

**Kumuhea:**  
**Ecocolonization and the Epidemics of the Native People**



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12 year old girl with Type II Diabetes gives herself an insulin shot in Wai'anae.

Anyone who wants to know the human psyche will learn next to nothing from experimental psychology. He would be better advised to abandon exact science, put away his scholar's gown, bid farewell to his study, and wander with a human heart through the world. There in the horrors of prisons, lunatic asylums and hospitals, in drab suburban pubs, in brothels and gambling-hells, in the salons of the elegant, the Stock Exchanges, socialist meetings, churches, revivalist gatherings and ecstatic sects, through love and hate, through the experience of passion in every form in his own body, he would reap richer stores of knowledge than text-books a foot thick could give him, and he will know how to doctor the sick with a real knowledge of the human soul.

Carl Jung

Kumuhea was an evil demigod, a son of Kū, known for ruining the health of his human wife.<sup>1</sup> “Kumuhea kupu ‘ino” is our ‘ōlelo no‘eau for things destructive to health.

It acknowledges how Kumuhea's presence in his wife's life led to poor health. It was through the deprivation of an adequate diet that Kumuhea made his wife ill. By only allowing her a diet of sweet-potato leaves, as opposed to the range of foods needed to feed herself and keep herself healthy, Kumuhea kept his wife ill and thereby controlled her. The continued American presence in Hawai'i acts as Kumuhea, a destructive force to health. Through the deprivation of necessary services and resources American imperialism and hegemony maintains control over the Hawaiian population by keeping them weak, usually through illness. In this regard, understanding displacement (and homelessness) among Native Hawaiians requires a hard look at the health of Native Hawaiians as a population.

Since contact, epidemics have plagued the Native Hawaiian people. This chapter looks at how colonizing forces have benefited from these "epidemics" in the Native Hawaiian community. To this end, the State allows these scourges to continue against the Hawaiian people. Maladies and economic hardships are both intersected here as epidemics reinforced by State action as a mechanism of keeping the Native population weak, for a strong population would only encourage further resistance to the continuing dispossession of the Native. The relationship between the disenfranchised and health has been documented for decades, as medical anthropologist Paul Farmer explains it: "we have learned that the relationship between poverty and health is ... complicated. But the complexities are often found in the diverse ways in which the health of the disenfranchised may be made to suffer. That is, poverty and other social inequalities come to alter disease distribution and sickness trajectories through innumerable and complicated mechanisms."<sup>2</sup> For Native Hawaiians, colonization operates as a primary

mechanism by which their community health is made to suffer. The relationship between poverty and illness is largely overlooked. We acknowledge that poor people receive poor health care, but rarely does the literature scrutinize the ways in which these variables interact; the ways in which one reinforces the other.

The study of Native populations becomes a notably important site of this inquiry. For Native scholars have long written about the relationship between health and colonization. Tsark noted: “It saddens me that we Kānaka Maoli continue to present one of the poorest health profiles both in Hawai‘i and in the continental United States. This is a direct result of the suppression of native religion, and cultural values and belief systems.”<sup>3</sup> Yet, it is still not widely acknowledged that the health problems of the Native Hawaiian people developed from colonizing religious and cultural practices. Instead, Natives are often themselves blamed for their physical condition and the physical condition of their people. If acknowledged at all, non-Hawaiian agencies identify cultural oppression as only one of a range of factors impacting Native Hawaiian health. The National Center for Disease Control, for example, writes of Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders (NHOPi):

NHOPi generally experience poorer health than the American population as a whole: they are more at risk for developing and dying from cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and other diseases. Factors contributing to poor health outcomes among NHOPi include cultural barriers, limited access to health care, and poor nutrition and lifestyle.<sup>4</sup>

“Poor nutrition and lifestyle” become the scapegoat for Americans, as discussed later in this chapter, the stereotypes given to Hawaiians only enable ecocolonization. Attributing the poor health of Hawaiians to lifestyle choices enables institutional patterns that fail to give Native people the sovereignty and health care needed to care for themselves.

Understanding how all these various factors (poverty, illness and colonization) interact is complicated. But we are slowly making ground. There is a strong relationship between health and socio-cultural factors that is currently being studied. Studies conducted here in Hawai‘i support this basic notion. One study on Type 2 Diabetes identifies as one of its implications: “the between-ethnic group differences observed in this study concerning the relationship between depressive symptoms and health-related quality of life supports the idea that sociocultural factors (e.g. health beliefs and expectations of social network) could play an important role in this relationship.”<sup>5</sup> Yet, the “hard data” on the relationship between sociocultural factors and health among Native Hawaiians remains inadequate, despite the best efforts of academics like Crabbe and Kaholokula, who commit their work to this area.

This only lends to the position that Native Hawaiian health remains a complicated and misunderstood matter within the western world. And the suffering of Native Hawaiians remains comfortably distanced from the affluent; those most able to alleviate this suffering. As Farmer explains: “But the experience of suffering, it’s often noted, is not effectively conveyed by statistics or graphs. In fact, the suffering of the world’s poor intrudes only rarely into the consciousness of the affluent, even when our affluence may be shown to have direct relation to their suffering.”<sup>6</sup> Since the affluence remains fatally disenfranchised from the health needs of the poor, efforts to improve the devastating health conditions among Native Hawaiians still fall within traditionally western paradigms that include invasive treatments with western drugs and reactive (as opposed to preventative) measures. These practices are wholly inconsistent with traditional approaches to health and healing within the Native Hawaiian community. As University

of California Professor Juliet McMullin explains, “Hawaiian health is more than merely attending to the physical body. Health is more than the dictates of biomedicine, science and technology. It is intimately tied to a communion with their ancestors (*kūpuna*), with the land that cares for them (a concept that is commonly referred to as *mālama ‘āina*), and with taro.”<sup>7</sup> McMullin’s point is that Native health is tied to the Native land from which they come.

This notion was a key theme and summary from the Ka ‘Uhane Lōkahi: 1998 Native Hawaiian Health and Wellness Summit and Island ‘Aha. In their executive summary, it states: “**‘Āina, wai and kai are key to our survival.** The land, water and ocean are inseparable from our health as a people, thus these issues cannot be disassociated from health issues. From discussions on stewardship to access and gathering rights, this topic permeated virtually every discussion as critical components of our overall well-being.”<sup>8</sup> For over two hundred years, Native Hawaiians have attempted to explain to foreigners how the well-being of Native Hawaiians is critically tied to that of the land and Hawaiians’ access to their natural resources.

In a historical overview, the report states the importance of the relationship between traditional Hawaiian values and physical health. The report reads:

Hawaiian concepts of health and wellness are interrelated and inseparable from other concepts associated with living on islands. The foundation for these concepts are built upon relationships – relationships with natural elements (wind, rain, water, etc.), with natural environmental (forests, oceans, mountains, etc.), with specific places (family or ancestral land(s) – places of birth, burials, etc.), with other living things (flora and fauna), and with people. All of these relationships form a Hawaiian concept of *ola* build upon a strong spiritual foundation. Everything has a life, everything has value, both animate and inanimate.

Traditional society dictated appropriate values associated with these relationships. Some of these values were *laulima*, *aloha*, *kōkua*, *lōkahi*, *pono* and *mālama*.

There was many others. These values provide guidance for achieving optimum health and wellness despite the fact that many in the dominant society would consider them superfluous to productivity. The fact remains that most Hawaiians still view these values and their practices as appropriate and desirable and essential ingredients to good health and well-being.<sup>9</sup>

This again reinforces the idea that well-being relied upon a Hawaiian's relationship with his or her surrounding environment. For the people of Wai'anae, the historical strains upon this relationship resulting from foreign forces directly impact their current community health status.

### Ka Mauli O Ka 'Āina A He Mauli Kānaka

In 2001, Mary Frances Mailelauli'i Oneha published an ethnographic study on the relationship between health and place in Wai'anae. In her study, she explains: "A sense of place has been directly linked to spiritual well being for all indigenous peoples. Yet, there is minimal evidence that demonstrates understanding and awareness of indigenous health from this perspective. Health, or lack of it, appears to be related to place or the loss of it. Issues of Hawaiian health are inseparable from issues of land, water, and atmosphere."<sup>10</sup> She interviewed thirteen Wai'anae community members and reported the following findings:

The findings suggest that the relationship between sense of place and health embodies four categories: (1) relationship to akua (god, spirit), (2) relationship to natural elements, (3) relationship to self and others, and (4) belonging to a particular place. Three major traditional Hawaiian concepts, which defined how the relationship between sense of place and health are experienced, were *pono*, *mana*, and *kuleana*. The relationship between these concepts revealed five cultural themes. Health for Hawaiians:

- I. is having a spiritual connection to their ancestral place;
- II. relates to the past, present, and future;
- III. is experienced with intention and understanding;
- IV. means an openness to the flow and use of energy; and

V. is experienced as a *pu'uhonua* or safe place.<sup>11</sup>

Her findings certainly illustrated the validity of her central theme, *ka maui o ka 'āina a he maui kānaka*, the life of the land is the life of the people.

The study revealed the strong tie between the people of Wai'anae to their ancestral land. As Aunty Ho'oipo DeCambra said: "This is me; this is my space. And going away can only be temporary. It's like an anchor. You can't be separated from it. It's just not possible. I could not imagine living anywhere else. I can't comprehend it – I cannot."<sup>12</sup> Resident after resident echoed similar feelings about their home. Their identity and well-being paralleled the land. The study explains: "*Health for Hawaiians is having a spiritual connection to their ancestral place.* The first cultural theme addressed the deep emotional ties Hawaiians have to the place in which their ancestors reside, *kula iwi*, the land of their bones, the place where they were born and raised, and the land of Hawai'i. The basis of health for Hawaiians was having a spiritual connection to the place their ancestors reside, *kula iwi*."<sup>13</sup> Aunty Puanani Burgess illustrates this point: "Put your nose between the rocks; somebody put it there, so smell it; you can still smell the scent of him. That's what so neat about going to someplace like that; you have a history."<sup>14</sup> This dissertation illustrates how that history is one of displacement and colonization for the people of Wai'anae. So when the history of our *kula iwi* contains decades of pain and illness, that history seeps up from the land and into the people. We embody the illnesses of our *kula iwi*.

Illness becomes intergenerational through the destruction of natural resources. The imbalances of parents are passed onto the children. Just as balance and good health allow for the *pono* and well-being of children. Uncle Pōkā Laenui says: "My father had

been the one who planted most of the trees and the idea is that the parent always plants the fruit and never gets the full enjoyment of it. The parents plant fruits for children. And it's so true because, the fruits that he has planted, he has passed on, and so we and our children are the one who benefit from it."<sup>15</sup> When we inverse this idea, we recognize that the inability to plant impacts children and subsequent generations most. When we lost control of the land and control of the water, what we also lost was the ability to perpetuate well-being. When we lose our relationship to the land, we lose our identity. And this loss of self roots itself in our families and becomes a site of intergenerational violence and illness.

### Land and Health

ʻIke is a gift. And one can spend a lifetime learning, having experiences, and gathering information and yet never receive ʻike. Hawaiians taught one another through particularly sacred and spiritually informed means. In traditional Hawaiʻi, following spiritual protocols in the training of kāhuna or experts could not be circumvented. In the text *Hawaiian Herbal Medicine*, June Gutmanis explains the role of the kāhuna lāʻau lapaʻau: “As a *kahuna laʻau lapaʻau* the boy would become not only a priest but a trained expert. Like all other *kahuna*, he would become a practitioner who know and taught the technicalities of his profession. And like all *kahuna*, his most important role would be that of liaison between the people and the great gods (*akua*), the family guardian (*aumakua*), and a multitude of other gods.”<sup>16</sup> Similarly sacred was the process by which kāhuna were selected and taught. Gutaris explains this process as well:

The choice of a future kahuna might be apparent at birth when the omens were too numerous to dispute. Or it might become known from the results of a

character reading done after the boy left the women's eating house. Then again, the gods might wait until the boy had entered his teens to show their interest. It was the kahuna who was to do the training that, looking at the signs (nana i na `ouli), knew the will of the gods.

