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https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-m425-1x37

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From Astoria to Annexation: The Hawaiian Diaspora and the Struggle for Race and Nation in the American Empire

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A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty of the College of William and Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Arts

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The College of William and Mary
May, 2011
This Thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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The debate over the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands in 1898 was fraught with tensions between race, nation, and empire. Nowhere was this more evident than in the experience of the Hawaiian diaspora during the nineteenth century, and yet neither their role in the expansion of the United States nor their presence on the mainland was mentioned during the debate. Shedding light on the diasporic experience revealed how the processes of creating race and nation, and then distinguishing between the two in matters of state, occurred during the era of American expansionism. The pivotal cleave between the two occurred in Oregon Territory in 1850, when a seemingly minor bit of legislation banning Hawaiians from the region marked a significant shift in the relationship between Hawaiians and Americans, a shift that culminated in the annexation of the Islands at the end of the century.

This study traces the arrival of Hawaiians in the Pacific Northwest, interrogating the descriptions of and attitudes towards Hawaiians as recorded by the Americans and Europeans they interacted with. During these exchanges, Americans and Europeans perceived Hawaiians to be part of the Polynesian nation, and a race of warrior-like people with desirable physical and mental attributes. This perception persisted for almost fifty years, but changed drastically when the U.S. formally acquired the land south of the 49th parallel. Once the American claim to the coast was no longer contested, the attitude towards Hawaiians transformed, and Hawaiians were designated an undesirable race. However, this designation conflicted with the American interest in eventually acquiring the Islands. The conflict resulted in the creation of two distinct types of Hawaiians: the racial Hawaiians and the national Hawaiians. The collision between the two was best revealed in the appeals written by the two most prominent voices in the debate over annexation, Lorrin Thurston and Queen Liliuokalani. Both Thurston and Liliuokalani appropriate similar language about the role of race in determining whether or not Hawaii should remain an autonomous nation: Thurston continued the tradition of keeping the designations between the Hawaiian race and the Hawaiian nation separate to justify American occupancy and eventual annexation, while Liliuokalani strove to reunite them, adhering to the rhetoric of racial distinction and inferiority to further her national claims. As the establishment of these competing “Hawaiians” resulted directly from the presence and experience of the Hawaiian diaspora, it is critical to retrace their history in the U.S., not only to illuminate exactly how these different interpretations of the Hawaiian race and nation formed, but also to reconnect the Hawaiian and American historical narratives, which traditionally tell the story as one of American conquest and Hawaiian submission. This interpretation focuses on the negotiation between race and nation in the diaspora's experiences and the annexation debates.
Dedicated to the memory of my mother, Chrystal Lee Kahala Johnson.
Acknowledgements

I am so grateful for all of the minds, meetings, and chances that contributed to this thesis: to Dr. Leisa Meyer and the faculty at The College of William & Mary, for teaching me how to be a historian; to my thesis committee members, Dr. Kathrin Levitan and Dr. Andrew Fisher, for their keen insight and observations; and most significantly to my thesis advisor, Dr. Brett Rushforth, who in our first meeting casually mentioned that a community of Hawaiians existed in the Pacific Northwest in the nineteenth century, if I was interested in studying them. I was—and have benefited largely from his expertise, critiques, and experience ever since. I am also thankful to both the College of Arts and Sciences and to the Department of History for the Graduate Studies Advisory Board Fellowship, the support of which allowed me to conduct a substantial amount of research in several geographical and thematic fields, resulting in what I hope is a grounded and truly transnational thesis.

I owe much of my success to my professors at Virginia Commonwealth University: to Dr. Marion Nelson, for teaching me how to think; Dr. Gary Marquardt, for giving me something to think about; and Dr. Sarah Meacham, for showing me how to navigate the field, pushing me read and write more professionally, and for being my inspiration and my friend.

I would like to thank all of my colleagues at William & Mary for their camaraderie and advice, for all the dinners we ate and the soccer games we played, and for letting me serve as your cruise director. Of these friends I am particularly indebted to Anna Cloninger and Jeffrey Flanagan for all the meals, walks, talks, and songs we shared, for Kate Egner’s birthday, and more things than I could list here. I am a better person for your friendship.

My family contributed significantly to this endeavor, and I am grateful to them as well. I am thankful to my aunt Wanda Aki, for allowing me to interrogate her about the nuances of the Hawaiian language. I owe a large debt of gratitude to my parents, Michael Liptak and Chrystal Johnson, for not only supporting my decision to go to graduate school but also keeping me fed while I worked, and to my brother Justin Young, for his unfaltering faith in me, and for teaching me how to throw a punch.

Lastly, I could not have done this without the love and support of my husband Wesley Savage, who jotted down my “ah-ha!” moments so I wouldn’t lose them, dutifully met me at the airport every six weeks for a short visit, and either listened to or read several versions of this thesis, sometimes against his will. For all that and more, thank you.
In 1897 Lorrin Thurston, Hawaiian Minister to the United States, circulated an eighty-eight page booklet titled *A Handbook of the Annexation of Hawaii*. With “this pamphlet...designed to digest and concentrate for the information of the busy man, the principal arguments for and against annexation,” Thurston hoped to sway indecisive and uninformed American policymakers towards favoring the annexation of Hawaii to the United States. The booklet claimed to include a “brief description of the people, laws, finances, educational system, resources and civilization of the country proposed to be annexed, and such documentary evidence as is necessary to the full understanding of the issues involved.” However, Thurston’s application of this “documentary evidence” created a “full understanding” that differed radically from the reality of many Native Hawaiians and diasporic Hawaiian living in the United States. Under the guise of full disclosure his evidence virtually eliminated Hawaiians from the “Hawaii question,” that is, the debate over the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands to the U.S., and portrayed Hawaii as a depopulated paradise ripe for economic exploitation.1

A year later Hawaii’s dispossessed monarch, Queen Liliuokalani, published *Hawaii’s Story by Hawaii’s Queen*. Concealed under the guise of a memoir, Liliuokalani issued an emotional appeal to the people of the United States: “Oh, honest Americans, as Christians hear me for my down-trodden people! Their form of government is as dear to them as yours is precious to you!”2

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2 Liliuokalani, *Hawaii’s Story by Hawaii’s Queen* (Boston: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1898), 373.
Liliuokalani began *Hawaii's Story* with anecdotes from her childhood, progressed quickly though her marriage to John Owen Dominis, and lingered on her time in the royal court prior to her ascension to the throne, culminating in the coup that overthrew the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893. With this timeline Liliuokalani created a new narrative about the Hawaii Islands, calling attention to the significant changes that took place over the course of the sixty years covered in her memoir, and bridging the gap between the tropical, sparsely populated Hawaiian paradise depicted by Thurston and the reality of the men and women living in the Islands under her regime. In doing so, she hoped to reunite the two distinct types of Hawaiians created by the America’s long tenure in Hawaii: the racial Hawaiian, or the indigenous person, and the national Hawaiian, a member of the Hawaiian nation capable of self-governance—and such a person, by nineteenth century standards, was most assuredly not part of the Hawaiian race. Thurston’s argument rested on the distinction between the two, whereas Liliuokalani endeavored to prove that Hawaiians, by virtue of their race, were the only people capable of representing the Hawaiian nation.

At the end of the nineteenth century and at the height of American expansionism the “Hawaii Question” was of utmost importance to the continued growth of the United States geographically, economically, and diplomatically. Both Liliuokalani’s *Hawaii’s Story* and Thurston’s *Handbook* emphatically answered that “question.” Although their answers and the format of their public appeals could not differ more drastically, both texts used the same language to support their arguments, particularly with regards to race. Their understandings of
race, racial hierarchies, and the relationship between race and nation are remarkably similar, though they arrive at radically different conclusions. Thurston used the language of race to diminish the Hawaiian people, while Liliuokalani took the same language to support their claim to sovereignty and to argue against incorporation into the United States.

Traditional histories written about the Hawaiian Islands relegated the indigenous population to the background. The landscape of Hawaii took center stage as a tropical paradise, wealthy in resources and ready for acquisition. Thurston’s *Pamphlet* embodied this ideal, as did many other popular representations of tropical territories at the time. When Native Hawaiians appeared in the story, they were introduced as a lost cause, as lazy indolent peoples doomed to extinction, or as “scores of footloose kanakas” interfering with the American experience in Hawaii. While Hawaiians did experience unprecedented death rates after the introduction of European diseases, lending a grain of truth to the myth of extinction, the transition of the Native Hawaiian people from members of a strong, vast Polynesian heritage, as established in the narratives of men such as Captain James Cook and Alexander Ross, to the shiftless, dying natives depicted by later accounts, justified the efforts of men like Lorrin Thurston in seizing, and thereby saving, the Islands from the natives.

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In these conventional histories the annexation of the Islands was considered inevitable, and "their [Native Hawaiian] resistance to all this feeble."\(^6\) New scholarship about the overthrow of the monarchy and the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands emphasized the role of Native Hawaiians in this historical moment, examining indigenous resistance efforts in depth, and reacting against the colonial agenda of the traditional historical narratives, all written by non-Hawaiians.\(^7\) Annexation remains one of the paramount events in Hawaiian history. At the time, Thurston gave the "Hawaii question" great weight, naming it the "key to the Pacific," due to its favorable geographic position between the U.S. and Asia, and warning that in the "great coming struggle between the civilization and the awakening forces of the East and the civilization of the West," control of the Hawaiian Islands was the lynchpin to determining whether America or Asia would control the Pacific. He argued that "Hawaii in possession of any foreign power would be a menace and a danger to the Pacific coast and its commerce" and annexation would "remove Hawaii from international politics and tend to promote peace in the Pacific by eliminating an otherwise certain source of international friction."\(^8\)

In spite of this emphasis by Lorrin Thurston, the annexation of Hawaii remained a footnote in the historiography of the United States westward expansion, and the Hawaiians living in the islands or U.S. received even less

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\(^6\) Dawes, *Shoal of Time*, 291.

\(^8\) Lorrin Thurston, *Handbook*, 34.
attention. The standard American textbook portrays the acquisition of Hawaii as a benevolent gesture, justified by Hawaii’s close relationship with the U.S., the “sizable population of American missionaries and planters,” as well as its precarious location in the Pacific, which merited additional security measures easily supplied by the U.S.9 Hawaii plays an otherwise negligible role in American history until the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941. Some of this diminished emphasis resulted from the United State’s discomfort with the questionable legality of annexation. More often, however, the conventional histories followed a trajectory of “progress” that took Hawaiian annexation for granted, relying heavily on the depopulation trope to minimize the historic significance of this act. This approach to Hawaiian history silenced Hawaiian people, in the islands and on the mainland, while the predominance of Asians and in the American west, combined with the historic emphasis on the black-white dichotomy as the epitome of American race relations, further removed Hawaiian people from larger discourse.

