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Dismantling Purity: Toward a Feminist Curdling of Hawaiian Identity¹

L. Brooke Rudow-Abouharb

Abstract

This paper explores Hawaiian racial identity formation using María Lugones's metaphor of curdling as a guiding theme. I aim to show that the accepted definition of "native Hawaiian" is based on a purity model of race that serves to undermine the unity of the Hawaiian Nation. I begin by outlining the pre-contact understanding of Hawaiian identity. This conception of identity was subsequently altered through various political agendas to fit within a Western/European notion of "pure" racial identity. I argue that continuing to use the imposed definition of "native Hawaiian" makes the fragmentation of Hawaiian identity and society difficult to overcome. Additionally, I offer a discussion of the gendered rhetoric of some Hawaiian activists that complicates the effort to regain a precolonial cultural identity that was largely egalitarian. Finally, I suggest that a rejection of racial purity and a rearticulation of Hawaiian identity that recaptures pre-contact, strategic notions of belonging by way of Lugones's "impure resistance" can set the stage for a more inclusive Hawaiian Nation.

Keywords: Hawaii, race, kinship, purity, resistance, Lugones

Ka Lāhui Hawai'i is an organization fighting for the sovereignty and land rights of the Hawaiian people. This organization seeks "nation within a nation" status similar to that of many Native American tribes. Ka Lāhui asserts itself as a "native Hawaiian initiative," stating that "Ka Lāhui's approach is to seek inclusion of Hawaiian people in the federal policy which affords all Native Americans the right to be self-governing" (Ka Lāhui Hawai'i 1993). Ka Lāhui seeks inclusion. Yet, they seem to rely on a style of rhetoric that speaks otherwise, one that María Lugones might call "split-separated" (Lugones 2003, 128). Beyond exclusivity, calls to action take on a decidedly gendered tone, placing higher demands on female Hawaiians. By appealing to their *mana*, women are charged as the keepers of Hawaiian identity.

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In this paper, I explore Hawaiian racial-identity formation and show that the accepted definition of “native Hawaiian” is based on a purity model of race that serves to undermine the unity of the Hawaiian Nation. I begin by outlining the pre-contact understanding of Hawaiian identity, which was subsequently altered through various political agendas to fit neatly within Western notions of “pure” racial identity. I argue that continuing to use the imposed definition of “native Hawaiian” makes the fragmentation of Hawaiian identity and society difficult to overcome. Additionally, I offer a discussion of the gendered rhetoric that complicates the effort to regain a precolonial cultural identity that was largely egalitarian. Finally, I suggest that a rejection of fictitious racial purity and a rearticulation of Hawaiian identity that recaptures pre-contact, strategic notions of belonging by way of Lugones’s “impure resistance” can set the stage for a more inclusive Hawaiian Nation.

Analyzing race from an outsider’s position is precarious business. There is much about these issues that I do not know and cannot know. I have attempted here to give an account and analysis that is accurate and respectful. Where I have failed, I apologize and hope to be corrected. Discussions of Native American identity in contemporary race theory are few and far between, and when it comes to Hawaiian identity, even more so. It is my hope that this paper can contribute to the growth of serious conversations about a wide range of political and social issues facing contemporary Hawai’i.

What Is Race?

Traditional Hawaiian understandings of belonging, identity, and family are far removed from European notions of blood “purity” as fundamental to identity formation. To illustrate the differences, J. Kēhaulani Kauanui cites Alan Howard’s identification of four main assumptions of European identity formation: (1) “Genetic inheritance is the main transmitter of a person’s vital substance.” (2) “Race, culture, and language strongly cohere . . . to compose a distinctive racial type.” (3) Where they do not cohere, “the character of individuals is primarily determined by genetic inheritance.” And (4) in the case of “racial mixing,” the “lower” racial type determines the racial identity of the offspring (Kauanui 2008a, 49). Here, a person is defined by her race and her race is predetermined in the sense that it is given by the race of her parents. It is fixed, unchangeable, and pure. Any racial “confusion” is sidestepped by the prescription of the “lower” racial type, says Howard. Yet, Linda Martín Alcoff significantly complicates the final assumption. She says, “In cultures defined by racialized identities, infected with the illusion of purity, and divided by racial hierarchies, mixed white/nonwhite persons face an *irresolvable* status ambiguity. They are rejected by the dominant race as impure and therefore inferior, but are also sometimes disliked and distrusted by the oppressed race for their

privileges of closer association with domination” (Alcoff 2006, 267; emphasis added).

Alcoff’s observation points to the insidious nature of this model, which is illuminated in its relationship to control. Those who are not easily placed into a racial category, those of “mixed” blood, are not permitted to exist as multiplicitous. Lugones says that, instead, they are “split-separated” into two (or more) pure parts which do not interact, where “what is multiple is understood as internally separable, divisible into what makes it one and the remainder” (Lugones 2003, 128). She calls this ‘fragmentation.’ Lugones says that fragmentation “follows the logic of purity” and creates a subject which is abstract and without particularity (Lugones 2003, 128–129). The fundamental assumption of the logic of purity, she says, is that underneath all multiplicity must be unity. A multiple must reduce to the pure element. Where there is no pure element, one is assumed for the sake of purity. This is clearly identified in Howard’s fourth assumption: in mixes, the “lower” racial type determines identity. The “mix,” the multiplicity, is denied in favor of a unified simple. This logic of purity is based on the logic of control. A thing unified, simple, pure is easily controlled.

