



# Accompaniment Through Carceral Geographies: Abolitionist Research Partnerships with Indigenous Communities

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**Abstract:** This article approaches “ea”—a Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) concept meaning life, breath, and sovereignty—as a vital mode of abolition ecologies, and proposes accompaniment as a methodology for mutual collaboration toward this endeavour. Research draws from ethnographic fieldwork on the Wai‘anae Coast of O‘ahu in Hawai‘i, a predominantly Native Hawaiian community, and reflects upon the author’s positionality on Wai‘anae’s insider–outsider borderlands. The argument is multifold: Carceral geographies inscribe racism by cleaving humans from the environment and each other, depriving life-giving resources from populations deemed a threat to a dominant socioenvironmental order. At the same time, abolition ecologies entail worldmaking predicated on the interdependence of all life forces, employing syncretic practices that join disparate struggles, people, and places to generate possibilities greater than the sum of its parts. Accompaniment works against racism’s practices of criminalisation and containment while contributing to radical, syncretic placemaking as part of an expansive liberatory practice.

**Keywords:** accompaniment, abolition ecologies, abolition, allyship, carceral geographies, Hawai‘i

“Mākua today stands for the right of people to control the destiny of ourselves and our children” (Na Maka o Ka ‘Āina 1983). In the early 1980s, a resident of Mākua Beach made this proclamation to filmmakers documenting a self-sufficient community on the Wai‘anae Coast of O‘ahu in Hawai‘i. The people of Mākua had fallen on hard times, yet they shared food and exercised a way of life typical for maka‘āinana (eyes of the land, commoners) by thriving on relationality and interdependence (Oliveira 2014). The residents primarily identified as Hawaiian, meaning Indigenous to the islands, and “broader associative politics” with lawyers, mediamakers, students, and construction workers made their cooperative existence possible.<sup>1</sup> Their maroon geographies forged through exile to build new solidarities and spaces (Ybarra and Heynen 2020) generated relationships across partitions to devise systems that transgressed the racial logics of elimination and containment.

The eventual bulldozing of this community sought to repress these vibrant forms of life that refuse to reproduce structures of domination epitomised by

Mākua Military Reservation occupying more than 4000 acres across the street. The formation at Mākua Beach enacted “*ea*”, a Kanaka Maoli (Hawaiian) concept meaning life, breath, and sovereignty. Because this posed a veritable challenge to colonial occupation, on 22 January 1983, the State of Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) evicted the houseless community.<sup>2</sup> Officers arrested six people who remained in an act of civil disobedience as they sat in a circle singing “*Hawai‘i Loa Kū Like Kākou*” (All Hawai‘i Stand Together). Hayden Burgess (1983), attorney and supporter of the residents, recorded: “The State’s heavy machinery crushed and chewed up their beach shelters while club-and-gun-carrying officers and their attack dogs watched.” Police vehicles hauled away the arrestees charged with “obstructing governmental operations”. This eviction mirrors military occupation’s violently destructive tendencies.

People however soon returned to the beach to establish another self-governing community that they called *Pu‘uhonua o Mākua* (refuge of Mākua), a space of healing from the assaults of colonialism (Na Maka o Ka ‘Āina 1996; Niheu 2014). One resident asserted to a reporter, “We’re poor, but we’re not living poorly”, and others cited challenges accessing government services (McDuffie 1996). They demonstrated how the shared harnessing of human and environmental resources defies the abandonment and uneven development endemic to late capitalism. Yet again, on 18 June 1996, more than 100 law enforcement officials from the DLNR, Honolulu Police Department, and National Guard evicted 16 people—eight residents and eight supporters—who remained in an act of civil disobedience. Afterwards, the DLNR maintained roadblocks and patrolled the area for four days, barring access to Mākua and neighbouring Keawaula, where some of the evicted had already set up camp. The repeated evictions, destruction, and restricted beach access eerily echo the developments of World War II martial law, when the Army forced out residents of the adjacent valley, destroyed homes, and blocked access to the ocean (Kelly and Quintal 1977). Confronting this living history, *Pu‘uhonua o Mākua* actualised abolition ecologies, worldmaking toward the total transformation of socioenvironmental relations predicated on dynamic and expansive modes of interdependence.

This article traces the living legacy of Mākua and proposes abolitionist methodologies to support such radical placemaking, drawing from interviews with former Mākua Beach residents, participation in more recent community organising efforts, and reflections on my own experiences conducting research. My goal is to connect localised placemaking at places like Mākua with expansive sites of resistance. In considering abolitionist research partnerships for shared work toward *ea* in the face of ongoing repression, I reflect upon the researcher’s inevitable confrontation with the contradictory workings of sociospatial partitions: uneven power relations, the deprivation of resources amid abundance, ambivalence regarding endless war, and the social atomisation that neglects the interdependence necessary for our collective survival. I interrogate my own positionality on the Wai‘anae Coast’s insider–outsider borderlands, as a non-native woman of colour who was born and raised in Hawai‘i. While “ally” implies an identity that may unwittingly reify the sociospatial partitions that the term endeavours to undo, “accompany” offers an active, relational verb, an action that one can partake. As

a research methodology, accompaniment engenders the convergence of differential forms of expertise to develop life-affirming systems that exceed and oppose the militarised partitions that unevenly harm our shared sources of life. The repatterning of socioenvironmental relations in the service of abundant Indigenous life-ways and accompaniment as a research methodology offer complementary practices that can birth a world where humans and environmental forces can thrive together.

