

The Los Angelesation of Hawai`i

Lois-Ann Yamanaka's work is rejected for a prize because her "pidgin"-rich, working-class fiction is judged by a local committee to be racist. Frank De Lima, the comedian most popular with local audiences (but often unintelligible to tourists), won't go near some of the jokes he used to tell. Governor Ben Cayetano and state legislator Senator Mary Thronos apologize for remarks which even a decade ago would not have been thought of as ethnic slurs. It looks like we are finally getting with it here in Hawai`i. Perhaps. But perhaps not. Perhaps this new-found sensitivity is but the most obvious symptom of something with deeper roots and far more significant consequences. It includes, to single out only a few of the worst cases, hostage taking and violence on Sand Island, an encounter with tragic consequences between a young male and a police officer on an H-1 overpass, and a shooting on the H-2 near Waipio—all involving ethnic confrontation. Call this the Los Angelesation of Hawai`i. And there are other potential consequences: Tourism falls apart, leaving a vacuum that nobody knows how to fill, soulless Democrats get replaced by the mean-spirited politics of California's Governor Wilson, "locals" join Hawaiians in becoming oppressed caste minorities in Hawai`i. The argument is simply put: The "maturing" of our political economy has undermined just what made it special: the development of a local culture, a Hawaiianized version of multiculturalism in a place of magnificent natural beauty.

On the US mainland, "race" is conceptualized in terms of "white" and "black." This is not the case in Hawai`i, where if there is a primary conceptualization, it is between "haole" (white) and "local." What follows examines this, hopefully in a fresh way. I begin by rejecting the usual approach, an attempt at a genealogical or political test of *who* is local. This is the route of most writers, including most recently, those who articulate a "post-colonial" or "identity politics," so-called. If I am correct, they fail to diagnose correctly the problem. They discern, rightly, that there are serious issues at state and they worry that the categories are changing and fuzzy. But they are nervous over any sort of bifurcation and especially one which seems "exclusionary." They want badly to preserve both the "differences" between groups and, in the "liberal" version to insist that we must treat persons only as "individuals." Alternatively, while "neo-colonists" interpreters affirm that "locals" share "a common culture," they also assert that "locals" have "a common history of oppression and exploitation by a white planter and merchant oligarchy." "Locals" do "share a common culture," but this hardly entails "having a common history of oppression by a white planter merchant oligarchy." Collapsed in this way, "local" is genealogical, essentialist and ahistorical. Collapsed in this way, it becomes logically impossible for anyone not "sharing this common historical experience" to be local. On this view, it would logically impossible for recent immigrants to *any* nation to assimilate!

But, of course, "local," like "American" or "Dutch" can refer to either an identifiable culture or to those who embody it. We can, accordingly, begin with the idea that "local" is a cultural (ethnic) category and ask questions about its reproduction/transformation including, both an account of the pertinent mechanisms and about who is reproducing it (or not). Unfortunately, political economy approaches have tended to marginalize culture, a consequence of accepting a mistaken dichotomy between structure and culture. Instead, since no political economy is culture-

less or culture-neutral and all are constituted in terms of historical available materials which are concretely various, I look at the development of local culture, showing how, given the historically available materials, it emerged, and how, by looking at changes in the political economy, it has developed.¹ After explaining how we got to where we are, I argue that this very special local culture is increasingly being marginalized and in specific ways.² This is not merely an expression of nostalgia on my part, for as I suggest, it could have disastrous consequences for locals.

This is not say, at once, that Hawai`i ever was "an ethnic rainbow," still less a multicultural "harmony." Yet one utterly misses something by denying (as does Okamura) that there is (or was) "points of commonality," or to admit that there is, and then to trivialize this by saying that "the practice of particular customs and habits... modes of entertainment...and shared folklore" are "with the exception of social interactions, ...trivial and can hardly serve as the collective basis for a shared culture that is supposed to underlie social relations in Hawai`i" (1994: 246). Unless one thinks that social interactions entirely lack a material basis, one would have thought that they *define* culture.

While I concur very much with the idea that different groups here in Hawai`i: Hawaiians, haoles, Japanese, Filipinos, etc. have very different histories of power, opportunity and outcome, this is no way inconsistent with there being a distinct--and valuable--local culture. Indeed, since ideas always have ideological force, much of this local culture has served ideological purposes, obscuring these differences and benefiting those with power. I return to this.

