

Making ‘Aha: Independent Hawaiian Pasts, Presents & Futures

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Abstract : We use Hawaiian methods of knowledge production to weave together contemporary and historical instances of Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) political resistance to U.S. imperialism and settler colonialism. Our departure point is the summer of 2014, when hundreds of Kānaka came forward to assert unbroken Hawaiian sovereignty and reject a U.S. Department of Interior (DOI) proposal to create a pathway for federal recognition of a reorganized Native Hawaiian governing entity. This essay situates testimonies from these hearings within a longer genealogy of Kanaka assertions of “ea” (sovereignty, life, breath) against the prolonged U.S. military occupation of Hawai‘i that began in 1898 and extends to the present.

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(Complete author biographies appear at the end of the essay.)

He wen
look up again
you know
only the eyes move kine
putting one more
strand of coconut fiber
on to the kaula
he make one
fast twist
and said
The Kaula of our people
is 2,000 years old
boy
some time ... good
some time ... bad
some time ... strong
some time ... sad
but most time
us guys
just like this rope
one by one
strand by strand
we become the memory of our people
and we still growing.

– ‘Īmaikalani Kalahahele, “Make Rope”¹

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doi:10.1162/DAED_a_00489

Kānaka Maoli, like the original nations of Turtle Island (an Indigenous name for North America), have faced forces of genocide at levels that can be characterized as apocalyptic. But still we rise. Our peoples continue to face (mis)representation as vestiges of a quickly fading and irrelevant past, but we know this is not our story. So often such discourses are tactics for expropriating Indigenous lands, waters, and creative capacities. In this essay, we focus instead on different stories. We aim to introduce readers to stories of Native Hawaiian future-making, drawing on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Kanaka Maoli archives, which are among the largest Indigenous-language archives in the Americas.

In a collection on North American Indigenous peoples, it is important to clarify that Native Hawaiians are not Native Americans. The category of “Hawaiian” signals both indigeneity and nationality. When we say we are Native Hawaiian, we mean that Kānaka Maoli are the autochthonous people of the archipelago known as Hawai‘i. Kānaka Maoli make up about one-fifth of the population in Hawai‘i at present, and about 40 percent of our people live outside of the islands. When we say Native Hawaiians are not Native Americans, we are therefore also referencing an ongoing struggle to (re)recognize Hawai‘i’s national sovereignty and contest U.S. claims to Hawaiian soil and waters.

Historically, “Hawaiian” is not only an ethnic or geographic identity, but a national one. By the late 1800s, the independent Hawaiian Kingdom government was recognized by all the major powers of the world, including the United States of America, which honored Hawaiian independence and entered into treaties and conventions with the Hawaiian government from 1826 to 1893. The Hawaiian Kingdom had its own national school system and boasted a literacy rate as high, if not higher, than all the major world powers of the time; it

also established over ninety legations and consulates in cities around the world. Hawai‘i’s national government exercised its authority over a multiethnic citizenry, including people from various backgrounds naturalized to Hawaiian citizenship and Kānaka Maoli, who composed a large majority of the archipelago’s population until well after the United States began its prolonged and ongoing occupation. A significant portion – though not all – of Native Hawaiian people today continue to assert that we are not American. In this essay, we discuss examples of independent Hawaiian futurities, as articulated by Kānaka Maoli of different eras.

Fururities are ways that groups imagine and produce knowledge about futures; thus futurities shape the horizons of possibility for specific futures. We see Indigenous futurities as practices of future-making that often disrupt the linearity of Western liberal-democratic understandings of temporality.² We foreground Kanaka Maoli enactments of relationalities of times and places that transcend settler temporalities and mappings, expressions that posit preferred Kanaka Maoli futures over U.S.-imperial ones.

