

BEFORE THE WAR:
RACE, MARXISM AND THE PRE-HISTORY
OF HAWAII'S WORKING CLASS

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#566

March 1998

CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON SOCIAL ORGANIZATION
WORKING PAPER SERIES

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Before the War: Race, Marxism and the Pre-History of Hawaii's Working Class .

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March 1, 1998

Introduction

At the turn of the century, Hawaii was a newly annexed territory of the U.S., tightly controlled by a cohesive oligarchy of *haole*¹ sugar capitalists. The "enormous concentration of wealth and power" held by the "Big Five" sugar factors of Honolulu prior to statehood was unparalleled elsewhere in the U.S. (Cooper and Daws 1985: 3-4).² In contradistinction, the workers -- most of whom at the time had been recruited from Portugal, Japan and the Philippines -- endured low wages and poor working and living conditions characteristic of other agricultural-export regions.³

In the mid-1940s, the workers organized themselves into one large, militant union -- the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU)⁴ -- uniting a racially divided work force. Organized on the waterfront and in Hawaii's two basic industries -- sugar and pineapple -- they engaged in a consciously interracial class struggle in the sugar mills and in the pineapple canneries, on the plantations and on the docks.

Historical and sociological studies of the past two decades, most notably those working within the Marxist tradition, have shed much light on the making of Hawaii's working class. However, reflective of Marxist analyses of race and class in general, race persists as a major theoretical and empirical blindspot in these works. Their misapprehension of the role of race in the formation of Hawaii's working class is largely prefigured by their misapprehension of the role of race in its pre-history, the specific focus of this paper. Why did workers of Hawaii remain racially divided and *not* seek to form an interracial working class prior to the 1940s? Why did Portuguese, Japanese and Filipino workers, who comprised the vast majority of the work force during the 1920s and the 1930s, not "feel and articulate the identity of their interests" (Thompson 1963: 9)? I begin with a theoretical overview of recent analyses of race and class in Hawaii, suggest an alternative approach based on racial formation theory, and analyze the absence of an interracial working class during the two decades preceding World War II, piecing together available primary data.

Theoretical Issues

The study of race and class boasts a long tradition within sociology. Within this body of literature, Marxist studies demonstrate the greatest concern for explaining the racial dynamics of class formation. Despite the concern, race remains an anemically theorized concept. On both counts, Marxist studies of race and class in Hawaii prove to be no exceptions. The recent wave of Marxist studies of Hawaii's workers undoubtedly provides a much needed conflict-based corrective to the earlier, more sanguine interpretations. However, in dealing with race, they suffer from two major weaknesses: oversimplification and class reductionism.

The first weakness of oversimplification enervates most recent analyses of race and class in Hawaii, including -- though not inherent or confined to -- Marxist ones. The weakness is most explicitly evident in sociologist Edna Bonacich's analysis. Drawing a comparison to California, she offers the following explanation for the formation of Hawaii's interracial working class:

The absence of a white settler class made class and race relations much simpler.[T]he class structure essentially consisted of white capital (plantation owners and related people) and Asian labor. Class and race coincided.... The simplicity of class relations in Hawaii was an advantage to Asian workers, in a sense. The enemy was clear.... Unambiguously, the main enemy was capital (Bonacich 1984: 179-181).

Despite its logical clarity, Bonacich's comparative look beclouds as much as it clarifies. While it may bolster her conclusion that the white working class, not white capital, was the main force behind the racist exclusion movements in California, the comparison is less sturdy in dealing with Hawaii, exaggerating the racial "simplicity of class relations." Aside from the exclusion of the Portuguese, my basic disagreement with the "simplicity" thesis stems from my contention that there was no "Asian labor" in Hawaii.

Sociologists and historians often study race and class in Hawaii backwards, conflating outcomes and explanations.⁵ The formation of an interracial working class is tautologically explained by the lack or weakness of racial divisions among workers inferred from the formation itself. So, despite the fact that Filipinos and Japanese viewed themselves and were viewed as constituting separate races,

they retroactively become "Asian" workers. An important consequence of such interpretations is the relatively ineffectual explanations proffered for the lack of an interracial working class movement prior to the 1940s: how and why did workers identify and act racially to create and re-create divisions?

The second major weakness is class reductionism. Provided that it can yield adequate explanations, class reductionism is not necessarily a weakness. My contention in this paper is that it is a weakness, because it fails to adequately account for the persistent racial divisions among workers prior to the 1940s. There are two variants of class reductionism, corresponding to two recent Marxist approaches to the study of race and class in Hawaii: a historicist approach and the capitalist world system approach.

As a historian committed to narrative historiography, Edward Beechert holds a generally skeptical view of "static" theoretical schemes (Beechert 1984: 156; see also 1982, 1985, 1993). His aversion to formal theorizing notwithstanding, a classic Marxist formulation undergirds his narrative, which he at times recognizes. In regards to working class formation, he paraphrases Marx's oft-noted remarks on 'class-in-itself' (i.e., objective class) and 'class-for-itself' (i.e., subjective class):

The labor history of Hawaii provides ample evidence of the *potential* of the working class to see itself as a class.... This class consciousness does not depend on subjective factors. It is based, according to Marx, on the reality of the structure of property relations in the society (Beechert 1985: 323; emphasis in original).

The direct, parsimonious path from class-in-itself to class-for-itself paved here by Beechert evinces a reductionist logic, in which "subjective factors" like race is consigned to the theoretically dubious concept of false consciousness.⁶ Referring to the numerous instances in which Hawaii's workers organized racially exclusive unions and labor actions, Beechert laments, "The responses of the working class, as they perceive their situation, are often incorrect. The problem of 'false consciousness' is one which recurs with a dismal frequency" (1984: 158). Although he recognizes race as an all-too-real impediment to working class formation, Beechert theoretically dismisses it as being external to working class formation, rendering race an acknowledged but inadequately analyzed presence in his narrative.

As argued by sociologists James Geschwender (1981, 1982, 1983, 1987; Geschwender and Levine 1983; Geschwender et al. 1988) and John Liu (1984, 1985), the core argument of the capitalist world system framework is that Hawaii's peripheral status provides the key to unlocking the workings of its political economy. This approach makes a valuable contribution to the study of immigration history by placing international labor migration in the context of the world economy. Not seeing them as mutually exclusive explanatory strategies, Geschwender and Liu also perceptively straddle the debate between 'orthodox' (Cox 1970; Szymanski 1981; Reich 1981; Wilson 1978) and split labor market (Bonacich 1972, 1976, 1981; Wilson 1978) readings of Marxism by indicting both the haole capitalists and intra-working class competition as sources of racial divisions among workers.