In contrast to the Western logic of purity, Lugones provides an alternative understanding of identity. She calls it ‘curdled,’ where identity is defined by one’s mixtures and multiplicities. She uses a metaphor of making mayonnaise to show that when oil and eggs are mixed hastily, they curdle. You cannot get the oil out of the egg or the egg out of the oil. They defy strict separation *or* combination. Likewise, multiplicities cannot be split-separated. *They* curdle. They intermesh; you will not find one “part” without the others. And while for the chef, or the lover of purity, this mixture is undesirable—curdling “ruins” the end product—Lugones understands curdling as a potentially empowering practice of resistance. Importantly, curdling is something performed, as opposed to purity, which is determined before birth. Curdling defies control and fragmentation because there are no pure parts to be had (Lugones 2003, 123). It resists classification, or at least any fixed classification. This notion of identity is in direct opposition to the logic of purity, and is what we find in pre-contact Kanaka Maoli genealogical kinship.²

Indigenous Kanaka Maoli cultural practices are such that identity is based on genealogical ties and lineal descent. Kinship is bilateral and is determined by relationship, status, and duty (Kauanui 2008a, 47). People are recognized as related through their mothers and fathers equally. For example, one might forge a connection to another Kanaka Maoli by following her father’s line to a shared

² *Kanaka Maoli* is the term Hawaiians used to refer to themselves pre-contact. There is a movement to reclaim much of Hawaiian language and it is in that spirit that I use this phrase alternately with Hawaiian throughout this paper.

relative, or she might invoke her mother's line to claim certain privileges or respect if she is connected to an *ali'i*, "royalty," through that route. As genealogy and relatedness make up identity, a child born to a Kanaka Maoli is immediately and wholly integrated into the Kanaka Maoli kinship system. This genealogical web cannot be broken (unless, as we shall see, it is forgotten) and thus, kinship cannot be "diluted." In this way, Kanaka Maoli identity is both inclusive and strategic. It gives one social flexibility as well as a collective identity. J. Kēhaulani Kauanui says, "Genealogy is about quality, not quantity; it is the quality of the connection that counts, not the 'distance' in relation to some mythic purity. . . . There are no exclusive boundaries between defined sets of relatives or bounded descent groups associated with land. Instead, there is social flexibility where there are no determinate kinship groups or rigidly prescribed relationships" (Kauanui 2007, 113). By quality, here, she means the virtue, merit and, especially, *pono* of one's ancestors (Silva 2004, 239).³

Additionally, a genealogical relationship to the Hawaiian Islands is crucial for Kanaka Maoli. The land is the mother of all Hawaiians, and their relationship to the cosmos is familial (Trask 1999, 59). Given that all Kanaka Maoli are children of the land, they are all family. Familial relationships are understood as reciprocal, where the elder sibling is required to provide and care for younger siblings, who are then required to love, honor, and care for their elders. In traditional indigenous society, this familial model was reflected in the language itself, whereby all Hawaiians of one's own generation were referred to as sisters or brothers. All Kanaka Maoli of the parents' generation were mothers and fathers. This reciprocal obligation extends to the land; Kanaka Maoli must *mālama 'āina*, "care for the land," and the land will care for all of its family. Therefore, access to and the ability to protect the land is fundamental and vital to Kanaka Maoli moral order.

But should we consider this undilutable, genealogical understanding of Kanaka Maoli identity a concept of race? Through this model, it is certainly the case that I, a *haole* from the continental US with no Hawaiian relatives, cannot be Hawaiian.⁴ It does not matter what cultural practices I may adopt or where I may move. One cannot become Hawaiian (Kauanui 2008a, 49).⁵ One is either born

³ Silva defines *pono* as "goodness, uprightness, morality, correct or proper procedure, excellence, well-being, prosperity, welfare, benefit, sake, just, virtuous, fair."

⁴ While *haole* simply means "foreigner," it is most often used in contemporary times to mean "white person." I use it throughout as "foreigner."

⁵ Adoption and fostering of non-biological relatives was practiced. However, Kauanui notes that "the fact that unrelated persons could be incorporated in these ways into

Hawaiian or not. Familial relationships are passed through genetic material and require that one is physically and physiologically connected to other Hawaiians and the land. Hawaiian identity does have a biological foundation, but does that make it racial? After all, what is race?

Michael Omi and Howard Winant propose a definition of race that does not rely upon blood purity as primary to race. They write that we must understand race as

an unstable and ‘decentered’ complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle. . . . *Race is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies.* Although the concept of race invokes biologically based human characteristics . . . , selection of these particular human features for purposes of racial signification is always and necessarily a social and historical process. . . . There is no biological basis for distinguishing among human groups along the lines of race. Indeed, the categories employed to differentiate among human groups along racial lines reveal themselves . . . to be at best imprecise, and at worst completely arbitrary. (Omi and Winant 1994, 55; emphasis added)

Is this description of race what we find in Kanaka Maoli genealogy? On one hand, social obligation and interests are certainly understood in virtue of one’s relatedness to other Kanaka Maoli. Being related to a *pono ali’i* would give one a higher social standing and more class mobility. This political and social hierarchy is related to the body. However, it is unclear how this manifests itself symbolically in (or on) the body. Genealogy is a type of history that must be taught, remembered, and retold again and again. If one “forgets” her genealogy, those ties become unraveled and can be broken. Indeed, many traditional Hawaiian songs, chants, and stories held the genealogical connections from a family to its ancestors. Especially important were those cosmological chants which connected *ali’i* directly to the land which legitimized their rule (Silva 2004, 182).⁶

Further, marriage and procreation with foreigners was neither uncommon nor problematic. The children resulting from Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian unions

‘*ohana* does not undercut the fact that Hawaiian society still works by ancestral links and privileges genealogy” (Kauanui, 2008a, 49).