The form of this essay aims to cultivate a Kanaka Maoli futurity that strengthens relations between Kānaka living, passed, and yet-to-come. The metaphor of making rope, or *‘aha*, aptly describes our method and objective. The Hawaiian word *‘aha* has numerous meanings: an assembly; a millipede; a needlefish; a design for garments; a ceremony for investing authority in a leader; and – most relevant to our essay – sennit rope that can be made from plant fibers, human hair, or animal intestines. *‘Aha* cord provided the material basis for countless functional elements of the complex society our ancestors developed in the Hawaiian Islands. Houses, canoes, tools, water containers, weapons, drums, burial goods, and symbols of chiefly rank: all of these and more depend-

ed on ‘aha. Anthropologist Scott Kekuewa Kikiloi discusses the ways that the ‘aha cord and ceremony were historically formalized in rituals with direct connections to natural cycles. Over time the ‘aha – as material object, metaphor, and prophesying practice – became a central means of legitimizing Hawaiian political leadership. Kikiloi explains that the ‘aha cord and ceremony “came to symbolize a historical record between the ancestors and their descendants,” such that political and spiritual power were not “accumulated within a single individual, but . . . continually accrued (or lost) over the span of generations.” Thus, the ‘aha ritual cycle supported self-determined Hawaiian political leadership that brought people together around common interests and that was “sanctioned by the ancestors in the afterlife.”³ The ‘Īmaikalani Kalahēle poem that opens this essay similarly implies that rope-making symbolizes the collective strength and survivance of Kānaka Maoli, and it is with such genealogical strands that we make our futures.

In September 2016, the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) under the Obama administration released its final rule setting out the procedures for establishing “a formal government-to-government relationship with the Native Hawaiian community,” within the confines of U.S. domestic law and subject to the plenary power of the U.S. Congress.⁴ Representatives of the state and federal governments lauded the rule as a historic step toward reconciliation. A relationship established under this rule, however, would be a fundamental break from history, as it would create a domestic-dependent quasi-sovereign nation out of a country previously recognized as independent. As the rule itself made clear, a new relationship “would have very different characteristics from the government-to-government relationship that formerly existed with the Kingdom of Hawai‘i.”⁵

As we discuss above, the Kingdom of Hawai‘i was a thriving sovereign country composed of a multiethnic citizenry in which aboriginal people were the majority. But in 1898, five years after militarily supporting an illegal coup by White sugar businessmen in what then-President Grover Cleveland later described as “an act of war,” the United States seized political control and roughly 1.8 million acres of Hawaiian national lands without the consent of the Hawaiian people. Since that time, not a single acre has been returned to Hawaiian sovereign control. The growing contemporary Hawaiian sovereignty and independence movement sees the ongoing occupation of Hawaiian land as a continuation of that original act of war.

There were no large-scale celebrations across the Hawaiian archipelago when the DOI released its 2016 rule, opening a doorway for federal recognition of a Native Hawaiian governing entity. This reaction might have seemed unusual compared to American Indian nations that have struggled for such recognition. As scholars of U.S. federal recognition have noted, since the United States established its current procedures for formal acknowledgment of Indian tribes in 1978, some tribes have invested decades of labor and millions of dollars into their petitions for federal recognition because they felt their peoples’ survival was dependent upon it.⁶ In contrast, the DOI’s final rule on Native Hawaiians was not the product of a long-fought, broad-based struggle by Kānaka Maoli for federal recognition; this recognition does not encompass the full sovereignty that many Native Hawaiians wish to reclaim. However, it must be said that some Native Hawaiian leaders with institutional power within the settler-state government have vigorously supported U.S. federal recognition.

In the summer of 2014, the Department of the Interior sent representatives to Hawai‘i to conduct public hearings on the pro-

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posed rule. It was the first time the U.S. government held any public hearings in Hawai'i on federal recognition in well over a decade. At the fifteen DOI-led sessions held on six islands that summer, Kānaka packed auditoriums and school cafeterias in standing-room-only crowds. Speakers were limited to just three minutes of testimony each, and voices poured out like rain on a thin metal rooftop, even though advance notice on the proposed rule-making had been issued only days earlier. A stunning majority of the oral testimonies at each consultation asserted Hawaiian independence. When the DOI responded a year later with its Notice of Proposed Rule-Making, the notice completely marginalized these Kanaka voices, failing even to list a count of the oral testimonies. In this essay, we pull out a few of these voices and intertwine them with those of Kānaka from earlier times who expressed similar commitments to Hawaiian nationhood and visions for independent futures.

