

THE NEW SCHOOL

Aloha ‘Āina as Commitment to Demilitarization

by

Gloria ‘Imiloa Borland

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THESIS COMMITTEE:

Alexandra Délano Alonso, Professor, Global Studies, The New School

Laura Liu, Associate Professor, Global Studies, The New School

Abigail Perez Aguilera, Assistant Professor, Global Studies, The New School

Abstract

Hegemonic mappings of the Pacific Ocean and her peoples read the region through the lens of security, particularly an understanding of security shaped by the United States and its allied Pacific Rim nations' strategic interests. Reimaginings of security dreamt up by peoples of the Pacific challenge this notion of security through many different concepts such as genuine security—which highlights the particular violences militaries inflict upon women and the environment. In this thesis, I argue that when genuine security is woven into practices of aloha 'āina, a new realm of imagining demilitarization emerges for both Kanaka Maoli and settlers to engage with, making space for decolonial and demilitarized futures.

Keywords: Demilitarization, genuine security, aloha 'āina, Pu'uloa.

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A Note on ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Usage

‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, the Hawaiian language, is not a foreign language in Hawai‘i. Therefore, Hawaiian words will not be italicized, as is convention for texts about Hawai‘i. The terms Kanaka Maoli and Kanaka all refer to Native Hawaiians, which may be used interchangeably throughout the text. Additionally, I will provide a translation for a word’s initial appearance or when its meaning differs from one I have provided already. However, a simple one or two-word translation is often insufficient to completely grasp the meaning of a word in ‘ōlelo. I encourage readers to refer to wehewehe.org, a free and comprehensive online Hawaiian language dictionary that can provide more context and definitions for a word. Translation, especially into English, can lack or omit the true meaning of a word.

The Almost End of the World: Or, My Awakening to the Need for a Demilitarized Hawai‘i

I was fifteen when I thought the world would end.

That lazy Mānoa morning yawned a golden dawn into the clear sky, chasing the sacred shadows of night to tuck themselves away in the nooks and crannies of the earth. Myna birds ruffled their feathers as they emerged from their nests to begin their endless daily caws, soon to be joined by cooing zebra doves to form the background chorus of a Hawai‘i day. Saturdays on Punahou School campus were quieter than schooldays, but not completely silent: the rolling green lawns and lush landscaping were attended to by groundskeepers chattering in Ilocano, the main gymnasium rumbled with the sounds of a girl’s wrestling meet, and the crisp pounding of ipu (hollowed gourd hula implement) echoed from the open doors of Forest Hall.

During the weekday, Forest Hall housed any and every sport that needed space when the gymnasium was being used: the tower of stacked mats that took up the far end of the room was for the wrestlers on practice days, the supply closet was crowded with yoga equipment, and twice a semester the hall was surrendered to administering the dreaded required fitness tests. But on spring Saturdays, that hot mirrored hall belongs to us: hula dancers.

From January to the end of April, Saturdays were dedicated to rehearsals for Punahou’s annual Holokū pageant. For those of us faithful to the perpetuation of hula kahiko (ancient style of hula), we would arrive in trickles as the last remnants of night melted under the morning sun, arranging ourselves in front of the mirrors in various stages of awakeness, compelled to perfection under the never-pleased gaze of Auntie Doreen. It was brutal work of dehydration and aching knees, our tangy sweat joining the decades of sweat before ours to polish the floors, but nothing beats the feeling of being tied into a pā‘ū (skirt) and adorned in lā‘ī (ti leaf) and pua (flowers), blessed by pule (prayers) and the guidance of generations of kumu (teachers) and

‘ōlapa (dancers) that came before us. To dance kahiko, for us, was to be unstoppable, to come alive, to remember.

It was our first Saturday back from winter break and despite the marrow of our bones remembering the footwork taught to us before the holiday break, Auntie Lau insisted on drilling the footwork for the first verse over and over again, trapping us for a near hour in a cyclical search manifested by Auntie Trish’s endless repetition of “*auhea wale ‘oe e ka ‘ō ‘ō?*” We forced precision and purpose into our feet, propelled the muscles of our legs to lift us up over the pā (beat), and when Auntie Lau finally permitted our hands to accompany our feet we moved our hands with strength and grace. We had been dancing for 40 minutes with no water break when all of our phones erupted with the unpleasant, incessant bleating of an emergency alert.

The spell of hula was broken with the abrupt silence of the ipu and we were released to collapse over ourselves in shuddering gasps. There was no strength left in us to process much of anything beyond our need for water; so we stumbled to the not-so-neat pile of our bags, exhausted hands scrambling amongst the mess for our water bottles like crabs scuttling along the rocky shoreline. As we found relief in the mouths of our hydroflasks, we missed the urgency that settled over our Hula Aunties. It wasn’t until the first of us managed the simultaneous task of drinking water and grabbing a phone that we remembered our phones were shrieking for a reason. As I grabbed my own phone to swipe away the notification, I nearly dropped my water.

BALLISTIC MISSILE THREAT INBOUND TO HAWAII. SEEK IMMEDIATE SHELTER.

THIS IS NOT A DRILL.

The words on my screen ceased to make sense; my dripping sweat distorted the text. For a few moments, the only sound in Forest Hall was our labored breathing and the screeching of the last few phones not cradled into silence by their owners. There was no doubt amongst us.

It was 2018, and Donald Trump had grown comfortable in weaponizing his blue-checked POTUS account to goad Kim Jung-Un to test the Department of Defense's patience for challengers in the Asia-Pacific region. In the endless chatter of MSNBC and CNN that my mom filled our home with, pundits bemoaned the President's tactlessness in provoking a man who had the power to deploy a missile that could destroy Guam in 18 minutes, Hawai'i in 20. This was our patriotic duty: to serve as the kevlar vest, the bomb-proof barrier, to protect the precious, vulnerable organs of the Mainland.

Aunty Lau ordered us to leave our things and follow her to shelter. Our exhausted legs, conditioned to follow her command, animated themselves and carried us after her. We brought only our phones and water bottles—some of us forgetting to slide our feet into our slippers. Clumped together like a nervous school of fish, we were herded across the track and towards the only underground structure we knew of: the locker room. As the situation began to hit us in the way of brutal winter swells, girls started to fumble on their phones to call whichever of their family members were most likely to be awake at this time on a Saturday morning. It wasn't until we were halfway across the track that I realized I held in my hands the means of contacting my mom.

It took extra effort to open my phone when my sweaty thumbprint failed to be recognized. Even worse, my calls kept dropping as 1.4 million people across the islands frantically tried to contact everyone they knew: to ask *what's going on?*, to figure out if there was even anywhere that could shelter them from a nuclear blast, to say goodbye. Only a handful of

girls managed to reach anyone, and they spluttered out sobbing farewells as we were guided down into the concrete belly of the locker room where cell service vanished. I sent out one last text of *I love you* before I settled myself on the concrete floor of the locker room to await whatever was hurtling at us.

In the post-war years, the US military turned freshly “liberated” Micronesia into a testing site for atomic bombs. One could drive the rickety, unpaved cane haul roads that connected the plantations of Central O‘ahu to the highways, park up on Kunia Ridge, and sit amongst the swaying pineapple and sugar cane to watch the sun explode from 2,600 miles away on Bikini Atoll. It would be night in Hawai‘i, and where the sun had just set hours ago to the West, a poisonous imitator would punch its way into the atmosphere, turning the world as red as blood.

I wouldn’t learn about Bikini Atoll and its people for another year, when my English teacher would have us read Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner’s poems *History Project* and *Anointed*. I would sit in that classroom and watch the footage of the explosion at Bikini while remembering sitting on the cold concrete of the locker room, sweaty and exhausted and terrified as I imagined which parts of the island the missile would destroy, vaporizing people and homes, fishes and birds, mountains and valleys; leaving the rest of us to slowly die in the minutes and hours and days and years of nuclear fallout.

There was a lot of crying in the locker room that morning. One of my classmates, a dominating force at ILH wrestling meets, was cradling a girl from another school who couldn’t stop sobbing, hiccuping and choking in the embrace of her arms. One of the locker room Aunties knelt at the girl’s back, rubbing circles in the hope it would soothe her lungs into regaining their function. The rest of my hula sisters had tucked themselves into different corners of the locker room, contorting their limbs into the smallest versions of themselves.

I was fifteen when I sat in the locker room, thinking that my world was about to end.

My grandma was fifteen when hers did.

It was 1945 in Tokyo, and she had been appointed as the leader of her neighborhood's evacuation procedure because in times of War, no child was too young to exercise their filial duty to Nation. She had been directing her neighbors and friends to the bomb shelter when the US firebombing of Tokyo reached them, burning all the hair from her sister's body; killing her mother, youngest sister, and only brother.

