

Survival Space

What pulls a person
to a family
to a group?

What does one seek
in a place?

If there is no family
no group
of one's own

How does one satisfy
the taste?

Mechanical to seek
Inevitable to greet
Those others from

Another tribe and place.

Survival is the aim

Communication tames

And trust, not fear

Fills the space.

—KATHRYN WADDELL TAKARA

The African Diaspora in Nineteenth-Century Hawai'i

KATHRYN WADDELL TAKARA

Changing Constructions of Color

To recover nineteenth-century Black history in Hawai'i is like trying to solve an answerless riddle, or like going on a treasure hunt at night without a flashlight and unaware that the treasure has already been spirited away. In the early 1800s, well before the development of the plantation economy and the subsequent importation of significant numbers of Asian contract laborers, foreign Blacks (*haole 'ele'ele*) represented nearly 25 percent of the admittedly miniscule numbers of foreign settlers, yet the history of Blacks in the early years of post-contact Hawai'i differs significantly both from the recorded immigration experiences of other subsequent ethnic groups, such as plantation workers from Asia, and from parallel Black history on the continental United States. There are relatively few written accounts of experiences of Black people in nineteenth-century Hawai'i, yet those accounts—and the fact that there are so few accounts—reveal and document an unexplored dimension of race, immigration, and class history.

The presence of Blacks in nineteenth-century Hawai'i and their absence in most written histories of Hawai'i leads one to interrogate the changing meaning both of racial designations and of the deteriorating race relations between Blacks and the local residents during the accelerating White settlement process of domination and forced assimilation. Before the explorers, missionaries, merchants, and sugar planters reached the shores of the Hawaiian Islands, the color of a person's skin seemed to be irrelevant. Unlike some of other nations and other times, Hawaiians seemed to disregard Blackness as an indicator of status and intelligence. History suggests that the *aloha* of the Hawaiians, that spirit of sharing represented by the sacred breath, meant that all people were generally respected. Social distinctions were not based on skin color, but on

traditional hierarchies and religious-political alliances connected with place (*āina*) and an elaborate kinship system. Black was, indeed, beautiful.

For example, renowned Hawaiian historian Samuel M. Kamakau, in writing of the last days of Kahekili (ruling chief of O'ahu, Moloka'i, Lāna'i, and Maui), notes the royal practice of using black tattoos as signifiers of the brave, fierce, noble qualities possessed by the most honorable warriors. Although it is likely that tattoos during this period came in only one color, there is reason to believe that black carried connotations of strength and bravery, perhaps even nobility. It seems that this practice of black tattooing included both warriors and chiefs from O'ahu, Kaua'i, and Maui, including the great chief Kahekili and his renowned fighting force, much feared and respected for its outstanding bravery and fighting skills. Kamakau describes Kahekili as "the ruling chief of Maui, a very old man at this time and strange in appearance because of his black tattooing"¹ and also reports that during the great war and before his death in 1793, "Ka-hekili selected a type of soldier new to O'ahu called 'Cut in two' (*pahupū*), strange looking men tattooed black from top to toe."² Kamakau goes on to suggest that "had the black negroes who came later to Nu'uuanu arrived at that time, they might have been made favorites and given the lands of black waters (Waipouli) and daubed black (Hono-mā'ele)!"³ His statement does seem to suggest that prior to the radical changes that took place in Hawai'i during the nineteenth century, those with darker skin, including Blacks from America and elsewhere, because of their resemblance to the great warriors of Kahekili may have been more easily accepted into Hawaiian society.

Not only was black associated with strength and courage, but for Hawaiians the rich density of the color black may have also served as a reminder both of the power of creation as found in *pō*—the deep darkness that for Hawaiians is the source of all—and of the necessary compassion that comes with an awareness of the creative space of *pō*. A powerful man like Kahekili might choose to be tattooed black as symbolic of that power or of the compassion demanded from those who possess power:

He elected to have his skin black; one half of his body from head to foot was tattooed black, and his face was tattooed black, and this became an established law with him: Any person taken in crime who passed on his dark side, escaped with his life.⁴

During this period in Hawaiian history, darker skin was a marker for dignity, strength, and courage; it was neither a justification for success nor a cause for failure.

After the arrival of the missionaries, it appears that lighter color and skin tone started to have more significance within Hawaiian society. Whether paler skin was valued in Hawaiian society or whether the white skin of these new settlers was originally thought of as beautiful is debatable; it was acknowledged as unusual and worthy of notice. For example, Kamakau reports that when the missionaries came ashore, the people “exclaimed over the pretty faces of the white women. . . . How white the women are! What bright-colored eyes! What long necks! But pleasing to look at! What pinched-in bodies!”⁵ Kamakau also describes the chiefess Kaheiheimaile—daughter of two fathers, the great chiefs Ke‘eaumoku and Kanekoa—as a “large, plump, and handsome child, tall for her age at twelve, and at fifteen perfectly proportioned with light skin and pleasant brilliant eyes.”⁶ Not surprisingly, Kamakau also notes the fair skin of Kekauluohi, the first born child of Kaheiheimaile,⁷ when he describes her as “a girl with a fine physique, pretty youthful features, a fair skin. . . .”⁸ Although Kamakau’s descriptions of these two women suggest an admiration for light skin or fair skin as handsome, pleasant, pretty, favorable, positive, and perhaps desirable, it is difficult to decipher whether these descriptions were indeed a reflection of long-seated Hawaiian values or of new values presented by those he thought interested in his accounts and who did value paler skin tones. It is clear, however, that the more divisive attitudes towards race that developed in nineteenth-century Hawai‘i resulted in unfortunate societal disruption.