I'm really confused about why you're here in the first place, as I'm sure a lot of our people are. If you knew just a little bit about our nation's history and your nation's history and relationship with our nation, then you would see, like so many people have already been saying, that you have no jurisdiction here. And so I don't really feel a need to answer your questions in the first place, but because I know how your nation does things, I will say no, no, no, no, no . . . you have to go back and talk to the people who have the power in your nation. Or better yet, you know, if you want to give up your citizenship and come and join us, I'm sure we can talk story about that.

—Shavonn Matsuda, Hāna, Maui, 2014

Hawaiian futurities as articulated in the contemporary Hawaiian-sovereignty movement have typically operated on a logic of inclusive, nonviolent change through the power of education. In 1990, one could hardly say the words “Hawaiian” and “sov-

ereignty” together in polite conversation: people would react as though you had uttered profanity. But massive educational efforts to uncover the history of Hawaiian independence shifted the political grounds on which Kānaka stood. Over the past few decades, such education has taken place at both institutional and grassroots levels, drawing on elders' experiential knowledge as well as on the research of Kanaka Maoli scholars. As a direct result of these pedagogical efforts, grassroots Hawaiian movements refusing recognition frameworks and asserting Hawaiian independence have grown in the new millennium, particularly in the face of proposed federal recognition legislation.

Too often, refusals are interpreted as complete withdrawals of any possible participation in a future. But we highlight those Kānaka who articulated a politics of refusal in 2014 precisely because we are interested in the ways in which refusals can also be forms of futurity.⁷ In the 2014 hearings, we can see a style of thinking about the relationship between the past, present, and future of an independent Hawai'i that relies on a logic of continuity. The oral testimonies are but one practice of bringing such a future into being by asserting the knowledge of connections to a sovereign past. Knowledge about Hawaiian pasts and presents fuels a repudiation of settler-state attempts to rein in Hawaiian independent futures and to contain them within what K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa McCarty have called “safety zones”: settler state-sanctioned spaces in which some aspects of Indigenous culture can be practiced as long as they do not disrupt or threaten settler society.⁸ For a large segment of the Hawaiian movement and of the hundreds who testified in 2014, federal recognition is seen as such a mechanism of containment. Refusal of that containment is not only about assertions of political autonomy, but also about rejecting unsustainable ways of relating to the natural world. Hawaiian independent futurities assemble practic-

es of *aloha ʻāina* (love for the land) that assert that our ability to sustain generation after generation requires healthier relationships with our lands and waters.

We derive our strength from our ʻāina, and it is our deep aloha for our ʻāina that is the foundation for our liberation. We know our past, as you have seen over the past week and tonight, and while the U.S. may be part of our presence by its own power, its utter disregard for the well-being of our ʻāina and lāhui has deemed it necessary that we envision and enact a future for our children and grandchildren, in which our nation, ka lāhui kanaka, thrives independent of the United States again. “Aʻole mea ʻoi aku o ka waiwai like me ke kanaka i noho kūʻokoʻa no ke aloha i kona ʻāina.” These are the words of our great Hawaiian independence leader from Puna, Joseph Nāwahī. There is nothing of greater value than Kānaka living independently for the aloha of our ʻāina. This is the political consciousness of our kūpuna, this is the foundation of our nation.

