional, talking to a priest behind a mesh screen. But this Catholic ritual of confession, rooted in a broader Judeo-Christian discourse of salvation, has also become a major location of subject formation in modern, secular society. As Foucault has taught us, "man" has not only

¹⁷ She has also appeared in Albert Wendt's "Songmaker's Chair", Chinese Opera Jinju, and has competed in numerous pageants such as Miss Continental Gay U.S.A, Diva of Polynesia, and Miss Understood.

¹⁸ Chow, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*: 107.

¹⁹ To "queer" something means to look at how something disrupts the norm, it is an analytic that comes from Queer Theory. For more see, David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: towards a gay hagiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). 62.

become a “confessing” animal; man’s modern identity is constituted through a confession-like process of first excavating and then divulging (to some authority figure) a deep or buried truth about himself but at the price of actual freedom or liberation. In his *History of Sexuality: Volume 1* (1990 [1976]), Foucault elaborates, “...it seems to us that truth, lodged in our most secret nature, demands only to surface; that if it fails to do so, this is because a constraint holds it in place, the violence of a power weighs it down, and it can finally be articulated only at the price of a kind of liberation.”²⁰ Subjects are thus encouraged to confess in order to achieve freedom, for the promise of liberation is understood to rest on the ability to articulate one’s “truth” in a coherent narrative—one that the State then adjudicates as “truth.”²¹ For Foucault, as for radical post-structuralist theorists after him, this kind of revelation is actually not liberating, but incarcerating. In the pages that follow, I connect the confession to anthropological discourse and to modern practices that require Natives tell their truths in order to be recognized. I contend that such practices can be detrimental to Natives and Kānaka Maoli in particular, who must always perform aloha.

As I noted in the Introduction, liberal multiculturalism is founded on networks of anthropological knowledge-gathering, upon which “cultural difference” became incorporated and catalogued.²² Kānaka Maoli, by and large, have been turned into “self-confessing subjects”; that is, they occupy a subject position that willingly confesses their

²⁰ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality* (New York Vintage, 1990). 59.

²¹ See also, Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism*.

²² See Da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*. Also, Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*.

experiences and their cultures in the mistaken belief that the process will set them free.²³ In a milieu of confessing as the chosen path of liberation, Cocoa Chandelier refuses the mode. Chow explains that ethnic subjects have taken up the “confession” as the telling of one’s “truth.”²⁴ In the specificity of indigenous subjectivities, these confessions or truths are derived, or at least strongly influenced or shaped by Anthropology via a legacy of institutional mechanisms of classification, surveillance, and training that can inhibit the ethnic subject or keep it locked in a discourse.²⁵ This is precisely why the confession (and its descendants in “truth-telling”) must be critiqued. As Kahnawake anthropologist Audra Simpson has explained, knowledge about the Native and representation of the Native required military force and methods and modalities of knowing.²⁶ Through salvage ethnography that was intended to “preserve” the “traditions” of “dying” natives, the Native was put in the position of having a culture to save and anthropologists were normalized as the ones who would document and authenticate Native cultures.²⁷ Nowadays, however, Natives often willingly tell their truths—to re-write history, to pass on internal community or cultural knowledge, and in many cases, to ask for reparations. Indeed, this is even how we come to know ourselves.

“Truth” can certainly be productive, but truths are used to create disciplinary institutions (like academia itself). Those same institutions then analyzed confessions to create rubrics of “knowledge” and “specialists” who compartmentalized subjects and

²³ Chow, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*: 110-15. She writes explicitly “...self-representation is now equated with the expression of truth.” (113).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Simpson, "On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, "Voice" and Colonial Citizenship," 67.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ See Clifford (1987) on the salvage paradigm in cultural anthropology.

delineated modes of normativity and deviance.²⁸ One consequence of this history is that identities of “the other” were then foreclosed and are now only identifiable through these standards of what is normative (or, for Natives, “recognizable”) and what is not. To illustrate this, Povinelli uses the example of indigenous subjects who are called on to perform an authentic difference in exchange for the good feelings of the nation and the reparative legislation of the state.²⁹ Neoliberalism in turn has rearticulated the legacies of the confession in the impulse to “speak our truths.” Under neoliberal discourse, Natives and other minorities feel they have to perform their truth (i.e. their culture) to be free when in fact it is not real freedom, but only how power has come to operate.

As earlier chapters of this dissertation have explained, imagery of Kānaka Maoli has been circulating through multiple discourses for centuries.³⁰ What is considered “Hawaiian” is hyper-visible in the American colonial imagination with attendant modern manifestations. In recent years, the stereotypical images of the past have been supplemented with images of Kanaka Maoli resistance (usually in Hawai‘i), often in very public affirmations and protests by Kānaka Maoli themselves, which also contribute to this hyper-visibility. Visibility, once perceived as the answer to misrepresentation and misrecognition, has a downside because it creates norms and limits alternatives. As Foucault has written, “It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection.”³¹ Thus, Hawaiian performance, especially through the performance of aloha, can be appreciated or

²⁸ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*: 59.

²⁹ Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism*: 6.

³⁰ Desmond, *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World*; O'Brien, "The Pacific Muse: Exotic Femininity and the Colonial Pacific."; Rob Wilson and Arif Dirlik, *Asia/Pacific as space of cultural production* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

³¹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*: 187.

understood critically as a primary means through which Kānaka Maoli have become “known.” In other words, power has been able to reproduce itself not just through disciplinary state institutions (Federal and State laws and agencies, civic organizations), but also through how Kānaka Maoli ourselves have willingly performed subjectivities expected of us.

Kānaka Maoli have consistently performed *our aloha* because, as I argued in chapter one, the performance of aloha, of “Hawaiianness,” has become tied to how we understand and identify ourselves. Aloha has become our defining character trait—our “truth,” our essence; it is who we are. This understanding of who we are became possible as a result of transformations to Hawaiian governance and political economies throughout the nineteenth century. Then, as well as now, performances of Hawaiian culture were subject to the colonialist gaze that structured Kanaka Maoli performances (because certain performances were more desired and thus worth more money). The gaze also enabled circulations of specific representations to become naturalized in discourse and internalized as norms among Kānaka Maoli. As I will explain in my analysis of *Ke Kulana He Māhū*, these norms get recapitulated even in cultural productions that aim to critique colonialism in Hawai‘i. The example of *Ke Kulana He Māhū* shows the ways in which “the confession” has become crucial to how neoliberalism functions. The film presents new identities and narratives to consume, even through the most transgressive expressions, and even in drag queens. As Miranda Joseph explains, the welcoming of a community and its multicultural diversity (which includes gender expression and sexual practice) is always about producing new subjects for capitalism.³² Indeed, throughout the

³² Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community*.

film, the consequences of colonialism in Hawai‘i are told through the confessions of māhū performing properly before a wide audience. But, as I indicated at the start of this chapter, at Cocoa Chandelier’s Confessional at The Loft, none of the audience members (many of whom were māhū) confessed.

Cocoa Chandelier’s power, then, comes through her resistance to ethnographic entrapment because her performances disrupt the practices of ethnography which attempt to contain her narrative. Smith describes “ethnographic entrapment” as a process by which Natives (or to use Da Silva, “the others of Europe”) present a version of themselves that would make them “universal,” as subjects with a culture that is worthy of universal humanity.³³ Cocoa Chandelier, in contrast, does not confess and I will not make her. As a Kanaka Maoli subject that does not confess, Cocoa Chandelier’s life, story, or “truth” remains largely undocumented, except through her own body of work. As an example of the problematics of the confession and the ways that Kānaka Maoli negotiate these calls to confess, the next section of this chapter analyzes the 2001 film, *Ke Kulana He Māhū*. Cocoa Chandelier is featured prominently as a māhū throughout the film, thus making her aversion to confession and her event, “Cocoa Chandelier’s Confessional” eight years later after the release of the film, all the more compelling.

Remembering a Sense of Place

Remember when Kānaka Maoli could walk down the street hand in hand, women would walk together hand in hand, arms around their shoulders and men could do the same and nobody said anything, but everybody would say hoo-those Kanaka Maoli they’re so expressive, its so beautiful they can touch each other. Remember that? Now look at what’s happening, we can barely touch each other...What

³³ In other words, this means that Natives must prove that they are worthy by showing that they have a redeemable essence or essential being that is of worth to everyone. As Smith argues, this makes Natives as natural objects to be discovered, to create and renew life of non-Natives, at the expense of the Native. Smith, "Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism," 42-43; Da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*.

happened so that things began to get imposed on us and more and more we distanced ourselves from each other? - Ku‘umealoha Gomes³⁴

In the film *Ke Kulana He Māhū* (2001), Samuel L.A. Akuna, also known as Cocoa Chandelier, is one of the māhū featured most prominently. Part colonial critique, part documentation of the drag community in Hawai‘i, this film is a tour de force of liberal multiculturalism. In this film, māhū confess. Admittedly, this is how I first knew about Cocoa Chandelier and many of the drag queens I had seen perform. *Ke Kulana He Māhū* personalized them and Cocoa Chandelier in particular, whose dynamism as a performer was magnified, in my mind, through the exposure to her private life. It changed me as a young Kanaka Maoli butchie. Watching her and the other māhū in the film confess, in a way, saved me. In this analysis I will critique the disjunctures between the film’s critique of colonialism and its rearticulation of liberal multiculturalism. I will listen closely to the voices in the film to point out the problems with its performance of aloha, to hear the silences around Hawaiian self-determination, and to embrace the films’ profound possibilities.

The first five minutes of the film prepare the viewer for the emotional intensity of the entire documentary. That is, an affective, nostalgic, tear-jerking, infuriating journey into the history of Hawai‘i, read through a critique of colonialism and its impact on the Hawaiian culture. The film is set to a backdrop of evocative contemporary Hawaiian

³⁴ See Brent Anbe, Jaymee Carvajal, and Kathryn Xian, *Ke Kulana he Mahu*, (Honolulu: Zang Pictures, Inc., 2001), videocording, 1 videocassette (67 min.): sd., col. with b&w sequences ; 1/2 in. Gomes is one of the more prominent Kanaka Maoli LGBTQ activists. She was also an administrator for Hawaiian education at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. She has extensive experience working in Kanaka Maoli communities in general. To this end, she was the sole Kānaka Maoli committee member appointed to the “Commission on Sexual Orientation and the Law” in 1994, organized by the state legislature to investigate whether the state should allow same-sex marriage. The commission eventually recommended legalizing same-sex marriage and removal of the legislation against it. They also recommend, as a second option--a comprehensive domestic partnership statute.

music: Keali‘i Reichel’s song “Maunaleo” plays as present-day shots of Waikīkī’s coastline with Diamond Head in the background are interspersed with black and white archival images of Hawai‘i and Kānaka Maoli throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.³⁵ In this beautifully rendered film, special attention is paid to the existence of a vibrant transgender mähūwahine culture in Hawai‘i that is based in Hawaiian cultural priorities of aloha and ‘ohana (love and family) that can be traced back to “antiquity.” The history of the mähū and personal narratives of modern day mähū are centered as historians and specialists explain the impact of colonialism in Hawai‘i and its more current implications in the debates around same-sex marriage in the 1990s. In the film, Hawai‘i’s history is described as a “history of aloha amidst Western exclusion,” as the viewer is presented with evidence that encourages her to question colonialism in Hawai‘i, especially as it pertains to ideas about sexuality. When the film first premiered, it garnered well-deserved praise from numerous independent APIA and LGBT film festivals across the U.S. and the Pacific, receiving best local film from the Honolulu Gay & Lesbian Film Festival and Best Documentary at the Chicago Lesbian and Gay Film Fest in 2002. The film was also screened at the Smithsonian and continues to be shown in university classes across the U.S. and the Pacific.³⁶ The film is one of the most important

³⁵ “Maunaleo” is recorded by Keali‘i Reichel, renowned Kanaka Maoli performer and kumu hula (hula master), on Kealii Reichel, *E O Mai* (Kailua, HI: Punahale Productions, 1997). For more see, <http://www.kealiireichel.com/index3.html>. The song, “Maunaleo” frames the significance of the mähū, inferring its deeply held role in Hawaiian world.

³⁶ The film circulated on the independent film circuit, also screened at the Seattle Lesbian & Gay Film Festival October 2001, Hawaii International Film Festival November 2001, San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival March 2002, Chicago Asian American Showcase April 2002, Visual Communications Los Angeles Pacific Film & Video Festival May 2002, San Francisco International Lesbian & Gay Film Festival June 2002, Outtakes New Zealand Gay & Lesbian Film Festival June 2002, Peabody Festival (Maine) June 2002, Q Cinema Fort Worth Gay & Lesbian Film Festival June 2002, Asian CineVision (NYC) Asian American International Film Festival July 2002, OUTFEST Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Film Festival July 2002, and the Chicago Screening Reeling Chicago Lesbian & Gay Film Festival July 2002. It won Best Local Film Honolulu Gay & Lesbian Film Festival May 2002 and Best

films ever made about Hawai‘i and Kānaka Maoli and quite possibly the only film ever made about Hawaiian gender and sexuality specifically.



Figure 4 *Ke Kulana He Māhū* film poster

The first half of the film summarizes pre-colonial Hawaiian sexual practices to contextualize the historical and cultural significance of the māhū, relating it to familial and social organization in a broader sense. During this historical and cultural centering, scholars, specialists, and activists are situated between montages of modern day imagery of Honolulu. The dominant and recurring visual oscillates between archival images of Kānaka Maoli (fishing, selling newspapers, making leis) and Waikīkī’s crowded beaches

Documentary Chicago Lesbian & Gay Film Festival July 2002. It is difficult to track how frequently the film is still shown, but an Internet search returned several screenings of the film in New York City in the late 2000s, screenings in Pacific Island studies courses, and Cocoa Chandelier told me herself that because of the film she is contacted every now and then from “people all over, in, like Egypt.”

and streets and landscape shots of Honolulu littered with high-rise buildings and the ominously beautiful Ko‘olau mountain range in the distance. Following this visual grounding and musical interlude, a voice-over narration explains, “In modern day Hawai‘i, Kānaka Maoli are attempting to regain their language, culture, and history, surviving a near decimation of their population due to foreign disease, racism, and assimilation.” The montage ends with shots of Hinaleialani Wong, the māhū who introduces the film, teaching Hawaiian language classes and dancing hula with what appears to be an all-māhū hula hālau (group). This transitional narration sets up the next portion of the film that explains the adoption of capitalism in Hawai‘i and the influence it has had on Kānaka Maoli. Following this sequence, the film shifts to “modern times,” profiling Honolulu’s drag community and the realities of living as māhū. The “modern” portion of the film brings to light the homophobia that exists in Hawai‘i that seldom gets discussed in public. The profiles of two performers—Cocoa Chandelier and Skeeter Mariah Crackseed—are featured extensively with commentary, photographs, performance montages, and interviews with themselves and their mothers.