After the arrival of the missionaries and the beginnings of American immigration to Hawai‘i, the social climate in Hawai‘i underwent radical transformation for many reasons, one of which is that developing social, economic, cultural, and political institutions of colonialism echoed the legacy of slavery. The history and consciousness of violence, racism, and White supremacy influenced how people of African descent, who had been initially welcomed to the Islands, came to be perceived by the mid-1850s as inferior by the Hawaiians. By examining early writings concerning the Black presence in the Islands as well as writings by missionaries and Americans about the dark-skinned Hawaiians, one can clearly see both how the discourse on color was altered by a changing leadership and how the darker skinned inhabitants were categorized, labeled, and treated during the nineteenth century. Changing attitudes about Blacks and Hawaiians during the monarchy and missionary periods (late 1700s to 1893) can be traced through commercial documents and in literature, and those traces show that race, in Hawai‘i as in so many other places, began to be used as a tool “to create and maintain a social hierarchy, cultural hegemony,

political dominance, and a system of socioeconomic subordination based on the presumed natural superiority of those classified as White."⁹

In light of both the history of racial attitudes and the racial mythology carried by early *haole* settlers to Hawai'i, one can challenge the oft-touted claim of Hawai'i as a racial paradise or as a model of relative ethnic harmony and racial peace. The identification of the color "black" with words such as "uncivilized," "ugly," "savage," and "heathen" influenced the many ways of speaking about and marginalizing Blacks during and after slavery, and Euro-Americans used a similar racial discourse and vocabulary when speaking about Hawaiians; both vocabulary and attitude entered into the discourse that affected the structuring of post-contact Hawai'i society. It is not surprising, therefore, that many Hawaiians began to change their attitudes toward skin tone or color in an effort to gain respect within what soon became a powerful *haole* society in Hawai'i. In their efforts to assimilate and maintain/regain power, some Hawaiians, especially *ali'i*, began to intermarry with the Whites, to adopt their attitudes, and slowly to distance themselves from Blacks so as not to be labeled as indeed they might have been labeled had they chosen to continue an association with Blacks. Not only did these Hawaiians accept the religion of the Euro-American, but perhaps as a means to power through association and assimilation, they may have paradoxically accepted aspects of the racial ideology of White supremacy. How much of this imported racial ideology was embraced by Hawaiians is difficult to determine. What can be seen is that despite missionary efforts to transform Hawaiian society and to alter Hawaiian cultural practice and although Hawaiians did seek, in many instances, to ally themselves with the *haole* newcomers, they did, nonetheless, experience different consequences of the exclusion and marginalization that resulted from imperialism than did Blacks in Hawai'i. Unlike the Hawaiians, Blacks were *haole 'ele'ele*, Black foreigners; Hawai'i was not their native land. As society changed, Blacks, as foreigners, may have experienced social and economic pressures to adapt greater than those experienced by the Hawaiians who were at home in their own lands. Although many Hawaiians continued to honor genealogical heritages and to celebrate *'ohana* (family), even as they adopted new Western ways, when Blacks intermarried, they often ignored their African ancestry. By the 1860s and the Civil War, Blacks had simply ceased to migrate in significant numbers to the Islands. Those changes in immigration patterns occurred partly because of the gradual demise of whaling, but also, because of the changing attitudes about Blacks both in America and in Hawai'i where a pattern of exclusion had begun to take shape. Fueled by

pressures of assimilation, this exclusion of Blacks from post-contact Hawaiian society may have at first been subtle and variable, but later, legislation was passed discouraging the immigration of Blacks to Hawai'i.

In 1882, due to the "Yellow Peril" hysteria, that anti-Chinese sentiment which produced the Chinese Exclusion Act, U.S. Secretary of State Blaine had urged the importation of Blacks to help replenish the dwindling Hawaiian population. This proposal was met with resistance by many Southerners, who, in search of cheap labor and land, sought to expand the sugar industry from the American South to Hawai'i after the Civil War but were reluctant to employ Blacks. Some members of the Southern planter class served as advisors to the Hawaiian monarchy, and later became part of the territorial government after the overthrow in 1893. Mass immigration of Blacks was formally rejected in 1882, when the Honorable Luther Alolo introduced in the Legislative Assembly a resolution that efforts to repopulate the Islands with Blacks be discouraged.¹⁰

In spite of such blatantly racist actions, Blacks have sustained a small, under-represented, but significant presence in Hawai'i since the 1800s. Several notable African Americans did participate in politics and government and make the Islands their home before and after annexation in 1898. Among them was T. McCants Stewart, an attorney, who helped in drafting the Organic Act of the Territory of Hawai'i after the overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy and who, also, on several occasions, aided Hawaiians in regaining their lost *kuleana* land. Carlotta Stewart Lai accompanied her father to the Islands in 1898, graduated from the elite Punahou School in 1902, and later became an outstanding educator and school principal in the Islands.¹¹ Available resources suggest that in sharp contrast to the prevalent racism and system of slavery found in much of the American continent of the time, initially early Black immigrants from the African diaspora were warmly welcomed in the Islands and found Hawai'i to be a place where they might work with dignity. If in the early 1800s, when very few foreigners lived in the Hawaiian Islands, the permanent Black residents in Honolulu made up probably a quarter of the population of foreigners—a sizable visible presence, what then were the factors that caused this visible presence of the early nineteenth century to fade to near invisibility by the twentieth century?

Although Blacks had demonstrated a willingness to assimilate and to adopt the ways of the dominant culture, paradoxically that assimilation process of Blacks in Hawai'i compares poorly with that of other ethnic groups.

Aupuni o ko Hawaii Pae Aina.

Ō KA MEA, i kakauia kona moa malalo nei, he Kanaka no
 i noho iho nei ma
 ua hooihiki maluna o ka Euaelio Homolele, a ma keia hooihiki ana o lelo mai la, E kokua
 mau no wau i ke Kunuikauawai a me, na Kanawai o ko Hawaii Pae Aina, a e lilo maoli no
 wau i kanaka no ka Moi KAMEHAMEHA EHAHA, ko 'Eli.

Government of the Hawaiian Islands.