–Noʻeau Peralto, *Keaukaha, Hawaiʻi*, 2014

One of the most enduring strands of our ʻaha is *aloha ʻāina*, and Joseph Nāwahī is a name that always comes up when Kānaka of the present speak about this concept. Nāwahī was a painter, politician, newspaper editor, lawyer, and orator who was once described by Queen Liliʻuokalani as “a man who fearlessly advocated the independence of Hawaiʻi Nei.”⁹

Since the emergence of the sugar industry in the mid-nineteenth century, planters in the Hawaiian kingdom had been pushing for an expanded market for their crop. For many of them, the logical market was the United States, yet import duties put them at a disadvantage to American sugar, leading many to seek annexation to the United States. But the majority of Hawaiian people were emphatically against such a move. When King Kamehameha IV (Alexander Liholiho, who ascended to the throne in 1855) supported a reciprocity treaty with the Unit-

ed States to relax its import duties on sugar, it was not merely a way to provide new markets for Hawaiʻi sugar planters; it was a tactic to undercut these American-descended businessmen’s push for annexation.

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The treaty came close to passing in several legislative sessions, but concerns over such a treaty’s effect on domestic industry and a lack of clear benefit to the United States kept it from passing. What finally piqued U.S. interest in the 1870s was the possible cession of Puʻuloa (an important and productive estuary and fishery that is now often called Pearl Harbor). Puʻuloa was the best option for a deep-draft harbor in the Northern Pacific, and the U.S. military eyed it as the key to maritime control of the Pacific region.

In 1872 Nāwahī was elected to the Hawaiian Kingdom House of Representatives to represent his home district of Puna. Nāwahī’s election came in the midst of the debate over the Reciprocity Treaty, and his staunch and consistent opposition to the treaty and the possible cession of Puʻuloa brought his voice to the fore as a champion of Hawaiian independence. After much negotiation and the passing of three monarchs, the treaty was ratified in 1876 without the cession of Puʻuloa and was set to go into effect pending the passage of a corresponding U.S. law.

That year, in a last-ditch attempt to stop the treaty, a small bloc of Hawaiian legislators called for the Hawaiian Kingdom House to have the final say over the treaty’s language. In a fiery and impassioned speech, Nāwahī exhorted his fellow legislators to recognize that what was at stake was greater than prosperity for plantation owners:

He wahi aupuni ko kākou i makaleho ʻia e nā Haole e lilo no lākou, akā, ua hoka wale nō ia mau hoʻāʻo ʻana a pau. He nui wale nō nā hoʻāʻo ʻana a lākou i loko o nā makahiki i hala aku nei, aʻo ka hāʻawi ʻana iā Puʻuloa kā lākou hana hope loa i hoʻāʻo ai, a nele ihola. Akā, ʻānō, ke kāpili nei lākou i kiʻi lio lāʻau me ka hoʻokomo ʻia o ka ʻenemi i loko.¹⁰

*We are a small nation that the foreigners have cast a greedy eye upon, desiring that it pass into their possession, yet their efforts have met with only frustration. They have tried over and over again during these past years, and the attempted cession of Pu'uloa was their latest gambit, and nothing came of it. But here and now they have given us a wooden horse in which our enemies lay in wait.*¹¹

Nāwahī's use of the Trojan horse image implies that Hawai'i was under siege not just by runaway business interests, but by a different model of being. The enemy Greeks hiding within the horse were damaging epistemologies and beliefs about commodifying and trading land. Kānaka Maoli in the late nineteenth century had a strong appreciation for Western cultural forms, and some of their governmental structures bore similarities to models introduced from the West. Yet Hawaiians of the time were also careful to ensure that the structures they employed continued to allow them to imagine a *Hawaiian* kingdom continuing into the future.

In a subsequent legislative session that same year, Nāwahī followed up his earlier refusal by emphasizing the important relationship between the kingdom's embattled present and sovereign past, one that predated European American-introduced understandings of state sovereignty and nationhood:

ke 'ōlelo nei au he ku'ikahi kā'ili aupuni a kā'ili pono lāhui kēia e ho'onele 'ia ai ka noho ali'i i kona mana kumu mai ka pō mai.¹²

I say to you that this is a nation-snatching treaty, one that will steal from us our national rights and leave our throne bereft of its foundational mana, granted to it from the depths of Pō, the darkness.