Genesis of Local Culture

The broad outlines of the genesis of local culture are clear enough, even if this is too often the pertinent details of this history are not well understood. Briefly, Hawai`i was a pre-modern Polynesian society, became a plantation political economy with colonial American haoles dominating a workforce largely of Asians from China, Japan and the Philippines. The material relations of everyday life forced the transacting parties to absorb, unevenly in proportion and in time, elements of the practices of each. This is best exemplified in the shifting "pidgin." Unfortunately, there is important confusion on this, confusion which has, I think, re-enforced confusion regarding the genesis of local culture. Most critically, on the standard view, Hawaiian played a relatively minor role in the development of "pidgin." Thus, Takaki (following John Reinecke) argues that "plantation managers recognized the need to teach immigrant laborers a functional spoken English" which early on "became 'the language of command' on the plantations." Accordingly, "worker's were able to respond in a pidgin that incorporated peculiarly Japanese, Portuguese, Chinese or other elements in their speech" (1983: 118). Sarah Julianne Roberts (following lines set out by Derek Bickerton) has recently and persuasively argued that this picture must be abandoned.³ Briefly put, haoles learned Hawaiian and pidginization of Hawaiian began. While Hawaiian remained the official language until the overthrow, a pidgin based on the Hawaiian language was the dominant tongue on the plantation until late in the nineteenth century. With the arrival of large numbers of Asians, plantation pidgin was thrown into confusion. With the Overthrow in 1893, Hawaiian was suppressed and the vernacular pidgin became Hawaiian Creole English (HCE), a mix of Hawaiian, English, Chinese, and other tongues. HCE and English became the dominant languages. What was true of language was also true of culture.⁴ And, of

course, given that Standard English was always available to Hawai`i's elite (including bilingual Hawaiians), cultural differences could also carry strong class meaning. Put succinctly, "pidgin," a multi-cultural tongue which developed from a pidginized Hawaiian, stands to local culture as standard English stands to white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant (WASP) culture.

Perhaps in the late 1930s the identity "local" found a use. It was profoundly stimulated by ⁵the huge numbers of military who came to Hawai`i in the 1940s. The plantation experience, especially in the 20th century, had redefined ethnic relations among non-haoles and between haoles and non-haoles, laying the basis for a local/non-local bifurcation. During this period, haoles permanently residing in Hawai`i were mostly *kama'aina*, either successfully "assimilated" or ghettoized, and hence largely invisible (Horman, 1982). The phrase, "local haole" was not a contradiction. Newcomers to the Islands inevitably encountered the unique culture which is called "local." As Yamamoto says, "until the mid-1960s the term local was not used as anything more than a label for distinguishing island people from mainlanders" (1979: 139).

There was then a period, perhaps from the late 50s to the 80s, when, stimulated by rapid tourist development and the large military presence during the Vietnam era, "local" could be defined the way that Yamamoto defined it: "the appreciation by people who belong to Hawai`i of the 'goodness' of the land, people, and cultures of Hawai`i" (1979:142). This attitude also became a feature of the local culture, contributing perhaps to the idea that local was primarily a political concept. The category, "people who belong to Hawai`i," was vague and, accordingly, inclusive. Evidently, it included Hawaiians and other "locals." Yamamoto's essay was written prior to the emergence of so-called "identity politics." Even more critical, it was written in the early stages of the Hawaiian "renaissance" and was framed in terms familiar to Democratic party reformers, terms which omitted any special acknowledgment of Hawaiians. This is absolutely critical as regards the politics of "local." Yamamoto noted that however they were defined, "locals" were committed "to retain or regain control of Hawaii and its future." While this is a politically potent conception of who is local, it failed to find a political form. I return to this.

The Specialness

Risking the obvious (but too often ignored), one must begin with the Hawaiians. It is sometimes held that the culture of the Hawaiians was substantially destroyed. Hawaiians lost their land and thus their traditional mode of life; Christianity replaced their religion, the *Kahiko* disappeared and was replaced by hapa-haole hula; and for almost all, the language was lost. Indeed, with intermarriage, a consequence of the devastating de-population and subsequent immigration, even the category "Hawaiian" became contested. Indeed, this view of history goes some way to explain the relative absence of special acknowledgment of Hawaiians in the post-WW II framing of "local" politics.

But to hold that these facts are necessarily evidence for the destruction of the culture one must assume both that cultures are frozen and that they exist as isolated blocks. One can then dismiss the fact that Hawaiian culture persistently was being reproduced—not only in the rural margins, but in the mainstream, for example, in Churches, music, and celebrations. A nostalgic view of "culture" is too often assumed also by those who think of the Hawaiian renaissance as