While Hawaiian historians work to reclaim that history, more recent American scholarship is also restoring agency to the unnamed actors in American expansion and examining how race and race-making influenced public opinion and foreign policy at the end of the nineteenth century.10 This study contributes to that growing body of work by examining the role of race and race-making prior to the debate over the annexation of Hawaii and at how racial rhetoric, shaped over

one hundred years of exchange between the islands and the mainland, informed both Thurston and Liliuokalani's arguments about annexation. By examining the experiences of Hawaiians living in the United States, and framing the discussion about race as a reaction to the competition for space between Hawaiians and Americans both in the Hawaiian Islands and on the mainland, this study traces the origin of the Hawaiian race as both a racial and a national entity, one that underwent significant overhauls throughout the nineteenth century. It demonstrates how the designation of "Hawaiian" worked as a racial and a national construction to serve the imperial efforts of the United States, illuminating the symbiotic relationship between geographical imperialism and racial perceptions. Lastly, this study reveals how the experience of the Hawaiian diaspora contributed to the formation of the racial rhetoric that informed Thurston and Liliuokalani's annexation debate.

Neither Thurston nor Liliuokalani's appeal addressed the diaspora directly: in her memoir Liliuokalani commented briefly on her experiences with various "Hawaiian émigré" communities in the U.S., while Thurston avoided deliberating on the presence of Hawaiians altogether, whether in the U.S. or the islands. To placate fears of Hawaiian immigration into the mainland after annexation he declared "if they [Hawaiians] wanted to come to America they could come now. But they have no reason for coming. They are more prosperous now than the people of the United States."\(^{11}\) The presence and absence of the diaspora and their experiences in these appeals revealed how differently Thurston and Liliuokalani conceptualized "Hawaii" and "Hawaiians," resulting in their

\[^{11}\text{Lorrin Thurston, Handbook, 32, 44, 38.}\]
drastically different answers to the “Hawaii question.” It illustrated one of the ways Hawaiians and Americans came to understand Hawaii as a nation and the Hawaiians as race. It also demonstrated how this competition for space manifested itself physically and figuratively in the debate over annexation in the Pacific Northwest and the Hawaiian Islands.

At the end of the nineteenth century the geographical competition in the islands between the Native Hawaiians and the American settlers resulted in the overthrow the monarchy and the establishment of the Republic of Hawaii. A similar competition emerged in the Pacific Northwest during the 1850’s, resulting in the first law prohibiting Hawaiian settlement in the west. But in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, prior to these struggles, the relationship between Hawaiians and Americans was considerably different. The Americans and the British, each desperate to establish themselves as a dominant power on the coast of the Pacific Northwest, found allies in the Hawaiian people, and thanks to their central location in the Pacific Ocean the Hawaiian Islands became key to infiltrating the China Market, where furs from the Pacific Northwest turned a significant profit. The successful maritime trade thrust Hawaiians into the global economy. Thurston and Liliuokalani’s appeals, written after more than 100 years of this exchange between the U.S. and the Hawaiian Islands, represented two different interpretations of this relationship.

**Polynesians: Most Civilized of Savages**

The Hawaiians arrived in America through a number of channels, beginning in 1788, just ten years after the British captain James Cook and the
HMS Resolution first encountered the Hawaiians on the Island of Kauai. After a brief but consequential layover, Captain Cook continued his journey through the Pacific, and unknowingly established the route by which Hawaiians would arrive in North America for the next fifty or more years. These Hawaiians traveled as sailors and laborers, servants and cooks, ambassadors and political refugees, and on occasion merely as curiosities, building a small but vibrant diasporic community on the mainland. This community grew over the course of the century, but events transpired on the mainland and in the homeland that kept the Hawaiian community from full civil participation in both locales. Understanding the diasporas’ experiences in the United States is critical to creating a more complex relationship between Hawaii and the U.S. It demonstrated the two-way exchange of people and ideas noticeably absent in Thurston’s Handbook, and illustrated how drastically the racialization of Hawaiians changed over the nineteenth century. Examining these diasporic experiences also revealed that Americans had a longer, more complicated relationship with Hawaiians than indicated in the conventional narratives, which focus primarily on economic treaties, the missionary movement in the Islands, and the extinction myth. To study the experiences of the Hawaiian diaspora is to study how Hawaiians transitioned from their portrayal in 1836 in Washington Irving’s Astoria as “The Sandwich Islanders...[who] evinced a character superior to most of the savages of the Pacific isles...frank and open in their deportment, friendly and liberal in their dealings, with an apt ingenuity,” to their description in 1850 as “Sandwich Islanders, who are a race of men as black as your negroes of the South, and a race, too, that we do not desire to settle” to the silence of 1897 in Lorrin Thurston’s Handbook of
the Annexation of Hawaii. This shift in portrayal was related to the competition for space and the relationship between Hawaiians, Europeans, and Americans as they worked together to occupy the Pacific Northwest.

The journals of the British seafarers, Captain James Cook and one of his lieutenants, John Rickman, provided the first accounts of Native Hawaiians to the global community. Given Hawaii’s remote location relative to the known Pacific Island chains, Captain Cook was struck by the Native Hawaiians’ close physical and linguistic resemblance to the other inhabitants of Polynesia. Upon departing the Hawaiian Islands to continue his search for the fabled Northwest Passage, Cook exclaimed:

How shall we account for this nation having spread itself in so many detached islands, so widely disjoined from each other, in every quarter of the Pacific Ocean? We find these people from New Zealand in the south as far as the Sandwich Islands to the north! And in another direction, from Easter Island to the Hebrides...How much farther in either direction its colonies reach is not known; but we know already in consequence of this voyage warrants our pronouncing it to be, by far the most extensive nation on earth.

John Rickman, then a lieutenant on the Discovery, also commented on the expansive Polynesian nation, saying “there seems indeed a remarkable conformity between these islands and those of the opposite hemisphere, not only in their situation, but in their number, and in the manners, customs, arts...tho’ it can scarce be imagined that they could ever have any communication...” Cook made

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further comments about Hawaiians in his journal, and thus rooted them firmly as
"Polynesians" and therefore "relatively superior among the savages" for
posterity. His observations reinforced his assumption that Polynesians in general
and Hawaiians in particular were a fierce, warlike people, especially with regards
to their sacrificial practices. He wrote "I could trace, on such evidence, the
prevalence of these bloody rights throughout this immense ocean, among people
disjointed by such a distance, and even ignorant of each other's existence, though
so strongly marked as originally of the same nation," unequivocally linking the
Hawaiians to this ferocious Polynesian tradition. Though Cook himself died in
the Hawaiian Islands in 1779, the journal from his third voyage around the world
was published in 1784 was widely read, and informed the public of the fierce
Polynesian race inhabiting the Hawaiian Islands.

In the early nineteenth century fur trader, thirty years later, Alexander
Ross reinforced the association between Hawaiians and the Polynesian race, or
nation. Upon landing in Hawaii Ross observed, "in their customs and manners the
natives resemble the New Zealanders, and like them are a war-like people." Even later in 1836 Rev. Samuel Parker drew specific comparisons between the
"Sandwich Islanders," as the Hawaiians were called (after Cook's patron, the Earl
of Sandwich,) and the Tahitians, reiterating the hierarchy of civility present
among this branch of "savages." He stated of the latter "the performances of the
natives in vocal music pleased me, their voices being very soft and musical,

14 From Maps to Metaphors: The Pacific World of George Vancouver, eds. Fisher, Robin and
Hugh Johnston (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1992), 245 and 261.
15 Cook, Seventy North, 183.
16 Alexander Ross, Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River, ed. Milo
Milton Quaife (Chicago: The Lakeside Press, 1932), 32.
though less cultivated than the Sandwich Islanders. Their personal appearance, complexion, language, and dress is the same as those.” He continued, observing “[the] government here is much the same as in the Sandwich Islands; but in some respects more free and systemized...the young queen Pomare is of a very possessing appearance, talented, and has decision of character; but her views of civilization are not so enlarged as those of Madam Kinau [Hawaiian queen-regent.]” This elevation in status, situating Hawaiians above other non-whites as more civilized, took root in the Hawaiian’s understanding of race over the next hundred years, and Liliuokalani would use this argument against the colonial efforts of the United States.

These observations linking the Hawaiians to the larger family of Polynesians are critical to reexamining the debate over Hawaiian annexation. Foremost, the language used to describe Hawaiians revealed much about the average perception of them at the dawn of the nineteenth century. As civil but fierce Polynesians, Hawaiians were respected and feared. These characteristics made them exotic, and contrasted drastically with the over-familiarizing language used to describe them in accounts at the end of that same century. In the eighteenth century “Age of Exploration” Europeans categorized people into groups or nations, usually based on shared features such as language, cultural practices, appearance, and territory. Explorers like Cook and Rickman, the “handmaidens of European colonialism,” used these guidelines to catalog the people they encountered, as evident in their travel journals. Other European thinkers “used explorers’ findings as evidence of the historical gradation of
societies from 'savagery' to civility." This system, combined with the imperial impulse driving the "Age of Exploration," constructed a method by which a people were assigned specific physical and personality traits based on their nationality, which was largely determined by a combination of their physical appearance, cultural deviations, and their location. These assigned traits often reflected the pressures, desires, agendas, or other "cultural baggage" of the explorers, generating a school of discourse that accomplished "much of the critically important work of colonialism."  