As the film progresses, scholars and specialists unpack the role of colonialism in changing Kānaka Maoli (or local) attitudes toward the LGBTQ community. Through the presentation of historical evidence, the argument is evocative and convincing in its interrogation of the bigotry expressed in opposition to same-sex marriage. The film calls into question the media campaign of the group, Save Traditional Marriage, in 1998, disparaging its campaign tactics that framed homosexuality as a foreign import.³⁷ At this

³⁷ Save Traditional Marriage was an umbrella group in the campaign against same-sex marriage that promoted itself as a group that sought to keep things the way they always had been, i.e. “tradition.” They insisted that the issue was not about civil rights, but the protection of marriage, of the family, of the future of the state.

point, the film briefly departs from explicit LGBTQ-focused issues to document the impact of leprosy (Hansen's Disease), which many Hawai'i residents, and particularly many Kānaka Maoli, contracted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and their subsequent quarantine at the "leper colony" on Kalaupapa, Moloka'i. Imagery of people suffering from Hansen's disease are shown on the screen, as narration explains that Kānaka Maoli often refused to leave their loved ones as they were being quarantined—even at the risk of getting the disease themselves—and praises them for their aloha. The importance of aloha and 'ohana are explained through their linguistic parts, to note their cultural significance for Kānaka Maoli. Reverend Kaleo Patterson explains that the exclusion of those who had Hansen's Disease is emblematic of conflicting Western and Hawaiian values, wherein disease is dealt with through exclusion in the West and in Hawaiian culture, disease--or in a sense, difference—would be attended to with the giving of more love. This particular segment is juxtaposed with the film's overall argument: that in Hawai'i, the exclusion of LGBTQ people or anyone that is "different" is a modern phenomenon, one that has serious social and cultural consequences. Told poignantly through the tragic murder of a gay man in the local community, the quarantining of Hansen's disease patients and this murder might appear to be entirely unrelated incidents, but the film conveys that these realities are both produced by conditions of quarantine and exclusion whose ultimate cost is life itself. A supportive and loving community response to both incidents are attributed to aloha. Though somewhat disjointed, this portion of the film still manages to accomplish its task of educating lay-viewers about the importance of aloha and 'ohana in Hawai'i. The film ends where it began, with Ku'umealoha Gomes asking people if they could remember

what life was like before colonialism and especially how we might return to a more inclusive and loving world. But, as Ty Tengan observed in his review of the film, *Ke Kulana He Māhū*, just does not provide the answers.³⁸

A Story of Aloha Amidst Western Exclusion

Hawai‘i’s story is one of colonialism, racism, land, and culture, but above all it is the story of aloha in the midst of trial and opposition. It is this aloha or love and respect that has survived the centuries within the hearts and minds of Hawai‘i’s indigenous people, the Kanaka Maoli...³⁹

Ke Kulana He Māhū, striking in its content and execution, attempts to challenge colonialism and its impact on sexuality in Hawai‘i. However, the film’s framing of race and politics in Hawai‘i, and especially the performance of aloha, ultimately inhibit the film from challenging deeply held beliefs people have about Hawai‘i—residents and outsiders. This section will examine how Kānaka Maoli and aloha are represented as synonymous with nature and as detached from politics.

The epigraph of this section is part of a montage in the film. It is spoken over black and white still-images of Kānaka Maoli. The first is an image of Kanaka Maoli children smiling wearing haku leis (flower garlands) around their heads. This is followed by an image of a young Kanaka Maoli man at the beach holding up a handful of fish, with a triumphant smile on his face. Next, there is a similar image of what appears to be a Kānaka Maoli couple walking on the beach: a woman walks next to a shirtless man with a fishnet draped over his shoulder. As the montage transitions to the modern day, the imagery is colorized, with action shots of the beach, Waikīkī hotels, and traffic. At the end of the montage, members of a māhū hula hālau are shown in a park, preparing their

³⁸ Ty Tengan, "Ke Kulana He Mahu: Remembering a Sense of Place (review)," *The Contemporary Pacific* 15, no. 1 (2003).

³⁹ This is spoken by a narrator in the film, Anbe, Carvajal, and Xian, *Ke Kulana he Mahu*.

hula costumes. The wind is blowing their hair as they help each other put on their pā'ū or skirt. The voiceover continues to explain that due to foreign disease, racism, and assimilation, Kānaka Maoli are now attempting to regain their language, culture and history. These images, juxtaposed with the voiceover, position Kānaka Maoli and their “aloha spirit” solely in the space of the “natural,” as simple Natives that emanate aloha. This is one example of the way the film remains deeply problematic.

As Andrea Smith explains, when Natives are looked to as resources of particular kinds of knowledges—like the ability to *have* aloha—they become equated to nature, a first step in rendering indigeneity as a static object that possesses an essential truth.⁴⁰ Recall the voiceover in the film: “It is this aloha or love and respect” that is surviving in the hearts and minds of the Kanaka Maoli people. Drawing from nostalgic tropes about a sexually liberal and all-inclusive Pacific (even if true) in this manner, the film reifies exoticized perceptions of Hawaiian culture, flattening its complexities. This film would benefit from a more nuanced rendering of Hawaiian culture, one that accounts for the history of how “culture” is constituted. As Raymond Williams has explained, “culture” is a term that must be analyzed in relation to “economy” and “society” and “civilization,” as something that changes and transforms according to these other conditions.⁴¹ Instead,

⁴⁰ Smith, "Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism," 42.

⁴¹ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); ———, "Culture," in *Keywords: a Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983). Williams explains, “culture” is an independent and abstract noun that describes a process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development. Second, it also refers to a particular way of life, as dictated by the customs of a period, group or general humanity. And lastly, “culture” also describes the works and practices of intellectual artistic activity. The first definition in this list, “culture” can be understood as referring to husbandry—the tending to of crops, animals and nature in general. Later, this understanding of “culture” and its relationship to “development” was applied to humans. At a time when Western religion was being actively questioned and the notion that man could be rational and logical grew in prominence, the Enlightenment took hold upon Western discourse and “culture” became a synonymous with civilization. “Enlightenment,” though, was not available to all, it had to be achieved and therefore, the idea that man was a thinking being, was something that man had to work on. At the height of “culture” in this

Kānaka Maoli are simply conceived as being “culture” itself because they are imagined as closer to nature, i.e. the natural environment. In *Ke Kulana He Māhū*, Kānaka Maoli are culture, or more specifically, they are aloha. Thus, *Ke Kulana He Māhū* participates in the extraction of aloha from Kānaka Maoli, performing yet another fetishization of Hawaiian culture, albeit, or in spite of, the film’s interest and compassion for LGBTQ populations in general, and especially the māhū in particular.

While this narrative framing can be affirming for māhū, it also continues to exoticize their experiences and does not dismantle the practice of appropriating culture from Native people, who are seen as part of nature itself, and thus available to modern subjects to draw from as they see fit. Throughout the film, Kānaka Maoli are constructed as a natural resource and aloha is its product, a view that is expressed by both settlers and Kānaka Maoli in the film. Aloha is heralded as the very essence of Kānaka Maoli and of a Hawai‘i that existed in harmony with the land, ocean, and cosmos, until Westerners came and ruined everything. Now, I agree that Westernization impacted Hawai‘i in negative ways, but what is telling in this configuration is the unproblematic way that Kānaka Maoli are positioned as repositories of aloha, and as these containers of aloha, Kānaka Maoli should be honored in the present. In *Ke Kulana He Māhū*, Kānaka Maoli are living resources who possess the innate ability to love without discrimination; and

definition, “culture” was manifest in expressive forms like film, visual art, dance, music, theatre and other types of trained performance. Access to these arts and being able to create them was considered a mark of civilization—largely related to ones ability to be an inward looking, self-critical being as well as having the financial or social status to learn the skill-sets required for these expressive forms. This latter point was a way for the bourgeois to differentiate itself from the unwashed masses within their own group (community, nation, whatever term you want to use) and later, this differentiation was used to justify colonial and imperialist ventures. Complicating things further, as “civilization” facilitates “development” (like industrialization, for example), the Romanticists began to feel that civilization is mechanical and alienating, that it is a betrayal of man’s “nature.” Here, “culture” departs from its usage alongside “civilization” and is seen as akin to nature, fitting with Williams’ first definition of “culture.” This becomes much more problematic as anthropological accounts (emanating from colonies) start to circulate within the metro-pole and thereby, influence identity construction there and in the colonies themselves.

while scholars in the film are able to critique the consequences of such love with abandon, there is no connection to how aloha might be rearticulated in such a way that allows Kānaka Maoli to harness political power.

Wendy Brown argues in *Regulating Aversion* (2008) that under liberalism, subjects are identified with and reduced to certain attributes or practices that influence and generate certain beliefs and consciousness.⁴² This is clearly shown in the film, as specialists and clergy confer aloha onto Kānaka Maoli, and of course even Kānaka Maoli do this to ourselves. This imposition and subsequent performance of aloha, as I have argued in this dissertation, is actively internalized and performed by Kānaka Maoli in complex ways. Aloha can be an ideological force that dispossesses Kānaka Maoli of our claims to cultural authority while it also functions as an affirmation of Kanaka Maoli life-worlds that Kānaka Maoli are profoundly invested in, despite--or in the face of--aloha's tourist-driven commodification and its ideological violence. Aloha again operates as the so-called personification of Hawaiian culture in this film, thus playing into a liberal multicultural agenda. One of the principal ways that this marginalization and dispossession occurs is by relegating Kānaka Maoli to the realm of nature, which modern liberalism defines as politics' other, thereby freeing up culture to be had or possessed (commodified) for other (political) purposes.

Indeed, aloha is defined throughout the film as a kind of uncritical inclusion in which everyone is welcomed regardless of his or her difference, particularly in relation to racial or cultural background. In his interview in the film, Reverend Darrow Aiona explains that the aloha spirit is about welcoming people into the 'ohana. He says,

⁴² Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

“Hawaiian culture is a very accepting culture, it does not discriminate, that’s what the aloha spirit is. Everybody comes, they become of the family, that’s what ‘ohana means.” This is a beautiful and important part of the film. It reiterates to the audience again that aloha and ‘ohana is about love, about family, and that this is what is special about Hawai‘i. Again, an effect of this understanding of aloha (marking Hawai‘i as available to all) is its facile support of liberal multiculturalism, gay civil rights, and, as I have explained ad nauseum, tourism. I flag this to cite the danger that such articulations of aloha can produce. When aloha is consistently harnessed to welcome difference, aloha is sadly flattened and represented ahistorically, because as I have communicated throughout this dissertation, aloha was politically harnessed to support Christianity, multiculturalism, and tourism, and to quell political dissent. At the same time, aloha, retains its cultural power, through Kanaka Maoli performance and, as *Ke Kulana He Māhū* shows, through the acceptance of the māhū.

Aloha without politics

In the film’s fervent anti-colonial stance, a conversation about Hawaiian sovereignty or self-determination is curiously absent. It is never expressed in overt terms, although the presence of certain scholars in the film, like Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa and Michael Dougherty, surely gesture toward that kind of critique.⁴³ So even as the film advances a staunch critique of colonialism, the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom is only mentioned in passing and the modern sovereignty movement is never even referenced. For a film about Kānaka Maoli and modern Hawai‘i, this is a huge oversight.

⁴³ Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa is a Kanaka Maoli academic and Professor of Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. Her writing is considered foundational in Hawaiian Studies, see her work, Kame'eleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires/Pehea La E Pono Ai?*

The only manner in which Kānaka Maoli are represented is through their enduring cultural difference. The film focuses on the transformation that occurred as a result of colonialism, but fails to link colonial processes to any sense of Kanaka Maoli political autonomy outside of the individual narratives of the māhū in the film or in the broader LGBTQ movement.⁴⁴

Though the film presents an anti-colonial perspective, and to a certain extent, its anti-capitalist stance, its main problem lies ultimately in how it *detaches* aloha from Kānaka Maoli, by detaching Kānaka Maoli from politics (self-determination) and designating them instead to the realm of nature. How the film depicts the prominent Kanaka Maoli activist and scholar, Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa, is a prime example of how a form of anti-colonial criticism can be advanced without properly understanding Kanaka Maoli struggles for self-determination. Towards the film’s end, Kame‘eleihiwa criticizes the standards by which Christian morality was imposed and perpetrated throughout Hawai‘i. Kame‘eleihiwa is shown expressing disgust that missionary standards continue to structure law in Hawai‘i: “... those Calvinists are still today trying to oppress Hawaiians, trying to take away Hawaiian rights...” The film then cuts, but she continues, “... same genealogy.” Cut again. Kame‘eleihiwa’s words become inaudible.⁴⁵ Was something edited out? Was she too repetitive, too political, or did she just tangent? The film itself levies a strong argument against colonialism because of its impact on

⁴⁴ See Kauanui, "Native Hawaiian Decolonization and the Politics of Gender," 282-83. The failure of this film to link with sovereignty struggles is similar to the lack of analysis of gender and sexuality within the Hawaiian sovereignty movement. As Kauanui explains, feminism (and analyses of gender and sexuality) within the Hawaiian sovereignty movement is often viewed as superfluous and unnecessary. She asks whether Hawaiian nationalist projects can help to restore indigenous traditions through forms of decolonization that include the eradication of sexism.

⁴⁵ It is curious that images of Hawaiian royalty are only shown a couple times and when they are, they are not captioned in the film. Only a viewer with knowledge of Hawaiian history would understand their significance.

“traditional” Hawaiian sexuality and, to a lesser extent, capitalism, but such a critique is never extended to contemporary political issues involving struggles for Hawaiian self-determination. Kanaka Maoli difference is cultural, not political. In other words, this discourse participates in the settler-colonial process of marginalizing and dispossessing Kānaka Maoli from their centrality in Hawai‘i while keeping prized elements of Hawaiian culture for any number of competing purposes.

This type of detachment of aloha from politics is common under liberal multiculturalism because culture is conquered and politically neutered by the non-cultural principle of liberalism.⁴⁶ In the Hawaiian context this is done through the deployment of aloha and removing it from Kānaka Maoli, and at the same time, conferring aloha onto Kānaka Maoli in a pernicious fashion that honors them at the same time that it marginalizes them and locks them in a cage. As Chow has posited, gazing at, consuming, and learning about these “others” functions much like a visitor to the zoo, where visitors proceed from cage to cage to see the animals, and no matter how well intentioned the viewer, the image is always somehow out of focus. The lack of focus stems from the production of a certain type of gaze, one that dislocates and displaces the objects of scrutiny to begin with, even when they are speaking and representing themselves.⁴⁷ Consequently, as Kanaka Maoli difference is highlighted throughout *Ke Kulana He Māhū* in the form of aloha, this marking of difference does not mention Kanaka Maoli difference as indigenous peoples with a right to self-determination. In place of this critique of political difference, cultural difference is foregrounded in a way that obscures Kanaka Maoli governance as a viable possibility. That is not to say that Kānaka Maoli do

⁴⁶ Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*: 21.

⁴⁷ Chow, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*: 99-100.

not have a special relationship with nature or the land as the indigenous people of Hawai‘i, but as Brendan Hokowhitu explains, the Native’s relationship to the land is wrongly misinterpreted as “primitive inertia,” as though Natives cannot evolve or be civilized.⁴⁸ In sum, the focus on Hawaiian cultural difference and the experiences of the māhū can also work to reify ideas about the Native as existing in harmony with nature, or existing primarily in the past, in a way that continues to exoticize Kānaka Maoli. As I explain in the next section, such exoticization unwittingly supports and limits contemporary LGBTQ efforts for equality via the fight for civil unions or same-sex marriage.

Fetishizing the māhū

In late 2001, I attended some screenings that included the usual Q&A with participants of the film. These participants included the filmmakers, academic and non-academic experts, māhū, and drag queens themselves, who were sometimes in “drag.” This ambience added legitimacy and authenticity to the film and even to their lives, insofar as the film gave them exposure and local celebrity status. The filmmakers, none of them being performers or māhū themselves, commented that they sought to bring dignity to the māhū by letting their voices be heard.

