

Chapter 2: Race and Ethnicity in Save Our Surf, the Hōkūleʻa, and the Kamala Valley Occupation

Introduction

There were many protest movements and cultural revitalization during the Hawaiian Renaissance, two of the most famous being the Kalama Valley Occupation and the voyage and creation of the Hōkūleʻa. There were many organizations involved in these events as well; some were multi-ethnic, some were people of color only, and others were strictly Kānāka Maoli. Within these two events, there were many tales of how people and activists from different races and ethnicities came together to fight for causes that were important to them. Sometimes it went off without a hitch, often when *haole* leaders knew when to take a step back and let the Kānāka Maoli steer the ship. Other times, there were heavy racial tensions, and leadership structures in organizations too closely resembled the systems of *haole* domination that had been so prevalent since 1778. This resemblance to systems of *haole* domination in movements that were a continuation of resistance to these very systems was unacceptable to many Kānāka Maoli participants. It made them feel like their self-determination was being stripped from them; they did not want the Hawaiian Renaissance to be yet another area of their lives co-opted and appropriated by *haoles*. This chapter will explore what worked and what did not in organizations and protests like Save Our Surf, the Kalama Valley Occupation, the Kokua Kalama Committee, the voyage of the Hōkūleʻa, and the Polynesian Voyaging Society. I focus on these organizations and events because they had multi-ethnic leadership and participation. These factors make them excellent case studies for exploring ethnic-tensions in the Hawaiian Renaissance. It is a pattern that these tensions over multi-ethnic leadership and participation lead to disagreements

and ultimately do not get solved. These tensions were a lesson in themselves that exemplified the continual racial and ethnic tensions that existed in Hawai'i during the Hawaiian Renaissance.

Save Our Surf and the Hōkūle'a

In 1919, *haole* activist John Kelly and his family moved from California to O'ahu. They planned to stay for a year but fell in love with the island and its culture and never left. John particularly fell in love with the ocean and surfing culture on the islands and became an avid member of the surfing community.¹⁰² He fought in World War II and was given a Presidential Navy and Marine Corps Medal for a dangerous skin dive he did near Kaho'olawe. When he returned from war, he attended Juilliard School of Music and later returned to Hawai'i with his wife, Marion Kelly, and his two daughters.¹⁰³ Marion Kelly was a part-Kānaka Maoli anthropologist who taught at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. After returning to O'ahu in the 1960s, Kelly and his surfing community began fighting to protect the shorelines that meant so much to them from overdevelopment, tourism, and pollution. John Kelly founded Save Our Surf in 1964, which initially started as a small, local environmental organization, and then flourished to become a larger activist organization over the next four decades. Save Our Surf was involved in many local struggles in the 1960s and 1970s and stopped 27 private-for-profit land development projects from destroying Hawaiian shorelines through skilled and diligent activism.¹⁰⁴

In *Waves of Resistance*, Walker discusses how many protest strategies that were heavily utilized in Hawaiian movements during the 1960s and 1970s were born out of Save Our Surf. The organization was run using Marxist ideology and frameworks and manned by many local young surfers. This movement was inspirational and foundational to other Hawaiian activist organizations and

¹⁰² John Kelly, "A Brief on John Kelly and Save Our Surf," UHM Library Digital Image Collections, accessed February 15, 2025, <https://digital.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/items/show/31224>.

¹⁰³ Kelly, "A Brief."

¹⁰⁴ Kelly, "A Brief."

participated in many struggles outside of the environmental sphere, including racial and class justice. Kelly worked at the University of Hawaii at Mānoa and taught some of the first courses in the Ethnic Studies Program.¹⁰⁵ Kelly's Marxist background helped shape his strategies for advertising these movements. The Kalama Valley protest was one of the first major protests of Hawaiian modern activism, and it centered around a land struggle between the Bishop Estate and the local people (mostly Kānāka Maoli) who lived there. SOS was heavily involved.¹⁰⁶

By 1971, SOS was one of the most influential local environmental groups in the country, with influence that could be heard about even on the mainland.¹⁰⁷ Stewert Udall, President John F. Kennedy's Secretary of the Interior, wrote a glowing article about Save Our Surf in *Our Environment*, where he called the organization "a force to contend with in Hawaii."¹⁰⁸ Save Our Surf began as an organization mostly involved in environmental issues affecting surfers. This can often be read as meaning that they were not invested in class and race issues. This, however, is not the case. In an environment as racially diverse and class segregated as O'ahu in the 1960s and 1970s, it was nearly impossible for the organization not to address them. In one article written about Save Our Surf in the *Hawai'i Free People's Press*, the author describes a struggle that SOS was involved in. It was over the protection of Canoe Beach, a spot where many *haoles* and tourists flocked to surf, canoe, and paddleboard. The protection of Canoe Beach was juxtaposed with the destruction of Queen's Beach, a local surf spot frequented by local surfers, people of color, and Kānāka Maoli. These two ocean destinations were a mere 20 minutes away from each other, yet "Queen's is brown and Canoes is white mainly. Interesting. So naturally, the tourist industry plans to take out Queen's and keep Canoes."¹⁰⁹ Because of the demographic differences between the two beaches, one was protected, and one was fast-

¹⁰⁵ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 114.

¹⁰⁶ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 107

¹⁰⁷ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 109

¹⁰⁸ Steve Udall, *Our Environment*, Box 13, Folder 6, Save Our Surf (SOS) Archives, 1960-2000, Hawai'i and Pacific Collections, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

¹⁰⁹ Hawaiian Free People's Press, Box 15, Folder 19, Save Our Surf (SOS) Archives, 1960-2000, Hawai'i and Pacific Collections, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2.

tracked for demolition. This exemplifies how environmental issues caused by overdevelopment and the tourism industry were surfers' issues, and the surfers' issues were inevitably tied to racial and ethnic dynamics and relations on the islands. The environmental crisis was directly tied to racial and ethnic discrimination on O'ahu.