⁶ This also made the fact Hawaiians were prohibited from speaking Hawaiian, given that their histories were entirely oral, especially tragic. By losing their histories that connected them genealogically to their ancestors, they lost a highly, if not the most, significant part of their Hawaiian identity.

were accepted as Kanaka Maoli (Silva 2004, 20–26). Due to bilateral kinship, a child could legitimately claim Kanaka Maoli identity through whichever line held a Hawaiian relative. The fact that one’s parent might not be Hawaiian in no way reduced one’s social or political position. Even contact and partial integration with white *haole* did not immediately change this. Kauanui gives a nice example of this, citing the runoff for the throne between Queen Emma and David Kalākaua. Although Queen Emma had a white British grandfather, she was a descendant of the Kamehamehas (a highly regarded line of *aliʻi*) and was therefore seen by the Kanaka Maoli as more qualified than Kalākaua, who, by European standards, had a “more Hawaiian” heritage. “[Her] European ancestry was not seen as something that weakened her high-ranking Hawaiian lineage, which bolstered her claim and popularity. Her mixedness was not seen as negative in any way nor a discount of her Hawaiianness” (Kauanui 2008a, 59). Hence, social standing could not be determined by visible physical features, but rather by the memorized, historical connection to a virtuous or powerful ancestor.

Certainly political and social, but by no means unstable, imprecise, or arbitrarily determined, this indicates to me that Kanaka Maoli identity cannot be understood through Omi and Winant’s version of race. Further, insofar as Kanaka Maoli kinship *was* social and political, it operated *within* a distinct group but not as a tool for political struggle against other racial groups. However, before long, the Kanaka Maoli would become “Hawaiian,” a full-fledged racial designation. Before delving into this racial formation, a brief history to contextualize the discussion may be of some use.

A Brief History

It is difficult to determine exactly when a white presence in Hawaiʻi began. Most European accounts place the first *haole* arrival in or “discovery” of the Hawaiian Islands with Captain James Cook in 1778. However, recently translated Hawaiian language newspapers place the onset of white *haole* visitors as early as 900 CE and no later than 1555 (Silva 2004, 20). Challenging both the European models of historical reporting and the notion that Captain Cook magically and uniquely appeared in Hawaiʻi to the paralyzing amazement of the Kanaka Maoli, Samuel Kamakau tells of a long, rich, and mostly peaceful relationship with white *haole*. He recounts stories of Hawaiians travelling to and from foreign lands and foreigners travelling to and from Hawaiʻi.⁷ European versions, nevertheless, prevail,

⁷ It is important to note that this information comes from the original version of Samuel Kamakau’s text written in Hawaiian and *not* the English translation in which all of this pre-Cook history is left out. Interestingly, also left out of the English translation are the detailed accounts of woman-led sea voyages and expeditions.

giving Cook credit for the discovery of the Hawaiian Islands, as well as the subsequent destruction of the Kanaka Maoli land, culture, and bodies that followed his arrival. “The fruits and the seeds that his actions planted sprouted and grew, and became trees that spread to devastate the people of these islands,” says Kamakau (Silva 2004, 22).

After Cook’s death, as more *haole* from the US and Europe arrived, peace did not return. Europeans brought foreign plants and animals, disease, armed conflict, and mass death. Conservative population estimates of the Kanaka Maoli upon Cook’s arrival in 1778 range from 400,000 to 1,000,000, dropping to 135,000 in the following 45 years, and then to only 40,000 by 1890 (Trask 1999, 6). Christian missionaries justified colonization, asserting a causal relationship. They connected the “evil” ways of the Kanaka Maoli and their pagan gods with the sickness, weakness, and devastation of their people. White *haole* did not succumb to these sicknesses and used this to convince Kanaka Maoli of their own righteousness. “The fertile field of conversion was littered with the remnants of holocaust, a holocaust created by white foreigners and celebrated by their later counterparts as the will of a Christian god” (Trask 1999, 6). Conversion, the missionaries asserted, would be the Kanaka Maoli’s only salvation, both physically and spiritually. Thus, by 1890, the Kanaka Maoli had been almost completely dispossessed of their religion, moral order, chiefly government, cultural practices, land, and water. By 1898, they would lose their nation as well.

Through the combination of the rapidly declining Kanaka Maoli population, powerful missionaries, and the strategic positioning of *haole* businessmen in the Hawaiian government, US interests were increasingly served by new laws regulating the sale of Hawaiian land which almost exclusively benefited American-owned sugar plantations (Silva 2004, 39–43). “By 1888, three-quarters of all arable land was controlled by *haole*” (Trask 1999, 7). High US tariffs on sugar trade and increased competition from foreign markets reduced profits, thus US annexation of Hawai’i would provide a convenient solution for American sugar planters. The Kanaka Maoli vehemently opposed annexation and rightly associated annexation with enslavement and national death. Yet, any public demonstration of this opposition was met with intervention from the US military, purporting to be merely “keeping the peace.”

