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### **AN INVESTIGATION OF VIOLENCE AS A MEANS TO ACHIEVE NATIVE HAWAIIAN SOVEREIGNTY**

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#### *Abstract*

*Since Hawai`i attained statehood in 1959, there has been growing demand for a return of sovereignty to the descendents of the original inhabitants. A string a failures to attain recognition from either the courts or congress has increased frustration among Native Hawaiians. This paper reports the findings of a pilot study in which 113 Native Hawaiians were interviewed. While only six percent of the respondents believed that violence was appropriate in the pursuit of sovereignty, over 53% stated that they believed the desire to attain sovereignty will eventually result in violence.*

#### Introduction

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, few states suffered greater economic consequences than Hawai`i. The governor at that time, Benjamin Cayetano, reported, "Our economy was hit and hit hard. In the two months that followed, domestic tourism fell by 39%, international tourism by more than 50%. Nearly 7,000 jobs were lost and thousands of workers saw their work hours cut (Tarring, 2002, p. 2). Hawai`i's economy took almost four years to recover. The September 11 attacks proved unequivocally how vulnerable Hawai`i is to acts of terrorism.

While those events took place almost five thousand miles from Honolulu, there is a threat of terrorism that lies much closer to home. Over recent decades, a movement calling for the return of sovereignty to the state's indigenous inhabitants has steadily grown. Numerous sovereignty groups have formed, each demanding the return of rights and property lost by Native Hawaiians in 1893, when their kingdom was overthrown in a revolution led by American expatriates and supported by the United States' Ambassador and military.

In the past decade, Native Hawaiian rights have suffered several setbacks in Federal Courts and a bill that would provide sovereignty, including a semblance of self-government similar to that of recognized Native American tribes, has stalled in the United States' Congress. The socio-economic status of Native Hawaiians has continued to fall compared to the remainder of the state's citizens, ever greater numbers of young Hawaiians are losing hope of meaningful employment or home ownership, and life expectancy lags behind that of the general population. Suicide is too frequently the final resort for young Hawaiian men. These factors have contributed to growing frustration and louder calls for a return of the Native Hawaiian nation. While the mass media seldom mention the chance of a violent response to these setbacks, there is a growing concern about that possibility among the state's citizenry.

## Background

When the British explorer, Captain James Cook, first visited the “Sandwich Isles” in 1778, the indigenous people he found had inhabited the islands for upwards of 1,400 years. The first human settlers of the island chain were likely Polynesian voyagers who arrived around A.D. 400 (Dougherty, 1992). A thriving tribal culture developed. Various estimates of the population at the time of Cook’s arrival range from around 250,000 to as many as a million people (Stannard, 1989) spread over the eight primary islands.

In the years immediately following Hawaii’s discovery by Europeans, several important events took place. First, a powerful king named Kamehameha began a conquest that eventually united all eight islands under a common ruler. This resulted in the founding of a ruling dynasty that would model itself after those in Europe. Second, many other Europeans followed Cook to the newly-discovered tropical paradise in the middle of the Pacific. First other explorers came, then whalers, merchants, missionaries, sugar growers and plantation laborers. With them they brought guns (which gave Kamehameha his advantage over other chiefs), whiskey, religion and disease. Each of these imports contributed to the near annihilation of the Native Hawaiian people. By the 1890 census, a little over 100 years after Cook’s arrival, only 34,346 individuals of Hawaiian descent were left.

King Kamehameha the Great died in 1819. His descendants ruled the kingdom until 1872. The last in the line was Kamehameha V (1863-1872) the brother of Kamehameha IV. Throughout this era, the number and power of Americans and Europeans in the islands continued to increase as the native population died off. Kamehameha V left no heir, so in accordance with the constitution, the national legislature selected a new king, Lunalilo, a descendant of a half-brother of Kamehameha I.