Although SOS began as an environmentally focused organization, it evolved to become one of the most engaged advocates for Kānāka Maoli of the era.¹¹⁰ In 1971, they participated in the Unite to Save Hawai'i Rally, advertising it to the community with posters and pamphlets Kelly made with his basement printing press.¹¹¹ This rally was protesting big corporations like the Dillingham Corporation and the Bishop Estate evicting Hawaiians from their homes to build tourist attractions, and destroying and cementing reefs and shorelines to build luxury hotels. Together with 9 SOS members, Kelly led the protesters into the Capitol rotunda in Honolulu and occupied the entire floor. State officials refused to listen to the protestors, slamming doors in their faces and attempting to go about their business. So the protestors began jumping in unison, causing the building's cement to crack. When the police told the protesters to stop because cement was falling on their heads, Kelly replied in a Pidgin accent "You know what, bradda. You go see the governor up there and give him this message: when he stops pouring cement into our surf, we'll stop cracking cement here at the capitol".¹¹²

SOS worked hard to combine the issues of the environment with the rights of the local Hawaiian people – both Kānāka Maoli and local non-ethnic Hawaiians alike – as Kelly saw these two issues as one and the same. Because of Kelly's Marxist background, he analyzed the conquest of the islands through a business-driven lens, emphasizing American capitalism and colonialism.¹¹³ One of these times was in 1972 when the state began evicting local Hawaiian families from their homes to build an airport extension on Mokauea Island, where people were living in a traditional Hawaiian fishing village. Although only 10 acres in

¹¹⁰ *Hawaiian Free People's Press*, 113.

¹¹¹ *Hawaiian Free People's Press*, 110.

¹¹² Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 113.

¹¹³ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 114.

size, the island was home to 17 Hawaiian families. Despite being ordered by the government to leave their ancestral homes, the families of Mokauea refused and stayed on their land until 1975, when Governor Ariyoshi ordered anyone who remained on the island to be arrested for trespassing and their homes be burned to the ground. Five homes were set ablaze before SOS heard about the evictions and decided to intervene. This was another instance of settler colonial attitudes to erase Hawaiian people from their land, both physically and culturally. Upon hearing of this injustice, SOS helped the families mobilize and create the Mokauea Fisherman Association (MFA). Then they got the State Historic Preservation Office involved and declared the island a protected historic site. After this victory, SOS helped the community restore their homes and village. Kelly and Save Our Surf were involved in many land rights issues and Kānāka Maoli families on O'ahu's north and west sides.¹¹⁴

Not only did Kelly work through SOS to preserve Hawaiian land rights and protect the environment, but he also educated the next generation of Hawaiian activists through the Ethnic Studies Program at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.¹¹⁵ He was one of the first educators to teach a critical analysis of the history and politics of colonialism on the islands. Like SOS, the Ethnic Studies Program had to fight to stay alive. SOS helped the Program when the University tried to shut it down just a few years after its birth. They promoted the Program to students and locals by advertising that the Program “combines theory with practice, and attempts to develop an understanding of our local people's culture and history and their needs in the changing conditions of Hawai'i today”.¹¹⁶ While Marion Kelly had been working with the Program since its inception in the early 1970s, John Kelly joined as an ethnic studies professor in 1974.¹¹⁷ Along with the other professors, both Marion and John Kelly taught a radical version of Hawaiian history that emphasized the illegal and immoral nature of the overthrow, annexation, tourism, and colonization by the United States in general. Inspired by his work in the Ethnic Studies Program, John Kelly

¹¹⁴ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 113.

¹¹⁵ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 114.

¹¹⁶ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 114.

¹¹⁷ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 114.

would also give impromptu lectures to local surfers outside of the University, with one of his most attentive and influential students being Eddie Aikau.¹¹⁸ Aikau was a young Kānāka Maoli big wave surfer who was involved in the Hōkūleʻa voyage.

Surfing and ocean-related activities were spaces where people felt free to express their Indigenous identities.¹¹⁹ As Walker writes in *Waves of Resistance*, “As the colonialists of the past became fused with the colonizers of the present, these Hawaiian surfers invited the possibility of restoring the deposed self and resurrecting a marginalized people.”¹²⁰ Connecting and exploring surf and ocean culture was one of the ways that Kānāka Maoli and Pacific Islanders decided to preserve, protect, and celebrate their culture. Even though many surfers were of mixed-race origins and may have only been part Kānāka Maoli, it was their Hawaiian-ness that united them with other surfers and brought them together to fight to protect their shorelines and their traditions.¹²¹ One of the leaders of this surf and oceanic uplift was Eddie Aikau, a famed local surfer and a strong community leader. He was known for being fearless and always surfing the biggest waves. He was so well known for this that a common saying on the North Shore of Oʻahu is “Eddie would go,” which is used when there are big waves that no one is daring to surf in order to psych up surfers to get out there. Eddie would go because he was a fearless surfer and a fearless activist. Aikau was largely influenced by his father, Sol ‘Pops’ Aikau, who deeply respected the work of Kelly and everything he did to preserve Hawaiian culture, rights, and beaches.¹²²

Eddie Aikau was involved with one of the most memorable and influential actions of the Hawaiian Renaissance: the voyage of Hōkūleʻa. This project was to restore a traditional Polynesian voyaging canoe in order to use the canoe to sail from Hawaiʻi to Tahiti and back. This voyage reawakened an ethnic pride in young Kānāka Maoli that had been tainted by years of Americanization,

¹¹⁸ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 115

¹¹⁹ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 2.

