

## ON BEING HAWAIIAN ENOUGH: CONTESTING AMERICAN RACIALIZATION WITH NATIVE HYBRIDITY

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There is incredible diversity within the Hawaiian community. Yet oftentimes Hawaiians are imagined to be a homogeneous group. This article probes the relationship between early twentieth-century representations of Hawaiians and the discursive construction of Hawaiianess along racial lines. Taking an ethnographic approach, I draw on the personal experience and family histories of contemporary Hawaiians whose lives reflect hybridity and multiplicity. I argue that the creation of a monolithic Hawaiian culture is rooted in the convergence of scientific and touristic depictions, which privilege phenotype over other components of identity. The stories of research participants reveal how color consciousness, racialization, and not feeling “Hawaiian enough” complicate matters for the lāhui Hawai‘i (Hawaiian community).

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## WHAT DOES A HAWAIIAN LOOK LIKE?

It was a bright December morning when I arrived at Mākua Valley on the west side of O‘ahu near Ka‘ena Point. It had been several months since I had visited the area. White light from the sun combined with a wispy rain to create a translucent haze across Ko‘iahi, Mākua, and Kahanahāiki, the major subdivisions of the awāwa,<sup>1</sup> or valley. Together these three sections constitute the ahupua‘a ‘o Mākua, an ecologically stratified and interdependent landmass extending from the mountain summit to the reefs offshore. The word mākua is most often translated as “parents.” The place called Mākua is believed to be a scared area where Papa and Wākea, two powerful Hawaiian gods representing honua (earth) and lani (heavens), meet.<sup>2</sup>

I was part of an eclectic group of university students, new age spiritualists, military representatives—both in and out of uniform—state archeologists, tourists, and Hawaiian<sup>3</sup> activists. While in the parking lot, we gathered beneath the guard tower and listened to an orientation speech offered by the military administrator of the facility. From the tone of his voice, it was clear he was concerned with our safety and compliance with federal rules. The waivers he collected from us were supposed to guarantee both conditions.

Next the members of Mālama Mākua, who had organized the morning’s cultural access, addressed the group. They conveyed a very different message from that of the U.S. Army. They took turns speaking about the larger history of the area, its aboriginal settlement, the cultural and archeological sites that have been recorded, the indigenous species of plants and animals that reside there, and the failing health of the valley due to its “military occupation.” I was impressed by the emotion displayed by the speakers. One was a haole<sup>4</sup> doctor and former military man, the other was a raspy, tell-it-like-it-is Hawaiian woman with deep knowledge of wahi pana, storied Hawaiian places.

To properly enter the valley, we were told that an oli kāhea and an oli komo needed to be exchanged.<sup>5</sup> The Hawaiian woman from Mālama Mākua looked at our group hoping to find someone to offer the oli kāhea. Assuming that the only other Hawaiians present were members of her hui, or group, she declared in an exasperated voice, “Since I don’t see any Hawaiians in the crowd we’ll have to begin with an oli komo instead.” Although I was rather unsure of my chanting skills, I was confident in my cultural identity and native ancestry. I raised my hand

from the middle of the group and asked, “I can give an oli kāhea, if that’s okay?” The woman fixed her attention on me. I continued, “I know ‘Oli Aloha.’ If it’s appropriate I could chant it for us.” She smiled and nodded. Shaking more than usual, I chanted before the group, and in return, the Hawaiian woman responded with a beautiful oli komo.

Then, after making offerings at a ho‘okupu ceremony, we began to hike up the firebreak road. The woman approached me and apologized for making the assumption that there were no capable chanters in the group. She explained that she had overlooked the fact that some Hawaiians don’t look Hawaiian. In a playful voice she said, “At first I couldn’t see the kanaka [Hawaiian] in you. You got ilikea [white] skin and haole blue eyes. But once you started chanting I could see your ‘ano [reflection/identity]. At that moment it became clear to me.” Appreciating her comments and the humility it took to make them, I said, “‘A’ole pilikia. I kēia mau lā, nui ka ‘ano o nā ‘Ōiwi Hawai‘i.” (No problem. Nowadays Hawaiians come in all kinds.)

I am conscious of the fact that I am not alone. Hawaiians truly come in all kinds today. There are many Hawaiians whose cultural identity and physical appearance cause a major disjuncture in the minds of others. Granted, it is sometimes annoying to be ethnically mislabeled by others. However, it can be truly painful not to be recognized by members of your own group. The notion of “Hawaiian looking” is informed by a uniquely American racial ideology, which permeates all levels of modern Hawai‘i society. It can even penetrate the personal and family sphere. Consider the following example described by a Hawaiian woman:

I think [clears her throat] I always felt my sister to be more Hawaiian looking than I did, and I think that influence came not from myself but from what others kept remarking on when making comments about the both of us. That wasn’t something I identified with or immediately felt, but it was directly from comments from family members like, “Oh dis one looks real Hawaiian yeah?” You know, whether it be facial features or the hair—’cause you know Hawaiians have really characteristic kinda hair yeah—and my sister had that. She just looked according to them a little more

Hawaiian. What that was or what that meant exactly, I dunno. That's purely from their remarks. For me, it never bothered me 'cause I knew that I was Hawaiian, but at the same time, now that I'm being asked this question, now I'm thinking, "Okay. So, what does a Hawaiian look like?"

The excerpt above represents the feelings of other Hawaiians whose multidenty,<sup>6</sup> or mixed-heritage, remains a core part of who they are whether by choice or otherwise. The speaker, a 40-year-old Hilo woman, is reflecting on her experience as a young girl and the way family members would often compare her to her sister. Although the speaker belongs to a blended family through her parents' divorce and remarriages, the individual being referred to here is her biological sister. The fact that the two of them share the same genealogical ties and possess equivalent amounts of koko (Hawaiian blood) does not prevent others from distinguishing one sister as "looking more Hawaiian" than the other. The question she raises in the final line is a significant one, "So, what does a Hawaiian look like?" Taking her remarks a bit further, it is salient to ask: What markers contribute to a Hawaiian-looking person? Who decided these characteristics matter? And what is the relationship, if any, between looking Hawaiian and being Hawaiian?

My purpose in this article is to engage these questions directly and to create a space for others to begin sharing their perspectives as well.<sup>7</sup> Using an ethnographic approach, I map the terrain between social practices that homogenize Hawaiians as a group and the lived experience of mixed-heritage Hawaiians who actively contest stereotypes through the enactment of diversity. I begin by synthesizing the recent work of scholars who articulate processes of racialization. Next, I draw on the personal writings of a few outspoken individuals who wrestle with the consequences their mixed ancestry has on their sense of being Hawaiian. Weaving the mana'o, or ideas, of these writers with the experiences of everyday Hawaiians, I create a narrativized tapestry emphasizing diversity within the lāhui (Hawaiian community). Doing so illuminates underlying issues that at first glance may seem unapparent or even trivial. However, I argue that tensions inherent in 20th-century American racialization have strong implications for understanding contemporary Hawaiian well-being.

The bulk of the information contained in this article is ethnographic in origin, consisting of talk-story interviews, family histories, and participant observation. I formally interviewed 30 mixed-heritage Hawaiians who range in age, income, ethnicities, and education. I conversed informally with dozens of other po'e ha'awina (people offering lessons; research participants), and although I include their mana'o in this work, I draw most extensively from the contributors whose interviews I recorded and transcribed in full. Po'e ha'awina are composed of individuals with whom I met through volunteer work as well as referrals from previous participants and family members.

A recurring theme that emerged from my conversations with po'e ha'awina centers on what it means to be a Hawaiian who is not typically "Hawaiian looking." Generations of American influence—and the importation of racial thinking in particular—continue to impact the way Hawaiians are seen and the way we see ourselves. Scientific, historical, and anthropological representations of Hawaiians in the early 20th century, as well as more recent depictions from the tourist and travel writing industry, combine to form unrealistic stereotypes that reflect a presumed overlap between "race" and culture.