THE UNDERSIGNED, a native of *Africa*
 lately residing in *Halo Hawaii* being duly sworn
 upon the Holy Evangelists, upon his oath declares that he will support the Constitution and
 Laws of the Hawaiian Islands, and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty KAMEHAMEHA FIFTH,
 the King.

Subscribed and sworn to this *1st* day of *October* A. D. 18 *69*

BEFORE ME

Chas. S. Tufitch
 Chief Clerk Int. Dept.

Moses Allen's certificate of citizenship of the Kingdom of Hawai'i, listing "Africa" as his native land, October 1, 1869. Courtesy of Hawai'i State Archives.

Two contradictory factors readily come to mind that might have contributed to this record of poor assimilation. The political economies of nineteenth-century Hawai'i created a need for cheap and controllable labor, but due to the violent history associated with slavery, dominant negative stereotypes about Blacks as unmanageable, lazy, untrustworthy, and violent prevailed, thus creating the previously mentioned reluctance to recruit Black laborers as potential immigrant laborers. It is also possible that, as Eleanor C. Nordyke argues, because of the great slavery debate in the United States, local missionaries and abolitionists opposed to contract labor intentionally excluded Blacks from the list of immigrant groups proposed in the 1850s to work in the Kingdom of Hawai'i.¹² Either one of these social notions might have contributed to the fact that, although the presence of Blacks in downtown Hawai'i was initially significant in the small business sector, Blacks did not flourish in Hawai'i, and their population did not grow after the middle part of the nineteenth century.

It is also possible that Blacks ceased to immigrate to Hawai'i because the subtle exclusion and erasure from the early history of Hawai'i permitted them only an uncomfortable invisibility within Hawai'i's growing society. Without a significant number of people from the African diaspora present in Hawai'i, social exclusion due to lack of familiarity may have resulted, and that exclusion and its resulting invisibility may have then led to an unfortunate construction of "otherness" accompanied by fear, apprehension, and the diminished genuine respect that is generated by such unfounded fear. Perhaps yet another reason was scientific racism and the vilification of Blackness so common during the nineteenth century. Any historical study of Blacks in Hawai'i is necessarily complicated by the need to acknowledge and address all these factors. Although it may be extremely difficult to know how Blacks were categorized and perceived in nineteenth-century Hawai'i, by examining the lives and circumstances of those who did come to Hawai'i and by searching for evidence of how Blacks were publicly discussed at this time, we may learn some of the dynamics responsible for the Black experience in nineteenth-century Hawai'i, both positive and negative.

Seamen, Musicians, and Entrepreneurs

In 1819, a year before the missionaries from New England arrived, whalers of African descent began regularly landing in Honolulu Harbor with crews from the East Coast—Nantucket and New Bedford. Shortly

thereafter, African Portuguese arrived in the Islands from the Cape Verde Islands off the West Coast of Africa, a port of call for Atlantic whaling ships bound for South America's Tierra del Fuego where they would then enter the Pacific to sail to Hawai'i. Between 1803 and 1856, many Black seamen, renowned for their seamanship and bravery, worked on ships that sailed from Providence, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore; many became sought-after harpoonists on whaling crews in the Pacific.¹³ In 1852, more than two hundred whaling ships docked in Honolulu and more than three thousand crewmen came ashore.¹⁴

Black sailors, particularly in the whaling industry, were numerous, and they traveled along the Eastern shore of the colonies to the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, the Pacific Northwest, and then, across the Pacific to Asia. After the American Revolution in 1776, about 60,000 Blacks gained their freedom,¹⁵ but since free Blacks found it difficult to acquire productive land, and met with discrimination in most trades, free men of color discovered seafaring as an occupation where they could earn a livelihood, "act with a manly bearing," and gain the respect of their fellow men.¹⁶ Hungering for freedom from their difficult lives first in the colonies and then in the United States, they recognized that working as a sailor, although hard work, might provide them with freedoms not available in the more closely organized land-based communities which were often structured around ideas of stability, ownership, and profit. Working on a whaling ship may not have been the most stable or the best existence, but it was the stuff of dreams, providing men with numerous opportunities to display bravado and real courage while testing their abilities to work collectively as a team.

Hard work, for Black sailors, often paid off. As Jeffrey Bolster states in his book *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail*, Blacks could be promoted to positions of responsibility, and, if life on the whaling ship didn't work out, pirates were quite willing to appoint "skilled seamen of color to positions of authority."¹⁷ Bolster goes on to describe how Blacks were encouraged to work as seamen during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, first as slaves, and then as freedmen, especially by those men and women along the Eastern seaboard who labored to destroy the institution of slavery and to free the slaves:

[This] turn of events proved fortunate for young Blacks with a penchant for the sea, especially those who met the abolitionist minded Quakers. Quakers' experience of rejection by the descendents of the Puritans combined with their

own religious philosophy to make the Society of Friends sympathetic to the disenfranchised, and they had a long history as anti-slavery advocates. Blacks on Nantucket were emancipated as early as the 1770s. Captain A. F. Boston (grandson of the emancipated Prince Boston) and Samuel Harris, another Black navigator of note, led the crew in a parade through town, shouldering harpoons, whale spades, lances and other whaling gear to celebrate their arrival back on shore with such handsome “lays” (shares in the profit).¹⁸

The whaling industry may have, at times, provided Blacks with greater freedoms than were available in the land-based communities, but the industry was not color blind, nor did it always provide as much space for freedom as imagined. Free Black whalers were not always treated like everyone else aboard the ships. At times, aboard the ships were “White sailors [who] boasted they would make their Fortunes by selling them [free Black seamen]” into slavery,¹⁹ and many actual slaveholders did hire out their slaves as seafarers—about 15 percent of the sailors at this time were Black seamen—especially for travel to St. Domingue and Haiti between 1790 and 1826, and those bondsmen were treated aboard ship as slaves.²⁰ However, many working as bondsmen returned to land to gain their freedom; some found freedom in Haiti.²¹ Even on the best of ships with the best of crews, as Bolster suggests, “throughout much of the eighteenth century, when most mariners of color were slaves, racial stereotyping defined Black men’s roles aboard ship.”²² He further posits that “their distinction from the seamen proper...hinged to some degree on Whites’ belief that Blacks should fill certain service positions—ashore or at sea.”²³ Many Blacks worked as deckhands, performing the heaviest of tasks.