As māhū voices are represented in the film, these voices begin to circulate in multiple discourses, and like all cultural productions, there is an inherent risk that these narratives will be taken out of context. Being critical of these processes is crucial when interrogating the politics of knowledge production, especially about groups that have

⁴⁸ Brendan Hokowhitu, "The Death of Koro Paka: "Traditional" Māori Patriarchy," *The Contemporary Pacific* 20, no. 1 (2008): 116.

been historically disenfranchised and purposely left out of the historical record.⁴⁹ The screenings undoubtedly presented another opportunity for LGBTQ and allied viewers to support the LGBTQ community in Hawai‘i and to have an increased understanding of the same-sex marriage debate in Hawai‘i throughout the 1990s. The film also serves up the narratives of the māhū as curious cultural others made for consumption by a wide LGBTQ audience. The representations in this film evoke the history of colonial anthropologists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, who traveled with their subjects from far-away lands to speak to audiences in the metropole. This history of colonial anthropology participated in the display, production, and eventual subjugation of the “other.” The effect of this process of knowledge production, whose objective was to offer audiences a taste of cultural difference, was to transform the life of the “other” (and that of the people he or she was supposed to represent).⁵⁰ Read within the frame of Hawai‘i’s ever-present exoticization and the broader Pacific’s ongoing image as a tropical and sexual Eden, the non-heteronormative gender presentation of the māhū constitutes a consumable and non-threatening difference for a general LGBTQ audience. The film relays the message that these māhū can provide insight into how we should all be able to survive, offering strength and wisdom for the viewers. (I’m not saying it doesn’t work, *it*

⁴⁹ In *Ke Kulana He Māhū*, archivist Desoto Brown talks about how when working with old materials, you get the sense that certain things are not being talked about because they are not acceptable. In other words, as missionaries encountered Kānaka Maoli partaking in homosexual acts or in acts that were outside the norms of heterosexuality, they may have not documented it in their narratives. There is some debate around the meaning of the term. See Morris, "*Aikane: Accounts of Hawaiian Same-Sex Relationships in the Journals of Captain Cook's Third Voyage (1776-1780)*."

⁵⁰ Da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*: 169; Smith, "Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism," 43. Da Silva puts exactly what it is this way: “never-before-heard languages that speak of never-before-heard things that actualize a never-before-known consciousness.”

gets better).⁵¹ The stories shared by the māhū about their struggles to maintain dignity can teach us something about the “real” aloha spirit. Their brown difference comes across through the film’s exoticization of them, but also presents a relatable narrative to a wide LGBTQ audience, as the māhū assertions of pride can be a source of inspiration and strength.

Still, the liberal impulse to recognize “the other” finds its limits in this film. In the current neoliberal age, the consumption of the “other” and their culture, comes through the sharing of “experience.” The desire to understand this “experience,” however, is merely a reinvention of colonial benevolence, or what is now called “liberalism,” which thrives through discourses of acceptance and tolerance. The producers impose aspirations for gay civil rights or LGBTQ marriage politics on the māhū in the film, inferring that they wanting inclusion, by juxtaposing their narratives with documentation of the Hawai‘i same-sex marriage debates in the 1990s. Careful attention to the voices of the māhū in the film shows something else. The film’s central project of using aloha to secure LGBTQ civil rights is ironically not secured through the māhū themselves because at no time do any māhū in the film express a desire to be accepted in dominant society, a desire for same-sex (or any kind of) marriage, or a desire for any kind of protection of their rights. Indeed, not a single performer in the film even utters the word “aloha.” With

⁵¹ “It Gets Better” is an internet-based project started in September 2010 in response to LGBTQ youth suicides (or even those just suspected to be LGBTQ). Started by radio host Dan Savage, many adult LGBTQ celebrities and allies around the world have recorded videos on the topic, telling their personal stories to convey that “it gets better”. Numerous organizations and individuals have contributed to the project, including U.S. President Barack Obama. See <http://www.youtube.com/user/itgetsbetterproject>. Accessed December 21, 2011. Savage’s project has subsequently also been criticized for its homonormativity. Critics noted that its easy for things to “get better” if you are a white middle class gay man and that making videos is not enough to stop bullying. Nevertheless, a book with testimonies about the campaign came out in March 2011, *It Gets Better: Coming Out, Overcoming Bullying, and Creating a Life Worth Living*. Dan Savage and Terry Miller (Eds).

the exception of the voiceover in the film, the word aloha is never spoken by anyone in the film except by Reverend Darrow Aiona who discusses aloha's importance.

In addition, while the film talks about marriage, there is no discussion of “equality” or inclusion. The only person that does is University of Hawai‘i Political Science professor and author Jonathan Goldberg-Hiller, whose subsequent book, *Limits to the Union* (2002), details the same-sex marriage debates in Hawai‘i and their wider implications for political sovereignty and civil rights. None of the other speakers in the film—performers, archivists, or specialists—speak about equal treatment at all. Taken as a whole, the film’s greatest contribution is the way it traces the power of colonialism to structure feelings about non-normative heterosexuality in Hawai‘i, a topic never broached critically in film before. Released in 2001, just as national battles for same-sex marriage became more prominent in mainstream American politics, the film renders a picture of LGBTQ Hawai‘i that does not easily fit into a homonormative narrative, even as the film begins to hint at it. Lisa Duggan has described homonormativity as a depoliticized version of gay culture that advocates for domesticity and consumption, one that does not challenge heteronormativity. Rather, homonormativity favors a corporate culture “achieved by the neoliberal privatization of affect as well as economic and public life” that normalizes a gay white middle-class.⁵² In this sense, the people featured in *Ke*

⁵² In *Twilight of Equality* (2003) Lisa Duggan disparages the adoption of neoliberal rhetoric and corporate decision-making models by gay civil rights groups, noting that large mainstream national lesbian and gay civil rights organizations have become increasingly focused on lobbying, legal, and public relation campaigns for a growing narrow and gay, moneyed elite. Instead of a broad-based focus on political, economic, and cultural issues, there is a focus on gay marriage and military service. Scholarship in Queer Studies has been especially critical of the impulse of gay inclusion at the expulsion of other subjects, especially when the “inclusion” being granted is available to only certain subjects. Lisa Duggan, *The twilight of equality?: neoliberalism, cultural politics, and the attack on democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003). Similarly, Jasbir Puar has theorized that homonormativity operates with “homonationalism,” defined as the ways in which the war on terror has rehabilitated LGBTQ politics by including some into the US national citizenship within a spatial-temporal domain. Puar invokes the term homonationalism to mark

Kulana He Māhū clearly do not have a place in this homonormative future—nor do any of them express such aspirations. The exotic gaze, which structures almost any rendering of Hawai‘i, is omnipresent. In other words, even with the critiques of colonialism and capitalism in the film, Kanaka Maoli cultural difference is the film’s take-away. Māhū difference, in a sense, prevents a homonormative narrative and I think on a deeper level, the māhū know that.

You can’t have my brown body and eat it too

Hiram Perez’s article “You can have my brown body and eat it too!” (2005), notes that many queer academic spaces mirror modern life in that “colored folk perform affect but can never theorize it.”⁵³ As seen throughout the film, the māhū talk about being māhū, the drag queens perform explicitly, but neither group (not always the same) ever get to theorize their lives in any meaningful detail. For example, most performers are shown talking about their experiences living as māhū, speaking explicitly about their families’ reactions to them, and the importance of having a place in the Hawaiian culture as māhū. Their commentary is on the level of personal experience, but Hinaleialani Wong is an exception. Wong especially is shown doing both, but her performance is not presented as “performance” per se. Wong is represented as a cultural practitioner and educator. Several times throughout the film she is shown dancing hula with a hālau, but never in a formal drag show setting. Wong’s performance is shown in nature—at the beach, at the park—and wearing everyday clothing that might be described as “Hawaiian” (e.g., mu‘umu‘u). Thus, the representation of her in the film is as a spiritual

arrangements of US sexual exceptionalism explicitly in relation to the nation (38-39). See Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalisms in Queer Times*.

⁵³ Hiram Perez, "You Can Have My Brown Body and Eat It, Too!," *Social Text* 2005, no. 23 (2005): 174.

and cultural specialist, not as a drag performer. Wong is allowed to theorize both because she is a trained educator of Hawaiian history and language. She is shown teaching a Hawaiian language class, speaking explicitly about Hawaiian values coming into conflict with Western capitalism, and in another scene she also offers an interpretation of Hawaiian mythology. Her portrayal appears much more explicitly “Hawaiian” than the other māhū featured in the film because she speaks directly to being culturally rooted in a way that the other performers do not and perhaps cannot. Cocoa Chandelier and Skeeter Mariah Crackseed are shown performing in “drag” or in other types of staged performance, and in their interviews, they are speaking in plain clothes. At no time in the film do they talk about Kanaka Maoli or local identity or anything that reaches beyond being māhū (nor do they necessarily call themselves that). Hence, with the exception of Wong’s role in the film, the other māhū are not shown talking about how their lives link up with issues in the larger LGBTQ community or Hawaiian self-determination. Scholars and specialists link māhū to larger issues on LGBTQ civil rights, but never on the issue of self-determination. The film is an example of the tensions and divisions within the Hawaiian community and LGBTQ communities in general that illustrate the marginalization of queer people of color and particularly transfolk and gender-non-conforming individuals who are often not represented as specialists, theorists, or scholars, even if they are sometimes all three.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Scholars have noted that queer transfolk, people of color, and working class people cannot easily assimilate into mainstream American culture and that Queer Studies in its early days did not account for these material realities or the necessities of community belonging that offered protection from dominant white supremacy and capitalism. For more see the work of Jose Munoz, Roderick Ferguson, David Eng, and E. Patrick Johnson. Situated within the intersections of race, gender, sexuality and class, queer of color critique works to examine gender and sexual heterogeneity composition of non-mainstream cultures and to provide an investigation into the non-normative aspects of racial formations and to challenge the limitations of normativity.

When attending to the actual voices of Kānaka Maoli in the film, however, political possibilities begin to emerge. For the first time, the suppressed voices of the māhū are shown in a visual public narrative, giving them a space to be seen and heard. The māhū themselves speak to dispel myths, solidify their contemporary presence, and situate themselves in the Hawaiian culture. This is personified in the first few minutes of the film when Wong asserts, “In American culture, I do not always feel that I have a place, but in my own culture, in Hawaiian culture, I definitely have a place, I know exactly where I stand.” In another instance, two māhū in the film are shown talking and Kalua, states, “I feel proud to be māhū. I’m very proud of it. I don’t feel anything different from anybody else.” And then Stacey responds, “Now māhū is like, if somebody says māhū... And? I’m over māhū, you know what I mean? You’re calling me a māhū (laughs).”⁵⁵ In this scene, Kalua and Stacey explain “being over māhū,” that being called māhū is not derogatory to them anymore. They are proud to be māhū. The māhū in the film express a firm rootedness and pride in who they are, in spite of what people may think of them. It is this kind of confessing to the viewer that prevents inclusion at the same time it argues for it by foregrounding Hawaiian cultural difference, which, while liberating, also fetishizes the narratives of the māhū, and provides fodder for the appropriation of aloha in LGBTQ politics. The film shows the sense of pride in being māhū, but at the same time, the confessing of “truth” is required of the māhū in the film,

⁵⁵ In the film, Kalua and Stacey talk about their pride being māhū. Kalua explains that she is very proud to be māhū and that her mother who is pure Hawaiian made sure to teach her about the māhū and the ‘aikane. Stacey, who is Samoan, explains how it was difficult for her to be māhū, which is called “fa’afafine” in the Samoan culture. She explains that her family had a hard time with her being fa’afafine, but that she does not understand why it was so difficult for them when in Samoa, fa’afafine’s are part of the culture and that she has other fa’afafines in her family.

as a way to humanize māhū to generate a feeling of identification, sympathy, tolerance, and well, *aloha*.

In the end, the film performs what is commonly performed upon Kānaka Maoli, an abstraction of Hawaiian indigeneity that marks it as ambiguous and politically irrelevant, separating out Hawaiian culture from Kanaka Maoli politics. Throughout the film, in the same manner in which gay or lesbian identity becomes abstracted, the viewer cannot tell who is local or who is Kanaka Maoli. Particularity is sacrificed for universalism and aloha remains the Kanaka Maoli gift to the world. This film honors the history of Hawai‘i by centering the actual experiences of Kānaka Maoli, but fails to correlate the film’s content with Hawaiian nationalist struggles that would alter Kanaka Maoli lives and Hawai‘i in a way that brings together cultural politics and social justice. The narrative is ultimately one that is to be consumed and the transformations the film advocates come in the form of affect, rather than a full interrogation of the consequences of colonialism. The film’s contribution is additive, but the story does not completely change. The foundations of Hawai‘i’s representation are the same, with new Kānaka Maoli in the picture, in a frame that neglects to include the ongoing material consequences of colonization. Despite the film’s anti-colonial stance on Westernization explicitly, the critique stops short. Such is the state of liberal articulations of Hawaiian indigeneity. *Ke Kulana He Māhū* is certainly a powerful film about Hawaiian history; at the same time it is also a shining emblem of liberal multiculturalism.

Even then, the film offers moments for both critique and hope. As Munoz reminds us, hope is both a critical affect and a methodology.⁵⁶ As māhū are shown teaching Hawaiian language classes, performing in drag shows, dancing hula (with no audience), praying in prayer circles, and participating in what the narrators describe as church activities, they appear to be engaged in all realms of public life and happy in doing so. Here, māhū are shown creating communities that might be termed “queer,” but are not named as such. They just are. In this sense, they are held in what Munoz refers to as an “ontologically humble state,” which is situated in a conceptual grid that is not about knowing queerness (or Hawaiianness for that matter) and thus, keeps at bay the “ossifying effects” of neoliberalism.⁵⁷ In other words, the communities that the māhū create and are shown in *Ke Kulana He Māhū* also possess a radical potentiality because they strategically evade the ways in which neoliberalism seeks to solidify new subjects and communities for the proliferation of capitalism. So, *you can't have my brown body and eat it too.*

In the next chapter, I examine the ways that Cocoa Chandelier *won't let you eat it.* I conduct a close reading of Cocoa Chandelier's performances, connecting her evasion of the confession to a theorization of what the performance of aloha *in drag* offers Kanaka Maoli performance and Hawaiian indigeneity.

⁵⁶ Jose Munoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009). 4.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

Chapter 5

“Hung Up” at the Feet of Orientalism

“No connectives are necessary: the imperial vision enables the natives’ life and death at the same time.”¹

The previous chapters detailed the ways that Kānaka Maoli answer the call of aloha to perform and announce themselves as Kanaka Maoli in a recognizable way. Though answering this call might be construed as simplistic internalized colonialism, it is a radical and vibrant manner of survival that remakes, reforms, and continually contests Kanaka Maoli engagement in the world. Still, I am nagged by the question: what happens when Kanaka Maoli don’t answer the call of aloha? In this chapter I examine Cocoa Chandelier, whose performance repertoire does not engage in obvious displays of aloha nor, by extension, Hawaiianness. For this reason in particular, Cocoa Chandelier can help us theorize indigenous subjectivity. More precisely, how might we get around the conundrum of averting the call of aloha when aloha is such an integral and essential element of what it means to be Kanaka Maoli. In her work on the question of “visibility,” Peggy Phelan links the theoretical concern with visibility to broader political questions about recognition, which I elaborate later in this chapter. In this chapter, I unpack my

¹ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage books, 1993). 167.

concept of “Hawaiian cultural performativity” and explain why I support the performance of aloha *in drag*. As a case study, I analyze Cocoa Chandelier’s winning performance at the 2008 Universal Showqueen Pageant. The chapter ends with a final assessment of the call of aloha.

