

10 Reasons Black Lives Matter in the Hawaiian Kingdom

1. U.S. imperialism in Hawai'i uses anti-Black racism and white supremacy to divide us when we should be allies and accomplices.

The rise of US empire in the Hawai'i was fuelled by white supremacy and anti-Black racism. Cartoons justifying US imperialism in the Pacific portray occupied nations as black, child-like savages in need of civilizing. This famous 1898 cartoon makes pickaninnies of Hawai'i, Guam, Cuba and the Philippines, while the U.S. educates them on "proper" governance.



2. Our ali'i were discriminated against in the U.S. because people thought they were Black.

In 1850, Alexander Liholiho and Lot Kapuāiwa, princes who would go on to rule the kingdom, were traveling throughout Europe and the U.S. In Washington, D.C., Liholiho entered their first-class reserved train cabin and the conductor told him he would have to change cars. Some accounts report that the conductor called Liholiho a "nigger." In his journal, Liholiho wrote, "In this country I must be treated like a dog to come and go at an American's bidding" (108).ⁱ

In 1901, en route to a trip to Washington D.C., Queen Lili'uokalani was turned away from 4 hotels in NYC because the hotel managers believed her to be an uppity black singer who didn't know her place. It was not until a young Hawaiian hotel porter recognized her and ran to the next hotel to announce her coming that she was allowed to stay. As a result, Queen Lili'uokalani left New York the next day.ⁱⁱ

3. Hawaiian and Black freedom struggles against a white plantation economy are connected.

The white-owned plantation industry turned 'āina into property and turned people into property that could be bought or sold for the sake of profit. Our colonization, genocide, and dehumanization is directly connected. Therefore, our liberation must be tied to the liberation all oppressed peoples. None of us are free until all of us are free.

"The Hawaiian sugar industry saw one of its greatest expansions during the Civil War era. As a result of the Union boycott of Southern sugar, Hawaiian sugar exports to the U.S. rose 175% a year from 1860 to 1866, while prices jumped over 500%. However, the rise in sugar profits sowed the seeds for the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy. The sugar industry in Hawai'i gradually gained political and economic power in the kingdom, eventually instituting a form of contract labor that verged on slavery."ⁱⁱⁱ

The 2011 murder of Kollin Elderts at the hands of a drunken federal agent who was brought to Hawai'i to protect the transnational trade agreement negotiations of the Asia Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) asks us to continue to interrogate global economic systems that render some lives expendable for the sake of profit.

4. There is a history of Kanaka Maoli and Black solidarity. Movements for black liberation have influenced the Hawaiian sovereignty movement.

The 1852 Constitution of the Hawaiian Kingdom outlawed slavery and said that any slave who ended up in Hawaiian territory was free. This was 11 years before the Emancipation Proclamation. The Hawaiian nation explicitly refused to participate in the institution of slavery and provided refuge to slaves.^{iv}

"The evolution of my thinking owes a great debt to some of the most creative intellectuals and revolutionaries of the 20th century: Franz Fannon, Malcom X, and Ngugi wa Thiong'o." – Haunani-Kay Trask, From a Native Daughter

"Angela Davis and Eldridge Cleaver visited us in Hawai'i and had a huge influence on our thinking and movement building at the time. We had to wrestle with our own contradictions, not appropriate black culture for our movement, but define our identity using our own culture and still be in solidarity with the black struggle." – Terri Keko'olani

5. Militarization of our islands contributes to the militarization of police & law enforcement.

The war has come home. Police wearing helmets, masks, bullet proof vests, packing shields and assault rifles, and riding in armored vehicles represent a growing epidemic of police militarization. Federal programs providing surplus military equipment to local law enforcement have turned communities of color into enemy territory, where police are occupying and criminalizing the very communities they are charged with protecting.

Hawai'i is no different. Following clashes with and mass arrests of protectors on Mauna Kea and Haleakalā this past year, Hawai'i's Department of Land and Natural Resources approved conservation officers' request for \$57,350 to buy 20 semi-automatic rifles and ten 12-gauge shotguns. DOCARE officers are charged with protecting and conserving natural cultural, and historic resources.^v

The murders of non-white men in Hawai'i are connected to a larger gendered history of militarization and racism in Hawai'i. In the Territory of Hawai'i in 1932, Native Hawaiian Joseph Kahahawai was kidnapped and murdered by white US Navy men, after he and four other non-white local men had been falsely accused of raping a white woman. Though the perpetrators were caught with Kahahawai's body, the relative social and political power of white military in Hawai'i enabled them to get off with a one-hour sentence. This case was sensationalized throughout the US at the same time of the infamous Scottsboro trial, where nine Black teenagers were falsely accused of raping a white woman, and became part of a larger national story about protecting white women from savage non-white men.