In this system, non-European nations existed in various stages of savagery: noble, ignoble, dying, and romantic. In the nineteenth century "race" rapidly replaced "nation" as the ranking method for non-Western civilizations. Its scientific grounding gave it more weight as a method of categorization and more strength as a justification for imperial gains. It was not until this shift that race and nation became discreet categories, and race became a tool of empire, to be deployed at will. This study argues that elevated position of Polynesians as "relatively superior among the savages" continued only as long as Polynesians did not compete with the British, or the Americans, for space. This peace existed between Hawaii and America, and Hawaii and Great Britain, for many decades, and during that time the three nations engaged in a rich and multifaceted

exchange. Most importantly, it was during this time that Hawaii entered the Pacific maritime trade and became part of the global market.\textsuperscript{20}

**Hawaiians arrive in the Pacific Northwest**

In the latter part of the eighteenth century, the contended space was the Pacific Northwest, and Hawaii was vital to both British and American efforts to secure that territory, each nation making Hawaii their ally in the competition against each other, and the Native Americans, for that space. As early as 1794 the British began stopping in Hawaii during their voyages between the Pacific Northwest and China, wintering their ships, replenishing their supplies, and occasionally picking up passengers. It wasn’t until 1810 and the founding of American controlled Astoria that any company employed a substantial number of Hawaiians and kept them abroad for any length of time. It is from the journals of the fur traders involved in this Astorian Adventure, such as Duncan McDougall, Alexander Ross, and Gabriel Franchere, and the experiences of their British contemporaries like Alexander Henry the Younger, that the first recorded impressions of the Hawaiian diaspora emerge. The Hawaiians, generally referred to as “Sandwich Islanders” or “Owhyhees” feature peripherally in these works, yet even the casual, unobtrusive nature of the few entries available reinforced the idea that the Hawaiians were an exotic yet distinctly civilized people, capable employees with many fine attributes specific to their race.

\textsuperscript{20} Samuel Parker, *Journal of an Exploring Tour Beyond the Rocky Mountains, Under the Direction of the A.B.C.F.M. Performed in the Years 1835, '36, and 3; containing a Description of the Geography, Geology, Climate, and Productions and the Number, Manners, and Customs of the Natives. With a Map of Oregon Territory* (Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, 1967), 362. Reprinted from 1838.
The first substantial group of Hawaiians migrating to the United States left with Ross and Franchere in 1811. They arrived to work three-year contracts within the fur trade in the Pacific Northwest, appearing in the journals, letters, and record books of the European and American men involved in the expeditions, explorations, and enterprises of that region. Hawaiians were inspired to migrate for a variety of reasons. The economic advantages take precedence in most accounts, but political and social motivations prompted many of these journeys, and understanding these motivations complicates the role of the Hawaiian diaspora, making them more than a community of contracted workers. The Hawaiian monarchs eagerly opened their ports to foreign goods and people, and allowed, even encouraged, their own people to travel abroad as well. Through this exchange the U.S. and Hawaii developed ties that transcended trade and economics, but extended into religion, politics, and social structure.

The first recorded impressions of Hawaiians emphasized of their physical presence and their thieving, licentious ways, and these first impressions informed how the traders continued describing Hawaiians once they reached the Pacific Northwest. King Kamehameha I, the first ruler of the united Hawaiian Island chain, was as a man “about fifty years of age, straight and portly but not corpulent; his countenance was pleasing but his complexion rather dark, even for an Indian.” Franchere described Kamehameha as “majestic” and noted that the

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21 Ross, Adventures, 39. Elizabeth Vibert noted in Ross’s Indian observations, that “physique was, in the traders’ estimation, the most visible distinguishing characteristic of hunters. Ross’s language points to the way in which representation of the body was morally charged and defined by a particular masculine ideology: the men were ‘tall, raw-boned, well-dressed,’ their clothing white, their voices strong and manly, their women decorous.” Some of this can be seen in his description of the Hawaiian king and of the women. Elizabeth Vibert, Traders' Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounters in the Columbia Plateau 1807-1846 (Norman: University of Oklahoma
king's authority "was absolute in all things." This authority extended to the ships anchored in the Islands as well. Ross complained, prior to leaving Hawaii, that "our supplies being now completed, the King came on board before our departure; and it will appear something surprising that the honest and wealthy monarch, forgetting the rank and pomp of royalty, should at his parting visit covet everything he aw with us...even the cabin bow and the cook were not forgotten by this 'King of the Isles,' for he asked a piece of black-bal from the former and an old saucepan from the latter. His avarice and meanness in these respects knew no bounds, and we were all greatly relieved when he bade us well and departed."22 They could not and did not stop him from seizing things from the ship, and Kamehameha did not exercise any reservation when dealing with whites.

Ross described Hawaiian women as "handsome in person, engaging in their manners, well featured and have countenances full of joy and tranquility, but chastity is not their virtue."23 Franchere too observed that "they had rather regular features and except for the colour of their skins could be considered fine-looking women...they are very amorous, which is to be expected in this climate." The contemporary correlation between tropical climates and loose morals was already established in these traders' minds and remained dominant even into Lorrin Thurston's day. The native men take on a different set of characteristics, both

Press, 1997), 248. Franchere's observations about Kamehameha used similar language to those of Ross; "The King was well built, above average height, robust and inclined to be corpulent, and he seemed to me to be between 50 and 60 years old. He was dressed in European style...looking quite majestic." Franchere, Journal, 62.
22 Ross, Adventures, 47.
23 Ross, Adventures, 51.
physical and mental. While in Hawaii Alexander Ross noted “The Sandwich Islanders are bold swimmers and expert navigators. They are like ducks in the water,” and tested this aquatic adeptness often. He and his shipmates “often amused ourselves by dropping a button, nail, or pin into the water; but such was their keenness of sight and their agility, that the trifle had scarcely penetrated the surface of the water before it was in their possession.” Other accounts described similar games. Ross did not mention that the value of the dropped items was significant to Hawaiians, and many would dive for such items until the underwater pressure caused their noses to bleed, although Franchere described this in detail.24 These feats merely reinforced the European idea of tropical peoples and their duck-like fondness for water, setting precedence for how Hawaiians appeared in future entries.25

Though they already accepted that Hawaiians were somewhat civilized, the mental capacities of the natives continued to astonish both the British and Americans. Franchere recalled an encounter between a Hawaiian man and some of the men on his ship. The men were reportedly “much surprised to find an Islander building a small craft with about 30 tons burthen. The tools he was using consisted of a well-worn axe, a very poor adze at most two inches wide and for an auger a piece of iron that he heated red-hot. Certainly it took all the patience of a savage to work with such tools. Yet his work was well advanced. They brought

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24 Franchere wrote “we were sufficiently curious to time their dives and were surprised to find that they could stay under water for four minutes. At last one of them brought up the two pulleys and received the promised reward. This exercise seemed to exhaust them, to such an extent that blood was flowing freely from the nose and ears of one of them.” Franchere, Journal, 60.
25 Ross, Adventures, 48-49.
him aboard and gave him suitable tools, which seemed to please him.”26 Samuel Parker, twenty years later, commented again that the “Sandwich Islanders, or kanakas, as the common people are called, have less activity of body and mind than the Indians of our continent, and yet a phrenologist would say that their intellectual powers are well developed. In their present political condition, they are not expected to be otherwise than indolent and improvident.” Parker’s description of the Hawaiians having “less activity of body and mind than the Indians of our continent” contradicted the initial descriptions of Hawaiians as physically adaptive, hard working, and advanced, but reflected a growing trend in the descriptions of Hawaiians living in the islands. The Hawaiian diaspora remained largely untouched by these charges until 1850.

All of these descriptions adhered closely to the Western understanding of civilized and savage societies, and reinforced the assumption that the Polynesian race was the most civilized of the savages. The sources created a delicate balance between these two extremes. The descriptions of Hawaiian women contrasted their handsome appearance with their “amorous” nature, a characteristic often assigned to women from the tropic regions. The men were capable of great but narrow feats, as indicated in the detail about their aquatic abilities. These racial and geographical caveats created a space for the Hawaiian people in the aforementioned Western “gradation of societies”27 A racial qualification tempered every observation about the Hawaiians in an attempt to establish and reestablish the distance between Polynesians and their British or American counterparts.

27 Clayton “Captain Cook,” 142.
From Gabriel Franchere’s first revelation that the captain of the *Tonquin*, fearing desertion upon arrival in the Islands, “engaged about a dozen or so” of the local men to augment the crew’s numbers, traders and travelers of the Pacific Ocean and the Pacific Northwest region investigated and recorded their impressions of these men, the newest identified members of their human race. Franchere’s account established that the Hawaiians’ presence on the mainland was to be transient, as “their term of engagement was three years, during which time we were to feed and clothe them, and at its expiration they were to receive a hundred dollars in merchandise.” This description did not include the terms of a return passage to the islands, but other accounts, such as Duncan McDougall’s, paid significant attention to returning Hawaiians to their homeland, not because they were unwelcome in the Pacific Northwest but because many Hawaiians desired to return. In 1813, when McDougall transferred control of Astoria from the Pacific Fur Company to the North West Company, he wrote that he “settled with the Sandwich Islanders and gave them to understand that the business was given up and that Mr. McTavish became responsible for the amount due to them, and they were at liberty to engage with him ‘till Spring, when those that wished to retune to the Islands, would be sent home in one of the N.W. Co. Ships. Gave to each of them as a present One New Musket, 1 Powder horn, 3 lbs. Powder, 8 lbs. Lead, 10 Gun flints, 1 half axe, 1 Tomyhawk and 3 lbs Leafe Tobacco.”

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especially guns, indicated that the fur traders, at minimum, respected the contract they made with the Hawaiian nation, if not Hawaiians themselves as contracted employees. The incentive for Hawaiians to return to the Islands was great. Frequently it bestowed a special status, as evident in Kamehameha’s navy, which was comprised largely of Hawaiians with experience abroad. Others simply wished to return to their families with their increased economic standing.

Observations about Hawaiians in the Pacific Northwest concentrated largely on their role as laborers. Many of the journals described Hawaiians in their capacity as guards. Depicted as physically powerful and menacing towards enemies (in contrast to description of their congenial personalities towards the fur traders) Hawaiians frequently acted as sentries. When going out into the wilderness, or even to the shore, a “Sandwich Islander” in tow was sure to provide “assistance in any danger.” More often than not, the Hawaiians were there to offer protection against the Native Americans, because “their bravery & fidelity being much relied on, and they appear to be a race of men who strike the Indians with peculiar terror.” However, this role was often depicted more subtly in the traders’ journals, as McDougall’s records indicated, stating “Our hunter went out in the morning accompanied by a Sandwich Islander” or “early in the morning, Mr. McGillis with a Sandwich Islander left the fort on a jaunt.”