Bodies of Evidence: Performance Studies and Visibility

This section will explain what the concept of “Hawaiian Cultural Performativity” can offer Hawaiian Studies, but first I will begin with a summary of Performance Studies as an academic field. Performance Studies began making academic waves in the mid-1980s and became institutionalized by the early 1990s. Performance Studies as an academic field has its origins in the Social Sciences, specifically in Anthropology, Sociology, and Psychology. Richard Schechner, Victor Turner, and Dwight Conquergood are among the most well-known anthropologists to have theorized the relationship between performance and culture. The latter two employed ethnographic methods, whereas Schechner is known for his work in official Theatre or Drama programs. As a result of Performance Studies’ mixed beginnings, it straddles multiple disciplinary affiliations and is often the subject of internal and external drama. Phillip Auslander has noted, Performance Studies is burdened and blessed because it is “forced to walk a tightrope between complicity and critique.”² At its core, Performance Studies is interested in the study of staged performance as well as the performance of everyday life. As explained in the Introduction, social forces structure the behaviors of certain groups and that broad sociological categories are both “performed” and lived realities. Based on

² Phillip Auslander, *Presence and resistance : postmodernism and cultural politics in contemporary American performance*, Theater--theory/text/performance (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992). 31.

the work of Erving Goffman, it was posited that people behaved according to environmental expectations in what was called “front stage” and “back stage” behavior.³ Later works in Performance Studies contended that people never stop performing. Thus, even while Theatre/Drama programs, Anthropology, and other fields interested in questions of subject formation (Sociology, Politics, Ethnic Studies, American Studies) began to converge, they just as quickly splintered, with one major faultline centering around Goffman’s distinction between whether or not (and to what extent) people “stopped” performing their subjectivities.

Performance Studies grew in these directions and became a viable methodological approach. Phelan’s 1993 book, *Unmarked*, examined the connections between representational visibility (via performance and visual art) and political power. Speaking to debates about representational politics in the late twentieth century, Phelan’s critique of visibility was an important contribution to the field. Drawing upon Lacanian psychoanalysis, Foucauldian analysis of power structures, and selected feminist theories of representational visibility and political power, Phelan’s work documented the complex irony of writing about something that is not “really” there. Her study of performance and representation centered the question of visibility and its futility for advancing political change. In stark opposition to the notion that visibility begets social transformation, Phelan challenged, in the context of performance, the idea that increased visibility or “speaking our truths” promoted cultural understanding.⁴ This was a truly radical plane of thought within Performance Studies in the early 1990s, especially in strains of Performance Studies that were closely affiliated with Anthropology.

³ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.

⁴ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

Phelan's insights align with Da Silva's arguments in *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (2009). As I explained in the Introduction, Da Silva critiques the efficacy of inserting the histories of the disenfranchised into dominant discourse, much in the same way that Phelan questioned visibility and performance. Da Silva challenges the onto-historical processes that motivated the institutionalization of once-marginal knowledges in the name of rewriting history or inserting the history of "others" into dominant discourse. In this configuration, non-Western subjects are viewed as containers of knowledge (because of their cultural difference) and Western subjects are normalized as the analysts who adjudicate such "truths," and this is a process that has become normalized.⁵ In short, the political subjects addressed in accounts of postmodernity and globalization are constituted by the same tools that instituted the marginalized subject. Phelan advances a similar assessment in terms of viewing performances. She writes, "It is assumed that disenfranchised communities who see their members within the representational field will feel greater pride in being part of such a community and those who are not in such a community will increase their understanding of the diversity and strength of such communities."⁶ In other words, visibility is supposed to provide people in the "community" a sense of pride and those outside of it with a better understanding of "the other." Putting Phelan and Da Silva in conversation, it appears that "cultural understanding" transmitted via "performance" does not transform those who are viewing the performance into better people nor does it transform power relations. Furthermore, as Phelan explains, visibility politics are symptomatic of capitalism's relentless appetite for

⁵ Da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*; *ibid.*

⁶ Phelan, *Unmarked*: 7.

new markets and the American way.⁷ In short, “you are welcome here as long as you are productive.”⁸ This latter point about being productive is something I will return to later when I discuss how Hawaiian bodies were made productive through the practice of “Hawaiian cultural performativity.”

Hawaiian Cultural Performativity

As I explained in chapter one, living off the land became an unsustainable form of living for Kānaka Maoli undergoing colonization in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The performance of hula (in depoliticized, sanitized, and deemphasized spiritual forms) became the marketable skill that Kānaka Maoli possessed. Hula became commensurate with the performance of aloha. Aloha was deployed by Christian missionaries and later by the State of Hawai‘i to institute particular traits upon Kānaka Maoli especially, who in turn performed such traits through bodily movements (in hula) and behaviors, characterized as the natural expression of “aloha.” As Hawai‘i was colonized, haole people asserted themselves as bearers of civilization and most fit to lead under capitalism. Asian settlers were normalized as hard-workers and Kānaka Maoli were encouraged to suppress their culture by missionaries and ali‘i who converted to Christianity. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, Kānaka Maoli were often encouraged to actively perform hula for high-ranking visitors, and later for tourists, engaging in what I would characterize as “Hawaiian cultural performativity.”

Hawaiian cultural performativity is built from an archive of imagery about Kānaka Maoli that have been circulating since the late eighteenth century. In order for something to be identified as “Hawaiian,” it must fall in line with certain expectations

⁷ Ibid., 11.

⁸ Ibid.

that are derived from this archive of imagery, but while this archive is attached to stereotypical imagery, it also constantly changes. Perceptions of Hawaiianness are contingent on things like dress, skin tone, what is performed, the content of performance, and the make-up of the audience, among other factors. Hawaiian cultural performativity, then, requires the constant performance of what people perceive “Hawaiian culture” to be in a specific place and time. As Balme has explained in his study of hula costuming in the nineteenth century, the hula repertoire had become transformed by several factors: laws that regulated the public performance of hula, the introduction of new types of music, a growing demand for performances for high-ranking Westerners, and, perhaps most importantly, Native perceptions of what the audiences would pay to see performed.⁹ This last factor is significant for it frames the capitalist motivations behind what kind of performances were staged, and of course, how audiences perceived Kānaka Maoli as Natives savagely expressing themselves, rather than as “performers” with skills. As I’ve indicated earlier, these moments of exchange would then circulate ideas about Kānaka Maoli in ways that became naturalized and then internalized by Kānaka Maoli themselves. This kind of repetition and circulation of performance is precisely what constitutes Hawaiian cultural performativity. In sum, Hawaiian cultural performativity is the performance of the perception of traits attributed to “Hawaiianness” and it is also the ways that Kānaka Maoli actively contest those traits of “Hawaiianness.”

Hawaiian cultural performativity is therefore a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it offers possibilities of destabilizing “Hawaiianness”; on the other, it also operates

⁹ Balme, "Dressing the Hula: Iconography, Performance and Cultural Identity Formation in late nineteenth century Hawaii," 243-50. In this, Balme builds on Sahlins (1985) concept of the “performative,” the idea that a culture can continually create its cultural rules anew and assimilate new cultural signs. See Marshall David Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

to keep Kānaka Maoli performing in prescribed ways. Indeed, Hawaiian cultural performativity is about the power of Kānaka Maoli to name the terms of performance and to continuously reinvent performances. It is also the mechanism by which Kanaka Maoli indigeneity is naturalized as welcoming and inviting, and then, as I explained in chapter one, tied to aloha. I will outline Hawaiian cultural performativity and its major components below.

Hawaiian cultural performativity emphasizes firstly that performances of Hawaiian culture are just that: *performances* in the critical analytical sense that Hawaiian identity is both a constructed and lived reality. Also, performances must be read within specific contexts—time periods, audiences, and the spaces in which they take place. Hawaiian cultural performativity is therefore not static or tied to its current composition, but it can certainly change and will continue to do so. Hawaiian cultural performativity insists that performances articulate different elements—for example, cultural revitalization, cultural nationalism, federal recognition, or even market interests (i.e., a paying audience). An example of how Hawaiian cultural performativity constantly transforms can be shown in early Westerner perceptions of Kānaka Maoli. Early Westerner accounts of Kānaka Maoli noted how industrious they were under “traditional” ahupua‘a¹⁰ land organization, but the missionaries turned businessmen eventually sought to proliferate capitalism in the islands.¹¹ So, the Kanaka Maoli body wasn’t necessarily “unproductive”, rather its productivity did not fall in line with colonizer notions of capitalist productivity. Hawaiian cultural performativity at this time acquired the trope of

¹⁰ A form of Hawaiian land division usually extending from the uplands to the sea.

¹¹ Puhipau et al., *Act of War: the Overthrow of the Hawaiian Nation*, (San Francisco, CA: distributed by National Asian American Telecommunications Association, 1993), videorecording, 1 videocassette (58 min.): sd., col. with b&w sequences; 1/2 in.

the “lazy Native,” but outsiders misunderstood Kanaka Maoli motives for not “working.”¹² The resistance to working on the plantations (we see this still happening, with Kānaka Maoli living on the beaches) marked Kānaka Maoli as incapable of existing within a capitalist system, but it also showed how they refused to adhere to growing expectations of such a system in light of encroaching Western power. Hence, Hawaiian cultural performativity is at work here—producing the trope of the lazy Native while it also articulated Hawaiian resistance to capitalism and the exploitation of the land.

Later, as explained in chapter one, the performance of Hawaiian culture, typically through hula performance and as employees in the tourism industry, is a way that Kānaka Maoli have been “called” to perform aloha. Hawaiian cultural performativity in this example articulated “Hawaiianness” with aloha. Hawaiian cultural performativity, most devastatingly, also forces Kānaka Maoli to bear witness to and to participate in the exploitation and bastardization of the Hawaiian culture in order to survive. Survival, however, is a dialectic performance that Kānaka Maoli have been engaging in since contact. It should be remembered, as Muñoz asserts, the disidentification that minority-subjects engage in “is about cultural, material, and psychic survival.”¹³ I explain “disidentification” in the section that follows, but I invoke it here to note that Hawaiian cultural performativity can also be a contestation of Hawaiianness itself that Kānaka Maoli articulate in a number of ways.

In Hawai‘i, at least, no longer is “Hawaiianness” always attached to the stereotypical imagery usually conferred upon Kānaka Maoli (e.g., the hula girl, the surfer

¹² A great deal has been written about the “lazy Native,” see Hussein Alatas, *The myth of the lazy native: a study of the image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th century and its function in the ideology of colonial capitalism* (London: Cass, 1977).

¹³ Jose Munoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). 161.

boy, the carefree beachcomber). It can be, but it isn't always. In light of the Hawaiian renaissance, thankfully, Kānaka Maoli have undergone a resurgence in the public performance of Hawaiian culture, but what it has also produced is a romanticization of pre-colonial Hawaiian subjectivity. Often these very public assertions of Kanaka Maoli identity have us searching for spaces to revitalize what has been lost. Self-authentication in the present through the search for pre-colonial origins can be a liberating and self-affirming process, but it can also be debilitating. Hokowhitu argues that it is ironic, and I would add sad, that colonization itself is what led to the cultural insecurity that motivates the search for "authentic" pre-colonial Indigenous culture that will never be found.¹⁴ This is a kind of Hawaiian cultural performativity that is articulated with cultural revitalization and cultural nationalism. Still, sometimes it is a necessary tactic to push back against stereotypical imagery of Kānaka Maoli. Certainly Hawaiian activism has caused such images to be critiqued on the basis of their mass-produced stereotypical nature, but for many Kānaka Maoli and Asian settlers in Hawai'i, such nostalgic imagery exists as a representation of a simpler time.¹⁵ We see this kind of nostalgic imagery throughout *Ke Kulana He Māhū*. While identified as both products of Hollywood and nostalgia for "old Hawai'i," this imagery also exists as referents for Kanaka Maoli indigeneity. Believing that our "real" selves existed prior to colonization is similar to imperialist ideas of the noble savage. It is also a reinvestment in the notion that the "real" Native exists in their

¹⁴ Brendan Hokowhitu, "Indigenous Existentialism and the Body," *Cultural Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (2009): 111.

¹⁵ This is most obvious in Hawai'i, in the expression "hanabata days," which is a reference to childhood. "Hanabata" is a Hawaiian pidgin way to say that your nose is running and you are too young to know that you should wipe your nose or that you don't know how to. It is often used in Hawai'i in everyday conversations and in Bamboo Ridge publications.

natural state somewhere, uncorrupted by the ills of the West.¹⁶ That is not to say that Kānaka Maoli do not have a special relationship with nature or the land, but this relationship is wrongly misinterpreted. As “natural” peoples, it was presumed that Natives lacked the ability to reason and were therefore unfit for self-government as though Natives can’t evolve or be civilized.¹⁷ The noble Hawaiian savage may be revered with good reason, but in the end, is always unfit for self-government.

I flag these representations to note their ongoing prominence alongside more modern representations. The modern Hawaiian sovereignty movement in the late-twentieth century up through the present has produced new tropes of the Hawaiian sovereignty activist and the Hawaiian warrior. The Hawaiian sovereignty activist is often an academic, while a “Hawaiian warrior” is usually reserved for the position of Kanaka Maoli men and Pacific Islander men broadly through military service or as an athlete in professional sports.¹⁸ It should be remembered that both of these representations, the Hawaiian sovereignty activist and the Hawaiian warrior (always gendered male), rest on recuperating and tapping into a past that authenticates the contemporary representations as authentically Kanaka Maoli. It is not my intention to fully deconstruct these identities

¹⁶ The Noble Savage served as a representation of man “before the fall.” That is, of man before the trappings of civilization transformed social reality. The noble savage was to exhibit what civilized man had ruined, serving as a model for nature, as inherently good. The noble savage existed as the opposite of man’s darker side and in many instances was used as an example against “bad Indians.”

¹⁷ Hokowhitu, “The Death of Koro Paka: “Traditional” Māori Patriarchy,” 116.

¹⁸ Tengan, *Native Men Remade: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Hawai’i*. Tengan also notes that the visibility of Hawaiian women as sovereignty activists in some ways fractured Hawaiian masculinity. Also, several Hawaiian and Hawai’i-based comedians have made jokes about Hawaiian sovereignty activists. Notably, Bu La’ia, for example, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FEErWQ3JnWw>. For more on Pacific masculinity see Vicente M. Diaz, “Tackling Pacific Hegemonic Formations on the American Gridiron,” *Amerasia Journal* 37, no. 3 (2012); ———, ““Fight Boys til the Last”: Football and the Remasculinization of Identity in Guam.”; Hokowhitu, “The Death of Koro Paka: “Traditional” Māori Patriarchy.”; ———, “Tackling Maori Masculinity: A Colonial Genealogy of Savagery and Sport.”; Tengan, *Native Men Remade: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Hawai’i*; ———, “Re-membering Panala’au: Masculinities, Nation, and Empire in Hawai’i and the Pacific.”

or representations, nor do I intend to dismiss people who fit these modes (surely I could be considered a Hawaiian feminist scholar-in-training; see chapter two), but it bears noting that outside of them—the hula girl, the surfer boy, the happy-go-lucky Native, the Hawaiian feminist, the sovereignty activist, the Hawaiian warrior, soldier, athlete—it is difficult to place someone as “Hawaiian” or “Kanaka Maoli.” Again, the point is not to dismiss these identities wholesale. My objective is to understand how the aforementioned identities contest “Hawaiianness,” expand Hawaiian cultural performativity, and in turn influence ideas about Hawaiian indigeneity. As Marvin Carlson has argued, building upon the concept of “slippage” employed by Butler, modern resistance performance often involves taking up the tools of the culture that is oppressing you because that is your only option. It is how those tools are used, possibly in a different direction that matter.¹⁹ For these reasons, the work of performers like Cocoa Chandelier, are a challenge to hegemonic representation in its many forms, which infuses Hawaiian cultural performativity. As I will demonstrate in the next section, Cocoa Chandelier queers the study of Hawaiian performance by performing aloha *in drag*.

