BLOOD AND REPRODUCTION OF (THE) RACE IN THE NAME OF *HOʻOULU LĀHUI*—A HAWAIIAN FEMINIST CRITIQUE

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I RECALL BEING IN HONOLULU for my thirty-first birthday and making plans to go hear some live music with a friend who is a professor there and is also Hawaiian. We were comparing notes as to which family members would be coming along when I mentioned that I planned to bring a date. Her first question was whether or not he was Hawaiian. "No," I replied, "Filipino, from Brooklyn." She looked terribly disappointed and told me I had better drop him fast. I explained that we had just met and this would be our third date. She again told me to lose him and find a Hawaiian man so I could have Hawaiian children. I made it clear that it was a date, not a fertility-planning event, and reminded her that any child born from me would have to be Hawaiian, regardless of the background of any man. She rolled her eyes and said, "You know what I mean. You'd end up diluting your genealogy!" I asked her how a lineage could possibly be diluted since it either existed as a relationship or not. She admitted, "I know, I know, but still!" Still.

A few days later the same friend told me a story about an upsetting encounter she had had the night before. Two close friends of hers, a married couple, revealed that their son had a crush on her daughter. My friend told them in no uncertain terms that she did not want their son coupling with her because he is not Hawaiian. They were insulted and confused; they had been friends since before their children were born. My friend told me how upset the couple was because they didn't understand her issues. Neither did I. How, I asked her, after all her research on Hawaiian genealogies, could she think of her daughter conceiving children with a non-Hawaiian as limiting?

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She yelled back, "I want Hawaiian grandchildren!" How, I wondered, could they *not* be Hawaiian?

I found my friend's position quite unsettling. It seemed as though she were imposing her racial anxieties onto me, as though I did not measure up enough to make my potential offspring count in any meaningful way. Her cautionary tales were meant to be instructive: there I was, like her, an adult, light-skinned Hawaiian whose alleged deficiencies might be somehow corrected by the production of offspring with more "Hawaiian blood" than ourselves. However misguided, her concern for me is understandable, given that fact that the state of Hawai'i currently defines "native Hawaiian" by a fifty-percent blood quantum rule. Blood quantum classification is a fractionalizing measurement that entails the assumption that blood amount indicates one's cultural orientation. The basis of my friend's pressure on me is a direct legacy of this racist policy.

The fifty-percent rule is a legal definition that originated in a U.S. Congressional policy—the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1921. In the Act, approximately 200,000 acres of land were allotted for residential, pastoral, and agricultural purposes for eligible "native Hawaiians" who met the blood rule, defined as those "descendants with at least one-half blood quantum of individuals inhabiting the Hawaiian Islands prior to 1778." The Act was originally proposed as a way to rehabilitate the Hawaiian people, who were suffering rapid depopulation that was linked to colonialism, disease, poverty, and urbanization.

My family resides on part of these lands—Anahola is part of the Hawaiian Home Lands territory, all of which was formerly part of the Crown and Government Lands in the Kingdom of Hawai'i. My father grew up in Anahola and has been on the waiting list for a homestead lease of his own since 1974. I myself do not qualify for the program as an original lessee, but I would be able to inherit my father's lease if he is eventually able to secure one, only because the U.S. Congress amended the Act to allow for direct descendants to inherit family leases so long as they meet a one-fourth blood quantum criterion.

Because the "one-half" requirement endures as the main standard, Hawaiian people are now classified into two categories, the "fifty percenters" ("native Hawaiians") and the "less than fifties" ("Native Hawaiians"). Most Hawaiians contest the federal and state definition of "native Hawaiian" because it is so exclusionary. The rule also undermines our indigenous cultural practices that define identity on the basis of one's genealogical ties. However, as my opening story illustrates, many are still invested in blood to prove their indigeneity. These concerns with "measuring up" reflect a growing angst among Hawaiians that is extremely troublesome and all too common. There are many alarming examples.