¹²⁰ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 9.

¹²¹ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 10-11.

¹²² Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 115.

tourism, and fetishization.¹²³ In the summer 1976 issue of a local publication called *Ka Pono*, students wrote how much it meant to them to have a voyage like that of Hōkūleʻa take place. Kānāka Maoli students and non-ethnic Hawaiians alike wrote poems of their hopes for the voyage and what it symbolized in the culture. One student named Henry Chang wrote, “The Hawaiian canoe Hokuleʻa represents to Kanaʻi Pono. Everybody has to be in one canoe paddling together to be friends with everyone. Arriving to the end in my canoe altogether.” Another, Frank Lawelawe, wrote, “Hokuleʻa is a crew of Hawaiian. My canoe is sailing to Hawaii. Hawaiian, my land, land of my birth and my language. Ka Naʻi Pono for six weeks at Ka Naʻi Pono it was pono.” *Pono* is a Hawaiian word that means goodness, uprightness, and morality. *Ka Naʻi Pono* can be translated as doing the right thing, also tied to a sense of moral justice and correctness. So this poem is talking about the overwhelming sense that what Hōkūleʻa was attempting to do was right and just. This perception of moral justness was widely felt by many people on Oʻahu. Another student, Tymmie Keala, wrote “Hōkūleʻa, a beautiful Hawaiian canoe, built exiesally to Tahiti. We Na Kua at Ka Naʻi Pono. Ikaika and pono. Luna trying to make us go in one canoe. Ke kupa want to go in one canoe... That’s my canoe”.¹²⁴ Keala uses the word *ikaika*, which means strong. She is also expressing the sentiment that Hōkūleʻa is strong and morally right. She takes pride in this canoe, claiming it as her own. The sentiment from these student poems shows that Hawaiians working together to uphold their heritage and traditional ways of life was appealing to the younger generation. Even students who were not ethnically Hawaiian were excited about the possibility.

The Hōkūleʻa voyage was created and supported by the Polynesian Voyaging Society (PVS). The word Hōkūleʻa means ‘Star of Gladness’ in Hawaiian, and is named after a star used for navigation.¹²⁵ Founded by local Kānāka Maoli artist Herb Kane, University of Hawaiʻi professor Ben Finney, and a local *haole* named Tommy Holmes, the PVS was created initially to support this

¹²³ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 118.

¹²⁴ Ka Lono, Folder 2, George Helm Papers: Hawn Rare Manuscript, Hawaiʻi and Pacific Collections, University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa, 21.

¹²⁵ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 202; and Talia Beebe, iMessage to author, April 29, 2025.

voyage and to build the Hōkūleʻa.¹²⁶ The PVS was partially funded by the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa, specifically their Committee for the Preservation and Study of the Hawaiian Language. In 1974, the PVS received a \$1000 grant from this Committee to purchase two *iako* (curved wooden pieces used on a traditional Polynesian canoe to connect the outrigger float to the hull of the canoe). The PVS would also later receive support from the Committee by helping them publish books about the voyage and to purchase more *iakos* for other canoes.¹²⁷

The multi-ethnic leadership of the Polynesian Voyaging Society was due to Finney, a *haole* anthropologist, having a background in building traditional Polynesian canoes, as he had built a smaller one in Santa Barbara a few years earlier. Kane, a local Hawaiian artist, had an interest in rediscovering the art of his ancestors and had researched and drawn Polynesian canoes for years. He was now determined to sail one. It was important to Kane that Hōkūleʻa be manned mostly by Kānāka Maoli and other Polynesian folks, to which Finney seemed to agree.¹²⁸ This opportunity was particularly interesting to Finney as a research opportunity to prove to racist academics in his circle that Polynesians were skilled voyagers and wayfinders. There was a theory going around that Polynesians had landed in Hawaiʻi by accident, which was based on racist stereotypes discrediting the ingenuity of Hawaiians and Polynesians. Finney had been publishing articles disproving these theories for years, yet the idea still remained. He believed that a modern-day recreation of these voyages would be exactly the spectacle needed to put these rumors to bed.¹²⁹

The Hōkūleʻa was built by paid members and volunteers over the course of a year, and in 1975, it celebrated its first launch into the ocean. During these initial short voyages, Kane recruited expert Kānāka Maoli swimmers and surfers to train on the boat. The Hōkūleʻa was becoming a symbol of the Hawaiian Renaissance, carrying the pride of young Hawaiians in its sails. Finney

¹²⁶ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 117.

¹²⁷ Grant Papers, Box 5, Folder 44, University of Hawaiʻi Committee for the Preservation and Study of the Hawaiian Language, 1959-2013, Hawaiʻi and Pacific Collections, University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa.

¹²⁸ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 117.

¹²⁹ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 117.

explained, “Hōkūle’a’s sacred mission, Kane began to preach, was to uplift the Hawaiian people, to be the catalyst for the Hawaiian renaissance. Culture is nothing without its artifacts, he reasoned.”¹³⁰ As mentioned previously, Eddie Aikau was involved in this project and became very well known as one of its crew members. He, like many young Hawaiians manning this canoe, became known as a symbol of Hawaiian strength, ingenuity, and masculinity.¹³¹ Because of this cultural pride being shared through the Hōkūle’a, racial tension was also mounting within the PVS. Some Kānāka Maoli believed that the leadership of the PVS was too *haole* and too overbearing. Because of these tensions, many Hawaiian men left the PVS, including Eddie Aikau briefly.¹³² Kane asked Finney to take a step back and not attend trainings, to which Finney reluctantly complied, as he was most excited about their voyage to Tahiti for his research.¹³³ The Hōkūle’a crew took on new leadership; the captain was now a man named Elia “Kawika” Kapehulehua, a Kānāka Maoli man from Ni’ihau who was very immersed in the culture. They also hired a Micronesian man named Mau Piailug to spearhead navigation, as he was revered as a navigational genius.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Ben R. Finney, *Hōkūle’a: The Way to Tahiti*, (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1979), 20.