Hawaiian men’s stamina continued to impress their white counterparts. While in Hawaii Rev. Parker and his colleagues, panting after physical exertion,

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30 McDougall, _Annals of Astoria_, 54.
observed “the natives pass up and down [the perpendicular points of the mountain steeps on Oahu] with their calabashes of poi, with their loads of melons, fish, and other commodities, without any difficulty more than fatigue.” Such observations encouraged traders to use Hawaiians for their manual labor, such as sawing, “hewing and rolling logs,” carrying stones, and even creating roads to haul timber. They also cleared the ground for planting and maintained the gardens. To some extent, they became involved in trade, and they engaged in numerous hunting and fishing trips. When Hawaiians appeared in the fur trader accounts, they were almost always involved in a high level of physical work and activity.

Most journals praised Hawaiian employees for their prowess as swimmers and their skills navigating rough waters, traits carried over from their experience in the Islands. They propelled canoes and navigated the Columbian river system, rendering an invaluable service to those hoping to settle in mass and secure their nation’s claim on the region. And yet while the Hawaiians labor and skills were critical to the settling of the Pacific Northwest, these descriptions root them very rigidly in the Pacific Ocean. Emphasizing the Hawaiians’ ability with water reinforced their foreignness and their “island nature” with geographical imagery that served to keep the Hawaiians separate from the whites they worked with.

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34 See Gary Okihiro for a discussion of geographic colonialism as it pertains to Hawaii.
The records mentioned few Hawaiians by name, and occasionally assigned several of them new European names, but virtually all entries called them “Sandwich Islanders.” The term was often preceded with a number, an article, or a possessive pronoun. Even as their contributions were respected, the language of labor also kept Hawaiians in a role of servitude, akin to the Indians and blacks sharing their brown skin as well as their menial tasks in the forts. Generally, the fur traders employed Hawaiians to fill roles that “kept things about the place in order,” such as gardening and fishing, occupations that fed the establishment.\(^{35}\) These roles helped shaped American understandings of the Hawaiian race, linking them to races already deemed incapable of self-determination, such as blacks and Indians. Though not immediately evident in these “traders’ tales” which still situated Hawaiians among the Polynesians and thus nominally distinct from other races, the roots of those impressions lie with these writings.

The Pacific Northwest continued to attract a wide range of Hawaiians, migrating to the U.S. under a variety of circumstances. Often, the Northwest coast represented a refuge for enemies of the Hawaiian ruling class, or a haven from political turmoil. Naukane, a Hawaiian of royal birth, worked at Fort Astoria/Fort George until 1814.\(^{36}\) He was perhaps better known as John Coxe, a trusted servant of fur trader David Thompson. Alexander Ross took note of him, stating “On Mr. Thompson’s departure Mr. Stuart gave him one of our Sandwich Islanders, a bold and trustworthy fellow named Cox, for one of his men, a Canadian, called Boulard. Cox, again, was looked upon by Mr. Thompson as a prodigy of wit and

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\(^{35}\) McDougall, *Annals*, 139.

\(^{36}\) He was considered to be a “trusted servant” because Thompson gave him a gun.
humor, so that those respectively acceptable qualities led to the exchange.”

David Thompson told this story a bit differently in his journal, saying “with Mr. McDougall I exchanged a Man, by the name of Michel Boulard, well versed in Indian affairs, but weak for the hard labor of ascending the River, for a powerful well made Sandwich Islander (whom we named Coxe, from his resemblance to a seaman of that name;) he spoke some English and was anxious to acquire our language...” In this entry David Thompson wanted Coxe because of his navigational abilities on the river, and utilized his other “Sandwich Islander” skills as well, particularly as a guard. Based on what is known about “Coxe” Thompson’s version of the exchange, in which both he and Coxe benefit from this relationship, seems more representative of the situation. An minor chief in his own nation, Naukane sought opportunities in the Pacific Northwest to increase his stature in the Islands, in part by ingratiating himself with David Thompson, by learning the trade, as well as learning English. Upon Naukane’s (Coxe) return to the Islands he accompanied the current Hawaiian monarch Liholiho, or Kamehameha II, to Europe. When the king died abroad, Naukane faced growing suspicions of foul play among the other chiefs in the Islands. He returned to the Pacific Northwest, living at Fort Vancouver until his death in 1836.

These early experiences were best summed up by Alexander Ross, who said “It would have made a cynic smile to see this pioneer corps, composed of

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37 Ross, *Adventures*, 123.
38 David Thompson, *David Thompson’s narrative of his explorations in Western America, 1784-1812* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1916), 510. When engaged in conflict with the Indians Thompson wrote “on casting my eye on Coxe, the Sandwich Islander, he had marked out his man with his large pistol, which he held steady as if it had been in a vice, my orders were, as soon as they drew the arrow to fire on them, but not before...” Thompson, 516. For more information about Naukane’s life after he left Thompson’s service, see Okihiro, *Island World*. 
traders, shopkeepers, voyagers, and Owhyhees, all ignorant alike in this new walk of life, and the most ignorant of them all, the leader. Many of the party had never handled an axe before and but a few of them knew how to use a gun, but necessity, the mother of invention, soon taught us both." Hawaiian pioneers, explorers of the Hawaiian frontier, were more than unskilled laborers earning a living abroad. Whether or not men like Ross and Franchere consciously chose to, their own portrayals of Hawaiian immigrants demonstrated their evolving ideas about "savage hierarchies," even hinting at an indifferent approach to race when the quest to secure and develop the Pacific Northwest took priority. That laity was revoked once the region was secured and the U.S. gazed even further west, toward the Islands.

The Dispute Over Oregon Territory

Perhaps no man better demonstrated the complex interactions between traders and Hawaiians than the "Father of Oregon," Dr. John McLoughlin. His business correspondence from 1847-48 gave some sense of how involved McLoughlin was with the Hawaiian population in the region. When the company was not forthcoming in sending Islanders for his employ, he persisted in requesting them, evidenced in his letters to James Douglass in the summer of 1847, when he expressed that "since I wrote I fell in with a Kanacka who came with Mr. Cooper and Engaged him for a Month or two as I was afraid you might

39 Ross, Adventures, 78-79.
40 Ross once said "But all nations, civilized as well as savage, have their peculiar prejudices. The law of the land compels a South Sea Islander to pull out a tooth (as he observed the Hawaiians doing); a northern Indian cuts a joint off his finger; national usage obliges a Chinese lady to deform her feet; an English lady, under the influence of fashion, compresses her waist; while a Chinook lady deforms her dead." Ross, Adventures, 108.
not be able to meet my Request and send your Kanacka with Many Thanks.”

His language treated Hawaiians like they were things, using possessive personal pronouns before the word “Sandwich Islanders,” or more frequently at this point in the records, “kanakas,” the Hawaiian word for the Hawaiian people.

Yet McLoughlin did more for Hawaiians in the Pacific Northwest than indicated by his business records alone. His most magnanimous (or savvy) gesture was to bring William Kaulehelehe from Hawaii to Fort Vancouver in 1845 to oversee his Hawaiian employees’ spiritual education. Fluent and literate in English and Hawaiian, Kaulehelehe and his wife, Mary Kaai, found acceptance from their “countrymen” as intermediaries and advocates between themselves and their employers. While Hawaiians frequently petitioned Kaulehelehe to intervene with the Hudson Bay Company on their behalf, they did not receive him as a minister, though Christianity was quickly becoming the religion of all Hawaiians in the Islands. Kaulehelehe influenced their behavior in minor ways, resulting in fewer rowdy Sabbaths at the fort, but was unable to fit in more educational opportunities for the kanakas due to their work schedules. Regardless, this represented a remarkable relationship between McLoughlin and the Hawaiians in his employ.

It also indicated for the first time that the Hawaiians abroad for a length of time, arriving in different stages of employment, viewed themselves as a unit. No other indications exist in the sources that illustrate the Hawaiians conception of

41 McLoughlin, *Business Correspondence*, 111.
42 McLoughlin’s relationship with the Hawaiians extends even deeper, as a group of Hawaiians were with his son when his son’s employees turn on him. The Hawaiians warned John Jr, and though he attempted to escape he was killed. The Hawaiians cleaned and buried his body and testified in court on his behalf.
themselves as a homogenous group that could work together for better conditions. The way they utilized Kaulehelehe demonstrated that they saw this educated and religious man as their “representative” to their employers. It was evidence that Hawaiians in America, as late as the 1845, understood their role as subservient in the Pacific Northwest, but did not accept that they were to have no voice in their lives abroad. It also illustrated that kanakas in the Pacific Northwest viewed themselves as a diasporic community: Hawaiians living in America. Kaulehelehe’s response to them legitimized that designation, stressing that he had no instructions from the King or Ministers to act as their liaison while they lived abroad. The Hawaiian’s desire for a mediator was not that unusual: in January of 1843 Congress passed a bill appointing an American to perform that same function, requiring the appointed “consul or commissioner to reside at the Hawaiian nor Sandwich islands, for the protection of the interests of the United States, and of their citizens, in said islands.”

Examples like these illustrate the dynamic frontier that existed for Hawaiians on the coast of the mainland United States of America and the “complex ethnic milieu, at least in the servant class” in the Pacific Northwest. The presence of the diaspora allowed Hawaiians to experience living among the Americans that were increasing in number in their own country, but also served as a representative community of Hawaiians to the Americans that remained on the

43 To provide for the future intercourse between the United States and the Government of the Hawaiian or Sandwich islands, H.R. 721, 27th Cong. (1843). http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llhb&fileName=027/llhb027.db&recNum=1661
44 Vibert, Traders’ Tales, 40. She continued “the ethnic complexion established before 1821 persisted, so that by 1835 there were 218 Canadians, 138 Scots and other Europeans, 55 Hawaiians, and 47 metis and eastern Native men on servant contracts with the Columbia and New Caledonia.”
mainland, providing an alternate version “Hawaiian” for Americans to grapple with. The fact that the word “kanaka” rose in usage around the same time was not coincidental. “Kanaka” is the Hawaiian word for “people” or more specifically, “ourselves.” During their tenure on the Pacific Northwest Coast, Sandwich Islanders became kanakas, mirroring the process in the islands by which the factionalized island chain united under Kamehameha in 1810 and became “Hawaii.” and its pervasiveness in the records over the course of this exchange indicated that Hawaiians no longer accepted the designation “Sandwich Islander.” They asserted their national identity against the British label and its implicit claim on their territory. This push against absorption under an American or British identity, evident in the terms used describe the diaspora, and their insistence on using Kaulehelehe as a representative, indicated that Hawaiian resistance to assimilation crossed was a trans-Pacific phenomenon, and strengthens the anti-colonial arguments of more recent historians of Hawaiian history.