I wondered if the fear I felt was the same fear she felt every time the air raid sirens blared and she knelt amongst her community in a bomb shelter. I wondered if she imagined emerging from the underground to a world unrecognizable like I did. I wondered how she managed to crawl her way from under the charred wreckage of her home to find her world destroyed, a fate I feared I would repeat if the locker room did not collapse atop us all, if we were not vaporized in the instant the missile impacted the island I called home.

And then one of the locker room Aunties announced that it had been a false alert, confirmed by our Governor via Tweet. We were free to return to our previously scheduled activities.

I don't remember much of the journey back to Forest Hall, just all of us reunited fish muttering about how we better not return to dancing, an almost hysterical feeling of disbelief and annoyance replacing our terror when Aunty Doreen ordered us back into our formations. When practice ended, Aunty Trisha offered us words of comfort. It wasn't until I was met with the miracle of greeting my mom's car, burrowed in the safety of her arms, that I finally cried, tears washing the sweat from my face.

After showering and curling up in my mom's bed to be witness to the infinite MSNBC and CNN reporting on the false alert that disrupted paradise in America's favorite vacation destination, I let myself cry and cry again, relieved that I was alive, relieved to be encircled in the protection of my mom.

And then when all the reporters flew back to the Mainland, when the school week began, and when I accidentally cleared the missile alert from my notification center, no one ever really talked about the Almost End of the World again.

But I couldn't stop thinking about that Saturday morning, even though everyone else around me seemed to move on. I didn't really know how to express and process how I felt about the experience, how it shifted something in me that I couldn't yet name. Even as I read the anti-military works of Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner and Haunani-Kay Trask in high school, this inability to understand and articulate what had changed within me remained a subconscious puzzle I was making no progress at solving.

And then during my freshman year of college, I took a class at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa with Dr. Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio—known to me as Kumu Heoli—who finally locked into place that missing piece of my internal puzzle. Kumu Heoli told those of us in her Intro to Indigenous Politics course that the US military made Hawai'i *insecure* by putting a target on us, exposing our islands to the violent threats of the US' adversaries. We had panicked on that day in 2018 because there was reasonable cause to believe that a North Korean missile would be aimed our way. And in 1941, Pearl Harbor had only been attacked by Imperial Japan because most of the US' Pacific Fleet was stationed there. Not to mention all of the toxic Superfund sites the military continues to create, the unexploded ordnance littered across every island, the jet fuel

leaking into our aquifer. When she spelled it all out like that, it was irrefutable: the military has not, and does not, keep Hawai‘i safe.

Since that moment in Kumu Heoli’s class, since I first heard her use the term “genuine security”—a feminist critique of security that highlights the military’s violence against women and nature—I’ve found myself unable to shift away from this pressing need for an alternative to the US military’s occupation of Hawai‘i and Oceania. Even after attending a University 5,000 miles away from home, my love for Hawai‘i only continues to grow and impact all of the work I do. It is only natural that as I conclude my time as an undergraduate at The New School, Hawai‘i is the foundation of my senior thesis.

The questions that have shaped this project have been numerous and ever changing, morphing as I’ve come to better understand what it is that I want to express in this paper. The guiding question for this capstone is: How can genuine security, incorporated into understandings and practices of aloha ‘āina, provide Hawai‘i with the possibilities to demilitarize, dismantle settler colonialism, and actualize ea?

Kanaka Maoli scholar and activist Kaleikoa Ka‘eo describes the US military in Hawai‘i as a giant he‘e, or octopus.¹ This he‘e’s head is nestled at Camp Smith in ‘Aiea, the headquarters of the US Indo-Pacific Command. Its eyes and ears are scattered across radar facilities, its nervous system comprising underwater fiber optic cables, and its tentacles stretching out across the Pacific Ocean from the US continent to Asia and Antarctica. When imagining a demilitarized Hawai‘i, a demilitarized Pacific and Asia are implicated as well.

Settler colonialism is a structure, not an event.² The militarization of Hawai‘i would not be possible without settler colonialism. American Christian missionaries began the work of turning ‘āina into a commodity. Their children turned this commodified land into sugar and

pineapple plantations, collaborating with the US government and military to secure profitable trade deals. During and after World War II, the Asian descendants of plantation laborers sought assimilation into the US as the solution for the racial oppression of the plantation system. As the current upholders of settler colonialism in the islands, dismantling these structures requires confronting the complexities of settler victimhood and collaboration.

‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i makes space for futures inarticulable and unimaginable when using English alone. Defined by Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, *ea* is both a concept and practice:

Ea refers to political independence and is often translated as ‘sovereignty.’ It also carries the meaning of ‘life’ and ‘breath’...*Ea* is based on the experience of people on the land, relationships forged through the process of remembering and caring for wahi pana, storied places...*Ea* is an active state of being...*Ea* cannot be achieved or possessed, it requires constant action day after day, generation after generation.³

The multiplicity of meanings evoked by *ea* expands the imaged possibilities that aren’t available when using terms like sovereignty or independence alone. In fact, *ea* calls upon recognizing the importance of *interdependence*. When doing the work of imagining and discussing a demilitarized and decolonized Hawai‘i, *ea* reminds us of the importance of remembering our connections to ‘āina and one another.

I am contending that genuine security, when realized through a framework of aloha ‘āina, will help Hawai‘i achieve demilitarization and guide both Kanaka Maoli and settlers to decolonize their relationships to ‘āina and to one another. I begin by explaining how ‘āina was turned into a militarized commodity at Pu‘uloa (Pearl Harbor) and examine the naturalization of the military in Hawai‘i amongst its civilian population. Next, I connect settler colonialism—in particular, Asian settler colonialism—to the military in Hawai‘i and across the Asia-Pacific;

drawing lines of solidarity between Hawai‘i and homelands in Asia. Finally, I explore how aloha ‘āina can be a conduit through which genuine security is realized.

Why does finding alternatives to the US military and the security it claims to provide matter? Why does Hawai‘i matter?

Since China has directed its attention towards investing in diplomatic relations and initiatives that will expand its political and economic influence on the international stage, the US and its allies have viewed this endeavor as a threat to their own hegemony and national security in the Asia-Pacific region. To respond to this perceived threat, the US has directed its efforts to increase its military’s presence and capabilities in the region, spurring China to do the same. These mounting tensions have led both nations to prepare for a potential war, implicating Hawai‘i and Oceania in the crossfire. Our fear of a potential ballistic missile would become a concrete possibility.

Beyond this, I am seeking alternatives to militarism because my kuleana—my responsibilities—to the lands and waters I call home compels me to do so. I grew up at my grandparents’ home on Olino Street in Foster Village, right at the cusp of the ahupua‘a (land division) of Moanalua and Hālawā. Because that ‘āina raised me, I in turn have a kuleana to that ‘āina. I have kuleana to *ke awalau o Pu‘uloa, the many harbored seas of Pu‘uloa*, because my grandpa was Master Chief Petty Officer of Pearl Harbor. Because I drank from its aquifer, I have kuleana to Kapukākī (Red Hill). And because I call Hawai‘i home, I have kuleana from ma uka to ma kai (the mountains to the sea), from Maunakea to Hanapēpē’s salt ponds, from Waikīkī to Kaho‘olawe. These are my burdens, these are my joys. This is the foundation of this thesis: my aloha for my ‘āina.

Hegemonic and Emerging Securities in Oceania and Hawai'i - A Review of the Literature

"...if we look at myths, legends, and oral traditions, indeed the cosmologies of the peoples of Oceania, it becomes evident that they did not conceive of their world in such microscopic proportions. Their universe comprised not only land surfaces but the surrounding ocean as far as they could traverse...the underworld...and the heavens above with their...named stars and constellations that people could count on to guide their ways across the seas. Their world was anything but tiny. They thought big and recounted their deeds in epic proportions."

-Eveli Hau'ofa, *Our Sea of Islands*, 1994

Since Captain James Cook, Ferdinand Magellan, and the myriad colonizers who followed them set sail across the Pacific Ocean, Oceania and its peoples have been subjected to the imposed cartographies and fantasies of continental white men. As the centuries have gone by, metropolitan hubs of global power such as Washington, D.C., Paris, and Canberra continue to impose their imaginings of what the Pacific should be upon the region, determining Pacific identities and possibilities.⁴ The current lens through which these hubs inflict their imaginings upon the region is security.

