

# “The Blood of Our Boys Must Be Kept Clean”: Blood and Militarism in Colonial Hawai‘i

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## Introduction

In March of 1941, just nine months before the Imperial Japanese strike on Pu‘uloa (Pearl Harbor), a headline flashed across *The New York Times*: “Hawaii and Its Vital Role in the Defense of America.” In the accompanying article, Harold Callender re-introduced the Hawaiian Islands to a continental American audience, inviting them to imagine the archipelago not only as a paradisiacal site of “palms and pineapples,” but also as a central piece of the American military project in the Pacific. When it came to describing the racial landscape of the Islands, Mr. Callender posed a question to his readers:

Where do the Hawaiians come into this Asiatic-American picture of industry, immigrants, and defense services? They are almost the least important element in Hawaii. There are only about 20,000 pure Hawaiians and they are decreasing, though there are some 43,000 of partly Hawaiian blood (usually mixed with Chinese). They are an easygoing, trustful people, neither mercenary nor energetic, who have been pushed aside by the alien forces from Asia and America which have shaped the island’s life and activities.<sup>1</sup>

Callender’s observations indicate not only a rubric of “blood” as a measure of race, but also the imagined insignificance of the Hawaiian bloodline to the military project on O‘ahu. This paper argues that Hawaiian colonial logics of “blood” and “purity” sought to sustain the American military project in the Pacific through the promotion of deracinated, patriotic masculinities. Examining representations of “blood” in Hawaiian newspapers, photographs, and ephemera from the early twentieth century reveals that blood as a metric of racial and political citizenship was inexorably bound to the project of American

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<sup>1</sup> Harold Callender, “Hawaii and Its Vital Role in the Defense of America,” *The New York Times*, March 2, 1941.

militarism in colonial Hawai‘i.

Blood has been adopted as an index of race in settler-colonial contexts across the world, but functions differently in relation to different bodies. In the contiguous United States, for instance, it is widely accepted that the “one-drop rule” of hypodescent governs African American identity. Conversely, the ideology of blood quantum—a rubric of tribal citizenship dating back to colonial Virginia—works to dispossess Native Americans of “diluted” blood who are deemed assimilated to whiteness, an assimilation that remains inaccessible to even the most “diluted” black blood.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, many have observed that in contexts of multiraciality, there is a heightened fascination with racialized blood and its mixture. It is no coincidence, then, that in Hawai‘i, where the Census Bureau estimates that 19-percent of the population identifies as two or more races (17-percent higher than the national average), the imagined racial and identificatory properties of blood are amplified.<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, discussions of blood populate literature on race, indigeneity, and colonialism in the Pacific world.<sup>5</sup> In her book *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity*, Pacific scholar J. K haulani Kauanui posits that blood as a metric of race is a colonial fiction introduced to render Hawaiian identity “measurable and dilutable.”<sup>6</sup> Kauanui locates the politics of Hawaiian blood within the broader projects of American imperialism and Native dispossession through her analysis of the 1921 Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA). The HHCA, which remains in effect today, allocated some 200,000 acres of land to native Hawaiians with “at least one-half blood quantum of individuals inhabiting the Hawaiian Islands prior to 1778,” effectually prohibiting many *hapa haole* (multiracial Hawaiians) from inheriting their ancestral

<sup>2</sup> Maile Arvin, “Still in the Blood: Gendered Histories of Race, Law, and Science in *Day v. Apoliona*,” *American Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (2015): 681-703.

<sup>3</sup> Sara Kehaulani Goo, “After 200 years, Native Hawaiians make a comeback,” *Pew Research Center*, April 06, 2015, accessed December 12, 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/04/06/native-hawaiian-population>

<sup>4</sup> J. K haulani Kauanui, “‘For Get’ Hawaiian Entitlement: Configurations of Land, ‘Blood,’ and Americanization in the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1921,” *Social Text* 59 (1999): 123-144.