If a candidate was chosen as a baby he might be raised by the kahuna who was to be his teacher. Whether he remained with his family or not, the young kahuna-to-be would not begin his training until the gods gave the appropriate sign.<sup>17</sup>

As in the case of Pukui in Ka`u, teachers only bestowed learning upon those chosen by ākua.

Deeply sacred and intimate was the learning process between teacher and student in traditional Hawai`i. Gutaris also explains this relationship: "No matter when the novice began his training it was based on the one-to-one relationship of a strict apprenticeship. The student was expected to have a good memory and to learn fast, `a`apo a`e. Instructions were never given more than twice or three times at the most, then no more, pau. Never questioning, always observing, the boy began his training doing menial tasks. He was in turn closely watched to assure to no *kapu* were broken."<sup>18</sup> Again, the important of the *kapu* remains central in Hawaiian learning. Gutaris notes: "If [the novice] failed to keep this *kapu* his knowledge would be shallow, not deep, *pulelehua ka ike*."<sup>19</sup>

This idea also recurred throughout the indigenous world. As Donald L. Fixico explains in *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World: American Indian Studies and Traditional Knowledge*:

The traditional educational system is to learn by two methods. The first is to listen, observe, be patient for a sign (which has caused others to call traditional Indians passive). And lessons are learned by receiving or taking in this information. An important point may be that it may not be most effective to try to deliberately obtain knowledge, as only information would be gained (not knowledge) and frustration usually happens in this acquisitive process.

After receiving knowledge, which may not always be understood at first, then a person reacts by imitating the elder who might be a teacher, or reacting to the instruction learned from nature, and knowledge is learned in this way like the mainsteam by doing – the practical experience and this knowledge of doing one’s job, taking an exam, hunting, and so forth is application of knowledge receiving by using this knowledge.<sup>20</sup>

Herein, we see how American Indians also share the Hawaiian method of simply being patient and waiting for knowledge to be given. Even in contemporary times, releasing control over one’s surroundings and allowing external forces to control learning proved extremely beneficial.

Few dispute that environmental factors contribute to a population’s general health. Yet, cultural factors and cultural health also contribute to health as well. Particularly in indigenous populations, where the culture’s history often holds keys as to health and self-healing, poor cultural health can speak to poor physical health. Food, a mechanism of both health and culture in Hawaiian society, plays a critical role in the health of the people. Therefore, when traditional food cultivation suffered from western contact, the health of the people suffered.

The importance of taro to Hawaiian culture cannot be underestimated. Taro as a cultural symbol has multiple meanings. The place is a symbol of the *‘ohana* (family), specifically of an elder sibling in Hawaiian cosmology for whom respect and care must be shown. In return for the care given to the elder sibling, and the land it grows in, that elder sibling (taro) will care for the Hawaiian people by feeding them. Taro is a symbol of Hawaiian family, and land and life.<sup>21</sup>

In recognition of the fundamental importance kalo, known to foreigners as taro, occupies with the traditional Hawaiian community, many cultural practitioners focus their cultural education around lo‘i restoration and kalo cultivation.

Considering the origins of kalo, its central role in both health and sovereignty are appropriate in reestablishing Native Hawaiian health. This functions well within the

theory of ecocolonization. For kalo influences not only our culture and beliefs, but speaks to where Hawaiians originated. While it is a key symbol of values, it is also our origin. Kalo appears in the Papa and Wākea creation story. Science begins with “the big bang.” Creation begins with the Book of Geniuses. The Hawaiian people begin with Papa and Wākea, the Earth Mother and the Sky Father.

Wākea and Papa created a heavenly daughter, Ho‘ohōkūkalani, whose beauty aroused her father’s passion. One night, father and daughter became one. Ho‘ohōkūkalani delivered a stillborn baby, and from the infant’s grave a kalo (taro) plant sprouted. Wākea called the plant Hāloa-naka, for its long, quivering leaves. Later, father and daughter produced a boy, naming him Hāloa in honor of the starch, the kalo, that nourished him as he grew into man.

In the following centuries, Hawaiians cultivated kalo in gardens large and small; the kalo, in turn, sustained the families. They knew kalo as their ancestor Hāloa, his heart-shaped leaves and genealogy entwined with their cosmos, their land, their gods, their chiefs, and themselves.<sup>22</sup>

Kalo is more than a symbol, more than an agricultural system, more than a food: it literally represents the people. The health of the people depends upon the health of the kalo and the health of the land. When the Hawaiian people fail to care for the kalo, the relationship of reciprocity between kalo and man is broken. The people will not be cared for in return. Therefore, when the epidemics of foreign contact began to sicken the Native Hawaiian people and they, in turn, could not care for their land, the health of the people deteriorated. While foreign disease may have initiated the current poor health of the Hawaiian people, it was the inability to care for the land and the inability to sustain themselves through their traditional foods and cultural practices that perpetuated ill health.

Poverty and poor health are logical weapons of colonization. There is a practical reason to keep Hawaiians ill. Sick people cannot fight. They cannot fight politically; they cannot fight economically. The people of Wai‘anae speak of being unable to work because they are injured or sick, because they are disabled by chronic health conditions.

The traditional lifestyle was far healthier and more active. One woman recalls from her childhood:

I had to work before I could have my breakfast. I would get up in the morning, fix my *pūne`e*, fold my *kapa* and roll up the mosquito net and put it away. We had to scrub the sidewalks with the *palaka niu`ānai* and brown soap. We would wash down our *hale lua* with chlorine.

When we finished doing our job in the house, we would go down to the taro patch to clean the *lo`i* or we would pull the taro to cook to make our poi. Tutu Kane, my father and my uncle did the heavy work. When our work was finished we would come in to have our breakfast. We would collect and have our collect the *pūpū-pāke* in the taro patch to cook. At that time we didn't have crawfish. Tutu Wahine would limit our food.

... Tutu didn't have running water. The river water was used for drinking water, the taro patch and cooking. Tutu's land was like a hole. If it rained you would slide down. We never brought fruits or candies. Tutu's house had a veranda. We used a mosquito net over us for sleeping. We had a mosquito net otherwise the mosquitoes would eat us up. We didn't have modern beds. Tutu Wahine made *pūne`e* out of *lau hala*. Each of us had our own *kapa*.

Tutu Wahine loved plants. Our tutus were taught that the human urine was good for plants. Tutu Wahine would get up at five a.m., collect all the children's urine pots and mix it with water. Then she would water her *laua`e* and *ilima* flowers.

Tutu Wahine didn't take us to see any doctors. She would go out to the yard and pick up plants and pound it into medicine. She would say a little prayer, then give it to us children: The doctors lived so far away. The only way we had to travel was by horse and buggy. ...

Tutu Wahine would chew our food. This was called *pu`a*. Then she would feed us mouth to mouth. Tutu Wahine would give us a teaspoon of wine before we would have our supper. Before the sun would set, we

children would have our verses to say, like “*Aloha Keakua*”[.] My father carried this tradition on in later years.<sup>23</sup>

This history provides great insight to Hawaiian health and living. We see that children were actively involved in caring for the house and for the land, particularly the lo`i. Pūpū-pāke were an invasive apple snail present in taro patches, but we see here how regular work in the lo`i allowed for this invasive species to be controlled. Native people were able to cope with many the various environmental changes that resulted from regular contact between Hawai`i and the world through shipping vessels.

The value of Native plants in caring for the family is also explored. Doctors (or healing experts in pre-contact times) were not typically present or easily accessible, so most Hawaiians has to learn how to take care of themselves and heal whatever ailments arose. Traditional skills and lifestyles harmoniously co-existed and the Hawaiian people were, by necessity, extremely knowledgeable regarding many aspects of life. While being an “expert” in a particular skill required a lifetime of training, most Hawaiians nonetheless acquired some level of skill in different areas: medicine, agriculture or aquaculture, engineering, crafting, pedagogy. Hawaiian people were environmentally sovereign. They relied exclusively upon their surrounding environment: they crafted all their material goods; they were food sovereign; they constructed all their dwellings. This sovereign system was an intricate and balanced web of co-habitation. Once foreign contact and ecocolonization disrupted this system, the entire system collapsed. Deterioration of physical health is an element of ecocolonization.

They became disabled by their poverty. Poverty and poor health are often synonymous in Wai‘anae. In this regard, the people of Wai‘anae are not distinct from the

millions of Americans denied access to adequate health care due to poverty. Farmer explains:

Our society ensures that large numbers of people, in the United States and out of it, will be simultaneously put at risk for disease and denied access to care. In fact, the spectacular successes of biomedicine have in many instances further entrenched medical inequalities. This necessarily happens whenever new and effective therapies – from antituberculous drugs to protease inhibitors – are not made readily available to those in need. Perhaps it was in anticipation of late-twentieth-century technology that Virchow argued that physicians must be the “natural attorneys of the poor.”

In any setting where medical injustice is a given, it is incumbent upon physicians and other healers to respond to the troubling questions posed by the destitute sick. These issues cannot be left to the leaders of the insurance and pharmaceutical industries, whose bottom line is not relief of suffering. Until doctors ask other types of questions – Who becomes sick and why? Who becomes a patient? Who has access to adequate services? How might inequalities of risk and outcome be addressed? – they will remain at least as blind as the anthropologists who “missed the revolution.”<sup>24</sup>

The Wai‘anae community currently works to incorporate this model into its community health care programs. In this community, it is a given that the clientele are poor Native Hawaiians. Outreach workers are overcome with the growing number of residents in need of health care and homeless outreach services. Resources are constantly stretched thinner and thinner in an effort to provide for as many people as possible.

In Wai‘anae, social problems and physical problems intersect. Homelessness is only one result of the symptoms that plague this community. Residents face domestic violence, substance abuse, poor pre-natal care and nutrition, chronic health problems, mental disorders. Therefore, “solving homelessness” requires much more than just finding shelter for residents, it demands looking at all the ways in which this community suffers. For as Farmer explains in another text:

Cornel West argues that “the condition of truth is to allow the suffering to speak. It doesn’t mean that those who suffer have a monopoly on truth, but it means that

the condition of truth to emerge must be in tune with those who are undergoing social misery – socially induced forms of suffering.”

The second lesson is that medicine has much to learn by reflecting on the lives and struggles of poor or otherwise oppressed people. How is suffering, including that caused by sickness, best explained? How is it to be addressed? These questions are, of course, as old as humankind. We’ve had millennia in which to address – societally, in an organized fashion – the suffering that surrounds us. In looking at approaches to such problems, one can easily discern three main trends: *charity, development, and social justice*.<sup>25</sup>

As discussed in the previous chapter, our society has largely ignored the suffering on the Wai‘anae Coast.

Only the Wai‘anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center seems to appreciate that healing a community begins with engaging with its suffering. How does a community suffer? What do those suffering have to say for themselves? Only when we understand suffering, can we begin to understand what a community needs in order to heal.