Conspiring with the United States Minister to Hawai’i, a small group of *haole* planters and businessmen overthrew Queen Lili’uokalani, Hawai’i’s final lawful ruler. Backed by the US Marines, the businessmen created their own “Provisional Government” (Trask 1999, 12). This Provisional Government became the Republic of

Perhaps Hawaiian identity could be more easily reconstructed in a European model when these gender roles were historically (yet, falsely) reinforced.

Hawai'i. In spite of a previous verbal agreement from the president of the United States respecting the independence of Hawai'i and the 1843 recognition of Hawai'i as an independent nation and member of the family of nations, signed by officials from England and France, and further, in spite of the fact that no vote was taken in Hawai'i or in the US Congress, the Republic of Hawai'i succeeded in obtaining full annexation by resolution (Silva 2004, 36–37). Haunani-Kay Trask captures the profound impact of this largely illegal apprehension:

Because of the overthrow and annexation, Hawaiian control and Hawaiian citizenship were replaced with American control and American citizenship. We suffered a unilateral redefinition of our homeland and our people, a displacement and a dispossession in our own country. In familial terms, our mother (and thus our heritage and our inheritance) was taken from us. We were orphaned in our own land. (Trask 1999, 16)

Yet the redefinition of Hawaiian identity would not stop there. The 1920s brought a rearticulation of “Hawaiian” under the guise of rehabilitation for Kanaka Maoli. And once again, the battle centered on *haole* interest in Hawaiian land.

Racial Formation in the Hawaiian Islands

The formation of a “purified” Hawaiian identity began when the white *haole* took an economic, religious, and political interest in Hawai'i. It initially took the form of US press depicting Kanaka Maoli as inferior, lacking morals and culture. Newspapers and missionary writings portrayed them as savages or barbarians:

We learned that Mr. Charles H. Derby went over to San Francisco . . . taking with him some native men and women. . . . A man must be pretty hard up for employment to undertake an exhibition of these islanders and their disgusting dances in a civilized country and to a refined community. (*Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, March 1862; quoted in Noyes 2003, 33)

Laka, the obscene goddess, still presides over the unspeakable abominations of the hula. (J. S. Emerson, “The Lesser Hawaiian Gods,” *Hawaiian Historical Society Papers*, April 7, 1892; quoted in Noyes 2003, 33)

Speaking generally, a region larger than several of our States has been redeemed from utter savagery. . . . The natives are steadily disappearing in number and seem likely sooner or later to disappear, their places are already supplied by others of sturdier stock. (D. L. Leonard, D.D., “Christianity and

the Hawaiian Islands,” *The Missionary Review of the Word*. July 16, 1903; quoted in Noyes 2003, 61)

Politically these images and constructions were necessary for white American *haole* to garner support for the eventual US takeover of the Hawaiian Nation and can be understood as what Omi and Winant call a racial project. “A racial project is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines,” the resource in this case: land (Omi and Winant 1994, 55–56). Painting the picture of Kanaka Maoli as savage, disgusting, weak, immoral, and animalistic served as a powerful political move which justified (1) encroachment on Hawaiian lands, for natives did not use it properly; (2) (re)population of the islands—Hawaiian souls needed replacing with Christian ones and dead Hawaiian bodies needed replacing by sturdier white ones; and, of course, (3) the eventual “adoption” of the nation as a whole, for “barbarians” certainly cannot rule themselves.

Racial categorizations that served the colonization project grew ever more prominent. Settlers began carefully distinguishing between full Hawaiians (as if there were such a thing) and part Hawaiians, especially in identifying *Caucasian* Hawaiians versus *Asiatic* Hawaiians. Hawaiian born children were also classified by nationality, which had become a clear code word for race, given that anti-Chinese and anti-Japanese sentiments were strong (Kauanui 2008a, 57). Dividing the population of Hawai’i would serve to reify and justify an entire social order, extant still, determined by and beneficial to white *haole*. This project of racializing Hawaiian bodies culminated in the establishment of a fully formed racial identity with the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920 (HHCA).

The HHCA was the result of a rehabilitation movement initiated by Hawaiian elites on behalf of Hawaiian commoners. They were highly concerned with the dropping population, poor living conditions, and high rates of unemployment. At that time, options and mobility were limited, dominated, and completely determined by the concentration of land ownership in the hands of a very few. Of all privately owned land in Hawai’i, over 80% was *haole* owned, the remaining lands were owned “by individual part-Hawaiians, Hawaiians, and Asians” (Kauanui 2008a, 69). Rehabilitation meant giving (back) some of the land to Hawaiians so that they might engage in homesteading and improve their circumstances in Hawai’i. The argument hinged on the US recognition that it was a social and moral duty to help the impoverished Kanaka Maoli. These very lands were being held by sugar plantation owners, but their 39 leases on over 26,653 acres of the best agricultural land, astonishingly cheap leases⁸ that kept the sugar profits high, would be expiring

⁸ For example, one plantation had 90,000 acres at two cents an acre per year!

soon (Kauanui 2008a, 68). Thus, the *haole* plantation owners, the Big Five as they were known, had a vested interest in the outcome of the rehabilitation pleas. A legislative commission was sent to Congress to negotiate new land laws on behalf of *both* Kanaka Maoli rehabilitation and the sugar expansion interests. These two agendas were pugnaciously opposed and set the stage for the problematic outcome of the mission.