This study brings Indigenous politics and carceral geographies scholarship into critical dialogue while proposing accompaniment as a methodology that can facilitate the expansive solidarities integral to abolition ecologies. I identify World War II as a critical moment that wrought the consolidation of carceral geographies on the islands, when military bodies constructed spatial and racial barriers to contain the promise of socioecological relations predicated on kinship, economic redistribution, and sustainable abundance (Woods 2000). Such formations, premised on environmental relationality, signify threats to colonial actors, who continually attempt to squash these configurations through the twinned spatial ventures of elimination and containment (Goodyear-Ka'opua 2013:25–27). As a strategy of repression, carceral geographies stretch beyond sites of formal detention to link the gates and fences that surround Mākua with prison cages, border walls (Lloyd et al. 2012), and urban spaces (Smith 2001). My argument is multifold: Carceral geographies inscribe racism by cleaving humans from the environment and each other, depriving life-giving resources from populations deemed a threat to a dominant socioenvironmental order. At the same time, abolition ecologies entail worldmaking predicated on the interdependence of all life forces, employing syncretic practices that join disparate struggles, people, and places (Gilmore 2008). Accompaniment works against racism's practices of criminalisation and containment while contributing to radical, syncretic placemaking as part of an expansive liberatory practice.

The following section explicates the meaning of abolition ecologies and develops a genealogy of accompaniment, tracing its emergence to Central America to show how this concept stretches across time and space. Transnational Cold War enclosures sought to defeat formations that threatened a capitalist global order, and a syncretic approach to disparate sites of carceral violence scales up from tightly circumscribed locales to global movements (Gilmore 2008). This exercises a key tenet of abolition. In the next section, I trace the conditions that abolition ecologies endeavour to transform in Hawai'i, drawing from ethnographic fieldwork and historical sources to show how the islands' carceral geographies emerged from World War II martial law and led to the development of autonomous Hawaiian communities that thrived through the 1980s and 1990s at Mākua Beach despite multiple evictions. The Hawaiian premise of *ea* breathed life into these abolitionist endeavours. The third and final section situates a film series that I co-organised in 2014 on the Wai'ānae Coast as part of a genealogy of anti-eviction struggles that began in Hawai'i in 1971, and reflects upon accompaniment as a methodology for abolition ecologies that joins local and global struggles.

## Abolition Ecologies, Allyship, and Accompaniment

Abolition does not singularly focus on abolishing one set of institutions such as slavery and prisons, rather, it encompasses efforts to transform the environmental conditions that allow society to designate certain populations as enemies and render their lives as disposable (Gilmore with Loyd 2012). The Mākuā Beach dwellers enacted these worldmaking capacities by drawing from environmental and ancestral relations as a wellspring of collective health and self-determination, opposing the destructive, atomising forces of militarism. Abolition encompasses life-affirming endeavours that include the coalescence at Mākuā that built alternatives to military occupation and can also entail transforming the relations that enable gender violence to occur, decolonial education, community alternatives to policing, imagining and working toward a world without prisons, and more (Gilmore 2017). Rather than approaching the reform of violent systems such as prisons, police, and militarisation as the end goal, abolition advocates for their drastic reduction and eventual dissolution, lifting people up in contrast to evicting, enclosing, and incapacitating (Prison Research Education Action Project 2005). Abolition yields the distinctions that divide us—native/settler, civilian/soldier, citizen/non-citizen—in favour of working across the global maldistribution of resources for collective access to life sources, such as clean water, fresh air, and stable living space (Gilmore with Loyd 2012:52). Abolition ecologies thus transform “the entire landscape of how we live” (ibid.). The dynamic interrogation of the interconnections between seemingly disparate sites of carceral violence across time and space breathes life into such a transformation (Heynen 2016).

Without using the term “abolition”, Noelani Goodyear-Ka’ōpua (2014) proposes a Kanaka Maoli conception of abolition ecologies by invoking *ea* as a worldmaking system that anchors human–environment relationality. Akin to breathing, *ea* rests on “experiences of people on the land, relationships forged through the process of remembering and caring for *wahi pana*, storied places” and the restoration of particular sites. Recognising the “mutual interdependence of all life forms and forces” (Goodyear-Ka’ōpua 2014:4–5), the people of Mākuā situated themselves as part of the interconnected web of plants and animals, soil, streams, ocean, sea, heavens, and human life (Oliveira 2014:48). In this cosmology, the natural world sustains emergence, like volcanic islands from the ocean depths, engendering the sovereignty of the environment in the service of Hawaiian self-determination (Goodyear-Ka’ōpua 2014). Curly, a community leader who lived on Mākuā Beach in the 1990s, described their cooperative realisation of *ea*: “You don’t go to the government, you don’t complain. Being on the land is sovereignty, living it, and drawing energy like a battery.” Echoing this concept, Noenoe Silva (2004) highlights *aloha ‘āina* (love of the land) as the “cornerstone of resistance”, the basis of Hawaiian self-rule. ‘Āina (that which feeds) figures as an “active participant in the narrative”, the foundation of resistance to colonialism and assimilation (Osorio 2018). *Maka‘āinana* play a leading role in this effort because their rootedness in particular places stand as the backbone of Hawaiian land tenure systems that fortify abundant futures (Oliveira 2014:40–41).

The people of Mākuā confronted the twin dimensions of invasion: elimination that evicts unruly articulations of Indigenous life and spatial containment that

regulates mutual, reciprocal relations with the natural world. As we see with the vibrancy of *ea* that catalysed residents' repeated returns to reconstitute their self-organised community, a "logic of elimination" (Wolfe 2006) can never fully complete itself. Attempting to deny what Manu Karuka (2017) identifies as the incoherence and instability of US sovereignty, military and policing bodies spatially contain vibrant alternative sociospatial orders to reinforce their power. While settler colonial scholarship often emphasises the logic of elimination, scholars including Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua (2013:25–27) designate containment as a key spatial strategy of Indigenous dispossession due to the fact that native sovereignty persists. These territorial practices of racism enlarge the axiom of "invasion ... [as] a structure, not an event" (Wolfe 2006), as the spatial manifestations of invasion shapeshift in ongoing campaigns to eliminate and contain native sovereignty.