Lunalilo died childless within a year and the legislature chose as king David Kalakaua, a chief descended from a cousin of Kamehameha the Great. Kalakaua traveled to Washington, D.C. and negotiated a reciprocal trade treaty with the United States in 1874. He endeavored to increase the power of the monarchy. In 1887 these attempts were rebuffed by powerful American and European businessmen who forced him to accept a new “Bayonet Constitution” that weakened royal power. Kalakaua almost bankrupted the Kingdom with his extravagant lifestyle before he died in 1891 of kidney disease while visiting San Francisco.

Upon his death, Kalakaua’s sister, Liliuokalani, became the last Hawaiian monarch. She attempted to strengthen the monarchy and replace the “Bayonet Constitution” that had been forced upon her brother. The business community saw this as an attempt to limit the power of the legislature as well as their own power and profitability. Changes in U.S. tariffs were threatening the sugar industry and many businessmen concluded that the best chance for security and stability would come to Hawaii if it were to become a territory of the United States.

In January of 1893, a revolution led by American businessmen overthrew Queen Liliuokalani. The bloodless revolt was planned with the cooperation of the United States’ Minister (ambassador) to Hawaii. He ordered U.S. Marines ashore from a naval vessel in Pearl Harbor ostensibly to protect U.S. citizens and property. This show of force was sufficient to intimidate the queen, who ordered her troops to stand down in an effort to avoid bloodshed. Subsequently, she agreed to turn the government over to the rebels under protest. She believed the United States ultimately would not sustain the overthrow of the Kingdom. She appealed to the president and congress to review the actions of their military and diplomatic representatives in Hawaii and to take action to restore the legitimate government.

The American leaders of the new provisional government immediately petitioned to have Hawaii annexed as a U.S. territory. The lame-duck president Benjamin Harrison submitted to congress a bill to annex the islands. On March 4, 1893, Grover Cleveland was inaugurated as president. He received a letter from Liliuokalani requesting he withdraw the annexation legislation. Cleveland was impressed with her arguments and assigned James H. Blount, former chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, to investigate.

Blount traveled to Hawaii to review all of the circumstances surrounding the revolution, in particular those of American diplomats and the military. He reported that the actions taken in support of the rebels were illegal and inappropriate. As a result, Cleveland wrote a detailed letter to the congress withdrawing the bill for annexation on December 18, 1893.

After annexation was rejected, the rebels formed the Republic of Hawaii in 1894. Attempts by some Native Hawaiian citizens at counter-revolution were unsuccessful. By that point in time, disease had reduced the indigenous population to a fraction of that prior to European contact. An 1896 census indicated that only a little more than one third of the population of the islands was of Native Hawaiian descent (The State of Hawaii Data Book 2004).

In January 1898, William McKinley was inaugurated as president and in April, the United States declared war on Spain. The need for naval port facilities in the Pacific Ocean was greater than ever. McKinley forwarded a petition for annexation of the Republic of Hawaii to congress. The bill was approved and on July 8, 1898, Hawaii was officially annexed as an American territory. In 1959, the Territory of Hawaii became the 50th state in the Union. Portions of the indigenous population have continually opposed the Kingdom's dissolution and subsequent annexation since the day Queen Liliuokalani was removed from office.

Since statehood, there has been growing demand for a return of some form of sovereignty to the descendents of the original inhabitants. These demands have been upheld by the U.N.'s World Court. The indigenous people of Hawaii did not retain any special recognition like that of Native American peoples on the U.S. mainland. The proportions of Europeans and Asians in the islands have increased over the past century. Of the state's 1.2 million residents, only about 21% are Hawaiian or part-Hawaiian. The voices of those demanding a return of sovereignty to Native Hawaiians have grown steadily since statehood.

### Native Hawaiian Sovereignty

Numerous groups have formed to promote the return of sovereignty. The exact number is difficult to determine because they include a wide range of organizational types. Some are formal state-wide political action organizations and some claim to be the actual restoration of the Kingdom of Hawaii with constitutions, officers and legislatures.