The first version of the HHCA was quickly rejected by Congress due to adamant opposition from the Big Five. It was much too inclusive, they complained, for it stated that anyone of 1/32 Hawaiian blood would be eligible to receive leased land for the purposes of homesteading. When the commission returned to Hawai'i to reconfigure the HHCA, the Big Five had a list of demands for their support. First, the degree of blood quantum would have to be increased. Second, the size and location of the homestead lots would need to be decreased. Third, the HHCA would have to be an "experiment" limited to five years. And, last, but certainly not least, the section of the Organic Act that limited the number of acres a corporation could own would need to be deleted (Kauanui 2008a, 154). Representatives rejected the experiment clause, but negotiated the rest. The Hawaiian Senate rejected the second point, calling it "a sellout" because it gave Hawaiians only the poorest of lands, not suitable for homesteading in the first place. Yet, the Big Five argued that if they did not retain control of the most productive and valuable lands, there would be no revenue to support HHCA and the bill "would be a dead letter" (Kauanui 2008a, 152). Thus, existing plantations and ranches were left alone and Kanaka Maoli were given undesirable, arid lands. The final demand was granted and all that remained to negotiate was blood quantum.

Representatives of the Big Five asserted that the point of the rehabilitation was to increase the number of native Hawaiians, thus it made little sense (to them) that 1/32-blood Hawaiians should be permitted leases to the land. They and the US Congress were concerned about this for two reasons. First, the white *haole* government, both on island and off, had little interest in aiding in any way those Hawaiians with any Chinese or Japanese blood. In support of allowing only "pure" Hawaiians to lease land, George M. McClellan of the Hawai'i Chamber of Commerce stated, "Here is a Hawaiian intermarried with a Chinese, so that man of half Chinese blood and half Hawaiian blood is given special privileges which are denied to a *full blooded American*. We do not object to that as far as *the Hawaiian part* of it is concerned" (Kauanui 2008a, 157, emphasis added).

Just what does he mean by "full blooded American" and "the Hawaiian part?" The man in McClellan's example, born to one Chinese and one Hawaiian parent in Hawai'i, would, by legal definition, *be* a full-blooded American. American is (supposed to be) a nationality, not an ethnicity or race. To be American only requires American citizenship, not "American" blood. But the US Congress was not

confused by his literally nonsensical statement. He meant *white*, and everyone present understood the code. He meant a pure-blooded white man would be denied the privileges given to some Chinese half-blood. But more, what exactly is the "Hawaiian part"? He was fine with the Hawaiian part of the man getting homestead lands, just not the Chinese part. Conceptual breaking of human bodies into parts is by no means uncommon or outdated and is a clear example of purity in the form of Lugones' fragmentation. In fact, Ruth Frankenberg notes this very phenomenon in her interviews with white women in the late 1980s. She says, "The concept of a racially 'mixed' person is an odd one. Even if it made sense to subordinate the social dimensions of humans to their physiological states, genetic matter and its combining are highly complex. The notion of a racially 'mixed' individual brings forth a simplistic and entirely erroneous image of two pots of paint (or blood!) stirred together, so that a 'half Chinese' person is exactly twice as Chinese as someone who is 'a quarter Chinese,' and so on" (Frankenberg 1993, 95).

The other (stated) reason that the Big Five were opposed to 1/32-blood Hawaiians leasing land was an almost complete reversal of the first; it was because of "the white part." Opponents of the bill said that "a person of one thirty-second Hawaiian blood was *to all intents and purposes a white person*; that as a matter of fact *you could not tell the difference* between a person having one-thirty-second part of Hawaiian blood and a white person" (Kauanui 2008a, 158, emphasis added).

We can think of this as the inversion of the "one-drop rule" which held that virtually *any* quantity of "Black blood" was enough to make one for "all intents and purposes" Black. But Annette Jaimes points out that, when it comes to indigenous blood, this inversion is all too common. Jaimes classifies this as motivated by "racially preoccupied 'white' Europeans" who are obsessed with and operate on an "unproven assumption of a 'purity of racial blood'" (Jaimes 1995, 317). But while I do not doubt the accuracy of Jaimes's assertion, I think there is quite a bit more going on here. Remember, this negotiation of blood quantum rules for Kanaka Maoli is a racial project working toward the formation of a Hawaiian Race. It is, in principle, political. The white *haole* deciding who can and cannot be Hawaiian stand in a position to be politically advantaged or (probably only slightly) disadvantaged by the outcome of these debates. The more Hawaiians able to claim land, the less land whites can hold. The more Hawaiians existing in Hawai'i, the less "full blooded Americans" can dominate political discourse. Here, limiting the definition of Hawaiian identity has very little to do with some fictional ideal of racial purity but everything to do with increasing, or stabilizing, white power on the islands. A new definition will only stand in as the new standard of what it *takes* to be pure. Whether it is the one-drop rule or its inversion, the deciding factor will be whichever gives white *haole* a bigger piece of the pie.

Even so, how is it that a 1/32 Hawaiian is basically a white person? It comes down to the racial essence of the pure Hawaiian. The full-blooded Hawaiians were seen as helpless, as primitive and unintelligent. They needed white *haole*'s help to make it in the new white *haole* land. So the white *haole* objected, "A few Hawaiians of pure blood who might be entitled to governmental assistance would not in any manner be benefited by the passage of the present bill, because of all of the part-Hawaiians *who do not need any rehabilitating* and are amply able to take care of themselves, as *they* are intelligent, industrious and prolific" (Kauanui 2008a, 148, emphasis added). Those part-Hawaiians, in virtue of their whiteness, could get along just fine. Whiteness had already helped them. In fact, McClellan was dubious as to whether native Hawaiians could make it, even with the help of the bill. He claimed that native Hawaiians were just not meant to farm. They could be anything, indeed "everything but farmers; everything but successful homesteaders" (Kauanui 2008a, 162). Kauanui points out the utter insidiousness of this portrait of the native Hawaiian, given that Kanaka Maoli understood themselves as the children of the land, especially endowed with the capability and responsibility of caring for their mother.