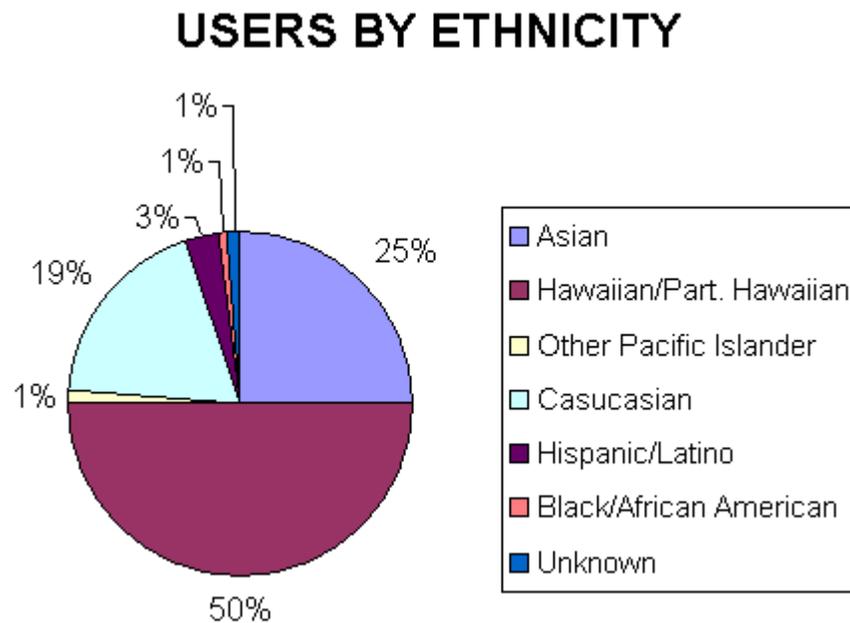
#### Wai‘anae Community Comprehensive Health Center

At the Wai‘anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center, they are beginning to ask and answer these questions. Literature from the Center explains:

The Wai‘anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center’s mission is to outreach and provide services to a predominately low income, Native Hawaiian patient population on leeward O‘ahu. This mission is in conflict with Medicaid managed care as it is currently structured in the State of Hawai‘i.

The mission of the Health Center has led it to the development of outreach programs addressing the unique health needs of native Hawaiians. Conditions disproportionately occurring in the Hawaiian population include teen pregnancy, substance abuse, chronic pain, behavioral health problems, morbid obesity, and chronic disease. For the Hawaiian community, early onset of chronic disease has led to a higher “potential years of life lost.” These conditions have been documented through the *E Ola Mau* submitted to Congress and the White House and led to the passage of the Native Hawaiian Health Care Act.<sup>26</sup>

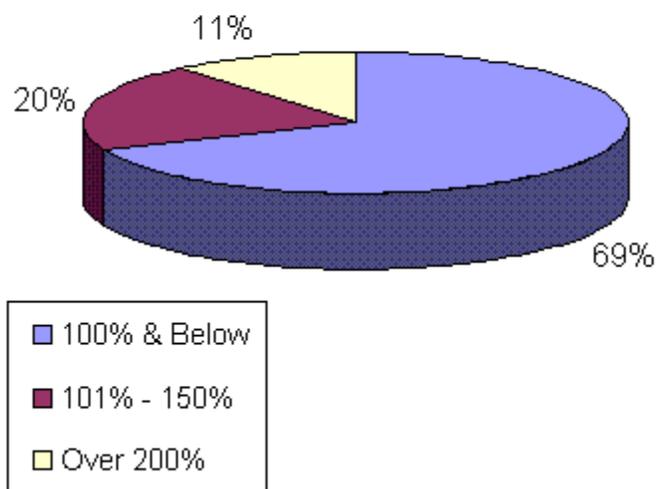
Native Hawaiian and low income are perfect descriptions of their clientele. Workers there repeatedly note how most of the homeless people they work with are Hawaiian. The data from WCCHC show that nearly 50% of its clientele are Hawaiian. Outreach workers estimate that at least 50% of the homeless population in Wai‘anae are Hawaiian. Workers and residents insist the percentage is actually higher; many estimate it to be 60-75%.



**Figure 7.** Breakdown of the clientele at the Wai‘anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center by race/ethnicity. Source: Wai‘anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center.

This next figure, provided also by Wai‘anae Comp, indicates that the overwhelming majority of their patients live below or near the poverty level. As the only large health care facility in the area (the closest hospital can be as much as an hour away in traffic), Wai‘anae Comp sees most of the residents at one time or another. It is also the area’s largest employer.

## Socio Economic Characteristics Income as a % of Proverty Level



**Figure 8.** Percentage of WCCHC's clientele as related to the poverty level. Source: Wai`anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center.

This data leads me to believe that the houseless population in Wai`anae sits closer to 50 – 60% of the population, well above the approximately 30-40% claimed by the state.

Wai`anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center, as the larger health provider in the area and one of the largest providers of services to the houseless, serves as a better measure of the composition of this population than any state study. Largely the result of WCCHC's long-term commitment to the area and its residents, residents express more trust and willingness to work with WCCHC than any other organization gathering data on this population. Therefore, WCCHC's data, while perhaps lacking the western validity claimed by other studies, possesses the cultural validity necessary to understand the needs of the people of Wai`anae.

Further, the health problems of the residents of Wai‘anae, particularly the Native Hawaiian houseless population, must be viewed in the schema articulated by Farmer in

*Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues*, Farmer explains:

In a very real way, inequality itself constitutes our modern plague. The burdens of inequality are primarily borne by the poor and marginalized, for not everyone can claim victimhood, despite the self-serving identity politics and “soft relativism” of our times. But it is worth noting that even wealthy societies driven by great inequalities are bereft of social cohesion. This lack of cohesion is tightly linked to increased rates of morbidity and mortality: “It is clear now,” Wilkinson in an important study of inequality in industrial societies, “that the scale of income differences in a society is one of the most powerful determinants of health standards in different countries, and that it influences health through its impact on social cohesion.”<sup>27</sup>

In one program, the Makahiki Project, attempts to use elements of the traditional Hawaiian culture to improve health. It is explained: “The Project, named after the traditional ceremony as celebrated by the k̄naka maoli, or Native Hawaiians, aims to increase physical activity and improve nutrition by providing activities that teach various means of growing and acquiring healthy foods. Activities, such as farming, aquaculture, and fishing are just some of the skills that participants will learn.”<sup>28</sup> For workers at WCCHC understand from working with community members that improving individual health requires improving cultural and community health. They cannot be separated. “Wai‘anae Comp,” as it is referred to by most residents, certainly bears good reasons to want to find solutions to improving health among Native Hawaiians in their area. Most of the workers are from the area, they know well the people they help because this is their community. Again, this makes it a better guiding post as to how to help this community.

### The Wai‘anae Diet

Wai‘anae community members fully appreciate that the key to wellbeing requires environmental and health changes. In 1991, Wai‘anae Comp published *The Wai‘anae*

*Book of Hawaiian Health*. The preface reads:

Hawaiian health is a critical issue today because in Hawai‘i, “the healthiest state in the union,” Native Hawaiians have the worst health in the nation. This is in sharp contrast to the excellent health that the Hawaiians had in pre-Western contact times, before 1778 when Captain Cook arrived. Today, Hawaiians have the highest rates of heart disease, cancer, stroke and diabetes in the state. Over 70% of all Hawaiians die of these diseases, and all of these diseases are diet-related.

This is the reason why the main focus of this book is on diet.

Why should a book about Hawaiian health come from Wai‘anae? First of all, the Wai‘anae coast has the largest concentration of Hawaiian people in the state. According to the 1980 U.S. Census, 56% of the people in Nānākuli and 34% of the Wai‘anae people are Hawaiian. Second of all, the Wai‘anae coast has the poorest economic conditions in the state and some of the poorest health. Yet, Wai‘anae is rich in Hawaiian tradition and in human resources and spirit.

This book and the Wai‘anae Diet Program are efforts to make use of this richness to reverse an epidemic of diet-related deaths among the Hawaiian people, both in this community and across the state.<sup>29</sup>

This focus on a diet comprised of traditional foods illustrates that “to reverse an epidemic” among Native Hawaiians, the ability to return to elements of the traditional lifestyle is key. We must reverse some of the impacts of ecocolonization.

*The Wai‘anae Book of Hawaiian Health* provides some very interesting history on the traditional health of the Hawaiian people.

The Hawaiian of the past was thin and strong rather than overweight. Let us repeat that... they were **thin** rather than overweight. In other words, their natural status was to be slim. This is in contract to the commonly held belief that Hawaiians were naturally obese. If you have doubts about the trust of this statement, just look at the pictures of ancient Hawaiians in this book and ask yourself, “Where are the overweight Hawaiians?”

The Hawaiian people were tall, “above the middle statute, graceful, and stately.” They were attractive and healthy. This was the conclusion of this early observer

in times soon after Western contact. Hawaiian people today have it in them to be this way, if we return to some of the ways of our kūpuna.

In addition to being taller than average, the Hawaiian people were “capable of bearing great fatigue.” In other words, they were energetic and very active. This energy and hard working nature was a reflection of their excellent health. A high level of physical activity was a normal part of Hawaiian life.<sup>30</sup>

Hawaiians were naturally healthy and fit. A sustainable lifestyle demands it. One cannot tend to lo‘i or fish without a fairly high level of physical capability. There were no vehicles or animals to ride in pre-contact. People walked where they needed to go.



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E ola ‘āina, e ola po‘e

The land lives; the people live. The concept is a simple one. As people we have the right to feed ourselves, to feed our families, to care for our land. To Hawaiians, the land, family and self are one entity. When one dies, all die.



(c) Trisha Kehaulani Watson

Many have expressed the ideal health status of Hawaiians as “ola lōkahi.” This embodies the idea that life (ola) is united (lōkahi). All forms of life are interwoven and therefore health comes from the restoration of this connection. Uncle Kekuni Blaisdell, M.D. articulates the principles of Hawaiian health within the context of Hawaiians’ relationship with the cosmos.

Because of common parentage from Papa and Wākea, the kānaka maoli (Native Hawaiian as calls himself) considered himself lōkahi (united) with all in the cosmos from the beginning and forever.

In spite of the prevailing spirituality, all in the Hawaiian cosmos was natural. There was nothing “supernatural” in the Western sense. Events could and were

influenced by all of the numerous forces in the material and spiritual cosmos, favorable and adverse, from the past as well as in present. These included the individual kanaka's thoughts and attitudes, as well as his action.

\* \* \*

Pono, or proper order or harmony of these interacting, cyclic and opposing forces required conscious effort, including each individual kanaka's participation.

Kapu (sacred restricting taboo), established by the kāhuna (priest specialists), sanctioned by the ruling ali'i and enforced by all, was society's way of preserving pono for the common good. For the kapu fostered self-discipline and responsibility in personal hygiene, health-promotion, illness-prevention, public sanitation and respect for the sacredness of nature.

Imbalance of mana or loss of pono accounted for misfortune, such as illness.

\* \* \*

Each child was a previous pua (flower) assuming perpetuation of the race. Adults, of course, were the promiders. And the elderly were esteemed. Death after a meaningful life was welcomed as a reuniting with one's kūpuna (ancestors) in the eternal spiritual realm, with completion of a recurring cycle of rebirth and transfiguration into kinolau or reincarnation into other human forms. Thus, the kanaka considered himself part of a continuum with his kūpuna before him, all of his present 'ohana and nature about him during his physical existence or ola (life) on earth, and with his offspring and succeeding generations after him. An individual alone without these relationships was "unthinkable."

These relationships were promoted by frequent informal, favorable thoughts and spiritual communication with himself, others and all of nature, punctuated by daily, formal rituals to maintain pono or soundness of personal kino (body), beauty and grace, skills, and social, economic and psychic security. Pono with others and with nature assured mau ke 'ea o ka 'āina, maintenance of "the life of the land."