Pō is the fecund and primordial darkness from which Hawaiians trace the world's descent. While American Protestant missionaries and their descendants hammered home the metaphorical connection be-

tween darkness and ignorance, evil, and sin, many Kānaka Maoli considered (and still consider) darkness to be generative, nurturing, and creative. In this way, Nāwahī's reference to Pō as the *mana kumu*, foundational mana (the power that exists in all things), is a reminder that the future flows from this darkness of the past. Legitimacy stems from the kumu (source) of Hawaiian sovereignty, and exceeds Western understandings of nation-state sovereignty. Descent from Pō is the reason for the independent kingdom's mana; that independence was to be protected to ensure the people's continuance. If futurities are created by assembling styles, practices, and logics for thinking about the future, Nāwahī was engaging a logic of Hawaiian futurity by evoking Pō.¹³ Refusal was the practice that gave content to that futurity.

The treaty passed, but the vocal resistance of people like Nāwahī and George Pilipō kept Pu'uloa off the negotiating table. After the initial seven-year term of reciprocity expired and the treaty became renewable on a year-to-year basis, the United States explicitly presented the exclusive use of Pu'uloa as a criterion for renewal. On July 6, 1887, a cabal of White militia and businessmen compelled King Kalākaua to sign a new constitution that severely limited the powers of his office and disenfranchised much of the Kānaka and all of the Asian electorate, the majority of whom supported the *mō'i* (monarch). Unsurprisingly, five months later, on December 9, even though he had strongly fought the cession of Pu'uloa, Kalākaua signed the treaty renewal, with an amendment giving the United States exclusive use of Pu'uloa.

In 1893, Queen Lili'uokalani, who had ascended the throne after her brother Kalākaua's death, was illegally overthrown by a European American-backed cabal. At this time, Nāwahī helped found the Hui Aloha 'Āina, a group that worked to restore the queen to the throne and oppose

annexation, and ran the newspaper *Ke Aloha Aina* with his wife Emma. A year after the overthrow, Nāwahī gave his most celebrated speech, a stunning call for refusal. Seven thousand people gathered at the Palace Square, and when Nāwahī appeared before them to great acclaim, he cried out:

Oiai hoi, no kakou ka Hale (Aupuni) e like me ka na Kamehameha i kukulu ai; aka, i ka la 17 o Ianuari, 1893, ua kipaku ia ae kakou e ka poe i aea hele mai, a komo iloko o ko kakou hale; a ke olelo mai nei ia kakou e komo aku a e noho iloko o ka hale kaulei a lakou i manao ai e kukulu iho a onou aku ia kakou a pau e komo aku. O ka'u hoi e olelo aku nei ia oukou, e o'u hoa makaainana, *mai noho kakou a ae iki*. [emphasis added]¹⁴

This house of government belongs to us, just as the Kamehamehas intended; yet on the 17th of January, 1893, we were kicked out by wandering trespassers who entered our house, and they are telling us to go and live in the lei stand that they thought to build and shove us into. But what I have to say to you, my beloved people, we dare not assent in the slightest!

Nāwahī called for the audience to know their past and refuse to participate in the present the foreigners were trying to thrust upon them. “Mai noho kākou a ‘ae iki” was not a foreclosure of action, but a call to live the alternative, to continue bringing a future rooted in Pō into being. The future of the Hawaiian people should not be a lei stand, a “safety zone,” but rather the house that the Kamehameha chiefly lineage built.

I am here to testify and affirm that the Hawaiian Kingdom continues to exist. We are Hawaiian subjects, as our kūpuna before us, who signed the Kū‘ē Petitions of 1897. They laid a firm foundation for us. And all we have to do is remember and stand together with courage and let the United States, the State of Hawai‘i, and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs know that we know who we are.