Despite these hardships, away from structured land-based society, ships may have had, in some respects, a necessarily cooperative atmosphere, as sailors had to work collectively if they wanted to survive the hardships of life at sea. Indeed, the fact that, to ensure personal survival and for successful voyaging, life aboard a ship required such active cooperation with other crew members may have been one reason that many Blacks chose to participate in a seafaring lifestyle; such requirements are ennobling. Certainly, as Bolster suggests, these sailors “constantly crossed cultural and geographic boundaries as they maneuvered between White and Black societies ashore and maritime society afloat.”²⁴ Working aboard whaling ships in whatever capacity, as deck hands, cooks, or pilots, Black sailors did experience personal and even economic success that was not as easily available on land. As whaling became an important industry in the Pacific in the 1840s, Black sailors could find work aboard whaling ships, but as the industry became more competitive, the cost

of whale blubber plummeted and so did wages, adding to social stresses and detracting from possible social successes at sea. According to Bolster:

Whaling ships offered the best chance for promotion and responsibility to Blacks, but they were notorious for poor pay, and conditions aboard the floating factories that butchered and processed whales were abysmal. . . . New England whalers' real pay deteriorated more substantially in the antebellum years than did that of merchant mariners in ports such as New York, and black men (on a per capita basis) were about twice as likely as whites to work in whaling ships. . . . Declining pay on whaling ships thus hit Blacks especially hard. The peculiar nature of the whaling's share system, which was skewed to protect shipowners' profits, meant that at the end of a two-or-three-year voyage, whalers might earn nothing or even owe the ship. Their plight foreshadowed that of sharecroppers after the Civil War.²⁵

Nonetheless, occasionally as sailors, Blacks found it possible to move into positions of leadership as skilled pilots, navigators, and captains.²⁶ Black whalers also filled positions as skilled coopers and blacksmiths and were often sought as cooks, since many, during times of privation, had gained enviable culinary skills necessary for creating wonderful meals from scant provisions. Although Black cooks were, at times, demonized by crew members who feared that they might be poisoned, a fear that reflected the suspicion with which Blacks were sometimes regarded,²⁷ fear did not always rule the roost. Some Black sailors were remembered for their songs and stories, often informed by politics of race and class, with which they entertained their fellow crew members during long months at sea.²⁸ Such improvisational music and dance, essential elements in the cultural expression of the African oral tradition, were as much appreciated on land as on sea. Black sailors who settled early in Hawai'i found use, appreciation, and respect for many of their musical skills as members of their new community. Indeed, Black musicians play an essential role in Hawai'i's musical history.

The Royal Hawaiian Band, the only musical organization in the United States founded by royalty and one of the last living links with Hawai'i's former monarchy, has played a major role in the development and preservation of Hawaiian music, particularly in the area of the classical style developed during the latter years of the Hawaiian Kingdom. Four Blacks formed a royal brass band for Kamehameha III in 1834, with America Shattuck as first master and Davis Curtis as second master. According to the official list, in 1836 a man name "Oliver" was the bandmaster, and between 1845 and 1848, another Black musician, George Washington Hyatt served.²⁹ In 1837, The *Sandwich Island*

Gazette reported that these Black musicians toured California in 1836.³⁰ Hyatt later organized a larger band of six musicians in 1845 with Charles Johnson as a band leader.³¹ It was not until much later in the century, in 1871, that a young Prussian bandmaster, Captain Henry (Heinrich) Berger who had been recruited by Kamehameha V arrived in Honolulu to introduce European music into the Monarchy, providing a cultural change within the popular Royal Hawaiian Band.³² This band, under the direction of Heinrich Berger may be the band most instantly recognized as “the” Royal Hawaiian Band, but history reminds us that the first royal brass band was composed of Black musicians. Perhaps, they played on occasion songs of the sea.

The earliest recorded settlers of African ancestry—mostly male seamen, often working on whaling ships—arrived in Hawai'i well before the missionaries' 1820 arrival. One man, called Black Jack, or Mr. Keaka'ele'ele, was perhaps of African descent; history seems to suggest that is the case. According to historical sources, Keaka'ele'ele was already living on O'ahu when Kamehameha conquered the Island in 1796 and was an active and notable member of the community. Samuel Kamakau reports that “before the battle of Nu'uuanu there were living on 'Oahu with Ka-lani-ku-pule, Mr. Oliver Holmes, Shomisona, Mr. Lele, Mr. Mela [Miller], Mr. Keaka-'ele'ele [Black Jack], and some other foreigners....[Later] Mr. Miller and Mr. Keaka built a red stone house for Queen Ka'ahumanu...in Lahaina.”³³

By 1833, Blacks were so numerous in Honolulu that they had begun to feel the need for community organizations. During this period the village of Honolulu had over twenty Black residents, and possibly half of the whalers who docked in Hawai'i were African Americans. According to a flyer from the Mission House in Honolulu, an African Relief Society Rally was held in Honolulu in 1833. This type of benevolent society was first organized by free Blacks along the East Coast of the United States, but the origins of the society have been traced to mutual aid associations founded in West Africa. One of the primary functions of the organization operating in Hawai'i was to assist Black seamen who visited the Islands aboard maritime fleets sailing from Africa, the West Indies, the Cape Verde Islands, the United States, Spain, and England. Before 1850, it is estimated that fifty percent of the maritime industry was manned by men of African descent in the United States, and since there were no unions to protect seafaring men, when they were ill or injured, they were often abandoned at the nearest port without funds or friends. As Marc Scruggs notes in his essay, “There is One Black Man, Anthony D. Allen...,” Allen, a

former slave, arrived on the island of O'ahu in 1810 or 1811, bringing with him valuable medical knowledge and training that he may have acquired from his former owner whose son, Dr. Dougal, practiced medicine in the United States.³⁴ Born in Schenectady, New York in 1774 or 1775, Allen became a free man in 1800 and spent the next ten years at sea before settling in Honolulu where he contributed enormously to the growing community there, founding a hospital to treat indigent mariners and operating a burial ground for those too sick to recover. Another function of the African Relief Society was to make burial arrangements for indigent sailors who died in Honolulu.³⁵