However, endemic to both the orthodox Marxist and split labor market theories from which they draw, the most pressing weakness of Geschwender's and Liu's capitalist world system approach is a second variant of class reductionism. They conceptualize race as an epiphenomenon of struggles between classes and/or working class fractions with contrary objective economic interests. Geschwender summarizes, "It is evident that class struggle is the motive force leading to the creation of race and ethnicity, the emergence of an ideology of racism, and the development of systems of racial/ethnic oppression" (1987: 155). Whereas Beechert's class reductionism places race outside of class dynamics, Geschwender and Liu view race as derivative of them.

In recent years, class reductionism has come to be perceived as perhaps *the* Achilles' heel for Marxist analyses of race and class, providing a focal point for re-theorizing.⁷ One promising approach at theory reconstruction within (post-)Marxism has been centered on re-readings of Antonio Gramsci by scholars in the U.S. and Great Britain (e.g., Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Gilroy 1991; Hall 1980; Hall et al. 1978; Omi and Winant 1986; San Juan 1992; Winant 1994). A "crucial" objective of this emerging racial formation approach is "the treatment of race," in the words of Omi and Winant, "as a *central axis* of social relations which cannot be subsumed under or reduced to some broader category or conception" (1986: 61-62; emphasis in original), or in the words of Hall, as having "its distinctive and 'relatively autonomous' effectivity" (1980: 339).

While the racial formation framework asserts the relative autonomy and irreducibility of race, especially vis-à-vis class, the aim is not to fetishize race as a phenomenon *sui generis*. Rather, it is to understand the complexity of the relationship between race and class, refusing to theoretically obscure one concept by dissolving it into the other. A common theme within this framework is to conceptualize both race and class as contingent processes rather than ontological givens. Racial formation refers to the process in which the meanings of race are continually contested through political struggle and in which other social relations -- like class but not only class -- can and do intervene. Similarly, classes are "only *potentially* constituted" (Gilroy 1991: 31; emphasis in original). The progression from class-in-itself to class-for-itself is neither inevitable nor mono-causally direct. Rather, this process of class formation is a political struggle in which other social relations -- like race but not only race -- can and do intervene.

The project of assaying how race is or can be central to class formation is of key importance to the racial formation framework, since it seeks to undermine the class reductionism of Marxist theorizing without undermining the continuing relevance of class. In essence, the framework partially turns previous Marxist thought on race and class on its head. As Gilroy explains, the "emphasis found in traditional Marxist writing about 'race' must therefore be inverted: 'race' can no longer be reduced to an effect of the economic antagonisms arising from production, and class must be understood in terms qualified by the vitality of struggles articulated through 'race' " (1991: 28). Omi and Winant concur that "racial dynamics must be understood as determinants of class relationships and indeed class identities, not as mere consequences of these relationships" (1986: 37).

Toward this understanding, the racial formation approach rejects economistic views of class interests and class formation. Myopically focused on isolating economic sources of race and racism, class reductionist Marxism ignores the *content* of racial discourses or ideologies and their potential "material effects" (Boswell 1986). It fails to recognize that workers do not act on economic interests which exist objectively outside their subjectivities but rather on what they construct their interests to be; although these constructions have material bases, they are not reducible to them. Sociologist Michael Burawoy's observation concerning academics' practices that "facts do not exist independently of theories but are

produced by them" applies equally well to workers' practices (1981: 281-282); workers' interests do not exist independently of their theories of their interests. And, racial discourses matter because they inform how workers (and employers) theorize and act on their material conditions, "chang[ing] the boundary of rational [class] behavior" (Boswell 1986: 353-354).

I contend in the following pages that strictly materialist analyses of class interests -- whether they be of orthodox Marxist, split labor market, or some other theoretical orientation -- yield insufficient explanations for the pre-history of Hawaii's working class. My analysis begins by briefly outlining the persistent racial hierarchy which existed at the point of production from the 1920s to the 1940s. I posit that the hierarchy in itself, however, remains ambiguous in its implications for how and why workers of various races did not form an interracial working class prior to the 1940s, prompting us to pay closer attention to the meanings of race and their effects. I argue that Portuguese workers distanced themselves from other workers in their pursuit to become haoles. Addressing a void in the current sociological and historical literatures, I then explore in depth how Japanese and Filipino workers faced fundamentally distinct racisms, which shaped their divergent politics during the 1920s and 1930s. And, in the process of outlining the racial complexities of class relations in Hawaii, the analysis also serves to debunk the simplicity thesis.

Analysis

When one examines the occupational structure of pre-World War II Hawaii, a clear pattern emerges. There was a racial hierarchy with haoles, Portuguese, Japanese and Filipinos occupying positions in descending order of power. Haoles were almost entirely confined to professional and managerial positions, and Filipinos were almost entirely confined to unskilled labor positions, with the Portuguese and the Japanese falling in between (Lind 1938: 252). Examining the first-level of supervisory positions in the sugar industry, we find that 42.1% of haole, 19.7% of Portuguese, 1.3% of Japanese and 0.3% of Filipino employees in 1920 held foremen positions; the racial disparities were progressively further skewed at higher levels of management (Reinecke 1996: 144). Although there was not a strict caste system with no overlaps in occupations, this racial pattern proved to be durable. Using the broad

categories of "skilled" and "unskilled," the Oloa Sugar Company on the island of Hawaii, a fairly representative plantation, reported that all 34 haoles on the plantation payroll were classified as "skilled" in August of 1929.⁸ In contrast, 43 of 176 (24.4%) Portuguese employees, 29 of 856 (3.6%) of Japanese employees, and 6 of 1783 (0.3%) Filipino employees were classified as such.⁹ The same plantation reported a similar pattern three months prior to the Pearl Harbor attack: 33 of 35 (94.3%) haole employees, 18 of 88 (20.5%) Portuguese employees, 32 of 604 (5.3%) Japanese employees, and 4 of 837 (0.5%) Filipino employees were salaried, "skilled" employees.¹⁰ Even at the tail end of the war and just at the beginning of the major organizational campaign by the ILWU in 1944, 33 of 34 (97.1%) haole employees, 31 of 86 (36.0%) Portuguese employees, 56 of 636 (8.8%) Japanese employees, and 15 of 691 (2.2%) Filipino employees were salaried, "skilled" employees.¹¹ So, while the numbers and percentages of unskilled labor shrank over time, the relative positions of racial groups remained stable. Furthermore, within the broad categories of "skilled" and "unskilled," a similar racial ordering prevailed. For example, the average monthly earnings of non-salaried, male sugar workers in 1939 for haoles, Portuguese, Japanese and Filipinos were \$76.00, \$56.23, \$50.94, and \$46.92, respectively. And, the differences were even more stark, if the differential values of their perquisites like housing were considered (USBLS 1940: 52-53).¹²