Working within and against elimination and containment, Mākua's residents and supporters began to call their home Pu'uhonua o Mākua (refuge of Mākua). Pu'uhonua include places where people who violate social norms find sanctuary from punishment, and in modern times provide "critical examples of cultural, political, and economic power based upon land" (Niheu 2014:165). Another definition includes "a place of safety in a time of war", as the pu'uhonua enacted an alternative to Mākua Military Reservation across the street, land that the Army used for target practice from 1941 to 2004. Mākua, meaning parent, holds particular significance as a pu'uhonua. Curly, the former resident, referred to Mākua as "mama, nurturing me like a child", comparing the place's embrace to a caretaker providing sustenance (also see Watson 2008). He describes his anger and pain from generations of displacement, a process that a person with ancestral ties to Mākua described as "the umbilical cord being severed". While life at Mākua was never perfect, its oceanic environment, the source of all life, animated a life-sustaining, healing process. The pu'uhonua demonstrates how shared responsibility for the stewardship and cultivation of resources birth new patterns of organisation in the face of elimination and containment.

As I interviewed the former inhabitants of Mākua Beach and spent many hours both inside and outside the valley's military fences, I found myself asking how this research can meaningfully support the efforts for self-determination that Mākua enriches. This question permeates my ethnographic research and hovers over my writing, as I come from the positionality of a non-native woman of colour, the first generation in my family born in Hawai'i, who grew up distant from the Wai'anae Coast amid O'ahu's segregated landscape. Other scholars of Hawai'i have spilled much ink over this question. Goodyear-Ka'ōpua (2013) asserts that both settler and Indigenous people hold a stake in "sustainable Indigenous self-determination and caring for lands upon which all depend for life". Acknowledging the importance of Kanaka genealogies as the basis of Indigenous territorial control, she invokes *kuleana*, responsibility toward particular places based on the expansive web of familial human–environment relations. This moves away from "static identity categories ... toward more subtle, context-based responsibilities and positionalities". She reflects on moments when non-Hawaiian students at a Hawaiian charter school replicated the inclusive, possessive pronoun "our" to refer to human and nonhuman Hawaiian ancestors. They "essentially assimilated and

wove themselves into the genealogy, predicated on a shared respect and commitment to Hawaiian culture” (Goodyear-Ka’ōpua 2013:149–151). Goodyear-Ka’ōpua builds off the work of Candice Fujikane (2008) to conceptualise non-natives’ shared investments in ea as “settler aloha ‘āina”. Fujikane (2018) and others have likewise embraced the term “settler ally” as a position of co-resistance based on a commitment to decolonial Indigenous futurity.

Yet activists have critiqued “ally politics” for both its tendencies to totalise the incoherent dimensions of structural oppression and the resignation of agency that it implies (Indigenous Action Media 2014). In a blog post called “A Critique of Ally Politics”, an activist named “M.” (2015) evaluates the paradigms that uphold allyship: one’s oppression produces certain identity-based experiences, and those who hold privilege can never fully grasp the subjugation of others. Therefore, the privileged must give up their role as primary actors to become allies who follow the leadership of the oppressed.<sup>3</sup> However, on-the-ground realities impart a major complication: there is rarely a singular fixed identity-based group from whom to take guidance. For example, Hokulani Aikau (2019) reflects on her positionality as a diasporic Hawaiian and malihini—foreigner, newcomer—engaging in participatory, community—based research at He’e’ia on eastern O’ahu. She describes the suspicion of elders and colleagues who doubted her belonging despite the fact that other community leaders had invited her participation. Building relations over time by working with her hands in the soil, Aikau came to embrace the role of *hoa’āina*, meaning friend, caretaker, and partner of the land, based on *kuleana* not directly bound to family lines. The earth bestowed belonging. Similarly, I found in my research that the partitions I examine do not produce clear dividing lines—rather, they are productive forces with jagged and broken effects. For example, Hawaiians are deeply divided regarding allegiance and opposition to the US military, a contradiction I explore in the final section. The acknowledgement of these nuances moves away from a singular native/settler binary to acknowledge the complex relationalities that partitions in fact produce (see Saranillio 2018).

While ally draws from metaphors of war, casting humans as “static and wholly configured sovereign nations” (Gilmore in Heatherton and Camp 2016), accompaniment draws from metaphors of travelling on a road and creating music (Tomlinson and Lipsitz 2013:9), suggesting the creativity and experimentation that can blossom in common company. Accompaniment makes space for multiple forms of expertise to converge through shared stakes in an issue or place (Lynd 2012). It crafts new ways of knowing and being (Tomlinson and Lipsitz 2013), including subjectivities, spatialities, and temporalities that defy the hegemony of carceral geographies (Katz 1992). Accompaniment grapples with the “structural betweenness” (Gilmore 2008) that pervades activist scholarship to reckon with the blurry positionalities that emerge from a partitioned landscape. Accompaniment also engages with a key tenet of *maka’āinana*. While *ali’i* (chiefs) demanded exclusivity to maintain their *mana* (power), *maka’āinana* exercised inclusivity, renewing communal bonds through acts of generosity and interdependence (Oliveira 2014:39). Accompaniment collaborates across positionalities to work against racial logics in

order to craft and imagine futures that rely on interdependence rather than partitions.