One reason there are so many different groups is the lack of agreement on the meaning of sovereignty. Some groups seek a nation-within-a-nation structure similar to Native American tribes. Others demand a complete restoration of the overthrown kingdom and return of all property to pre-1893 owners. The common attribute among the groups appears to be the belief that the United States was complicit in the illegal overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii and has the legal and moral responsibility to restore the rights and property to the descendents of those from whom it was taken.

In 1993, one hundred years after the overthrow, President William J. Clinton signed a Joint Resolution of the Congress of the United States that recognized the illegality of the 1893 coup and apologized for the United States' role in the revolt. While the apology was appreciated by

many, it did not offer redress for the alleged wrongs. It also did not return property or power as demanded by supporters of sovereignty. Since 1993, a series of state and Federal court rulings has further limited the rights and privileges of Native Hawaiians, while legislation to restore at least limited sovereignty has stalled in Congress<sup>1</sup>. The aftermath of the attacks on September 11, 2001, demonstrated how vulnerable the Hawaiian economy is to acts of terrorism.

As Native Hawaiians become more frustrated with the lack of progress toward legal representation, some are becoming more vocal in their calls for a violent rebellion. Activists recognize that local terror attacks on either United States military facilities or the state's transportation and hospitality infrastructure could seriously damage the islands' desirability as a tourist destination.

While Native Hawaiian sovereignty currently enjoys a high profile in Hawaii, there is little public discussion of the possibility that it could eventually result in violent revolution. One exception is a novel, *Shark Dialogues*, published in 1995 (Davenport) which contains a subplot in which characters bomb resorts to call attention to their desire for the restoration of native rights and land. No research regarding this possibility has been published to date.

### Blood Quantum

For descendents of many Native American tribes, an individual's proportion of indigenous ancestry is an important factor for determining certain benefits such as tribal membership, educational or health care benefits. The same principle holds true for Native Hawaiians. For example, a child that has any Native Hawaiian ancestry can qualify for educational benefits from Hawaii's largest charitable trust, the Kamehameha Schools/Bishop Estate. On the other hand, a person must have at least 50% Native Hawaiian ancestry to qualify for a land grant from the Hawaiian Homelands authority which was established while Hawaii was a territory to distribute land and income from state-held Native Hawaiian trust land.

If both of an individual's parents were 100% Native Hawaiian, then that individual's blood quantum is also 100%. The offspring of a 100% Native Hawaiian and someone with no Native Hawaiian ancestry would have a blood quantum of 50%. If two people who were each 50% Native Hawaiian have offspring, the children will also have a blood quantum of 50%. Most people claiming Native Hawaiian ancestry are familiar with their own blood quantum. Because of the many successive waves of immigrants from Europe, Asia and other parts of Polynesia over the past two centuries, almost half of Hawaii's citizens are of mixed race. Frequent intermarriage has created many circumstances in which the formulae for computing blood quantum are very complicated.

The exact number of individuals with Native Hawaiian ancestry is unknown. Because there is no exclusive census category for Native Hawaiians, all existing numbers are estimates.

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<sup>1</sup> The Native Hawaiian Government Reorganization Act of 2005. On 1/25/05, the "Akaka bill", S. 147 was introduced in the U.S. Senate by Senator Daniel Akaka for himself and Senator Daniel Inouye, and H.R. 309 was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Congressman Neil Abercrombie and Ed Case. This bill offers limited sovereignty to Native Hawaiians similar to that of Native American and Native Alaskan tribes. An earlier version was passed by the House of Representatives in 2000 but was never voted upon by the Senate. The 2005 bill has had committee hearings in the Senate and was subject of a negative report from the U.S. Civil Rights Commission in early 2006. No action has been taken in the House through the date of this paper, June 1, 2006. A revised version, S.3064, was introduced in Senate on May 25, 2006.