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance: Maile Arvin, “The Polynesian Problem and Its Genomic Solutions,” *Native American and Indigenous Studies* 2, no. 2 (2015); Judy Rohrer, “‘Got Race?’ The Production of Haole and the Distortion of Indigeneity in the Rice Decision,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 18, no. 1 (2006): 1-31; J. K haulani Kauanui, “The Politics of Blood and Sovereignty in *Rice v. Cayetano*,” *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 25, no. 1 (2002): 110-128.

<sup>6</sup> J. K haulani Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008): 3.

lands.<sup>7</sup> While extant literature discusses Hawaiian blood quantum as a technology of indigenous dispossession, few, nevertheless, have considered the historical uses of blood within the American military project in the Pacific. This paper seeks to build upon Kauanui's body of work by investigating historical representations of blood as fundamentally tethered not only to the settler-colonial project, but also to the tradition of U.S. militarism in Hawai'i.

### **Blood Logics and Pacific Warfare (1917-1945)**

While the language of bloodshed has been central to American military rhetoric since the earliest days of colonialism, discussions of blood feature most prominently in the heavily militarized Pacific theater, where Keith Camacho explains that a vast “network of U.S. military bases exists.”<sup>8</sup> A 1917 article in Kauai's newspaper *The Garden Island*, for instance, attempts to rationalize the United States' entrance into World War I, reading: “We are fighting for those principles of free government for which the heroes of the Revolution spilled their blood and which placed Lafayette and Washington and Lincoln among the immortals.”<sup>9</sup> The author's appeal to canonized American historical figures, coupled with the remembrance of “spilled” Revolutionary War blood, typifies American military rhetoric in pre-statehood Hawai'i. In the passage, blood becomes representative of both patriotism and heroism in order to encourage military enlistment. This section examines how such “blood logics”—political ideologies shaped by racialized understandings of blood—galvanized World War I and II participation in Hawai'i while also forging particular models of deracinated, patriotic masculinities through war recruitment.

In the autumn of 1917, shortly after the United States entered World War I, President Wilson circulated a message across Hawaiian newspapers to drum up support for the war:

“President Wilson thanks Liliuokalani. The gracious queen has set her example to all who are here in Hawaii [sic.], whether of Hawaiian blood or not, to give, and keep on giving to that fine cause, the Red Cross.”<sup>10</sup>

The Wilson announcement illustrates that even two decades before formal blood donation campaigns began, blood was an important feature of campaigns for wartime aid. It was not until the early years of

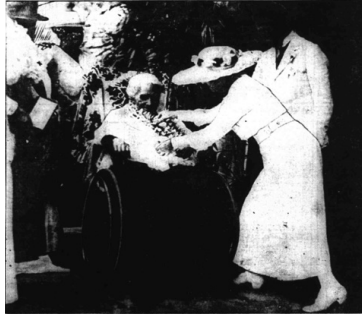
<sup>7</sup> Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity*, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Keith Camacho, “After 9/11: Militarized Borders and Social Movements in the Mariana Islands,” *American Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (2012): 686.

<sup>9</sup> “The Right Kind,” *The Garden Island*, December 11, 1917.

<sup>10</sup> “President Wilson thanks Liliuokalani,” Honolulu Star-Bulletin, September 28, 1917.

**Liliuokalani Becomes Red Cross Member  
As Whistles Signify 8000 Mark Is Reached**



*Figure A: Queen Liliuokalani announces her Red Cross membership, September 1917*

World War II when the American Red Cross began regular blood drives, collecting more than 13 million units of American blood by 1945.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, the financial aid solicited by the 1917 campaign appeals to those “of Hawaiian blood or not,” cementing the idea of blood as racial formation in the colonial Hawaiian imagination. Just four years later, the HHCA would codify a one-half blood quantum policy to assess Kʻnaka Maoli (indigenous Hawaiian) claims to land, reaffirming blood as a metric of race and indigeneity.<sup>12</sup> The President also gestures towards a spirit of race-blind unity in appealing to both Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian “blood,” each compelled to donate to the Red Cross. In the passage, blood becomes both a technology of racial difference and a deracinated metonym of American patriotism.