Aloha in Drag and the Queering of Hawaiian Performance

The performance strategies of Cocoa Chandelier allow an expansion of Hawaiian cultural performativity by performing aloha *in drag*. The term “drag” can be used as an adjective or a noun. According to Esther Newton in her trailblazing text *Mother Camp* (1972), as a noun, “drag” means the act of one gender performing another gender (i.e., a man wearing a dress or a woman wearing a suit and tie).²⁰ Within LGBTQ communities

¹⁹ Marvin A. Carlson, *Performance: a critical introduction*. (New York: Routledge, 2004). 188.

²⁰ Esther Newton, *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America*, Phoenix ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979). 3.

it often refers to drag queens or kings who play with gender norms through different modes of performance. As Butler has explained, drag subverts the “distinction between inner and outer psychic space that affectively mocks both the expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity.”²¹ Butler’s canonical *Gender Trouble* (1990) focuses on the ways in which drag performance—in terms of gender—unifies the category of “woman” or “man” through reiteration, in other words, through the constant performance of traits attributed to “women” or “men.” Drag exposes the “normal” constitution of gender presentation that is constituted by a set of “disavowed attachments or identifications.”²² Drag reveals the ways that gender norms are naturalized, but as Butler stresses, drag is also contingent.²³

The contingency of drag performance is useful for considering how aloha is performed *in drag*. Drag performance often parodies the very notion of an original, revealing that the supposed “original” is fabrication to begin with. Drag performance then is contingent on its audience having some kind of unifying component that allows them to recognize the construction of whatever is being performed (I will return to the importance of audience later). For example, in the case of drag queens, when drag is performed before a LGBTQ audience, there is a shared commonality that allows the normative performance of gender to be exposed as a construction. Drag has primarily been analyzed in regards to the latter, but for the purposes of this chapter, I am more interested in how something like aloha became a critical concept tied to Hawaiianness and how it is performed in drag in particular spaces. Using drag as an analytic of

²¹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*: 174.

²² ———, “Critically Queer,” in *Performance Studies*, ed. Erin Striff (Houndmills, UK; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 160.

²³ ———, *Gender Trouble*: 175.

performance, I examine how Cocoa Chandelier queers the study of Hawaiian performance.

Unlike the continental U.S., where “queer” is a term that was historically employed to degrade people performing modes of non-heteronormative behavior, or even in the recent reclamations of “queer” amongst the LGBTQ community, allies, and many others—“Queer” is often not heard in Hawai‘i.²⁴ Still, I use “queer” here to mark how Cocoa Chandelier differs from the norm and how she disrupts the naturalization of Hawaiianness. A brief summary of Queer Studies is necessary to understand the force of what Cocoa Chandelier’s “queering” of Hawaiian performance achieves.

Queer Studies emphasizes the study of normalization and deviance in a given social or cultural matrix rather than the study of LGBTQ-identified subjects.²⁵ Queer Studies is rife with internal critique amongst its many factions, holding itself in constant tension. As Butler has written, “the critique of the queer subject is crucial to the continuing *democratization* of queer politics.”²⁶ As the field progressed, however, it received a considerable amount of internal critique from transfolk and people of color who felt that the “anything goes” quality of Queer Studies diluted the specificity of LGBTQ life as well as obscured the material realities of discrimination faced by those who do so do not easily assimilate into mainstream American culture.²⁷ The explosion of

²⁴ That is not to say that there aren’t comparable terms to mark someone “queer.” “Māhū” and “butchie” are often terms used to degrade non-normative gender performance in Hawai‘i.

²⁵ Queer Studies has been critiqued as scholarly spaces where white supremacy masquerades as transgressive. See David Eng, Judith Halberstam, and Jose Esteban Munoz, “What’s Queer about Queer Studies Now? (entire issue),” *Social Text* (2005). Built from discussions and conflicts that occurred at a Queer Studies conference held at the University of Michigan in 2003, some activists were dissatisfied with the academic bias of the panels, particularly about the failure to invite prominent scholars of color in the field, which led to many racially-charged exchanges that took place over the weekend, which this special issue addressed.

²⁶ Butler, “Critically Queer,” 155.

²⁷ See also critiques by Jose Muñoz, Roderick Ferguson, E. Patrick Johnson.

boundaries and transcendence that Queer Studies may have advocated (in its early days) pushed against the necessary, although sometimes essentialist, community belonging that many people of color and transfolk need to survive in a world rife with white supremacy.

Building on women of color feminism, materialist analysis, and post-structuralism, queer of color critique emerged to examine the racial, gender, and sexual heterogeneity composition of non-mainstream cultures. Queer of color critique, according to Ferguson, investigates “how intersecting racial, gender, and sexual practices antagonize and/or conspire with the normative investments of nation-states and capital.”²⁸ The latter is of particular interest to scholarship in Native Studies that seeks to critique the nation-state as a model for nationhood and decolonization. As I’ve explained elsewhere in this dissertation, Smith advocates using queer theory’s subject-less critique to escape ethnographic entrapment, which positions Natives as perpetual objects of study.²⁹ Smith endorses a subject-less critique that does not require Natives to be the sole subject of a Native Studies project, the same way that LGBTQ-identified people are not necessarily the subjects of a Queer Studies project. In other words, a move away from making the Native subject the primary object of Native Studies is necessary to question the practice of ethnographic entrapment that turns Natives into containers of truth.³⁰ Later in this chapter I examine how Cocoa Chandelier resists ethnographic entrapment through her performance of aloha in drag.

²⁸ Roderick Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer Color Critique* (2004). 4.

²⁹ Smith, "Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism," 45.

³⁰ As Smith explains, ethnographic entrapment is endemic in multiculturalism, where the sharing of cultural difference and its subsequent assimilation in the American multicultural narrative is a mere reification of the genocidal nation-state that dispossessed natives of their culture by making them not native enough to be on their lands. Multiculturalism normalizes settler-colonialism and supports an ongoing settler-colonial project under the guise of recognizing cultural difference. See *ibid.*

For these reasons, I retain “queer” to look at how the normalization or naturalization of something is disrupted. Read within the ever-visible terrain of Hawaiian performance, I argue that Cocoa Chandelier actively queers Hawaiian performance by not performing anything “Hawaiian.” Cocoa Chandelier queers Hawaiian performance through what Jose Muñoz has termed “disidentification.” Muñoz defined “disidentification” as a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology.³¹ Through performance, Cocoa Chandelier disidentifies with “Hawaiianness.” By employing drag as a method, Cocoa Chandelier bucks the perception and expectation that Kānaka Maoli perform in a particular way. Performers like Cocoa Chandelier help us, as Sarita See explains in her work *The Decolonized Eye* (2009), “... think about identity as a politics of evading rather than securing visibility and legibility.”³² In See’s study of Filipino American artists, she ponders the politics of form in art, asking what happens when art offers no explicit or visible markers of ethnic identity?³³ The intent of this question is to think about how American empire or imperialist ventures are abstracted and how they are represented in the abstract. As See explains, the violence of American empire is hidden through particular kinds of performances and other times, resistance is performed through seemingly apolitical performance genres.³⁴ In the Hawaiian context this is personified in stereotypical perceptions of hula that the untrained eye would mark as apolitical because they appear to embody “aloha.”

Aloha in drag is the performance of Hawaiian indigeneity by means other than through direct references to supposed Hawaiianness. This is a performance of aloha that

³¹ Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*: 11.

³² Sarita See, *The Decolonized Eye: Filipino American Art and Performance* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009). 128.

³³ *Ibid.*, 138.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

is not recognizable to most audiences. Cocoa Chandelier does not perform in ways that physically and culturally mark a performer as Kanaka Maoli. So, in performing aloha in drag Cocoa Chandelier performs aloha in a way that aloha cannot be identified—you cannot see the resistance nor can you *see* the aloha. This is how it circumvents neoliberal circuits of exchange—because you cannot name it and subsequently, you cannot sell it. This is how it is profoundly *queer*. Following See’s logic, evasive performances like Cocoa Chandelier’s at the USQ 2008 pageant participate in abstracting practices. Cocoa Chandelier’s abstraction of Hawaiianness questions how Kānaka Maoli are supposed to perform, it expands Hawaiian cultural performativity, and disrupts the very meaning of “Hawaiianness” itself. Through the putting on and taking off of multiple signifiers, the purposeful ambivalences and complexities of Cocoa Chandelier’s performance at the USQ Pageant offers a space to imagine and engage the agonizing realities of Kanaka Maoli indigeneity. As a disidentifying subject, Cocoa Chandelier holds onto the loss of Hawaiian life, but also reinvests in it.³⁵ I will return to my analysis of aloha in drag in the specific case study of Cocoa Chandelier’s performance at the USQ.

What it Feels Like for a Girl: 2008 Universal Showqueen Pageant

At the 2008 Universal Showqueen Pageant, an annual pageant held in Honolulu that started in 1984 “for the enlightenment of the transsexual experience as a contestant, fashion model, and spokesperson,” Cocoa Chandelier transformed the neocolonial juggernaut known as the Hawai‘i Convention Center into a Bollywood “Harem of the Underworld.”³⁶ Situated at the mouth of Waikīkī and adjacent to Ala Moana Center, the

³⁵ Munoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*: 12. Muñoz explains that disidentifying subjects both hold onto the loss of the subject and invest in it a new kind of life.

³⁶ www.universalshowqueendvd.com

Hawai‘i Convention Center that opened in 1998 is known for its purported “Hawaiian sense of place.” The convention center was built as part of a large-scale revitalization and rejuvenation of Waikīkī, designed and inspired by Hawaiian concepts. The space is adorned with Hawaiian plants, featuring rooms with names like “Kamehameha I,” and promoting “nā mea ho‘okipa” (translated as Hawaiian hospitality).³⁷ The convention center also houses the Hawai‘i Visitors and Convention Bureau (HVCB). The design and decoration of the convention center is a perfect example of the ways in which Kanaka Maoli indigeneity is actively incorporated into public space throughout Hawai‘i in the service of the tourist industry.³⁸ But draped in Hindu accoutrements, Cocoa Chandelier transformed the space and herself, as she played the role of a bride-to-be who was kidnapped and forced to live in a Harem of the Underworld. Danced to the tune of a world music montage and a remixed Jay-Z Bhangra hit, Cocoa Chandelier performed a mish-mash of scenes from a Bengali epic. The performance ended with Cocoa Chandelier hanging upside down by her feet from the convention center ceiling, giving herself up to the spectre of Orientalism. Cocoa Chandelier’s performance of aloha in drag in this fabricated space of “aloha” is thus all the more provocative. Refusing to be a Hawaiian subject in this convention center that intends to produce a “Hawaiian sense of place,” Cocoa Chandelier figuratively sacrifices herself. In her performance, she refuses to give up her brown body by not answering the call. This provokes the question, whether it is

³⁷ “Kamehameha I” was the first Hawaiian chief to unite all the islands in the late eighteenth century. The Hawaiian “monarchy” that resulted in his consolidation of power reigned throughout the nineteenth century and has a genealogy that is still present today, although in obviously less public ways and very different from in the past. Kamehameha as an icon of Hawaiian strength is personified in various cultural productions—paintings, architecture, statues and clothing.

³⁸ For examinations of how Hawaiians are invoked in urban planning, see Serge Marek, “Waikiki Virtual Reality: Space, Place and Representation in the Waikiki Master Plan” (University of Hawai‘i, 1997). Kathy Ferguson and Phyllis Turnbull, *Oh Say Can You See? The Semiotics of the Military in Hawai‘i* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Wood, *Displacing Natives: the Rhetorical Production of Hawai‘i*.

really possible to turn away from the call? What happens when the call is not answered? In chapter one, I wrote that not answering aloha's call results in a kind of figurative death, as a kind of erasure and absence. I also posited that Kānaka Maoli answer the call as an act of survival to secure social life. But when called, Cocoa Chandelier does not answer. I will spend the remainder of the chapter unpacking the futility of performing aloha in drag as well as the ongoing conundrum of "the call."

As I explained in the previous chapter, Cocoa Chandelier is featured in the film *Ke Kulana He Māhū*. As Cocoa Chandelier is introduced by Skeeter Mariah Crackseed, a montage of video footage is shown as Skeeter Mariah Crackseed's voice lists Cocoa Chandelier's various aliases. Cocoa Chandelier is introduced as: Samuel L. A. Akuna, Cocoa Chandelier, Paris France, Kinko Lush, and Sumir Lacroix. When asked in an interview of the origins of her drag name, she starts telling me a story, but I feel like she is making it up. I ask her again, "No, really, are you lying?" And she just laughs. In the midst of my incessant questioning and her laughing at me as a "researcher," I soon learned that this aversion to tell me "the truth" was part of her performance strategy. I will never know the "truth."

In the USQ competition, Cocoa Chandelier is the first contestant. The competition had four primary categories of couture cocktail, evening gown, talent presentation, and showgirl. In the couture cocktail category, Cocoa Chandelier wears black elbow-length satin gloves paired with a white and black leopard print pear-shaped gown. A large feather boa adorns her right shoulder, with a fluffed-out bottom section, accented by black trim. Diamond earrings in the shape of a bunch of grapes paired with an ornate diamond necklace accentuate her shoulders. Cocoa Chandelier breathes slowly on the

catwalk, with her mouth perched slightly open. Brian William's "Everything I Do," (from the *Robin Hood* [1991] soundtrack) is playing in the background.³⁹ As Cocoa Chandelier graces the stage, the announcer reads a tableau:

Few words of wisdom enrich her everyday life. Sitting in open-air, indulging in authentic Greek café sparkling limonada, the setting of the sun behind her and the sound of world music montage make for a perfect start of a gorgeous evening. Inspiration feeds her creative soul in the form of current affairs, in-depth conversation with her peers, with a hint of ultraviolet by Paco-Rabanne, she takes a minute to review her flight details with a quick stop off in Las Vegas, Nevada to fit with her favorite designer, Arturo Moreno.