The traditional law of the land was aloha 'āina, or mālama 'āina (love and care for the land). That is, since the resources of the 'āina nurtured kānaka maoli, it was the responsibility of kānaka maoli to cherish and care for the 'āina for subsequent generations. Thus, kānaka were stewards, not private owners, of the 'āina. Their subsistence economy required mutual mālama. For the fisherman, providing his catch was not only for himself, but for all in the ahupua'a (sea-to-mountain region). Similarly, the taro planter shared his harvest. And the mauka (upland) forester supplied wood for his fellow ahupua'a residents.

Conversely, to intentionally harm others or anything in nature, was to harm oneself...<sup>31</sup>

Harm to nature was harm to the self. The Wai‘anae Diet is largely spiritual. It, in fact, provides a “spiritual recipe”: “Be aware of the processes of life. As it is in man, so it is in the nature of things. Lessons learned by man from nature allows him to balance a perfect part of life often interrupted by man and his need for assurances and guarantees. For that there is none. All guarantees are only secure if “Hā” (breath) is in the balance and perfect.”<sup>32</sup> The people of Wai‘anae understand intimately the relationship between health, food and spirit.

The introduction of western medicine has been systemically problematic through the Pacific. In Guam, the shift to western medicine resulted in shifts in health practices and treatments that only increased the problems brought on by colonization. Anne Perez Hattori explains:

Western medicine introduced definitions and understandings of science, nature, and the supernatural not subscribed to by most Chamorro people. For example, the concept of medicine as clinical and laboratory based conflicted with Chamorro notions of health as both naturally and supernaturally determined. Chamorros long accustomed to comprehending their health problems in terms of the desecration of sacred places or the violation of particular cultural behaviors much been thought strange the demands of navy doctors for samples of blood, soil, fecal matter, and other laboratory specimens. To people attuned to relating their health conditions to the surrounding conditions of people, land, spirits, and weather, such diagnostic techniques may have seemed disconnected from their environmental realities.<sup>33</sup>

So even where foreigners have shown concern for the health of native populations, the methods by which they attempt to address these problems contribute to the community’s poor health.

Yet, restoring pono and thereby restoring health cannot be achieved without the ability to live a traditional lifestyle. This means access to land and access to water. The economic security to return to an agricultural lifestyle. Above all else, it requires foreign forces to appreciate that Native Hawaiians see their land differently. Our view of the cosmos fundamentally differs from westerns. And reversing ecocolonization will require allowing Hawaiians to live in a manner consistent with their worldviews.



(c) Trisha Kehaulani Watson

### Health and Ecocolonization

There remains a tremendous need to further integrate public health and environmental health. The foundational premise of ecocolonialism remains outside most discussions on public health, even the discussions on public health among Native Hawaiians. Such exclusions are understandable considering the overwhelming lack of funding and resources provided to public health programs. Yet, if health among the

Native Hawaiian population, especially in rural, underserved areas like Wai`anae, is to be improved, we must commit ourselves to programs that appreciate the inseparable tie between the health of Native people and the land base on which they reside.

The health of the environment is directly tied to the health of its community and this is exceptional true of indigenous populations. For Native Hawaiians, environmental devastation contributes to the poor health of the people because of the deep link between nature and the people.

It is no great surprise that kupuna, land and taro are the symbols that represent Hawaiian health. And it is no surprise that these symbols simultaneously represent Hawaiian identity. Kahea ola (the call to life), a phrase commonly used by Hawaiian health agencies, is more than a call to restore the health of the physical body. It is a call to the Hawaiian people, to the elements of their culture, to the land, to fully restore that which has been half-alive, suppressed by Western ideologies. The themes of history, land and health ... are intertwined, working together to define a Hawaiian culture and identity.<sup>34</sup>

Therefore, when western forces consume and ravage natural resources, the destruction extends beyond “nature” into the human communities. For example, when sewage gets pumped into the ocean, we do more than simply pollute the ocean. In addition to the extensive reef destruction and injuries to the ecosystem, within traditional Hawaiian culture, such an act may also be considered as defiling Kanaloa.

Pumping sewage into the waters is only one example of the vile manner in which we treat the environment. The reality is that people use these waterways; people live in these areas. Yet the state and city regularly fail to ignore the pleas of the public and the suspect (and often chronic) health conditions that develop in areas known for being polluted.

Polluting land therefore not only sickens the land but it sickens the people. The mechanism in which it does this is three-fold. First, Native People are directly sickened through the pollutants. This logically applies to all residents in any area suffering from pollution. Yet, it is found that in Hawai`i, the people of the Wai`anae Coast are disproportionately impacted by destructive land uses. Primarily through landfills, power plants and environmentally hazardous industrial land uses, the people of Wai`anae are more like to be impacted by environmental injustices than people residing in other places in Hawai`i. The high placement of locally unwanted land uses in this region is consistent with national trends throughout the United States and the world that place hazardous land uses in poor communities with large populations of ethnic minorities or Native Americans.

Second, environmental destructive hurts the Hawaiian people spiritually. For those who see themselves as lineal ancestors of the land, the pain of environmental destruction is a real and personal one. We are physically and emotionally pained by the injuries caused to our ancestral lands. Just as with any sort of emotional trauma, this suffering can manifest itself in physical symptoms. Or, alternatively, if the emotional pain of seeing our homeland bombed and attacked does not cause actual illness, it certainly weakens the Native spirit, making us more susceptible to illness.

Finally, the Native People are injured through environmental pollution through an inability to practice their culture. For Native Peoples, whose traditional lifestyles were active and healthy, colonization stripped them of these healthy lifestyles. This began with the need to provide labor to the plantations. It now translates into the need to provide labor for tourism and the inability to return to our traditional economic systems. Now

today Hawaiians are perceived as drains upon our larger society; this perception stems largely from the colonization of the image of the Hawaiian in local media. These stereotypes only fuel the conflict between Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians and further alienate an effort to restore Native lands and the Native people.

Invisible and In Your Face:  
Colonizing the Image of Native Hawaiians

Mr. Kamakawiwoole (Mr. Kamakawiwoole)  
Got plenty not too much of nothing  
Got plenty nothing, he takes it out on me  
And he's just one mean Hawaiian man

From "Mistah Sun Cho Lee"  
Lyrics by Keola Beamer

Honolulu Baby  
Where'd you get those eyes  
And that dark complexion  
I idolize

Honolulu Baby  
Where'd you get that style  
And those pretty red lips  
And that sunny smile

'Neath palm trees swaying  
At Waikiki  
Honolulu baby  
You're the one for me

From "Honolulu Baby" Original Music from  
the Laurel and Hardy Film "Sons of the  
Desert" (1933)  
William Axt, George M. Cohan, Marvin  
Hatley, Paul Marquardt, O'Donnell-Heath,  
Leroy Shield

This particular section focuses in how representations of the Native Hawaiian "houseless" population symbolize Native dispossession. As the above lyrics of a popular Keola and Kapono Beamer song from the 1970s emphasizes, the image of the

dispossessed Native Hawaiian has become woven into the very fabric of local stereotypes about this indigenous group. Hawaiian dispossession, in this case on the Wai`anae Coast, is the intersection between people who have been forced from their physical space (land) and ideological space (discourse). This analysis illustrates how media representations of the “houseless” population on the Wai`anae Coast reinforces disengagement and a negative public perception of this population.

### Public Perception

No one has ever doubted the power of the media. Scholar Todd Gitlin revealed in 1980: “the mass media have become core systems for the distribution of ideology.” Gitlin continues: “the mass media produce fields of definition and association, symbol and rhetoric, through which ideology becomes manifest and concrete.”<sup>35</sup> To this end, local media, primarily in the form of local news outlets, have controlled the ways in which residents of Hawai`i view Native Hawaiians, particularly the homeless population on the Wai`anae Coast.

Media generates and reinforces imperial-based stereotypes about Native Hawaiians that serve only two primary purposes: maintenance of hegemonic structures and disabling community dissent. This seems to have always been the case for the press in Hawai`i. Queen Lili`uokalani wrote in *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen*:

And just here let me say that I have felt much perplexity over the attitude of the American press, that great vehicle of information for the people, in respect of Hawaiian affairs. Shakespeare has said it is excellent to have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous to use it like a giant. It is not merely that, with few exceptions, the press has seemed to favor the extinction of Hawaiian sovereignty, but that it has often treated me with coarse allusions and flippancy, and almost uniformly has commented upon me adversely, of has declined to publish letters from myself and friends conveying correct information upon matters which other

correspondents had, either willfully or through being deceived, misrepresented. Perhaps in many cases *libellous* matter was involved. Possibly the press was not conscious of how cruelly it was exerting its strength, and will try, I now trust, to repair the injury.<sup>36</sup>

No such effort occurred. As shown through Lili`uokalani's expressed frustrations, the press not only favored non-Hawaiians, but it hindered dissent by failing to publish letters from those who supported Hawaiians. These functions fall directly in-line with Gitlin's incantation of Gramsci, in which Gitlin explains: "hegemony operat[es] through a complex web of social activities and institutional procedures. Hegemony is done by the dominant and collaborated in by the dominated."<sup>37</sup> Further, the media operates to control dissent, generally through the control of ideology and communication resources. These purposes serve a higher cause: colonization.

Colonization is about money. Colonizers do not just colonize for the thrill of it; they colonize because colonization allows a finite number of individuals to become extremely wealthy. So where the introduction discussed how Hawai`i *became* colonized, this chapter begins to reveal how Hawai`i *stays* colonized. For the continued colonization of Hawai`i (or any colonized population) requires two elements: 1) the maintenance of existing power structures; 2) oppression of resistance efforts. The local media works relentlessly towards these goals.

Any colonizing group needs to stay in power and doing so requires a concerted effort to make sure that no one else ever gets powerful enough to strip them of their power. As White notes: "It seems clear that the colonial encounter challenged local forms of meaning and power to a degree never experienced before" (White 3). Therefore, an analysis of how meaning and power interact within this local colony is necessary to any conversation on the continued subjugation of the Hawaiian people. The local

colonial encounter would have a particularly profound impact on Native understandings of illness, death and religion. Beginning here, understanding “the epidemic” of homelessness becomes much easier.

No one has ever doubted the power of the media. Todd Gitlin noted in 1980: “the mass media have become core systems for the distribution of ideology.” Gitlin continued: “the mass media produce fields of definition and association, symbol and rhetoric, through which ideology becomes manifest and concrete.”<sup>38</sup> To this end, local media, primarily in the form of local news outlets, controlled the ways in which residents of Hawai`i view Native Hawaiians. Native Hawaiians therefore continue to suffer at the hands of a mass media machine that stereotypes them in a fashion that perpetuates them as “happy Natives” and keeps them subjugated and oppressed.

Media generates and reinforces imperial-based stereotypes about Native Hawaiians that serve only two primary purposes: maintenance of hegemonic structures and disabling community dissent. These functions are particularly important in a colonized society like Hawai`i. These functions fall directly in-line with Gitlin’s incantation of Gramsci, in which Gitlin explains: “hegemony operat[es] through a complex web of social activities and institutional procedures. Hegemony is done by the dominant and collaborated in by the dominated.”<sup>39</sup> Further, the media operates to control dissent, generally through the control of ideology and communication resources. These purposes serve a higher cause: colonization.

### Myth and Media

Myth and folklore play a unique role in Hawai`i. We have been defined and destroyed by myth, particularly myths of spirituality. Native identity (used here as

identity created by the Native people to identify themselves) has been governed by myth for the majority of our history. Beginning with the kumulipo, the creation chant, Native people have turned to myth to understand our history and culture.