While "looking Hawaiian" fails to be a reliable indicator of Hawaiianness, po'e ha'awina realize that people, both non-Hawaiians and Hawaiians alike, tend to assess cultural and ethnic identity based on phenotypic qualities. A dark complexion, dark hair, brown eyes, a wide nose, and fuller lips are common markers for "Polynesian" in Hawai'i's multiethnic society and often lead to assumptions of one's Hawaiianness. These markers are initial signifiers that are tested against other attributes, such as names, behavior, cultural knowledge, and location of residence.

In today's highly politicized environment where nativeness has achieved a certain moral and social appeal, there is increased policing of the boundaries between Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians. The stories shared with me by po'e ha'awina shed light on this process and provide a vehicle for evaluating the effects of false identity ascription. Research on this topic bridges earlier discussions of Hawaiian identity (Holt, 1964/1995; Kanahela, 1986; Osorio, 2006) with broader debates of indigeneity and lateral oppression (Weaver, 2001).

## RACIALIZATION AND ITS ENDURING EFFECTS

In 1940, Franz Boas, a pioneering anthropologist, published a seminal work titled *Race, Language and Culture*. The book was conceived in an atmosphere of intense debate surrounding the scientific concept of race and its exportation to cultural groups around the world. Using comparative anthropology (i.e., ethnology), Boas managed to tease apart the perceived boundedness of race, language, and culture. Instead, his depiction of culture was highly nuanced, historically contingent, and thoroughly dynamic. In essence, he argued that “race” is a woefully inadequate tool for measuring human diversity. His research-based writing and arguments for cultural change stood in sharp contrast to prevailing trends in the scientific community at that time. Nearly 70 years later, an overlap between race, color, and culture remains largely intact within people’s perceptions.

More often than not, the observable differences between people are internalized by way of racial classifications. Summarizing Steve Martinot (2003), colors are racialized precisely because the concept of race is so prevalent. I use the term racialization when referring to the process whereby racial meanings are attached to people based largely on visual communication. This practice can be traced back to Europe where the concept of white purity was established through contact with the “New World.” As Martinot (2003) argued, “Thus, all concepts of race, and all racializations of people, derive from the European invention of whiteness through the assumption of a purity condition for themselves in the context of a colonial relation with other peoples of different shades” (p. 23).

The process whereby Hawaiians are institutionally constructed through a racial lens has been the focus of critical scholarship by J. Kehaulani Kauanui, who has consistently called for the deracialization of Hawaiians. Kauanui provides a clear window into the problematic development and impact of American racial thinking as seen through large initiatives such as the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA; Kauanui, 1999, 2000), pending federal recognition via the Akaka Bill (Kauanui, 2005b), and U.S. census classifications (Kauanui, 2005a). In each instance, Kauanui calls attention to the underlying colonial notion that Hawaiian identity—like all other identities—is primarily anchored in a concept of race, which is measurable in terms of blood quantum. She argues, “The definition of Hawaiian identity on the basis of blood logistics was an American conception, a colonial policy developed through experience with American Indians” (Kauanui, 2002, p. 110).

Besides dispelling the colonial practice of blood logic, Kauanui explores Hawaiian identity from numerous angles. First, she calls attention to the historical moment Hawaiian identity first became measurable via American governmental policy. Referring to mixed ancestry among Hawaiians, she reports, “The mixed-race status of Hawaiians is both a desired outcome of assimilation, and also a condition that disqualifies them from land rights and other benefits” (Kauanui, 2002, p. 119). Following the HHCA, a resulting continuum of Hawaiianness was established that bestowed benefits to Hawaiians with a blood quantum of 50% or more who were perceived to be in the most need of rehabilitation.

Second, Kauanui explores the politics of identity that operate within the Hawaiian community itself. She tackles the notion of continental Hawaiians in her 1998 paper, “Off-Island Hawaiians ‘Making’ Ourselves at ‘Home’...” Examining the current landscape, Kauanui points out that Hawaiians who live in Hawai‘i are privileged over those who live elsewhere. While Hawaiians leave their ancestral homeland for a variety of reasons, though most economic in nature, they receive treatment resembling second-class status within the Hawaiian community. Ironically, these families and individuals have to work harder and longer at maintaining a connection with their roots and their culture.

Rona Halualani (2002) describes an “internal hierarchy of Hawaiianness” based on specific identity positions in her book *In the Name of Hawaiians*. An “off-island Hawaiian” herself, like Kauanui, she remains cognizant of the power plays that exist within the Hawaiian community. The questions of who counts as a “real Hawaiian” or what criteria make a person “Hawaiian enough” are couched within a discourse of authenticity stemming from an American ideology of racial purity.

“Pure-bloods” are discursively framed as the original experts on Hawaiian tradition, a tradition once practiced with a sincerity now lost in the modern world. They hold the cultural power, they are the last links to the indigenous. Separate, yet connected, are the mixed-bloods or “hapas” (originally meaning “part”; part Hawaiian) and later generations of Hawaiians (born from the 1950s on), who serve as living reminders of modernity’s sweep over the Hawaiian culture. “Mixed-bloods” and later Hawaiian

generations are deemed Hawaiian but with different connotation. As modern subjects who are products of foreign contact with Hawaiians and born of a different world, they enact a much different Hawaiian culture than yesterday. (Halualani, 2002, p. 199)

Halualani creates a framework for understanding cultural power from an intra-group perspective. She reports that “pure-bloods” are often looked to as genuine repositories of cultural knowledge, presumably because the lack of intermarriage implies a lower degree of assimilation. On the other hand, “hapas” and later-generation Hawaiians are somehow removed from their native history, tradition, and culture, tending to be “born of a different world” (Halualani, 2002, p. 199). It is clear that the discourse and structure of the hierarchy of Hawaiianess outlined above can be linked to mutually supported notions of racial purity and cultural authenticity that severely marginalize mixed Hawaiian identity.

In a letter to the editor of *The Honolulu Advertiser* dated April 27, 2005, James R. Day attacked Hawaiian entitlements based on American racial logic and discourse. The letter, titled “Only Pure Hawaiians Have Case for Redress,” argued that anyone with less than full Hawaiian blood quantum is not truly Hawaiian. In Day’s (2005) own words, “I would like to know why people who are not 100 percent Hawaiian are considered ‘Hawaiians.’ Suppose a person is 50 percent Hawaiian and 50 percent Japanese. The current thinking is that they are Hawaiian. Why are they not Japanese?” Day’s question is steeped in a monoracial view of identity. In his mind, no allowance is made for a person to be both Hawaiian and Japanese. He also does not account for the fact that living in Hawai’i, an ancestral homeland for many, can weigh heavily as a factor in determining one’s identity.

Day bolstered his argument that only full-blooded Hawaiians should receive benefits by advancing the notion that hapa willingly forfeited their rights to redress by intermarrying with haole and others. “It seems to me that if a person isn’t 100 percent Hawaiian, there must have been a Hawaiian in his or her past who was OK with not maintaining a ‘pure culture’” (Day, 2005). By this line of reasoning, mixed Hawaiians do not merit a redress of grievance because they are not authentically Hawaiian; in effect, being hapa is not Hawaiian enough. Here again, the specter of blood quantum looms large as it did in early 20th-century American conceptions of



identity. Day's words mirror the design of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (1920), which originally sought to define beneficiaries as 100% Hawaiians before settling on the customary 50% rule.

Day's letter to the editor received a forceful retort from Nalani Markell in the May 18, 2005, edition of *The Honolulu Advertiser*. In response to Day's claim that racial purity is a measurement of moral standing when it comes to Hawaiian entitlements, Markell dismissed the argument as a racist tool aimed at further dividing the Hawaiian people. Instead she insightfully asked, "Why is it always a non-Hawaiian, as in the past, dictating how Hawaiians should view and acknowledge one another?" She went on to point out Day's ignorance of Hawaiian history and his apparent ethnocentric worldview. Markell (2005) concluded her letter with the following statement:

Today people of Hawaiian ancestry continue to endure having their ethnocultural identity stripped from them as dominant Asian and Caucasian groups continue to deny people of Hawaiian ancestry their right to be Hawaiian while at the same time stealing their ethnocultural identity passed down to them by their kupuna [ancestors] as hapa, which is the cultural term that defines and describes people of part-Hawaiian ancestry.