During a long-distance phone call from Honolulu, an activist friend who is also Hawaiian asked me in desperation, "What are we gonna do when the full-bloods die out? How will we define our *lāhui* [people]?" I feel despair when I think of his unease, yet I am also critical of his assumptions and their implications. What he was suggesting is that *piha kānaka maoli* ("full" Hawaiians) currently define who Hawaiian people are as lāhui, and that our future rests with them. An impossible burden indeed; here, the demand for the "full-blood" or *piha* Hawaiian has crossed over beyond the mere symbolic. My friend's anxiety—and that of many Hawaiians—is a haunting refrain. In Hawaiian nationalist contexts, one often hears the political leaders cite numerical figures of Hawaiians' racial mixtures as an index of Hawaiian extinction. Piha Hawaiians are rarely explicitly named unless in relation to their predicted demise.

Prominent sovereignty activist Kekuni Blaisdell, M.D., along with Noreen Mokuau, frequently warns that "today there are less than 8,000 *piha kānaka maoli* (pure Hawaiians) remaining."[1] Blaisdell also reiterates predictions that by the year 2020 there will be no more piha kānaka maoli. Linked to these recitations, many Hawaiians, including Blaisdell, who is a long-term independence activist, urge Hawaiian people to *hoʻoulu lāhui*—to reinvigorate the nation of Hawaiian people. While replenishment among Hawaiians can certainly be achieved through a variety of means, the call to hoʻoulu lāhui, more often then not, is a call to procreate and bear more Hawaiians, preferably the "more than fifties." My worried friend was clearly taking refuge in the imaginary need for the authentic sign, with the "pure" body as ultimate referent.[2]

Because blood is often used as a metaphor for ancestry, blood quantum and genealogy are often thought to be one and the same. But even though blood has evolved as a figure of speech for ancestry in Hawaiian contexts, blood quantum classification is very different from Hawaiian genealogical practices—which function in substantially different ways. As an administrative logic, blood quantum fragments by dividing parts of a whole, severing unions, and portioning out blood "degree." The definition of Hawaiian identity on the basis of blood logics was an American conception, a colonial policy developed through experience with American Indians. This policy presupposed long-term patterns of assimilation and assumed that blood is a qualified measure of relatedness.

Moreover, blood logic works to displace a discourse and recognition of Hawaiian sovereignty. Hence, the political question of who counts as Hawaiian is fraught with histories of contested entitlement and colonial dispossession, now persisting in neocolonial state practices. The current blood quantum rule is not only abstract and arbitrary, it is restrictive. How can a

fraction represent whom one's ancestors are, where they may have come from, with whom they were affiliated, and what those relationships were? Blood quantum schema can never account for the ways that genealogy connects Hawaiians to one another, to place, and to land. *Genealogy makes nonsense out of fractions and percent signs that are grounded in colonial moves marked by exclusionary racial criteria*.

In reclaiming a place in Oceania, many Hawaiians are emphasizing their genealogical connections to all Pacific peoples. Hawaiians' traditional form of considering who belongs emphasizes lineal descent over and above constructions of blood. Hawaiian genealogical practices are much more fluid and strategic. Hawaiians continue to invoke their lineage at specific moments appropriate to their own social positioning. In other words, genealogy is about quality, not quantity; it is the quality of the connection that counts, not the "distance" in relation to some mythic purity. Genealogy is used to establish a collective identity and emphasize shared ancestry through the social nexus of *`ohana.* In Hawaiian kinship forms there are no exclusive boundaries between defined sets of relatives or bounded descent groups associated with land. Instead, there is social flexibility where there are no determinate kinship groups or rigidly prescribed relationships. Hawaiian kinship is forged through bilateral descent, whereby people relate to each other by connections made through their mothers and fathers equally. Moreover, descent can be traced in a myriad of ways, even as those genealogical practices have changed over time and adapted to new historical circumstances.