The dominant strategy of security in the Pacific is known as the Indo-Pacific Narrative. This narrative is driven by the United States and its allied Pacific Rim nations such as Australia, New Zealand, and Japan, who all view China's emerging interest in the Pacific as a threat.⁵ The term Indo-Pacific itself reflects the anxieties of a dominant China that have shaped foreign policy decisions since the Obama Administration's Asia-Pacific Pivot. As China's Belt and Road Initiative seeks to expand its geoeconomic and geopolitical relations, so too has the Department of Defense (DoD) expanded its own scope of the region to compete with China. This has led the DoD's US Indo-Pacific Command (USPACOM) to stretch itself from the West Coast of the United States across the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

The expansion of USPACOM to oversee more than 100 million square miles, or 52% of the Earth's surface,⁶ demonstrates how in the cartographic imaginations of the US and its allies, the Pacific Ocean has become territory, a natural extension of the continental nation. This view of the Pacific mimics Australia's colonial government's declaration of *terra nullius* and the United States' project of Manifest Destiny, rendering "the Pacific—its cultures, ecosystems, and peoples—[as] empty space of *aqua nullius* designated for [the] United States' possession."⁷ The Pacific Ocean and its islands are overlooked as insignificantly small—just lagoons, atolls, and islands whose only relevancy lies in their convenient strategic position between two massive continents. When mapped under the Indo-Pacific Narrative and rendered isolated, useless, and valuable only as strategic holdings, "security threats to the Pacific Islands [become] defined in terms of their vulnerability to economic and political influence from China."⁸

The limits of Oceania's possibilities in the narratives fabricated in these continental hubs of hegemony practice an economic and geographically deterministic perception of the Pacific that overlooks its historical and contemporary understandings and traditions of the Ocean as a vast connecting force.⁹ However, like other inaccurate imaginings of Oceania, Pacific Islanders have been challenging and deconstructing these false and limiting narratives, asserting their own sovereignty in a region deemed to be nothing more than an arena where the geopolitical dominance of large nations can be won, "where powerful countries compete to map Oceania into their boundaries of influence."¹⁰

The Blue Pacific narrative emerged at the 2017 Pacific Islands Forum in direct opposition to these inaccurate cartographies, empowering Pacific Island nations to regain their agency in a geopolitical climate dominated by the competing influences of China and the US and its allies. Inspired by decolonial regional scholarship such as Tongan scholar Epeli Hau'ofa's

region-defining essay “Our Sea of Islands,” the Blue Pacific narrative draws upon traditional Pasifika understandings of the region not as a collection of small, poor, and vulnerable islands separated by the world’s largest ocean, but as communities connected by the sea. The Blue Pacific’s foundation is the region’s common heritage of the ocean, which is critical to identity, connections, and responsibilities that guide Pacific Islanders’ resistance to the continued militarization and subjugation of the region.¹¹

The Blue Pacific narrative identifies the region’s source of insecurity to be climate change. Climate change is already unleashing disasters upon Oceania as island nations face increasingly volatile storms and the world’s fastest rate of sea level rise.¹² The effects of climate change are coupled with and exacerbated by the environmental catastrophes carried out by the US, French, and Australian militaries; most notably the lasting consequences of nuclear weapons testing throughout Oceania and destructive military training exercises like the biennial Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) Exercise, the world’s largest international maritime warfare exercise.¹³

Across the Pacific Ocean, recognition of the need for alternatives to the hyper-militarization that has overtaken the Asia-Pacific region has fostered many imaginings for a demilitarized Pacific. One of these is genuine security, a vision that directly addresses the insecurities women, girls, and the environment face under militarism. The concept of genuine security was developed by feminist anti-military activists in Okinawa, who sought to emphasize the specific gendered violence committed by US Marines against Okinawan women and girls. Like other feminists organizing against war, their activism “is both a direct response to violence *and* an attempt to transform deeper social issues that relate to women’s rights and wellbeing.”¹⁴

This mission to seek out a genuine form of security for women and girls sparked the creation of the International Women’s Network Against Militarism (IWNAM), bringing together

feminist anti-military activists from Okinawa, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, the US, Puerto Rico, Guåhan (Guam), and Hawai‘i. This network is dedicated to redefining security by and for communities who bear the brunt of US militarism.¹⁵ This is manifested in dialogues and collaborations between women impacted by the effects of militarism and its violence, defining and imagining the conditions that would bring a genuine sense of security to their communities.¹⁶

The opportunities the IWNAM provides women to imagine these possibilities for their communities empowers them to go beyond seeking an end to militarism, but an end to all forms of domination and violence perpetrated by patriarchal society. As Cynthia Enloe found in her conversations with feminist peace activists:

...from India, Zimbabwe, and Japan to Britain, the United States, Serbia, Chile, South Korea, Palestine, Israel, and Algeria all have found that when they have followed the breadcrumbs of privileged masculinity, they have been led time and again not just to the doorstep of the military, but to the threshold of all those social institutions that promote militarization.¹⁷

Organizing around visions of genuine security allows for the reimagining of all oppressive systems.

This is why I find it crucial to couple genuine security with aloha ‘āina when imagining a demilitarized Hawai‘i. Because genuine security calls for recognizing and dismantling all of the systems that uphold militarism and its violence, when it comes to Hawai‘i or any other settler colony, settler colonialism must be one of those institutions that is dismantled alongside the military. In Hawai‘i, the way both Kanaka Maoli and settlers can deconstruct settler colonialism is by engaging with and practicing aloha ‘āina.

Aloha ‘āina has been translated in many ways such as *love for the land* and *patriotism*. However, Kanaka Maoli scholar Noenoe K. Silva challenges the use of patriotism when defining aloha ‘āina: “where nationalism and patriotism tend to exalt the virtues of a people or a race, aloha ‘āina exalts the land...[it is] a complex concept that includes recognizing that we are an integral part of the āina and the ‘āina is an integral part of us.”¹⁸ This is what distinguishes aloha ‘āina from state-centric nationalism: “aloha ‘āina understands and values the relationships between the self and ‘āina through a complex mo‘okūauhau of pilina.”¹⁹ Joseph Nāwahī, a 19th century writer and aloha ‘āina, described aloha ‘āina as a magnetic force that not only draws an individual Kanaka to the ‘āina, but also maintains a pilina (relationship, connectedness) between all other Kānaka and the ‘āina.²⁰ By practicing aloha ‘āina, an individual not only creates and maintains a relationship to ‘āina itself, but also a relationship with community that is also in relationship with ‘āina.

Settlers are also able to—and must—engage with aloha ‘āina. By rejecting the settler colonial logic of land as property and instead entering the networks of pilina formed through aloha ‘āina, settlers become connected to a way of relating to community and land that goes beyond sovereignty and the nation-state. These networks of pilina are what the IWNAM calls for in its mission of ensuring genuine security: “The IWNAM’s concept of genuine security follows a theory of change that believes in the everyday capacity of people to create new worlds. Rather than focusing on formal governance structures...genuine security encourages us to find alternative paths to change by valuing the social resources that we have available.”²¹ By practicing aloha ‘āina and entering the webs of pilina it offers, Kanaka Maoli and settlers alike are able to discover the myriad of alternatives to militarism and settler colonialism in Hawai‘i Nei.

‘Āina and Mo‘olelo as Methodology

‘A‘ohe pau ka ‘ike i ka hālau ho‘okahi. Not all knowledge can be found in one school.

‘Ōlelo No‘eau #203

I come from a tradition of hula. It has instilled within me an adherence to protocol and a dedication to doing things in a pono (righteous, just, balanced) manner. When dancing hula, a dancer is not only using their body to tell a mo‘olelo (story, legend, history), the dancer *becomes* the mo‘olelo. In the process of learning to become a mo‘olelo, huaka‘i are crucial.

Huaka‘i are transformative journeys defined by intention. In hula, a hālau (school, place of learning) will embark on a huaka‘i together so the haumāna (students) can truly understand the ‘āina of their mo‘olelo. I remember being six and small as I accompanied my Washington, D.C.-based hālau, Hālau O ‘Aulani, on a huaka‘i across Hawai‘i Island. On our huaka‘i, we visited the wahi pana (storied places) we danced about: the snow capped peaks of Maunakea, the fiery caldera of Halema‘uma‘u Crater at Kīlauea, and the misty, humid, and always raining Puna. When dancing hula, it is simply not enough for a dancer to know where a wahi pana is, what it’s famous for, its name. To embody ‘āina in hula, one must know how the earth there feels against their feet, what scents are carried by the wind, how it sounds when the rain falls, how its plants catch dew.

Because this capstone seeks to address the destructive scope of militarism in Hawai‘i as well as remembering and reconnecting with ‘āina suppressed by settler colonialism, it is only pono for me to have embarked on my own huaka‘i to Pu‘uloa. Pu‘uloa is a significant site as the symbolic and literal center of the US military’s presence in the Asia-Pacific. However, Pu‘uloa is also significant because it is part of the ahupua‘a my family is from, it’s where I grew up. It is my kuleana not only to remember the life, history, and abundance of Pu‘uloa, but to reconnect with and aloha this ‘āina I had grown distant from and forgotten.