The persistence of the racial ordering over time strongly suggests that the labor market for plantation jobs was split along racial lines. But, what are the implications for the formation or the absence of an interracial working class? If a racial hierarchy continued to reproduce itself at the point of production from the 1920s to the mid-1940s, why did workers seek to organize interracially in the mid-1940s but not during the 1920s and the 1930s? Since the largest racial cleavage in terms of the preceding figures appears to lie between haoles and the others, how do we explain the lack of unity among the non-haole workers? Is the question reducible to the material interests of capitalists in keeping the workers divided per the orthodox Marxists and/or to the material interests of higher-paid racial groups of workers in maintaining their advantageous position per the split labor market Marxists?

While haoles occupied the most privileged positions and predictably identified themselves as or with the ownership and management of the Big Five factors and their plantations, the stories of the three largest groups of workers were not as clear cut. The enemy was not unambiguously haole or capitalist. Until the mid-1940s, Portuguese, Japanese and Filipino workers did not choose to form a united front, either on a race basis as non-haoles and/or on a class basis as workers. Understanding the divergent and contrary goals and politics of the three racialized groups requires an interrogation of the prevailing ideological discourses of race.

The Reciprocity Treaty of 1876 between the U.S. and the Kingdom of Hawaii, under which unrefined sugar from Hawaii could enter the U.S. market tariff-free, caused a veritable boom in Hawaii's sugar industry, paving the way for large-scale corporate farming controlled by the sugar factors. However, along with their access to the U.S. market, the planters faced increased political pressure to "Europeanize" or "Americanize" -- functionally equivalent terms -- their labor force. On the mainland, white workers on the West Coast were leading a racist exclusion movement to halt Chinese labor immigration. And, with the signing of the treaty, they were joined by U.S. sugar producers in condemning Chinese workers in Hawaii and the penal labor contract system under which they were recruited and worked (Beechert 1985: 80-81).

The largest group of workers to arrive as a result of the planters' consequent efforts to Europeanize the work force was from Portugal. The experience of this European group sharply differed from those of the Chinese before them and the Japanese immediately after them, reflecting the planters' racial identity being partially imagined through their common European ancestry and their "deep-seated racism" against non-Europeans (Beechert 1985: 86). First, the planters were willing to bear the much higher cost of recruiting the Portuguese. In 1886, bringing a Portuguese worker to Hawaii cost the planters \$112.00 compared to \$65.85 for a Japanese worker (Liu 1985: 137). In addition, the Portuguese were brought to Hawaii as families in the hopes of encouraging their permanent settlement, which further escalated the planters' costs (Estep 1941). By contrast, Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino recruits were predominantly single and male. Second, the planters paid the Portuguese higher wages, which quickly usurped their Chinese predecessors' and outpaced the Japanese from the beginning (Liu

1985: 137). Third, in addition to receiving higher wages for the same jobs performed, the Portuguese soon became a 'middleman' minority between the haole managers and the other workers (Geschwender et al. 1988). The Portuguese preponderance in low supervisory and skilled craft positions continued through to the mid-1940s. Fourth, as immigrants from Europe, the Portuguese were entitled to the rights of franchise and citizenship, both prior to and following annexation.

The Portuguese middleman status engendered a singular racial consciousness which provides one piece of the puzzle for the lack of an interracial working class prior to the mid-1940s. Although their European origin afforded them their higher position vis-à-vis other workers, the Portuguese were never accepted into the dominant racial group as they were on the mainland. According to the most thorough analysis of race and the Portuguese, their non-acceptance as haoles was predicated largely on their being *exclusively* wage-laborers upon their arrival. By contrast, the other groups of European origin were represented in the capitalist and professional-managerial classes (Geschwender et al. 1988). Not accepted as haoles, they were in turn kept out of higher management positions. Although they provisionally accepted their wages of near-whiteness, the Portuguese resented their exclusion from the haole category. A 1947 letter-to-the-editor appositely exemplifies their aspirations and frustrations. The writer, who signed the letter as "A White Portuguese," complained that behind the racial distinction made between haoles and the Portuguese "well up the outraged feelings of tens of thousands of white Portuguese" and urged "the immediate substitution of the term 'white' for 'haole' in every press and radio release."¹³

Aware of their full 'whiteness' on the mainland, the ambition of the Portuguese prior to the mid-1940s was not to engage in a class conflict with the haole capitalists but rather to aspire to be accepted as haoles, de-emphasizing any differences with haoles and emphasizing any differences with other non-haoles (Estep 1941; Fuchs 1961: 59). On the plantations, their racial identity manifested perhaps most visibly in the behavior of the *lunas*, among whose ranks the Portuguese predominated; lunas were the low supervisory foremen who mediated between haole upper management and the mostly Japanese and Filipino laborers. Regarding the lunas of the late-1920s and the 1930s, a retired half-Portuguese sugar worker recalled, "They[, the Portuguese,] were the lunas.

And they were the slavedrivers. And they were the worst you could get on the sugar plantation." Explaining how the Portuguese lunas strongly identified with the haole management and not with the workers, he recounted reprovably, "[E]verything would be for the plantation. Nothing for the workmen."¹⁴

In terms of racial differentiations among workers, one of the least understood is the one between the Japanese and Filipinos prior to the 1940s. As noted above, most analysts tend to elide differences and subsume both groups under 'Asian' labor. Compounding this tendency is the dearth of studies on Filipinos. Reflecting the Chinese- and Japanese-centric state of Asian American studies in general, a far disproportionate number of studies solely focus on the Japanese, implicitly rendering the Filipinos invisible.