¹³¹ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 119.

¹³² Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 119.

¹³³ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 119.

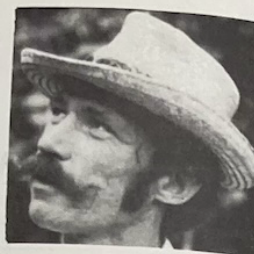
¹³⁴ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 119.

MEET THE CREW OF HOKULE'A

The Society and Captain Kawika Kapahulehua salutes the crew chosen for the Bicentennial voyaging canoe Hokule'a. Because of food and water limitations only 17 persons can make the actual voyage on any one leg. Chosen for the leg to Tahiti are: Kapahulehua, Lyman, Pailug, Williams, Hugh, Keaulana, Kalalau, Richards, Kuahulu, Kruse, Bertleman, Kaawaloa, Lewis, Finney, Holmes and two photographers from the National Geographic Society and TV station WQED Pittsburgh of the public broadcasting system.



KAWIKA KAPAHULEHUA



DAVID LYMAN

CAPTAIN OF THE CREW

Kawika Kapahulehua, a 45 year old pure Hawaiian, captain of the canoe, Hokule'a. Kapahulehua has been sailing catamarans for over 25 years. Catamaran racing is one of Captain Kapahulehua's passions. He has raced catamarans in California and Mexico and has been in four Trans-Pac catamaran races between California and Hawaii, two of them in the "first to finish" boat Seasmoke. Kapahulehua holds a 100 ton masters license and is on the Board of Directors of the Pacific Maritime Academy. He is a Director of the Polynesian Voyaging Society.

Captain Kapahulehua has worked for Western Airlines since 1960. Western Airlines has granted him a leave of absence so that he may take a leading role in the Hokule'a project.

Until Hokule'a is ready to leave, Kapahulehua will be working as an educational officer of the Polynesian Voyaging Society. His primary duty will be to implement an educational program, supported in part by the Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts under a special grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, designed to bring a greater awareness to the people of Polynesian canoes and sailing as art forms as well as simply a means of transport.



MAU PAILUG



RODO WILLIAMS



BEN FINNEY

RELIEF CAPTAIN DAVID LYMAN

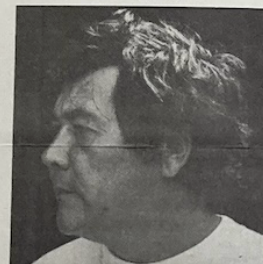
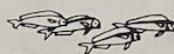
David Lyman, a 32 year old part Hawaiian, is relief captain of Hokule'a. Lyman, a fifth generation descendant of pioneering Hilo missionary David Belden Lyman, is a graduate of Punahou and the California Maritime Academy. He has served on merchant marine vessels around the world, and holds a master license for "Steam and Motor Vessels, Any Ocean, Any Tonnage". Lyman has also taught courses on navigation, sailing and seamanship for the College of Continuing Education of the University of Hawaii at Hilo.

Lyman has sailed in three Trans-Pac races and after the races has shipped the yachts back to California. Lyman also served as skipper for the 68 foot schooner, New World, on a month long educational cruise around Hawaii for Hawaiian youths. Lyman is been sailing with Hokule'a since she was launched, and is a member of the Polynesian Voyaging Society.

VISIT THE CREW AND CANOE IN TAHITI

The Society is exploring the feasibility of arranging special membership air tours to Tahiti. Anyone interested in participating should contact the Society office.

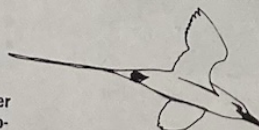
P.O. BOX 6037
BISHOP MUSEUM
HONOLULU, HAWAII
96818
PHONE 841-3966



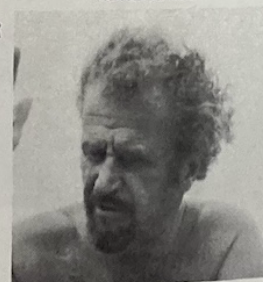
HERB KANE

LM TEAM

Other members of the crew will be Nick de Vore, photographer for the National Geographic Society, and Norris Brock, photographer for Metropolitan Pittsburgh Broadcasting, Inc. WQED Pittsburgh.



BE A CREW SPONSOR
See page 4.....
complete information



DAVID LEWIS



Figure 2. Pages from the Polynesian Voyaging Society Newsletter that show the crew of Hōkūle'a.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Polynesian Voyaging Society News, Box 5, Folder 44, University of Hawai'i Committee for the Preservation and Study of the Hawaiian Language, 1959-2013, Hawai'i and Pacific Collections, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

When the crew of the Hōkūleʻa set out on their voyage to Tahiti, they decided to try and be as accurate to traditional sailing and navigation techniques as possible. At first, it all seemed like smooth sailing, but racial tensions were growing between crew members. Most of the Hawaiian crew members resented the *haole* presence on the canoe and in the PVS leadership. There were seventeen people on board, and five of them were *haole*, giving the Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders a majority on the boat. Many of the Kānāka Maoli also resented the Hawaiian captain, Kapehulehua, as they viewed him as being a puppet controlled by Finney.¹³⁶ A core group of the Kānāka Maoli crew members harbored strong resentment toward Finney as they believed he had co-opted a celebration of Hawaiian culture and a feat of Hawaiian ingenuity and changed it into a project to benefit his research.¹³⁷ There were major disagreements between Finney and the Kānāka Maoli crewmen, including a man named Buffalo Keaulana.¹³⁸ Keaulana and other Indigenous crew members found ritual very important on their voyage. It is part of what legitimized the voyage to them as a symbol of modern Hawaiian culture and as a connection to their ancestors. Finney, however, believed that most of their rituals were “sorcery” and did not support their insistence on it.¹³⁹ What was important to him was that they only sustained themselves on board with traditional Hawaiian foods and means, and no modern luxuries were allowed. Finney was infuriated when he found that some crew members had snuck candy, a radio, and pakalolo (marijuana) onto Hōkūleʻa.¹⁴⁰ Finney’s insistence on some aspects of Hawaiian culture and refusal of others was reminiscent of the Americanization and exploitation of Hawaiian culture for capital gain and tourism by earlier settler colonialists.