The President’s appeal to donate to the Red Cross on behalf of the dispossessed Queen Liliuokalani—herself a symbol of Hawaiian sovereignty—is puzzling at first glance. The Red Cross, after all, was an appendage of the American military, the same military that illegally overthrew and imprisoned Liliuokalani in 1893. In fact, in one of the final public appearances before her death in November of 1917, the dispossessed Queen announced her membership to the American Red Cross, garnering 8,000 new memberships to the wartime aid organization, many of Kʻnaka Maoli “blood.”<sup>13</sup> The Queen’s symbolic gesture signals the incorporation of Kʻnaka Maoli into the project of American militarism vis-à-vis the American Red Cross.

Blood was also central to the military project in the Pacific as

<sup>11</sup> “Red Cross Blood Services History,” American Red Cross, accessed December 12, 2017, <http://www.redcrossblood.org/about-us/red-cross-blood-services-history>.

<sup>12</sup> Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity*.

<sup>13</sup> “Liliuokalani Becomes Red Cross Member as Whistles Signify 8000 Mark is Reached,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, September 29, 1917.



*Figure B: Japanese-American World War II volunteers on Kaua'i, 1943*

a measurement of health and demonstration of patriotism among prospective army and navy recruits. A 1943 photograph (*Figure B*) of white military sergeants drawing the blood of Japanese-American volunteers on Kaua'i invokes such a performance of patriotism. In permitting the military to extract blood, these Japanese American soldiers demonstrate their dedication to the American military agenda during the Second World War. The photograph, taken less than two years after the attack on Pu'uloa, is captioned:

Impatient to go through the last step in their physical examination—the blood test, these AJA [Americans of Japanese ancestry] volunteers on Kaua'i press forward to have samples of their blood taken by Sergeant Bernard G. Borden of Hartford, Connecticut (left) and Sergeant Romeo L. Giguere of Detroit, Michigan (right).<sup>14</sup>

For Japanese Americans, whose patriotic allegiance was questioned relentlessly during the Second World War, enlistment in the American military was a gesture of monumental importance. In the earlier referenced *Times* article, for instance, Callender notes that “there is a suspicion, frankly entertained by Navy and Army, that citizenship does not necessarily imply loyalty to the land of their birth in a crisis. Utterances of Hawaiian Japanese sometimes lend substance to these suspicions.”<sup>15</sup> In colonial Hawai'i, blood helped to define Japanese ancestry and national allegiance. Colonel Karl Bendtsen of the Wartime Civil Control Administration famously declared “I am

<sup>14</sup> *Japanese-American Volunteers*, March 1943, United States Office of War Information, Kauai County, Hawaii, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/fsa.8b06603/>.

<sup>15</sup> Callender, “Hawaii and Its Vital Role in the Defense of America.”

determined that if they have one drop of Japanese blood in them, they must go to camp,” outlining a policy of blood racialization, sometimes enforced at the level of 1/16, that the government used to incarcerate Americans of Japanese ancestry on the West coast.<sup>16</sup> Blood was also central to demonstrations of patriotism for Japanese American men, who Ronald Takaki suggests “[proved] with their blood, their limbs, and their bodies that they were American.”<sup>17</sup> The 1943 photograph captures such a demonstration, not through the spilling of blood in combat, but rather through a ritualized performance of patriotism vis-à-vis blood extraction. For Hawaiian Red Cross donors and Japanese American men enlisting in the war, it is evident that blood figured centrally as both a racial marker and a pathway to American cultural citizenship through participation in the military.