Of course, the tendency toward homogenizing the experiences of Japanese and Filipino workers is not totally without basis. As the case of the Portuguese illustrates, there was certainly a racial line drawn around Europe, endowing people of European ancestry with a privileged, if uneven, position vis-à-vis the economy and the state. But, what have frequently been overlooked by homogenizing the "Asian labor" experience are the fundamentally different racisms faced by the Japanese and Filipinos.

The recruitment of Filipinos by the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association (HSPA) began in 1907, just five years following the bitterly fought Philippine-American War. As cultural theorist Epifanio San Juan, Jr. reminds us, "the context [of Filipino immigration] then was the violent colonization of six million Filipinos" (1992: 47).¹⁵ The context for the immigration and settlement of the Japanese in Hawaii was Japan's emergence as a modern nation-state and its colonialist projects in Asia. Haoles in Hawaii projected divergent racial imaginings onto a people colonized by fellow Americans and onto a people who represented an imperialist rival. As in the Philippines, Filipinos in Hawaii were constructed as a "primitive" race "in an adolescent stage of development," not unlike Blacks on the mainland (Porteus and Babcock 1926: 58-70). The Japanese in Hawaii were constructed as the "yellow peril," an inscrutable race beholden to their nation of origin and carrying out its colonialist cause from within (Okhiro 1991: 80). So, whereas the racial discourse concerning Filipinos revolved

around the unquestioned assumption of their racial inferiority, underlying the racial discourse concerning the Japanese was the *fear* that they were not racially inferior.

The momentous dual union strike of 1920, in which both Filipino and Japanese workers participated, illustrates how they were racially conceived in dissimilar terms.¹⁶ The five-month strike involved 8,300 Japanese and Filipino workers on Oahu, representing 77% of the island's work force. It was conducted by Oahu members of two separate unions, the Federation of Japanese Labor and the Filipino Labor Union, with outer island members continuing to work and contributing their wages to the strikers. Both unions struck for higher wages, eight-hour work days, overtime pay, maternity leave, and better health and recreational facilities (Reinecke 1979: 95).¹⁷ The strike ended in defeat with the planters making "no concessions whatsoever, either direct or implied."¹⁸

From the beginning of the strike, the HSPA adopted the interpretation that the "action taken by the Japanese Federation of Labor is, as we see it, an anti-American movement designed to obtain control of the sugar business of the Hawaiian islands."¹⁹ The two mainstream dailies wholeheartedly agreed with the industry's assessment of the strike. Drawing on and magnifying the public's racial fear of Japanese imperialism and fusing it with the nationalist rhetoric of Americanism, *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* editorialized:

The strike is an attempt on the part of the Japanese to obtain control of the sugar industry. It is in line with Japanese policy wherever they colonize...Korea, Manchuria, Eastern Inner Mongolia, Shantung, and Formosa.[T]he Japanese evidently think that they can use [their methods] with equal success in Hawaii. They evidently fail to realize that it is one thing to bluff, bulldoze and bamboozle weak oriental peoples and another thing to try to coerce Americans.²⁰

Depicting Hawaii as "a buffer outpost on the border line" between the U.S. and Japan, the same paper later urged its readers to "fight...until all of Hawaii is unquestionably American."²¹ The *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* rhetorically asked, "Never lose sight of the real issue: Is Hawaii to remain American or become Japanese?"²² The characterization of the Filipino strikers contrasted sharply. When not being conspicuously ignored, they were portrayed as blind followers of the Japanese. Casually calling them

"ignorant," one paper wrote, "As regards to the Filipinos, there is good reason to think that they are mere catspaws, used by wily agitators to further the interests of the subjects of the Mikado."²³

If the activism of Japanese and Filipino workers briefly crossed paths for the duration of the strike, they found their paths quickly diverging after it. The divergence had several probable causes. First, Japanese and Filipino workers did not share the same structural position in the plantation economy. Filipinos were relegated to the most menial jobs on the plantations, while the Japanese could increasingly be found in low supervisory, skilled and semi-skilled positions. Second, having immigrated earlier and with a higher proportion of females, the Japanese were fast becoming a second-generation population and consequently a citizen population, while the more recently arrived and more male Filipino population continued to be disenfranchised.²⁴ By 1920, 44.5% of the Japanese were already native-born, which increased to 58.2% by 1930. Only 11.2% of the Filipinos were native-born in 1920, which grew to only 16.6% by 1930 (Lind 1938: 120). Third, the Japanese were increasingly leaving the plantation economy, resulting in the number of non-plantation workers equaling the number of plantation workers by 1920 (Tamura 1994: 211). Foreseeing a limited future on the plantations for themselves and their children, they left to join the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie, skilled labor, and independent farmers (Lind 1946: 17). More circumscribed in their opportunities, Filipinos overwhelmingly remained tied to the plantation economy as unskilled labor. Compared to 30.0% of the Japanese, 76.5% of Filipinos in Hawaii were living on sugar plantations in 1928.²⁵ Consequently, while the Japanese comprised 56.4% of all sugar workers in 1912 compared to 12.8% for the Filipinos, Filipinos outnumbered the Japanese by as early as 1922.²⁶ By 1932, Filipinos represented 69.9% of the sugar work force compared to 18.8% for the Japanese (USBLS 1940: 34).²⁷ Similarly, while the Japanese made up 29%, Filipinos constituted 57% of all pineapple plantation workers in 1939 (USBLS 1940: 86).

In addition to these socio-economic and demographic differences, the workers' defeat in the 1920 strike and the employers' staunch anti-union stance²⁸ undoubtedly curtailed any proclivities among the Japanese towards building and sustaining an interracial working class movement with Filipino workers. However, the explanatory power of these various factors, though undoubtedly

significant, remains insufficient, considering that they were still largely operant in the 1940s when an interracial working class movement took shape.

The most decisive factor inhibiting a sustained Japanese involvement in a working class movement during the two decades following the 1920 strike may have been the ubiquitous racial ideology of Americanism. The discourse of Americanism -- which thoroughly melded race, class and nation in regards to the Japanese, as evidenced during the strike -- effectively winnowed the range of politics in which they could engage, leading the increasingly *nisei*²⁹ citizen population away from class conflict and towards assimilationist politics.