Kuleana manifests as aloha ‘āina. During my huaka‘i to O‘ahu and Pu‘uloa, I honored aloha as an active verb and aloha ‘āina as a dynamic practice by participating in community workdays at Wāwāmālu Beach Park and Kapapāhu Point Park. Both of these community workdays provided me with the opportunity to implement aloha ‘āina and talk story as research practices.

By engaging with ‘āina through these community workdays, I was able to deepen my understanding of ‘āina as source, people, and ongoing connection and care.²² When thinking of ‘āina as source, ‘āina itself became a resource I gathered knowledge from. ‘Āina as people recognizes that those who mālama (care for) ‘āina are an invaluable source to learn from. Lastly, ‘āina as ongoing connection and care reflects the pilina that is forged between people who aloha ‘āina, a love for land that reflects back onto the people who care for it.

Talk story is a Hawaiian Creole English term that describes the ways in which Hawai‘i’s people connect through conversation and storytelling. Talk story is characterized by its informal and casual nature that facilitates deep and meaningful conversations. Talk story is an entrenched local practice of information sharing and gathering. During these workdays, I was able to talk story with those working alongside me such as Aunty Sue, a local botanist dedicated to revitalizing East O‘ahu’s native biodiversity, or the young Marine I removed pickleweed with, who knew none of Hawai‘i’s complicated history with the US and its military. By talking story while practicing aloha ‘āina through scattering native seeds or removing invasive species, that shared work of showing aloha to ‘āina allows for connections to grow quickly and conversations to flow easily.

This thesis’ structure draws heavily on mo‘olelo. In Western literary tradition, there is a firm distinction between fiction and nonfiction. Kanaka Maoli epistemologies hold a different

relationship with truth and storytelling, it expands beyond fact and fiction. The word mana, while meaning strength or power, can also refer to a version of a story. Therefore, the more versions of a story there are, the more powerful it becomes. Telling, holding, and remembering mo‘olelo is a practice of resurgence, as it reconnects both the teller and the listener to our wahi pana, to one another, and reconnects us to the work of aloha ‘āina. I weave together personal recollections, histories, mele (song), and traditional “legends” that tell complementary and opposing narratives of Pu‘uloa, Hawai‘i, and Oceania to form a thesis that is perhaps more mo‘olelo than traditional academic thesis. My hope in crafting this thesis in this way is to evoke the same aloha for and commitment to ‘āina that mo‘olelo do; to instill in a reader’s na‘au (gut, heart, center) the same determination and urgency to detangle the tentacles of militarism from Hawai‘i and Oceania that I feel.

Remembering Ka‘ahupāhau

*Alahula Pu‘uloa he alahēle na Ka‘ahupāhau. Everywhere in Pu‘uloa is the trail of
Ka‘ahupāhau.*

‘Ōlelo No‘eau #105

In ka wao kahiko (ancient times), there was a sister and brother who loved to play in the waters of Pu‘uloa. One day, an akua manō (shark god) watched them play and decided they should be transformed into sharks. When the family of these siblings discovered they had become manō, they went down to Pu‘uloa every day to bring them food, hang lei around their necks, and play with them. The sister shark was named Ka‘ahupāhau, who became the ali‘i (chief) of the sharks of Pu‘uloa.

One day, Ka‘ahupāhau discovered that an ‘ilima flower lei one of her relatives had made for her had been stolen by Pāpio, a wicked girl. Enraged by Pāpio’s actions, Ka‘ahupāhau ordered for Pāpio to be killed. When she learned of Pāpio’s death, she was initially pleased. However, she thought of Pāpio’s mother, who would weep for her murdered daughter.

Remorseful, Ka‘ahupāhau summoned the sharks of Pu‘uloa and proclaimed:

O my sharks...I, your chiefess, have done great wrong. In anger I ordered a young girl killed. We sharks can kill but not make alive. Now that girl is dead and her mother weeps. O my sharks remember my wrongdoing! Hereafter man, woman and small child shall swim safely in Pu‘uloa. We shall be their friends and protectors. Remember, never harm them!²³

Since then, Ka‘ahupāhau and the sharks of Pu‘uloa became the protectors of the people of ‘Ewa. The people learned that the manō were there to protect them, and so they forged a strong pilina with one another. Children played with the sharks and rode upon their backs. When strangers came to ‘Ewa, the people told them to not harm the sharks, as they were friends.

In 1919, after Pu‘uloa was no longer known as the home of Ka‘ahupāhau and her manō but as the center of the US military’s expansion in the Pacific, the US Navy began construction of a drydock at Pearl Harbor. The initial stage of this construction required digging a hole 50 feet deep. A kupuna (elder) named Kanakeawe demanded the construction be stopped. Kupuna Kanakeawe’s ‘aumakua (ancestral deity) was Ka‘ahupāhau, whose cave resided below the construction site. Kupuna Kanakeawe came to the construction site for four years in an effort to stop the construction of the drydock. The dredging continued, but the construction crew faced numerous challenges, such as their pump and boilers breaking.²⁴

On February 17, 1913—just a few days after the death of Kupuna Kanakeawe—the entire drydock collapsed on itself. When learning of this collapse, Kanaka of Pu‘uloa knew this was the work of Ka‘ahupāhau, because no one was killed or injured. “Ka‘ahu loved people,” they said, “and wanted no one killed at Pu‘uloa.”²⁵

When construction of the drydock was attempted a second time, there were concerns that Ka‘ahupāhau would destroy the drydock again. Elizabeth Kainana Puahi Hiram, a kahuna (spiritual leader), was brought to the site to advise which prayers and offerings would appease Ka‘ahupāhau. After these prayers and offerings were given, workers later found the skeleton of a 14-foot tiger shark at the bottom of the drydock site. This was interpreted by the construction crew and newspapers as the death and appeasement of Ka‘ahupāhau.²⁶

Mehameha wale no Pu‘uloa i ka hele Ka‘ahupāhau. Pu‘uloa became lonely when Ka‘ahupāhau went away.

‘Ōlelo No‘eau #2152

From ‘Āina Momona to Superfund Site

The district of ‘Ewa and its 12 ahupua‘a—Honouliuli, Hō‘ae‘ae, Waikele, Waipi‘o, Waiawa, Mānana, Waimano, Waiau, Kalauao, ‘Aiea, and Hālawā—were famous sites of ‘āina momona (abundance). Six of these ahupua‘a hold the word for freshwater, wai, in their ‘inoa (name), demonstrating the various sources of wai that could be found in these ahupua‘a. Waiwai (wealth), is measured by one’s access to freshwater. In this way, ‘Ewa was teeming with waiwai communities, both because of the numerous springs and streams found across the ‘āina as well as access to Pu‘uloa.

One mo‘olelo remembers the ali‘i Kaha‘i, who brought the first ulu (breadfruit) tree to Hawai‘i and planted it on the shoreline of Pu‘uloa.²⁷ Niu (coconuts), wauke (paper mulberry, used to make cloth), mai‘a (banana), and olonā (an endemic plant used to make cordage) grew well in the interior valleys and plains of ‘Ewa. Kāi o ‘Ewa was a famous and rare variety of kalo (taro) grown in the marshlands of ‘Ewa, regarded as ‘Oahu’s best eating kalo.²⁸

The three awalau (lochs) of Pu‘uloa—Kaihuopala‘ai (West Loch), Wai‘awa (Middle Loch), and Komoawa (East Loch)—were teeming with such a diversity of marine life it was said that the whale was the only sea creature that did not enter these waters.²⁹ Pu‘uloa was home to almost 40 loko i‘a (fishponds), the highest concentration of fishponds on O‘ahu (see Figure 1). The infamously abundant pipi (pearl oysters) gave the area its English name: Pearl Harbor.

Hawai‘i’s land was not only desired for its potential to support industrial agriculture, but for its location at the center of the Pacific Ocean. In 1851, US Admiral Samuel Francis DuPont wrote: “It is impossible to estimate too highly the value and importance of the Hawaiian Islands, whether in a commercial or military sense...Should circumstances ever place them in our hands, they would prove the most important acquisition connected with our naval supremacy in those seas”.³³ Hawai‘i was desired for its strategic location between the US and Asia.

During the American Civil War, Union households in the North boycotted Southern-grown sugar, using Hawai‘i-grown sugar as a substitute. When the war ended with the reunification of the North and South, Hawai‘i’s tariff-taxed sugar was no longer as desirable as Southern sugar.³⁴ Desperate to revive the wartime sugar boom, the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce devised a new strategy to secure duty-free imports of sugar.