Not just the sick and the dying stayed on in Hawai'i. Quite a few hale and hearty Black seamen decided on arriving in Honolulu or Lahaina to leave the demanding life of the sea and settle in the Islands, often marrying Hawaiian wives and raising families.³⁶ Some of these early Black settlers in Hawai'i predictably found jobs as blacksmiths and mariners, according to previous experience. Other Black men were active in the early Hawai'i business community, and some were active Prince Hall Masons. "William the Baker" owned an eating establishment which he sold in 1834, and Joseph Bedford, also known as Joe Dollar, opened a boarding house in 1826 and operated it as a successful establishment for almost twenty years. Lewis Temple, a Black resident of New Bedford who had made a name for himself by inventing an improvement for harpoon design, retired to Hawai'i in the 1830s as a veteran of many Pacific voyages from New England.³⁷ "Black Jo," no doubt another sailor who had reached Hawai'i and decided to stay, was a long time resident trader and Sail Master for one of King Kamehameha II's trading vessels. According to Levi Chamberlain, who had business dealings with Black Jo, he also worked for many years with the King as an advisor and interpreter before dying in 1828.³⁸

Blacks are also mentioned in Hawaiian historical sources both as men working at ordinary but essential tasks and as men whose work was perhaps less ordinary, including those noted as traveling in the circles of the highest political and spiritual powers. The first edition of the *Sandwich Island Gazette* lists William Johnson as a Black man who owned the "Shrine of Adonis" barber shop, where anyone, regardless of race, could have their hair neatly trimmed.³⁹ After his death in 1838, Spencer Rhodes took over his barber shop. Frederick E. Binns had his own barber shop by 1845, and Charles Nicholson worked as a successful Black tailor, sewing clothes for Islanders from the 1840s until 1861.⁴⁰ As Paul Wermager notes in his essay, "Healing the Sick," many of

these barbers also provided medical services to the community. James Smith, another African American, laid the cornerstone of the Chamberlain House, the home of the Bishops which would later be known as 'Iolani Palace. Kamakau mentions the presence of another Black man, Kinikona, possibly East Indian, who joined Kamehameha's voyaging party during his historic first return visit to the Island of Hawai'i since becoming King of the Hawaiian Islands: "[Kamehameha] was preceded, by two days, by a Black man (lascar) by the name of Kinikona who had made an oath to leave his hair in the keeping of Pele and who had then joined the king's party."⁴¹

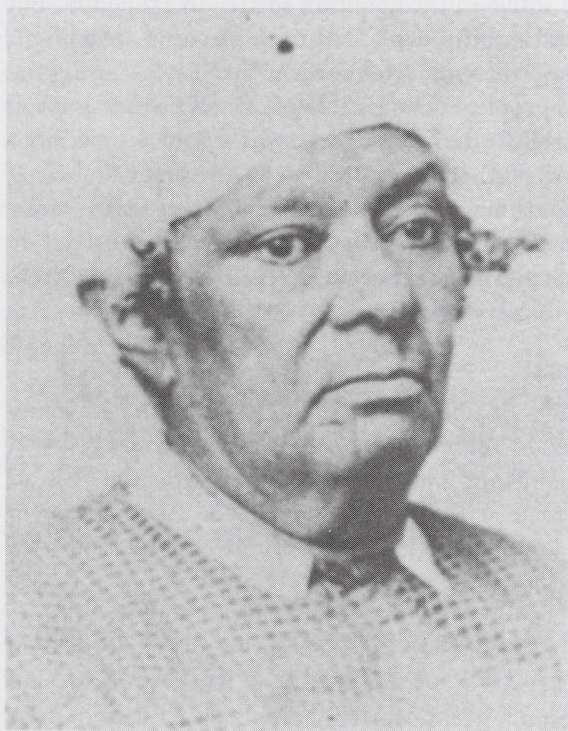
These early Black settlers in Hawai'i lived in an environment that appears, by all historical accounts, to be relatively unrestricted by the more extreme forms of social divisioning by race, but, by the latter half of the nineteenth century, Hawai'i's social climate was changing, and such divisioning was becoming more noticeable and troubling. Although many missionaries who settled in Hawai'i opposed slavery and theoretically believed in the equality of all humans, not as many were fully capable of practicing what they preached. Some established and were active in the abolition society in Honolulu, but others held fast to the American attitude of "Manifest Destiny," deeming it their moral responsibility to civilize the backward "Others" while using the lands and resources of these people. Such moral hypocrisy is neither unusual nor uncommon. Unfortunately, often those who assume moral superiority have difficulty recognizing that other cultural values and practices embraced by other peoples of other lands may have as much validity as the "morally superior" values held up as examples, but, in Hawai'i not all missionaries were so short-sighted. Indeed, not all missionaries were White. Some were Black, and one in particular was a Black woman.

An Extraordinary Woman

The first available history of a Black woman in Hawai'i is that of young Betsey Stockton, who arrived in 1823 with the second company of Christian missionaries. According to Takara and Scruggs, Betsey Stockton was an ex-slave, one of the first foreign settlers in the Islands, and the first known African-American woman to round Cape Horn. Born in 1798 in Princeton, New Jersey, as a slave owned by the family of Robert Stockton, *Esq.*, Betsey Stockton was presented as a gift to the Stockton's eldest daughter and her husband, the Reverend Ashbel Green, who was then the President of Princeton College. Although her master did not favor educating his servants beyond proficient training as domestic nurse, seamstress, and cook, Stockton's son-

in-law, perceiving Betsey's thirst for knowledge and innate intelligence, gave her books and encouraged her to use the family library. She later attended evening classes at Princeton Theological Seminary, where she was especially brilliant in English and Theology.