some sort of fraud--or on the opposite side, by those Hawaiians who demean more lately evolved social practices and art forms as "impure" or bastardized. Of course, after contact, the culture of the Hawaiians--a culture that even prior to contact was not frozen, underwent massive changes. But short of some essentialist definition of a culture, e.g., its language or religion, it will be quite impossible to say whether or when changes have constituted a change of "substance." This is not to say that cultures do not get destroyed and remain only as historical artifacts, in our books and museums. This is surely not true of the culture of the Hawaiians, even if present-day Hawai`i is not the Hawai`i of the last Monarch, Queen Lili`uokalani (deposed in the Overthrow of 1893), still less that of Kamehameha I. Christianity and capitalism seriously changed the Hawaiian culture, but it did not destroy it. Indeed, until the overthrow, official business was carried on in Hawaiian, and most haoles were bilingual. Of course, it would also be a huge error to say that the dominant culture is still Hawaiian, if by that one means that everyone who came to Hawai`i was "assimilated" as an "Hawaiian." Still, I surely do want to affirm that this place is inconceivable without Hawaiians and their practices, past and present. My earlier reference to the origins and basis of "pidgin," suggests strongly that standard treatments have minimized this, assuming that e.g., because Hawaiians were not in significant numbers on plantations, the "pidgin" was not a "pidgin Hawaiian." But the "aloha spirit" extends deeply and includes a range of local beliefs and practices (especially strong among Hawaiians) in nurturing and sharing, in educational practices and attitudes, in beliefs which constitute practices regarding the *aina* (land) and *ohana* (family), in being open to others, one could go on.⁶ Former Governor John Waihe`e is right: "What glues it all together is the native Hawaiian culture" (Okamura, 1994: 246). It is regrettable, of course, that Waihe`e was not himself sufficiently clear or committed to what this implied.

Between 1778 and WWII, some 400,000 folks immigrated to Hawai`i, mostly from Asia and mostly to work on the plantations. This is familiar enough. So too is the fact that until very recently, this American state was the only one in which haoles were a minority. This is the second fundamental feature of its uniqueness.

Assimilation

This is an American state and its citizens are "Americans." In Hawai`i, there was a process of "assimilation."⁷ But to what? Did the aliens (or most of them, at least) become "Hawaiian." Hardly. Did they, including the Hawaiians, become "American"?

There are, of course, some very high level abstractions which might be used to identify typical Americans, e.g., their often nearly obsessive individualism and aggressiveness, their commitment to vague notions of "freedom" and "democracy," their disregard of class, and their belief (common, of course, to some other societies) that they are members of a very special and superior society--"the land of opportunity." Because they dominated the political economy and the state from the days of the Founding, the paradigmatic American is the middle-class, White, Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP), the model for all hyphenated Americans (Italian-Americans, Greek-Americans, etc.). Euro-Americans have "assimilated" --making "whiteness" an unspoken background feature of the culture--even if Americans in (say) New England exemplify their Americanism in different ways than do Americans in (say) the deep South or California.⁸

As regards the sense of "members of the dominant society," Hawai`i is, again, special. We can say that the members of the dominant society constitute the ethnicity which defines what others are to assimilate to. But while haoles dominated the political economy of Hawai`i, they could not, despite their strenuous efforts, especially after the overthrow, define what others were to assimilate to. This was due, in part, to demographic facts: there were too few haoles. But is also reflected the fact that Hawai`i was colonized. As a result, regardless of the aims of the colonizers, its culture would be transformed in unexpected ways.

Because the practices and beliefs of immigrants always have consequences on the host culture, reshaping it in this way or that, the effect of haole and Asian immigrant cultures on the indigenous Hawaiian culture was the multicultural construction which we call "local." The second and later generations of these immigrants assimilated to "local." "Locals" are a very special sort of American. Locals who go the mainland know this, of course. So too do haoles and others who have recently come to Hawai`i.

Of the Asian immigrant populations, the largest group of these, and the *only* one which resisted assimilation were the Japanese.⁹ In 1943, Japanese constituted some 34% of the population. The bombing of Pearl Harbor surely forced them to choose. But the forced choice was between Japan and the Hawai`i version of being an American. It was not the choice (forced on mainland American Japanese) between Japan and the dominant WASP version of America. When the 100th battalion, the local Japanese unit which became the most decorated unit in US military history, got to the mainland, they were quite amazed by what they saw and experienced, but they also could see clearly that they were unlike both "the Americans" and the "assimilated" Kotonks (mainland born Japanese.) At Shelby, Mississippi in 1943, one soldier complained:

I didn't know what racial prejudice was until I hit the South. There was the `white' toilet and the `black' toilet. I'm brown. Where do I go? (Matsuda, 1992: 66)

Fred Ida noted:

Hawaii boys were more informal, while Mainland Japanese were more competitive.... The kotonk style was altogether difference from ours. The Hawaiian style was share and share alike, while the kotonks were more for themselves (Matsuda: 69).

During the fight over Japanese language schools in the 1920s, Fred Makino, editor of the *Hawai`i Hochi*, had insisted that the Japanese needed to "assimilate" with American society "only on the structural level." I interpret this to mean that they should try to remain Japanese, yet exploit all of the rights of Americans. But, of course, they did not remain "Japanese": They became "local Japanese."