–Leilani Lindsey Ka‘apuni, *Keaukaha, Hawai‘i*, 2014

The Kū‘ē petitions constituted one of the largest acts of refusal in modern Hawaiian history, one that inspired many of the Kanaka expressions of refusal in the 2014 DOI hearings. After the 1893 overthrow, the *haole*-led provisional government (which later declared itself the Republic of Hawai‘i) pushed hard for Hawai‘i to be annexed to the United States. But two Hawaiian political organizations assured that no treaty of annexation was ever passed. Kuaihelani Campbell, who served as president of the women’s branch of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina, was a contemporary of Joseph Nāwahī. She was of a chiefly lineage from the island of Maui, a fiercely intelligent and financially astute woman who helped James Campbell build up his estate after their marriage, while maintaining her own large estate separate from the Campbell lands.¹⁵ She supported many elderly Hawaiian pensioners through her estate, in addition to paying the medical bills of many others who did not receive a pension from her directly.¹⁶ She was mother to Abigail (who became Princess Kawānanakoa) and Alice Kamokilaikawai, both of whom were leaders in their own right and played active roles in fighting for Hawaiians. She even insisted on a prenuptial agreement before she would allow her daughter, Abigail, to marry Prince David Kawānanakoa.¹⁷

As a young woman, Kuaihelani traveled to London and the United States, writing about her journey in the Hawaiian-language newspaper *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa*. She referred to herself as the “Eueu o Lahaina,” a title that evokes a provocateur of sorts: someone who stirs people to action or who is lively and excited.¹⁸ Kuaihelani Campbell indeed embodied all of these qualities, and she made good use of them as she grew older, particularly when she became the president of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina o nā Wāhine after 1893. Many different women’s *hui* (political groups) sprung up around Hawai‘i, all under the leadership of Kuaihelani and

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Emma Nāwahī, wife of Joseph Nāwahī and leader in her own right. They were a formidable pair, and Lili'uokalani called the Hui Aloha 'Āina o nā Wāhine one of the "societies much dreaded by the oligarchy now ruling Hawai'i."¹⁹

Representatives of the haole-led illegitimate government pushed hard for Hawai'i to be annexed to the United States. In 1897, Emma Nāwahī suggested to Kuaihelani that both the women's and the men's groups draft a petition refusing annexation, to be sent to President William McKinley.²⁰ That kicked off an archipelago-wide effort to garner signatures from the Hawaiian people. It was a massive undertaking, involving Hui Aloha 'āina members traveling throughout the islands and organizing small- and large-scale community meetings.

One such meeting took place at the Salvation Army Hall in Hilo and was attended by the American journalist Miriam Michelson, who was writing for the *San Francisco Call*. According to Michelson's account, the hall itself held three hundred people, but there was an even larger crowd gathered outside. Both Emma Nāwahī and Kuaihelani Campbell got up to address the crowd. Nāwahī asked of the crowd: "This land is ours – our Hawai'i. Say, shall we lose our nationality? Shall we be annexed to the United States?" This was not their imagined future, and the crowd shouted out their refusal: "'A'ole loa! 'A'ole loa!" *Never! Never!* Then Kuaihelani Campbell spoke:

Stand firm, my friends. Love of country means more to you and to me than anything else. Be brave; be strong. Have courage and patience. Our time will come. Sign this petition – those of you who love Hawai'i. How many – how many will sign?

As she spoke, she raised a gloved hand asserting she would refuse the United States through her signature, and when she asked how many would join her, "in a moment the palms of hundreds of hands were turned to-

ward her." The people of Hilo spoke with their words as well as their upraised hands, one man crying out from the back: "I speak for those behind me. They cannot come in – they cannot speak. They tell me to say, 'No annexation. Never.'"²¹

Though it was perhaps true that some of those gathered in Hilo were unable to speak at the meeting, they along with the vast majority of the Hawaiian population made their voices heard when the petitions were forwarded to the U.S. Congress. Michelson observed: "There are 100,000 people on the islands. Of these not 3 per cent have declared for annexation. To the natives the loss of nationality is hateful, abhorrent." The petition made this abhorrence clear, as twenty-one thousand men and women out of a population of forty thousand had signaled their refusal on the Hui Aloha 'Āina petitions.²²