A friend of the family, a certain Charles S. Stuart, also learned of her exceptional character and her devoted Christian life. It was not long before Betsey Stockton expressed openly to him both her great desire to be useful in the mission and her interest to accompany Stuart and his new bride on their foreign mission. Betsey Stockton was granted her freedom and accepted by the American Board of Commissions for Foreign Missionaries. On November 20, 1822, she sailed for Honolulu on the *Thames* from New Haven, Connecticut. The twenty people in this second group of missionaries to sail for the Hawaiian Islands arrived in Honolulu on April 27, 1823, and, then, proceeded on to Lahaina, Maui on May 31, 1823.⁴² During Stockton's brief stay in Honolulu



*Betsey Stockton, ca. 1798
–October 24, 1865. Photo
courtesy Notable Women
of Hawai'i, ed. Barbara
Bennett Peterson (Hono-
lulu: University of Hawai'i
Press, 1984).*

she visited Anthony Allen who tells her she is the first "colored female" he had seen during his thirteen years in Honolulu.

Mr. Stuart's plan was to establish a mission in Lahaina, but Betsey Stockton was most interested in establishing a school for the education of Hawaiians. Since most missionaries were occupied exclusively with the instruction of their own families and those of the chiefs (*ali'i*), Betsey Stockton founded a school for *maka'āinana* (common people) and their wives and children. Miss Stockton quickly learned the Hawaiian language, and began to offer classes at the first school for commoners on Maui, where she spent two years between 1823 and 1825 as a teacher of English, Latin, History, and Algebra.⁴³ The well-known Lahaina Luna School is today located at the site of Stockton's school.

Miss Stockton, always seen in a turban and moving about in a dignified and regal manner, was well-trusted, and her advice and opinions were often sought in many matters, even those of personal and family concern. Intelligent, industrious and frugal, she was aptly described as a devoted Christian, not only because of her constant attendance at church and her faith in God, but also because she supported the interests of the church, secured clothes for her students, and helped to heal the sick while continuing her domestic work to help the Stuarts. Because of the serious illness of Mrs. Stuart and the family's subsequent return to the United States, Miss Stockton's stay in Hawai'i ended after only two and a half years, but, in those two short years, she had contributed much to the people of Maui.⁴⁴ She subsequently worked with Native Americans in Canada before moving to Philadelphia where she spent the final years of her life teaching Black children.⁴⁵ By establishing a school on Maui, Betsey Stockton set a new direction for education in the Islands. Stockton's school was commended for its teaching proficiency, and later served as a model for the Hilo Boarding School and also for the Hampton Institute in Virginia, founded by General Samuel C. Armstrong. Betsey Stockton died in October 1865 in Princeton, New Jersey.⁴⁶

The Racialization of Hawaiians

Why did Hawai'i's Black community fail to grow with the speed that other ethnic communities enjoyed? Why were so few Blacks in Hawai'i for so many years? In *Around the World with a King*, William N. Armstrong, an advisor and Minister of State who accompanied Kalākaua on his travels in 1881, displays an attitude of condescension toward non-Whites, and certainly that attitude, so prevalent during the nineteenth century, also affected the

construction of society in Hawai'i. Armstrong opens his book with a less than objective account of a disagreement Kalākaua had with his "White subjects, who held the brains and most of the property."⁴⁷ He soon states that although the Kingdom of Hawai'i was recognized as "civilized" and that Kalākaua had established "the etiquette of civilization in his own court," he was able to do so only because of "the unselfish labor of the American Missionaries and their allies, who had created the framework of an institutional government and placed the administration of law in the hands of intelligent and honest White men."⁴⁸ Earlier Hawaiian monarchs are referred to as "savage,"⁴⁹ and Armstrong consistently separates the "White subjects" of the Kingdom from "native subjects, who had fallen far behind their White neighbors in the march of progress, because as one of the King's predecessors had frankly said, they were 'shiftless, lazy, and incompetent.'"⁵⁰ As for the King himself, Armstrong describes him as "a 'colored man,' unusually dark for a Polynesian and several of his features suggested Negro inheritance"⁵¹ and then reports that the Tokyo press called Kalākaua a "dark, almost Black King." These statements may be interpreted as descriptive; Kalākaua was indeed an extraordinarily handsome man with dark skin and bold features, but when Armstrong also recounts that, because Kalākaua's retinue included a high percentage of White men, these same Tokyo reporters

suspected that the White men had already become dominant in his kingdom and that he was only a figurehead. It typified to them the coming supremacy of Anglo-Saxons in the Pacific regions.⁵²

He reveals an attitude of assumed superiority based on race that appears to be shared by these writers in nineteenth-century Tokyo. That an attitude of racial superiority is both embraced by Armstrong and also inherent in much of his account of Kalākaua's historic trip around the world is amply supported by the more blatant racist statements he makes in his book. Comparing the "civilizing" task of the British in India against that of the Americans, he writes:

The eight millions of American negroes speak the English language, outwardly conform to Christian doctrine, and have the habit of subservience to the stronger race, which is more effective than law. The task of controlling and molding these eight millions of simple blacks, important as it is, is a bagatelle in comparison with the greater task of reconstructing the defective civilization of two hundred and fifty millions of people...who suffer from the dry rot of ancient and unchangeable customs and habits.⁵³

Armstrong, a powerful figure in Hawai'i's government, makes no attempt to conceal his racist statements; he assumes that his readers will share

his views. No doubt, when he initially voiced these views as he jotted down his musings in the last decades of the nineteenth century, many did agree with him, and sadly, in 1904, when his memoir was first published, there were still others who nodded in solemn agreement, but as Glen Grant states in his introduction to the 1995 edition, "Armstrong's perception of the superiority of the Anglo Saxon race to the 'weaker,' 'crude,' 'superstitious mind' of a Polynesian race and king completely distorts his appraisal...of his royal traveling companion."⁵⁴