In the name of Americanization, Japanese newspapers, Japanese language schools, and virtually anything else Japanese came under intensified attack after the 1920 strike, resulting in a series of territorial laws governing their operations (Nomura 1987: 98). With the number of registered Japanese voters increasing from 658 in 1920 to 27,107 in 1940, becoming the largest racial group of voters, the voting behavior of the *nisei* was also carefully monitored, and any deviations from the haole elites' Republican politics were construed as racially motivated and un-American. For the most part, the *nisei* did not deviate, with little mitigating effect on the continuing stream of accusations (Lind 1980: 99-102). While the assimilation of the Japanese was the purported goal of the Americanization movement, the ideology of Americanism was also molded to racially segregate public schools. Those haole parents who could not afford to send their children to elite private schools successfully organized to set up publicly-funded "English standard schools," thereby preserving the "pure Americanism" of haole children (Okihiro 1991: 139-140). At the first one of these schools, only 19 Japanese children passed the English Standard examination compared to 683 haole children during its first year, hence successfully replicating the racial segregation pattern of Hawaii's elite private schools (Fuchs 1961: 276-277).

With the racially charged 1920 strike serving as the backdrop, issues concerning Americanization quickly replaced worker-led movements as the focal point of Japanese politics during the inter-war period. As a Japanese leader of the 1920 strike observed, "the Americanization movement swamped the Japanese."³⁰ A central aspect of the Americanization movement for the haole

elite was to induce the nisei to stay on or head back to the plantations as loyal, tractable workers. By the mid-1920s, faced with declining numbers of Japanese workers, the planters began to voice concerns about the "rising generation" of Japanese who "show[ed] no inclination of returning to the soil."³¹ Such concerns became increasingly more urgent towards the end of the 1920s, as mainland exclusion movements and the Congress continually placed their only outside source of labor from the Philippines "in jeopardy."³² For example, in a series of highly publicized annual Conferences of New Americans -- as the nisei were euphemistically dubbed -- backed by prominent haoles and Japanese, the invited haole speakers pounded home their 'back-to-the-soil' message to the nisei audience assembled from all over Hawaii. Under the intense gaze of the public, the Conferences served to intertwine the desire of the planters for nisei workers and the desire of the nisei for full acceptance as Americans.³³

Initially, the planters' message was criticized by segments of the Japanese community, who rightly viewed the plantations as not giving the nisei an equal opportunity to reach the higher echelons of management.³⁴ As the Depression and unemployment took hold, however, earlier Japanese criticisms gave way to guarded endorsement. While the pineapple industry -- producing what was considered a luxury fruit -- was hit hard in the early 1930s, the sugar industry was relatively unscathed and continued to encourage the nisei to turn to it for employment.³⁵ The industry's efforts took on renewed urgency when the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934, as feared, cut off its only external source of labor, the Philippines. Faced with shrinking employment opportunities in other industries, the nisei turned to the sugar industry in increasing numbers; the percentage of citizen sugar workers nearly doubled in six years, from 15.9% in 1930 to 31.4% in 1936 (Beechert 1985: 253).

The racial discourse of Americanism had a dire effect on Filipinos, which has hitherto been neglected. Not feared as an imperialistic threat and with no significant citizen population, Filipinos were initially excluded from and, during the Depression, victimized by the Americanization movement. Viewed as ignorant and primitive and from an impoverished U.S. colony which served as Hawaii's only external source of labor, the term "cheap labor" became synonymous with Filipinos. That they were hired exclusively as unskilled labor and were not seriously considered for advancement

into higher positions hardly needed to be justified, which became acutely obvious during the Depression.

As the pressure of unemployment mounted, Filipino workers were targeted as the release valve. Over 2000 "indigent" Filipinos were repatriated to the Philippines by March of 1932.³⁶ By April of 1933, an additional 5196 Filipinos were sent back.³⁷ The unemployment and repatriation of Filipino workers did not only result from a 'last hired, first fired' policy, certainly not in the sugar industry. With the unquestioned understanding that American citizens -- however challenged that status may have been for the nisei -- would bear as little of the Depression's effects as possible, Filipino workers were, as a matter of explicitly stated policy, being laid off from the sugar industry at the same time nisei and other citizens were being hired.³⁸ For example, in the year preceding June of 1932, the number of Filipino male workers decreased by 700 while the number of Japanese male workers increased by the same number.³⁹ Furthermore, to secure the long-term employment of citizen workers, the planters -- again as a matter of explicitly stated policy⁴⁰ -- expedited their advancement, finding it "highly important to place qualified citizens in 'preferred' and semi-skilled jobs wherever possible."⁴¹ So, Filipino workers who did not lose their jobs found themselves being passed over for promotions and confined to the bottom of the racial hierarchy.

Despite facing a racism of their own, the Japanese were not merely passive observers in the marginalization of Filipinos. Embroiled in the discourse of Americanism, the Japanese shared with the haoles and others a common assumption, the assumption that being an American should entail privileges. With their racial identity firmly linked to proving their Americanness, the nisei not only formed a racial identity vis-à-vis haoles, who assailed their rightful place in the imagined community of Americans, but also vis-à-vis Filipinos, who were unequivocally imagined, and at times literally displaced, out of the community. Japanese racial formation during the 1920s and 1930s was a collective project of both longing and rebuffing.

When the HSPA announced its policies of favoring citizens for employment and promotions, *Hawaii Hochi* -- a widely-read newspaper which claimed to speak to and for Japanese workers and progressive causes -- only questioned the HSPA's sincerity.⁴² As in the mainstream press, the negative

impact that such policies would have on Filipino workers who were already living and working in Hawaii was not given much serious thought in the Japanese press. And, although discussions of citizen labor should logically have marginalized other non-citizen workers like the issei, only the Filipinos were isolated as the category of workers to be defined as 'not citizen', revealing a distinctly racial logic.

Understandably most evident between the beginning of the Depression and the passage of the Tydings-McDuffie Act, *Hawaii Hochi* adopted a racist rhetoric which combined arguments regarding the nisei's rights as American citizens and the imputed racial characteristics of Filipinos. Filipinos were portrayed as the "cheapest grade of labor" who "eagerly avail themselves of every opportunity to grab jobs by underbidding the citizen labor.... That is the reason that thousands of our own people, Portuguese, Hawaiians, Japanese and Chinese are unable to find work." Filipino workers "crowd at the bottom," "herd together in little tenement rooms like sardines in a can," and "save money on wages that would mean starvation to any American." "The Filipinos are of an alien race, of a stock that does not fit in with our social system."⁴³ Without a trace of irony or historical memory, the paper took a position which resembled the one taken by white workers on the mainland and in Hawaii.⁴⁴

Not surprisingly, Filipino workers did not attempt to form an interracial working class movement with other workers during the 1920s and the 1930s. Aware of their uniquely disadvantaged position in Hawaii, they embarked on a different course of action than the Portuguese and the Japanese. Hit hardest by the Depression -- being the first to be laid off in the pineapple industry and being cast aside as the Americanization of the sugar industry favored citizens -- Filipino workers organized to revive the territory's moribund labor movement on their own.