Kuaihelani Campbell remained in Hawai'i, but representatives of the Hui Aloha 'Āina traveled to Washington, D.C., to present the petitions and succeeded in defeating the treaty. In its report, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations echoed Michelson's earlier observation, pointing out that "if a requirement should be made by the United States of a plebiscite to determine the question of annexation, it would work a revolution in Hawai'i which would abolish its constitution."²³ The very next year, supposedly out of wartime necessity, Congress took this advice to heart and "annexed" Hawai'i through the Newlands Resolution, a joint resolution of Congress that skipped the plebiscite and required only a simple majority vote to pass.

Kuaihelani Campbell and the other presidents of the Hui Aloha 'Āina and the Hui Kālai'āina protested the Newlands Resolution in a lengthy declaration, part of which reads:

Ma ke ano hoi he poe elele no kekahi mahele nui a ikaika o na kanaka Hawai'i oiwi maoli

ke kue aku nei makou ma ka manao kulipolipo kukonukonu loa i ka hoohuīia mai ma ke ano i manaōia a me ka ui ole ia mai hoi a loaā aku paha hoi ka ae ana o ka lahuikana-ka o ko Hawai‘i Paeaina nei.

Whereas we are representatives of a large and powerful segment of the native Hawaiian population, we hereby refuse with the deepest and most profound sentiment this annexation as it stands, having been done without the input or consent of the people of these Hawaiian Islands.

The U.S. Congress’s final move of simulating annexation through the Newlands Resolution is widely held to have been illegal. The refusal outlined in this joint declaration undergirds the continuing protest against any connection forced upon the Hawaiian people by the U.S. government.

The English translation sounds like a much more straightforward refusal, but in a manner similar to the earlier speeches by Joseph Nāwahī, the Hawaiian text serves as more of an exhortation for the listener to remember the source of Hawaiian sovereignty rooted deep in Pō. The word *kūlipolipo*, which we translate here somewhat narrowly as “deepest sentiment,” in actuality means something more like “standing in or upon the deepest darkness.” It means that Hawaiians feel with the most certainty and conviction when they can rely on this connection to the darkness of Pō. Until her death in 1908, Kuaihelani Campbell held onto her mana‘o kūlipolipo and continued to fight for her people, refusing to forget our deep connections to Pō and refusing to give up on a vision of a sovereign Hawai‘i in control of its own destiny.

It is wonderful to know that one day when I put my kino in the ground, that I know that in the future, the faces of our young people that’s here tonight, I can rest in peace, that you’ve come tonight to bring your voices, that you will stand for the journey that our people have set for you. Your

life is in – and the life of our people and our nation is in your hands. We trust you, we beg you to rise to the moment now and forever.

– Dawn Wasson, *He‘eia, O‘ahu*, 2014

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In this essay, we have collected facts of history, voices of past and present Kānaka Maoli, to make rope connecting past and present narratives of Hawaiian sovereignty. In our language, the general term for history and story is the same: *mo‘olelo*. Mo‘olelo weave past into present to help us envision futures that, to some, may seem unrealistic or unthinkable – these are practices of Hawaiian futurity.

Seneca scholar Mishuana Goeman writes, “The stories that connect Native people to the land and form their relationships to the land and one another are much older than colonial governments. . . . Stories create the relationships that have made communities strong even through numerous atrocities and injustices.”²⁴ Such stories, as Indigenous futurities, are practices of liberation.