Historically, some people have attempted to hide their Hawaiian heritage because natives were often looked down upon during the territorial years. Informal adoption or *hanai* is a common tradition in Hawaii. On occasion, individuals not of Hawaiian ancestry have been adopted by Hawaiian families. Uncertainty regarding the ancestry of adopted children has led to some concerns of later generations when computing blood quantum. *The State of Hawaii 2004 Data Book* estimated the total number of Hawaiians and part-Hawaiians as 401,162 based on the 2000 United States Census. (Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism, 2004). Of those, about 60 percent live in Hawaii with the remainder spread throughout the United States. The exact number of pure Hawaiians is unknown but it is estimated that there are only a few thousand individuals with 100% Native Hawaiian ancestry.

### Methods

This study is an analysis of in-depth interviews with Native Hawaiian adults of various ages regarding sovereignty and the likelihood that violence will ultimately be used as a tool to regain that goal.

A 16-item survey was conducted among individuals claiming to be of Native Hawaiian ancestry. The initial items consisted of several demographic questions regarding age, sex, blood quantum, birthplace, primary location while growing up, whether the subject had ever lived anywhere except Hawaii and who the subject's primary guardian was while growing up. The second section consisted of open-ended questions regarding education, employment, religion and political beliefs. Finally, the following open-ended questions were asked:

What is your attitude toward sovereignty?

Are you active in sovereignty movement?

Is violence an appropriate way to achieve sovereignty?

Do you think the desire to gain sovereignty will result in violence in the future?

Interviewers conducted the interviews face-to-face with the subjects. Interviewers were undergraduate students at the University of Hawaii at Hilo. Each interview began with the interviewer reading an informed consent sheet to the subject and answering questions about the survey, its uses and associated risks. Subjects were required to sign the informed consent form. Individual Native Hawaiians have a wide range of educational experiences and have varying degrees of English language competency. Interviewers were trained to assist subjects to understand questions. All interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed.

### Sample

One-hundred-thirteen (113) subjects participated in this pilot study, 48 males and 65 females. Interviewers encountered some reluctance among Native Hawaiians to be interviewed on the subject of sovereignty. A number of factors may have contributed to this imbalance including cultural reluctance or shyness, the sensitivity of the topic, confidence in verbal skills, and intimidation by the interviewer or recording device. Interviewers reported some younger men and older women didn't feel they were educated enough about the issues to respond.

Age and Sex

As a result, the sample for this pilot study was not well distributed for age or sex of the subjects. The median age of the subjects was 30-39 years. About 58 percent of the participants were female and 42 percent male. That there were more female than male college students who conducted the interviews and that most interviewers were under the age of 30 may have contributed to the sample imbalance. Future research will need to address the sampling problems confronted in the pilot study.

Table 1. Subjects age distribution

Subject's Age	Freq.	%
1) 18-29	52	46.0
2) 30-39	25	22.1
3) 40-49	16	14.2
4) 50-59	13	11.5
5) 60-69	6	5.3
6) 70-79	1	0.9
TOTAL	113	100

The sample is skewed toward younger age groups. Forty-six percent (46%) of the subjects were under 30 years old (see Table 1). In retrospect, this discrepancy was likely the result of two factors--the comfort level that interviewers have talking to subjects with ages similar to their own and the reluctance of older candidates to discuss the topic. Efforts must be made in future studies to overcome this deficit.

Based on self-report, the average subject in this study had a Native Hawaiian blood quantum of 42.9% (see Table 2). Only 10 reported that they were 100% Hawaiian.

Table 2. Distribution of Native Hawaiian Blood Quantum

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
	113	0.429	0.263
Percentage of Native Hawaiian Heritage (Blood Quantum) claimed by Respondent	Freq.	%	
6-25%	46	40.7	
26-50%	43	38.1	
51-75%	12	10.6	
76-100%	12	10.6	
TOTAL	113	100	

## Other variables

Because of the limited sample size, the demographic questions regarding education, religion, guardians and places of residence produced frequencies that were too small to be of value for useful analysis. The sample was skewed geographically with 45 percent of the subjects indicating they were born on the Big Island of Hawaii (Hawaii County) and 50 percent of them had primarily grown up on the same island. Only 12% of the state's resident population lives on the Big Island. The University of Hawaii at Hilo which the interviewers attended is located in Hawaii County. It is apparent that the skewing of these geographic variables is a "sample of convenience" artifact that should be avoided in follow-up studies. With a larger sample, it appears that some of these may provide interesting correlations and will prove valuable in future studies.