Hawai'i police have shot and killed 4 people so far this year, twice as many as all of 2015. At least 1 more person died in a police incident in Hawai'i this year, bringing the total to 5, making it the sixth-highest state on a per capita basis of police-related deaths.^{vi}



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6. The same racist prison industrial complex that targets Black communities in the U.S. disproportionately targets Kanaka Maoli communities in Hawai'i.

The prison industrial complex (PIC) is a massive multi-billion dollar industry that promotes the expansion of prisons, jails, immigrant detention centers, and juvenile jails. The PIC uses tough on crime policies, the “War on Drugs”, and the “War on Terror” to criminalize and disenfranchise poor communities of color.

Native Hawaiians make up almost 40 % of those incarcerated in Hawai'i and are more likely to be sent to prison, and for longer periods of time, than every other ethnic group in Hawai'i. Hawai'i has the largest proportion of its women in prison. 44% of women incarcerated in Hawai'i are Native Hawaiian.^{viii}

7. Anti-Black racism is present in Kanaka Maoli, Pacific Islander and Asian communities in Hawai'i.

Black people and anti-black racism are present in all of our communities. Talking about anti-black racism often gets derailed by the myth that Hawai'i is a racial paradise. Still our friends and family perpetuate racist stereotypes, mock each other for being dark-skinned, maintain colorism, or appropriate black culture, hip hop, and reggae, while rejecting the very people who created it. Our internalization of white supremacy is the most effective tool of colonization yet. We must decolonize ourselves, starting with calling out anti-black racism, especially when it happens in our own backyard.

8. We must affirm and commit to those in our community who are both Kanaka Maoli and Black.

There are many Black Hawaiians who have been picked on, discriminated against, or whose Blackness has been erased by a refusal to honor intersectionality, learn Black history, or work at the intersections of our struggles. Loving and honoring Blackness, recognizing that anti-indigeneity and anti-blackness are interconnected and that our freedom is bound up with each others', starts with us and our 'ohana.^{ix}

9. Blackness is in the origins of Kanaka Maoli genealogy and 'Ōlelo No'eau. We cannot run from our origins or deny our genealogical connection to Blackness.

The Kumulipo “Beginning-in-deep-darkness” tells us blackness is the origin of all creation. Hānau ka Pō. Pō gives birth to all living things. Before coral grew in the sea, there was Pō. Before kalo covered the land, there was Pō. Before birds filled the sky, there was Pō. And before light fills day, there is blackness—night—Pō.^x

He hō'ike na ka pō.

A revelation of the night. A revelation from the gods in dreams, visions, and omens.

Ka pō nui ho'olokolako, ke ao nui ho'ohemahema.

The great night that provides, the great day that neglects. The gods supply, but man does not always accept with appreciation. Guidance is given in dreams that man often misunderstands and neglects.

Nā ali'i mai ka pō mai.

Chiefs from the night. Chiefs whose ancestors were chiefs in remote antiquity and were recognized by the gods.

Nā po'o o ka pō.

People of the night. A term applied to unseen gods who help their devotees.

10. A sovereign Hawai'i depends building genuine security for our communities and indigenous alternatives to policing and prisons.

We must reject the rhetoric of national security that is used to instill fear and justify profiling, surveillance, warfare, occupation, dispossession, militarization, policing, and prisons. Genuine security will require building everyday practices and systems of restorative and transformative justice and life-affirming indigenous alternatives to police and prisons like truth and reconciliation practices and Ho'oponopono.

ⁱ Liholiho, Alexander. *The Journal of Prince Alexander Liholiho; The voyages Made to the United States, England and France in 1849-1850*. University of Hawai'i P: 1967.

ⁱⁱ <https://nupepa-hawaii.com/2014/01/20/on-this-day-perhaps-it-is-appropriate-to-remember-further-indignity-faced-by-the-queen-1901/>

ⁱⁱⁱ http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/08/13/the-civil-war-and-hawaii/?_r=0

^{iv} <http://www.hawaii-nation.org/constitution-1852.html>

^v <http://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/30728313/state-land-board-approves-assault-rifle-request-for-conservation-officers>

^{vi} <http://www.civilbeat.org/2016/07/police-are-shooting-and-killing-more-people-in-hawaii-this-year/>

^{vii} <http://mauiNOW.com/2015/06/24/11-arrested-as-mauna-kea-demonstration-against-tmt-continues/>
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-36759711>

^{viii} <http://www.justicepolicy.org/research/1902>

^{ix} http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/politics/2008-05-19-2291659494_x.htm
<http://www.civilbeat.org/2015/02/being-black-in-hawaii-is-something-few-people-talk-about/>
<http://www.uhpress.hawaii.edu/p-9273-9780824847326.aspx>

^x http://www.kumukahi.org/units/ka_hikina/kumulipo