## EARLY 20TH-CENTURY IMAGES OF HAWAIIANNESS

Virginia Dominguez (1998) described a time during King Kalākaua's reign (1874–1891) when the "thinkability" of race perhaps first elicited investigation by Hawaiians. During a research visit to the Bishop Museum, Dominguez found a letter dated January 26, 1885, written by a Swedish physician, Dr. E. Arning, to His Majesty, Kalākaua. The letter was sent in response to an inquiry the king had commissioned concerning how best to classify Hawaiians according to Huxley's taxonomy. "What we do know is that 'race' and 'color' remained elusive as principles of classification and modes of reference at least into the 1880s" (Dominguez, 1998, p. 374). However, within a short period following U.S. annexation, Hawaiians came to understand the power and pervasiveness of racial thinking among Americans.

The absence of racial ideology among ancient Hawaiians did not last long following contact with Europeans and Americans. Through their travels abroad, 19th-century Hawaiians became aware of the currency of racial terms and how they could be used to subordinate others. Noenoe Silva (2004), in *Aloha Betrayed*, relayed a story from a 19th-century Hawaiian language newspaper in which a kanaka asks, “E Like Ana Anei na Hawaii me na Negero?” (Are Hawaiians going to be like the blacks?) The question was printed in the editorial section of *Ke Aloha ‘Āina* in response to the swell of American annexation efforts in 1894. It is clear that Hawaiians were aware of the disenfranchisement of blacks and Native Americans at the hands of white Americans and realized their fate could be the same if Hawai‘i became a U.S. territory (Silva, 2004, p. 148).

Silva (2004) revealed how mainstream American cartoons were used as a tool to dehumanize Queen Lili‘uokalani after the overthrow in 1893 and deny her request for a redress of grievances. The pictures were gross caricatures of a barefoot, childlike figure with dark skin and oversized facial features. The intent was to create a racial association between Hawaiians and blacks. Although in some cartoons the queen was wearing high heels, jewelry, and contemporary fashions, Silva’s interpretation of the message being conveyed is ultimately that “the queen cannot escape her nature, which is defined by her skin color and features” (Silva, 2004, p. 178).

At the turn of the 20th century, depictions of Hawaiians could be found in media ranging from tourist literature and memorabilia to scientific journals of various academic fields. The anthropologist Louis R. Sullivan provided a scholarly account of the Hawaiian phenotype. Published in the *American Anthropologist* in 1924, Sullivan set out to describe the variation of racial types found in Polynesia using data recorded by physical anthropologists.<sup>8</sup> He began by stating that Polynesians are a thoroughly nonhomogeneous group, a fact that tends to frustrate scientists and prevents a widely accepted classification to emerge. Nevertheless, his awareness of extant phenotypic diversity did not inhibit him from making the following broad characterization:

The Polynesian is a tall and remarkably well-proportioned type with a short head, a high and relatively narrow nose, straight or wavy black hair and a yellowish brown skin. Now, as a matter of fact, in no part of Polynesia from which we have present data, does this type make up the majority. (Sullivan, 1924, p. 22)

Sullivan's apparent double-talk in this passage reveals that phenotypic criteria tend to create false depictions when they are amalgamated. In other words, examining the specific phenotypes of subgroups does not always present a realistic picture of a larger group. Ironically, while Sullivan critiqued the viability of the "Polynesian type," he turned to a seemingly more discrete level of analysis. Looking specifically at Hawaiians, he asserted, "In Hawaii, in the Marquesas and to a lesser degree elsewhere in Polynesia, we find a short head combined with a broad nose, low stature and a dark skin" (Sullivan, 1924, pp. 24–25). Some of the aforementioned racialized features persist as markers of Hawaiianness among contemporary Hawaiians.

Sullivan's assessment of Hawaiians is noticeably more guarded than comments of other scientists of the same period. Although consensus on racial classification was not brokered between leading researchers, the fact remains that scientists continually approached Hawaiians with a racial lens in hand. In the following excerpt, the renowned anthropologist A. L. Kroeber (1921) attempted to classify Hawaiians according to customary race types. Although his article was published earlier, Kroeber mentioned Sullivan's work on behalf of the Bishop Museum.

The impression that there is a Negroid strain in the Hawaiians can hardly be escaped. Their resemblance to the less specialized Mongoloids, such as East Indians and American Indians, is even more striking. At the same time, so far as the Hawaiians may be representative of the Polynesians generally, there is no doubt that these people form a highly specialized race, not easy to include off-hand in one of the recognized primary divisions of mankind nor to ally specifically with any subdivision. (Kroeber, 1921, p. 131)

Kroeber went a few steps further by assessing the temperament and mental faculty of Hawaiians. He claimed, "So much is clear: their psychic life surely presents more sharply diverse facets than the coherent temperament of the American Indians" (Kroeber, 1921, p. 132). At the time this article was published, the U.S. Congress had been debating a homesteading act designed to rehabilitate Hawaiians and aid in the process of American assimilation. The inclusion of a 50% blood quantum requirement for all potential leaseholders was borrowed from longstanding U.S. government policies applied to Native American tribes.

A handful of salient points were made in Kroeber's short piece with regard to color consciousness among Hawaiians in the early 20th century. He asserted that "the Hawaiian Islands of today offer an unparalleled opportunity to the psychologist of race: there exists almost no color discrimination among the many races and nationalities" (Kroeber, 1921, p. 132). He provided no substantive data to support this claim and instead referenced high rates of intermarriage, which he believed reveals a lack of racial preference among island residents. In addition, he argued that there are relatively no social barriers based on race operating at the institutional level as well. In contrast to the continental United States, Kroeber (1921) claimed, "in no public matter, whether of residence, conveyance, business or pleasure, is there exclusion on the basis of nationality or color" (p. 132).

In addition to scientific journals' racialized representations of Hawaiians at this time, there were also images circulating in the popular media. The second volume of *Mid-Pacific Magazine* (1911) featured an article written by Thomas F. Sedgwick, titled "Hawaiian Types," in which Sedgwick noted, "There is an Hawaiian race today, but it is fast dying out." He lamented the fact that each year there are fewer "ancient Hawaiians" who speak their native tongue and can remember the days of the "early Kamehameha kings." He mentioned specifically the reduction in full-blooded Hawaiians, which according to his estimates, account for roughly one-tenth of the 250,000 natives who were present a century ago (Sedgwick, 1911, p. 557).

Sedgwick's article also describes the various ethnic groups residing in Hawai'i and the prominence of racial intermixing. There is a subtle yet consistent acknowledgment of the experimental nature of the islands in terms of race relations and a definite nod to American assimilation.

Perhaps Hawai'i is to remain a melting pot of the Pacific; perhaps it is to be Americanized by a flow of people from the mainland. In either case, there is room and good will in Hawai'i for the people of any race or nationality that can help to make Hawai'i a better place to live in. (Sedgwick, 1911, p. 563)

The article is flanked by black-and-white photographs of “Old Hawai‘i” with telling captions. The first image on page 556 is a picture taken of a kupuna wahine, an elderly Hawaiian woman. Her hair is white, her skin is wrinkled with age, and she is wearing a button-down dress that extends past her shoulders and up her neck. The caption reads, “Study of a Pure Hawaiian Type.” Page 557 contains a picture of a kupuna kāne, an elderly Hawaiian man, holding a long stick and squatting in a grassy field. The caption below the photograph reads, “Old, Old Hawai‘i.” Also, “A Portugee-Hawaiian [sic]” is the caption attributed to a photo on page 562 of a bearded old man in rustic work clothes and a broad-rim hat standing next to a donkey.

Such images and loaded captions containing notions of race and a dying past are powerful public messages. As the article itself argues, Hawaiians are being overrun by modernity, and relatively few “pure Hawaiians” remain on the land. The image of the kupuna wahine is particularly suited to make this argument because it links racial purity with older generations, implying that the “true” Hawaiian culture will die with individuals such as her. In line with Halualani’s comments, the implication is that less than full-blooded Hawaiians practice a different—and less authentic—native culture. The photograph of the old “Portugee-Hawaiian” also emphasizes the fact that racial mixing has been occurring over a long time in the islands, which has ultimately diluted a “pure” Hawaiian bloodline.