As part of his attempt to preserve the Hawaiian Kingdom against imperialism and the "Manifest Destiny" ideology of the Americans as they marched Westward into the Pacific, Kalākaua, the first modern monarch or national leader to go around the world, visited the heads of state in nations of Asia, Africa, Europe, and America. Before this journey ended, Kalākaua had also visited Hampton Normal and Agricultural School, later known as Hampton Institute, a historic Black college in Virginia established after the Civil War, by William N. Armstrong's brother, General Samuel C. Armstrong, and modeled after Betsey Stockton's Lahaina school.⁵⁵ As Helena Allen writes in her biography of Kalākaua, the king wanted to "let the world know that Hawai'i was an independent nation, self-governed, open to commerce and social interchange with people."⁵⁶

According to Armstrong, upon his return, Kalākaua desired to "unite the half-savage tribes scattered through Oceania into some federal union, of which he would be Primate"⁵⁷ and thus went about "increasing their loyalty" by reviving "some of the ancient vile and licentious practices of the savage times," an activity which caused Armstrong to end his service to the King.⁵⁸ Shortly after the coronation, Armstrong resigned and left the country, never to see Kalākaua again, since the King died two years later in California. In speaking of Queen Lili'uokalani, who succeeded her brother to the throne, Armstrong wrote that she "had all of his defects of character"⁵⁹ and approvingly reported that her kingdom was soon overthrown and that there were soon "laid the foundations for a high civilization in which the natives took little part."⁶⁰ Armstrong, who worked closely with Kalākaua and even saw himself as a friend of the King, nonetheless, personified the patriarchal attitude of White supremacy so prevalent in nineteenth-century America, and if we are to accept his first-person account as an accurate portrayal of life in nineteenth-century Hawai'i, an uncomfortable picture emerges of a developing society in possession of these same patriarchal attitudes and also of a not too subtle enmity towards Blacks and other dark-skinned ethnic groups.

With her discussion of Kalākaua's life, Helena G. Allen highlights nineteenth-century American racism Hawaiians encountered during travels abroad and thus opens a window to understanding how Hawaiians and Hawaiian leaders might, as mentioned previously, paradoxically accept the racial ideology of White supremacy. Americans such as Armstrong had their attitudes about Polynesians and Indians and any one else with dark skin, and they also made it quite clear that Black was different from Hawaiian or Polynesian, and that such difference demanded segregation. Citing the journal of young Prince Liholiho, who writes of an incident in Philadelphia while traveling with his brother, Allen suggests that Americans classified Hawaiians as Black and therefore subject to segregation: "the princes were mistaken for Negroes and had been relegated to the last car on the railroad."⁶¹ Allen also reports controversy conflating race and genealogy that raged about succession to the throne after Kalākaua's death. Since "Kalākaua was of a darker color than his sister and had some Negroid features, as many Hawaiians had," some began to claim

that he was Negroid, and a rumor began that his father was not Kapa'akea but a Negro Blacksmith named John Blossom, even though Blossom had not come to Hawai'i until Kalākaua was thirteen years old.⁶²

In speaking of the political downfall of Kalākaua, Allen describes a vicious "genealogical trial," conducted only in the streets and in the press, concerning his suspected African blood,⁶³ reporting the rumors that it "was told" that before his death Kapa'akea had denied being the father of all Keohokalole's children except Lili'u Kamaka'eha, and that "someone was supposed to have testified that she had seen Kaohokaloli in sexual relations with Blossom, a Negro coachman and blacksmith, and from the union had come Kalākaua."⁶⁴ Although Michael Dougherty states in his 1992 book *To Steal a Kingdom* that "Hawai'i's White property owners...[had] discovered a method of directly attacking Kalākaua on a racial basis without offending the Hawaiians who still represented the majority at the ballot box,"⁶⁵ for many Hawaiians, this issue was not one of race but of genealogy. Genealogical awareness is foundational to Hawaiian culture and society; hierarchical structuring based on color of skin is not. If Kalākaua had a different father, his links to *wohi* chiefs would have been erased. These two issues—genealogy and race—are easily conflated and confused, and those who were interested in acquiring greater political and economic power in Hawai'i exploited that confusion. By creating suspicions of Kalākaua's genealogy and thus of his royal authority, the authority of the Hawaiian nation was attacked, and

that attack was strengthened by further exploiting the growing desire of Hawaiians to distance themselves from potential identification as Black, a desire fueled, in part, by a recognition of the severe discrimination and prejudice directed towards Blacks in America, such as that experienced by Liholiho and others during travels through post-Civil War America. The linkage of Kalākaua's debated genealogy to race, created a doubled negativity that gravely impacted the Blacks in Hawai'i. When speaking of Whiteness in literary language, Toni Morrison explains that "the choice of words" contains "indirect and direct revelations of that (White) power" Certainly, nothing highlights "freedom" like slavery, nothing highlights "purity" like sinfulness, and nothing highlights "Black" like White.⁶⁶ When rumors were circulated to accuse Kalākaua of being Black, the accusations identified "Black" as undesirable and allowed "White" to surface as desirable.

Kalākaua's desire for Hawaiian sovereignty—"Hawai'i for the Hawaiians"⁶⁷—and for the resurrection of the Hawaiian language and culture have led historians to conclude that the efforts to slander him by accusing him of African ancestry were attempts to discredit his vision, to destroy his great popularity amongst the Hawaiian people, and to throw doubt on his leadership abilities. That the very possibility of being Black could threaten to depose a king in late nineteenth-century Hawai'i, a land where prior to Western contact "Black" had symbolized the greatest political and spiritual powers, should indicate just how much had changed in less than 100 years.