On the other hand, the increased prominence of Hawaiians in the Pacific Northwest also led to the first act of legislation against them, legitimizing a turn against the Hawaiians in popular sentiment and creating a rift between the Hawaiian race and the nation of Hawaii in American foreign and domestic policy, one that distorted the racial and national assumptions of both Americans and Hawaiians. The welcoming environment in the United States turned hostile after 1850, and the Hawaiians saw a rapid reversal of the acceptance they experienced in the early part of the century. Prior to the establishment of the 49th parallel, the competition for the Pacific Northwest had been between the British and the
Americans. Once the Americans annexed the region for themselves, they created new grounds for contention.

The lengths to which a man like McLoughlin went to maintain a happy and harmonious workforce in his fort illustrated how it was critical the success of such ventures were to establishing a dominant presence in the Pacific Northwest for any nation hoping to enforce their claims to the territory. During the early part of the nineteenth century, publications wrought with suspicion of the British insinuated that the United States was being outfoxed by the European nation in an attempt to drum up support for the westward expansion of the Union, as the American settlement in the west was vital to the United States’ claim to the region during the time of joint occupation. The widely held belief that “whatever nation posses this land, or the south portion of it, with its neighboring harbor, Puget’s sound, possesses nearly all of a national consideration which pertains to Oregon, and will consequently control it” and that “this young colony, but yesterday begun, and whose country and existence were but yesterday disputed, will at no distant day, under the softening, life-giving influence of civilization and our holy religion, take its place among the wealthiest, happiest, and best nations of the earth” increased the pressure American’s felt to secure this part of the continent from Great Britain, at any cost.45

45 Joel Palmer, Journal of Travels over the Rocky Mountains (to the mouth of the Columbia River; made during the years 1845 and 1846; Containing minute descriptions of the Valleys of the Willamette, Umpqua, and Clamet; a general description of Oregon Territory; its inhabitants, climate, soil, production, etc, etc, a list of necessary outfits for emigrants and a table of distances from camp to camp on the route.), (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, INC, 1966), 167 in a letter to the Rev. H. H. Spalding to Joel Palmer, Nez Perce Mission, Clear Water River, Oregon Territory, April 7 1846, 167.
After the Oregon Treaty of 1846 established the boundary between Great Britain and the United States at the 49th parallel, policy makers deployed new tactics to counter the British presence in that region. Unfortunately for the Hawaiians working at or around the various forts in the Pacific Northwest, that included sowing suspicion about the Hudson Bay Company, and with it John McLoughlin. Saumel R. Thurston, the first delegate to Congress from the Oregon Territory, mistrusted McLoughlin not only because to his tenure with the Hudson Bay Company but also due to his claim on a chunk of land in Oregon, which he designated “Oregon City.” Thurston, originally from New England, moved to Oregon territory in 1847, and immediately campaigned to discredit the “Father of Oregon.” He revealed his misgivings about McLoughlin a short letter to Nathaniel J. Wythe. In this letter Samuel Thurston asked for “as correct a description as you can at this late period, of the manner in which you and your party, and your enterprise in Oregon, were treated by the Hudson’s Bay Company, and particularly by Doc. John McLaughlin” as McLoughlin had “rendered his name odious among the people of Oregon, by his endeavors to prevent the settlement of the country and to cripple its growth.” Wythe’s retort praised McLoughlin extensively, and regretted that McLoughlin had become “as you state…odious to his neighbors.” Wythe proceeded to forward the letter to the Speaker of the House as well as McLoughlin, who responded only that he “never endeavored to prevent the settlement of the country, or to cripple its growth, but the reverse. If the whole country had been my own private property, I could not have exerted myself more strenuously than I did to introduce civilization, and promote its settlement.” That

46 No relation to Lorrin Thurston.
he had done more “to settle the country and relieve the immigrants in their
distresses, than any other man in it” was obvious, exemplified by his treatment of
the Hawaiians in his employ and the accommodations he made for them, such as
requesting the services of William Kaulehelehe.\textsuperscript{47}

This did not dampen the suspicions of Samuel Thurston, who continued
his crusade against McLoughlin during his time as a congressional representative,
dedicating his longest journal entry by far to recording the slights made toward
him and the secrets withheld from him by men he considered McLoughlin’s aids,
“lest [he] might forget them or be liable to mistake in case they should come in
play.”\textsuperscript{48} Thurston’s journal revealed much about the machinations behind his
congressional activities. In December 1849 he observed that the stress between
the North and the South resulted in arguments where “the South appear[ed] not to
have patience to discuss these questions upon the merits to be shown in argument;
but, laying it down that they are right and no mistake, fall to abusing the North
because she thinks otherwise, and threaten the Union.”\textsuperscript{49} He used that Southern
impatience and intolerance to his advantage when he came to the floor to debate
his land bill.

In 1850, five short years after McLoughlin brought Kaulehelehe from the
Islands to minister to the Hawaiians, the U.S. moved to regulate them. In stark
contrast to McLoughlin’s petition for additional kanakas, Samuel Thurston argued

\textsuperscript{47} Samuel R. Thurston, Nathaniel J. Wyeth, Robert C. Winthrop, John McLoughlin
“Correspondence of John McLoughlin, Nathaniel J. Wyeth, S. R. Thurston, and R. C. Winthrop,
Pertaining to Claim of Doctor McLoughlin at the Falls of the Willamette—The Site of Oregon
\textsuperscript{48} Samuel Royal Thurston and George H. Himes, “Diary of Samuel Royal Thurston,” \textit{The
Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society} 15 (1914): 189-190. Entry from Feb 16\textsuperscript{th}, 1850.
\textsuperscript{49} Samuel Thurston, “Diary,” 164. Entry from Dec 13\textsuperscript{th} 1849.
for the first law legislating against Hawaiians. In a congressional meeting that year he declared that “Canakers, or Sandwich Islanders, who are a race of men as black as your negroes of the South, and a race, too, that we do not desire to settle in Oregon.”\footnote{Samuel R. Thurston, \textit{The Congressional Globe}, May 28, 1850, 1079, accessed at the Library of Congress, memory.loc.gov.} This language took advantage of the tensions Samuel Thurston observed, indicating a marked shift from the previous language about Hawaiians in the region, and immediately assigned an unfavorable racial designation to Hawaiians that was so strong Lorrin Thurston struggled to rebound from its lasting impression as late as 1898 with his remarks that Hawaiians were “brown, not black,” and emphasizing further that they were not “African, but Polynesian.”\footnote{Lorrin Thurston, \textit{Handbook}, 80.} Moreover, Hawaiians could not even petition for citizenship, and were included in anti-miscegenation laws for the territory, and eventually the state.\footnote{Peggy Pascoe, \textit{What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America} (Oxford University Press, 2009), 5.} This was a calculated multi-pronged attack on McLoughlin, the lingering British influence in the region, and Hawaiians in general. Samuel Thurston not only succeeded in changing the status quo for the Hawaiian diaspora, but also introduced race as a negative element in the relationship between Hawaiians and Americans.

Elements of race, nation, and space informed the debate in Oregon Territory. In this instance, the competition was for both physical space and civil space, that is, who would settle the land and have rights in the American Pacific Northwest. Samuel Thurston succeeded in passing both an Indian Bill and a Land Bill during his short time in Congress. The former terminated Indian land claims.
west of the Cascade Mountains, and the latter effectively ended McLoughlin’s reign in Oregon by preventing the establishment of Oregon City. Ultimately, the role of the Hawaiians in securing the region for America as the “advance agents of empire,” part of the American Astorian team responsible for mapping out the frontier and extending national boundaries into the Pacific Northwest, conflicted with the agenda of those trying to incorporate the Pacific Northwest into a homogenous United States already straining under the weight of the black-white racial tensions on the Atlantic seaboard. The competition over who would have rights, and therefore a stake, in the region led men like Samuel Thurston to systematically refute any Hawaiian claim to legitimacy and citizenship by thrusting race into the equation and manipulating it for his purposes.

This initiated a movement stateside that complicated the racial dynamics of the west, but also generated a new understanding about Hawaiians as a race unfit for citizenship, an understanding created a sympathetic audience for Lorrin Thurston’s annexation arguments forty years later. This was one in a series of movements that eroded the Hawaiian as part of a grand Polynesian tradition, supplanting that idea for another corroded with racial inferiority. If Thurston’s Handbook struggled to make Hawaii and the Hawaiians living in the Islands overly familiar with his New England rhetoric, the opposite reaction took place on the mainland. Hawaiians, particularly in Pacific Northwest, rendered familiar to American through the publications of fur traders and explorers almost seventy years, began to take on a more sinister set of racial designations that bled into
their social, economic, and civil statuses. The entire West reverberated with this shift in racial tensions.\(^5^3\)

Samuel Thurston died in 1851, but Hawaiians in the United States continued to make appearances in Congressional sessions, particularly as the Hawaiian monarchs offered overtures such as “the treaty of friendship, commerce, and navigation” with the United States.\(^5^4\) In 1854 Maine politician Israel Washburn Jr. addressed the House of Representatives with an annexation appeal that was remarkably similar in tone and enthusiasm to Lorrin Thurston’s, with one notable exception: he openly discussed the Native Hawaiians and their participation in the government. In fact, his portrayal of the Hawaiians and their racial attributes almost mirrors Lililuokalani’s appeal as well, demonstrating that both of the late nineteenth century works drew heavily on the tradition of racial hierarchies and hegemony of democracy. Though his first reference to the Island’s inhabitants report on the “enterprising and influential American population” he immediately addressed the indigenous population, explaining that “the great decreases of the population of the islands presents the dark side of their history;

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\(^5^3\) In Kester’s examination of Native Hawaiian communities in Mormon Utah, he observed “The region’s cosmopolitan environment, which brought together former Mexican citizens, Chinese and Japanese laborers and entrepreneurs, freed or fleeing African American slaves, and eastern European immigrants, among others, forced white settlers of northern European ancestry to re-evaluate racial categorizations that had developed in the East.” If we took the traders’ narratives at face value, it would seem that suddenly “Native Hawaiian settlers found themselves near the bottom of the West’s social and economic hierarchies, marked by differences in language, cultural habits, and skin color, even in a region where their religion was culturally dominant.” Matthew Kester, “Race, Religion, and Citizenship in Mormon Country: Native Hawaiians in Salt Lake City, 1869–1889.” *Western Historical Quarterly* 40 (2009): 59-60.