Yet, after contact, the role of myth changed drastically, perhaps not among the kanaka themselves, but certainly as a device used by haole for Native identification (the process by which non-Hawaiians created an image of the Native and asserted it onto the Native people). The process by which haole misappropriated the image of the Native relied largely on the haole monopoly of the English language and a western epistemology that favored written documentation over the Natives' oral traditions. Once haole writers gained control over Native identification through control of the discourse – they never let go. As Haunani Kay Trask notes: “the Hollywood, tourist poster image of my homeland as a racial paradise with happy Natives waiting to share their culture with everyone and anyone is a familiar global commodity.”<sup>40</sup>

This power of discourse has been written on at length. Therefore a full analysis of this literature need not be recounted here. More important than theories of discursive power are examples of how haole used their discursive power via mass media against the Native people, particularly in the culture of colonization. A dominant haole culture came to control media ideologies about the Native people – thus enabling the growing tourism industry of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In *Staging Tourism*, Jane Desmond wrote: “During the 1930s, Hawaiian cultural practices become increasingly commodified, and the tourist industry consolidates its reliance on live performance. Selected cultural practices which once circulated mainly in noncommercial social contexts now enter the case economy, marketed for outsiders. This commodification is aided by an emerging anthropological

discourse of culture which links notions of distinctive practices and products to specific population groups.”<sup>41</sup> Therefore, we see here, as Trask does, how media images of the Hawaiian are linked to the needs of a tourist industry that depends on a certain stereotypical image of the Native Hawaiians.

Yet, the stereotypes of the Hawaiians generated by mass media are more insidious than this. Couple the positions of Trask and Desmond with Elizabeth Buck’s analysis of Hawai`i’s political economy. Buck writes: “The colonial structure depended on coercion, rather than consent, for social stability. The dominant material practices of the islands were not grounded in commonly shared systems of religion, culture, or language but were controlled by an ideology of plantation capitalism and racism ascribed to be a small but powerful minority.”<sup>42</sup> Therefore, the stereotypes generated by the mass media about Hawaiians served not only an economic interest in which Natives served as “noble savage” lures to wealthy Americans, but it also acted to maintain an ideology of colonization within the islands. As noted, the continued colonization of the Hawaiian islands depends largely upon a lack of organized resistance. A divisive use of the mass media and the continuous regeneration of the image of the Native as either passive (as in the case of tourism) or irrational (as in the case of sovereignty) allow colonization to continue.

The damage of such paternalistic coverage amplifies in colonized and disenfranchised communities, because these communities’ demonstrated need for social support. Social support largely depends on public perception, therefore when the media skews the coverage of a particular group or issue a certain way – the public is largely influenced by this perception. When the public buys into the stereotypes created by mass

media, colonization persists in that subjugated people receive little or no support from the larger community. Jennifer Bowie explains: “For society’s out-groups – minorities, activists, and anyone else who stands outside the mainstream – the question of how they are portrayed by the media has become paramount. Society has become dependent upon the media to make sense of the variety of events and situations that occur in the world every day. The framework in which these events and situations are presented impacts the way society perceives them.”<sup>43</sup> The process of situating media coverage within a specific framework is commonly referred to as *framing*. Bowie explains: “individuals are able to determine and define what is going on around them through the use of frames. Communication researchers have adopted and contributed to the concept of framing by addressing how frames are used to shape the information that appears in the mass media as well as the ways in which these frames affect how audiences perceive what they read and see.”<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the public is not influenced by any of the “truth” of colonization of the subjugation of the Native Hawaiian people, rather they are influenced only by how the media frames this particular group.

One of the most divisive tools of framing is the stereotype. And if the stereotype that most hurts the Native and any effort to resist colonization. Stereotypes about the Native Hawaiian have existed for as long as westerners have been coming to Hawai`i. Bowie states: “Stereotypes tend to perpetuate an invalid set of assumed characteristics/generalizations of out-group members. They can inform the audience of a group’s socioeconomic status as well as personality traits.”<sup>45</sup> The stereotypes about Native Hawaiians are varied depending on the issue at hand. For the purposes of tourism, we are happy Natives, willing and eager to perform. Trask explains: “Above all, Hawai`i

is 'she,' the Western image of the Native 'female' in her magical allure. And if luck prevails, some of 'her' will rub off on you, the visitor."<sup>46</sup> In the arena of sovereignty, we are "angry, irrational Natives." Portrayed as lazy or criminal, the media can be relentlessly unforgiving in its effort to ensure the larger community never sympathizes with Hawai'i's indigenous people.

The media wields tremendous power in maintain the divide between Hawaiians and the rest of the community. Communications Professor David Domke noted: "Many have theorized that the press's selection and framing of language, news, opinion, and perceptions conveys and abets a social reality that legitimates the practices and ideas of the dominant social class... According to this view, certain ideologies embedded in media representations and frames are presented as common sense: that is, they are unchallenged, appearing as natural or "grounded in everyday reality," thereby encouraging their acceptance by audience members."<sup>47</sup> Therefore, the beliefs people have about Native Hawaiians are not even perceived as "stereotypes," but rather facts grounded in reality. This is the power of hegemony. Ideologies become so entrenched in our belief systems that most people never even think to question them.

#### Homelessness as "an Epidemic" and Other Modern Media Myths

In recent years, despite a natural geographic isolation of the region, the media has turned its lens on the "homeless epidemic" among the Native Hawaiian people. And while one might naturally consider such attention to be beneficial to a community in dire need of public support, the attention of mass media does not necessarily lead to improvements in the situation being discussed. For mass media often operates to maintain the status quo, instead of generating change. It has been written: "Most studies

of the mass media view them as either an agent of social change or an agent of social control.”<sup>48</sup> In the case of Hawai`i, mass media serves only to reinforce an oppressive discourse about Native Hawaiians originally created by members of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century’s haole oligarchy. Viswanath and Demers state: “the media as an agent of social control is often traced to the writings of Karl Marx, who drew attention to the role of ideology in supporting the interests, goals and actions of the ‘ruling class.’ Ideology prevented the emergence of class consciousness, which was seen as a necessary condition for revolution.”<sup>49</sup> This analysis of the visual culture generated by the local print media illustrate emphasize this malignant role. This particular treatment also leans towards the views put forth by the Frankfurt School, which sees the media as oppressive. Todd Gitlin, in his seminal text, *The Whole World is Watching*, looked at the power of media, particularly visual media, in controlling the perception the public had about a certain group.

The depiction of homelessness as an “epidemic” is particularly interesting, especially considering the significant role of epidemics in Hawai`i’s colonial history. Epidemics occupy a notably significant role in Hawai`i because of the devastating impact epidemics had on the population, nearly wiping out the entire Native population between the arrival of foreigners in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Yet, epidemics would also occupy a very special place in Hawaiian ideology, particularly after the arrival of the missionaries and Christianity.

Myth and folklore play a unique role in Hawai`i. We have been defined and destroyed by myth, particularly myths of spirituality. Native identity (used here as identity created by the Native people to identify themselves) has been governed by myth

for the majority of our history. Beginning with the kumulipo, the creation chant, Native people have turned to myth to understand our history and culture.

Yet, after contact, the role of myth changed drastically, perhaps not among the kanaka themselves, but certainly as a device used by haole for Native identification (the process by which non-Hawaiians created an image of the Native and asserted it onto the Native people). The process by which haole misappropriated the image of the Native relied largely on the haole monopoly of the English language and a western epistemology that favored written documentation over the Natives' oral traditions. Once haole writers gained control over Native identification through control of the discourse – they never let go.

This power of discourse has been written on at length. Therefore a full analysis of this literature need not be recounted here. More important than theories of discursive power are examples of how haole used their discursive power against the Native people.

This discursive power, particularly during a time of race-selective and devastating plagues, allowed to haole to convince the Native people that the epidemics that befell them were the work of an angry God. The diseases came with the haole. Much is known now, but *then* both Native and non-Native alike believed that these were the work of a divine power. The impact of plagues and religions on Hawai'i is a book yet to be written, yet this much is vital to this project: haole coupled every epidemic that fell upon the Native people with rhetoric insisting that the Native people brought catastrophe upon themselves. Natives were responsible for and deserved the tragedies that befell them.

It is essential to emphasize this racist and incorrect dialogue because it continues today. In 2003, the *Honolulu Advertiser* published an article entitled “Homelessness

reaches ‘critical mass’ in Wai`anae,” included this rhetoric of “epidemic.” And like the epidemics of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, implications of the Natives’ role in their own tragedy accompany discussions of the problem. There is no indication that the problems Hawaiians face today are in anyway related to (or the direct result of) the continued colonization of the Native people.

The damage of such paternalistic coverage amplifies in colonized and disenfranchised communities, because these communities’ demonstrated need for social support. Social support largely depends on public perception, therefore when the media skews the coverage of a particular group or issue a certain way – the public is largely influenced by this perception. Jennifer Bowie explains: “For society’s out-groups – minorities, activists, and anyone else who stands outside the mainstream – the question of how they are portrayed by the media has become paramount. Society has become dependent upon the media to make sense of the variety of events and situations that occur in the world every day. The framework in which these events and situations are presented impacts the way society perceives them.”<sup>50</sup> The process of situating media coverage within a specific framework is commonly referred to as *framing*. Bowie explains: “individuals are able to determine and define what is going on around them through the use of frames. Communication researchers have adopted and contributed to the concept of framing by addressing how frames are used to shape the information that appears in the mass media as well as the ways in which these frames affect how audiences perceive what they read and see.”<sup>51</sup> Yet, framing can also be used to marginalize groups, as is the case with the Native Hawaiian homeless population on the Wai`anae Coast.

One of the most divisive tools of framing is the stereotype. Bowie states: “Stereotypes tend to perpetuate an invalid set of assumed characteristics/generalizations of out-group members. They can inform the audience of a group’s socioeconomic status as well as personality traits.”<sup>52</sup> The case of the Native Hawaiian homeless population in Waianae becomes a fascinating case study because it includes not only the force of colonialism and racism but discrimination against the poor. In this regard, this population faces the perfect storm of discrimination: they are poor, indigenous minorities. The media claims to simply document life as it happens. This is not the case. The article opened:

It resembles something out of John Steinbeck’s 1939 novel of the Depression, “The Grapes of Wrath” — a hard dirt shanty town consisting of a couple of dozen flimsy dwellings fashioned from wooden pallets and broken-down vehicles. Plastic tarps strung between them provide meager protection from the elements.

With no shade, the makeshift homes become dusty sweatboxes by day. When rain roared through last week, tarpaulins gave way and shelters turned to mudholes.

For eight weeks, nearby residents have stared nervously at this throwback to a 1930s “Hooverville” that’s sprouted off Farrington Highway next to the Wai’anae Boat Harbor.<sup>53</sup>

The image above appears to support the sentiments expressed in this article. Yet, they were made to do so.

We see similar treatment of Native Hawaiian subjects in the visual images generated by political cartoons at the height of American imperialism. In these images, we see how Native Hawaiians are widely characterized as insolent children, even lazy. While clearly a stretch from the images placed in print media today, we nonetheless see a continuation of dispossession. Just as in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Native Hawaiians today continue to lack the agency to control how we are represented to the public at large. In

this regard, the distance between the racist political cartoons of the overthrow era and the dehumanizing photographs being used to document the Native Hawaiian “houseless” population are not nearly as far apart as one may believe.

The media wields tremendous power in maintain the divide between Hawaiians and the rest of the community. Communications Professor David Domke has noted:

Many have theorized that the press’s selection and framing of language, news, opinion, and perceptions conveys and abets a social reality that legitimates the practices and ideas of the dominant social class... According to this view, certain ideologies embedded in media representations and frames are presented as common sense: that is, they are unchallenged, appearing as natural or “grounded in everyday reality,” thereby encouraging their acceptance by audience members.<sup>54</sup>

The visual images generated by the local print media support this view. It seems that photographers have gone out of their way to create visual representations that appear “natural,” even if a considerable amount of manipulation and staging are required to create this perception. The way we “see” Native Hawaiians (as a general public) has changed little in the last 150 years. Natives are still categorically seen as lazy, undeserving, and angry. It was the racist rhetoric that enabled the dispossession of Natives in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and it has been used continuously ever since to keep Hawaiians displaced.