Conclusion

The connections between racial hierarchy, exclusion, and the contested status of Blacks as true Americans help in part to explain the relative absence of Blacks in Hawai'i immigrant history. As illustrated in the writings of William N. Armstrong and other early settlers, tropes of darkness, sexuality, paganism, and heathenism of the non-White Other which permeated colonial and national literature during the nineteenth century also helped to establish, expand, and perpetuate an architecture that supported the new White man as the real, pure, Christian American whose complicity in the fabrication of racism was either ignored or justified as a necessary tool of Manifest Destiny.⁶⁸ In *Souls Looking Back*, Gibbs discusses how racism shapes a socialization agenda and how effective in that shaping are the consequences of victimization by omission as people struggle for balance in a world dominated by Eurocentric Christian values and racial oppression.⁶⁹ African Americans live in Hawai'i today, yet they seem nearly invisible despite their historical contributions to the political,

educational, socio-economic and cultural tapestry. Such invisibility in the face of presence can be understood as the result of nineteenth-century imperialism, including Manifest Destiny, and of the changing attitudes in Hawai'i toward race and color significantly influenced by White authority, including advisers to the monarchs, plantation owners, and religious authorities. The absence of an acknowledged Africanist presence in the written history of immigration during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Hawai'i may have significantly affected subsequent migration patterns. It is also clear that Blacks' exclusion from the plantation experience (except for a brief period in the early 1900s) can help to explain the virtually ignored, though not insignificant, presence and history of African Americans within a larger Island mosaic of historical ethnic experiences. That presence can no longer be ignored. ♦

Notes

1. Samuel M. Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs of Hawai'i* (Honolulu: Kamehameha Schools Press, 1992), 165.
2. *Ibid.*, 159.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, 166
5. *Ibid.*, 247.
6. *Ibid.*, 385.
7. *Ibid.*, 391.
8. *Ibid.*, 394.
9. Jewel T. Gibbs, "The Social Construction of Race, Ethnicity, and Culture," in *Souls Looking Back: Life Stories of Growing Up Black*, ed. Andrew Barrod, et al. (New York: Routledge, 1999), 75.
10. Kay Brundage Takara, "Who is the Black Woman in Hawai'i?" in *Montage: An Ethnic History of Women in Hawai'i*, ed. Nancy Foon Young and Judy R. Rush (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, College of Education, General Assistance Center for the Pacific and State Commission on the Status of Women, 1977), 87.
11. See Albert S. Broussard, "Carlotta Stewart Lai: An African American Teacher in the Territory of Hawai'i," in this volume.
12. Eleanor C. Nordyke, *The People of Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1977), 39.
13. W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 235-6.

14. Ethel M. Damon, *Samuel Chenery Damon: Chaplain and Friend of Seamen* (Honolulu: Hawaiian Mission Children's Society, 1966), 75.
15. Bolster, 153.
16. *Ibid.*, 158, 176.
17. *Ibid.*, 14.
18. Donald Brown, "Black Whalers: They Were Great While It Lasted," *American Visions* (August 1987): 27.
19. *Ibid.*, 94.
20. Bolster, 145.
21. *Ibid.*, 148.
22. *Ibid.*, 32.
23. *Ibid.*, 32.
24. *Ibid.*, 35.
25. *Ibid.*, 177-9.
26. *Ibid.*, 96, 133.
27. *Ibid.*, 82.
28. *Ibid.*, 90.
29. David W. Bandy, *Royal Hawaiian Band, America's Royal Legacy: Music—Hawai'i* (Honolulu: International Society for the Promotion of Band Music, 1993), 168.
30. *The Sandwich Island Gazette*, February 4, 1837.
31. R. A. Greer, "Blacks in Old Hawai'i," *Honolulu Magazine* (November 1986): 183.
32. Bandy, 69.
33. Kamakau, 174.
34. See Marc Scruggs, "There is One Black Man, Anthony D. Allen....," in this volume.
35. Bolster, 173.
36. Romanzo Adams, "Census Notes of the Negroes in Hawai'i Prior to the War," *Social Process in Hawai'i 9-10* (1945): 24.
37. Brown, 30.
38. Levi Chamberlain, *Daybook*, vol. 20, January 1836, 10, Hawai'i Mission Children's Society.
39. *The Sandwich Island Gazette*, July 1836.
40. Greer, 183.
41. Kamakau, 284.
42. Takara, 86.

43. Ibid., 87.
44. Ibid., xx.
45. Carol Santoki, "Betsey Stockton," in *Notable Women of Hawai'i*, ed. Barbara Bennett Peterson (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1984), 356–360. Betsey Stockton's journal was published in *Christian Advocate* 2 (May 1824): 233–235; *Christian Advocate* (December 1824): 563–566; *Christian Advocate* (January 1825): 36–41.
46. Ibid., 359.
47. William N. Armstrong, *Around the World with a King* (New York: F. A. Stokes, 1904), 1.
48. Ibid., 11.
49. Ibid., 10.
50. Ibid., 6.
51. Ibid., 15.
52. Ibid., 47.
53. Ibid., 160.
54. Glen Grant, introduction to *Around the World with a King*, by William N. Armstrong (Honolulu: Mutual, 1995).
55. Armstrong, 217, 275.
56. Helena Allen, *Kalakaua: Renaissance King* (Honolulu: Mutual, 1994), 89.
57. Armstrong, 285.
58. Ibid., 286.
59. Ibid., 288.
60. Ibid., 289.
61. Allen, 22. See also Gavan Daws, *Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1968), 284; Michael Dougherty, *To Steal a Kingdom* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1992), 132, 147.
62. Ibid., 26.
63. Ibid., 151.
64. Ibid., 152.
65. Dougherty, 147.
66. Ibid., 38.
67. Ibid., 41.
68. Tony Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 15.
69. Gibbs, 75.



Benny Rollins, horse trainer and breeder for Haleakalā Ranch, Maui, 1922. Photo courtesy of Ludvina Rollins Abrew.