Indeed, it is one of the special virtues of the ethnic category, "local" that it allows for a plurality of subcultures. The earlier generation of assimilated Asians could affirm their "roots" in Japan or the Philippines and still affirm they were, together with the other local subcultures, a special kind of American. So, too, could Hawaiians. Thus, locals, including Hawaiians, often

spoke “pidgin” as their first language, sometimes had Japanese or Korean as their second (and rarely Hawaiian) and often had a faltering grasp of standard English even as they achieved, after World War II, positions of power.

As Ikeda and Beechert have argued, the mainland unions who came in the 1930s, the CIO and the ILWU, overcame the ethnic divisiveness which had burdened the union movement in Hawai'i. Achieving a “class consciousness,” immigrant plantation workers were pulled together in opposition to haole Republican domination. After WWII, exploiting their rights as Americans, "Japanese locals" (I deliberately invert the usual expression, "local Japanese" so as to emphasize that "local" is prior) along with a disproportionate numbers of local Chinese became a political force in Hawai'i. After seeing that their interests could be combined with the interests of old oligarchy, they embarked on developing Hawai'i.¹⁰

When Hawai'i enthusiastically became the 50th state, was rapidly developed into a tourist economy and then thoroughly integrated into the world economy, it quickly came to look like many modern places: Malls replaced downtown (Fort Street disappeared), MacDonalds displaced the KC Drive-in, the H1 (and then the H2) bifurcated streets and neighborhoods, urban sprawl made Kam Highway look like Century Boulevard, the beat-up cars in Ka`a`awa went with Windward upscaling, and of course, the skyline rapidly approached the skylines of New York and Hong Kong.

This period was the heyday of the politics of locals. These local elites could and did exploit their opportunities—in good ethnic-American fashion. Those who got a piece of the action, took their piece of the pie, leaving behind, in good American fashion, those who could not “make it.” A former State Senator put the point neatly:

I didn't think that I was doing anything unethical. Most of us had come through the war and the Depression and we didn't have anything. I thought getting ahead was what you were supposed to do in America.¹¹

Surely, he was right in this. To their credit, Japanese locals took advantage of the opportunities then available, opportunities not available to all groups then in Hawai'i,¹² nor opportunities presently available to anybody! Indeed, if explosive development was the critical condition for their success, we are, today, paying dearly for choices made then. Tourism may well have been inevitable. But two choices made then were not inevitable: the reformers abandoned the idea that the wildly distorted control of land had to be corrected, a choice which is at the bottom of Hawai'i's current economic woes, and they failed to notice that Hawaiians (along with Filipinos who were far fewer in numbers), were left out. Thus, in a recent interview, Tom Gill, a leader of the new Democratic party in Hawai'i could discuss “30 years of Hawaiian government without mentioning a single Native Hawaiian name or concern.”

Most elite Hawaiians had been tied to the Republican oligarchy. As Stauffer (1994) writes: “by the 1920s and 30s, Hawaiians had gained a position of political power, office and influence never before--nor since--held by a native people in the United States.” After the

Democratic takeover, since the new regime had to work with the old landed oligarchy, elite Hawaiians could maintain their status--and its benefits. But the majority of Hawaiians were the big losers in the post-World War II transformation. This required no conspiracy. At this time, Hawaiians were conceived by the ruling elites as part of the more inclusive "local" community and put into the fuzzy background. Their political self-consciousness had not yet emerged.

The maturing of the Hawaiian economy also brought dramatic demographic changes.

Demographic Changes

In 1970, 59% of Hawai'i's resident were born here, 29% were born on the US mainland and 12% were foreign-born (Hawai'i Date Book, Table 3.1). Those born here reached a peak of 62% in 1977 (for reasons not clear to me) and then fell in 1980 to 58%. By 1990, the number had fallen to 56%, while the number who were born on the US mainland increased from 23% to 26% and the number who were foreign born increased from 14% to 18% (Table 1.33).

Moreover, since 1970, these shifts represent a large immigration from the US mainland along with significant outmigration of locals to the mainland. In 1970, of 228,913 haole residents, 178,531 had been born on the mainland. Of these, 125,732 had been in Hawai'i less than five years. They tended to be both young and well-educated and critically, some 65.5% of these would be considered "high status" workers (Whittaker, 1985). Meanwhile, some 179,735 of those who were born in Hawai'i were, in 1970, living on the mainland.

In 1977, 24% of the population had lived in Hawai'i less than 5 years and 37% had lived here less than 10 years (Table 14). By 1990, remarkably, 21% of those residing in Hawai'i lived outside of the Hawaiian Islands in 1985 (State Department of Health, Table 12). By 1990, 36% of all haoles in Hawai'i (total: 369,616) did not live in Hawai'i in 1985. Critically by comparison, only 3.5% of the Japanese did not live in Hawai'i in 1985 (Barringer, 1994).