There is a revitalization of genealogical practices among Hawaiians. I believe this is an attempt to assert cultural sovereignty within the current neocolonial context, where issues of place and belonging are threatened, while indigenous political status is under continuous assault. Blood quantum policy affecting Hawaiians *originates* in our land dispossession by the United States. Moreover, in the Hawaiian case, blood quantum is incommensurate with sovereign recognition. Blood quantum modalities are *always* about allotment in relation to the *individual*, whereas genealogy emphasizes the continuing *collective* political claims of indigenous descendants.

Still, there needs to be more critical analysis of the ways we as Hawaiians continue to deploy discourses of blood quantum; it is to our detriment and propagates uneven gendered impact in negative ways. The continued legal "demand" for Hawaiians who can document their blood quantum at fifty percent or more has in turn fueled angst among many Hawaiians. Their fretfulness is evidenced in the nationalist calls to "replenish the race" by reproduction. These calls have significant bearing on Hawaiian women as well as the transformation of genealogical reckoning. Perhaps more importantly, it is Hawaiian women who are calling on other Hawaiian women.

At a feminist family values forum, sovereignty leader Mililani Trask also made note of this push, stating that "There is a saying in the Hawai'ian [sic] culture that you can marry whomever you wish, but mate with your own kind. In this way, we regenerate our numbers."[3] The heterosexual arrangement of Trask's dictate is unmarked, but let us be clear: within the current laws of the state of Hawai'i—and throughout most of the United States—Hawaiians cannot marry whomever they wish to marry if that person is someone of the same sex, though there are various forms of same-sex unions within Hawaiian cultural histories.[4] Still, the concern Trask articulates here is one of recovering from mass Hawaiian depopulation. She explains that "When Cook arrived there were one million Kānaka Maoli [Native Hawaiians]; a generation and a half later, at the time of the U.S. overthrow, 39,000 of us remained. Today we are 200,000 Kānaka Maoli. You see that our population is increasing, because we love each other." Here population recovery is the impetus for her call for physical reproduction, not a concern for bearing sons for the nation that has characterized so many other nationalist struggles, which are seeped in domineering patriarchal leadership. But these calls to ho'oulu lāhui certainly have an uneven gendered impact and beg for an indigenous feminist critique.

Trask is not alone in marking the impetus on reviving a people. In the collection *Autobiography of Protest in Hawai'i*, Hawaiian sovereignty activist Lynette Cruz offers a point that speaks volumes to the issues of pedagogy and reproductive behavior. Cruz also evokes a set of alarming statistics, noting that "It has been projected that by the year 2044, there will be no more Hawaiians with fifty percent or more Hawaiian blood. This means, in effect, there will be no more Hawaiians by our definition, and the federal government no longer has to deal with us as a people."[5] It is not clear why Cruz says "our definition," given that Hawaiian genealogical practices are far more inclusive in defining who counts as Hawaiian. As for lessons for other Hawaiians, Cruz maintains that "When we talk about educating people we're talking about educating them *right now*. Time is short. We're telling people, especially Hawaiian women, that we need to have some Hawaiian babies from Hawaiian men who are full-blooded. We need to have these things documented. This is one strategy that we can use to make sure that Hawaiians do not become extinct by somebody else's definition."[6] Clearly, Cruz's plea has a sense of urgency. But who are the "we" that need the babies and why? Where is the collective and material support that should come with such a demand? What about Hawaiian men? Supposing that Hawaiian women were interested in (ful)filling such a tall order, what would be the method of doing so? And what about those Hawaiian women who would not want to sleep with *any* man? It is as if people expect Hawaiian women to tap full-blood men on the shoulder and call them out into the bush for a quickie. These

calls unwittingly promote objectification and the fetishization of "full-blood" bodies. And this encouragement in terms of mate selection and breeding is nothing less than a form of eugenics. Why not instead infuse Hawaiian political projects with a similar sense of urgency toward the goal of wrestling definitions of Hawaiianness away from state-imposed neocolonial definitions as a profound course of self-determination?