Tension climaxed when Hōkūleʻa neared Papeete, Tahiti on June 3rd, 1976.¹⁴¹ A few days into their journey, some Hawaiian sailors added a makeshift jib to the canoe while Finney was sleeping. They were having trouble making it to Tahiti and had many days left on their journey. Finney was infuriated when

¹³⁶ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 119.

¹³⁷ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 120.

¹³⁸ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 119.

¹³⁹ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 119.

¹⁴⁰ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 120.

¹⁴¹ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 119.

he found out they had added a jib and reprimanded the crew for not adhering to authentic Hawaiian customs.¹⁴² As a jib is not a traditional Polynesian device, Finney tried to convince Kapehulehua to remove it, but Kapehulehua was hesitant as it could help them reach their destination. Keaulana believed that Finney had no right to police the Kānāka Maoli crew members on their own culture. Finney responded to these claims by pulling rank, saying, “But it’s my job as president of the Voyaging Society to see that we stick to our plans!”¹⁴³ This angered Keaulana, as he saw it as typical *haole* behavior to attempt to pull rank in order to encourage the Kānāka Maoli not to challenge his authority. Systems like these were reminiscent of the harms done by settler colonialism to Hawaiians on the island. It spoke to the rights that *haoles* felt they had over Indigenous people. Keaulana responded by asserting his connection to the ocean, a trait that was often tied to Kānāka Maoli masculinity, and said “When it gets rough, when the big waves start coming over the canoe, we’re [Hawaiian crew and surfers] going to be standing here steering the canoe and you’re going to be down inside hiding.”¹⁴⁴ These tensions eventually reached their climax with some of the Kānāka Maoli crew members physically attacking some of the other crew members, namely Finney and Kapehulehua. These tensions were symbolic of years of *haole* domination, and the Kānāka Maoli men on the Hōkūle’a were finally at their wits’ end with it. They used their connection to the ocean and their pride in Hawaiian culture to gain power back over Finney on the voyage (before they used physical force).

The fact that Finney was both trying to honor Hawaiian culture while simultaneously being domineering over PVS and its members was a sign that heavy *haole* leadership did not work in the Hawaiian Renaissance. Racial tensions were manifesting through young Kānāka Maoli leaving the organization because it felt too reminiscent of other structures of *haole* domination. They also manifested on the voyage itself, when Finney perfectly recreated the *haole* tradition of pulling rank over Kānāka Maoli, who were drawing on their lived experience and knowledge. While he was trying to aid in resisting a settler

¹⁴² Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 120.

¹⁴³ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 121.

¹⁴⁴ Walker, *Waves of Resistance*, 121.

colonial legacy by celebrating the Indigenous culture of the land, he was actually reinscribing Hawaiian culture with his own ego and beliefs. He was actively ignoring the voices of the Kānāka Maoli who were on Hōkūle'a. Keaulana asserting his Indigenous masculinity is also important as it shows another form of resistance to *haoles* domination, which was to fight against notions of Kānāka Maoli men being passive. Instead, Kapehulehua challenged this notion by taking pride and power in his culture and confidence in his knowledge of the ocean. This event on Hōkūle'a is important because it demonstrates that even *haoles* who had good intentions should not have been leading Hawaiian cultural revitalization projects. This was a recreation of current and historical systems of domination, and it was bound to create tensions. If *haoles* were to be involved in movements of the Hawaiian Renaissance, it was better for them to take a back seat when it was necessary, as is demonstrated in the Kalama Valley Occupation.

Kalama Valley Occupation and the Kokua Kalama Committee

Within social movements in Hawai'i, there was substantial racial tension, and people had many strong beliefs about how organizations should be run and who should attend and lead protests. Largely inspired by the American Indian Movement (AIM) in the mainland United States, Hawaiian activists drew influence from events like the occupations of Wounded Knee and Alcatraz Island. These two events consisted of Native Americans from many tribes coming together to occupy land that was rightfully theirs. This method of making their presence known was direct resistance to settler colonial systems. As Wolfe explains, settler colonialism relies on and facilitates the disappearance of the Indigenous people and culture.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, occupation is in direct resistance to the goals of settler colonialism. Demanding the right to take space and utilize the land is a powerful symbol of resilience and pride. Like the Native American movements in the mainland United States, the Hawaiian movement began as a

¹⁴⁵ Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism," 391.

battle for land rights but later evolved into a larger struggle for Kānāka Maoli autonomy.¹⁴⁶ Some Hawaiian activists, specifically from the organization ALOHA, felt that a Hawaiian ‘Wounded Knee’ was needed to prove to Congress the severity of their situation in terms of land rights and property management.¹⁴⁷ However, there were often disagreements on the best way to go about staging these protests and who had the right to participate in them. Though the Kalama Valley Occupation did not end in a stop to the evictions, it was vitally important as the first major event of the Hawaiian Renaissance and as an example of an event with multi-ethnic participation and leadership.