More recent in- and out-migration to Hawai'i follows these same patterns: Between 1992 and 1996, annual immigration averaged some 27,000 souls of whom some 23,000 (excluding military and dependents) were mainland haoles. The median age was 29.8. In 1994, 7,680 of these were identified as either management or professional (Tables 1.46).

Recent non-American immigration is overwhelmingly Filipino and from poorer parts of the Philippines. Between 1966 and 1975, non-American immigration averaged 6106 annually, of which 3312 were Filipino; between 1991 and 1995, the annual average was 7887 of which 4326 were Filipino. Each of the other major groups, Chinese/Taiwanese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese and Latin American represented perhaps 1/10 of the Filipino immigration. Annual Korean immigration, e.g., was 408 (Table 1.47). As regards out-migration, in 1990, 323,156 of those who were born in Hawai'i were living on the US mainland. Remarkably, perhaps 106,827 of these were Hawaiian! These are stunning facts.

Both in-migration and out-migration patterns are very easy to explain. With the "maturing" of Hawai'i's political economy, the cost of living has soared and real wages have fallen

precipitously (Stauffer, 1984/5). For example, rentals are perhaps twice the US median and Hawai`i has the worst overcrowding of any state in the US, a rate of 15.9% as against the national average of 4.9% (Gibbs, 1977), BAs and law degrees do not guarantee decent paying jobs. We just do not know how many recent graduates of the University of Hawai`i. e.g., have found work on the US mainland. Recent immigrants from the Philippines, Vietnam, and Latin America come for the same reasons that Southern Europeans immigrated to mainland America: the hope for a better life. A minority, from Taiwan, Hong Kong and Korea come as middle-class entrepreneurs. During the 80s and 90s many haoles came both for construction and to fill middle-management positions in the growing tourist economy. Some, according to a forthcoming Maui study by Peter and Patricia Adler, came as “career dropouts”: They traded life-style benefits for low stress positions in tourism.

There are a number of consequences. For the first time, haoles comprised the largest plurality in Hawai`i. By 1990 (using the State Health Survey classification), they represented 24.1% of the total with mixed non-Hawaiian at 20.6%, Japanese at 20.4%, mixed, part Hawaiians at 18.8% and Filipinos at 11.3%. Moreover, these *malihini* haoles fill critical cultural roles: media and mass communications, higher education, art, music, and key posts in advertising, marketing and public relations.¹³

Accordingly, with over one fifth of the current population as recent immigrants, it is not implausible to say that this place is increasingly being defined by “*malihini* haole residents!

Perhaps, contrary to this assertion, these *malihini* are assimilating to local culture? In the standard case, of course, not only do immigrants assimilate, but, as noted, they also affect the culture into which they have immigrated. But in the standard case, there is not only a coincidence between the dominant majority and their culture (WASP America for most of its history), but the dominant culture is not itself a relatively recent multiculturalism. That is, in the standard case, there are both official mechanisms and imperatives for immigrants to assimilate and it is by and large clear what they must assimilate to.

This is just not the case here. Consider this second aspect first. While the genesis of local culture plainly antedates the relatively recent idea of a “local” as a means of self-identity, there was little in the material culture to represent this and no “official” mechanisms for reproducing it. One thinks of “pidgin” and food. The case of “pidgin,” is particularly illuminating. It is not part of any curriculum and is discouraged at all levels of instruction and there are no longer pidgin speakers who command mass media attention. A pidgin literature is only now appearing, but even here, there is no accepted written version of the language.¹⁴ Accordingly, not only are dialects of pidgin proliferating, but as perhaps part of this, among young people, pidgin itself is disappearing, replaced, ironically enough, by bad English. This is ironical since, contrary to widespread belief, HCE is not “bad English,” but is, instead, a perfectly valid language which, as the linguistic expression of Hawaii’s local culture, carries with it, a host of the distinctive features of local culture, e.g., “talk story.”

Nor are there imperatives for haoles to assimilate. Unfortunately, in any class society, there

are benefits and liabilities bequeathed on people just because of their race and ethnicity; those who suffer the liabilities are acutely aware of this. These liabilities are both structural and interactional: the quality of a neighborhood and its schools, the assumption made known that the person is not expected to be "smart" or ambitious, the contempt communicated to a pidgin speaker by a person who thinks that *he* does not have an accent. Whether or not acknowledged, benefits derive in Hawai`i from being haole. This is, of course, both deeply rooted in Hawai`i's past and is today reinforced by the (waning?) hegemonic power of the US.

Moreover, white Americans are ideological unprepared to assimilate. They believe that they have no race and because they are assimilated Americans, their European ancestry, where it functions at all, is purely symbolic. Whittaker recognized this in her 1986 study. Of the mainland haole, she concludes: "The Caucasians seem to be saying through their objections that they dislike having ethnicity become their most identifying feature.... For the first time in their lives many of them face their own ethnicity. Previously it had been irrelevant. Now, however, ethnic recognition determines interaction' (Whittaker, 1986: 153).