Cynthia Enloe, feminist scholar of gender and nationalism, acknowledges that "Women in many communities trying to assert their sense of national identity find that coming into an emergent nationalist movement through the accepted feminine roles of bearer of the community's memory and children is empowering."[7] Indeed, reproduction as part of Hawaiian women's self-determined autonomy is potentially empowering as a form of resisting the over-determined narratives of Hawaiian dilution. The legacy of depopulation has contributed to Hawaiians' status as a minority in Hawai'i. This history, along with the assault on Hawaiian families via state policies and discourses, shapes our concerns about blood quanta criteria and notions of indigeneity and makes it no surprise that Hawaiians are feeling concern about bearing children with more "Hawaiian blood." But Hawaiian women's reproductive rights must be reserved without the alternate construction of Hawaiian women's bodily agency as a site of inevitable betrayal.[8] What other baby could come from my womb, so long as the genetic material also comes from me—regardless of my partner choice—if not a Hawaiian child?

I believe we must stop reproducing these colonial legacies. If not, Hawaiian women will continue to bear the brunt. We need to turn to our own Hawaiian philosophies about who we are. Instead, too many of us are internalizing colonial notions of race and reproduction—all of which work to suppress the freedom of Hawaiian women.

We know who we are. Hawaiians are a people who have historically treasured and relished our encounters with outsiders. And, sometimes to our own detriment, we have a long track record of incorporating those people who have come to our shores because we are an inclusive people. Yet many people, including other Pacific Islanders, point to our Hawaiian mixed-ness as evidence of our dissolution instead of a sign of our cultural resilience and integrity. We should explore the endurance of Hawaiian indigenous identities, regardless of blood quantum and the dominant insistence that those who do not meet the fifty-percent blood rule become honorary whites (or Asians, for that matter). Moreover, it would serve us to remember that we are a voyaging people, willingly exposing ourselves to other peoples and cultures the world over. If we yet can reclaim our own sense of who we are, we can move further away from the burden of blood that is dividing us. Maintaining blood

discourses is a form of violence—both epistemological and spiritual—because it ultimately contributes overall to *all* Hawaiians' erasure.

Let us think of broader meanings of hoʻoulu lāhui that serve us, as we are now. When King Kalākaua enshrined this motto to increase and preserve the nation, he knew our survival was at stake. Let us restore attention to ancestors through more thoughtful and meaningful conceptions of our common ancestry. Let us remember our genealogy in relation to our connection to the spirit world of our *kūpuna* (elders and ancestors) and *`aumakua* (family deities).

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NOTES

1 Blaisdell, Kekuni and Noreen Mokuau. Kānaka Maoli, Indigenous Hawaiians. *Hawaiʻi Return to Nationhood*. Edited by Jonathan Friedman and Ulla Hasager, pp. 49–67, IWGIA Document 75, Copenhagen: the International Working Group of Indigenous Affairs, 1993, p. 50.

2 "A sign stands for something lying outside of itself. It does not 'simply exist' as part of a reality—it reflects and refracts another reality," E. France White. 2001. *Dark Continent of Our Bodies: Black Feminism and the Politics of Respectability*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, p. 127.

3 Bright, Susan (ed.). 1996. Mililani Trask. *Feminist Family Values Forum: Gloria Steinem, Angela Davis, Maria Jimenez, Mililani Trask*, presented by the Foundation for a Compassionate Society. Austin: Plain View Press, p. 13.

4 Kameʻeleihiwa, Lilikalā. 1992. *Native Land and Foreign Desires*, Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press.

5 Mast, Robert H. and Anne B. Mast (eds.). Lynette Cruz. *Autobiography of Protest in Hawaiʻi*. Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, p. 381.

6 Ibid, pp. 381–382.

7 Enloe, Cynthia. 1989. *Bananas, Beaches & Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics.* 1st ed. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, p. 55.

8 Kauanui, J. Kēhaulani. 1998. Off-Island Hawaiians "Making" Ourselves at "Home": A (Gendered) Contradiction in Terms? *Women's Studies International Forum*, 21 (6): 681–693.