Six years later, in 1917, *Mid-Pacific Magazine* published a similar story. Once again the anonymous writer placed a strong focus on race and appearance. For instance, one photograph shows an adolescent Hawaiian girl wearing beautiful lei. The accompanying caption reads, “Here we see a little lei girl of full Hawaiian blood...” On the following page, a young Hawaiian boy is photographed wearing a button-down shirt. The caption: “A full blooded Hawaiian youth...speaks English and thinks in Hawaiian.”

Even more provocative are captions that collapse race and desirable traits in depictions of hapa individuals. A Hawaiian woman who is also a quarter white is described as attractive because she embodies a particular racial combination. “Sometimes a tinge of Anglo-Saxon blood lends a softness that is not seen in the full blooded Hawaiian features.” The approval of race mixing is not limited to females and is also evident in pictures of mixed Hawaiian males. A picture of a Hawaiian man is accompanied by a caption that reads, “Foreign blood very often lends a certain strength to the Hawaiian features. Above is a Portuguese-Hawaiian.”

Images such as these tend to naturalize notions of Hawaiianness along racial criteria and become enduring reference points that people use to measure identity. The very title of the 1911 article, “Hawaiian Types,” makes an implicit claim that there is a continuum of Hawaiian categories and bestows authenticity on full-blooded members. Focusing on racial purity is a particularly American practice stemming from a long history of race consciousness and a systemic desire to separate blacks from whites (Omi & Winant, 1994). When the United States came to power in Hawai‘i just prior to the turn of the 20th century, a new discourse was set in place. As a result, it is often the image of the full-blooded Hawaiian that comes to mind when people, non-Hawaiian and Hawaiian alike, imagine Hawaiianness.<sup>9</sup> Still, the racialization of Hawaiians through 20th-century visual representation persists to this day and has the effect of homogenizing an incredibly diverse people into one monolithic group.

## CONTESTING RACE, EMBRACING DIVERSITY: EXAMPLES FROM PERSONAL WRITING

The preceding section demonstrates how processes of racialization came about in Hawai‘i along with the imposition of American political authority in the early 20th century. A convergence of racial discourses from the scientific community, U.S. popular culture, and the tourism industry washed over Hawaiians at the dawn of the 20th century. Previously, indigenous perspectives of identity were rooted in expansive connections made through genealogy, place, rank, and ability rather than deductive and individualized notions of race (‘Ī‘i, 1995; Kamakau, 1992; Malo, 1997). Since contact with Americans was made, awareness of the concept of race and the tendency to measure difference in terms of skin color and observable features continue to hold profound implications for Hawaiians.

The writings of John Dominis Holt capture the inherent tension surrounding Hawaiian identity in the mid to late 20th century. Born in 1919, Holt belonged to a landed haole family with ancestral ties to Hawaiian ali‘i (chiefs, rulers). He grew up during a time when Hawaiian culture was heavily supplanted by American assimilation. He attended Kamehameha Schools briefly before graduating from Roosevelt High School. Although he attended Columbia University (1943 to 1946), he did not earn a degree.

Holt held a deep passion for Hawaiian history, language, and culture. He dedicated much of his life to raising the native consciousness in Hawai‘i and restoring pride to other part-Hawaiians like him. His second marriage was to Frances “Patches” Damon, a descendant of the wealthy banker, Samuel Mills Damon, who was a close friend and business partner with Pauahi and Charles Bishop. During the 1950s to 1990s, Holt and his wife were tireless community activists who, through their resources and notoriety, worked to stave off rampant development on O‘ahu. During his lifetime, Holt gained fame for being an especially gifted writer and raconteur.

In 1964 Holt authored and published *On Being Hawaiian*, a reflective manuscript that chronicles his family history while making strong statements about the value and respect owed to people of Hawaiian ancestry. Holt explains that for his family, “We grew up, deeply respecting our bicultural heritage” (Holt, 1964/1995, p. 11). His grandparents spoke the language and ate foods of Hawai‘i, and his ‘ohana (family) trained him in both Hawaiian and world history. In addition to Hawaiian ancestry, he also claims Corsican, Spanish, American, and British descent. He explains that the book itself “came out of me like an anguished child” (Holt, 1964/1995, p. 7). The transformative pain he experienced stems from his willingness to explore his multidentivity and to share his personal struggle with the public.

Holt’s subjectivity, as a self-identified “part Hawaiian” with European and American ancestry, connects him directly with broader historical processes that continue to shape island life. His social status is impressive: descending from *kaukau ali‘i* (subchiefs) and a well-to-do *haole* family. Given his mixed heritage, Holt can be positioned alongside other part-Hawaiians, who together form a critical mass for discussions about Hawaiian identity and multiethnicity. As Holt explains, “There are many pure Hawaiians; but numerically there are more part Hawaiians—many more...who, because of their parentage, might also draw from cultures of Asia, Europe, and the New World for some of their ethnically determined feelings” (Holt, 1964/1995, p. 11).

The bulk of the book deals with the contentious question: What is a Hawaiian? In response, Holt poetically describes the cultural and historic uniqueness of the Hawaiian people. For him, being Hawaiian involves a blending of ancestry, sentiment, and commitment, all of which connect him—physically and spiritually—to Hawai‘i. Enduring ties to the land and the aboriginal people of Hawai‘i are always foremost in Holt’s mind. The course of his life experience and other

aspects of his heritage do not overshadow his sense of Hawaiianness, nor do they become washed away by his Hawaiian ancestry. Drawing from his own experience and interpretation, Holt conceives of his identity as dynamic and multilayered.

In Hawaii, where I was born, I am an American: a product of the historic process as it unfolds itself within the limits of the United States; but in Hawaii I am statistically, as well as ethnically, a keiki hanau o ka aina—a child born of the land—and a part Hawaiian. Although I was educated in American schools and college; and although I am broadly conditioned to appreciate the music, painting, literature, the scientific thought and philosophies of the world...I am at heart always something of a Hawaiian. (Holt, 1964/1995, p. 12)

Elsewhere in the book Holt asks, given the circumstances of the present, does being Hawaiian matter anymore? He is decidedly distressed at what he considers to be the loss of cultural consciousness among Hawaiians of his generation. He is adamant that Hawaiians be recognized for their many historical achievements and be treated on par with other cultures of the world. To him, the answer is an emphatic “yes.” His writings argue that being Hawaiian matters, and from a global perspective, the Hawaiian people matter too. Holt systematically identifies what Hawaiians should be proud of and dismantles familiar sources of shame such as the ancient practice of human sacrifice and a perceived failure to adjust to the demands of modern life. “They tell us all kinds of things, but what do we tell ourselves?” (Holt, 1964/1995, p. 19).

While Holt acknowledges the persistence of negative stereotypes attached to being Hawaiian, he instead uses a strengths-based approach when imagining the future of his people. He points to infrequently cited examples of Hawaiians who have made successful careers as educators, artists, doctors, lawyers, and men and women who hold esteemed positions in business and politics. He also looks toward the children: “All around I see the evidence among Hawaiians of a renewed interest in themselves, and the future, and their community...[They] will grow up to be less the victims of their heritage than I and my generation were” (Holt, 1964/1995, p. 20).



Elsewhere, Holt articulates the raw feelings he experienced when fellow Hawaiians shunned him as a “haole boy.” In a short story titled “The Pool,” he fondly recalls summers spent with his family at Kawela Bay on the north shore of O’ahu. He would often play near a deep, naturally formed tidepool that was connected to the sea. He creates an image of this place for his readers: “Freshwater fed into it from underground arteries, blended with warmer water pushed in by the tide from the sea through a volcanic umbilical cord” (Holt, 1989, p. 20). From the time he was a small child, four or five years old, he remembers being told stories of how the dark blue-green waters were home to an ancient goddess who could manifest herself as giant strands of limu, or seaweed.