Viewed from the side of locals, for historically apt reasons, mainland haoles (unlike other non-white immigrants) are easy scapegoats who contribute substantially to their situation as scapegoats because they do not understand an ethnically pluralist society in which they are the minority! The mainland haole wants to be thought of as "an individual." Moreover, in a stunning lack of understanding, they compare themselves to African-Americans. Of course, as mainland haoles, they may well experience discrimination for the first time here in Hawai`i; but even if they do, they fail utterly to see that *unlike* African-Americans, they are, as whites, privileged persons who gain enormous benefits at the expense of non-whites. The mainland haole attitude, often characteristic of the better educated, high-status, and best-intended of individuals, would go some way to explain the distress felt by mainland haoles to be called a haole, to be upset by what they take to be the extraordinary ease of local people to identify a person as, for example, "the Filipino who sits in the front of the room and who dates the Japanese," to be annoyed at having a local person served before them in a store, to be genuinely frightened by verbal hostility expressed by locals at a beachpark, to be outraged at tuition waivers being granted to Hawaiians "just because they are Hawaiian." All of this, of course, inhibits any real effort to accommodate oneself or family to the local culture. *If anything, having identified locals as racists, legitimated in terms of liberal ideology, self-righteous "race-neutral" indignation is reinforced.*

What then of the recent Asian and Latin American immigrants? Will they assimilate and if so, to what?¹⁵ This will be more complicated. Like haoles, there is little imperative to assimilate to local culture. That is, excepting those who try to maintain their heritage, the aspirations of immigrant families will be that their children be "American." Haole dominated neighborhoods and schools, and especially the private schools, will be preferred. For the relatively few who have the luxury of choice, pidgin will be rejected. This may also reinforce tendencies to maintain imported cultural identities among recent immigrating Asians.¹⁶ Those who have resources and can acquire requisite skills will likely depart for the mainland where at least the cost of living is manageable. Of course, even for the economically better off, this aspiration will face obstacles. Euro-Americans were able to be assimilated to WASP America because for them "racialism" was

overcome. Irish, Sicilians and Jews came to be seen as "white." This was possible, of course, exactly because some 14% of the American population is Afro-American, a caste minority in America (Ogbu, 1978). Afro-Americans are surely Americans, but as long as racism exists, they are not assimilated.¹⁷ Given increasing haolefication, the only real opportunity for assimilation for the new Asian immigrants in Hawai`i who lack significant resources will be to assimilate to a local culture which is increasingly being transformed to something much like the ghetto cultures of the US mainland.

The case of the Filipinos in Hawai`i is of special concern. As noted, they represent the largest foreign immigration since 1965. In 1990, on the census count, Filipinos numbered between 11 and 15% of the population, depending on how one counts. 44% of these 168,232 were born abroad and most are low status workers. They seem to face a kind of double-bind. Attesting the importance of the category "local," Okamura notes that beginning in the 1970s, Hawai`i-born Filipinos asserted "the local component of their ethnic identity. Filipino immigrants were perceived by their local-born counterparts as reinforcing derogatory stereotypes" (1994: 256). Japanese locals have done the same *vis a vis* "Japanese" Japanese.

For reasons already noted, it will not be easy for Filipinos to assimilate as Americans -- even if there is an imperative to do so. On the other hand, as a large group they may perceive their situation as comparable to the situation of the Japanese before WW II and try to pursue a similar strategy here. But the opportunity structure for "assimilation" is now very different. On the one hand, the political economy is at a standstill, and, as I have argued, the culture is increasingly being haolefied. It is surely true that increasing numbers of Filipino second and third generation are seeking advanced education, and it seems reasonable that some of these at least will find opportunities in Hawai`i while others leave for the mainland. But what of those who are unable to get decent jobs, who live in poorer neighborhoods where their children learn pidgin or worse, bad English, and who attend substandard schools? They will find it extremely difficult to break a circle of poverty.

Indeed, this possibility exists more generally for "locals." That is, as local culture becomes marginalized, locals will increasingly represent a marginalized social group. Hawai`i was radically transformed after World War II and "locals" were key participants. Japanese and Chinese local elite took over the Democratic party and the key unions. *They then behaved like Americans:* Having a piece of the action, they took their piece of the pie. Although it is not self-evident that they could have done otherwise, it can hardly be denied that this local elite sold out the local mass. The trumping of class over ethnicity repeated itself in 1978 with the failure of "palaka power." Democratic Party responses in 1978 to the structural imperatives of global capitalism paralleled their responses in 1954.