Yet, perhaps the most telling argument against part-Hawaiian inclusion in the bill was the claim that "you could not tell the difference" between a white and 1/32-blood Hawaiian. How could the HHCA claim to perpetuate the (now almost fully formed) Hawaiian Race, if many included did not even *look* Hawaiian? Without a physical marker of race, the claim to racial identity made little sense to white Americans. As Omi and Winant told us, "Race is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies" (Omi and Winant 1994, 55). Hawaiians, if they included bodies that did not look Hawaiian, were not properly a race. The race could not, then, be rehabilitated for it did not exist! For the white American government to approve a plan to rehabilitate a native race, then a full racial identity must be forged with reference to the body. Hawaiians needed to look Hawaiian; they needed Hawaiian bodies clearly distinguishable from white bodies. Only once the Hawaiian race was formed and formalized by legal definition, only once Hawaiian identity was neatly placed within the Western/European assumptions of pure racial identity, could a racialized bill be ratified.

Facing anger and resistance from Kanaka Maoli to limiting the bill to only "full blooded" Hawaiians, the Big Five and the Hawaiian representatives agreed to meet (literally) halfway. They defined the appropriate recipients of homestead leases as Hawaiians of 50% blood quantum or more. With this alteration, along with the other two concessions to the Big Five, the HHCA was signed into law on July 9, 1921. In the final bill, it became obvious that Hawaiian rehabilitation was merely a

facade, masking the real agenda behind the amendments. Kauanui provides a sobering recapitulation:

[The] section on "Hawaiian rehabilitation" was relegated to an explicitly minor role in this omnibus bill while the colonial form of land expropriation won out. Large corporations were then free to control the bidding at public auctions of leases to the 26,000 acres of highly cultivated "public land" without threat of withdrawal for any homesteads, and without the 1,000-acre limit that had been imposed in the 1900 Organic Act. Thus, the major impetus behind the HHCA was revealed—to amend the Organic Act land laws by repealing homesteading for the general public under the pretext of rehabilitating Hawaiians. (Kauanui 2008a, 164)

Haole bonus: the 50% blood quantum rule would serve to undermine Hawaiian solidarity toward the reclamation of Hawaiian identity and land for the next 90 years and counting.

Rearticulation and the Curdling of Hawaiian Identity

Haunani-Kay Trask speaks of women's *mana*. She says that *mana* is a form of power that enables and entitles one to lead effectively. To possess *mana* one must be *pono* and speak the needs of the land, people, and cosmos. She recognizes that Hawaiian women have incredible *mana* (Trask 1999, 92–97). Women have a strong political presence in Hawai'i's sovereignty movements, and especially in Ka Lāhui Hawai'i. Ka Lāhui was engendered by Mililani Trask, and women continue to lead its efforts. Haunani-Kay Trask believes that women have the *mana* to lead in part because of the ways they have been affected by and respond to colonization. Women were disproportionately affected by colonialism, given that it was a patriarchal system which came to replace a highly egalitarian Hawaiian society. Hawaiian men have, to a larger degree, become powerful through the US system. They receive "rewards" for their cooperation, rewards for which the women are not eligible.⁹ She also genders the colonial picture even more by giving a detailed account of white *haole*'s prostitution of Hawaiian culture, especially of Hawaiian dances like the *hulu* and the fetishization of female Hawaiian bodies (Trask 1999, 136–147).

⁹ Trask recognizes that a very few Hawaiian women have adopted the male-model of politics and do participate and benefit from that system. However, in large part, Hawai'i's politicians have all been men who tend to work against native Hawaiian interests.

Kauanui agrees, adding that the US occupation in Hawai'i was founded on gendered oppression "with the islands being viewed as feminine and therefore ready for masculine dominance" (Kauanui 2008b, 285). She points out that Hawaiian men took advantage of the rapidly decreasing status of Hawaiian women, working with white men to advance their own lot. Further, many Hawaiian men became involved with the US military, which had and still has a dominant presence on the islands. "[Their] socialization within that institution has arguably contributed to sexism and violence in home communities by setting new standards about what is considered culturally appropriate. US militarism also perpetuates gendered violence against both the Hawaiian people and lands and waters of our archipelago" (Kauanui 2008b, 285).

Trask takes this to mean that the *mana* found in Hawaiian women is not present in many men. Perhaps more accurately, it is not *invoked* by Hawaiian men due to the patriarchal colonization which benefits them. Yet for Trask, women's *mana* is something more than this particular positioning in the colonialist hierarchy. Rather, it is a deeper connection to the land and to the nation which drives women to speak out and to lead:

I believe the main reason women lead the nationalist front today is simply that women have not lost sight of the *lahui*, that is, of the nation. Caring for the nation is, in Hawaiian belief, an extension of caring for the family, the large family that includes both our lands and our people. Our mother is our land, Papahanaumoku, she who births the islands. Hawaiian women leaders, then, are genealogically empowered to lead the nation. (Trask 1999, 94)