## Findings

While the 113 subjects in this study varied in beliefs regarding sovereignty and the appropriateness of violence to attain Native Hawaiian goals, most believed that the struggle would eventually result in acts of violence toward the state or its economy. While almost even proportions were in favor of or against sovereignty, almost-one quarter of the sample was neutral. Over 32% of the sample favored some form of sovereignty (Table 3), but fewer than 17% actively participated in a group that advocates sovereignty (Table 4).

Table 3. Subjects Attitude toward Sovereignty

Subject's Attitude Toward Sovereignty	Toward	
	Freq.	%
Against	31	27.4
Neutral	45	39.8
Favor	37	32.7
TOTAL	113	100

Table 4. Subjects Activity in Sovereignty Movement

Is subject active in sovereignty movement?	Toward	
	Freq.	%
No	93	82.3
Yes	19	16.8
Missing	1	0.9
TOTAL	113	100.0

The interviewees indicated that one of the primary reasons for not supporting sovereignty is the quarreling between various organizations about appropriate redress and that unity was unlikely unless a charismatic leader comes on the scene.

The subjects were overwhelmingly firm in their belief that violence was not an appropriate way to achieve sovereignty. Only six subjects thought that violence was an appropriate tool (see Table 5).

Table 5. Subjects Beliefs regarding appropriateness of violence as a means to achieve sovereignty

Is violence an appropriate way to achieve sovereignty?	Freq.	%
0) No	106	93.8
1) Maybe	1	0.9
2) Yes	6	5.3
TOTAL	113	100

Many opposed violence based on the belief that violence was contrary to the example set by Queen Liliuokalani when she was forced from the throne, for example:

You know talking about dat (sic), we can be violent in a second yeah, but this process dat (sic) we are walking in, our queen said she didn't want to see bloodshed and we abide by what she said and I'm so proud of her. (Subject #14)

Even among those who opposed violence, there was recognition that violence might be a consequence of the oppression whether it is the preferred alternative or not:

Personally, no, I don't think it is, but when your back is against the wall and nothing is being ironed out either way, I think, you know, people tend to, that's the only way to go is violence. (Subject #37)

No, it's not appropriate. You know, but it might be effective. History sometimes, if you consider the situations, violence has produced some effects. But I don't think it's appropriate, especially in Hawaii. (Subject #41)

Some who felt violence was appropriate indicated that it may be the only alternative available to motivate the desired response from the United States government:

Yes, again I reflect back to what happened to the Native Americans. The only way that they gained their independence, so-called independence, from the United States was that a whole lot of them had to die. Yes, violence might not achieve peace but will achieve the end in finding peace or the beginning of finding peace. So it is inevitable unless the United States government recognizes and gives back to the people of Hawaii their life of freedom. (Subject #1)



While fewer than 6% of the interviewees felt that violence was justifiable in the pursuit of sovereignty, over 53% expressed the belief that it was inevitable. Of interest is the finding that less than one fourth of the sample reported that they think that the desire to gain sovereignty *will not* result in violence in the future. (Table 6).

Table 6. Subjects beliefs regarding the possible use of violence to achieve sovereignty

Do you think the desire to gain sovereignty will result in violence in the future?		
	Freq.	%
No	28	24.8
Not Sure	25	22.1
Yes	60	53.1
TOTAL	113	100

Many of the subjects responded to this question with great emotion. Most recognized and enunciated the incongruity between their desire for nonviolence and their belief that the movement toward sovereignty would likely result in violence. For example:

If you go to my militant friends—when I listen to them I think it is an option for them, an option on the table. So because it’s still on, because it’s on the table, it is potential, the potential for it is there. You know individuals, if they feel angry enough, can resort to violence, can use that option. So I’d have to say that it is, the potential for it is there. That means it can happen. I hope, I hope and pray that it doesn’t, but you know because it’s there, the potential is there. (Subject #23)