### **(Re)producing Pure Blood in Colonial Hawai‘i**

If blood and bloodshed were central to wartime recruitment in colonial Hawai‘i, then equally central was the maintained “purity” of these bloodlines. Indeed, in the opening passage of this paper, Harold Callender’s article signals the importance of both blood and purity in racial lexicons of colonial Hawai‘i. This section examines how colonial thought in Hawai‘i centered the “purification” and sanitation of blood as a strategy for reproducing bodies fit for military service. Beyond its metonymical power as a symbol of warfare, blood often had more literal—if pseudoscientific—constructions in the early twentieth century as a necessarily “pure” bodily fluid. This ideology manifested in both explicit and implicit discussions of blood as an index of “pure” and “impure” race.

In *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, anthropologist Mary Douglas discusses widespread preoccupations with “pure blood,” reminding that “all bodily emissions, even blood or pus from a wound, are sources of impurity.”<sup>18</sup> Douglas posits that “impurity” and “dirtiness” are socially constructed concepts that are ascribed to matter out of place. When blood is contained within our bodies, it is pure and clean; but as soon as it traverses the boundary of the body, it becomes impure and thus constitutes a site of

<sup>16</sup> Col. Karl R. Bendetsen, *Aberdeen Washington, Civil Affairs Division, SHAEF [Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force], 22 Princess Gardens, February 29, 1944, A More Perfect Union, National Archives, London, England, in A More Perfect Union: Japanese Americans & the U.S. Constitution, <http://amhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/non-flash/index.html>.*

<sup>17</sup> Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*, (Boston: Little-Brown, 2008): 385.

<sup>18</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966): 35.

risk, anxiety, and danger.<sup>19</sup> Such anxieties about blood are reflected in the heightened fascination with miscegenation—often articulated as the mixing of blood—in the Pacific, and indeed throughout Euro-North America.

One of the most common representations of pure blood in colonial Hawai'i came in the form of pseudo-medicinal "patent medicine" advertisements. Advertisements for Hood's Sarsaparilla, a patent medicine often associated with the American West, were printed weekly across several Hawaiian newspapers throughout the turn of the century, typically reading:

Blood is essential to health. Every nook and corner of the system is reached by the blood, and on its quality the condition of every organ depends... the surest way to have good blood is to take Hood's Sarsaparilla. This medicine purifies, vitalizes, and enriches the blood.<sup>20</sup>

Historian James Young contends that patent medicines like Sarsaparilla—derived from continental Native American medicines—were widely advertised across the American frontier (including the Pacific territories) in spite of their futility.<sup>21</sup> Whether or not the pseudo-medicinal advertisements of Hood's and other patent medicines were convincing, their presence in colonial Hawai'i indicates the imagined properties of blood as materially pure or impure, clean or dirty. It is precisely this rhetorical framework that allowed anti-miscegenation ideologies to prosper.

In 1917, at the height of the First World War, an article ran in Kauai's newspaper, *The Garden Island*, calling for the reproduction of a military bloodline to ensure America's future success:

America will require that every male child who comes to maturity during the next twenty-five years, be highly equipped for citizenship—not only for citizenship but for paternity. The blood of our boys must be kept clean. Their bodies must be made strong and their hearts must be quickened with a passionate love for their country.<sup>22</sup>

While the precise intention of the passage is unclear, one reading suggests the maintenance of a "clean," white bloodline, as the article comes from an historical moment marked by heightened anxieties about interracial sexual liaisons in Hawai'i. Some years later, the infamous Massie Affair would unfold, in which a *haole* (white) socialite woman falsely accused a group of Asian and Hawaiian men of sexual

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<sup>19</sup> Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, 35.

<sup>20</sup> "Good Blood from Hood's," *The Hawaiian Star*, August 8, 1896.

<sup>21</sup> James Harvey Young, "Patent Medicines: An Early Example of Competitive Marketing," *The Journal of Economic History* 20, no. 04 (1960): 648-56.