In 1873, the Chamber of Commerce secretly hosted General John Schofield to investigate if Pearl Harbor had potential to become a US military harbor. Publicly, they encouraged Hawaii’s King Kalākaua to enter into a reciprocity treaty with the United States, “[pleading to the King] that reciprocity was the last hope Hawai‘i had of escaping its economic depression and that the only way to obtain reciprocity was to hand over Pearl Harbor to the United States.”³⁵ General Schofield, pleased with what he saw of Pearl Harbor, wrote in a confidential report to the US Secretary of War: “The cession of Pearl River could probably be obtained by the United States in consideration of the repeal of the duty of Sandwich Island sugar.”³⁶ This is where Hawai‘i’s economy became tied to the US military.

Reciprocity was reached in 1875 without any concession of Pearl Harbor.³⁷ Between 1876 and 1880, 42 new plantations were established across Hawai‘i. These plantations hired predominantly Asian laborers, who were ethnically segregated by plantation bosses and made to

work long hours in deplorable and dangerous conditions.³⁸ Growth continued at a rapid pace without the burden of tariffed sugar. Sugar exports outweighed any other commodity in the islands; when the Treaty expired, sugar had become synonymous with Hawai‘i’s economy.³⁹

In 1887, white businessmen staged the first part of the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom government when they stormed ‘Iolani Palace in Honolulu and held King Kalākaua at bayonet point, forcing him to sign what became known as the Bayonet Constitution. The Bayonet Constitution stripped much of the Monarch’s power, transferring it to the white-dominated legislature, as well as implementing new voter eligibility laws that restricted voting rights to male residents of Hawaiian, American, or European ancestry who met outrageous income or property requirements; stripping the right to vote from Asian plantation laborers and many Kanaka Maoli, who could not meet the property or income requirements.⁴⁰

The US signed a revised Treaty of Reciprocity with this newly restructured government. The revised treaty of 1887 included a clause that gave the US sole access to Pearl Harbor in exchange for the continuation of tariff-free sugar. This revised treaty was ruinous for the *maka‘āinana* (*eyes of the land*; common people) of Pu‘uloa, who depended on this ‘āina momona to sustain their lives.

In January of 1893, Queen Lili‘uokalani—sister and successor of King Kalākaua—attempted to establish a new constitution that would restore the power of the Monarch and broaden the Kingdom’s electorate. Once again, a white mob of businessmen stormed ‘Iolani Palace but this time, they had the guns of the Marines from the USS Boston pointed at Honolulu. Under duress and the threat of mass violence, Queen Lili‘uokalani temporarily abdicated her position as Sovereign to prevent bloodshed and began a campaign to US President Cleveland to restore her throne. In July of 1898, four months after the bombing of the USS Maine and the

beginning of the Spanish-American War, Hawai‘i was illegally annexed under the Newlands Resolution.⁴¹

The rapid build-up of military installations across Hawai‘i was justified by the Spanish-American War. Fort Weaver was constructed in 1899, Fort Ruger in 1906, Fort Shafter and Fort Armstrong in 1907, Schofield Barracks in 1908, and Fort DeRussy in 1911.⁴² US Army Brigadier General Montgomery M. Macomb said that O‘ahu should be “encircled with a ring of steel, with mortar batteries at Diamond Head, big guns at Waikiki and Pearl Harbor and a series of redoubts from Koko Head around the island to Waianae.”⁴³ All of this was made possible by the collaboration between the military and Hawai‘i’s white business class.

Described like this, the US military’s presence feels choking. The speed at which militarism consumed the islands feels dizzying, and surely worthy of mass dissent. But the military was able to integrate itself so well in Hawai‘i that despite its undeniable presence, it goes unnoticed—has become invisible—for those who call Hawai‘i home. How is this possible? Through powerful narratives of normalization and reassurance.

The Hyper (In)Visibility of the US Military in Hawai‘i

It is often hot on the ‘Ewa side of O‘ahu. The sun seems to shine brighter and hotter here, while the Kona tradewinds offer little relief. As a child, the heat never bothered me in that way children seem impervious to the weather so long as they are still able to play and make mischief. But on those hot summer days where even I found the heat unbearable—despite seeking relief in the multiple nozzle settings of the garden hose—I would scramble up the breezeblock wall in our front yard and stare out at the expansive blue lochs of Pearl Harbor, wondering why I could not wash the sweat of summer off there.

It would not be until I was in college that I understood that the harbor was contaminated. I had never even approached its shoreline until December of 2023, while doing research for this thesis. I stood on the damp gray sand in my slippers, trying to not be disgusted by the swarms of gnats clinging to the shoreline as I read the warning signs that have come to line the entirety of Pu‘uloa from Hālawā to Honouliuli: CONTAMINATED FISH AND SHELLFISH...DO NOT EAT.



Figure 2: Signs at Blaisdell Park in Waimalu, Dec 21, 2023.

Figure 3: Signs at Kapapapu Point Park, Honouliuli, Jan 13, 2024. Photographs taken by the author.

It is bizarre to grow up someplace that is so deeply saturated by the military. Our highway exit signs designate where to get off for Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Schofield Barracks, Tripler Army Medical Center, Bellows Air Force Base, and Marine Corps Base Hawai‘i. Military personnel shop at the malls in uniform. Banners across the island encourage young men and women to enlist part-time in the Hawai‘i National Guard. Hawai‘i’s most popular tourist attraction—bringing in over 2 million tourists a year—is the Pearl Harbor Historic

Sites featuring the USS Arizona, the USS Missouri, and the USS Bowfin. On O‘ahu alone, the US military occupies roughly 22% of the island’s land.⁴⁴

Despite this dominating presence, the military can at times become invisible; so unremarkable the eye seems at times to simply not notice the extent of its presence. One of my friends in high school would complain about being unable to sleep in on the weekends because of how loudly they would play *Taps* on the loudspeakers at Camp Smith, neither of us questioning why the headquarters of the US Indo-Pacific Command was nestled in the middle of a suburb. When bowling with my coworkers one summer night, a massive banner that stretched across the lanes read *Welcome RIMPAC 2022!* My elementary school playground and the southern part of my mother’s high school were built atop Makalapa Crater, where the US Navy dumped the toxic wreckage from the attack on Pearl Harbor. This was unknown until the school tried to replace its aging track and football field, only to discover the soil below was highly toxic.⁴⁵ There are hundreds of miles of military pipeline networks sprawling beneath civilian and military residential neighborhoods around Pu‘uloa, unknown until the contamination of the Navy’s water system in 2021 exposed their extent. During that same spill, O‘ahu’s largest aquifer was contaminated.⁴⁶

This paradox of the military’s hyper-(in)visibility, their ability to hide in plain sight, is made possible by narratives of naturalization and reassurance. Observed by scholars Fergusson and Turnbull, the narratives of naturalization—the military order overlapping with daily civilian life to become “just the way things are”—and reassurance—that the military’s presence in Hawai‘i is necessary, productive, and good—morph into a perception of inevitability: the military is good, and cannot be changed.⁴⁷

The narratives of naturalization and reassurance are not simply enforced by the military over the civilian population, they are created in a dynamic alliance between civilian society and the military. As detailed in the previous section, the alliances formed between the white plantation owners and Asian veterans have made the military's initial and sustained presence in Hawai'i possible. By incorporating the military into trade agreements, becoming contractors for military base construction, and ushering DoD dollars into the local economy, these civilian allies have seamlessly incorporated the military into Hawai'i's economy.

This encroachment into civilian life makes the military not only difficult to see, but to question and oppose as well. The military is seen by many Hawai'i residents not as an occupying force, but a necessary sector of the State's economy. My friend participated in JROTC (Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps) in high school because she could get PE credit for it. Her father tried to convince her to become an Air Force pilot so she could retire and become a commercial pilot. For them, the military was a means to not have to run the mile twice a semester or to guarantee a reliable career.

This ease with which the military is able to seep into the daily lives of civilians demonstrates the success of the narratives of naturalization and reassurance. The military order "is thoroughly normalized within Hawai'i, sedimenting itself through accumulated familiarity into the everyday ways of life that produce what we experience as normal."⁴⁸ Because of how normalized and entrenched the military has become in civilian life, questioning and opposing the military feels to many as questioning and opposing society itself.

When this happens—such as Kānaka opposing the occupation of sacred lands, discussions around potential base closures, or proposals of economic transformation—the narratives of reassurance—the military is necessary, productive, and good—are called upon to provide

legitimacy for the military's presence. These narratives insist that Hawai'i's economic and strategic security can only be guaranteed by the US military, emphasizing Hawai'i's vulnerability in a world perceived as threatening and insecure.⁴⁹ It is common in these moments to hear disparaging arguments against alternative orders in Hawai'i: if America didn't come in, then Hawai'i would've been conquered by Japan or Russia or China; if we shut down this military base, what will happen to local jobs on base and local businesses who depend on military customers? We forget our waiwai past and potential.