The Kalama Valley Protest and Occupation was the first major land struggle defining the Hawaiian Renaissance.¹⁴⁸ In Hawai‘i in the 1970s, private landowners accounted for 6.8% of land ownership in the state, with 9.8% belonging to the federal government, and 38.7% belonging to the state government. The other 45.2% of Hawaiian lands were controlled by just 39 major landowners, a staggeringly small number compared to the entirety of the Hawaiian population.¹⁴⁹ The ethnicities of these landowners were contentious, as in “The Birth of the Modern Hawaiian Movement,” Trask writes, “the local political elite (predominantly of Japanese and *haole* ancestry) moved quickly to support tourism while reaping enormous private financial benefits from their investments.”¹⁵⁰ This distrust and distaste for the actions of the Japanese and *haole* elite often seeped into the social interactions and decisions made during the Kalama Valley Protest. Kānāka Maoli suffered greatly from the economic change brought on by the drastic increase in tourism and the induction of Hawai‘i as a state, which was largely supported by the Japanese and *haoles* of the upper class. Many Kānāka Maoli or part-Kānāka Maoli who were displaced due to rising prices and tourism ended up in Kalama Valley, a neighborhood of working-class

¹⁴⁶ Trask, “Birth of the Modern,” 126.

¹⁴⁷ Davianna McGregor-Alegado, “Hawaiians: Organizing in the 1970s,” *Amerasia Journal* 7, no. 2 (2019): 48, <https://doi.org/10.17953/amer.7.2.d331761876682740>.

¹⁴⁸ Trask, “Birth of the Modern,” 127.

¹⁴⁹ McGregor-Alegado, “Hawaiians: Organizing,” 35.

¹⁵⁰ Trask, “Birth of the Modern,” 127-128.

farmers near O'ahu's southeastern shore. By the 1960s, about 150 families were living in the valley on a month-to-month lease.¹⁵¹

The trust that controlled Kalama Valley was the Bishop Estate, founded in the late 19th century by one of the last members of Hawaiian royalty. It was designed to support Kānāka Maoli and make and maintain the well-being of the Kamehameha Schools. These schools were designed for Kānāka Maoli students to get a well-rounded education.¹⁵² Initially, the trust was designed to protect and support the Hawaiian people. Its sole purpose was the betterment of the lives of Kānāka Maoli. However, the state Supreme Court appointed the Trustees of the Bishop Estate, leading to the makeup being about 80% *haole*. At least two trustees were members of a whites-only club called the Pacific Club, and many of them generally had no interest in the land rights of local Hawaiians.¹⁵³ Trustees had a history of racist comments. One of the founding members of the Kokua Kalama Committee (KKC), Kalani Ohelo, remarked that while one trustee made the inflammatory comment that "in today's modern world, the Hawaiian lifestyle should be illegal," another trustee was trying to "buy us off with Chinese dinners at King's Garden and other places."¹⁵⁴ This was a paradox of the trustees trying to save face with protesters and Kānāka Maoli people, all the while their true intentions were clear. The KKC knew the true intentions of the Bishop Estate were to persuade them not to make problems and buy them off, all while continuing the settler colonial system of disappearance of an Indigenous people and culture. The Bishop Estate had a pattern of moving its residents around when a lucrative development project was on the horizon. Before Kalama Valley, they had already moved many Kānāka Maoli and working-class non-ethnic Hawaiians out of Koko Head, Pearl City, Lunalilo, and more. This constant threat of change had made the community of Kalama Valley, many of whom had been moved before by the Bishop Estate, a very tight-knit community, closer to a family than a neighborhood.¹⁵⁵ Even non-ethnic Hawaiians who lived in Kalama

¹⁵¹ Trask, "Birth of the Modern," 128.

¹⁵² Trask, "Birth of the Modern," 128.

¹⁵³ Trask, "Birth of the Modern," 131.

¹⁵⁴ Trask, "Birth of the Modern," 142.

¹⁵⁵ Trask, "Birth of the Modern," 129.

Valley viewed their lives to be more akin to a Hawaiian culture of living than a *haole* one, because of their bonds with their Kānāka Maoli neighbors.¹⁵⁶ Because of the importance of Hawaiian culture in Kalama Valley, and what a close community it was, even non-ethnic Hawaiians identified heavily with and wanted to protect their Hawaiian neighbors.

Despite Kalama Valley being a rural, close-knit community, the struggle of the people against the Bishop Estate attracted a lot of outside attention. The first community to take notice of the plea of the Kalama Valley residents was students at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, specifically, students who studied in the Ethnic Studies Program.¹⁵⁷ They heard about it through local newspapers, and local *haole* activist John Witeck got a small group of students together to go help. Since these students and professors had a background in fighting for their institution's right to study their own history, they were familiar with and passionate about social movements in Hawai'i and often brought an academic lens to organizing. In the summer of 1970, a group of community members and organizers founded the Kokua Kalama Committee (KKC), headed by Larry Kamakawiwo'ole, Pete Thompson, "Soli" Niheu, and Kalani Ohelo.¹⁵⁸ When Kalani Ohelo witnessed his first eviction in Kalama Valley, it changed his perspective and thrust him into action. He was appalled by the inhumane nature of these evictions; houses were bulldozed to the ground, livelihoods destroyed, and typically carried out by other Kānāka Maoli who were being paid and made to do the dirty work of the Bishop Estate.¹⁵⁹

There was a long history of *haole* interference hurting the lives and homes of Kānāka Maoli on the island, and this history was known by many activists regardless of their ethnicity. In a letter, John Kelly describes how, in the early days of Hawaiian colonization, two separate foreign mission projects made a declaration privatizing Hawaiian lands. They split it between 251 high Hawaiian chiefs, leaving the rest of the population landless. Because most of the Kānāka Maoli were landless, the foreign powers enacted a law called the "Penal Code of

¹⁵⁶ Trask, "Birth of the Modern," 131.