So why do the homeless participate? Many genuinely believe that exposure through the media may generate public support or empathy from state officials. Such a belief is not unwarranted. Scholars have noted that there exists “a subsystem in which the media serve as an intermediary mechanism between the governors and the governed.”<sup>55</sup> Goldenberg explains:

Unless a group has direct access to the government officials dealing with its interest, group members interested in influencing those officials must attempt to influence them indirectly. The media are often involved in indirect attempts to influence policy. They are key access points to public officials for all groups. Through the media, issues are frequently brought to the attention of the public and of government officials. News coverage is used by groups in gaining status and visibility, in expanding the scope of conflict, in reinforcing attitudes, in activating third parties on their behalf, and in gaining a hearing in the political process.<sup>56</sup>

Therefore, the homeless are largely reliant on the media. They need to media to make their pleas for support to the general public. Yet, until Native Hawaiians have more control over the images and rhetoric being disseminated by the press, the houseless are more likely to suffer as the hands of the media than find support there.



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A competing discourse would bring to light the interrelatedness of Native issues. What ecofeminism gives us is the ability to see how classism, racism, gender discrimination and land issues are all symptomatic one a single force: colonization. The American cultural stronghold over Hawai`i relies on two elements: the colonization of

people and the colonization of land. The dominant visual discourse in Hawai`i allows for this colonization.

The discourse disengages the “homeless” population from the surrounding environment. We cannot allow these issues and struggles to be separated. The media disvalues the environment just as it devalues Natives. We can no longer afford to tolerate either. In addition to respecting and incorporating the Native texts, we must always be diligent in our effort to create new texts that challenge the dominant discourses present in today’s society. Only through actively challenging dominant ideologies through our own texts and our Native ideologies can we begin to reclaim the intellectual landscapes still occupied by foreign voices.

On August 20, 1960, revolutionary leader Ernesto Che Guevara made the following statement to a group of Cuban medical students:

We must then begin to erase our old concepts and come ever closer and ever more critically to the people. Not in the way we got closer before, because all of you will say: “No, I am a friend of the people. I enjoy talking with workers and peasants, and on Sundays I go to such and such a place to see such and such a thing.” Everybody has done that. But they have done it practising charity, and what we have to practise today is solidarity. We should not draw closer to the people to say: “Here we are. We come to give you the charity of our presence, to teach you with our science, to demonstrate your errors, your lack of refinement, your lack of elementary knowledge.” We should go with an investigative seal and with a humble spirit, to learn from the great source of wisdom that is the people.<sup>57</sup>

Che’s words have been inspiring community leaders for forty-five years. Grassroots workers (more than state institutions and more than the academy) seem to fundamentally understand the importance of community and the people. These words reflect the spirit of the people who guided my journey. They remind me fondly of the sentiments of Aunty Puanani Burgess:

He Alo A He Alo

(Face to Face)

He alo a he alo,  
(Face to face)

That's how you learn about what makes us weep.

He alo a he alo,  
(Face to face)

That's how you learn about what makes us bleed.

He alo a he alo,  
(Face to face)

That's how you learn about what makes us feel.  
what makes us work.  
what makes us sing.  
what makes us bitter.  
what makes us fight.  
what makes us laugh.  
what makes us stand against the wind.  
what makes us sit in the flow of power.  
what makes us, us.

Not from a distance.  
Not from miles away  
Not from a book  
Not from an article you read  
Not from the newspaper  
Not from what somebody told you  
Not from a "reliable source"  
Not from what you think  
Not from a cliff  
Not from a cave  
Not from your reality  
Not from your darkness

But,

He alo a he alo  
(Face to face)

Or,

Else,

Pa`a ka waha (Shut tight, your mouth)

`A`ohe o kahi nana o luna o ka pali;

iho mai a lalo nei;

`ike i ke au nui ke au iki;

He alo a he alo.

(The top of the cliff isn't the place to look at us;  
come down here and learn of the big and little current,  
face to face.)

And come and help us dig, the lo`i, deep.<sup>58</sup>

Gitlin concludes *The Whole World is Watching* with a warning:

As the mass media have suffused social life, they have become crucial fields for the definition of social meaning – partially contested zones in which the hegemonic ideology meets its partial challenges and then adapts. The cultural industries, including the news organizations, produce self-contradictory artifacts, balancing here, absorbing there, framing and excluding and disparaging, working in complicated ways to manage and contain cultural resistance, to turn it to use as commodity and to tame and isolate intractable movements and ideas. In the process, they may actually magnify and hasten manageable forms of political change. One thing seems certain: the society will go on helplessly manufacturing, and deforming, the opposition it deserves; yet as long as the political economy continues to deliver what the majority define as the essential goods, the legitimacy crisis of the system as a whole will likely remain within bounds. A resistible hegemony is resisted because it cannot satisfy human needs; it cannot be taken entirely for granted; it is hegemony in process.<sup>59</sup>

Individuals have a right to create meaning for themselves; to be more than subjects and Others. As long as media and meaning-making go uncontested, we are no more than the stereotypes generated by the media. Smith illustrated how those stereotypes become internalized. This then begs one to wonder if the conflicts and rivalries that exist within subjugated groups are legitimate conflicts or rather the products of internalized meanings created by the media. How often do we really stop to think about the messages the media bombards us with on a daily basis? Can we ever really know how they affect us? How do we know where the media constructed self ends and our “true” selves begin?

Freire makes an interesting comment on freedom and the importance of subjugated and oppressed people being willing to fight for their freedom. He writes: “The oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom. Freedom would require them to eject this image and replace it with autonomy and responsibility. Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly. Freedom is not an ideal located outside of man; nor is it an idea which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion.”<sup>60</sup> This is an interesting idea - that we are somehow incomplete as human beings until we begin to fight for our identity and for our own liberation. I imagine this would be an incredibly inspiring idea to the colonized indigenous people throughout the world, like the Native Hawaiians, who continue to struggle on the many fronts on which colonization occurs for liberation.

Freedom from colonization requires contestation of the stereotypes of Native Hawaiian identity is only one front. The contestation of visual discourses and visual media is only one site of this contestation. Yet, it is a site with the potential to empower people at the grassroots level. It allows subordinated people to share their visions of their world. It allows them to empower their efforts to define their places as sacred. To show the world that colonization is not about being lazy or angry, but that colonization permeates the lives of Native Hawaiians in vicious and violent ways on a daily basis. That our lands are important and beautiful. The violence of ecocolonization remains invisible to the outside world. This too enables stereotypes to persist.

Ho`oponopono

The Native Hawaiian people today are not pono. We have not been for over 200 years. We did not cause this hihia. So we alone cannot resolve it. We must find a way to ho`oponopono with the foreign forces that cripple us.

Hawaiians understand that being pono is critical to our well-being. As the Wai`anae Diet explains: “Loss of pono, or loss of balance, was believed to be the cause of all illness. In terms of physical health, loss of pono can be caused by eating the wrong foods. In ancient Hawai`i, the ahupua`a system helped maintain this balance, as this system of land division provided a manner in which people could have access to foods from the highlands down to the sea. In this way, the people were assured of having a balanced diet of a variety of foods.”<sup>61</sup> And while this passage focuses on food, the reality of the situation demands attention to the forces that make it so difficult for the people of Wai`anae to feed themselves. These are issues of water, land rights, property prices and usage, healthy families capable of tending to agricultural parcels. We cannot discuss the restoration of the health of the Hawaiian people vacuously.

Public policy critically hinders the reversal of the trends of ecocolonization: poor health, land loss, poverty, violence. Policies and laws serve as a means of institutionalizing ecocolonization and the hegemonic mindsets that alienate Hawaiians and struggles from the general population. The reality is that these policies, ones that encourage destruction of natural resources and rampant industrialization and development hurt everyone. We, kama`āina and hoa`āina, share this `āina. We must come together. We must come together to resolve our differences or the pains of Wai`anae will be the future of all these islands and all their people.

I am a true believer. Much of this work comes from my na`au. My na`au holds the only truths I know to be true. All other things are fallible. I believe in my home. I believe in my people. I believe in the capacity of my community to enlighten and inspire anyone. I believe in my Akua, my `aumākua, my kūpuna. I believe they guide my hand as I write this. I believe in my people can survive this and thrive. I believe the Hawai`i my mo`opuna live in will be better than the one that exists today. I believe we all ho`i hou iā Papahānaumoku.

I believe.

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Kawena Pukui, “1920,” *‘Ōlelo No ‘eau: Hawaiian Proverbs & Poetical Sayings*, (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1983), 206.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Farmer, *Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 13.

<sup>3</sup> Jo Ann ‘Umilani Tsark, “Native Hawaiian Health Data: Contours of a Hidden Holocaust, Islands in Captivity,” *Islands in Captivity*, edited by Ward Churchill and Sharon H. Venne (Cambridge: South End Press, 2004), 273-276.

<sup>4</sup> Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities, The National Center for Disease Control, “Highlights in Minority Health and Health Disparities, May 2006”

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Keawe‘aimoku Kaholokula, Stephen N. Haynes, Andrew Grandinetti, and Healani K. Chang, “Ethnic Differences in the Relationship between Depressive Symptoms and Health-Related Quality of Life in People with Type 2 Diabetes,” *Ethn Health*, 2006 February 11(1): 76.

<sup>6</sup> Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 31.

<sup>7</sup> Juliet McMullin, “Kāhea Ola: Revitalizing a Healthy Native Hawaiian Identity,” PhD Diss., University of California, Irvine, 1999, 13.

<sup>8</sup> Papa Ola Lōkahi, “Ka ‘Uhane Lōkahi: 1998 Native Hawaiian Health and Wellness Summit and Island ‘Aha Issues, Trends and General Recommendations.” (Honolulu: Papa Ola Lōkahi, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> Papa Ola Lōkahi, “Ka ‘Uhane Lōkahi: 1998 Native Hawaiian Health and Wellness Summit and Island ‘Aha Issues, Trends and General Recommendations.” (Honolulu: Papa Ola Lōkahi, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Mary Frances Mailelauli‘i Oneha, “Ka maui o ka ‘āina a he maui kānaka: an ethnographic study from a Hawaiian sense of place,” *Pacific Health Dialog: Journal of Community Health and Clinical Medicine for the Pacific*, E Ola Nā Kini: The Health of the Hawaiians, Vol. 8. No. 2, September 2001, 299.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 299-311.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> June Gutmanis, *Hawaiian Herbal Medicine: Kahuna Laau Lapaau*, (Honolulu: Island Heritage, 2006), 14.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 14-15.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 15

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 15

<sup>20</sup> Jocelyn Linnekin, *Sacred Queens and Women of Consequence: Rank, Gender and Colonialism in the Hawaiian Islands*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 13.

<sup>21</sup> Juliet McMullin, “Kāhea Ola: Revitalizing a Healthy Native Hawaiian Identity,” PhD Diss., University of California, Irvine, 1999.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Wai`anae Coast Culture and Arts Society, *Ka Po`e Kahiko o Wai`anae: Oral Histories of the Wai`anae Coast of O`ahu*, (Honolulu: Topgallant Publishing Co, 1986), 51-53.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Farmer, *Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 12.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> The Wai`anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center, Handout, Honolulu: WCCHC.

<sup>27</sup> Paul Farmer, *Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 15.