The work of feminists, stressing the multivalent intimacies and affinities that animate emancipatory research, inform this proposition. Cindi Katz (1996) acknowledges the power differentials facing the ethnographer, embedded in gender, class, race, and institutional affiliations. Accompaniment redefines knowledge and the relations of power that constitute it, “refus[ing] mastery” (ibid.), while embracing experimentation (Katz 1992). It rejects ethnographic authority, domination, possession, and instead recognises that the “field” is in fact the “blurry space of everyday life” (Katz 1994:67). Here the neat partitioning between “academia” and “community” proves patently false, as do other categories that over-generalise a person’s role in a particular space. Accompaniment advances abolition ecologies by enabling researchers to forge relationships amid and across partitions to devise knowledge systems and craft ecological relations that both recognise and defy divisions while facilitating connections between disparate struggles.

Here I take a brief detour from Hawai’i to trace accompaniment’s syncretic roots in Central America and offer some examples of this work in the present day.

### ***A Genealogy of Accompaniment***

Syncretism, the merging of multiple worldmaking systems to generate new insights and perspectives, offers a useful approach for abolition ecologies for two reasons: it facilitates the re-scaling of activism from local to global (Gilmore 2008) and because of its association with liberation theology, from which the notion of accompaniment derives. Liberation theology weaves together Indigenous Central American and Christian cosmologies to uphold a religious practice that supports the poor and the oppressed. Oscar Romero, known to have introduced the notion of accompaniment, worked within this theological and ideological strain as the Archbishop of San Salvador from 1977 until his assassination in 1980.

Connecting Oceania and Central America during the Cold War and its aftermath reveal the globality of carceral geographies, as the late 1970s and early 1980s mark a crucial moment when the military police state systemically eliminated and contained formations that challenged systems benefitting the ruling class. Ignacio Martin-Baro (1985:12) reflects on this period: “In its Salvadorean version, the North American doctrine of national security meant the systematic elimination of any person or group that even indirectly represented any sort of opposition to the total power of the oligarchy and to their system of economic exploitation.” From Wai’anae to San Salvador, the US government reshaped life-ways to a vision of capitalism tethered to the US through ongoing warfare, including murders and disappearances in Central America and the 1983 militarised Mākuā eviction. This entrenched the Cold War mandate to discipline anti-colonial and anticapitalist movements (Hammond in Kim 2004). Here we can grasp the prerogative of contemporary carceral states: to eliminate and contain efforts for redistribution based on sustainable, interdependent human–environment relations (Woods 2000).

Manifold interests contest these enclosures, and during the 1968 gathering of Latin American bishops in Medellín, Colombia, the clergy had reached a controversial consensus to decouple the church from powerful interest groups in favour of a “preferential option for the poor”. In 1977, the Salvadorean government and oligarchs selected Romero as the Archbishop of El Salvador because of his early anticommunist leanings. However, less than a month after his anointment, on 12 March 1977, a Salvadorian US-trained officer murdered Romero’s friend, Rutilio Grande, upending Romero’s political views (López Vigil 2000:38,106). Grande’s murder represented “an attack against ... the church’s preferential option for the poor” and this realisation “brought Romero to an integrated, living faith” (Martin-Baro 1985:6). Confronting the murder of teachers, demonstrators, and campesinos by security forces backed by the US while popular and left political organisations continued to grow, Romero spoke frequently about accompaniment, standing beside the campesinos to protect them from the barrel of the gun in an act of solidarity (López Vigil 2000:248; Martin-Baro 1985). On 23 March 1980, after security forces decimated over 1000 teachers and demonstrators, Romero pleaded with troops and national guardsmen not to follow orders to kill. The following day, assassins murdered Romero as he stood at the altar.

In the 1980s, accompaniment began to take the form of foreigners acting as the “unarmed bodyguards” of Indigenous activists, providing protection from military attack to facilitate continued activism (Mahony and Eguren 1997). Accompaniment was especially crucial during Guatemala’s Civil War that transmogrified into an all-out genocide that began in the late 1970s when Guatemalan military and paramilitary groups—backed by the CIA to protect transnational corporate interests—targeted the rural poor, Mayans, and Catholics supporting them (Ybarra 2018:7). Peace Brigades International (PBI) initiated accompaniment programs in Guatemala in 1983 at the height of conflict, founding Grupo Apoyo Mucho (GAM), a support network for families of the disappeared. Paramilitary forces assassinated two of their leaders in 1984, and, in 1985, military dictator General Oscar Humberto Mejia Victories threatened to expel PBI if they continued to support GAM (Henderson 2009).<sup>4</sup>

As a specific type of solidarity work that emerged from the violent repression of resistance to imperialism in Central America, accompaniment challenges these destructive campaigns by practicing radical interdependence. The 2016 Quaker Social Change Ministry Manual defines accompaniment as “walking together while navigating differences in a loving, respectful, trusting” way with people most impacted by injustice (AFSC 2016). Putting this into practice, Casa de Paz in Denver supports migrants after they leave detention facilities, providing housing for former detainees and their visitors as part of the city’s sanctuary movement. A participant in these efforts describes accompaniment as “the simplicity of being with someone else truly, and not trying to take over” and a “deep spiritual practice” bound to relationship building. She continues:

We are living within a larger system whose goals are to make us feel separate and to make us feel like we don’t have the power to change anything ... [in contrast,] we

accompany each other as if we were friends, cousins, neighbors, because we are all connected. (UUSC 2018:17, 22)

Reaching across rather than down, accompaniment struggles in community for a new world, confronting a tendency group to operate as atomised individuals struggling solely for a particular demographic (Koopman 2008:294–295). A receptive and creative mode of relationality, accompaniment as an abolitionist practice strives for kinship and connection in the face of violent borders that sever people from each other and from sources of livelihood.