It was during a summer vacation that Holt first befriended an old Hawaiian man, a caretaker of the property, who taught him cultural knowledge and practices passed along in his family. Together they would present offerings at a secret kū’ula, or a fishing shrine; the old man prayed in Hawaiian and Holt would mutter a mixture of English and Hawaiian. They spent a lot of time in the water, diving deep into the mysterious pool and swimming up the coast with sharks the old man identified as ‘aumākua (ancestral guardians) and would address by name. The two shared a close relationship and a special bond despite their different backgrounds.

I was blond-haired. Exposed for weeks to the summer sun when we made long stays at Kawela, I became almost platinum blond. The old man was bearded, tall and thin. Still muscular. He was pure Hawaiian. Blond though my hair might be and my skin fair, I was nonetheless three-eighths Hawaiian. I think this captured the old man’s fancy—often he would say to me in pidgin, “You one haole boy, yet you one Hawaiian. I know you Hawaiian—you mama hapa haole, you papa hapa haole. How come you so white? Your hair ke’oke’o?” He would laugh, draw me close to him and rub his scruffy beard against my face as if in doing this he would rub some of his brownness off and ink forever the dark rich tones of a calabash into my pale skin. (Holt, 1989, p. 24)

The previous excerpt reveals Holt's awareness of the outward differences between himself and the old man. Nevertheless the story, overall, captures the intense feeling of belonging that Holt felt upon being received as a Hawaiian by such an esteemed kupuna (elder). In his mind, the old man was capable of seeing past Holt's light complexion and blond hair to the part of his identity that is sometimes less visible, his Hawaiian ancestry. In this way, the old man recognizes Holt's bicultural ancestry and refers to him simultaneously as "one haole boy" yet "one Hawaiian." His awareness of the boy's hapa haole parentage is what ultimately informs the old man's judgment and directs his attitude toward Holt. When the family would gather in the evening to talk story and share family histories, the boy would often fall asleep in the old man's lap.

One day, when Holt ventured past the pool to the caretaker's hut he was greeted by a strange and distasteful smell. When he saw a body covered with flies lying still on the bed, he realized that his elderly friend had died. He quickly rushed home in tears, but instead of telling his family about the gruesome discovery, he decided to share the news with the old man's relatives. The young men promptly ran to the shack and later set fire to the corpse. Holt hid in the shrubbery near the path to the hut when the anger and emotion of the young men turned toward him.

I ran from the hau bushes toward the pool. One of the men saw me and yelled, "Go home, boy! Go home!" "Git da hell outa heah, you goddam haole!" another one shouted. I was angry and stunned in not being accepted as Hawaiian by the old man's nephews. (Holt, 1989, p. 28)

The passage above contrasts sharply with the preceding excerpt where Holt revels in the warmth of a fellow Hawaiian's embrace. Instead, in this example he is wholly dismissed as a "goddam haole" by the old man's relatives even though he informed them of the old man's passing. Holt is confused and saddened by the turn of events and returns home. When his family hears that the caretaker has passed away, they begin to share stories of how remarkable the old man was. He was a famed fisherman, an expert diver, and a respected kahuna (healer). Although Holt's family affectionately called him Boboda, his real name was Pali Kapihe.

Through his published works, John Dominis Holt left a significant legacy of pride among the Hawaiian community. Much of his writing, published between the 1960s and 1980s, buttressed the movement for native rights that occurred both locally and globally. His words helped foster a resurgence of cultural consciousness and pride in being Hawaiian during a poststatehood era when many island residents were content with affirming their newly established American nationality. More than anything, Holt raised penetrating questions about how the past meets up with the present. His driving assertion is that history and heritage are key components of Hawaiian identity. “We are links to the ancients: connected by inheritance to their mana [life force, essence], their wisdom, their superb appreciation of what it is to be human” (Holt, 1964/1995, p. 9).

Similar emotion, arising from a lack of being a recognizable Hawaiian, can be found in the personal writing of others. “Hapa Haole Wahine,” a poem written by Lani Ka’ahumanu (1991), captures the tension and ambiguity surrounding mixed identity by focusing on related concepts of race and gender. The poem chronicles Ka’ahumanu’s life experiences, which continue to inform her work as an author, activist, poet, educator, and organizer.<sup>10</sup> Overall, the text of the poem reads like an indictment of the American social system, which allows oppression to be visited upon mixed-heritage and bisexual people; it is part confessional, part manifesto.

Ka’ahumanu begins her poem with a familiar confession. While growing up she never really felt like she fit in and could not fully understand why. Reflecting on her childhood, she explains, “I was raised with menehune and leprechauns, sushi and corned beef, flower leis and Ikebana, kimono and aloha shirts, chopsticks and silverware, miso and tuna casserole” (Ka’ahumanu, 1991, p. 308). The multicultural upbringing she describes is not uncommon in Hawai’i or within families that have recently left the islands after long-term residence. Ka’ahumanu was conceived in Hawai’i, born in Canada, and raised mostly on the continental United States. Oftentimes, when she shares her cultural roots and ethnicities with others, she is dismissed for not looking the part. The frustration she experienced so many times before now becomes a reminder of her ownership in a strong multidentity.

I never want to hear  
that I don't look Hawaiian  
that I don't look Japanese  
that I'm lucky I don't look my age  
that I can't be, that I couldn't be  
Why make such a big deal about it?  
Why is it so important?

. . . . .

I am brown  
I am yellow  
I am white  
I am a proud, visible and vocal mixed heritage multicultural woman.  
I claim it all and have no shame for it is the truth...  
(Ka'ahumanu, 1991, pp. 320–321)

It is easy to become upset when people deride you for not looking like the cultural group you claim to belong to. Ka'ahumanu's poem conveys the difficulty that exists when people assert multiplicity and hybridity within the confines of a mono-racial society. Here a familiar ultimatum is made to choose membership in one racial group over all others. For indigenous peoples there is also an added expectation to appear recognizably native when claiming a native voice. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999, p. 72) explained that the notion of the "authentic, essentialist, deeply spiritual other" is closely tied to 19th-century views of race and racial categories. Modern Hawaiians do not usually resemble lithographs circa the 1800s. Since that time, we have grown in number and intermarried considerably. However, a strong tendency persists to reduce a diverse and vibrant community of Hawaiians into a homogeneous and unchanging group—frozen in time to serve as a lasting memory of a colonial first encounter.

## EXPANDING THE ETHNOGRAPHIC ‘UPENA (NET)

So, what does a Hawaiian look like? I received valuable perspectives on this issue by the po‘e ha‘awina I “talked story” with over the past 18 months. For some participants, the idea of looking Hawaiian is a foreign concept that plays no significant role in their lives. Others were decidedly more invested in the question because it continues to affect their acceptance as Hawaiians *by* Hawaiians. As discussed above, racial thinking—and the foreign worldview it perpetuates—is a colonial design. Nevertheless, the responses of many po‘e ha‘awina illustrate how a dominant discourse of racial homogeneity tends to mask the real diversity that exists in the Hawaiian community.

Historically, Hawai‘i has been lauded as a racial paradise and model multicultural state (Adams, 1937; Hormann, 1972; Lind, 1980). While Hawai‘i’s discourse of ethnic harmony has helped to attract tourists to the islands, the narrative itself has been criticized for being ahistorical, nonstructural, and overly simplistic (Edles, 2004; Okamura, 1998; Trask, 1999). When I conversed with po‘e ha‘awina about their experiences with racism and discrimination, the majority described encounters on the U.S. continent in communities where white ethnic majorities exist. I asked a 27-year-old part-Hawaiian woman and native language speaker if she had ever been treated poorly based on her appearance alone.