¹⁵⁷ Trask, "Birth of Modern Hawaiian," 131.

¹⁵⁸ Trask, "Birth of the Modern ", 133.

¹⁵⁹ Trask, "Birth of the Modern," 135.

the Hawaiian Islands,” declaring that all landless Hawaiians were ‘vagrants’ and forced them to work as slave labor building infrastructure for sugar plantations. This law was passed in 1850 and was not repealed until 1970.¹⁶⁰ This knowledge of the many economic and land injustices was fuel for the fire of the Kalama Valley Protests.

The fact that Kānāka Maoli were both the ones being evicted and the ones carrying out the evictions hit a nerve with a lot of Kānāka Maoli activists. One of the original three protesters to get arrested for trespassing, Lori Hayashi, told the story of witnessing these evictions firsthand. The *Hawaiian Free People's Press* came out with a special issue called ‘Kalama Valley Struggle’, in which they focused primarily on the Kalama Valley protest and plight. In one article called “The Kalama Nine”, Lori Hayashi described blocking the bulldozers from demolishing the homes of Kalama residents. The first bulldozer operator was a Hawaiian man who could not go through with bulldozing the homes of these innocent families. After the first man could not do it, a second Hawaiian man with “madness in his eyes” began to bulldoze the house while people were inside of it protesting.¹⁶¹ Hayashi and the other protesters were tussled around, wood and glass flying everywhere. Hayashi said, “I felt so sick! These damn Estate bastards, sending out Hawaiians to do their dirty work. Shit! That guy destroyed three houses.”¹⁶² It was difficult for Kānāka Maoli to have to go against their own people, on both the protesters’ and the bulldozers’ sides. The men who worked for the Bishop Estate were doing their job and most likely did not want to risk losing their income during a housing crisis. Meanwhile, the protesters were in the process of losing their homes during this same crisis, making the resentment towards their fellow Kānāka Maoli all the more potent. However, in the postscript of the article, the author informs that the Hawaiian man who bulldozed those three houses (a man called “Tiny”) called in sick two days later

¹⁶⁰ Letter to WIN Advisory, Box 14, Folder 9, Save Our Surf (SOS) Archives, 1960-2000, Hawai'i and Pacific Collections, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 1-2.

¹⁶¹ *Kalama Valley Struggle*, 12.

¹⁶² *Kalama Valley Struggle*, 12.

and refused to destroy any more homes. The author writes “Our brudda has a conscience; he can not screw his own people.”¹⁶³



Figure 3. Special Issue of the *Hawai'i Free People's Press* called 'Kalama Valley Struggle'. The infamous quote from the Bishop Estate official and the picture of Kalama Valley residents on the front cover.¹⁶⁴

In this same issue of the *Hawaiian Free People's Press*, Pete Thompson wrote an article about the housing crisis in Hawai'i. He discusses how the housing market had been overrun by tourists and hotels, and that the vacancy rate on O'ahu was surprisingly low. He also discusses the high birth rates on the island,

¹⁶³ *Kalama Valley Struggle*, 12.

¹⁶⁴ *Kalama Valley Struggle*, cover.

as well as the military presence that was so prevalent on the island and in the surrounding waters. Issues with foreigners coming to the island were causing a lot of discourse among the people in Kalama Valley, especially because the Bishop Estate wanted to sell the land to make luxury homes and a golf course. It was most likely that these new homes would go to wealthy tourists or military families, further displacing Kānāka Maoli in favor of appealing to foreign and corporate powers.¹⁶⁵ This was another occurrence in the long history of *haole* domination and displacement of Kānāka Maoli people in favor of furthering the settler colonial agenda and advancing the tourist industry.

Thompson and Hayashi, as well as local activist Herb Takahashi were part of the Kaimuki Collective, a Maoist group dedicated to discussing resistance ideology that only had open membership to local people of color. This group was torn when deciding whether or not to join in the fight to save Kalama Valley. As Trask describes

Thompson remembered that the criticisms were threefold: the struggle was insular, meaning agricultural not urban, and pre-dominantly Hawaiian, not local; the activists in the Valley were anti-theory, meaning that their support was reactive and essentially unplanned (i.e. without Marxist ideology); and the KKC was "nationalistic," meaning that it was not inclusive of other oppressed non-Hawaiian groups.¹⁶⁶

There was strife between the organizing styles of college-educated activists who were well-versed in Marxist theory and the KKC, which was more grassroots and comprised of people who did not have formal education on organizing strategies. Another issue was that of ethnicity; the KKC was comprised mostly of Kānāka Maoli or part-Kānāka Maoli and fought specifically for them, while the Kaimuki Collective was comprised more broadly of local Hawaiians and people of color, and they were not sure if it was right of them to back a cause that did not belong to them and excluded many of their members. In the end, they decided to participate by occupying the valley with the KKC and Kalama Valley residents, despite their hesitations.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ *Kalama Valley Struggle*, 3.

¹⁶⁶ Trask, "Birth of the Modern," 136.

¹⁶⁷ Trask, "Birth of the Modern," 136.