While allyship stresses the recognition of privilege, accompaniment breaks out of the carceral logics of innocence and culpability through a commitment to wrestling with the complexities, incoherent ideologies, and experiences that emerge from uneven power relations. Drawing from spiritual traditions, it invokes the mutual, cooperative practice of being present while walking side by side with another person, strategically deploying power differentials to leverage networks for the liberation of the oppressed (Koopman 2011). Yet, like allyship, accompaniment can easily fall into the very logics that it aspires to unmake, as accompaniment “engage[s] the preferential dynamics of racism, and it flirts with colonialism”. The differing values that military forces assign to particular lives hold long histories of racial and economic violence that produce the very privileges that enable people to accompany those whose lives are at risk (Coy in Henderson 2009:970). In other words, accompaniment works within the logics of racism rather than fully transforms them. As another mode of co-resistance, accompaniment signifies a commitment to actively engaging, however clumsily, with racism’s contradictions in the service of its abolition.

The following section traces the ongoing history of Mākua to explicate the carceral processes that spatially enforce racism, while the last section reflects on my experiences engaging in accompaniment as a research methodology amid a partitioned landscape.

## **Geographies of Carcerality and Marronage**

People in Wai‘anae today designate World War II as a pivotal turning point in Hawai‘i. Indeed, it marks the expansion of carceral geographies that regulate relations between and among the natural world and humans, operationalising racism through the production of uneven access to life-giving resources. As the longest institutionalisation of military rule in US history that lasted nearly three years (Nebolon 2017), martial law began on 7 December 1941, the day of the Pearl Harbor bombing. Weeks later, the US Army evicted all of Mākua’s residents, many of whom lived and worked on a ranch, for no other reason than wanting the land for target practice. They claimed that this expulsion was a war necessity and deceptively promised its return six months after the war. The military then used Mākua for joint Army–Navy manoeuvres, bombing the valley from planes and sending shells from amphibious ocean crafts. They used homes as targets and destroyed one of the last remaining fishing villages on the island (Kelly and Quintal 1977). While destroying lifeways, martial law also criminalised much of the

islands' population, particularly Japanese people who the US military deemed in need of control, containment, and "united in purpose and action" with the US (Okihiro 1992:201–203). It also spatially regulated Hawaiians and other local people by blocking access to the ocean and other sources of livelihood. The US military asserted veritable control over Hawai'i's land and people by assembling partitions that stretched across racial lines.

The month of the Pearl Harbor attack, the Navy initiated one of their largest building programs in history, constructing barriers across Hawai'i, Midway, Wake, Johnson, and Palmyra (Anthony 1955:3). At Mākua, in addition to evicting residents of the valley, the military erected a concrete training wall, about 60 feet long, 6 feet thick, and 8 feet high, on the beach for Army and Navy troops to practice scaling it under fire (Kelly and Quintal 1977:89). This carceral geography of World War II set the stage for the "oceanic theatre for competing imperialisms" (Pieris 2016:258) between former European colonists, Asian challengers, and the United States. Carceral processes stretch beyond sites of formal detention to far-reaching, everyday systems of criminalisation and confinement that emerge from a security-obsessed culture. US, Japanese, Australian, and European prisoner of war camps across the Pacific during World War II provide a striking iteration of these spatial, disciplinary dimensions of imperialism (Pieris 2016).

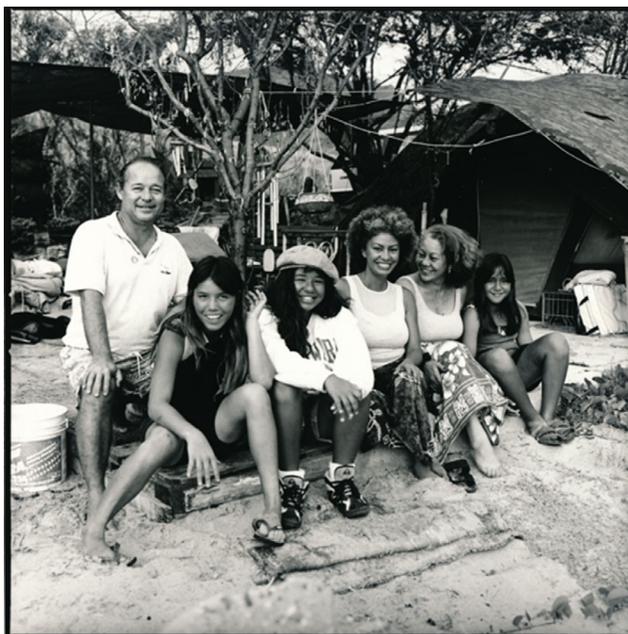
Carceral geographies encompass the territorial processes that spatially hold together the colonial racial state. The territorial partitioning consolidated during World War II continues today, casting those who do not conform to imperial prerogatives as threats. This justifies the policing and coralling that deprive entire communities of stable homes, community networks, and sources of sustenance. The ongoing evictions of houseless people in Wai'anae stand as an alarming illustration of this process. In this context, carceral geographies include the range of "[s]paces in which individuals are confined, subjected to surveillance or otherwise deprived of essential freedoms" (Herbert 2009:64). In sum, it captures what Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2017:231) describes as "the system's apparently boundless boundary-making". This endemic partition building contours racial lines to enable society as a whole to organise itself around fabricated threats to shape entire ways of life (Gilmore with Loyd 2012) according to the visions of US empire.