This is the first the audience hears about Cocoa Chandelier, if they do not know her already, but I would venture that many in the audience do, as the audience cheers are amplified when she walks onto the stage. This category offers the contestants the only opportunity to speak directly to the audience through pre-written scripts read by the announcer as they take to the stage. All ten contestants thank their families, say where they're from, and speak about their goals and dreams. Some offer information about their "day job," list their favorite things, designers, inspiring celebrities, where they'd like to go on vacation, and especially, they explain their ethnic background. Notably, none of the contestants are white. All the contestants follow this trend, except for Cocoa Chandelier. The Kanaka Maoli contestants, in particular, self-identify by listing all their ethnicities—common in Hawai'i—some even comment on the importance of preserving the Hawaiian culture. Stacey Ashton Ka'au'a especially notes in her introduction: "To move forward in this modern world, we must embrace our ancestors, for they are the foundation of who we are today and for what we are to become tomorrow." The practice of self-identifying

³⁹ Also played is Janet Jackson's "Lets Wait Awhile" and a Spanish version of Toni Braxton's "Unbreak my Heart." Artist unknown at the moment.

as a particular ethnic or racial background, common in ethnic beauty pageants, is replicated in the USQ, curiously setting Cocoa Chandelier apart from the other contestants, as she is the only contestant that does not state where she is from, what her background is, or her aspirations for the future. Instead, the audience is presented with a verbal image of Cocoa Chandelier in an idyllic setting, framing her as a jet-setting artist who associates with famous designers and engages in intellectual conversation in Greek cafés. Later, in the talent competition, Cocoa Chandelier further disembodies Kanaka Maoli indigeneity, as others openly assert it.

Deeper and Deeper: Harem of the Underworld

In this performance, Cocoa Chandelier plays the role of the muse, a bride-to-be who is forced to live in the Harem of the Underworld.⁴⁰ Cocoa Chandelier's entry in the talent category of the pageant is an homage to an Orientalized East. Throughout this six-minute spectacle, Orientalist signifiers run amuck, performed in drag, by an abstracted Kanaka Maoli body. Cocoa Chandelier's performance begins with a pre-recorded video and narration in which Cocoa Chandelier is adorned with Bindi and surrounded by other Hindu accoutrements and motifs. Along with the audio narration, Cocoa Chandelier is shown in front of a backdrop of turquoise and orange silks. She herself is dressed in turquoise silk, with gold pearls wrapped around her wrists. She wears a scarf on her head, giant gold earrings, and a necklace in a similar style. She introduces herself:

Deep beneath the desert sands the legend was foretold that a muse was taken on the day of her wedding to the bowels of the underworld, deep beneath the desert sands, where she would remain with her haunting voice that which would lure a man's soul to his death to be devoured by this

⁴⁰ Not to be confused with Persephone, Queen of the Underworld from Greek Mythology. Stories told about Persephone reference her abduction into the underworld and eventual return to regular life, under the condition (or curse) that she return to the underworld during winter months. The myth is thought to explain the absence of fertility during winter.

creature of the underground, placing these men under a trance with her intoxicating dance and her beckoning harem of lost brides-to-be. But this would not remain true, for the gods had forsaken such acts placed upon unwilling mortals. And so the sun-god, Syria, sent-forth a ray of light to penetrate the darkness that from which she had climbed out into the light, but at the last moment, she heard the call of the cihade and fell from the light, back under her unbecoming spell of bewitching darkness.

This visual imagery is lit through high-contrast blacklighting. Her head is facing downwards as the camera pans the perimeter of her body, stopping at her eyes. Her eyebrows are represented by dots. While her voiceover explains an attempt to “penetrate the darkness,” Cocoa Chandelier is shown holding and pulling on a rope, trying unsuccessfully to escape from the underworld. She is pulled back.



Figure 5 Cocoa Chandelier, as “the muse,” attempts to climb-out of the darkness

This pre-recorded video sets the stage for the live performance that takes the audience into the underworld where the brides-to-be perform their songs. The song that begins the piece is entitled “Harem,” which was originally recorded by British world music star Sarah Brightman. At first, Cocoa Chandelier dances alone but is soon joined

by a young man to whom she sings the lyrics, “I hold your Eastern promise close to my heart, welcoming you to my harem,” immediately after which she kills him. At this point the music switches and a group of women and men begin to dance a scene from the 2002 Bollywood film *Devdas*, a film based on a 1917 Hindi novella by Sharat Chandra Chattopadhyay.⁴¹ *Devdas* is a classic, and is still the most expensive Bollywood film ever made and has been adapted to film dozens of times. Next, three other men approach and lift Cocoa Chandelier above their heads, carrying her away in a cross formation. Then, four female backup dancers in red belly dancer outfits approach (they are the Giinko Marischino dancers, with whom Cocoa Chandelier frequently collaborates). The song changes to Kavita Krishnamurthy’s “Dola Re Dola” with the choreography matching much of the dancing in *Devdas*.⁴² Following this, Cocoa Chandelier begins disrobing. First the bracelets, then the skirt come off, all while the dancers lift her up and spin her around. Then, just as they frame her with jazz hands (or what some refer to as spirit fingers), the song changes to Jay Z’s 2003 release, “Beware of the Boys,” which features a popular Bhangra music sample, “Munddian to Bach Ke,” by Punjabi MC.⁴³ The dancers exit the stage and Cocoa Chandelier begins dancing with another man in a mash-up of hip-hop and Bhangra. After this brief dance, the group of dancers return and the song switches back to “Dola re dola,” as Cocoa Chandelier scales a long piece of red fabric that is hanging from the ceiling. Presumably this is the “ray of light” that was sent to save

⁴¹ *Devdas* (2002) is based on the book by Sharat Chattopadhyay. The Film was released in 2002 and was the third Bollywood version of the film to be produced, but the first to be produced in full color. It has been released in English, French, German, Mandarin, Thai, and Punjabi. At the time, it was the highest grossing Bollywood film ever.

⁴² Kavita Krishnamurthy. “Dola re dola” on the *Devdas Soundtrack* Fontana Indian, Universal Music India Pvt. Ltd. 2002.

⁴³ Also featured prominently is Panjabi MC, “Beware of the Boys”. Sequence Records 2003. Single. Features remix with Jay Z.

the “bride-to-be.” As she begins to scale the fabric, the crowd is screaming in disbelief. When she gets to the top, she spins upside down, and slides down slowly. The dancers all continue dancing below her. The music is blasting in Hindi and as it crescendos, Cocoa Chandelier wraps her feet around the red fabric and again begins to ascend, only to suddenly flip upside down in an apparent unsuccessful bid to climb out of the dark “harem.” Hanging by her feet, she sacrifices herself at what might be now understood as an altar of Orientalism. Hanging thusly from the Hawai‘i Convention Center ceiling, Cocoa Chandelier receives a rousing standing ovation. It is a provocative site/*sight*. In an interview, Cocoa Chandelier has described this story as one in which the woman who attempts to flee her fate, even with the help of a god-like figure, is doomed to remain a prisoner forever. I contend that performance encapsulates the conundrum of modern Kanaka Maoli indigeneity and subjection. While Cocoa Chandelier’s performance renders her own Kanaka Maoli heritage completely invisible by not performing anything that can be identified as “Hawaiian,” she offers the possibilities of a radical alterity, one that is achieved by appropriating the subjection of a feminized Oriental. My read attempts to straddle these problematics.

“Hung up” at the Feet of Orientalism



Figure 6 Cocoa Chandelier ends the performance

The bride-to-be that Cocoa Chandelier portrays is evocative of the Sirens from Greek mythology (Persephone especially), because of her ability to lure men to their death with her song, she must stay in the harem, for she is dangerous. Cocoa Chandelier crafts a performance that references the fears of women’s sexuality and the emotive power of sirens’ songs. As the story progresses, when the bride-to-be is given a chance to escape, she cannot, she is continually pulled back into the Harem of the Underworld, to perform her song amongst the other lost brides-to-be, where no one can see them (but everyone knows they’re there). In this story, the bride is being punished for her intoxicating dance and song. In short, the bride is being punished for what makes her different, her culture. A god-like figure in the story unsuccessfully tries to save her, a figure which I interpret as the liberal multicultural subject. In spite of her song or culture,

the god-like figure offers her a chance at freedom, but as she attempts to climb out, she is hailed and interpellated back to the underworld, unable to escape.⁴⁴ Her performance was ultimately insufficient and she was therefore not able to climb out. There, she is fated to live out her subjection forever as a racialized subject. Her race pulls her back down; she cannot overcome it through the performance of her culture.

This story relays a message that efforts to overcome subjection through recognizable forms of cultural performance are ultimately futile because the very discourse through which such performances must occur is fundamentally colonial. Put another way, cultural performance might change the perspective of the onlooker, but not the act of gazing. This exemplifies what Da Silva (2007) and others have theorized, that the very need to recognize cultural difference is proof that “the other” or the bride in this story, is inherently unassimilable and cannot be saved. As I explained in the introduction, Da Silva contends that (a) it is “culture” and not “race” that now (doubly) disempowers us, and (b) this results in a double-binding through discourses of culture rather than through discourses of race.⁴⁵ As such, the “other” is always racially encoded, always prisoners of their own cultural difference and never self-determining.⁴⁶ This is why the bride cannot climb out of the harem. Under liberal multiculturalism, racial over-determination can only be combated through the recognition of cultural difference, but in this story, the call of the state cannot save you.

Answering the call means performing a recognizable mode of cultural difference.

⁴⁴ I define the “liberal multicultural subject” as an identity formation that aspires to be politically correct, integrative, and culturally sensitive to ethnic minorities. Liberal multiculturalism celebrates cultural diversity, teaches tolerance, and promotes ethnic diversity, but as Chow has argued (2002), such formations of liberalism are overseen by liberal whiteness that favors cultural diversity divorced from politics, which works to produce the fantasy of multiculturalism and further conceals racism, violence, and inequality.

⁴⁵ Da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, xxxv.

The performance of “cultural difference,” however, is not so easily dismissed when talking about Native or indigenous peoples whose claims to sovereignty as based on their difference as indigenous peoples, which differ considerably from the claims that U.S. racial minorities might advance. Hence, I am somewhat torn when I advance an argument that advocates for disguising Kanaka Maoli identity because the need for Kanaka Maoli-only resources have a material reality.⁴⁷ In this sense, Phelan’s critique of the power of performance to advance political change, stops short because she completely overlooks the realities of indigenous peoples who need visibility and must perform in recognizable ways to be deemed worthy of resources from the very state that dispossessed them of their way of life to begin with.⁴⁸ But, as Povinelli explains, aboriginal groups are forced to perform in certain ways to show themselves as worthy in the eyes of the state. The continual performance of particular types of aboriginal cultural practice, then, is sanctioned by the state through a multicultural imaginary that defuses struggles for liberation and ensures the functioning of the modern liberal state. In sum, Native aspirations for decolonization and self-determination are predicated on their cultural difference, and must be “recognized” by people in power in order for their claims (like land claims or entitlement programs) to be acknowledged.

As Phelan notes, the spectator dominates and controls the exchange because more often than not, underrepresented groups are scripted to “sell” or “confess” to someone (a theatrical “audience” or government official) who is in a position to buy or forgive the

⁴⁷ Office of Hawaiian Affairs, *Native Hawaiian Data Book*; Kana'iaupuni, Malone, and Ishibashi, "Income and Poverty Among Native Hawaiians: Summary of Ka Huaka'i Findings."

⁴⁸ Phelan, *Unmarked*.

performer.⁴⁹ Ergo, state forms of recognition are undoubtedly important, but they should be understood as temporary, rather than being the end goal of decolonization.

Furthermore, the idea that cultural performance can educate audiences about cultural others is not a means to an end. As argued in the Introduction, being forced to perform a particular type of cultural difference—sanctioned by the very government that is requiring you display that difference—to legitimate your claim to sovereignty is an inherently colonial practice.

Aware of the problematics of performance and recognition, at the performances' end, Cocoa Chandelier or the bride sacrifices herself at the feet of Orientalism. This act of self-sacrifice is instructive for rethinking Kanaka Maoli indigeneity. Remember, Cocoa Chandelier's performance of the bride's death is a commentary on the bride's inability to overcome her racial subjection because the performance of her culture was insufficient. So, rather than continue trying to climb out of the harem or being imprisoned there, she sacrifices herself. Within the context of Hawaiian cultural performativity, Cocoa Chandelier's performance exposes how Hawaiian performance and bodies are deeply inscribed as racialized (and culturalized) objects within a representational system and yet provides resistance to that very system.

This racialization (and culturalization) occurs in tandem with the perception that Kānaka Maoli are performing our interior selves all the time and this is where the idea of the "aloha spirit" comes from. In short, Cocoa Chandelier refuses this confessional of Hawaiian culture. Historically, the aloha spirit has been fabricated as a Hawaiian essence

⁴⁹ Ibid., 163. Phelan reads Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (1979), noting that his usage of the "confession" is akin to how power operates in many forms of performance. She confers that "women and performers" are the ones that are scripted to sell or confess, but I would add here that this is applicable to anyone "underrepresented" who must confess or sell themselves to be included.

that is shared and transferrable to non-Hawaiians. But aloha's market value only counts when people believe that Kānaka Maoli naturally emanate aloha. If aloha is identified as a performance, its worth depreciates. Cocoa Chandelier, like Krystilez, shows us how aloha and "Hawaiianness" itself are performances because neither of them perform aloha in recognizable ways. Cocoa Chandelier especially performs on multiple levels of drag and invokes the trope of the harem to confuse this Western gaze that only sees Kānaka Maoli when they perform aloha. Cocoa Chandelier hides in plain sight. On the verge of this perhaps libratory performance, Cocoa Chandelier's performance simultaneously exhibits Kanaka Maoli complicity in the racial overdetermination of another subjected group through her appropriation of another "other."

In June 2008, at the time of this performance, the so-called "War on Terror" was still in full swing with the ongoing military occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan as well as a military build-up in the Pacific unseen since WWII. Additionally, the American media had renewed fears of terrorism because of the 2008 Mumbai bombing attacks in India.⁵⁰ Cocoa Chandelier's performance of South Asian Orientalism is evidence of the manner in which the "War on Terror" revived American interest in Middle Eastern, Arab, Muslim, and South Asian cultures that is both an embrace and a distancing from the brute realities of U.S. war-making. Celebrating the "other" and their culture has always been a tactic of colonialism and nationalism, whereby the inclusion of certain "others" requires the exclusion of undesirable "others," like "terrorists" or "bad Indians," for example.⁵¹

⁵⁰ On November 26, 2008, a Pakistan-based military organization coordinated bombing attacks throughout South Mumbai, India. The attacks lasted two days and killing over a hundred and fifty people and wounding over three hundred.

⁵¹ Evelyn Alsultany, "Selling American Diversity and Muslim American Identity Through Non-Profit Advertising Post-911," *American Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (2007): 619. See also Amaney A. Jamal and

Therefore, there is space to critique Cocoa Chandelier for indulging a vague Orientalist notion of a generalized Eastern world. Cocoa Chandelier's usage of the Jay-Z song is a classic example of Arab and South Asian rhythms being incorporated, whether through dialogues or sheer appropriation.⁵² This re-packaging of culture—via the remix—enters the public sphere and marketplace as commodities to be enjoyed through a multicultural imaginary that celebrates difference without critiquing the political economy upon which it relies. Throughout the performance, Arab and South Asian cultures are abstracted, which is common in the post-9/11 era where Arabs, South Asians, Muslims, and anyone perceived to be from a nation with a large Muslim population are wrongly clumped together.⁵³ For example, “harems” of the abstracted Arab world are also conflated with indigenous culture when remixed into the *Devdas* Bollywood spectacle that is based on a Bengali novel. Cocoa Chandelier's appropriation of *Devdas* choreography and the story she tells about the harem exhibits this conflation. Historically, harems were imagined as an alluring and tantalizingly forbidden world because the Western male gaze could not penetrate it.⁵⁴ By embodying this performative realm—the so-called harem—Cocoa Chandelier may well be replicating Orientalism, but she may also be understood to be availing herself strategically of a space that cannot be penetrated by the Western gaze, a space which can be liberating for Natives, especially for Kānaka Maoli, who continue to

Nadine Christine Naber, *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects*, 1st ed., Arab American writing (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2008).