\(^5^4\) S. Executive Record, 31st Cong., 1st Sess. 120 (1850).
but this, it is believed, may be accounted for without implying any essential incapacity in the race” and cited one of these reasons as “emigration.”

He described the Islanders in familiar terms, calling them “handsome, strong, well-limbed, and in height above the average standard Europeans. ...the women are decidedly pretty.” He explained that “a habit of labor has been implanted in them, by causes peculiar to their situation and condition, until they have fairly earned the reputation of an industrious people.” This particular example more closely resembles the popular portrayals of the Hawaiian diaspora rather than the Native Hawaiians in the Islands, who were more commonly described as lazy, as indicated previously in Samuel Parker’s 1836 observations.

This was abundantly clear in the publications of the Hawaiian Agricultural Society. In 1850 Henry Whitney, member of the newly formed society, declared “I shall coincide in the assertion that native labor cannot be depended on...we all know that the nature of the character of the Hawaiian is pliable. It is easily diverted, and, with proper inducements, it is easily directed.” Clearly, two contradictory representations of Hawaiians existed during this time, and lawmakers latched on the representation that best suited their agendas.

Washburn’s extensive comments on the Polynesians demonstrated that the myth of the Polynesian race, established in 1788 and revisited at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was still intact. He observed, “the vices and propensities of the islanders are such as are usually found in the Malayan races, but generally

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56 Ibid.
in forms of mitigation and relief. Their good points of character, however, are so numerous and striking as to justify the most confident anticipations of reform, under the influences of Christianity and civilization.” They were also “gentle and amenable, courageous and valiant; in these respects far ahead of all other Polynesians.” He did not entirely devoid them of their tropical stigma, stating “I believe these people capable of doing more and better for themselves and the world than they have heretofore, as inhabitants of remote and isolated islands, known or conceived...for their own sake they should be protected, held up, sustained, by one of the stronger and more advanced of the civilized Powers.”

Washburn’s description of “the Hawaiians” borrowed largely from the images and perceptions found in the publications of fur traders and explorers, and those records primarily involved interactions with the Hawaiian diaspora.

Washburn’s speech represented a clear departure from Samuel Thurston’s sentiment that Hawaiians were a race of undesirables. Washburn, who thought himself a staunch anti-expansionist, nevertheless thought it would be appropriate for the United States to annex the Hawaiian Islands eventually. His caveat was that the United States required the “free consent of the Hawaiians” and in the meantime should be “ready to receive the Sandwich Islands, whenever they shall signify a willingness to become part and parcel of the United States...fairly and honorably acquired.”

Interestingly, forty years after this speech men calling themselves “Hawaiians” would appeal to the United States for annexation on these same grounds. This loophole was the key to accomplishing the coup legally, and if

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Israel Washburn provided the blueprint for the annexation scheme, then Samuel Thurston was responsible for making it possible when he legalized and legitimized racism against Hawaiians in the United States and problematized their racial status. Lorrin Thurston, James Blaine, Sanford Dole, and the other members of the Safety Committee remade themselves as Hawaiians, but Hawaiians without the stigma of race, and on behalf of the Hawaiians, to “become part and parcel of the Unites States” and by their own standards of fair and honorable, as seen in Thurston’s 1898 *Handbook*.

**Race, Nation, and the Debate Over Annexation**

Though many historians argued that “any analysis of Hawaii’s political evolution and statehood must also take account of its gradual Americanization—a process begun early in the nineteenth century” it is also worth noting that that the nineteenth century was a time of growth, change, and a burgeoning sense of what other world powers of the time should have recognized as nationalism within Hawaii. The records of the Hawaiian diaspora reflected this growth when the off-island community recognized themselves as a cohesive unit and demanded formal representation, but the increased use and prominence of the word “kanaka,” as previously described, epitomized this shift. As the presence of Hawaiians in the Pacific Northwest also spurred the first legislation against Hawaiians, creating an irreparable fissure in the racial and national representation of Hawaii in America, the experience of the diaspora was closely tied to the trajectory of Hawaiian-American relations. Three types of Hawaiians emerged

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from this experience: the hardworking native and the lazy native, both of whom adhered to the myth of the dying native, and the national Hawaiian, a person that was Hawaiian by virtue of birth but without all the hindrances of race. By promoting these discrete conceptions of “Hawaiians” American policymakers fractionalized the Hawaiian movement and separated Hawaiian people as a race from Hawaii as a place.

It was the decedents of the first missionaries that embodied the national Hawaiian, and it was not until the politicization of the missionaries’ descendents in Hawaii that this perception of Hawaii’s inherent national alignment shifted from Great Britain to the United States, as “missionaries endeavors were a significant, if not a preponderant, magnet in drawing Hawaii from the British into American sphere of influence.”60 It was this enlargement of nationalism that distanced Hawaii from Great Britain and unwittingly brought the nation closer to the United States through the education and conversion of the Hawaiian chiefs. Not only did the Hawaiian people adopt Christianity in forms brought to them by Americans, but also the language of liberty and an understanding of sovereignty as a right of a “civilized” people, of which their Christianity certainly made them. These lessons served to reinforce their own ideas about nationalism, and the relationship between the Hawaiian race and the Hawaiian nation, which conflicted with those of the missionaries’ descendents, and spiraled into a full-blown confrontation in the 1890s.

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60 Merze Tate, *Hawaii: Reciprocity or Annexation* (Michigan State University Press: East Lansing, 1968), 5.
The underlying problem driving Thurston’s objections was the question of “who was a Hawaiian,” and therefore who had a right to topple the monarchy and petition for annexation. In this sense he adhered closely to Washburn’s admonishment that Hawaii should only be annexed by the “free consent of the Hawaiians.” For men like Thurston, Dole, and the other annexationists in Hawaii, they were Hawaiians by virtue of their birth in the Islands. As an American politician born in the Kingdom of Hawaii, part of a small and inbred community of descendents, Lorrin Thurston walked a fine line advocating for white American interests under the guise of Hawaiian nationality, a nationality he divorced from the concept of race when it came to promoting annexation. It is important to note that all the annexationists claimed to be Hawaiians, but not kanakas: they were national Hawaiians, but not racial Hawaiians. By analyzing the arguments for annexation in his *Handbook* the struggle between these two categories of Hawaiians emerge as he desperately attempted to minimize the Hawaiian race without sacrificing the integrity of the Islands he hoped to annex.

Thurston saw no paradox between the contemporaneous experiences of Hawaiians in the United States and the experience of Europeans and Americans in Hawaii. This could be attributed to the historic acceptance of non-Hawaiians into the government, a point abundantly clear in his pamphlet and supported by the records of men like Ross and Franchere in the early nineteenth century. Thurston described the coup as a reaction against Queen Liliuokalani’s “attempt to abrogate the constitution and promulgate one increasing her power and disfranchising the whites. The people thereupon overthrew the monarchy and established a
Provisional Government.” Not only did Thurston see whites as entitled to rule in the Hawaiian Islands, “the people” in this case are almost all the male descendants of the white missionaries in the Islands, “Hawaii born, American parentage,” and among those that Liliuokalani accused of calling themselves “Hawaiian” when in America, but operate as Americans in Hawaii.\textsuperscript{61}

Liliuokalani tried to reveal this disconnect in her memoir, emphasizing, “when I speak at this time of the Hawaiian people, I refer to the children of the soil—the native inhabitants of the Hawaiian Islands and their descendants.” She called out the annexationists, stating that

Two delegations claiming to represent Hawaii have visited Washington...lately these aliens have called themselves Hawaiians. They are not and never were Hawaiians...they have retained their American birthright...when it pleased the provisional Government to give their control another name, they called it the Republic of Hawaii...such has been their custom at Honolulu, although in Washington they represent themselves as Hawaiians.\textsuperscript{62}

She not only contrasted their Hawaiian citizenship with their American birthright by insinuating that they are incompatible, she also called them aliens outright. Liliuokalani regretted the liberties the Hawaiian government historically afforded foreigners, stating “suppose I had thought it wise to limit the exercise of suffrage to those who owed allegiance to no other country; is that different from the usage in all other civilized nations on earth? Is there another country where a man would be allowed to vote, to seek office, to hold the most responsible of positions, without becoming naturalized?”\textsuperscript{63} This distinction was critical to her stance on

\textsuperscript{61} Thurst, \textit{Handbook}, 24.
\textsuperscript{62} Liliuokalani, \textit{Hawaii’s Story}, 325.
\textsuperscript{63} Liliuokalani, \textit{Hawaii’s Story}, 237.
Hawaiian autonomy, particularly where it used the rhetoric uniting race and civilization as avenues to national sovereignty.

Liliuokalani's long term as princess regent meant she "had the longest period of time to understand her nation's dramatic transformation," and subsequently she was able to track the shift in national orientation and sentiment not only away from Great Britain, but into something distinctly "Hawaiian."\(^6\)\(^4\) She was educated at a missionary school where she was "instructed to prefer the outsiders' ways" so that "her moral values were shaped by the influence of the missionaries."\(^6\)\(^5\) This would prove detrimental to the missionaries in the long run, as she inherited their ideas about race and nation as well. It was Liliuokalani who composed the Hawaiian National Anthem, recalling, "in the early years of the reign of Kamehameha V he brought to my notice the fact that the Hawaiian people had no national air. Each nation, he said, but ours had its expression of patriotism and love of country in its own music; but we were using for that purpose on state occasions the time-honored British anthem 'God Save the Queen.' This he desired me to supplant by one of my own composition."\(^6\)\(^6\) Other declarations of these national intentions included the new Iolani palace and the importation of fine fabrics and other luxuries from around the world. More importantly, the monarchs traveled extensively during this time, representing their people and their nation abroad, and indicating to the world that the Hawaiian monarchy, government, and people viewed themselves as distinct from and equal

\(^6\)\(^6\) Liliuokalani, Hawaii's Story, 31.
to the nations vying for hegemony in their kingdom. Liliuokalani was aware of
the power in these symbols, never more so than when endeavored to secure the
“new dynasty” after an embittered election by preparing to “formally ratify the
accession...to the Hawaiian throne by investing both His Majesty Kalakaua, and
his queen, Kapiolani, with the crown and other insignia of royalty. To this end all
needful articles had been ordered from Europe, excepting such things as could be
readily obtained in the nearer port of San Francisco, California.” Liliuokalani was
at the forefront of these activities, and saw them as a strong element of nation-
making.67