Amid the durability of World War II's carceral infrastructures, people have repeatedly returned to the beach at the base of Mākua Valley. While predominantly Hawaiian, the community was in fact multiracial; 83% were Hawaiian, and 13 other Pacific Islanders, 11 white people, nine Filipinos, three Puerto Ricans, and one Japanese person lived at Mākua in 1996 (Niheu 2014). Many moved there because of trauma, poverty, illness, and family issues, and Pu'uhonua o Mākua provided a place of healing. Their collective work across partitions mobilised experimental worldmaking to cultivate well-being through resurgent interdependence. Sparky Rodrigues, who lived on the beach in the mid-nineties, reflected that "Hawaiian-ness", as an ontology and practice, breathed life into shared responsibility for the place and each other to cultivate lived resistance to carceral geographies. Later, Sparky, along with other community leaders, participated in a delegation to Vieques in solidarity with the Puerto Rican struggle for demilitarisation. Drawing from the wellspring of Indigenous environmental

knowledge while engaging in expansive modes of resistance, their abolition ecologies centred *ea* as the basis of Indigenous futurity.

The houseless exercised what Sparky calls a “long term solution to homelessness”, in other words, radical reterritorialisation within and against the racial logics of partitions that private property regimes uphold. Working under the banner of Hawaiian independence, the Mākua inhabitants challenged the crisis in affordable housing on O‘ahu by refusing property ownership altogether. Sparky notes that these collaborative efforts to redistribute resources to the disadvantaged have worked to disempower government and capitalist interests because it “takes away their stick”. He continues, “How are they going to enforce the law if you don’t break any laws because you’re not in that system ... not paying any money into it, not supporting your paychecks, you don’t need it?” (Figure 1).

While *ea* animated their *pu‘uhonua* as a space of sanctuary from war, maroon communities similarly demarcate spaces of freedom and self-determination (Diouf 2014). This endeavour does not always entail distance from spaces of domination. Just as the people of *Pu‘uhonua o Mākua* lived adjacent to a military base, escaped slaves in the US South often practiced *marronage* on the borderlands of plantations, hunting and foraging while obtaining food, matches for fires, and furniture from the estates they sought to flee (Diouf 2014). Likewise, Mākua inhabitants were not “outside” capitalism and the nation-state, as many used mass produced goods, held jobs that provided a paycheck, and obtained government aid. Operating alongside these structures, they devised ad hoc strategies of



**Figure 1:** Sparky Rodrigues and ‘ohana in front of their Mākua home. 20 May 1996. Photo by Ed Greevy [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]

resistance and resurgence. For pu'uhonua and maroon communities, a syncretic in-betweenness defines their lives.

Abolition ecologies encompass the territorial practices that make the subjugated unconquerable to an extent, even as they defy purity by operating alongside, against, and sometimes even intertwined with colonial apparatuses. Pu'uhonua and maronage demonstrate that carceral geographies do not solely exclude and push out, they also generate new spatial practices through radical placemaking within the landscape of racism. The ea of Mākua centred human–environment intimacy while working both amid and against elimination and containment.

Sparky reflected on the threat that their self-governing community posed to state bodies: those “living on the beach [were] really discovering their Hawaiian-ness ... Every time someone tries to do that, that’s when enforcements are called in to stifle it. And it seems like there is an effort to really prevent that from blossoming”. As Clyde Woods (2017:180) argues, racism materialises through repeating rounds of social, spatial, political, fiscal, and ideological barricade-building that attempt to defeat movements for sustainable development and wealth redistribution. A planetary endeavour, carceral geographies eliminate and contain localised spatial practices that pose alternatives to racism and war.

Conflicts came to a head in the 1990s, when life at Mākua became a combat zone. Sparky reflected, “we ended up catching SEALs coming through the property, with rubber guns. The submarine would drop them off, they’d swim in, they’d go in and do an objective at Mākua, but they’d go through our camps” on their way into the base. In March of 1996, Governor Ben Cayetano affirmed that an eviction was necessary for “clean-up” and “public access”, demarcating the beach dwellers outside the bounds of the “public” while coproducing spatial and social partitions. On 18 June 1996, the Navy, Army, Hawai’i Department of Land and Natural Resources, and Honolulu Police Department collaborated in an eviction. Vietnam Veterans Against the War distributed a pamphlet with a description of that chilling day:

Hundreds of police and members of the National Guard were mobilised to bust up a community at Mākua Beach, forcibly removing Hawaiians from their land and bulldozing their houses, while at the same time the US military’s ability to bomb and burn an entire valley *only a few feet away* was literally guaranteed for the next 65 years. And for the price of only \$1!!

More than “keeping people in”, carceral projects reconsolidate control over places in the face of threats to the legitimacy of colonial states, particularly powerful Indigenous claims to land (Mei-Singh 2016) (Figure 2).

Heidi Kiiwetinepinesik Stark (2016) aptly describes how colonial law employs criminalisation tactics that construct “Indigenous lands as lawless spaces absent legal order”, to reduce Indigenous political authority and avert attention from the settler state’s own illegality. In response to unruly Indigenous political formations such as expressions of ea at Mākua, the colonial racial state constantly recalibrates territorial jurisdiction through acts of criminalisation. Yet this does not fully expunge native presence, as Indigenous people “continue to structure settler colonial society” (Wolfe 2006:390). Because of this, settler colonialism must

actively and continually reproduce itself through acts of war. While Pu'uhonua o Mākuā provided sustenance and healing, a racist war apparatus repeatedly cuts apart familial connections between and among humans and the natural world. Today Mākuā Military Reservation's 4000 acres remain in military hands as houselessness persists and remains criminalised across O'ahu.