<sup>28</sup> The Wai`anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center, The Makahiki Project, Honolulu: WCCHC.

<sup>29</sup> Sheila Beckham, Kekuni Blaisdell, and Terry Shintani, ed., *The Wai`anae Book of Hawaiian Health* (Wai`anae: Wai`anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center, 1991).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Anne Perez Hattori, *Colonial Dis-Ease, US Navy Health Policies and the Chamorros of Guam, 1898-1941*, Pacific Islands Monograph Series 19 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 191.

<sup>34</sup> Juliet McMullin, "Kāhea Ola: Revitalizing a Healthy Native Hawaiian Identity," PhD Diss., University of California, Irvine, 1999, 14.

<sup>35</sup> Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Berkeley: U of California P, 2003, 2.

<sup>36</sup> Queen Lili'uokalani, *Hawai'i's Story by Hawaii's Queen* (Honolulu: Tuttle Publishing, 1991), 41.

<sup>37</sup> Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Berkeley: U of California P, 2003, 10.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>40</sup> Haunani Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), (Honolulu: UH Press, 1999), 18.

<sup>41</sup> Jane Desmond, *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World*, (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1999), 99.

<sup>42</sup> Elizabeth Buck, *Paradise Remade: The Politics of Culture and History in Hawai'i*, (Philadelphia: Temple U P, 1993), 165.

<sup>43</sup> Jennifer Bowie, "Out of Their Hands: Framing and its Impact on New York Times and Television Coverage of Indians and Indian Activism, 1968-1979." Unpublished paper presented at AEJMC National Convention, August 1999, 1.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>46</sup> Haunani Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), (Honolulu: UH Press, 1999), 136-137.

<sup>47</sup> David Domke, "Journalists, Framing, and Discourse About Race Relations," *Journalism and Mass Comm. Monographs*, 164, Dec. 1997, 3.

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<sup>48</sup> K. Viswanath and David Demers, "Mass Media from a Macrosocial Perspective," in *Mass Media, Social Control and Social Change*, Iowa State University Press: 1999, 3.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>50</sup> Jennifer Bowie, "Out of Their Hands: Framing and its Impact on New York Times and Television Coverage of Indians and Indian Activism, 1968-1979." Unpublished paper presented at AEJMC National Convention, August 1999, 1.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>53</sup> Will Hoover, "Shanty town may serve as motivation for change," *Honolulu Advertiser*, November 14, 2004.

<sup>54</sup> David Domke, "Journalist, Framing and Discourse About Race Relations," *Journalism and Mass Communications. Monographs*, 164, Dec. 1997, 3.

<sup>55</sup> Edie N. Goldenberg, "Introduction" and "Conclusions," in *Making the Papers*. Lexington Books, 1975, 1.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>57</sup> Che Guevara, Appendix, "Speech to Medical Students: a child of my environment," in *the Motorcycle Diaries: Notes on a Latin American Journey*, Che Guevara, Melbourne, Ocean Press, 2003.

<sup>58</sup> The `Opelu Project `Ohana, *From Then to Now: A Manual for Doing Things Hawaiian Style*, Honolulu: Ka`ala Farm, Inc. 1996.

<sup>59</sup> Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Berkeley: U of California P, 2003), 292.

<sup>60</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Ed. (New York: Continuum, 2003), 47.

<sup>61</sup> The Wai`anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center, *The Wai`anae Book of Hawaiian Health: The Wai`anae Diet Program Manual*, Honolulu: WCCHC, 1991

**Conclusion:**  
**Ho`i Hou iā Papahānaumoku**

The valley is a woman lying on her back, legs spread wide, her geography wet by constant rain. Waterfalls wash the days and nights of winter storms into the river that empties into the froth of the sea.

In the valley, the rain is a gossamer cloth, a tempest of water and leaves. The rain is southerly with strange foreboding. The rain is northerly with cool rime.

The rain glistens on maiden fern, the wind rustling the laua`e, the palapalai touching her there where it is always wet and seamy.

The valley is a woman with the features of a face, a woman whose eyes watch the procession of the celestial sphere; a woman with woodland arms outstretched and vulnerable, a woman with shadowy breasts of `a`ali`i and hāpu`u, lobelias and lichens; a woman, a womb, impregnated earth.

O body.

Lois Ann Yamanaka  
*Behold the Many* (2006)

The greatest struggle for Native academics is the attempt to put the knowledges that arise from our indigenous experiences and ancestral senses in an academically acceptable framework. He Hawai`i au. I am Hawai`i. Therefore, my most valuable information does not come from an archive or a book, but from *being Hawai`i*. Understanding ecocolonization as a result grows from a community discourse. The conversations we have as a Hawaiian community. The things we know. The things we experience. Things that are largely intangible. They are the conclusions we have drawn from the stories that compose our lives, our family's lives, our kūpuna's lives: our history. Woven intricately into this tale are places and customs that are as much the

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fibers of our being as our minds and our bodies. Papahānaumoku is part of our kino; nohona Hawai'i is part of our mana`o. We cannot be separated from them. To colonized and abuse one is to colonize and abuse the other.

A couple months ago I was asked to come and speak at a community meeting in Nanakuli about the PVT Landfill. I wrote about the landfill and community in my master's thesis. The concern was that the neighboring landfill in the Waimanalo Gulch would be shut down and that the PVT landfill was the only active landfill capable of immediately receiving the solid waste from throughout the County, which included the entire island of O`ahu.

The meeting was held at an old church in Nānākuli; it was not easy to find. You had to turn left by 7-11 on a different street and travel down a series of backroads to find the church, quietly tucked away in a quaint but densely populated neighborhood. I arrived in the early evening and parked my car down the street, immediately noticing the large, dark mountain slope of property behind the church. As I approached the church, I realized that the landfill ran adjacent to the church and was only separated from it by a thin, worn black tarp. There were holes where the tarp had torn. Looking through them, there was not much to see but shadowy darkness.

I had not eaten all day, so I parked myself near a plate of Famous Amos cookies and listened as various community people socialized. They spoke with obvious frustration, as this was yet another in a series of countless meetings, hearings and informational briefings they had taken the time to attend. They spoke with great concern about the closing of the Waimanalo Gulch landfill, as many had been in Nānākuli for multiple generations, long before there was ever a construction dump in their backyards.

Ho`i Hou iā Papahānaumoku

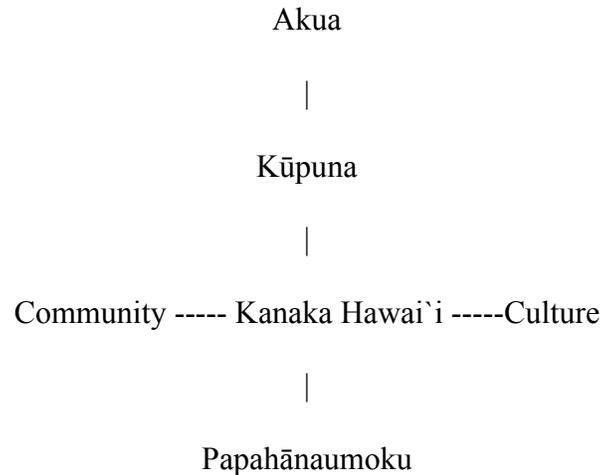
None wanted to see their backyards become the primary solid waste dump for the entire island.

I stood there and gave them information about causation and environmental litigation. I told them how my own husband, who grew up only 20 minutes away from that church, suspiciously contracted cancer at age 28. From that, resident after resident stood up and told tales of their own cancers, tumors and illnesses. Many who stood were terminally ill - inexplicably terminally ill. And as I tried to respond, I felt tremendous sadness and helplessness, but more importantly I felt sick. I literally felt sick.

I have the great disfortune of being allergic to mold and other aerial irritants. I need to stay indoors on days when the vog from the volcano on Moku o Keawe turns the air of Mānoa into an eerie haze. Should I venture outside for too long, I am likely to end up on steroids to keep my throat from swelling shut. Within an hour of that meeting in Nānākuli, I could barely breathe. I recognized all the signs of my exposure to a high level of allergens: I was congested; my throat itched and felt inflamed; I had difficulty swallowing. I had not even thought to bring my allergy medication as it was an otherwise clear and breezy day and my allergies had not bothered me for weeks. Yet, I stood there holding a report from the State which explained how the landfill had no impacts upon the community. I stood there in the conflict zone between science and knowledge. I surely would have been unable to prove that my symptoms were caused by the landfill; I nonetheless knew they were. We regard science with an infallibility that results in the displacement of what our senses, both in the present and the ancestral meaning, tell us. As a result, Native knowledges become displaced, both within the discourse and within the individual.

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We encourage individuals to trust their instincts but fail to create space in which that can occur. For above all else, Native Hawaiians suffer from a lack of trust: a lack of trust in themselves; a lack of trust in their community; a lack of trust in their culture; a lack of trust in their kūpuna; a lack of trust in Papahānaumoku.



I know this: being pono for me involves a series of beliefs and practices: a belief in Akua, the gods; respect for your kūpuna, both present and past; it demands respect for yourself; it requires involvement in the Hawaiian community; practicing the customs of the culture; relationship to the land. When exercising our identity we mālama each of these elements. To mālama the different aspects of our identity is critical, because to mālama something you must more than simply believe in it, you must care for it. When we care for something we are bound to it by a sense of reciprocity and interconnectedness.

*Mālama Akua.* We must have an active relationship with the gods, whichever god(s) we believe in, Hawaiian or not. Belief in a benevolent god(s) gives us faith in a

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higher power and respect that there are things greater than ourselves. I believe that adhering to the traditional beliefs of Hawaiian polytheistic spiritual practices leads to a stronger relationship with the land than belief in Judeo-Christian religious practices, but I found that the two are not mutually exclusive. Rather, it seems many Hawaiians developed spiritual beliefs that allow for self-identification as “Christians” while still demonstrating practices that suggest a continued belief or at least respect for traditional spiritual ideologies. This would be an interesting area for further study.

*Mālama Kūpuna.* Embedded within the notion of mālama kūpuna are two separate practices: the caring for family and the caring for our identity. Continued involvement with kūpuna is critical for any Hawaiian. These are truly reciprocal relationships, of which the younger members are always the greater benefactors. Kūpuna continuously teach us. They are our greatest resources of our Hawaiian identity and greatest social controls. They are the greatest teachers we have. For any Hawaiian, the approval of our kūpuna is very important. They provide us with feedback, often only through non-verbal communication (i.e., certain looks, behaviors), that let us know if we are pololei, if we are correct in our behavior and moving forward in a pono way. I will give an example.

During the process of naming the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, a committee of approximately twenty of us agreed as to a process by which revered kūpuna would be asked to provide names. The group would select a name from among those put forward by the kūpuna, each of whom had a close relationship to the islands through mo`oku`āuhau (genealogy) or hana (work or practice). Two of the three kūpuna asked agreed to participate and provide names, an honor to our group unto itself. We held a

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meeting for the kūpuna to share the names with the group and provide their mana`o behind them. After this occurred and people from the group were sharing their mana`o or thoughts on the names provided, an individual entered into the room, noticeably and considerably late, and put forward a name.

This person had not been asked to provide a name, nor had this individual been at the previous meeting when the process was selected. In my opinion, this behavior was `a`ole pono. It was disrespectful to the group and extremely disrespectful to the kūpuna who had provided names. I sat there steaming - trying to decide what to do - but then the kūpuna did the most amazing thing. At almost exactly the same, although they were across the room from each other, both kūpuna simply got up, politely said they had other places to get to, and left. Neither had to say anything, their behavior spoke volumes about their disapproval.

