

# Preface

A sheltered valley forged by Pele's fires opens its mouth to the shimmering waters of Pu'uloa below. On days, it seems Pele's fires still burn in the gulch and ravine. Absent cooling breezes, searing heat from the earth's red soil rises toward the skies, but the valley's steep walls box in the air, forming a stratigraphy of radiant thermals. Pu'uloa's cooling waters tease the thirst that is the valley called by Pele's children Honouliuli or "dark bay."

Pu'uloa forms another bay, so coveted by the United States that in 1873 its war secretary, W. W. Belknap, secretly dispatched two generals to survey the harbor for its commercial and military value. After a two-month stay, the agents reported to Washington that Pearl Harbor, so-named by foreigners, constituted excellent plunder for US imperialism in the Pacific. Hawaiians stoutly resisted an erosion of their sovereignty despite considerable sentiment by influential white sugar planters to cede Pu'uloa to the United States in exchange for trade reciprocity. Both bays, the dark ravine and militarized waters after the illegal US takeover of the kingdom, would form correspondences after December 7, 1941.

Japan's attack on the US installation at Pearl Harbor, as the studies in this remarkable collection document, connected the liquid with the landed bay. War with Japan, as was planned by the United States decades before 1941, led to martial law in Hawai'i, forced removals, and the detention of aliens and citizens alike. Pu'uloa was the site of Japan's attack; Honouliuli became the place of "custodial detention" after the closure of Sand Island concentration camp in March 1943. Honouliuli for Japanese Americans confined in the ravine was a descent into Jigoku Dani or "Hell Valley."

Those related acts of imperialism abroad and segregation at home centered spatially at Pu'uloa and Honouliuli reveal US history at work. Those themes of US expansion and conquest and the absorption and segregation of those annexations of empire constitute a central spine of the nation's past in the alienation of "free" land from American Indians. Manifest destiny furthered the course of the US empire, which snatched Mexico's northern territories and its peoples, Mexicans and American Indians, and splashed

into waters to capture islands in the Caribbean and Pacific. Hawaiians were engulfed along with the native peoples of Puerto Rico, Guam, and for a time the Philippines and Sāmoa. Prior to and during those periods of expansion, America’s plantations employed and expired Africans and Asians in the slave and coolie systems of labor.

Despite their conquest and thus containment within the nation, “persons of color,” according to the US Supreme Court ruling in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857), were “not included in the word citizens.” Since the nation’s founding, the court reasoned, citizenship and therewith membership within the nation were reserved for “free white persons” per the Naturalization Act (1790). That segregation between white and nonwhite, the “citizen race” and “persons of color” stood for nearly one hundred years. The Thirteenth (1865), Fourteenth (1868), and Fifteenth (1870) Amendments to the US Constitution finally allowed the African American citizen and thereby transformed the complexion of the Constitution’s “We, the people.” Still, the rule of Jim Crow persisted to *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and beyond.

The extinction of Hawaiian sovereignty and expropriation of land throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, accordingly, was neither original nor novel, and the forced removal and detention of Japanese Americans was not an aberration and act of wartime hysteria. Pu‘uoloa and Honouliuli are extensions of US settler and colonial history. As a consequence, I hold, this collection of essays remembering Honouliuli as a place of confinement for US aliens and citizens, women and men, and US prisoners of war, soldiers and civilians alike, marks a signal occasion for the nation’s historical consciousness.

This collection reminds us of the pattern in US history slighted by standard narratives of nation. Those histories, these essays reveal, are purposeful creations in the constitution of a nation and people, and they uncover how exclusions can operate to install hierarchies of power. Memorializing that past in words and as a place and pilgrimage of remembrance, by contrast, calls to mind vigilance as a requirement of democracy. It is in that sense and spirit of commemoration I urge a close reading of the accounts contained herein, an appreciation of the labor exerted to locate, excavate, and preserve this site and history, and a commitment to right past wrongs and to advance the cause of freedom.

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