In many ways, the Hawaiians push for a recognized form of nationalism
worked against them in the American arena. Under this pressure, the Islands
monarchy came under fire as a savage institution, despite Liliuokalani’s efforts.
One argument against the Hawaiian ability to self-govern involved their system of
land distribution, an institution historically misunderstood by Americans and
Europeans alike. Fur traders bore part of the responsibility for these
misconceptions. Franchere believed that “although Nature has showered her
bounties on these Islanders, who enjoy a healthful climate and can live almost
without working, they are never the less unhappy. The dependence in which they
are kept by their chiefs, who make them work without any hope of reward, the
limitations even in the choice of food, would be unbearable to anyone
unaccustomed to slavish obedience.”68 Ross also saw a system of slavery in the
Hawaiian’s social structure. He recorded that “to those who behave well the King

67 Liliuokalani, *Hawaii’s Story*, 100.
68 Franchere, *Journals*, 68.
allots land, and gives them slaves to work it. He protects both them and their property, and is loath ever to punish an evildoer.”69 Rev. Parker recorded that “The government of these islands is absolute and hereditary, administered by the king, queen, and chiefs, whose will is the supreme law; the common people are a nation of slaves. The lands belong to the government, and are leased to the people at high rents, and even then the people have no security…” There were no slaves in Hawaii: these “slaves” were simply common people, kanaka maoli, who were subject to the divine power of their ruler and the land in a cultural contact that intimately linked the people, the ruler, and the land. From the first recorded impressions of Hawaiians the Western lens retelling and distributing this history transformed the Hawaiian Islands, savaging them with terms like “slavery” and observations about wasted space while also remarking on their civility—descriptions that walked a line between fully accepting or rejecting Hawaiians until Americans and Europeans decided exactly how they fit into their gradation of civilizations. The perception of this misunderstanding contributed to Lorrin Thuston’s portrayal of the monarchy in his Handbook, and provided the historical precedence for reimagining Hawaiian people as inherently racially inferior towards the end of the nineteenth century, contrasting with seventy years of positive or neutral portrayals.

Land distribution was not the only reform the American presence introduced. By any accounts the American missionaries also enjoyed great success in Hawaii, allowing Hawaiians to latch onto the religion as evidence of their advanced racial status. Liliuokalani herself argued that she knew of “no

69 Ross, Adventures, 51.
people who have developed a tendered Christian conscience, or who have shown themselves more ready to obey its behest. Nor has any people known to history shown a greater reverence and love for their Christian teachers, or filled the measure of a grateful return more overflowingly.” She took the connection even further, acknowledging the implied equivalency between Christianity and civility, asking “where else in the worlds history is it written that a savage people, pagan for ages, with fixed hereditary customs and beliefs, have made equal progress in civilization and Christianity in the same space of time? And what people has ever been subjected during such an evolution to such a flood of demoralizing experiences?” The presence and successes of the missionaries in Hawaii were critical pieces of evidence for Queen Liliuokalani, clearly delineating her people’s civility and thereby their right to remain autonomous and self-determining. She seized on the language of savagery and civility and exploited the racial implications of both definitions, using the rhetoric to defend her people and insist on their distinction from Americans by emphasizing their racial differences while celebrating their civility through Christianity. Her Memoir stated,

I shall not claim that in the days of Captain Cook our people were civilized. I shall not claim anything more for their progress in civilization and Christian morality than has already attested by missionary writers… the habits and prejudices of New England Puritanism were not well adapted to the genius of a tropical people, not capable of being thoroughly ingrafted upon them. But Christianity in substance they have accepted… and where else in the world’s history is it written that a savage people, pagan for ages, with fixed hereditary customs and beliefs, have made equal progress in civilization and Christianity in the same space of time?”

— Liliuokalani, Hawaii’s Story, 366.
Liliuokalani turned the annexationists own reasoning against them, arguing “will it also be thought strange that education and knowledge of the world have enabled us to perceive that as a race we have some special mental and physical requirements not shared by the other races which have some among us? That certain habits and modes of living are better for our health and happiness than others? And that a separate nationality, and a particular form of government, as well as special laws, are, at least for the present, best for us?” By owning the racial designations meant to disempower Hawaiians, she hoped to remove the leverage Thurston wielded with this rhetoric.

Thurston did not refute the Hawaiian claim to civilization through Christianity, but he did not entirely accept it either, beyond agreeing with US Minister to Hawaii Henry Pierce that “the Hawaiian people for fifty years have been under the educational instruction of American missionaries and the civilizing influence of New England” and were therefore “Puritan and democratic in their ideas and tendencies” though “modified by a tropical climate.”71 Thurston tread this line cautiously, lest his attempts to render the Hawaiians familiar to the American public by promoting their “Puritan and democratic” nature backfire. He tempered this stance by reminding his readers that these attributes were subject to the laws of geographic racialization. Earlier, however, he stated that Hawaiians were “not a product of the tropics but [are], like the white man, a product of the temperate zone,” demonstrating a willingness to bend the language of geographical imperialism to suit his needs, and mirroring the cautious racial balance exemplified in the fur traders’ descriptions of the diaspora.

Part of Thurston’s ambiguity resulted from his need to portray the climate as suitable to Americans. The Hawaiian climate supported massive agriculture and therefore tremendous economic opportunity, so a language of laity would not suffice. Thurston declared “it is a climate well suited to the physical and mental development of the Anglo Saxon,” but the common portrayals of Hawaiians as unclean and diseased demanded Thurston address the climactic issue more fully. The presence of disease encouraged missionaries and policy makers to sustain the myth of Hawaiian extinction, contrary to their formidable reputations as Polynesians in the past, and thus relieving Thurston the burden of sanitizing the Islands while continuing to distinguish between Hawaiians as a race and Hawaii as a space. Though often contested, the losses Hawaiians sustained during the early years of contact were common knowledge, but even as late as 1853 a smallpox outbreak killed thousands of Hawaiians.\footnote{Originally estimated at anywhere from 250,000 to 800,000 pre-contact, the population plummeted by more than 50 percent in most estimates before the question of annexation ever arose. Okihiro, Island World, 97 and Osorio, Dismembering, 47.}

Leprosy continued to be a problem, affecting Hawaiians on the Islands physically and even stigmatizing Hawaiians in the United States. Thurston addressed this concern in his pamphlet. The Seventh Objection he foresaw to annexation was “There is leprosy in Hawaii” to which he responded “that is, unfortunately true.” He continued to explain, “nothing in the climactic conditions in Hawaii, however, caused the disease.” This was an important distinction to make, because twenty pages earlier he argued that “the country at all elevations, and throughout the year, is healthy, the death rate among whites being exceptionally small. None of the fevers and other typical diseases of tropical
countries are found here.” Thurston shifted the stigma of leprosy to the Chinese, claiming that it arrived with them thirty years ago and “has attached a large number of the natives, it being confined almost exclusively to them,” although there were not “as many lepers in Hawaii as there are in Norway, nor do there begin to be the number there are in Japan, China, India, and other Eastern countries,” the very same countries he believed would gain control of the Islands if the U.S. did not annex them. In doing so, the burden of illness became the result of the racial frailties of Polynesians and part of their epic of decline, not a fault of their coveted territory. This further emphasized the wide gap Thurston projected between Hawaiians as a race and Hawaii as a place, and his role as a national Hawaiian, acclimated to the habitat and competent in self-governance, the ideal “Hawaiian.”

The combination of religion, racism and disease that feature so prominently in Thurston’s *Handbook* culminated in the experience of diasporic Hawaiians in Utah. Kester’s study of the Mormon community in Iosepa best illustrated how these factors influenced the perceptions of Hawaiians in America. Kester observed that religion was a powerful motivator in creating and sustaining diasporic communities. During her trip to the United States Liliuokalani stopped in Salt Lake City and met with several elders from the Mormon church as well as Hawaiians living in the region who were “naturally much delighted to meet visitors of their nation so far from home.” Kester’s study examined “the process

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73 Lorrin Thurston, *Handbook*, 22. For an interesting discussion about tropic and temperate zones and race see Okihiro.
75 Liliuokalani, *Hawaii’s Story*, 119.
of negotiating both a racial and religious identity” that was “complicated by the West’s unique brand of racialism...” Native Hawaiians in Utah contended not only with racial discrimination, but also religious persecution. While their Christianity connected them to the larger Mormon community, it was the scourge of disease that contributed heavily to their continued division from mainstream society. In fact, since “most whites in Utah knew what little they did about Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders from the plethora of newspapers that printed accounts of Hawaiian politics, social life, and customs, as well as sensational events from throughout the Pacific.” This study illustrated not only how popular representations of Hawaiians in the islands influenced the diaspora, but also how the racialized language of savagery and civilization, even tempered by Christianity, affected the Hawaiians living the United States. Since “without the voices of the community members themselves, which have not survived, we can only speculate on the ways that the community created and maintained a hybrid identity based on race, class, and religion,” those early recorded impressions of Native Hawaiians and the diaspora, discussed earlier in this study, continue to remain relevant.76

Thuston went one step farther in his attempts to minimize the presence of Native Hawaiians, describing them as, as previously mentioned, as “not Africans, but Polynesians” and therefore “brown, not black...” This was a critical distinction in recovering the race from their extreme degradation, as promoted by Samuel Thurston, because he then declared “the two races [white and Hawaiian] freely intermarry one another...they are a race which will in the future, as they

76 Kester, “Race,” 75.
have in the past, easily and rapidly assimilate with and adopt American ways and methods,” further reducing the presence of the Hawaiian “race” in his new concept of “Hawaiian.” His decision to Americanize the Hawaiians mirrored his conviction that “Hawaiian Christianization, civilization, commerce, education, and development are the direct product of American effort. Hawaii is, in every element and quality which enters into the composition of a modern civilized community, a child of America. Hawaii is the one ‘American Colony’ beyond the borders of the Union.” This merger of Hawaiian and American contributed to the native depopulation by obscuring their presence with assimilation, and also supported his belief in the new Hawaiian as a white, Americanized Hawaiian, like himself and his fellow annexationists. In doing so, he rendered what was formerly exotic and foreign familiar and domestic, and his own role in their government from foreign usurper to subject, reconciling these conflicting positions about race and nationalism.77 Native Hawaiians no longer factored into his vision of Hawaii, and he dismissed their role in the future government in one sentence, arguing that “it is no longer a question of whether Hawaii shall be controlled by the Native Hawaiian, or by some foreign people; but, the question is, ‘what foreign people shall control Hawaii.’78

Liliuokalani vehemently disagreed. In addition to seeing Christianity as one method of combating what she saw (and was commonly understood) as the inherently uncivilized character of the Hawaiian race, she argued that it was that

78 Thurston, Handbook, 5.
same inherently uncivilized character that merited the Hawaiians right to self-governance and autonomy. Adopting the language of geographic imperialism to advocate the continued sovereignty of her people, Liliuokalani "admit[ted] the criticism of some intelligent visitors that were not missionaries—that the habits and prejudices of New England Puritanism were not well adapted to the genius of a tropical people, not capable of being thoroughly ingrafted upon them." In concluding this admission she redirected the blame for the Hawaiians inability to surrender to American control on their "education and knowledge of the world" which "enabled us to perceive that as a race we have some special mental and physical requirements not shared by the other races which have some among us. That certain habits and modes of living are better for our health and happiness than others..."