⁵² For more on music and appropriation see Georgina Born and David Hesmondahalg, eds., *Western Music and Its Others: difference, representation, and appropriation in music* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000).

⁵³ Deepa Iyer, "A Community on the Front Lines: Pushing Back the Riding Tide of Anti-Immigrant Policy Since September 11th," *The Subcontinental* 1, no. 3 (2003). See also Puar's chapter "The Turban is not a Hat" in *Terrorist Assemblages* (2007) is also an example of this conflation.

⁵⁴ For more see, Leila Ahmed, "Western Ethnocentrism and Perceptions of the Harem", *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Autumn, 1982), pp 521-534. Leila Ahmed, "Western Ethnocentrism and Perceptions of the Harem," *Feminist Studies* 8, no. 3 (1982).

be hypervisible subjects. This kind of “liberation” for one group, however, comes at the expense of another. It makes the appropriation of culture appear both individual and universal, which is at the core of American notions of liberal-democratic freedom, where multiculturalism means appropriating and commodifying ethnic difference to hide ongoing subjection.⁵⁵

Subjection is something Kānaka Maoli know all too well, as it has been through the embrace and celebration of Hawaiian culture and performance that the material realities of Kanaka Maoli dispossession have been concealed. But, as I have explained throughout this dissertation, Kānaka Maoli internalize these processes in complicated ways. By appropriating Orientalist signifiers, Cocoa Chandelier temporarily destabilizes the grounds upon which Hawaiianness is built because she refuses to perform in prescribed ways. Cocoa Chandelier’s “truth” is revealed and hidden at the same time. This is what made this performance so spectacular. Cocoa Chandelier’s performances do not present a desire to be represented or “recognized” in an easy way; the actual references she uses are difficult to track. However, the Orientalist tropes are also easily conjured. And yet, by not performing anything that can be named “Hawaiian,” Cocoa Chandelier refuses to be a confessing subject fated to live out her subjection forever as a Kanaka Maoli. In this performance of Orientalist drag, Cocoa Chandelier obstructs the disciplinary gaze that seeks to further normalize, contain, and commodify Hawaiian culture. Throughout her performance repertoire and discursive strategies, she is rarely

⁵⁵ For notes on how Arab dance is incorporated, see Barbara Sellers-Young and Anthony Shay, eds., *Belly Dance: Orientalism, Transnationalism, and Harem Fantasy* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2005); Sunaina Maira, "Henna and Hip-hop: The Politics of Cultural Production and the Work of Cultural Studies," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 3, no. 3 (2000). Sunaina Maira explains that the opening up of India’s economic market has caused India to be a nation of cheap labor, goods, and emergent markets and trends.

seen or heard explicitly talking about herself. Her work, therefore, confounds disciplining technologies that seek to understand “Hawaiian” identity expression and performance. Cocoa Chandelier’s performances help us think about how we understand and constitute Hawaiianness. Cocoa Chandelier’s performance, ultimately, pushes Hawaiian performance to interrogate the ever-mutating and disciplining technologies of colonialism. Linking back to how Cocoa Chandelier queers Hawaiian performance, her performance of aloha in drag circumvents the wide optics of neoliberalism.

Aloha in Drag (reprise)



Figure 7 Cocoa Chandelier showgirl entry, Universal Showqueen Pageant 2008

I am aware that I might perhaps be letting Cocoa Chandelier off the hook for her appropriative moves, but I would contend that her numerous performances exemplify what Sarita See has called “abstraction as a practice.”⁵⁶ I view Cocoa Chandelier’s usage of the abstract as a tactic, one that See explains is an aesthetic practice, alongside other

⁵⁶ See, *The Decolonized Eye: Filipino American Art and Performance*: 129.

strategies of indirection, trickery and mimicry.⁵⁷ Cocoa Chandelier is not associated with a specific kind of Orientalism, her performances vary widely and, as she told me in an interview, she is trained in numerous types of dance and draws inspiration from many different cultures. This approach to performance is not necessarily novel, but what is apparent is the ways that in actual public performances, as I've mentioned, she chooses not to perform in "Hawaiian" forms. Hence, in her disguising of the Kanaka Maoli subject, she resists the ghosts of stereotypical Hawaiian iconography. Cocoa Chandelier's impersonation and performance of Orientalist tropes thus operate as a strategy that pushes and expands the boundaries of Hawaiian cultural performativity and identity because she resists a commodifying gaze that, in seeking out the "Hawaiian," always seeks a new cultural product.

Another example of this abstracted performance is in the "showgirl" portion of the competition. Many of the contestants dress in elaborate headpieces, are covered in brightly colored feathers and sometimes even mechanical moving parts of the headpieces or capes themselves. Frequently, the costuming involves large capes underneath which the contestant is wearing very little clothing, showcasing the illusion (sometimes real) of female secondary sex characteristics, like breasts and hips. Cocoa Chandelier enters the stage with her entourage dressed as a court jester. She wears a black-and-white checkered skintight bodysuit on stilts, holding a long scepter. Reminiscent of the jester tricksters of carnivals and mardi gras, Cocoa Chandelier invokes these notorious scenes of performance play to further set herself apart from the other contestants. In this, Cocoa Chandelier performs what Simpson describes as a mode of triple, even quadruple

⁵⁷ Ibid., 128-29.

consciousness that engages in constant play, at times, mocking those who seek to make sense of it. Using Simpson to look further at Cocoa Chandelier's performance, the play she engages in, as Simpson explains, reveals itself only through refusal.⁵⁸ Cocoa Chandelier refuses the hyper-commodification of Hawaiian identity and produces a momentary performance event for a specific audience that, as Phelan has noted, finds its greatest strength by "eluding the economy of reproduction" because it "clogs the smooth machinery" of capitalism, as the performance is not easily recreated or marketable to a mass audience.⁵⁹

At the same time, performances of this nature tap into public fantasies, leaving a trace that produces and alters cultural repertoires, making visible not just the live event, but *the powerful army of the always already living* (emphasis mine).⁶⁰ These performances thus speak to the presence of a community that can be uplifted by Cocoa Chandelier's performance. As Taylor suggests, "the powerful army of the always already living," in this case, is the army or community of Kānaka Maoli who—whether or not they are recognizable—are always already there. This can be seen in the Kanaka Maoli presence in the convention center space, throughout Hawai'i, and represented through Cocoa Chandelier's very body. In the contained performance event a sense of pride and strength emerges for this particular community, be it of māhū, Kānaka Maoli, as well as all the muffies and the butchies, or the wider LGBTQ community in Hawai'i. Hawaiian cultural performativity is expanded again through Cocoa Chandelier's articulation of Orientalist discourse as the audience acknowledges Cocoa Chandelier's brilliance as a

⁵⁸ Simpson, "On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, "Voice" and Colonial Citizenship," 74.

⁵⁹ Phelan, *Unmarked*: 148-49.

⁶⁰ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and Repertoire: Performance Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). 143.

performer, with her “true” identity abstracted because the audience is already familiar with her. Aloha in drag makes this possible.

To perform aloha in drag is to narrate a version of contemporary Kānaka Maoli life that contends with images of Hawaiian culture that have been bastardized through the “spirit of aloha.” Cocoa Chandelier narrates this darkness in her pre-recorded video (explained earlier) as the muse or the bride-to-be who possessed difference through her song (i.e., culture), knowing that she will be a prisoner forever. Kānaka Maoli occupy such darkness amidst the realization of the constructed ideal they are measured against. Aware of this bastardization, activist iterations of Kanaka Maoli sovereignty iterations of resistance have been particularly invested in narrating a version of Kanaka Maoli indigeneity that is situated in a dynamic and confrontational imagining of Kanaka Maoli identity. As explained in the “Bloodline” chapter, Kanaka Maoli performers often embody the antithetical perception of “aloha” by refusing aloha as a way to produce counter-hegemonic imagery against the trope of a happy Kanaka Maoli filled with aloha. Yet, as many Kānaka Maoli will tell you, aloha is still something we deeply believe in, even as we pretend to disavow it or publicly critique its commodified nature. We struggle with finding ways to balance this contradiction. *Aloha in drag* allows that contradiction to be held in productive tension when performed or expressed in the appropriate spaces. Cocoa Chandelier’s performance at the USQ competition is one such space, where it appears that Kānaka Maoli indigeneity is not limited or overdetermined by the specter of aloha and all that it carries. Even in the Hawai‘i convention center space, marred as it is in Hawaiian appropriation at every turn—with rooms named after Hawaiian royalty and Hawaiian imagery adorning its insides—Cocoa Chandelier manages to hide her

“Hawaiianness” while also asserting her Kanaka Maoli indigeneity. That is not to say that the Showqueen pageant exists as a pure space outside of colonial discourse, nor am I saying that it is a “liminal” space in-between the mainstream and the underground. As McKenzie has theorized, liminality has turned into a “liminal norm” in Performance Studies that is an effect of its performative power.⁶¹ Cocoa Chandelier’s performance within the USQ pageant space allows such a space to be constructed, but it is not liminal—in this space the call of aloha is not answered when Cocoa Chandelier does not perform Hawaiianness, but it is also disguised and answered because the audience recognizes Cocoa Chandelier, knows her, knows her work, has aloha for her—shares in her performance, in its success.

Living (with)in death

Phelan explains that performance must be experienced live—honoring the idea that a limited number of people in a certain place and time can experience something that leaves no visible trace after the performance.⁶² Performance thus disrupts the representation necessary for capitalism.⁶³ Full disclosure: I was not at the USQ pageant that I just spent half of this chapter examining. I bought the DVD online. Phelan explains that once the performance is documented and put into a reproduced form, in this case in a DVD, it is no longer a “performance,” it is an archival video document consisting of a multitude of images of a performance that took place, but like I said, I wasn’t there.⁶⁴ I did not experience its liveness the way that the audience there did. Indeed, I only saw the performance on DVD and had heard about it through word of mouth, during my annual

⁶¹ McKenzie, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance*: 50, 166.

⁶² Phelan, *Unmarked*: 149.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 146-47.

return to Hawai‘i over the summer in 2008. Since I had moved to Michigan for graduate school in 2006, I had come back during the summer to teach, be around brown people, recuperate my social life, and get my fill of some much-needed vitamin D. I had been back about a week before a friend had showed me the DVD, which she had purchased a week earlier.⁶⁵

So, I watched Cocoa Chandelier’s performance at the USQ on DVD, blown away, transfixed. The fact that I “had to see this” as my friend put it, spoke to the way that word of mouth operates in a small LGBTQ community. The spectacular nature of Cocoa Chandelier’s performance was spreading through what people in Hawai‘i call the “coconut wireless,” i.e., the rumor mill. I was told that I had to see it to believe it. It was true. As the audience members left the Hawai‘i convention center after the performance, word surely spread. *OMG Cocoa did this Bollywood thing. OMG girl she did that aerial ribbon-dancing thing. OMG she hung herself upside down, etc.* These were actual things people had been saying. The performance produced this immense feeling of pride; everyone was talking about it. The community somehow felt uplifted in it, they felt connected and affirmed in the fact that this small community was part of this spectacular performer who represented the best of the community, something *we* could be proud of. The performance in general overshadowed the figurative death that is staged at the end. In watching the DVD, I was witness to a reenactment of a woman’s sacrifice. Her powerful act, in the face of her unbearable existence, could only be dealt with through

⁶⁵ Two weeks earlier I saw Cocoa Chandelier do a rendition of “I Will Survive,” a version modified by performance artist, Kate Rigg, who in her rendition of “I Will Survive,” tells a story of a postcolonial dispossession of Asian women, specifically during the Vietnam war. This version of the song is referred to as the “postcolonial version,” Cocoa Chandelier’s rendition of this song was staged during COEXIST, a collaborative project by the avante-guard performance group Cocoa Chandelier founded, Giinko Marischino. At the end of the performance, Cocoa Chandelier mused jokingly about her recent USQ crowning, “I spent thirty thousand and only won a thousand.”

death, by hanging herself. The song ends. The crowd is heard screaming on the DVD. Cocoa Chandelier chooses to ignore the call of aloha, but through her performance, she sends out her own call of aloha.

This performance is in line with a type of performance that Phelan described as “hardship art” or “ordeal art.” This is a type of art focused on developing an aesthetics of pain which attempts to make a distinction between presence and representation by using the singular body as a substitute for a nonreciprocal experience of pain. Put another way, the audience views pain through one performer as a way to engage their own pain. The performance calls witnesses or the audience to the individual’s death. This is what happened during Cocoa Chandelier’s performance at the USQ. Phelan explains that in these performances, the audience is pushed to see the significance of an individual’s death and asks the spectator to “do the impossible,” to share the death by rehearsing for it. Phelan likens this experience and performance to ritual, like the ritual that takes place in Catholic church, where there is a ritualized performative promise to remember and to rehearse for the Other’s death (i.e., how mass reenacts the death and resurrection of Christ through the “substantiation”—the turning of bread and wine into body and blood that is further ritualized in communion). The performance evokes a promise to learn and remember what is lost, to recall not only the meaning, but the value of what cannot be reproduced or seen (again).⁶⁶ Cocoa Chandelier’s performance of self-sacrifice forces the audience to experience her—the bride’s—figurative death. The death is not just of Cocoa Chandelier, it is of the subjected Kanaka Maoli body and to that end, it is a staging of the death of aloha. Remember, aloha is “the call” of Kānaka Maoli because aloha became the

⁶⁶ Phelan, *Unmarked*: 152.

essence of Hawaiianness through a ritualized performance of aloha that is attached to colonial commodification. In the performance, the audience witnesses the bride attempting to climb out of the underworld (because aloha is calling her), but the bride transforms into Cocoa Chandelier, as a member of the community. And, the community, I would argue, because it is small and because of Cocoa Chandelier's prominence, knows that she is Kanaka Maoli. Attempting to break out of the underworld, Cocoa Chandelier chooses death. The audience witnesses Cocoa Chandelier's sacrifice, the performance of her death. In this death-scene, the screen flashes and the music comes to an abrupt halt. Cocoa Chandelier's body hangs by her feet, her arms spread in a cross formation, an upside down crucifixion without the pole, without Jesus (without aloha). As the death occurs, we are forced to ponder what is lost in this enactment of death. As a viewer you see the bride sacrifice herself because she knows that she will never break out of the harem of the underworld. She chooses to opt out of subjectification. After unsuccessful attempts to climb out, she chooses death because she knows that outside of the harem, she is dead anyway. Put another way, the spectre of Kanaka indigeneity is sacrificed, the call of aloha is turned away from and thus rendered irrelevant, moot, dead. As this death of aloha occurs, a new formation of aloha becomes possible.

Epilogue

The Audacity of Aloha

“When you come from Hawai‘i you start understanding that what’s on the surface, what people look like, does not determine who they are. And that the power and strength of diversity, the ability of people from everywhere whether they’re Black or White or whether they’re Japanese Americans or Filipino Americans or Korean Americans, or whatever they are, they’re just Americans and that all of us can work together and all of us can come together to create a better country.”¹



Figure 8 Obama Dashboard Doll, “Obama Ukulele”

¹ Obama’s speech in Hawai‘i at Ke‘ehi Lagoon, August 8, 2008.