H. K. Trask calls Hawaiian women the "life-givers of the nation" (1999, 143). This is especially important to her considering that the number of Hawaiians is decreasing. Another Hawaiian sovereignty activist, Lynette Cruz, tells us that by 2044, there will be no more Hawaiians with 50% or more Hawaiian blood. She says, "This means, in effect, there will be no more Hawaiians by our definition, and the federal government no longer has to deal with us as a people" (quoted in Kauanui 2007, 114). Thus, population recovery is a primary agenda for the Ka Lāhui movement. Mililani Trask says, "There is a saying in the Hawai'ian [sic] culture that you can marry whomever you wish, but mate with your own kind. In this way, we regenerate our numbers" (quoted in Kauanui 2007, 114). Cruz gives a similar call: "We're telling people, especially Hawaiian women, that we need to have some Hawaiian babies from Hawaiian men who are full-blooded. . . . This is one strategy that we can use to make sure that Hawaiians do not become extinct by somebody else's definition" (quoted in Kauanui 2007, 114). Here we find that "life-givers of the nation" should be taken quite literally.

Trask and Cruz ask women to repopulate the Hawaiian nation by mating with full-blooded Hawaiian men. Several questions arise when we consider this call and especially when we look at the language used in making such a call. First, they are specifically asking Hawaiian women to choose full-blooded Hawaiian mates. Why not men? While they certainly do desire that men take up the task as well, the framing of the demand to repopulate provides a clear answer to this question. Women, in virtue of their *mana* and their connection to the land as mothers, daughters and sisters, carry the responsibility of giving life to the nation. This is a responsibility that they cannot (or at least, should not) escape. Men, while also connected to the land as sons, fathers, and brothers, do not *embody* the land in the same way that women do. Thus, it is appropriate, as physical bodies capable of producing life, just as the land is a physical body capable of producing life, that women should be called to stand and give life to the nation by instantiating their *mana*.¹⁰

While Trask and Cruz may intend to reinforce a connectedness to place and the land, their commanding of women to literally produce a nation comes across as a disturbing attempt to control the reproduction and sexuality of Hawaiian women. Ecofeminist Val Plumwood points out that the connection between women and nature is an ancient one that many feminists regard with (appropriate) suspicion. “The very idea of a feminine connection with nature seems to many to be regressive and insulting, summoning up images of women as earth mothers, as passive, reproductive animals, contented cows immersed in the body and in the unreflective experiencing of life” (Plumwood 1993, 20). While not all connections of this type are oppressive—after all, women (and men) *are* connected to nature—instructing Hawaiian women to choose a full-blooded “mate” does conjure images of selective breeding for high pedigree. Decidedly heteronormative, this call to “action” completely disregards the individual desires of Hawaiian women who may not want to have sex with a full-blooded Hawaiian man, a half-blooded Hawaiian man, or any man at all, for that matter. This can work to undermine the cultural history of same-sex unions, and it also seems to undermine the significance of any union whatsoever, turning sexuality into a means to a greater end. “It is as if people expect Hawaiian women to tap full-blooded men on the shoulder and call them out into the

¹⁰ It also makes a great deal of sense from a simple biological standpoint. A single man can produce vastly more offspring than one woman. Thus, her options for the fathers of her children are fewer and must be made more carefully if she wishes to populate the Hawaiian nation. It is more crucial that a woman be impregnated by *only* “full-blooded” Hawaiian men. A Hawaiian man, however, may impregnate any woman, as long as he includes some Hawaiian women.

bush for a quickie” (Kauanui 2007, 114), hinting at the idea that somehow full-bloodedness is perceptible to the world at large.

Given that the association of women’s bodies with the land is largely through conceptual and analogical connections, cannot their “life-giving” duties be understood in the same way? Kauanui asserts that “replenishment among Hawaiians can certainly be achieved through a variety of means,” but these procreative requests to bear Hawaiian children harken to “the imaginary need for the authentic sign, with the ‘pure’ body as ultimate referent” (Kauanui 2007, 112). And this points to the deepest problem in this Ka Lāhui rhetoric.

H. K. Trask says that any decolonization movement requires, first, decolonization on the most basic level. She mentions rejection of Western clothing and the superiority of the English language as some elementary steps to activate the process. She says that Hawaiians must throw off and peel away a forced behavior in favor of “Native cultural alternatives” and “conscious Native resistance.” She says, “But decolonization is political at the core because it functions to unscrew the power of the colonizing force by creating a new consciousness very critical of foreign terms, foreign definitions, and foreign solutions” (Trask 1999, 89–90).

What Trask is describing here is what Omi and Winant call *rearticulation*, or the redefinition of the meaning of racial identity and, hence, race itself (Omi and Winant 1994, 99). While a rearticulation of Hawaiian identity in opposition to and rejection of American colonialism is certainly the intention here, it is unclear that Ka Lāhui and the female leaders of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement are successfully rearticulating the Hawaiian race *itself*. Recall Cruz’s call to action.

On the one hand Cruz asserts that Hawaiians have been defined by Hawaiians, but that, on the other hand, Hawaiians have been defined by someone else. Indeed, Ka Lāhui’s definition of ‘native Hawaiian’ is precisely the same definition as that of the HHCA. Perhaps she recognizes that it *is* strategic to work within the formal definitions already legally recognized. US-defined “native Hawaiians” are recognized as having certain claims to the land, thus it *is* a legitimate strategy to work within this system, staunchly demanding more. And this strategy might work, in the short term, but alas, as Audre Lorde so poignantly puts it, “The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change” (Lorde 2007, 112). As long as Hawaiian identity is defined by someone else, Hawaiians will always remain in danger of complete disappearance. The definition might change and, indeed, it *has*. Those who were once Kanaka Maoli became Hawaiian. Those who were Hawaiian are now “for all intents and purposes” white. If the power to define remains in the hands of someone else, the Hawaiian is never safe.