This conviction was enforced, in part, by the presence of the Americans in Hawaii but also by the immigrating Hawaiians. The Pacific Northwest was the Hawaiian frontier, a place of economic and cultural exchange, where political favor was gained, worldly lessons earned, and ideas about race and nation exchanged. This experience, combined with the familiarity of American life and law resulting from the long-term missionary presence in Hawaii ensured that Liliuokalani could appropriate the rhetoric of race and nation and use it as justification for self-determination. She says as much in her conclusion, challenging the annexationists with an argument taken right from their own
rhetoric, asking whether “a separate nationality, and a particular form of
government, as well as special laws, are, at least for the present, best for us?”

Liliuokalani demonstrated an increased political awareness and a growing
sense of outrage at the prominence and entitlement of many Americans in Hawaii.
She wrote “for many years our sovereigns had welcomed the advice of, and given
full councils to, American residents who had cast in their lot with our people, and
established industries on the Islands. As they became wealthy, and acquired titles
to lands through the simplicity of our people and their ignorance of values and of
the new land laws, their greed and their love of power proportionately increased.”
She aggressively addressed these disparities, perhaps no more so than when she
argued “supposing I had thought it wise to limit the exercise of suffrage to those
who owed allegiance to no other country; is that different from the usage in all
other civilized nations on earth? Is there another country where a man would be
allowed to vote, to seek for office, to hold the most responsible of positions,
without becoming naturalized, and reserving to himself the privilege of protection
under the guns of a foreign man-of-war at any moment when he should quarrel
with the government under which he lived? Yet this is exactly what the quasi
Americans, who call themselves Hawaiians now and Americans when it suits
them, claimed the rights to do at Honolulu.” She equated the Hawaiian Islands
with other great nations of the time, indicating that citizenship and participation
within the government out to be limited to those within the populace, and casting
the annexationists as foreigners motivated by greed, guests that overstayed their

79 Liliuokalani, Hawaii’s Story, 366.
welcome in the Islands. In doing so, she attempted to reunite the racial and national elements of her Hawaii, arguing that only racial Hawaiians had a right to decide the fate of the Islands.

A Nation Divided

Annexation in 1898 "was a pivotal episode in America’s thrust for empire and a symbol of its determination to join the European imperialist powers on the world stage." The United States entered a time when "geography was a discipline of empire, remaking the world literally and figuratively in the name of progress" and race as a tool of this imperial impulse was "the core of the imperialist policy and the northern view of economic expansion abroad." Thurston’s list of "objections" repeatedly illustrated this point. He overtly preyed on American fear and racial attitudes, and relied on geographical imperial rhetoric in his description of the salutatory tropics, from the diseases that only affected Natives and Asians, both undesirables at this time in American History, to the environment’s affect on the Hawaiians as a tempering force on their American Christian disposition, otherwise well-suited for the Anglo-Saxon, and the use of race and geography in the imperial quest for the Hawaiian Islands.

Yet the “prevailant notions of civilization and savagery” were also central to how Hawaiians conceptualized their own race and nation, and might explain why they allowed whites in Hawaii more liberal political freedoms than whites afforded them in America. They adopted the same language of civility and savagery. Queen Liliuokalani described her position as patron of the Polynesian

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80 Liliuokalani, Hawaii’s Story, 177.
81 Bell, Last Among Equals, 2.
82 Proto, Rights of My People, 122. Okihiro, Pineapple Culture, 27.
society resulting not only from her reputation as a “friend of education, of art, and of all those refining influences which exalt the nation” but also because “the Hawaiians were the most highly civilized of any of the ancient people of those seas.” This idea was not unique to the Hawaiians. In 1898 a story in Harper’s Weekly about Kamehameha stated “Certainly no other savage or barbarian, in all the stories of all the Pacific islands, is Kamehameha’s superior. The race that produced him had possibilities within itself.”83 These sentiments echoed Washburn’s 1854 descriptions, which drew heavily from Captain Cook’s portrayals in 1778. This illustrated a long tradition of adhesion to the same racial rhetoric. Both Samuel Thurston and Lorrin Thurston successfully challenged this understanding, with lasting implications for native Hawaiians in the nineteenth century and today.

Through these mechanisms Hawaiians and Americans interpreted and internalized the same discourses of savagery and civilization, and of race and nation. Americans used them to subjugate Hawaiians, while Hawaiians used them to assert their right to self-determination. In both versions, the experiences of the Hawaiian diaspora, underrepresented in both appeals, contributed significantly to the creation of this discourse. Without a Hawaiian diaspora in the Pacific Northwest, the Islands could have been quietly colonized, as Americans used the mandate of education and the spread of Christianity as their weapons in colonialism. However, the long established presence of Hawaiians in the Pacific Northwest spawned the creation of anti-Hawaiian legislation, and set in motion a transformative half-century that saw Hawaiians adopt numerous racial

designations and statuses, and ultimately brought them as far as possible from their original Polynesian depiction.

The competition for space, civil and physical, between the Hawaiians and the Americans lasted for almost one hundred years. From their first interactions with Captain Cook, an unusual relationship with an uneasy power dynamic existed between the two nations, culminating in this collision of interests. The lack of competition during the early years of contact was the result of not only the formidable reputation attached to the Polynesian nation, but also the lack of economic interest in the Hawaiian Islands. After the Hawaiians participated in the annexation of the Pacific Northwest, the U.S. adjusted its gaze into the Pacific Ocean, creating a new dynamic in the relationship between the two countries that relied on the discourse of race to shift power away from native Hawaiians. The primarily civil, but also physical, competition in the 1850s and 1860s was the outcome from a fierce debate over race and citizenship in the expanding United States.

The competition for space at the end of the nineteenth century was difficult to justify, even during that era of expansionism. The United States acquired other islands, all of them closer in proximity than Hawaii, and chose not to annex any of them. The desire for the Hawaiian Islands confounded Liliuokalani when she observed that in America were thousands of acres of uncultivated, uninhabited, but right and fertile lands, soil capable of producing anything which grows, plenty of water, floods of it running to waste, everything needed for pleasant towns and quiet homesteads, except population...and yet this great and powerful nation must go across two thousand miles of sea, and take from the poor Hawaiians their little spots in the broad Pacific, must covet our islands of
Hawaii Nei, and extinguish the nationality of my poor people...and for what? In order that another race problem shall be injected into the social political perplexities with which the United States...is already struggling?84

The experiences of the Hawaiian diaspora were a testament to these questions, as they highlight the struggle between two discreet groups of people trying to occupy the same civic and physical space. Ironically, the space they initially competed to occupy belonged to neither nation, and so they were able to join together to establish a dominant presence, as seen in the Pacific Northwest. But the evolution of this relationship, as exemplified in the conflicts of 1850-54 in Oregon Territory and again in 1897-98 in these annexation debates, was a critical component to the annexation debates, one unfortunately overlooked by its participants.

A fuller and more politicized understanding of the first members of the Hawaiian diasporic community is the first step in recovering the voice of the Hawaiian immigrants ignored by American politicians like Thurston. The diaspora’s complete absence from Thurston’s pamphlet confirmed that policy makers would rather omit than explain the diaspora’s role or interest in annexation. He blotted out the Hawaiian in this competition for space, relying on the language of racial inferiority to justify his reconstruction of the Hawaiian “nation” into a nation of his own imagining. In becoming Hawaiian, but not kanaka, Thurston and the annexationists wrested control from the Hawaiian monarchy and helped establish the Hawaiian Republic.

Liliuokalani took that same language and argued for the unique, if inferior, character of Hawaiians as a race, but used those designations to justify her vision

84 Liliuokalani, Hawaii’s Story, 309.
of the Hawaiian nation as one for the kanaka maoli, not for the Americans masquerading as Hawaiians. She identified and appropriated several American justifications for self-determination and autonomy, such as their desire for racial homogeneity, the resources abundant in their own country, their Christian religious traditions, and their commitment to democracy, to bolster her own claim to Hawaiian sovereignty. She used her memoir to illustrate the Hawaiian’s unique embodiment of race, their tropical adaptations, their fervent Christianity, and their love of government, citing her own experiences to demonstrate the civility of the Hawaiian people. She contrasted this with the savagery of the annexationists, portraying them as men with no patriotic loyalties, motivated by greed, and with a violent disrespect for lawful government.

Racial constructions linger long after the forces that created them dissipate. The conflict between race and nation in Hawaii is not only a historical problem, but continues to play a significant role in politics in the twenty-first century. In comparing Liliuokalani and Lorrin Thurston’s public appeals, new patterns emerge that illustrate two very different visions of the Hawaiian nation, but two very similar interpretations of the Hawaiian race. The incompatibility of these two categories drove Thurston’s argument, and their exclusivity informed Liliuokalani’s.

Reexamining these two appeals and interrogating their statements and their silences revealed much about the presence of Hawaiians in America and their absence in the American narrative and their influence on the creation and reinterpretation of race and nation as it pertained to Hawaiians. Reestablishing
this two-way exchange between these nations is the first step to recovering the Hawaiian presence in the annexation debates, the benefits of which transcend the historical interest in the event itself. Traditional histories of both nations need to be rewritten to incorporate the Hawaiian diaspora’s experiences. Illuminating the evolution of racial perceptions in response to a competition for space and resources in the Pacific Northwest and Hawaii not only draw them closer together historiographically, but also demonstrates that in the United States nineteenth-century perceptions of race were malleable and responded to a myriad of pressures. As a result of annexation “race” and “nationality” are still very rigid categories in the Hawaiian Islands. A fuller understand about how these two things, once represented fully in the “Polynesian nation,” diverged so completely, might be one step in reconciling them again.
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