The topic surrounding the ethnicity of the KKC leadership was contentious. While they never had any intention of becoming a Hawaiian nationalist organization, 'Soli' Hanale Niheu wanted the leadership and membership of the KKC to be solely Kānāka Maoli or part Kānāka Maoli. However, he recalls that non-ethnic local Hawaiians were enthusiastic about joining the KKC and helping in the Kalama Valley occupation, and he felt that his desire to keep the occupation and organization consisting of Kānāka Maoli only was not shared by the masses, including other Kānāka Maoli. He did try to push for the leadership of the KKC to be Kānāka Maoli only, even if the membership had to remain multi-ethnic. However, he was overruled, and the young organization had 'local' non-Indigenous leadership, and by the time of the first arrests was perceived as more of a 'local' organization than a Kānāka Maoli one.¹⁶⁸ The narrative of Kalama Valley supporters and Kokua Kalama Committee as hippy *haole* mainlanders was pushed by the Bishop Estate, causing problems between KKC and Hawaiian groups who demanded fewer *haoles* if they were to lend their support. The narratives surrounding *haole* supporters and residents were so effective that a Kānāka Maoli organization called 'The Hawaiians' only agreed to join the protest movement on the condition that the number of visible *haoles* was vastly reduced.¹⁶⁹ This took effect publicly one night when *haole* supporters were asked to leave by Kokua Hawai'i.¹⁷⁰

Ohelo thought the tensions between *haole* supporters and Kānāka Maoli were due to "two hundred years of frustration and anger" that both Hawaiians and local people of color felt about *haole* dominance in Hawai'i.¹⁷¹ Even some *haoles*, like the founder of an organization called Youth Action, John Witeck, believed that there were too many "*haole* long hairs" and it distracted from the movement and upset local people, as it reminded them of the *haole* domination that was so present. Witeck believed the Kokua Hawaii needed to separate and

¹⁶⁸ Trask, "Birth of the Modern," 136.

¹⁶⁹ Trask, "Birth of the Modern," 143

¹⁷⁰ By April 1970, the leadership of the Kokua Kalama Committee had decided that the mission of their organization was more encompassing of the Hawaiian Islands than of solely Kalama Valley. They decided to rename themselves 'Kokua Hawai'i' to more accurately describe their mission.

¹⁷¹ Trask, "Birth of the Modern," 143.

consolidate ranks, as part of the movement was self-determination.¹⁷² Kelly was also one of the more understanding and cooperative *haole* activists who was involved in the movement, and he supported the move to a more Hawaiian-centered approach to the occupation.

There was a difference in how people viewed the occupation depending on what group they were a part of. Between the two groups, there was a difference between class divides and racial divides. Students and activists who were trained and educated in Marxist ideology were more likely to view the struggle as one between socio-economic classes, focusing on the poverty of the Kalama Valley residents compared to the financial circumstances of the Bishop Estate and private land developers. Residents and activists who were from Kalama Valley or had grown up experiencing racism and prejudice on the island were more likely to view the struggle as between racial groups. They viewed their poor treatment as a result of their ethnicity based on their lived experience.¹⁷³ In reality, both factors were to blame for the treatment of the residents of Kalama Valley.

Many *haole* participants understood when they were asked to leave or take a step back in the protest. Witeck was on board, and Kelly was also receptive to the separation of *haole* people and saw it as a necessary step in the historical process of class struggle.¹⁷⁴ He was unique in the fact that he was familiar with Marxist ideologies yet understood the ethnic intricacies on the island and knew when it was time to take a step back. Other *haoles*, however, were infuriated at being asked to leave, taking it as a personal attack.¹⁷⁵ They believed that they were being wrongfully attacked when they were just trying to help. These *haole* believed that they were not the enemy and that it was landowners specifically, not just any *haole*, whom the Kānāka Maoli and the Kalama Valley residents should have been fighting against. This lack of trust and separation from *haoles* by many Kānāka Maoli involved in the Kalama Valley protest did not extend to locals of other races. As Trask points out, “[...] curiously enough, they did not

¹⁷² Trask, “Birth of the Modern,” 144.

¹⁷³ Trask, “Birth of the Modern,” 144.

¹⁷⁴ Trask, “Birth of the Modern,” 145.

¹⁷⁵ Trask, “Birth of the Modern,” 146.

feel a distinction, at least not in political terms, between Hawaiians and other locals. Despite the fact that Hawaiians were much worse off than Asians economically, occupationally, educationally, and in terms of their collective health, the dividing line followed a white vs. people of color characterization."¹⁷⁶ The distrust that was extended towards *haoles* who were trying to help did not reach other people of color, like Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, etc. At this point in the Hawaiian Renaissance and Hawaiian organizing, the push for Hawaiian sovereignty was not yet the popular rhetoric. It was not until much later in the decade that Kānāka Maoli would begin to distinguish themselves from other people of color on the island and move to a more concentrated Kānāka Maoli movement.¹⁷⁷

Conclusion

The interpersonal struggles fueled by tensions surrounding race and ethnicity in these movements are indicative of larger societal structures. Socio-economic class was also a point of contention because it caused a difference in ideologies. There were people using Marxist ideologies and practicing more theory-driven activism often disagreed with people using their lived experiences to inform their protest strategies. There were also disagreements between Kānāka Maoli (and other people of color) participants and *haole* participants, as many *haoles* struggled to relinquish their control, and many Kānāka Maoli did not want the Hawaiian Renaissance to be yet another area to be dominated by *haoles*. This protective nature that many Kānāka Maoli felt over their cultural revitalization and practices was a response to years of settler colonial structures attempting to tear their culture away from them. When *haoles* were present, or worse, attempted to dominate these forms of resistance, it made the message less potent. The strategies of multi-racial organizing worked better in Save Our Surf than they did in the early years of the Polynesian Voyaging Society. Kalama Valley had disagreements about who should be involved, but ultimately decided

¹⁷⁶ Trask, "Birth of the Modern," 146.

¹⁷⁷ Trask, "Birth of the Modern," 146.

to keep their multi-ethnic leadership. Tensions in multi-ethnic organizations, protests, and events existed no matter what, but they were less frequent and less explosive when Kānāka Maoli led their resistance movements, and *haoles* took a backseat.