<sup>22</sup> "The Right Kind," *The Garden Island*, December 11, 1917.



assault, culminating in the vigilante killing of Joseph Kahahawai.<sup>23</sup> In their study of the Massie Affair, Lee and Baldoz quote then-Assistant Secretary of State William Castle, who had remarked of the alleged rape: “the mixture of Hawaiian with foreign blood does not usually result well... as a rule, among the men at least, it seems to be the weak qualities of both races which are exemplified in the children of mixed marriages.”<sup>24</sup> Castle’s suggestion that mixed blood produces degeneracy, especially among men, echoes the sentiments offered in *The Garden Island* passage. In both, the tainting of pure bloodlines is configured as a threat to white masculinity and paternity, and by extension to the future of militarism in the Pacific.

This sentiment is echoed by a 1920 op-ed from *The Garden Island* on the nascent threat of continental American Indian sexualities, which reads:

“And it seems that there is growing conviction, even among attractive and intelligent young women, that Indian blood is mighty good blood. He is the original American, with more blue blood in him than any of us, and a strain of it in our descendants will give them a sort of patrician touch of exclusiveness and distinction. So, it seems, the girls are ‘laying for’ him.”<sup>25</sup>

By cautioning against the allure of Indian “blue blood,” the author of the column invokes the parallel threat of racial admixture with K’naka Maoli in Hawai‘i. The article laments that even “attractive and intelligent” women are “laying for” American Indian men, unable to resist their “mighty good blood.” This passage simultaneously upholds the racialization of blood while also gesturing towards the sexual politics of the Massie Affair. Here, intimacy between brown men and white women is an imagined danger to American progress articulated through the logic of pure blood. For Douglas, blood and sex hold a privileged relationship to one another, and blood *in sex*—both literally or through the figurative “mixing” of raced bloods—is an imagined site of risk and danger.<sup>26</sup> It is precisely this danger that the *Garden Island* articles warn against in their appeal to young *haole* (white) men and women to find partners of the same race.

Each of these articles illustrates that in colonial Hawai‘i, blood

<sup>23</sup> Ty Tengan, “Re-Membering Panal ‘au: Masculinities, Nation, and Empire in Hawai‘i and the Pacific,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 20, no. 1 (2008): 27-53.

<sup>24</sup> Shelley Sang-Hee Lee and Rick Baldoz, ““A Fascinating Interracial Experiment Station”: Remapping the Orient-Occident Divide in Hawaii,” *American Studies* 49, no. 3-4 (2008): 92.

<sup>25</sup> “The Transformation of the Indian” *The Garden Island*, February 3, 1920.

<sup>26</sup> Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 139.



was popularly imagined as pure or impure—a belief which in turn sustained anti-miscegenation rhetoric. Moreover, blood mixing, a coded articulation of interracial intimacy, was perennially configured as a threat to Hawai‘i’s white population. The sustenance of a white “bloodline,” it seems, ensured the continued prosperity of American militarism in the Islands.

## **Conclusion**

Colonial logics of blood and bloodshed were central to promoting American military campaigns in pre-statehood Hawaii. Hawaiian newspapers appealed to American wartime sensibilities by rationalizing the First World War as one in a series of conflicts in which American blood was spilled to ensure global democracy. President Wilson and Queen Liliuokalani garnered support for the war by enlisting native Hawaiians in the wartime aid organization the American Red Cross. Japanese American men in Hawai‘i demonstrated their wartime allegiances by enlisting in the American military, in doing so permitting military personnel to draw their blood, a literal and metaphorical penetration of the bodily margins. These events illustrate that beyond its imagined racial properties, blood figured centrally in wartime recruitment in colonial Hawai‘i, enabling both K‘naka and Japanese American men to earn American cultural citizenship through military participation. Finally, newspaper articles and advertisements preoccupied with “pure” and “clean” blood indicate that these masculinized and militarized bloodlines were envisioned as corruptible by racial admixture. Blood is therefore a critical analytic not only in the study of Native Hawaiian dispossession via blood quantum, but also in understanding how the project of American militarism was sustained in colonial Hawai‘i.

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