I return to the moment described at the beginning of this dissertation, Obama's speech at Ke'ehi lagoon, with the so-obviously missing "Hawaiian" in his speech. Obama's oversight makes clear who gets and doesn't get to be part of the future he gestures toward. I wonder how Hawai'i will move into the future and how this so-called aloha will be expressed in material actions, rather than merely through producing "good feelings."² As recent beach sweeps and city clean-ups of homeless populations on O'ahu have made alarmingly clear, living in Hawai'i is no longer feasible for many Kānaka Maoli, pushing many off-island out of economic necessity. Composing only a quarter of Hawai'i's population, one wonders, where have all the Hawaiians gone?³ Obama, indeed, forgot to mention them at all.

On the packaging of the Obama dashboard doll, a quote from Michelle Obama reads, "To understand Barack, you need to understand Hawaii." Flattening Hawai'i's complex history and foregrounding it at the same time, the Michelle Obama's assertion renders Hawai'i representative again of something different, something special that can only be found in Hawai'i: the aloha spirit and its source, the Kanaka Maoli people. I frequently stare at this Obama dashboard doll. My mom got it for me from Don Quijote.⁴ Obama holds a 'ukulele painted red, white, and blue, and wears a plumeria lei, shorts, a polo shirt, and slippers. It also comes in an "Obama Surfer" design. It is distributed by KC Hawaii, a company in Aiea, HI, that is dedicated to "making aloha part of your life." This doll represents everything that is wrong with liberal multiculturalism. Encased in

² See Hawai'i State Law, (L 1986, c 202, § 1). [§5-7.5].

³ To clarify, according to the 2010 U.S. Census, those who reported Native Hawaiian as their only race compose 10% of the population and those who reported Native Hawaiian in combination with another race were 26.2% of the population. In both cases, Native Hawaiians followed Asians and Caucasians who make up the majority of Hawai'i's populus. See United States Census Bureau, "Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: Hawaii 2010," (2010).

⁴ Don Quijote is a discount store chain with stores throughout Japan and a few in Hawai'i.

plastic, standing atop a small patch of grass, Obama mid-strum on an ‘ukulele, adorned with a lei—a common marker of island style, of Hawaiianness—and a smile on his brown face gently narrates multiple signifiers of cultural-othering, appropriation, and practices that objectify Kānaka Maoli (or Pacific peoples broadly) and require the performance of culture in formulaic ways. Steeped in the histories of colonialism and exploitation in the Pacific and arguably across the Americas, the audacity of hope and aloha are personified in this Obama doll.

We’re All Hawaiians Now

As I’ve explained, “aloha” is used to do everything in Hawai‘i, at times to advocate for a particular kind of politics and at others, to show affection or just to say “hello.” The power of aloha’s salutatory affectations however, should not be underestimated, for aloha’s deployment in specific discourses—like colonialism or liberal multiculturalism—often works to the disadvantage of Kānaka Maoli. Recently, however, one might say that “aloha” is finally being expressed on the behalf of Kānaka Maoli. On July 6, 2011, Hawai‘i Governor Neil Abercrombie signed into law a measure (ACT 195) that recognizes Native Hawaiians as the indigenous people of Hawai‘i, in order to set in motion a process for Hawaiian self-determination at the state-level. The bill is intended to be a state-level version of the Akaka Bill. ACT 195 itself allows the creation of a “roll” that will be used to determine membership in an emergent Hawaiian governing entity, akin to the federal recognition and tribal governance exercised by many Native American tribes. Witnessed by prominent Kanaka Maoli politicians, lawyers, leaders, and community members, this moment was celebrated as a moment of reconciliation, to set Kānaka Maoli forward on a path of self-governance and a “reunification” of the

Hawaiian nation. Abercrombie noted that it was Hawai‘i’s collective sense of “aloha for one another” and justice that was at the heart of the bill.

The promise or future hope exemplified by ACT 195 and the Akaka Bill and the motivations behind them, rooted in so-called “aloha” for Kānaka Maoli, continues to circulate throughout Hawai‘i and to varying degrees of acceptance within the Kanaka Maoli community. I am not interested in rehearsing the debates amongst the various groups here. The Akaka Bill itself has changed forms many times and yet, in its most current iteration, does not return one inch of land. The Akaka Bill reeks of neoliberalism, which is precisely why I choose to end with it and the Obama doll, for they both narrate the same empty recognition of political and cultural difference, in a way that pretends to respect culture and at the same time it trivializes and commodifies it. Both are fundamentally neoliberal, because the very thing that was leveraged to benevolently dispossess Kānaka Maoli of our lands is the thing being deployed to supposedly protect us, to “heal the kaumaha” or the sadness of the overthrow and colonization.⁵ To wit, these measures which aim to reassert Kanaka Maoli political autonomy, or at the very least provide Kānaka Maoli with an acknowledged voice, does not stop anyone from selling aloha as Hawai‘i’s (and Kānaka Maoli) quintessential “spirit.” Kānaka Maoli do this, too—to each other—we do it to ourselves. In recent years the Hawai‘i Tourism Authority (and other state-funded agencies) has taken many steps to insure that “Hawaiianness” is authentically performed—so that the type of Hawaiianness being sold is less kitschy and less offensive as a result. In short, it is Hawaiian commodification-lite. Now, I realize that throughout this dissertation, I have theorized that Kānaka Maoli perform aloha through

⁵ Hawaii Independent Staff, "Senate Bill 1520 intended to facilitate Akaka Bill," <http://thehawaiiindependent.com/story/senate-bill-1520-intended-to-facilitate-akaka-bill>.

refusal and drag in ways that contest the sort of uncomplicated understanding of aloha that has been widely disseminated. But still, I worry about the incorporation of Kānaka Maoli in tourism planning. I worry about Kānaka Maoli performing “authentic” aloha for tourists. I worry about Kānaka Maoli who cannot be “part of the Nation” because they are not “Hawaiian” enough, because they are not favorable to those in power—they are bad for tourism, bad for Hawai‘i. I worry about Kānaka Maoli who keep getting swept off the beaches, streets, and sidewalks.

In preparation for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meetings held in Honolulu in November 2011, multiple sweeps were conducted across O‘ahu to remove waves of homeless people from beaches and other public spaces.⁶ The APEC meetings were bringing together dignitaries from nation-states, heads of local governments and transnational corporations, local businesses, and even Hawaiian corporations and organizations, to support sustainable growth and development in the Asia-Pacific region. Hawai‘i is right in the middle of what looks to be yet another flexing of U.S. economic and military power in the face of mounting fears of Asia’s growing influence around the world. APEC, of course, has been critiqued for strong-arming local governments into economic relationships with corporations and further dispossessing lands and disintegrating other natural resources from the people who live and work on them. In preparation for the Hawai‘i meeting, certain Kanaka Maoli organizations⁷ have helped with the planning (and not to mention what I imagine will be a large Kanaka Maoli

⁶ See Hoover, "Homeless population on Oahu rises 28.2%."; Paige L. Jinbo, "Homeless likely to be cleared from H-1 ramps before APEC," *Honolulu Star Advertiser*, June 30, 2011 2011; Larry Geller to The Disappeared News, November 3, 2011, 2011, <http://www.disappearednews.com/2011/11/state-sweeps-aloha-from-aloha-state.html>; Dan Nakaso, "State clearing homeless from APEC sight lines," *Honolulu Star Advertiser*, October 26, 2011 2011.

⁷ Such as the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Kamehameha Schools, and Bishop Estate.

security force) because they truly believe that the connections being made (i.e., plans for development) will benefit Kānaka Maoli, but still I wonder, which Kānaka Maoli and to what ends?⁸

The rampant neoliberalism hiding behind the velvet curtain of culture, as I've explained in this work, proposes that human well-being is best achieved by advancing human entrepreneurial interests. As David Harvey has warned, neoliberalism believes that social good can be done through market transactions by bringing all human action into the domain of the market.⁹ Operating in economic and cultural spheres, neoliberalism attempts to incorporate everything into itself in order to produce profits from it. This is why I choose to write about Krystilez and Cocoa Chandelier: because they are Kanaka Maoli performers who cannot easily fit into a Hawaiian market niche and do not try to.

As federal recognition gets closer to becoming a reality for Kānaka Maoli and OHA presents itself as the steward of an emergent Hawaiian Nation, supported by the State of Hawai'i, Hawaiian civic clubs, and a number of U.S. politicians, we must remember that such a seeming embrace of Kānaka Maoli is really the appearance of a justice project that has been replaced with a therapeutic or behavioral one.¹⁰ If it were really about justice, they would be giving back the land! Make no mistake, neoliberalism

⁸ Interestingly, Hawaiian musician Makana was invited to perform at the APEC gala dinner. At the performance—which was just a few days before a draft of this dissertation was submitted—Makana performed his song “We are the many,” a song about the masses agitating against the few people in power. Makana performed quietly before a room filled with world leaders, corporate officers, and of course secret service personnel. He wore a shirt that said “Occupy with Aloha,” the performance was documented and posted to YouTube the next morning, along with Makana’s commentary. The performance was also picked up as a story and shown on CNN. Indeed this moment of covert resistance documented Makana’s ability to “subliminally convey a message that I felt was paramount to the negotiations,” as he put it. Connecting himself to a genealogy of Kanaka Maoli musicians and performers (including Krystilez and Cocoa Chandelier) who resist through their art, Makana was allowed to disrupt the APEC space.

⁹ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹⁰ Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*: 16.

is coopting Hawaiian culture (and lands) via federal recognition, at the same time it is making Kānaka Maoli believe that they, that we, will be protected by it. Beyond this dissertation I see myself conducting a more in-depth investigation of the ways that neoliberalism is articulated with Hawaiian indigeneity by elaborating the socio-political terrain of multinational capital through which these performances of aloha circulate.¹¹

At the beginning of the research process I was originally interested in focusing on the appropriation of aloha and Hawaiian indigeneity, but as I started researching, I found myself more compelled by the activity of performers. I wanted to show, before tearing neoliberalism apart, how Kānaka Maoli have survived in ways that people do not expect, in forms that people aren't able to recognize as "Hawaiian." In this dissertation, I've explored instead the ways that Hawaiian indigeneity is performed, to make evident the ways that indigeneity itself is performative. I hoped to produce something that would enable a more nuanced rendering of indigeneity. The indigeneity that I sought to document—not necessarily "understand" or to make legible—was the kind that I had experienced all of my life among my family, my friends, and other Natives. I have always known a kind of indigeneity that is not foreclosed when we make it mobile, one that is constantly made and remade for specific means and that such performances or activities do not delegitimize indigeneity itself. *That we will still be here.* This dissertation aimed to unravel the ways that our survival occurred specifically through performances of aloha by

¹¹ I hope to broaden the scope of my project by unpacking the covert violence of aloha in state-support for Native Hawaiian federal recognition and LGBTQ civil unions. I posit that state support of such forms of recognition hides behind particular kinds of Hawaiian indigeneity. Using the theory of settler homo-nationalism, I hope to show how the appropriation of aloha signals an American gay-inclusion narrative through a hetero-normative American institution of marriage, buttressed by the cultural affects of "aloha" and articulated with Hawaiian indigeneity. I am interested in how the rhetoric of aloha in arguments for same-sex marriage displaces Kānaka Maoli through the appropriation of their own episteme in a move that naturalizes American settlement.

Kānaka Maoli, but performed in divergent, hidden, and, of course, unexpected ways. The work of Krystilez and Cocoa Chandelier are emblematic of larger performance processes at play across Hawai‘i, which centers modern Kanaka Maoli needs and concerns embodied in performance, for Kānaka Maoli and by Kānaka Maoli.

In chapter one, I provided an historical and theoretical mapping of the significance of aloha for Kānaka Maoli. It was my intention to show the ways that Kānaka Maoli remain passionately attached to aloha, despite an awareness of aloha’s articulation with multiculturalism, tourism, and colonialism. Surely, aloha can work to the disadvantage of Kanaka Maoli claims to cultural autonomy, and yet, we still believe because it is how we retained *who we are*. In chapters two and three, my investigation of Krystilez brought to light the varied manner in which modern Kānaka Maoli express their aloha. Hawaiian hip-hop seemed to be a fruitful place to unpack the resistance expressed in modern Hawaiian cultural production, but what I found instead was an alarming array of deeply entrenched performances of violence and heteropatriarchy. I became torn. Krystilez’s performance ultimately, to me, laid bare that we have to be critical of ourselves as Kānaka Maoli, as we articulate claims to nationhood or at the very least narrate a counter-hegemonic version of ourselves. And really, after the “Bloodline” call and responses are done—when the video is over and the song has stopped—it reminded me above all things, the profound aloha we have for the ‘āina and for one another. “Aloha,” although it appeared to be *refused* in these performances, was actually being articulated for *us*. In the final chapters, I chased down Cocoa Chandelier’s evasive narrative to examine the paradigmatic nature of “the confession” in Native Studies scholarship. My critique of the confession was motivated by a desire to caution us against

“speaking our truths,” valorizing the public display of culture, and investing in empty representational politics. That is not to say that I think we should not necessarily perform, share our culture, or teach others about its importance. But, given the way that neoliberalism works to incorporate all difference into the market, the sharing of Hawaiian culture—i.e., the usage of “aloha” in cultural productions—needs to be interrogated thoroughly. Chapter four analyzed the film, *Ke Kulana He Māhū*, a film about the transformation of attitudes about Hawaiian sexuality, which also turned out to be an advertisement for the aloha spirit. It pained me to leverage such a critique, especially since as I explained in that chapter, the film was transformative for me. Films like this one fetishize the narratives of minorities, but don’t get me wrong, I understand the importance of the film for the community it documented and for a wider audience that may have been touched by the story it tells—it is my hope that my read of the film expressed both these risks and opportunities. As an extension of this critique, I examined the performance repertoire of Cocoa Chandelier in chapter five, to look at her performance strategies—the non-performance of anything that can be marked as “Hawaiian.” Through this close reading in the final chapter, I was able to see the potential in alternative formations of aloha expressed by Cocoa Chandelier when she performs aloha *in drag*. The chapter ends with a consideration of Cocoa Chandelier’s performance of self-sacrifice and the larger implications of this performance for Hawaiian subjection.

The performers who are the focus of this dissertation have the ability to go *there*, to narrate things that most Kānaka Maoli do not know how to put into words. Krystilez can be the personification of our rage, articulating who he is in ways that make kupuna

cry and shame OHA, while also providing an important space for young Kānaka Maoli who identify with hip-hop to see themselves reflected in Krystilez's music, videos, and public persona. Cocoa Chandelier, in contrast, enacts the ways that we sometimes choose to perform by hiding ourselves through abstraction. Cocoa Chandelier performs aloha, but does not give it away. She performs aloha without saying it, without sacrificing it. She sacrifices herself instead. Both of these performers show us defiant ways of being Kānaka Maoli, of performing our "Hawaiianness," so that we can think of new formations of who we are, in ways that are, undoubtedly, built on all that we have been made to be. But through these performances for Kānaka Maoli, by Kānaka Maoli, we forge new pathways that allow an internal critique of how we enact violences amongst ourselves too.

These performers fly just below the radar, sometimes emerging in defiance and at other times, barely recognizable. But we all know that they are there and that they matter more than I could ever articulate in these words and more than you will ever comprehend, without seeing or feeling it for yourself. Because that's the thing about aloha: you can be told again and again what it is, but unless you are one of us, you will never know. Rather than a dissertation about all the fucked up things that happened to us, I wanted to write instead about the beautiful ways that we live and will continue to.

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