Yeah, when I lived in the mainland for a little bit, I did. They couldn’t quite figure out what we were so they just assumed, like I had mentioned earlier, that we were Mexican or ethnic. So some of the people, they treated us a little bit different. And I think even if you don’t, if you’re not a cultural practitioner or anything, when you grow up in the islands and especially if you’re part Hawaiian I think you do things a little bit differently, the way you carry yourself, the way you talk, the way you interact with other people. So I think people did look at us differently. We were nice but we didn’t quite fit in a lot of the time. But I haven’t really [experienced racism], luckily, because I think I don’t look pure Hawaiian. But I know when my uncle went up

[to the Mainland] he had a hard time. And my aunty can tell you when her husband went up, he had people following him 'cause of his looks; he's like 80% Hawaiian. So he had a totally different experience. My dad also, we went to Utah, and some small drugstore company guy followed him around the whole store.

In the excerpt above, the speaker admits that while on the “mainland,” she and members of her family were treated differently based on their “looks” and by the way they carried themselves. Whites, as the dominant ethnic group from both socioeconomic and political perspectives, often misidentify Hawaiians as either Hispanic or Native American. The woman considers herself fortunate because she had not encountered a high degree of racism unlike other relatives. In her mind, what separates her experience from theirs is the fact that she does not look very Hawaiian and instead appears visibly mixed. “I’m not dark and because I don’t really have a Hawaiian nose or anything [laughs] I haven’t experienced as much racism, but I know people in my family, who look more Hawaiian, that have.” Presumably because of their dark brown skin and nonwhite features, her uncle and father were looked on with suspicion.

On the continental United States, color remains a salient indicator of ethnicity, and lines dividing whites and nonwhites have been historically drawn. In this context, recognizable Hawaiians would presumably fall into the nonwhite category and could experience disadvantage. However, in the current politicized atmosphere of Hawai‘i, the situation may be reversed. As Rona Halualani (2002) suggested, the internal hierarchy of Hawaiianness privileges purebloods over hapas. I asked the same young woman about her experiences as a mixed person who went to school and now works in communities with high populations of Hawaiians.

There were times when I felt singled out because of my looks. I went to school to be an immersion-school teacher so I was around a lot of Hawaiians that looked very Hawaiian and I thought, “I’m a lot whiter than these people. I don’t look like them.” So there may have been some times when I felt a little bit uncomfortable, but I knew that if I just carried myself in a way that was culturally appropriate and I was respectful, that it wasn’t really gonna be an issue.

The previous excerpt suggests that a person who is visibly of Hawaiian and haole descent might feel “singled out” in the company of other Hawaiians without any real confrontation occurring. The speaker is uncomfortable when she realizes she is “a lot whiter than these people” and does not necessarily “look like them.” However, she manages to overcome the temptation to quit the program by allowing her actions and values to determine her cultural and ancestral identity over time.

An 18-year-old immersion school graduate shared with me a similar story. She describes her nationalities as Hawaiian, Chinese, Portuguese, and German. While culturally she feels a closer connection to her Hawaiian side, she acknowledges that her haoleness is represented more in her appearance. The awareness she has regarding her looks first came about in her family and later carried over into school.

Because I’m the lightest [skinned] in my family, they would think that I was adopted or they just didn’t think I was Hawaiian at all. And still to this day I have to remind people I am Hawaiian. It’s something that before used to hurt me. “How come people can’t tell I’m Hawaiian?” Now I know in my heart what I am and it doesn’t really bother me anymore...But it was hard. And in my [immersion] class too I was the lightest so I was automatically the odd man out. But I made it known that I am Hawaiian and that we all look different. I try not to make anyone feel that way either.

The question the speaker raises in her story is a crucial one, “How come people can’t tell I’m Hawaiian?” The reality is that nowadays people have been largely conditioned to perceive Hawaiianness in line with racial criteria such as skin color, facial features, and body shape. The image of Hawaiians first constructed in the scientific, anthropological, and tourist literature over a hundred years ago remains the reference point with which Hawaiianness is judged today. In turn, what gets erased is the incredible diversity that exists within the Hawaiian community, a group that continues to grow in size and influence. The speaker recognizes that Hawaiians “all look different.” Her understanding of diversity and its positive prospects transforms her pain into action when she tries “not to make anyone feel that way either.”

## COLOR CONSCIOUSNESS: “BROWN” AND “WHITE” HAWAIIANS

A surprising theme I encountered in my research centers on the use of color terms to distinguish different types of Hawaiians. As one might expect, skin color was a prominent social marker discussed in my talk-story interviews. Some po‘e ha‘awina made offhand remarks about being a “brown Hawaiian,” a “white Hawaiian,” or even a “fair Hawaiian,” whereas others went into great detail to explain the significance of the terms in social and interpersonal contexts. From my research, what becomes clear is that Hawaiians of various hues experience the world and their position within it very differently.

One afternoon I attended a conference where I heard a man speak about his views on Hawaiian indigenous education. In the course of his storytelling, the man identified himself as a Hawaiian, born in Honolulu and raised in ‘Ewa Beach. However, he went further, describing himself as a “brown Hawaiian.” As he explained, being brown ultimately means being identified as both a Hawaiian and a local wherever he goes. From this position he is highly conscious of stereotypic images people have of Hawaiians. Unfortunately, many Hawaiian stereotypes continue to be negative in nature, stemming from a recent colonial history.

I sought out the presenter after the session and asked him if he would agree to participate in my research. We met at his home and sat outside listening to the wind in the trees and the chickens in his yard. After a short time I asked him to elaborate on the meaning of the phrase “brown Hawaiian.” He explained that it is a label he sometimes uses to remind people that there are different kinds of Hawaiians and that we often face different challenges based on others’ perceptions of us.

It’s not like I can distance myself at any time from being Hawaiian, which now I feel is a good ting. Cuz before when I would talk to older folks, eh brown wasn’t cool. Even when I was growing up being brown wasn’t necessarily cool. So it wasn’t something dat you bragged about. It is today, but it’s more a kū‘e [resistance] type ting though.



For this man, choosing to label himself “brown” is a conscious political statement. Referring to himself as a “brown Hawaiian” is one way to demonstrate cultural pride. At the same time, in so doing he succeeds in calling attention to the stereotypes levied against “Hawaiian-looking” persons that may or may not affect those who pass in society as non-Hawaiians. When he was growing up, “being brown wasn’t necessarily cool.” In contrast, nowadays he sees no shame at all in being Hawaiian, and consequently, he loves being brown. As we move forward as a lāhui, it is critical that we acknowledge and welcome different experiences of what it is like to be Hawaiian.

## THE RACIALIZED CHECKLIST

I talked story with another research participant about her views on the color issue after surfing Kewalo’s, a surf spot on the edge of Honolulu Harbor. She is a 27-year-old woman raised in Kona, Hawai‘i, who now works for a prominent Hawaiian agency. As she admits, she tends to be identified as Hawaiian by others because of her dark skin, brown eyes, and the place where she works. In contrast to her sister, who has a lighter complexion and blonde hair, family members and friends often refer her to as the “brown one.” In our conversation below, she explains how her coloring influences the way people perceive her, and that being recognized as a Hawaiian immediately conjures expectations in the minds of others.

**PO‘E HA‘AWINA (PH):** In any case, me being the brown one has meant that I’m automatically accepted as Hawaiian. At least in Hawai‘i, I’m automatically accepted as Hawaiian. There’s never any question for almost anybody about what my ethnicity is. Or if I am questioned it’s like, “Well, I know you’re Hawaiian, but you must be something else ‘cause I can see that there’s something else.”

**BL:** Mmm hmm, mm hmm.

**PH:** For the most part, just right off the bat I look Hawaiian to most people. It's really only those people that are really discriminating where you get stuff like, "Oh, I can tell that you're hapa." There are very few times that I've been told—one of my coworkers tells me this—I look haole, it's just that I'm colored different. But very rarely does that happen, for the most part people just consider me to be Hawaiian, which means that I'm automatically accepted, but then there's also that expectation. There's a level of expectation that I can speak my language, which I cannot. There's an expectation that I know everything there is to know about the culture, that I dance in a hālau [hula group], that I know how to make lei and all of this.