These justifications of the military presence and fears of its absence are a localized manifestation of national security discourse, where a nation state's understanding of security "compels it to coordinate and discipline...the hopelessness that reigns" in the wider world around it.⁵⁰ The issue with this strategy is that it "goes on forever because...it is obsessed with establishing and protecting boundaries that can never be finally fixed."⁵¹ The global he'e of the US military, with its over 800 foreign bases⁵², will never be enough in a world where danger can never be contained, when perceived threats necessitate continued expansion both physically, financially, and mentally.

Contradictory to these arguments of necessity, the US military's presence in Hawai'i makes it *insecure*. Pearl Harbor had not been targeted by Imperial Japan because of its loko i'a and pipi, but because it had become home to the US Pacific Fleet. O'ahu's fresh water supply was clean and abundant until a US Navy contractor drove a golf cart into a pipeline, causing it to burst and spill more than a thousand gallons of jet fuel directly into the US Navy's drinking wells, contaminating the homes of 93,000 military families and civilians.⁵³ How can a military keep our island safe when they are responsible for contaminating it?

These instances and more demonstrate the necessity of rejecting the narratives of naturalization, necessity, and reassurance when it comes to the military and instead advocate and imagine a Hawai‘i with a holistic and *genuine* security.

Talking Story with Aunty Sue - What Does Security Look Like?

It is an overcast and windy Sunday morning when I park my car in the rocky red dirt access lot of Wāwāmalu Beach Park. Despite the cloud coverage up above, it’s clear out over the dark ocean where the gentle sloping curves of Moloka‘i can be seen on the horizon. Waves crash against the rocky shoreline and both seabirds and pigeons enjoy a sunless morning amongst the grasses.

I’ve come for a community workday sponsored by the Sierra Club of Hawai‘i and run by two longtime members: husband-wife duo Uncle Reese and Aunty Sue. Despite their age—Aunty Sue easily spends hours crouching and weeding while Uncle Reese leads a group of pickaxe wielders to a row of boulders—and the many other projects they juggle, they continue to mālama this ‘āina.

I embark with Aunty Sue to “weed and seed,” as her husband puts it. We spread out over a patch of pā‘ū o Hi‘iaka to remove the invasive grasses competing with it. As we crouch with garden gloved hands and fill buckets and empty soil bags with clumps of weeds and grasses, I talk story with Aunty Sue.

Aunty Sue grew up in Kalihi amongst her free diving uncles, meaning her family lived off of the fish they caught. To this day, she tells me, she can’t stand to eat small fish, as it was all they ate during the summer months. As we slowly sweep across the landscape, clearing patches in the sandy soil, Aunty Sue reflects on how good the pandemic was for Hawai‘i’s environment.

I remember those times well: sea turtles and monk seals going undisturbed on previously over-crowded beaches, fishes and corals returning to Waikīkī now that its waters weren't constantly filmy with runoff sunscreen, and lifelong residents returning to beaches they hadn't visited in years. "I was telling young people especially to go," she says as she yanks out a long clump of grass at its stubborn roots. "It was like how it was in the old days, in their grandparents' time." The sudden disappearance of our annual 10 million tourists brought a controversial emptiness to our islands: while hotels, restaurants, and businesses that depended on tourist customers suffered tremendous financial losses, residents were beginning to realize just how much physical and emotional space tourists took up. A sense of relief swept through many of us residents, like we could breathe without something heavy on our chests for the first time since Statehood ushered in the first flocks of mass tourists to the islands.

As we continue to weed, Auntie Sue points out where past seeding projects are beginning to flourish: in that dip there is a thicket of naupaka and here, under our careful feet are bashful shoots of milo. All of these native plants bringing green back to this sandy shoreline were grown from seed, she tells us. As a botanist, Auntie Sue is passionate about using seeds rather than nursery plants in these types of projects: "how can you expect something in optimal conditions to survive in not those conditions?" I see the outcomes of this foresight: there is naupaka, kou, and milo popping up in bright green clumps, kipukai and ohai growing steadfast with the recent blessings of winter rain.

We have finished our weeding work for the morning and grab cardboard boxes of saplings and buckets of native seeds. While walking over to where she wants us to plant and scatter seeds, Auntie Sue pauses to point out to us volunteers the dried remains of a kipukai mother plant (see Figures 4 & 5). While this mother plant had died under the scorching rays of

the sun, her seedlings had survived and were beginning to wake up after the rains. Her little children are scattered beneath her withered seedheads, growing strong in the malu (shade, shelter) of her withered body. Aunty Sue says this is generational, a mother and her children. A mother providing a home for her children to grow, to bring life back to this shoreline.



Figure 4: Uncle Justin watches Aunty Sue as she weeds amongst the pā'ū o Hi'iaka at Wāwāmalu Beach Park.

Figure 5: Aunty Sue shows us a withered mother kipukai plant with her children emerging from her seedheads.

Photographs taken by author December 17, 2023

We begin to scatter akeake seeds from various repurposed buckets. As we do so, I point out a shrub that caught my eye and ask Aunty Sue, walking plant encyclopedia, which plant it is. She tells me that under a nonnative tree grows ohai, planted by Uncle Tony, a Hawai'i Kai resident who comes out to Wāwāmalu to plant whenever he can. "He doesn't care if his plants die, he just comes back and keeps planting them," she tells me, pointing him out where he is crouched in the distance; no doubt planting something he had grown. "It's people like him who really keep these places thriving." She smiles, and we continue to scatter seeds and talk story.

Later, after the work is pau (finished) and the sun is beginning to come out, I linger behind while the rest of the day's volunteers leave. I drink a can of Hawaiian Sun provided by Uncle Reese and Aunty Sue while I talk to Uncle Justin, a regular volunteer. He asks me about

school, my major, my plans for after graduation, and my thesis when I mention it. I carefully explain its premise while glossing over the demilitarization aspects after he makes a few prodding but slightly joking remarks about Hawai‘i’s poor prospects without the military. I emphasize my desire to discover more holistic forms of security beyond the military, trying to not invite a debate about the necessity of the military after hours of manual labor and the beginning of a sinus infection brewing behind my nose.

Looking thoughtful at this repackaging of my thesis, Uncle Justin turns to Auntie Sue and asks her how security in Hawai‘i has changed during her lifetime. She laments how when she was growing up, most of Hawai‘i’s people still grew their own food. Her uncles caught fish for the family, and her parents knew those who worked for the farmer’s co-op, so they received huge boxes of vegetables as part of the informal trade and barter economy that was stronger in those days. Even the neighbor islands, who for so long held on to more traditional ways, are no longer self-sufficient like they were. Food security has become a huge conversation in Hawai‘i lately, with the state relying on “just in time” shipments to provide upwards of 80% of Hawai‘i’s food.⁵⁴ During longshoremen strikes in California and most recently the pandemic, when grocery store shelves grew barren from panic buying and delayed shipments, many began to look at how Hawai‘i could rebuild its food sovereignty, making the effort to visit farmer’s markets, kalo farms, and other local food initiatives run by farmers’ co-ops and local grocery stores.

Wāwāmalu rests at the makai (seaside) side of Kalama Valley, where in 1971 the eviction of Kanaka Maoli and local farmers sparked a massive protest and the modern Hawaiian Movement.⁵⁵ Having this conversation about the loss of food security—the consequences of losing our agricultural lands to development—at the mouth of the valley where pig farmers were evicted for the construction of a suburb felt like a prophecy come true. The development of

Kalama Valley was just one of dozens that swept across the islands in the post-Statehood decades, pushing Kanaka and poorer longtime residents off their lands to make space for hotels, shopping malls, and suburbs for Mainlanders and wealthy local Asians.⁵⁶ The tidal force of development was so pervasive that local residents joked the new State bird should be the construction crane.

This wave of development that washed away Hawaiian and local communities to make way for the wealthy marked the changing tide of a Hawai‘i moving away from an economy dominated by the plantations and the Big 5 to an economy bolstered by tourism, militarism, and development that was made possible by Statehood and the Asian settlers who ushered this new era in.

Beef Stew - A Brief Examination of Asian Settler Colonialism in Hawai‘i

Settler colonialism is a structure, not an event. The elimination of Indigenous peoples becomes the organizing principle of a settler society that seeks total and complete control of Indigenous lands. In Hawai‘i, this structure of settler colonialism that originated with the arrival of white Christian missionaries and their children’s establishment of sugar and pineapple plantations has continued with Hawai‘i’s Asians taking on the role of upholding this structure. This has been done through replicating arguments of *terra nullius* and further entrenching systems and manifestations of US colonialism in Hawai‘i.