Those of us who understood just how severe a reprimand that was to that individual were very concerned and extremely embarrassed for the person who had intruded into the process, even if that person was oblivious to her own behavior. We would eventually select a name given to one of the kūpuna (in a dream) who in turn gave it to us: Papahānaumokuākea, a celebration of the union between Papahānaumoku and Wākea and a recognition of the unification of all the Hawaiian Islands, from Maunakea (or Mauna a Wākea) where Papa and Wākea first came together, up to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

The name now serves as a constant reminder of the sacred nature of those islands. It also serves to remind us that Papa and Wākea are also our kūpuna. Every Hawaiian can trace their genealogy back to them, as Kumu Cy Bridges did recently at the

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rededication of Waimea Valley on O`ahu. He literally traced and chanted his genealogy from Papa and Wākea to himself. He Hawai`i kākou; we are Hawai`i.

The other element of mālama kūpuna relates to the `olelo nō`eau “Ola Ka Inoa,” the name lives. A value taught to me by Uncle Earl Kawa`a, Ola Ka Inoa reminds us that we are a reflection of our family. The kūpuna teach us our name is the first gift from our family. Therefore, we must always act honorably as to not shame that name or our family. We must constantly care for the kuleana we carry as a result of our birth heritage. We must always remain mindful of who our kūpuna were and remember that they are always with us. My beloved Aunty Nickie Hines always reminds me that my kūpuna are always with me, watching me, caring for me. It is both an overwhelming and empowering realization that we are carrying the mana of all of our ancestors who came before us. In return, we care for them by bringing pride and honor to the name and legacy they gave us.

When we mālama kūpuna, we also intrinsically mālama keiki. When we are being honorable and faithful to the traditions of our kūpuna, we create a loving and powerful familial environment in which our children learn to mālama kūpuna. Through this we naturally feed the Hawaiian lifecycle, where mana and `ike are constantly transforming, passing into different forms and into succeeding generations.

*Mālama Kino.* This is caring for ourselves; caring for our bodies; our kino. As shown in the previous chapter on Hawaiian health, ill health among Hawaiian presents a tremendous obstacle in the effort to maintain and restore Hawaiian control over natural resources. This impedes the Hawaiian community’s ability to combat political oppression. Therefore, we have an obligation to tend to our individual physical health.

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*Mālama Hawai`i.* This is caring for Hawai`i and caring for Hawaiians. By reinforcing our notion of community, we are empowering our traditional culture. Caring for each other as Hawaiians means working in harmony to establish environments that allow for Hawaiians to prosper. It means being steadfast in putting community before self. This includes commitments to our culture: `olelo Hawai`i, mea no`eau, mo`olelo.

*Mālama `Āina.* Care for the land. Caring for the land is a cultural practice. Stewardship lies at the very core of our identity as Hawaiians. Through caring for the land, we share stories about the land, learn the legends of our landscapes, see and feel our history. We learn the different properties of plants. We practice planting and cultivation techniques. We practice diversified agriculture. We practice aquaculture. We create biodiversity. We learn about, perpetuate, and pay homage to our gods. We participate in a healthy, sustainable lifestyle: farm locally, minimize waste, and use organic and biodegradable materials. It also provides opportunity to exercise and use our energy for productive purposes. Mālama `Āina is where the journey back to Papahānaumoku begins and ends.

As with all things Hawaiians, these values are also cyclical. They originate from above, mālama akua, pass through our ancestors, into ourselves, to our community, and down into the lepo (soil), where we again find akua: Papahānaumoku. But in the `āina we find not just Papa, in the `āina we find all our akua: Kane, Kanaloa, Hi`iaka, Kū. When we realize this, the act of mālama kino becomes very important, because we are bringing our akua into our kino.

Ecocolonization therefore becomes the act of disrupting these relationships and these practices. This disruption is what makes us `a`ole pono or unbalanced. It leads to

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social unrest, economic hardship, political disempowerment, and poor health. As with our practices, ecocolonization is primarily about a sacred relationship to our surrounding ecology. Decolonization begins with this sacred relationship. The land is the embodiment of our beliefs and our culture. It is the foundation of our native identity.

It is critical for the Hawaiian people to move from the preservation of their culture to the active practice of our culture. It is no longer enough to simply identify and recognize nohona Hawai`i; we must actively live nohona Hawai`i. Take the example of the Latin language. It is taught. It is used. It is studied. Yet, since it is not used in conversation, we consider it a dead language. The same principle holds true of cultural values; their true value comes from their practice.

I have witnessed the disconnect between the way institutions views the protection and preservation of a culture versus the way the community protects and preserves culture. Within the community, we as `ōpio are taught by kūpuna practices and behaviors, not simply ideas or concepts. Ma ka hana ka `ike. In doing one learns. Books teach us aloha, laulima, lokahi. Kupuna teach us actions: ho`omanawanui; pololei. We are not taught “Hawaiian values,” because proper values are intrinsic in proper behavior.

I am reminded again one of my role models, Aunty Loretta Ritte, who often gently reminds me: ho`omanawanui; pololei. So I will share a mo`olelo of an experience I had with the Ritte `ohana in Hālawa Valley on Moloka`i.

In spring of 2006, a series of devastating floods swept through the islands. In Hālawa Valley on the island of Moloka`i, a flood washed through the kahawai (stream), washing away the manowai (dam). For the `auwai system, irrigation system, in Hālawa still actively employed many traditional aspects, including a manowai that was not

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cemented so it would wash away in the event of a flood, saving the lo`i from flooding and destruction. Yet, the manowai was now in need of reconstruction, as the manowai diverts water from the kahawai into the po`owai at the head of the `auwai or irrigation system that took water to the lo`i kalo. Traditionally, there would have been enough residents in the valley, either in the kauhale system, extended family unit, or in the ahupua`a to help rebuild the manowai immediately after the flood. As such, depopulation, urbanization and other forces left the valley without the labor force needed to reconstruct the manowai. Thus, water was not flowing into the auwai and the lo`i was dry. The food supply was dying: the kalo was wilting and turning yellow from the lack of water in the lo`i.

I happened to be on Moloka`i a couple days later. A group of middle school children were visiting from O`ahu as well. Responding to a request for assistance from residents in the valley, Uncle Walter, as usual, pulled a group together to go help in Hālawa. I was among the people in that group.

Hanohano Naehu, Kalaniua Ritte and I drove one of a number of pick-up trucks full of students into the valley. The students were typical middle school children: full of energy and excitement, expressing particular excitement over the promised trip to the beach after. We got to the end of the road, near the beach entrance. We walked into the valley. As every gets ready to oli kāhea, Hanohano barks at me: “Back of the line, Honolulu Hawaiian.” I quietly pad to the back of the crowd. After awaiting residents and friends oli komo and allow us into the valley, it is explained that we are to help rebuild the manowai and restore the water to the lo`i. Hano, Ua and I go in first. We have to remove all the rocks and other debris from the po`owai and `auwai. The kids

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come in next to start rebuilding the wall. I remember that everyone is loud and energetic at first, not yet appreciating how labor-intensive the work is. The rocks blocking the `auwai are fairly large and heavy. Within about a half hour, my arms and back are aching. But no one else is slowing down or stopped, so neither do I, but we are all much quieter. We get the `auwai and po`owai cleared. The manowai get bigger and starts to hold the water back. We are working in chest deep water by then. Diving down to find rocks. Swimming them up and down the kahawai. We run out of rocks in the immediate vicinity and a line of people naturally forms to bring down more rocks from upstream. There is very little talking. Somehow we all just know what to do.

Nobody stopped to give these students a “lesson” on Hawaiian values. No one stopped to explain we needed to think about “laulima” or “lokahi.” The mākua just stepped forward to do it. The `ōpio just fell in line. Behaviors were observed and mimicked over the course of completing this task together. Behaviors were learned and embraced by the students. Intrinsic in those behaviors were many Hawaiian values and principles, but no one stopped to point that out or explain them. It was not necessary. All anyone needed was to be put back on the land; ua ho`i hou iā Papahānaumoku. Returned to Papahānaumoku.

The most amazing part of the day occurred after we finished restoring the dam and reopened the `auwai. Uncle Walter told the kids they were pau, and they could go to the beach now. For all the excitement they expressed on the way there about the beach, not one went. Not one. They all stayed to watch the water return to the lo`i. Some even ran down the `auwai with the water. They sat around the banks of the lo`i just watching the water flow into the patches. Their faces beamed with pride. I occasionally run into

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people from that day; we always discuss what an amazing experience it was. How it stayed with us. Changed us.

The problems that Hawaiians face today will only begin to find resolution when Hawaiians take it upon themselves to live as Hawaiians. We must restore our culture and community from within. If we are to restore pono (physiologically, socially, culturally, environmentally), we must restore nohona Hawai'i.

So what does anyone care? Why would anyone but Hawaiians care about any of this? It's because ecocolonization is everywhere. Wai`anae was not the only place affected by it. It's in Puna and Mānoa - everywhere in these islands. It's moved beyond these islands into the Pacific and Asia. It's in Africa and the Americas. It has taken the entire planet out of balance. Everyone is vested in looking hard at ecocolonization and undoing it. We have seen the ways in which Wai`anae is dealing with ecocolonization: primarily by protecting and restoring their pu`uhonua.

Wai`anae remains a pu`uhonua because the `ōiwi who reside there maintain it as such. This kuleana has sometimes been out of want and sometimes out of necessity, but kuleana does not involve itself so much with why we are given a particular kuleana only with an appreciation and acceptance of the kuleana we are given. This understanding of how Hawaiians understand the responsibilities of stewardship does not make the history of this kuleana irrelevant though. Instead, it should bring light to the tremendous strength required of these `ōiwi in fulfilling this particular kuleana. They have encountered and overcome obstacles. It is the people of Wai`anae who keep the home fire burning for the entire lāhui.

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These people have become my heroes. And I have learned that knowledge does not come from any book, any library or any university, but the relationships we build with other people. I am blessed beyond measure by kūpuna who gifted me with their time and their words. While those words may not appear here in quotations, I assure you of their presence. With great humility and admiration I thank Auntie Puanani Burgess, Auntie Ho`oipo DeCambra, Auntie Leandra Wai, Uncle William Ailā, Auntie Nickie Hines, Uncle Earl Kawa`a, Uncle Sparky Rodrigues, Kumu Momiala Kamahale, Kumu Snowbird Bento, Auntie Gege Kawelo and the Hawaiian Civic Club of Wai`anae, Auntie Terri Keko`olani, Uncle Eric Enos, the members of Mālama Mākua and the countless others whose time, generosity and words shaped me through this experience.

Indigenous people throughout the world embrace the knowledge and experiences given to us by our kūpuna. We know that real education occurs there. So I end this story with an explanation by Māori writer Patricia Grace:

There is a way the older people have of telling a story, a way where the beginning is not the beginning, the end is not the end. It starts from a centre and moves away from these in such a widening circles that you don't know how you will finally arrive at the point of understanding, which becomes itself another core, a new centre. You can only trust these tellers as they start you on a blindfold journey with a handful of words which they have seemingly clutched from nowhere: there was a hei pounamu, a green moth, a suitcase, a birdnosed man, Rebecca who was mother, a man who was a ghost, a woman good at making dresses, a teapot with a dent in its nose.

Or sometimes there is a story that has no words at all, a story that has been lived by a whole generation but that has never been worded. You see it sitting in the old ones, you see it in how they walk and move and breathe, you see it chiseled into their faces, you see it in their eyes. You see it gathering in them sometimes, see the beginning of it on their lips, then you see it swallowed and it's gone.<sup>1</sup>

There once lived two sisters, twin sisters...

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<sup>1</sup> Patricia Grace, *Baby No Eyes*, (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), 29.

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