Decrying the high rate of unemployment, the high cost of living and the lack of opportunities, over a thousand Filipinos gathered for a mass protest in Honolulu in 1932, at which there was a public announcement calling for the rebirth of the Filipino Labor Union (Beechert 1985: 219). A vigorous attack by the Big Five quickly interred the union underground, transforming it into a secret organization by the name of *Vibora Luviminda*.⁴⁵ In 1937, *Vibora Luviminda* initiated a strike on a Maui sugar plantation, which later escalated into a general strike of Filipino sugar and pineapple workers on

Maui and Molokai. Although the strike ended with very few material gains for the workers, Vibora Luviminda did become the first plantation union to gain official recognition (Beechert 1985).

Largely due to the forced secrecy of the organizational drive, little is known about the internal workings of the Filipino Labor Union or Vibora Luviminda. However, available evidence suggests that Filipino workers felt themselves to be uniquely discriminated against, which provided the main impetus for the union's racial exclusivity. E.A. Taok, the president of the Filipino Labor Union, wrote to the President of the Philippine Senate in 1935 that Filipinos in Hawaii were "all the time subject of discrimination" and were treated worse than other groups.⁴⁶ This notion of Filipinos' being singled out for the worst treatment seems to have been a major theme in the union's organizational campaign. At a meeting on the island of Hawaii, an organizer spoke to this theme, "The plantations should not treat the Filipinos lower than the other laborers, because we are just as good as they are." Explaining why they needed to join an exclusively Filipino union, another organizer received applause of approval from the workers when he averred, "There are many Managers who treat the Filipinos different from others. Why can't these Managers treat us right, when we are just as good as the other nationalities."⁴⁷

Conclusions

From the preceding analysis, I draw three main conclusions. First, in studying the workers of pre-statehood Hawaii or of other racially stratified regions and periods, race needs to be more centrally integrated. Presently, the call for a non-reductive synthesis of race and class (and other social categories) is a common refrain in sociology and other social sciences. Less common are coherent answers to the calling. On both counts, Marxist studies of race and class prove to be no exceptions. Some even explicitly intend to avoid class reductionism in their analyses but nevertheless veer towards it (e.g., Liu 1985).

I posit in this paper that to satisfactorily study race in class, one must examine the content of racial discourses. Racial discourses cannot be assumed to be merely *post facto* ideological justifications for deeper, material social practices and therefore remain unexamined. As the preceding analysis

demonstrates, racial ideologies inform social actors' practices, enabling and constraining the range of possibilities. Theoretical approaches which narrowly focus on economic interests, which include but are not limited to various Marxisms, are doomed to fall short. Portuguese workers sought full haoleness as much as, if not more than, any economic benefits they may have derived from their distinction vis-à-vis other non-haole workers. Without comprehending the impact of Americanism as a racial discourse, our comprehension of Japanese workers would be severely distorted. And, without a consideration of how they were racially isolated, the source of Filipino workers' insistent exclusivity in labor organizing prior to the 1940s would be misplaced.

Second, the presupposed racial simplicity of Hawaii's class relations needs to be complicated. In particular, the long-neglected racial differentiation between the Japanese and Filipinos -- which has been obscured by a presumed but absent pan-Asian identity -- needs to be further interrogated. Towards this end, the colonial contexts of their immigration and integration require more attention. Not only exported to the Philippines via American colonialism, racial theories concerning Filipinos seem to have been imported back along with Filipino labor, prefiguring their racialization in Hawaii. And, Filipino workers' racial identity in Hawaii dialectically seems to have been partially grounded in their anti-colonial nationalism. The colonial roots of Japanese racial formation also call for further exploration, both of how haoles feared and repressed the Japanese in Hawaii and of how Meiji Japan's prevailing racial nationalism (Weiner 1995, 1997) informed the Japanese own conceptions of other Asian groups in Hawaii (e.g., ESOHP 1981; Reinecke 1979: 128).

Third, the preceding analysis suggests important implications for the study of Hawaii's working class formation. If race lies at the center of the pre-history of Hawaii's working class, race must be dealt with more centrally in its history. Even in times of rapid change, new ideologies and identities are not woven out of whole cloth but from threads of pre-existing ones (Sewell 1980, 1992). After having played a vital role in the workers' *not* forming an interracial class, race is unlikely to suddenly disappear from the historical stage as workers supposedly realize the errors of their ways and find their true, de-racialized class interests (Beechert 1985) or as exogenous variables like a radical union leadership are introduced (Geschwender 1981). While outside the purview of this paper,

preliminary findings indicate that racial discourses in fact do not disappear during the formation of the interracial working class. Rather, they are transformed as old racial meanings are contested, from which new racial meanings are created.⁴⁸

Endnotes

1 While "foreigner" is the literal translation, the Hawaiian term, *haole*, is the racial designation for non-Iberian people of European descent. The Portuguese, the largest group of Iberian origin, have always been considered a distinct racial group in Hawaii.

2 The "Big Five" sugar factors or agencies refer to Alexander & Baldwin, American Factors, C. Brewer and Company, Castle & Cooke, and Theo. H. Davies and Company, a heavily interlocked group of corporations.

With the signing of the Reciprocity Treaty in 1876 which permitted the importation of unrefined sugar to the U.S. duty-free, these merchant capital firms provided the much needed capital to increase production. Since sugar production was a capital-intensive venture and was becoming increasingly so, the effective control of the plantations quickly gravitated towards the Big Five to the detriment of individual producers. As early as 1909, 76 percent of Hawaii's sugar production was being handled by the Big Five. By 1933, the figure had risen to 96 percent (Geschwender 1982).