The following section further unpacks the perpetual incompleteness of elimination due to the persistence of *ea*, reflecting on my experiences conducting research on the Wai'ānae Coast from 2013 to 2014.

## Accompaniment as Research Methodology for Abolition Ecologies

In the fall of 2013, upon initiating intensive ethnographic fieldwork, I had every intention to practice engaged abolitionist research in Wai'ānae, where the military controls 34% of the Wai'ānae Coast and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander residents comprise 68% of the population compared with 24.5% for the rest of Hawai'i (American Community Survey 2013–2017).<sup>5</sup> However, I found myself uncertain about how to forge meaningful connections across sociospatial partitions. After living in Wai'ānae for four weeks, I reflected in my 28 September 2013 fieldnotes: "I'm not sure if I've ever had such a profound feeling of being an outsider as I do living in Wai'ānae." Because I had grown up 40 miles away on the same island, I had previously held an illusion of closeness and familiarity. However, I became increasingly aware of the vast distances in culture, lifestyle, privilege, language, community, and resource availability between Wai'ānae and the part of Honolulu where I had grown up. While this sense of outsider-ness remains for me today, long-lasting relationships have provided opportunities to work across partitions. Lucy Gay, a revered Wai'ānae community leader who I met the same week I wrote my 28 September fieldnotes, made this possible.



**Figure 2:** Mākuā, 1977. Photo by Ed Greevy [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonline library.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)]

As Director of Educational Opportunity at Leeward Community College's Wai'anae campus and leader of the Wai'anae Environmental Justice Working Group (EJ Working Group), Lucy has dedicated her life to education and organising in this economically and socially disenfranchised community. She grew up in the working class town of Kalihi-Pālana on the outskirts of Honolulu, approximately 30 miles from Wai'anae, and attended the University of Hawai'i Mānoa (UH) in the 1960s during the civil rights and other global protest movements. Inspired by these struggles, in 1971, the "birth of the modern Hawaiian movement" at Kalama Valley on east O'ahu changed the course of Hawai'i history and Lucy's life. This struggle marked a battle for land rights between working class tenants and pig farmers on one side and development interests on the other, and represented a larger struggle for Hawaiian autonomy (Trask 1987). The tenants' plight attracted antiwar and environmental activists, Students for a Democratic Society, and Black Panther Party supporters (Milner 2006), garnering a syncretic, coalitional mobilisation that later inspired the Mākua anti-eviction efforts in the 1980s and 1990s. Lucy recalled that she was at first hesitant to engage in acts of civil disobedience, but, she says, "You gotta [get involved]. There's only so much of us Hawaiians at UH at the time".

Lucy emphasises community building at the convergence of education and organising as the basis of transformation. She initiated her work in Wai'anae in 1967 with a youth program for school dropouts funded by Lyndon B. Johnson's Model Cities program, part of the War on Poverty. Working with young mothers forced to drop out of school due to being pregnant, Lucy educated them towards a high school diploma. Her primary challenge entailed finding care for the students' children during class-time. She approached the leader of a group of women who took Wai'anae children idling in public places to school, and asked a few of them to watch the babies while she taught. In exchange, she tutored any of them for free for their GED. It was through this work that Lucy identified "the power of community resources", meaning "how you get things done without the exchange of money or any formal organization". This models accompaniment as the enactment of commitment and capacity to find common ground "despite the radical divisiveness inherent in a stratified society" (Tomlinson and Lipsitz 2013:10). As an abolitionist practice, it recognises this stratification while prioritising the provision of life-giving resources such as education for those who hold the least power, in this case, young mothers grappling with the workings of gendered colonial violence.

After living in Wai'anae conducting research and organising alongside Lucy for six months on various initiatives, I came to understand our working relationship as a form of accompaniment, making space for affinity and connection as part of an expansive liberatory practice. Participating in the EJ Working Group, I had observed the Wai'anae community's encyclopaedic knowledge about immediate problems in the community, such as illegal dumping and harmful development. While absorbing as much of this information as I could, I found myself searching for connections between immediate local and broader structural historical issues, drawing from the syncretic traditions of the Kalama Valley struggle and liberation theology. Learning from the lived vernacular theory of Wai'anae while

contributing my own understandings, I began to approach ethnographic research as a process that unfolds through mutual teaching and learning. I proposed to Lucy in early 2014 that we organise a Waiʻanae Film Series to discuss the takeover of Hawaiian land and struggles for ea in local and global contexts.<sup>6</sup> At our first event, on 14 March 2014, Lucy and I paired Mākua Homecoming (Na Maka o Ka ʻĀina 1996), about the 1996 eviction from Mākua Beach, with *The Insular Empire* on the US occupation of the Mariana Islands, the home of many recently arrived migrants in Hawaiʻi (Warheit 2009). This pairing enacted what Gilmore (2008:31, 56) describes as the work of public scholars: “to think in cross-cutting ways and to find both promising continuities and productive breaks” to intervene “in a particular historical-geographical moment ... [to change] not only what people do but also how all of us think about ourselves and our time and place”. In other words, we were stretching our locally situated analyses of militarised dispossession to look at multiple places together to grasp a stronger understanding of the larger whole. The conversations opened, transformed, and redefined the meanings of the world we are collectively making.

The community organically came together to carry out the initiative. Five women from Waiʻanae volunteered to join Lucy and me in an organising committee and multiple organisations supported as cosponsors. This included the EJ Working Group, KAHEA: The Hawaiian-Environmental Alliance, Hawaiʻi Peace and Justice, Aikea (connected to Unite Here! Local 5), and an elected official’s office. Community leaders Maimun Yusuf and Ken Koike pulled together a group to make locally sourced dinners for each event, exercising the collectivity that undoubtedly shapes Waiʻanae. At the first gathering, about 50 people participated. By our third event, on 30 May 2014, approximately 100 people in this rural town of approximately 50,000 joined us. They remarked on the importance of these forums to generate and share grassroots analyses of their lived conditions as a starting point for collective action.