Yes, it will. Again, imposing someone’s will on them, they have two choices. They can lay down and die or they can sacrifice their life for what they believe in. Those are the only two alternatives left. Dialogue has shown it’s worthless. How else are the Hawaiians supposed to fight? Dialogue doesn’t work in America. (Subject #24)

I think sooner or later, something will bubble over in a violent manner. I don’t condone violence. But you know sometimes I think about it as, well at least it will make an impression on people and they will let them know that the people who are seeking sovereignty, they’re serious about it, and it means something to them. (Subject #30)

### Conclusions

Though limited by the small size and uneven demographic distribution sample, this pilot study clearly demonstrated the belief by many members of the Native Hawaiian community that the sovereignty movement will likely become violent in the future. Over three-fourths of those

asked believe that violence is a possible outcome. Because no evidence was found that this topic has been analyzed by researchers, law enforcement or other agencies in either the public or private sectors, the dangers inferred from this study should stimulate interest in developing a clearer appreciation of both the risks involved and possible means to address them.

While there are many potential targets for the violence anticipated by the subjects of this study, the tourism industry appears to be the most advantageous possibility for maximum impact with minimal effort. Tourists and tourism destinations are vulnerable targets for terrorists as demonstrated by attacks in Bali, Morocco, Jordan, Egypt and Israel. The drastic impact the attacks of September 11, 2001 had on Hawaii's tourism highlight how vulnerable the state's economy is. An independent report on the future of tourism was prepared for the state in 2003. A 170-page report compiled for the state describes the potential threat posed by terrorism to Hawaii's tourism industry" (Knox & Associates, 2003a):

The September 11 attacks, terrorism in Bali and other tourism centers, American military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq, and fears of further war and terrorism all appear likely to affect Hawai'i tourism in currently-unforeseeable ways. Public debate in Hawai'i has just begun, and thus far largely centers around whether we should see and market ourselves as a "safe" destination. (p.20)

A 111-page supplemental report titled, "Impacts on Native Hawaiians"(Knox & Associates, 2003b) was also compiled. While the report makes no direct mention of the threat posed by the Native Hawaiian sovereignty movement, it includes the following statement:

Tourism today is Hawai'i's number one industry. It succeeds sugar and pineapple as the dominant economic driver of the Hawaiian economy. Tourism permeates every aspect of the economic, social, and political life of Hawai'i. It is joined in its importance to the economy by our military-industrial complex, which ironically also brings thousands of strangers to Hawai'i. These industries are the current political outcomes of a western economic system that resulted – without the approval of Hawaiians and at the expense of their sovereignty – from the overthrow of Queen Liliuokalani. The growth of these industries did not happen with our (native Hawaiian) consent, and they continue without our consent. It would be a mistake not to acknowledge the impact of tourism in this historical context (P.3).

The state and county governments in Hawaii depend on tourism for a significant portion of their incomes. They go to great lengths to protect the image of a tropical paradise. While tourists, especially foreign ones, are targets of many crimes, the state goes to great lengths to minimize publicity that could cause concern to tourists.<sup>2</sup> It is not hard to imagine how difficult damage-control would be if there was a local act of terrorism. Because the risk of future

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<sup>2</sup> A 2001 Visitor Satisfaction Survey conducted by the Hawaii State Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism, Tourism Research Branch (Knox & Associates, 2003a) found that 1.9% of tourists from the United States and 3.7% of Japanese tourists reported having had a wallet, purse or personal property stolen; 1.1% of American and 2.3% of Japanese reported their rooms were vandalized; 1.8% of Americans and 2.1% of Japanese had their rental cars vandalized. About 1% of American tourists and 1.7% of Japanese tourists reported assaults while visiting Hawaii.

sovereignty-related violence is apparently high and the potential for economic, not to mention social, damage potential is incalculable, it is imperative that further research of this topic not be delayed.

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