But today's political economy is not the political economy of 1954, nor as I have been arguing in this essay, is the ethnic situation anything like what it was then. As Hawai`i becomes more and more a version of haole America, locals and other non-white immigrants will disproportionately suffer increased inequality and decreased economic opportunity. The public schools have profound difficulties, exacerbated by the high percentage of students in Hawai`i's

private schools. Indeed, we were told that the short-fall in the current budget will require even larger classes for elementary students, less attention to pre-school programs, and increased costs for parents—precisely the worst things that one could do. The Governor would like to abandon the University of Hawai`i. There is no hope that tourism can save us nor that the balloon of speculative investment of the 1980s will repeat itself. Racial tensions are accelerating. On the mainland, while there is a significant African American middle class, African Americans remain a caste minority. A Hawai`i version of this is not impossible.

But the real wild card in this account is the Hawaiians. Despite the presence of prominent Hawaiians in key institutions, Hawaiians have become a caste minority in their own land. While there is blame enough to go around, one has to assign considerable responsibility to the Bishop Estate and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) for their failures, only lately visible to all.¹⁸ There is, undoubtedly, an ethnic consciousness among Hawaiians very unlike the pre-*Hokule`a*, pre-*Kaho`olawe*, consciousness. It is only in the past decade that the Health Survey has bifurcated its "mixed" category into "part-Hawaiian" and "non-part-Hawaiian." Sovereignty remains an unfinished business. While these attitudes stand as obstacles to haolefication, they have also surely contributed to the fragmentation of identity "local." We now have, it seems, a deeply problematic trilogy: Hawaiian, Haole, Local. Depending then on how this is worked out, Hawai`i might well reconstitute its specialness.

Much will depend, I believe, on how efforts of Hawaiians to reclaim this place are posed by Hawaiians and responded by both haoles and locals, whether or not winning a measure of sovereignty will allow for a richer inclusiveness or an impoverished one.

Peter T. Manicas
1998

Hawai`i Sociological Association, Honolulu, February 14,

¹ See Stephen Steinberg, *Turning Back* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), especially pp. 13-16.

² A November, 1997 *Honolulu Advertiser/Channel 2 News* poll "found a strong current of pride in Hawai`i's special qualities and a determination to make sure those qualities are not lost." Of interest here, *Kama'aina* (residents of long standing) were strongly in agreement with the idea that Hawai`i will be the kind of place where they want their children to grow up. *Malahini* (newcomers) were split on this (*Advertiser*, 9 November 1997)." As I suggest below, lacking any clear sense of why this place is special, *malahini* haoles (Caucasians), especially, cannot see the problem.

Every society is trivially "multicultural" in that no society can remain isolated or uninfluenced by the presence of strangers or their ideas and practices. Still, Paris is unmistakably French and Tokyo unmistakably Japanese. Nor should other sorts of multicultural environments be confused with Hawai`i's Hawaiianized "local" culture. For example, New York City is multicultural, but is perhaps best termed a cosmopolitan city: one regularly encounters all sorts of different peoples and hears all sorts of languages, but while members of these groups transact with one another, they remain easily identified in terms of their places of origin, whether or not they dwell in neighborhoods which define communities. Miami (and LA) are not monocultural, given that large numbers of

Latinos are citizen-residents, but neither are they anything like Hawai`i in that they lack utterly anything like the common local culture of Hawai`i. France is the best example of a monocultural society. It would be 22% smaller without immigrants, but non-French Europeans are virtually invisible, See Gerald Noirel, *The French Melting Pot* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

³ See most recently, “*The Role of Diffusion in the Genesis of Hawaiian Creole, Language*, 74:1 (March 1998).

⁴ Although only anecdotal, Takaki reports a Korean mother who “recalled how she noticed her children were growing up as `Hawaiians,’ for they spoke `Hawaiian English’ much more fluently than their native tongue” (p. 119). It goes without saying, perhaps, that none of the foregoing changes are intelligible without seeing the changes in the way production and consumption were being altered.

5

⁶ Although plainly idealized, Haunani-Kay Trask’s table of contrasting values found in her “Hawaiians, American Colonization, and the Quest for Independence’ (1984/85) is pertinent. The hold of some of these enduring but transformed practices also has implications for the character of the capitalist political economy in Hawai`i, a fact very much lamented by some. For example, gathering-rights claims cannot be dismissed even where there is clear title to land by developers.

⁷ I assume in what follows that to be assimilated is to identify with the dominant culture and to be identified by members by the dominant culture as one of them. This last is crucial. I assume also that this takes place, when it does, in the second and subsequent generations and almost never not before. A mark or symptom of assimilation of group is that it will not stand disproportionately in a range of statistics, e.g., income distribution, occupational status, criminal records, educational levels, etc. as compared to the dominant group. Thus income distribution among white Americans of any ethnicity is about the same. But as note below, proportional distribution is not a sufficient condition for assimilation.