The Big Five's influence in the maritime and pineapple industries were formidable as well. For example, Matson Navigation Company, "Hawaii's economic lifeline," accounted for 90 percent of all "Hawaii-mainland public-carrier freight." Four of the Big Five owned 74 percent of Matson's stocks, and nine directors of the Big Five sat on Matson's board of directors. With mainland companies taking part from early on and a number of small producers hanging on, the pineapple industry, which did not flourish until the beginning of this century, was never as totally dominated by the Big Five as the sugar industry. The Big Five's behavior in the two agricultural industries, however, did not differ greatly (Cooper and Daws: 3, 210).

3 This paper does not discuss native Hawaiians or the Chinese in detail. Although they had constituted large segments of the plantation labor force during the 19th century, they had long left the plantation economy by the 1920s and the 1930s, the focal period of this paper.

4 At its 1997 triennial convention held in Honolulu, the union renamed itself the International Longshore and Warehouse Union.

5 In varying degrees, other students of race and class in Hawaii (e.g., Liu 1984, 1985) tacitly agree with Bonacich's position, assuming 'Asian' to have been a racially meaningful category. Without theoretical or empirical justification, they impose a two-tiered scheme of race and ethnicity, in which Filipinos, Japanese and other groups from Asia constitute sub-racial 'ethnic' groups. This rhetorical move does not merely mark a recent change in academic convention but is of significant theoretical consequence. While most analysts recognize 'ethnic' divisions to have impeded working class formation, they at least partially subscribe to the "simplicity" thesis by placing racial divisions among Asian groups in the less power-implicated realm of the 'ethnic'. Consequently, a common pan-Asian racial identity is explicitly or implicitly assumed to have been a pre-made resource for workers to have drawn from, thereby rendering the making of Hawaii's working class a simpler, if not an inevitable, outcome.

Explicitly noting the recency of Asian American racial formation, Geschwender (1983) is a notable exception.

6 The concept is dubious, because any consciousness other than a class one determined by the relations of production is deemed false by theoretical fiat. That is, if workers do not achieve this presumably radical class consciousness as predicted, the workers rather than the theory are found to be false.

7 For a lucid discussion of race and Marxism, see chapter 1 of Roediger (1991).

8 The broad category of "skilled" included not only skilled workers but also all levels of management, including the highest position of plantation manager.

9 Form 111, Oloa Sugar Company, dated August 1929, Folder PSC34/1, HSPA Plantation Papers.

The Lihue Plantation Company on the island of Kauai reported a similar pattern for August of 1930: 29 of 29 (100%) haole, 24 of 140 (17.1%) Portuguese, 21 of 354 (5.9%) Japanese and 0 of 1588 (0.0%) Filipino employees were "skilled" employees. Form 111, The Lihue Sugar Company, dated August 1930, Folder LPC17/7, HSPA Plantation Papers.

10 Form 54, Oloa Sugar Company, dated September 1941, Folder PSC40/7, HSPA Plantation Papers.

11 Form 54, Oloa Sugar Company, dated June 1944, Folder PSC40/7, HSPA Plantation Papers.

The following are the comparable figures for the entire sugar industry: 668 of 715 (93.4%) haole workers, 472 of 1917 (24.6%) Portuguese workers, 723 of 9048 (8.0%) Japanese workers, and 120 of 11,641 (1.0%) Filipino workers were salaried "skilled" workers. "Labor Report of All Islands," dated June 1944, Folder PSC40/7, HSPA Plantation Papers.

12 Although facts about the pineapple and stevedoring industries are not as well known or knowable as the more intensively archived and studied sugar industry, a similar racial pattern seems to have prevailed. For example, in 1938, full-time "Caucasian," Japanese and Filipino pineapple workers earned on average \$1,131, \$814, and \$659 per year, respectively; compiled by the U.S. Department of Labor, the earnings of haoles and Portuguese were collapsed into one (USBLS 1940: 111). Concerning the stevedoring industry, the same report noted, "Among the salaried workers, exactly one-third (33.3 percent) were Caucasians and one-quarter Japanese. Filipinos had an extremely small representation in the salaried group" (USBLS 1940: 171).

13 *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 11 April 1947.

14 Holmberg interview, 1 June 1976, p. 96.

15 The number of Filipinos who died during the war is fairly conservatively estimated at 250,000 (Francisco 1987).

16 Regarding the lasting impact of the 1920 strike on the social and labor histories of Hawaii, a historian of the strike wrote,

The Oahu sugar plantation strike of 1920 was a traumatic episode in Hawaiian history. It can best be compared with the dock strike of 1949.... A later generation in Hawaii, witness to how the fears and resentments aroused by that strike had not wholly subsided fifteen years later, can appreciate how emotions aroused by the strike of 1920 influenced the thinking and emotions of islanders long afterward (Reinecke 1979: 87).

17 Despite the better financed and organized Japanese union's support of the Filipinos and the two groups' mutual aims, "the two unions acted independently," according to the strike's most authoritative historian (Reinecke 1979: 101), and did not represent an interracial working class in any meaningful sense.

18 John Waterhouse, presidential address, *Proceedings of the Fortieth Annual Meeting of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association*, 29-30 November 1920, p. 8, Hawaiian Collection.

19 As quoted in *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, 6 February 1920.

The HSPA's racial attack has mainly been interpreted as a conscious ruse to steer the issue away from the workers' class demands. For example, Takaki writes that the planters "deliberately stressed the racial issue in order to shroud the economic issue" (1983: 172). While I partly agree with this argument, the extent to which haoles actually believed the Japanese to be a racial threat should not be minimized. That is, the HSPA's position was not merely an ideological dressing of a material conflict. Rather, the two were inseparable. For example, during the 1920 strike, George M. Brooke, Assistant Chief of Staff for Military Intelligence, wrote a "highly confidential" letter to O.W. Collins, the manager of Pioneer Mill Company, informing him of the presence of "agents of the Japanese Consulate General" on the islands of Maui and Molokai. Brooke asked Collins to monitor them and also warned him that there were "great many more of these agents" on whom information is not presently being released. Such portentous information from the military was probably not taken lightly by the planters and undoubtedly affirmed and fueled their racial imaginations. Letter from George M. Brooke to O.W. Collins, dated 7 May 1920, Folder PMC2/40, HSPA Plantation Papers.

For the most comprehensive account of the military vis-à-vis Hawaii's Japanese, see Okihiro (1991).

20 *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, 30 January 1920.