one by one
strand by strand
we become the memory of our people
and we still growing.
We cultivate
strength under duress
inner bark of unbreakable fibers
dried and bleached in mountain sun
impervious to the salt of sea
does not kink or stretch
will not break when tested
when put under load
when encircling water
when fine mesh grasps feathers
or long line grasps warrior fish
this ‘aha is strength
the question is not whether
to break or to hold,
but what to carry
‘aha

the thread running through ancestral ways of life
cord to sew together cracks running up wooden bowls
netting to equalize the weight of two full containers of water
lashing for our houses, our canoes, our drums
'aha,
cord, turned hand over hand, deft fingers
extending mana
'aha,
ceremony, completed to perfection
ritual binding us to this land.²⁵

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ENDNOTES

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- ² Ben Anderson, "Preemption, Precaution, Preparedness: Anticipatory Action and Future Geographies," *Progress in Human Geography* 34 (6) (2010): 777–798; and Eve Tuck and Ruben Gaztambide-Fernandez, "Curriculum, Replacement, and Settler Futurity," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 29 (1) (2013): 72–89.
- ³ Scott Toshio Kikiloi, "Kūkulu Manamana: Ritual Power and Religious Expansion in Hawai'i, the Ethno-Historical and Archaeological Study of Mokumanamana and Nihoa Islands" (Ph.D. diss., University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2012), 67.
- ⁴ Department of the Interior, Office of the Secretary, "Procedures for Reestablishing a Formal Government-to-Government Relationship with the Native Hawaiian Community," 43 CFR Pt. 50 (2016), Docket No. DOI–2015–0005;145D010DMDS6CS00000.000000DX.6CS252410.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Brian Klopotek, *Recognition Odysseys: Indigeneity, Race, and Federal Tribal Recognition Policy in Three Louisiana Indian Communities* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011); and Amy E. Den Ouden and Jean M. O'Brien, eds., *Recognition, Sovereignty Struggles, and Indigenous Rights in the United States: A Sourcebook* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).
- ⁷ Our usage of "politics of refusal" follows that of Audra Simpson. See Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruption: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2014).
- ⁸ K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa L. McCarty, "To Remain an Indian": Lessons for Democracy from a Century of Native American Education (New York: Teachers College Press, 2006).
- ⁹ Lili'uokalani, *Hawai'i's Story by Hawai'i's Queen* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1898), 300.
- ¹⁰ Kahikina Kelekona, *Ka Puke Mo'olelo o Hon. Iosepa K. Nāwahī* (Hilo, Hawai'i: Hale Kuamo'o, 1996), 92.
- ¹¹ Unless otherwise specified, translations of Hawaiian-language sources have been done by Bryan Kamaoli Kuwada.

- ¹² Kelekona, *Ka Puke Mo'olelo*, 100.
- ¹³ Anderson, "Preemption, Precaution, Preparedness."
- ¹⁴ "Haehae ka Manu, Ke Ale nei i ka Wai," *Ka Leo o ka Lahui*, July 3, 1894, 2.
- ¹⁵ "Death of Mrs. Campbell-Parker at the Hospital," *The Hawaiian Gazette*, November 3, 1908, 3.
- ¹⁶ Richard Hawkins, "Princess Abigail Kawananakoa: the Forgotten Territorial Native Hawaiian Leader," *Hawaiian Journal of History* 37 (1) (2003): 163 – 177, 165.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 166.
- ¹⁸ "He Leta na ka Eueu o Lahaina, Ka Wahine Kaapuni Honua," *Ka Nupepa Kuokoa*, June 7, 1879, 2.
- ¹⁹ Lili'uokalani, *Hawai'i's Story by Hawai'i's Queen*, 304.
- ²⁰ Noenoe Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), 132.
- ²¹ Miriam Michelson, "Strangling Hands upon a Nation's Throat," *The San Francisco Call*, September 30, 1897, 1.
- ²² Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 150. The Hui Kālai'āina had done their own petition drive and garnered seventeen thousand signatures.
- ²³ United States Senate Congressional Committee on Foreign Relations, *Compilation of Reports of Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 1789 – 1901: First Congress, First Session to Fifty-Sixth Congress, Second Session* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Publishing Office, 1901), 200.
- ²⁴ Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 28.
- ²⁵ Kalahēle, *Kalahēle*.