⁸ See David Hollinger, “Postethnic America,” *Contention* (Fall, 1992). Richard Brookhiser (*The Way of the Wasp* (New York; Free Press, 1991) holds that the Wasp character is the American character and that while the US is a nation of immigrants, none of the groups have been able to establish “a rival way of life.” One need not agree with Brookhiser’s politics to agree with this assertion, even if, not acknowledged by him, America has always had a plethora of vibrant sub-cultures and even if non-WASPs, especially African-Americans, have contributed critically to the shaping of “the American way of life,” including for African-Americans, not only an immense cultural contribution, but, negatively, in terms of the self-identity of white Americans. As Roger Wilkins so eloquently put it: “Whites have an easy sense of ownership of the country; they feel that they are entitled to receive all that is best in it. Many of them think of this as white country and some of them experience it that way. They think of it as a land of opportunity—a good place with a lot of good people in it. Some suspect (others *know*) that the presence of blacks messes everything up (*The Nation* (27 March 1995).

⁹ Other groups, of course, might have wanted to resist assimilation, but in fact could not. Except for Filipinos, no other group was large enough nor sufficiently concentrated to constitute themselves as a “diaspora” community in Hawai`i. But the sex ratios for Filipinos made it impossible for them. Lacking a second generation, they would not have children in the public schools en route to status in the society, nor they would have votes when the Democrat Party took over local politics. See below.

¹⁰ See George Cooper and Gavan Daws, *Land and Power in Hawai`i* (Honolulu: Benchmark Press, 1985).

¹¹ Quoted from Mike Markrich, "Can the Democrats Survive?" *Honolulu Weekly* (October, 1992). The Democratic Party has been in continuous power in the state since 1954. Cooper and Daws document in detail who were the "locals" who got ahead in Hawai`i and how they did this.

¹² The two large groups which faced very different structural conditions were the Hawaiians and the Filipinos. Briefly, Hawaiians had not been part of the modern plantation economy and did not, accordingly, seek to leave it. Many were able to maintain the older modes of life, supplementing this with jobs in the cash economy. While *nisei* Japanese were in progressive McKinley High School preparing for higher education, Hawaiians were in the Kamehameha Schools. In 1929, its *malahini* principal, Fred Midkiff, wrote Frank Atherton, President of the Hawai`i Sugar Planter's Association, urging him to appoint a committee to work out methods "for directing thousands of our Hawaiian-born children into happy service in connection with our basic industries" (quoted from Lawrence H. Fuchs, *Hawaii Pono* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1961), p. 292). Most Hawaiians, accordingly, were ill-prepared to succeed in modernizing Hawai`i.

As previously noted, in 1929, there were but a handful of Filipinos in McKinley (43% of the students were Japanese, 20% were Chinese, 11% Hawaiian and 4% Portuguese). In the election of 1934, there were but 102 registered Filipinos.

¹³ There is nothing new about this, of course: The Bishop Museum, Honolulu Academy of Art, the *Advertiser*, UH Manoa, the Honolulu Symphony, KHON, the marketing department at Liberty House, etc. have always been haole dominated. I would insist, however, that these are more hegemonic in the recent past, perhaps a consequence of pressures of consumer democratization. The recent announcement of the demise of KCCN, an AM radio station which played only Hawaiian music, is an important symptom.

¹⁴ See Nancy Caraway's sympathetic review, "Pulp Friction," *Honolulu Weekly*, November, 1996 and the ruckus created by Okamura's rejection as racist of the work of Lois-Ann Yamanaka.

¹⁵ See Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou, "Should Immigrants Assimilate?" *The Public Interest*, (Summer 1994).

¹⁶ In her interesting senior sociology project, Stella Ho'okano showed that the ethnic diversity that prevails in Hawai`i "may have contributed to the greater spread and higher social distance responses found in [her] study" ("Social Distance in Hawai`i," Fall 1995, p. 15). "Only two of 57 haoles identified their ethnicity by listing a specific ethnicity or ethnicity. In contrast Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders choose, almost without exception, to list specific ethnicities" (p. 15) The category local seems able to both maintain and bridge ethnic self-consciousness. Thus, "the group with the lowest average social distance score was the panethnic identify local..." (p. 16).

¹⁷ In addition to relatively equal proportion of groups in critical socio-economic categories, assimilation requires also that the "ethnic" category becomes irrelevant in social interaction. This is evidenced in social networking. The experience of Afro-Americans might be better termed "accommodation," the effort of a group to survive in the face of systematic oppression against them.

¹⁸ The Bishop Estate is a multi-billion dollar trust which funds the Kamehameha Schools. Its recent troubles began with an essay entitled, "Broken Trust," which appeared in the *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, August 9, 1997. These difficulties are thoroughly documented on the *Star Bulletin* web-site: <http://starbulletin.com/specials/bishop.html>. An excellent discussion of OHA difficulties is to be found in Susan C. Faludi, "Broken Promise: How Everyone

Got Hawaiian Homelands Except the Hawaiians,” *Wall Street Journal* (9 September 1991).