As previously established, narratives of *terra* and *aqua nullius* have been written upon Oceania in an effort to make militarism and colonialism appear natural and inevitable. In Hawai‘i, Asian settlers have adopted these legacies to stake their own claims to the islands. As a 1976 poster in support of the establishment of an Ethnic Studies Program at the University of

Hawai‘i proclaimed: “We working people of Hawaii cultivate the land and harvest the sea. We build every home, harbor, airport, and industry. Through the centuries we’ve fought loss of lands, evictions, low pay, unemployment, and unsafe working conditions. Yes, we working people struggled for and built Hawaii!”⁵⁹ Kanaka Maoli, the many mo‘olelo of ‘āina, and the momona of Hawai‘i’s ahupua‘a have been erased. Meaning is made through the labor of Hawai‘i’s settler workers which justifies their presence. They claim Hawai‘i by claiming the physical manifestations of settler colonialism.

The super patriotism exercised by Hawai‘i’s Asians—particularly its Japanese population—during WWII carried into the post-war years. The *nisei* (second generation Japanese) who returned from serving in the Army’s segregated 100th and 442nd battalions felt that their demonstration of loyalty should be reciprocated with recognizing them as full US citizens. They became politically activated, and were crucial to what is known as the Democratic Revolution, when Hawai‘i’s Territorial Legislature was flipped from Republican to Democrat.⁵⁸ Taking advantage of the educations made possible through the GI Bill, many of Hawai‘i’s young WWII veterans earned law degrees and became elected officials. There, they became the administrators of settler colonialism.

One man, the late US Senator Daniel Inouye, became the most powerful elected official in Hawai‘i. A veteran of the 442, Senator Inouye sat on the Senate’s Appropriations Committee and Defense subcommittee, portioning the DoD’s massive budget towards Hawai‘i. With this money, Inouye was able to keep military bases open and fund massive infrastructure projects, such as the H3 Interstate that connects Pearl Harbor in ‘Ewa through the Ko‘olau Mountains to Kāne‘ohe’s Marine Corps Base. While this highway was celebrated for partially alleviating

O‘ahu’s gridlock traffic, the highway itself destroyed numerous heiau (temples) and sacred sites—another physical manifestation of the ontological violence of settler colonialism.⁵⁹

Senator Inouye used to say that Hawai‘i was like beef stew, a popular local cuisine. In juxtaposition to the US continent’s melting pot, where people of different races and ethnicities melted together to create *E Pluribus Unum*, Hawai‘i’s people were a beef stew: distinct ingredients that retained their identities while coming together to create something larger than themselves.

Despite the power and privilege acquired by Hawai‘i’s Asians who assimilated into the administrators of settler colonialism, these privileges are not permanent under the racist structure of US society. During the height of the COVID Pandemic, anti-Asian sentiment and violence soared.⁶⁰ As the US continues to disparage China in its preparations for potential war, sinophobia has once again become normalized in the US, with the media evoking sinophobic imagery when describing US adversaries and Congress passing legislation to ban TikTok solely because of its CEO’s heritage.⁶¹ It is clear that investing in settler colonialism does not guarantee safety from the violent racism of the US. There is no genuine security for Indigenous people and settlers alike under settler colonialism.

I’ve identified Hawai‘i’s Asians here as settlers to center their relationship and responsibility to Kanaka Maoli. Often in Hawai‘i, we use the term local to describe both Kanaka and the descendants of those who worked on the plantations. There is an understanding that to be haole, white, is an automatic disqualification from being local. However, the identity of local, while rooted in recognizing an often shared struggle of plantation-era multi ethnic solidarity, disguises the complicity Asians have in the violence of colonialism and dispossession experienced by Kanaka Maoli.

These colonial violences are similar to the violences faced by Asian settlers' ancestors in their homelands. Hawai'i's haole sugar planters took advantage of the destabilization imperialism wrecked on Asia to recruit vulnerable and desperate workers. These workers became unwitting laborers in the work of building a US settler colony in Hawai'i.⁶² Their descendants continue this settler colonial work through their daily identification with and participation in the US settler state as senators and legislators, military officers, and administrators.

The military maintains its order in Hawai'i by collaborating with civilian sectors. These relations, however, are unstable.⁶³ Civilian-military alliances have changed overtime. These shifting alliances are born out of conflicts amongst other sectors of Hawai'i society, such as the partnership with the haole planter class shifting to Asian veterans. The presence of these conflicts suggests possibilities for implementing change that doesn't result in the military rebuilding alliances with a new civilian sector of Hawai'i, but instead results in the military losing its legitimacy in Hawai'i.

This would require a major shift amongst Hawai'i's civilian population to break away from the hegemonic narratives of normalization and reassurance and instead embrace the transformative potential of genuine security. How could we reimagine Hawai'i where our ideas of security don't come from the military and other oppressive regimes, such as the police, but are instead informed by the needs of women, the needs of 'āina, the needs of our children? How could our pilina with one another transform when we stop identifying as local and instead identify through our relationship with 'āina?

Aloha Through ‘Āina

Ma ka hana ka ‘ike. In working, one learns.

‘Ōlelo No‘eau #2088

It is a cold January morning—meaning it’s dewey and in the upper 60’s—as we gather at Kapapahu Point Park in Honouliuli. There are more than a hundred of us gathering beside the parking lot: a handful of solo community members, two elementary school groups and their chaperones, a group of high schoolers fulfilling their community service requirements, and a platoon of young Marines freshly shipped in from the continent. We are all here today with the group Mālama Pu‘uloa to ring in the new year by showing aloha to our ‘āina.

Our massive group is split in two, and I join the Marines and high schoolers. As we make our way to the worksite, we walk past bright yellow signs warning of petroleum pipelines just beneath the surface of the group, an emerald green golf course, and the occasional jogger or biker. We arrive at Pekāne pond, a former loko i‘a that has been overtaken by a forest of invasive mangrove trees. One of the workday leaders in a neon green work shirt gives our group a quick briefing: we are clearing Pekāne because loko i‘a are important aspects of recreating food sovereignty; when using a pickaxe do *not* swing it above your head; do not step on these plantlings. Armed with information and a handful of tools and gloves, we are released to the shore banks of Pekāne.

The boys from the Marine platoon are eager to trek into the mangrove forest atop the pond to haul out thick cuttings of mangrove trunks and branches. The rest of us lacking their upper body strength and careless bravado settle at the northern bank, which is overrun by pickleweed that had sprung up where mangrove had been long cleared out. They are bright green

and need to be pulled from their roots, as that is how they spread across the muddy ground like a glistening green carpet.

As the hours pass I quietly creep my way along the muddy edge of the pond, leaving in my wake thick piles of pickleweed with their muddy roots exposed. I continue along until I come to work beside a young Marine woman and a haole college student, who have been pleasantly chatting as they systematically hack their way through the pickleweed.

By the time I make it within hearing distance of them, their conversation has turned to what this young Marine has done so far in her three days of being in Hawai‘i. She gushes to the student about all of the things she’s seen. “It’s weird,” she comments as she yanks up a particularly thick and stubborn web of roots, “Hawai‘i doesn’t really feel like America, even though it is.” At this, my ears prick and I try to subtly shuffle closer.

“Well,” the college student says, “legally, it isn’t.”

The young Marine turns to look at him, perplexed. “Explain,” is all she says, sitting back on her heels.

The college student keeps his eyes on the pickleweed patch in front of him as he tries to explain the overthrow, but he’s stuttering and struggling to find the right words, so I jump in.

“They held the queen at gunpoint—the Marines who were docked at Honolulu Harbor—and they pointed their guns at the palace. We weren’t legally annexed, they didn’t have the proper votes in Congress.”

I too am not at my most eloquent. By the time this conversation is happening, we are hours into hacking and tugging pickleweed and despite my massive jug of water, I’m becoming dehydrated. If I had not been going blind from my own sweat dripping into my eyes and dizzy from crouching under the ‘Ewa sun, I would have tried to give her a more thorough explanation

of Hawai‘i’s complicated history; but it is difficult to manage this when my shoes are at least five pounds heavier with mud and I am telling someone who had enough faith in the US to enlist that she is part of a legacy of injustice and violence on a land she has only just arrived on.

Despite this, she looks thoughtful as she continues her work, and the college student continues to chat with her as I yank at pickleweed. Their conversation meanders away from the implications of a military-backed coup to complaining about how difficult these patches of pickleweed are to remove.