Kauanui rightly criticizes the Ka Lāhui movement for remaining rooted in a purity framework of racial identity. Not only does it “unwittingly promote objectification and the fetishization of ‘full-blood’ bodies,” but in light of Lorde’s insight, it serves to *reproduce* colonial legacies rather than rearticulate a consciousness which can then be critical of foreign forces (Kauanui 2007, 115). Kauanui stresses that racial purity is completely incompatible with Hawaiian sovereignty. Blood quantum indicates individuals where Kanaka Maoli genealogy represents collective and related identities. Further, purity is stagnant. Lugones calls it “ahistorical;” it does not come to be, change, or move (Lugones 2003, 128). One is born with a particular position in relation to others and is then defined by that position. Genealogical kinship is dynamic. It is strategic; it is *curdled*. Based on one’s motivation, one’s context, or even one’s present company, a lineage can be invoked to forge or strengthen relationships. While one’s identity is grounded in descent, history, and, to some degree, biology, one is not completely determined by it. Kanaka Maoli genealogy grants a mobility and freedom to create one’s own Hawaiian identity. Blood quantum/purity is the utter antithesis to this model.

While Trask argues that white feminism undermines Hawaiian solidarity, the 50% blood quantum rule is probably *the* most divisive racial project initiated by the white *haole* (Trask 1996, 909). By redefining Hawaiian identity in order to more easily acquire Hawaiian lands, the *haole* was set up nicely to remain dominant in a fragmented society, creating a vast divide between “native” Hawaiians and those “for all intents and purposes”-but-just-not-quite whites. Kauanui says, “Many [Hawaiians] are still invested in blood to prove their indigeneity. These concerns with ‘measuring up’ reflect a *growing* angst among Hawaiians that is extremely troublesome and all too common. There are many alarming examples” (2007, 111). Kauanui tells of parents restricting their daughters from dating “less-than-fifties,” of a friend criticizing her for dating a non-Hawaiian man, an activist’s distress crying, “What are we gonna do when the full-bloods die out? How will we define our *lahui* [people]?” (2007, 112). But Kauanui asks a poignant question: “What other baby could come from my womb . . . if not a Hawaiian child?” (2007, 115).

Kauanui emphasizes that calls to literally repopulate a Hawaiian nation merely serve to repopulate a colonizer’s portrait of what a Hawaiian is. “Too many of us are internalizing colonial notions of race and reproduction—all of which work to suppress the freedom of Hawaiian women” (2007, 115). She says that Hawaiian women must turn to Kanaka Maoli philosophies of Hawaiian identity. And this is where Lugones is most helpful. Kanaka Maoli kinship is already a curdled identity, but it is powerful in that it could be invoked to practice the “art of curdling,” or *mestizaje*: impure resistance (Lugones 2003, 122).

Curdling, like Kanaka Maoli kinship, is strategic. “It is something we do in resistance to the logic of control, to the logic of purity . . . that we curdle testifies to

our being *active* subjects . . . it can become an art of resistance, metamorphosis, transformation” (Lugones 2003, 144). Impure resistance incorporates both purity and impurity, split-separation and curdling. Revisiting my earlier question: is Kanaka Maoli kinship a racial identity? I think the answer is that *it can be*. If Kanaka Maoli kinship is understood as an art of curdling and impure resistance—as a political tool of decolonization—it becomes a rearticulated racial identity in its own right. That is, Hawaiian identity can be both pure and impure, depending on the project at hand.

Embracing a genealogical model of kinship, an oppression paradigm of racial purity is rejected in favor of an inclusive and empowering identity-building practice. Yet, when negotiating with the US government, which remains wedded to racial categories, Kanaka Maoli can *function* as a race. It is in this sense that the Kanaka Maoli identity can be strategically understood as a race without succumbing to an oppressive and totalizing agenda to restrict it to just that. The identity is thus curdled on two levels, inside and out. First, genealogical Kanaka Maoli identity is curdled in that it defies the logic of purity in virtue of its dynamic and shifting character. But second, it is curdled in the sense that it is not strictly a race or not a race. The status of *the identity itself* can be one that is curdled in relation to strategic efforts to, on one hand, bring more solidarity to the Hawaiian Nation when it appeals to inclusion and kinship, and, on the other, bring more power to political resistance when it functions as a racial identity that can demand justice of the US government.

By reclaiming the genealogical model of kinship, the Hawaiian nation can increase its numbers exponentially without any rhetorical recourse to the control of women’s bodies. In this, Hawaiian men and women remain free to choose their partners and welcome their children into the Hawaiian family, while they are equally charged with the duty of making genealogical histories known. Genealogical kinship stands in stark contrast to the blood quantum rule—imposed by the white *haole* businessmen, missionaries, and US government—and to a Western version of a purified, racially defined identity. By encouraging a rejection of this “logic of purity” and embracing a curdled Kanaka Maoli identity, Ka Lāhui can continue to empower its people to become mothers and fathers of the Kanaka Maoli, but in a way that is political and *pono*, inclusive and strategic. By leading this genuine rearticulation of Hawaiian identity, Hawaiians can invoke their *mana* and each give life to their nation.

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