21 *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, 6 March 1920.

22 *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 13 February 1920.

23 *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, 27 January 1920.

24 The Naturalization Act of 1790 deemed only "white" immigrants eligible for naturalized citizenship.

25 Letter from J.K. Butler to HSPA trustees and all plantation managers, dated 11 May 1928, Folder PSC33/15, HSPA Plantation Papers.

26 In 1922, Filipino and Japanese workers represented 40.2% and 38.5% of the sugar labor force, respectively (USBLS 1940: 34).

27 The data for 1932 were only available for men. By this time, there were very few women working on sugar plantations.

28 Resolved to act more in concert following the strike, the planters institutionalized standard paternalistic practices, making improvements in housing, medical care, recreation and other welfare programs (Okihiro 1991: 80-81). Of course, once established, the withholding of these "perquisites" became a favorite coercive tactic of the employers. Furthermore, the territorial state passed a series of repressive laws aimed at preventing and breaking labor organizing. They included a broad-sweeping anti-criminal syndicalism law, a law aimed at limiting the Japanese press, a law prohibiting picketing, and a loosely interpreted and enforced trespassing law.

29 The Japanese term, *issei*, refers to first-generation immigrants from Japan. The term, *nisei*, refers to their children.

30 *Nippu Jiji*, 7 March 1921 as cited in Beechert (1985: 212).

31 John Hind, presidential address, *Proceedings of the Forty-fifth Annual Meeting of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association*, 16-20 November 1925, Hawaiian Collection, p. 9.

An industrial survey conducted by the sugar industry in 1926 similarly concluded that the industry should rely less on a constant flow of immigrant Filipino labor and more on "attracting native-born workers." Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association, "Confidential Extracts From Industrial Survey of 1926," 1927, p. 1, Labor History Archive, Plantation Era Files, CLEAR.

32 R.A. Cooke, presidential address, *Proceedings of the Forty-ninth Annual Meeting of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association*, 2-4 December 1929, p. 7, Hawaiian Collection.

33 See *Proceedings of the Annual Conference of New Americans*, 1927-1941, Hawaiian Collection.

34 *Hawaii Hochi*, 9 August 1928.

See also *Honolulu Advertiser*, 7 August 1928; Dr. Harry I. Kuriasaki, letter-to-the-editor, *Hawaii Hochi*, 13 August 1928; *Nippu Jiji*, 6 September 1928; Nomura (1987).

35 John W. Waldron, presidential address, *Proceedings of the Fifty-second Annual Meeting of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association*, 7 December 1932, pp. 18-19, Hawaiian Collection.

36 The 2000 Filipinos were "mostly...those thrown out of work by the pineapple companies." J.K. Butler, "Remarks before the Territorial Senate," dated 13 April 1933, Folder HSC25/6, HSPA Plantation Papers.

37 J.K. Butler, "Remarks before the Territorial Senate," dated 13 April 1933, Folder HSC25/6, HSPA Plantation Papers. See also John W. Waldron, presidential address, *Proceedings of the Fifty-second Annual Meeting of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association*, 7 December 1932, p. 16, Hawaiian Collection.

38 Allen W.T. Bottomley, presidential address, *Proceedings of the Fiftieth Annual Meeting of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association*, 17-21 November 1930, Hawaiian Collection.

39 Letter from J.K. Butler to sugar plantation managers, dated 17 August 1932, Folder HSC25/5, HSPA Plantation Papers.

40 Frank C. Atherton, presidential address, *Proceedings of the Fifty-first Annual Meeting of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association*, 7-10 December 1931, Hawaiian Collection.

41 J.K. Butler, "Remarks before the Territorial Senate," dated 13 April 1933, p. 5, Folder HSC25/6, HSPA Plantation Papers.

42 *Hawaii Hochi*, 19 November 1930.

Nippu Jiji, the other major Japanese paper, took a more accommodationist stance towards the haole elite. The paper's less vitriolic stance towards Filipino workers can be more accurately read as stemming from its favorable assessment of management than from a favorable assessment of Filipinos.

43 *Hawaii Hochi*, 7 February 1930.

Although other forms of documentary evidence are hard to come by, Japanese racism against Filipinos did not seem to be confined to editorial pages. For example, even in a very public forum like the New Americans Conferences which tended to mute strong opinions, some of the nisei delegates characterized Filipino workers in similar terms. Their statements portray the Filipinos as befitting their menial positions on the plantations and the Japanese as being superior to Filipinos. One delegate from Wailuku, a sugar plantation on Maui, stated, "[W]e have certain types of work that must be handled by [Filipinos]; we Japanese citizens cannot handle those jobs." He further asserted, "[The Filipinos'] living conditions are not on a par with those of the Japanese.... Naturally until the Filipinos improve their conditions or get out[social conflict between the two groups] will be a problem for the Japanese citizens to tackle." *Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Conference of New Americans*, 19-24 July 1937, pp. 66-67, Hawaiian Collection.

44 For example, *New Freedom*, a newspaper which catered to haole workers and purported to be "devoted to progressive democracy" (Chapin 1996: 143), argued for cutting off Filipino immigration by similarly counterposing the citizen "jobless" and the "overflowing " "little brown brothers" who crowd city tenements "after a brief period of work with their wages intact in their pockets -- plus what was gained in the gambling dens or cock-fighting pens on the sugar estates." *New Freedom*, 25 October 1930.

45 "Luviminda" is the contraction of the three main groups of the Philippine islands -- Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao -- suggesting a racial/national unity among Filipinos. Also suggestive, "Vibora" was the nickname of the Filipino general Artemio y Recorte, a popular nationalist who had heroically resisted American colonization of the Philippines.

46 Letter from E.A. Taok to Manuel Quezon, dated 21 May 1935, Quezon Papers.

47 Letter from L.W. Wishard to Theo. H. Davies & Company, dated 1 November 1937, Folder LSC69/17, HSPA Plantation Papers. See also Letter from B.H. Wells to American Factors, Ltd., dated 20 September 1937, Folder KSC27/21, HSPA Plantation Papers.

48 For example, 'pidgin' English -- technically a creole -- spoken by most non-haoles in Hawaii was by its negation predominantly a marker of haole superiority prior to the 1940s. However, 'pidgin' English later gained counter-hegemonic meanings, as it served as one of the ways in which workers built a

common interracial identity around their non-haoleness and around their position in the relations of production.

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