**BL:** There's the checklist again, right?

**PH:** The checklist. There's an expectation that I got all of that 'ike [knowledge]. And when I don't have those things, then I'm not good enough. Or it feels to me like I'm not good enough. And I struggle with this today. I struggled with this last week when I went to a conference. It's like I'm not Hawaiian enough for some Hawaiians.... At the same time, because I'm Hawaiian and I work for a Hawaiian organization, people assume I'm an activist. Automatically I'm an activist, which I am not comfortable with because I do not necessarily consider my thoughts and beliefs and ideas to be those that are one of an activist.

**BL:** It's hard for some people to believe that being Hawaiian doesn't mean you have to be an activist.

**PH:** Right. So there's that element and also the other that because I'm Hawaiian and I guess can be physically identified as one, in my classes—especially in my MBA classes I noticed this because there were really no other Hawaiians in the MBA [program]—I become a mouthpiece for my entire ethnicity. I become a mouthpiece for all Hawaiian people everywhere, which I am very, very uncomfortable with. It drives me crazy! So the fact that I

appear Hawaiian and people identify me as that, on the one hand I'm not Hawaiian enough and on the other half of it I speak for every Hawaiian everywhere, you know? [Laughs]

When I left the interview, I was struck by the conviction of the young woman's words. She is a confident, articulate, and honest person. Her comments about feeling "not Hawaiian enough for some Hawaiians" and yet being "a mouthpiece for all Hawaiian people" rang in my ears with a mixture of truth and irony. I heard others make similar remarks, but no one had put it so plainly to me before.

The key to the puzzle has to do with the notion of a "racialized checklist" we discussed. But where did such a checklist originate, and how does it contend with present-day diversity? One would presume that early 20th-century representations of Hawaiianness were replaced over time. However, the colonially constructed images largely persist in the classification of recent generations of Hawaiians. The process of racialization, in fact, forces a convergence between ideas of race, color, and culture.<sup>11</sup>

The counterbalance to "brown" Hawaiians is "white" or "pale" Hawaiians.<sup>12</sup> Mostly, but not exclusively comprised of individuals of Hawaiian and haole ancestry, people who self-identify as "white Hawaiians" often are conscious of the disrapture their appearance creates in the minds of others. For example, a 50-year-old Honolulu man who earns a living researching and writing about Hawai'i's past routinely encounters incredulity when meeting people familiar with his work.

What's interesting now is...there are a fair number of people who know who I am just from having read my name. And what I find quite frequently is if people come to me and I meet them in person—if they know who I am or they've been given my name, "Go talk to him," which happens very often—the two reactions I usually get are: one, you're a lot younger than I thought you were...and two, there is a level of awareness that I do have Hawaiian ancestry and so when people meet me it's quite common for them to say, "Oh I thought you were gonna look Hawaiian. I thought you were going to be an old Hawaiian man." In that sense, of course,

I don't fill that physical thing *at all*. So it's not so much that I have to prove it to people, it's more that they already expect it from me, and I don't live up to their expectations of what a Hawaiian should look like.

In a separate conversation, the speaker referred to the look he receives when people find out about his Hawaiian ancestry. He describes it as a combination of a blank stare with a wide-open mouth. As he remarks above, the fact that he doesn't "live up to their expectations of what a Hawaiian should look like" evidences how successful processes of racialization have been on the Hawaiian community. In other words, emphasis on phenotypic indicators alone tends to distort and misrepresent the diversity of Hawaiians. The speaker considers himself to be a Hawaiian who often gets mistaken for being "pure" white. Indeed, his light skin and blue eyes sharply contrast with a race-based model of Hawaiianness. Again, although the majority of Hawaiians share haole ancestry, there is incredible variation in the phenotypes presented.

Assuming that being labeled "white" might occasionally invite privilege, I asked the Honolulu man whether he felt lucky to be able to pass as haole. The question led him to compare his experience in Hawai'i and in a private boarding school on the East Coast. He responded quickly but somewhat flatly:

Not really. When I became aware of it I was more—I thought about it more in terms of—if you look really haole there are a lot of social situations where you're gonna be in trouble than if you looked non-haole. I clearly remember when I used to go to the stadium—the old Honolulu Stadium for football games—in this total mass of people there would always be these moke [tough Hawaiian] guys that looked sort of threatening. And if you were a skinny haole guy, then you needed to be on your toes about that. However, when I went to boarding school in Connecticut, it was very different—I mean looking haole was of much more use over there.... If I had looked nonwhite, it would have been a totally different situation in a very Caucasian, very white social setting, which it [Connecticut] was.

The speaker, now in his 50s, would have been a teenager in the 1960s, the decade immediately following Hawai'i's admission as a U.S. state in 1959. During this time, many island residents affirmed their nationality as Americans. However, as the previous story illustrates, ethnic and class tensions persist between locals and haole despite a shared sense of nationalism. Although the speaker is Hawaiian by ancestry and can claim descent from well-known ali'i, he is nevertheless cognizant of his white appearance and has been for most of his life.

In another talk-story interview, I discussed what it feels like to be the palest Hawaiian in the room. For some po'e ha'awina, being mistaken for a haole is commonplace. A young woman from Kaua'i shared a story about how people often comment on appearances, which can affect dynamics within the family. As the excerpt below reveals, her brother's daughter is considered "Hawaiian looking" and sometimes receives more outward approval than her "fair"-skinned children.

I work in Hawaiian communities and I've had people tell me, "Oh you, you're so white though" [laughs] 'cause I'm not dark, I'm just, you know, I'm a fair Hawaiian [laughs]... It happens even among our kids 'cause my kids are fair and my brother's daughter is really Hawaiian looking. She's dark and somebody was like, "Wow she's a brownie Hawaiian, yay!" [high pitched voice]. And then [referring to] my kids, "They're so fair, they're the fair Hawaiians." So yeah, it's definitely true, and I think there are different expectations and perceptions based on whether you look really Hawaiian and you're a brown Hawaiian, or if you look really fair and you're a fair Hawaiian.

These comments illustrate how Hawaiians may be divided into types based on skin color. In turn, "brown" and "fair" Hawaiians may receive different treatment both within and beyond the Hawaiian community. Below, a mother who works for a Hawaiian organization reflects on the preoccupation with Hawaiian looks. For her, it is reminiscent of the Jim Crow period, following the end of the civil war and before the civil rights movement, in the southern United States.

I actually had a coworker tell me—and I think she was joking. But you know when you joke there's always an element of truth in there, right? I guess she's frustrated. She goes, "You know, when you watch Kamehameha [Schools] song contest on TV? You don't see any Hawaiian faces." [Pause] I always thought that every single face up there was Hawaiian. But she thought they should make it part of the admission procedure that you should look Hawaiian to get into Kamehameha. And she's someone I respect and is a friend of mine. I just looked at her like [expression of puzzlement]. I thought to myself, "So I don't have the right to go there? 'Cause I don't have dark skin and ūpepe [broad] nose?" I wanted to say something, but I just blew it off.... It's like now we're back in the South in the '50s. We're discriminating on the basis of what skin color you have.

## CONCLUSION: SYNTHESIS AND IMPLICATIONS

I have returned to Mākua Valley numerous times since first visiting there in 2003. The U.S. Army continues to occupy the ahupua'a and restricts public access. As a teacher, I have taken students there to learn about the history of the area and the politics that surround 'āina (land), culture, and identity in Hawai'i. Over time I have made friends with the folks of Mālama Mākua, who remain committed to restoring the valley to its premilitary condition. I have also spent many hours talking story with the Hawaiian woman who at first mistook me for a haole piha (full haole). Our conversations are always interesting and lively. I have come to learn that what matters most are not the first impressions we make but the lasting relationships we share.

This article has presented some of the lived experience of contemporary Hawaiians who are not typically "Hawaiian looking." To be sure, there are hapa, like the man I met at the conference and the woman from Kona, who are perceived as "brown Hawaiians." However, the bulk of po'e ha'awina whom I interviewed expressed concern over not being "Hawaiian enough." As individuals whose mixedness does

not readily reveal visual ties to Hawai'i, their perspectives on the politics of native authenticity are especially illuminating. In the preceding pages I provided examples of ongoing racialization and its effects on real people. I critiqued the racializing aspects of 20th-century representations of Hawaiianness, which originated in the scientific literature and spread to more popular media. To broaden the analysis, I included content from public writings and several talk-story interviews. I conclude now with a discussion of specific implications for Hawaiian well-being.