We are called back to the site of our briefing session where trays full of young plants sit on the ground. These, we are told by our group leader, are ‘ākulikuli plants, which are Indigenous to Hawai‘i. To make these plants even more special, they were each grown by a student at ‘Ewa Elementary School. Their names are attached to the plants they raised with a small nametag. I examine mine and learn that it was grown by Cameron (see Figures 6 & 7). “This is community,” our group leader says, beaming down at the plant he cradles in his hands.



Figure 6: A member of Mālama Pu‘uloa explains how to properly plant ‘ākulikuli to group of high school students and Marines.
Figure 7: ‘Ākulikuli grown by ‘Ewa Elementary School student Cameron.
Photographs taken by author January 13, 2024

In pairs, we head down to the bank we had just cleared and find new homes for our ‘ākulikuli. The college student and I find a spot and scoop the thick mud with our bare hands. It

is common practice when planting native plants to chant “E ola! E ulu e!” (live and grow!) to encourage their growth, to start their new lives with a burst of love and belief in their potential. The two of us chant this to our plant over and over again, eager parents of a young ‘ākulikuli. As we do this, I try my best to ignore a gaggle of the Marines who find the chant to be ridiculous, laughing at one another as they struggle to fit the ‘ōlelo in their unwelcoming mouths, prodding each other to “talk” to their plants. A part of me wishes to go over to their ‘ākulikuli after they’re gone and encourage their growth myself.

When our work is done and we split off to our respective cars, I think about that Marine I had spoken with so briefly. Will she google the overthrow on her way back to base? Will she ever think more deeply about why Hawai‘i doesn’t feel like America? Does she even remember our conversation? I’m not sure, but a part of me hopes that her huaka‘i to Kapapahu and the hours she spent practicing mālama ‘āina at our side stays with her, becomes a seed of aloha ‘āina that can be cultivated in her.

The IWNAM’s understanding of genuine security is centered in the belief of the everyday capacity of people to create new worlds.⁶⁴ Genuine security finds the pathway to change through valuing and centering social relationships that transcends the networks established through militarism and imperialism. In Hawai‘i, military and non-military families do not intermingle much. When those living in Navy housing found their homes irreparably contaminated by jet fuel, it was grassroots Kanaka- and local-led mutual aid groups who crossed that barrier and provided bottled waters to families in need.⁶⁵ At community meetings with the EPA and the Joint-Task Force on Red Hill, military and non-military community members talk story, share food, and collaborate on future actions to continue advocating for the complete shut down and remediation of Red Hill.

These networks of care that transcend the US military are rooted in the power of *ea*, in *ea*'s insistence on interdependence. *Ea* recognizes that 'āina is the conduit through which we root our relationships with one another. We love one another *through* 'āina. When we aloha 'āina, we maintain two relationships: love to the land and love to each other. As Kumu Heoli said in the *malu* of Maunakea: “‘Āina becomes...the hands that will hold all the aloha we have together.”⁶⁶ When we lose our 'āina to the he'e of militarism or through the hunger settler colonialism, we begin to lose the means with which we love and relate to one another. There is no *ea*: no life, no breath, no sovereignty.

Never in my life did I think I would hear military families insist on the need for healthy *wai* and 'āina. Never in my life did I think I would see them acknowledge the *kuleana* Kanaka Maoli have to 'āina, and the *kuleana* they as settlers have to Kānaka. Never in my life did I think I would kneel beside a Marine and forge a relationship with her through the mud that all these months later I still think about and feel transformed by. The power of learning to aloha 'āina comes gently, like waves lapping at the shore, and then it rushes in like a downpour or beams down like the 'Ewa sun and suddenly I know the life and breath of myself and all who call Hawai'i home is made possible through our aloha—in all its messiness and imperfection and hope—for 'āina; for *that which feeds us*.

Whether our love for Hawai'i is for its white sand beaches and crystal blue waters or because our families have called Hawai'i home for so long our homelands can feel at times impossibly far away; whether we love Hawai'i because no where else feels like home or because our *mo'okūauhau* leads back to Pāpāhānaumokuakea and Wākea, what matters is that love, that aloha, for Hawai'i. These tangling and complex relationships to Hawai'i necessitates different

kuleana that cannot be negotiated. Kanaka, settler, stranger, all of these kuleana vastly differ except for this: aloha ‘āina.

Aloha e Pu‘uloa

Pūpū (a‘o ‘Ewa) i ka nu‘u (nā kānaka)	Shells of ‘Ewa, throngs of people
E naue mai (a e ‘ike)	Coming to learn
I ka mea hou (o ka ‘āina)	The news of the land
Ahe ‘āina (ua kaulana)	A land famous
Mai nā kupuna mai	From the ancient times
Alahula Pu‘uloa he ala hele nō Ka‘ahupāhau	All of Pu‘uloa, the path trod upon by Ka‘ahupāhau

Traditional, Elbert & Mahoe

The mele *Pūpū a ‘o ‘Ewa* is like many other mele aloha ‘āina in that woven into its melody is the mapping of ‘Ewa’s geography, history, and relationships. The verses of this mele describe the winds, mountain peaks, resources, and deities of ‘Ewa. This mele was anonymously written as part of a fundraising drive for Kahikuonālani Church, a Native Hawaiian Church in ‘Ewa. While many in Hawai‘i may not have heard of this particular mele, nearly everyone is familiar with another song inspired from this one: *Pearly Shells*.

Pearly Shells was written over the melody of *Pūpū a ‘o ‘Ewa* by Webley Edwards, who hosted the radio program “Hawaii Calls” that ran from 1935 to 1975.⁶⁷ *Pearly Shells* captures the 1960s romanticization and exotification of Hawai‘i, and to this day it is an iconic classic. In fact, *Pearly Shells* was one of the first hula I ever learned. I remember kneeling with my hula sisters as we cupped imaginary shells in our palms, formed the shining sun above our heads, and gave our hearts out to the audience of beaming parents.

Just like *Pūpū a ‘o ‘Ewa*, Pu‘uloa has been written over; its melody of pipi and loko i‘a, its shark goddess and her loving people dredged, drained, and replaced with battleships and toxic sea water, with war memorials and 2 million unaware tourists. For the first time since my uncle

sold my grandparent's house and my mother and I moved away, I've been thinking deeply about the years I called Moanalua and Hālawā home, the years I spent gazing out at Pu'uloa and wondering *why*.

This thesis has been an attempt at contemplating what work needs to be done to tackle the hungry, sticky-tentacled he'e of the US military. My research question established genuine security—a reimagining of security that rejects the violence of militarism and centers the survivance of women and the earth—as one transnational framework through which to dismantle the structures of militarism. I decided to weave aloha 'āina into this concept to root it to place here in Hawai'i, and to vocalize and center Kanaka Maoli kuleana. Demilitarizing Hawai'i would be impossible and meaningless without Kānaka, whose 'ike and mana have kept the military from swallowing Hawai'i whole.

If it were possible, this thesis would be an endless and continuous work that both dove deep to the seabed of militarism and soared into the clouds of liberation—but while possible, that project would be unreasonable for an undergraduate thesis; and I surely would have found myself more distressed and lost in the tangles of that work than I already have been in this 40-something page paper. So much of my work here at The New School has been examining militourism⁶⁸—the relationship between the military and the tourism industry. Sadly, this path of analysis was not possible in this paper, although I have woven in brief flashes of this scholarship in hopes of enticing myself and others to continue venturing into that space carved by the late Teresia Teaiwa.

What remains unanswered here is clear and definitive pathways towards demilitarization. I have long been involved in community organizing work in Hawai'i, and these experiences have taught me that no problem is insurmountable with people you love standing at your side. All I

know is that ea is unreachable without all of us striving towards it, and that requires many long and short, intimate and vast conversations amongst us all who call Hawai‘i home. This summer, RIMPAC 2024 is scheduled to commence once again, inviting allied militaries from around the Pacific Ocean to turn our ‘āina and moana into a militarized playground. As the US sells weapons to Israel to commit a genocide in Gaza, activists in Hawai‘i have drawn parallels between the rifles fired at Schofield Barracks and the bombs tested at Pōhakuloa to the destruction of Palestine.⁶⁹ The work of building genuine and committed solidarities in Hawai‘i, Oceania, and the world continues.

I will sing *Pūpū a ‘o ‘Ewa* and remember the mo‘olelo of Ka‘ahupāhau in defiance of those who wish to see Pu‘uloa continue to be the heart of the he‘e of the military. I will crouch under the sun, hands caked with mud, and I will teach someone who has never worked with ‘āina before how to make space amongst their teeth for ‘ōlelo to wiggle in. I will let my aloha spill out into the ‘āina and into those around me so that I can aloha ‘āina and aloha through ‘āina. I will remember the Almost End of the World, and work to make sure that there will be a new beginning to our world.

‘Amama ua noa. The prayer is said.

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