First, Hawaiians need to recognize that 20th-century American racialization causes both personal and collective fragmentation among our people. We must actively challenge these discourses whenever we encounter them. As a result of a specific and purposeful history, we have unknowingly been equipped with a set of measuring sticks for determining what “a Hawaiian” is or how much “more Hawaiian” one person is over another. The personal stories shared with me by po'e ha'awina illustrate how these tools produce real harm among our people, especially when used by fellow Hawaiians. The majority of Hawaiians nowadays are hapa by ancestry and when seen through a racial lens may or may not be “recognizably Hawaiian.” It is imperative that nation-building activities effectively address the mixed-heritage composition of today's lāhui (nation), which we know was present from the days of the Hawaiian kingdom.

Second, we must continue to amplify Hawaiian perspectives of identity and challenge the limitations inherent within an American ideology of race. Classifications of people based on color and phenotypes are not indigenous concepts for Hawaiians; rather, rank, ancestry, birthplace, and ability were used to measure social status and identity from a historical perspective (I'i, 1995; Kamakau, 1992; Malo, 1997).<sup>13</sup> At the same time, these indicators spring from an ever-encompassing sense of spirituality, which simultaneously anchors Hawaiians to the 'āina and connects them to the realm of pō where ancestors and spirits reside. Precisely because a Hawaiian framework of identity is based on bilateral kinship and genealogical ties, there is room for diversity and multiplicity to thrive in our community. Unlike American society, which often pressures individuals to choose one piece of their ethnic heritage over all others, Hawaiians have a longstanding history of being comfortable with their mixedness.

Third, we should take time to learn from each other's experiences of being Hawaiian. Over and over again, as I talked story with po'e ha'awina, I was reacquainted with the fact that the colonization of Hawai'i has been a deep and uneven

process—so deep that it extends into areas we do not often consider, and so uneven that it affects people in profoundly different ways. While some Hawaiians may live out their lives unconcerned with how others perceive their cultural identity, others are reminded on a daily basis that they do not conform to a stereotypical image of Hawaiianness. The emergence of color consciousness among Hawaiians and the tendency to assess others with a racial lens originated with the imposition of American ideology and government in Hawai‘i. Representations of Hawaiians gleaned from scientific and popular media are anchored in a pure racial type that is unrealistic given the contemporary ethnic mixture among Hawaiians.

In the interest of Hawaiian well-being, we need to remember that power rests in diversity. Two hundred years of intermarriage and cultural exchange with malihini (strangers) have indeed taught us much. We have made choices, gathered experience, and gained knowledge. As Jonathan Osorio (2001) so adequately remarked, “‘Ae [yes], even in the face of a most determined effort to assimilate and quiet us, we persist” (p. 17). As we remain confident in our enduring collective spirit, which preserves us and keeps us Hawaiian, we can, together, be Hawaiian enough to face future challenges and persist as a unified lāhui.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brandon C. Ledward was born and raised in Kailua, O‘ahu. He works as an analyst at Kamehameha Schools in the Strategic Planning and Implementation Group, Research and Evaluation Division. He received his PhD in cultural anthropology from the University of Hawai‘i–Mānoa (UHM) in December 2007. In addition to being a researcher, he has lectured in anthropology at UHM and Hawai‘i Pacific University.

## NOTES

1 Throughout this article, I do not italicize any Hawaiian words. Doing so is a purposeful choice in line with the argument laid out by Noenoe Silva (2004), which states ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i is not a foreign language in Kō Hawai‘i Pae ‘Āina (The Hawaiian Islands). Although I do not offer detailed translations of Hawaiian terms used, I provide the reader with glossed definitions upon first usage.

2 For more information on the ethnohistory of Mākua Valley, see *Mākua Means Parents: A Brief Cultural History of Mākua Valley* by Marion Kelly and Nancy Aleck (1997).

3 I use the term “Hawaiian” when referring to individuals who have a genealogical connection to the aboriginal population residing in Hawai‘i prior to 1778. While “Hawaiian” may not be the preferred word choice for some readers, it was the label most often used by my research participants. By employing this term specifically, I mean to emphasize its native and indigenous connotations and challenge those who would use it merely as a marker of residence—in a similar fashion to “New Yorker” or “Californian.”

4 I place identity labels like “haole” (white), “hapa,” and “brown Hawaiian” in lowercase because they are not traditional racial/ethnic groups but rather more local and contingent terms of identification. In contrast, “Hawaiian,” “Filipino,” and “Japanese” are listed in uppercase because they are nationalities in addition to racial categories and are more commonly known. The terms “white” and “black” are lowercased in the article because I am critiquing the racialization of these and other groups.

5 The oli kāhea is a chant announcing one's presence—often asking permission to enter or to be formally received. The oli komo is a chant used to welcome newcomers to a place and to solidify relations between groups.

6 I use the term *multidentity* to more broadly describe the Hawaiian-language based concept of hapa (Hawaiians of mixed ancestry). Kirin Narayan (1993) previously put forth the notion of “multiplex identity,” which locates subjectivity in a similar way. See chapter six of my dissertation (Ledward, 2007) for a fuller discussion of multidentity.

7 This article is based on ethnographic research that was conducted between 2005 and 2007. The text was adapted from chapter four of my doctoral dissertation, “Inseparably Hapa: Making and Unmaking a Hawaiian Monolith” (Ledward, 2007). While the anonymity of research participants has been preserved in this rendering, some descriptive information is provided wherever possible.

8 One of the data sources Sullivan relied on is the “cephalic length-breadth index,” which consists of measurements taken to approximate the size of the cranium of both skeletal and living exemplars. Cranium measurements have been used by scientists to estimate brain size and to infer intelligence. This is a practice that Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) specifically admonished in her writing about the indigenous experience of research.

9 One striking example that counteracts this discourse is the prominence of hula girl and hapa-haole hula girl images that reflect representations of visibly mixed-looking persons (see Desmond, 1999).

10 For more information about the author, see the descriptions on her Web site: <http://www.lanikaahumanu.com>.

11 For instance, in 1987, *Honolulu Magazine* featured a photo essay commemorating the “Year of the Hawaiian.” Written and photographed by Brett Uprichard, the piece contains pictures of Hawaiians and their ‘ohana. Most of the people displayed have ancestral connections to Ni‘ihau, a small private island with the largest full-blooded Hawaiian population in the world. The article advances a racializing discourse as it celebrates “100% Hawaiians” with photographs that play up racial difference and dark skin.

12 A series of provocative commentary was published as letters to the editor in the Office of Hawaiian Affairs' newspaper, *Ka Wai Ola*, in the summer of 2006. Examples of some letter headings are "Hey, haole" (July 2006) and "Pale skinned kanaka" (August 2006). In these focus letters and subsequent responses, issues of color politics and ethnic authenticity evidence wider community concern.

13 Indeed, much can be gleaned from the insights of these brilliant 19th-century historians. However, suffice it to say that a review of their work can provide a window into the way ancient Hawaiians conceived of themselves and their place in the world. First, rather than seeing themselves and others as members of fixed and distinct races, they chose to focus on negotiable and open relationships. Above all, the importance of genealogy is evident as a way of connecting people to each other and to the land. Second, Hawaiians emphasized cultural knowledge, practices, and values as crucial components of identity. While Hawaiian words exist that may be used to differentiate persons based on skin color, there is no comparison in the native lexicon that resembles a Euro-American concept of race. Third, the use of personal mo'olelo, that is, history, through storytelling has profound implications for Hawaiian identity-making processes. The emergent and contextual nature of mo'olelo, in which the speaker is a part of the story he or she is telling and must relate his or her narrative to the audience in a meaningful way, highlights a strong tendency Hawaiians have to seek out connections—however small—with those they encounter. Finally, the reality that Malo, Kamakau, and 'Ī'i all saw themselves as loyal kingdom subjects underscores the fact that a national identity was always in their minds and hearts.