Our shared commitment to abundant futures for the region coincided with our differential positionalities and experiences; as such, accompaniment was a driving force for the Waiʻanae Film Series. The multivalent affinities between different types of expertise—in this case, the Waiʻanae community’s lived experiences and knowledge about its conditions, Lucy’s deftness as a community organiser, our chefs’ ability to craft delicious and locally sourced meals, and my work as a scholar at the intersections of geography and ethnic studies, opened up new analytical and material possibilities. In this recognition, my subject position as a researcher became a “space of betweenness”, a place of connection between intersecting worlds and ways of thinking (Katz 1994). My approach to research emerged from growing up as a mixed race Asian in Hawaiʻi—a racial makeup that many in Waiʻanae share—and previous involvement in community organising in New York City, placing me on insider–outsider borderlands.

Both uncomfortable and generative, this position forced me to grapple with the fact that a nation with capacity for self-determination in the face of genocidal erasure and containment must make a set of strategic claims regarding belonging to a particular territory. This is in itself a boundary-making project. As Sparky said: when the military returns Mākua to the Hawaiian people, the fences will need to

stay standing in order to grant entry to caretakers while excluding those intending to damage the place. In another example, Kanaka Maoli geographer Kamana Beamer (2014:32–33) describes palena as place boundaries in Hawaiian land tenure systems that are “dynamic and subject to the agreement of neighboring ali’i [chiefs] or families”. Rather than establishing hierarchies that deprive people of resources, palena protect places to sustain and govern abundance. Protectors of places emphasise the importance of boundaries and barriers to protect and maintain ea, stressing that decision-makers regarding land use must transform. I experienced this boundary-making repeatedly as I learned from, lived among, and organised with the people of Wai’anae. This was sometimes painful and always humbling. Conducting research and organising the film series, I found that not only was I analysing and deconstructing the partitions that separate people from land, I was actively living the social and affective boundary-making tied to the reclamation of places that grapple with, oppose, and sometimes incorporate the logics of carceral geographies.

Amid this, one thing became clear: Wai’anae’s people were eager to reflect upon Hawai’i’s enclosures in a global context and strategise about how to cultivate ea in order to continue traditions of resistance exemplified by the 1971 Kalama Valley struggle. A particularly generative event on 30 May 2014 presented films about the military in Hawai’i and the global network of military bases. Afterwards, Terri Keko’olani, Ellen-Rae Cachola, and Kyle Kajihiro spoke about their demilitarisation activism. During the share-out that followed small group discussions about the films and speakers, participants expressed visions for alternatives to militarism. Invoking generational wisdom, they highlighted the ahupua’a as the keystone of the Hawaiian land tenure system. Ahupua’a, as a land division, frequently extends from the mountain to the ocean with waterways, lo’i (water terraces, especially for taro), farms, and fish ponds as the basis of an abundant economy for all. Participants characterised the sharing of resources as the basis of Kanaka Maoli self-determination—with many stressing the imperative to transform from a monetary economy to one that relies on trading and bartering. Participants envisioned biking infrastructure as an alternative to the car, gas, and oil culture to promote health. They also consistently emphasised ‘ohana (extended family that includes non-blood relations) with spiritual connections to the environment and each other woven throughout. Their visions of ea, as a mode of abolition ecologies, recognised the layered obligations that people hold based on pilina (linkages) to a particular place amid histories of dispossession (Osorio 2018). This worldmaking involves the abolition of capitalism and militarism while centring patterns of organisation predicated on the shared cultivation of resources. They identified community dialogue for education, nonviolent resistance, organising, and protest as critical strategies for realising these aims.

While participants almost universally stressed interdependent relations with the natural world as the basis of transformation, I soon learned that no cohesive community ideology exists due to the persuasive, ideological dimensions of empire. In fact, participants held mixed sentiments regarding the merits of policing and war. At the 30 May event, someone remarked that he was torn about activists’ call for demilitarisation because he sees the military as necessary. He said: “If we got

attacked by terrorists because we got the military to leave, who are we going to go crying to?" He asked: "Who's going to protect us if they don't?" He repeatedly invoked the threat of "terrorists" as the basis of his position. Others listened respectfully, several seemingly sympathising with this sentiment. This was because he was speaking of the need to ensure safety for his community, family, and self, a wholly rational imperative. At the same time, this form of security relied on containing the fabricated danger of "terrorists", a racial category consolidated in the wake of 9/11 that casts people who appear "Middle Eastern, Arab, or Muslim" as outside the bounds of US "citizenship" (Volpp 2002). The Trump administration similarly justifies their insistence on expanding the border wall by casting border-crossers from Mexico and Central America as "terrorists". Speaking of the need for military protection, the young man was in fact speaking to the violent and vast partitioning of land and people, voicing the ideological dimensions of carceral geographies.

I soon understood that it would be virtually impossible to develop a clean analysis of colonial imposition on one side and anticolonial practices and ideologies on the other, as lines zig zagged, crossed, and broke altogether in many places. I reflected in my 28 September fieldnotes: "one cannot clearly trace one thing to another, they often overlap and then become lost ... How can I ever make sense of this messy constellation?" It became clear that fences do not produce clear dividing lines, rather, many gradients of betweenness. When the young man asked, "who are we going to go crying to?", he was sharing knowledge gained through living in an unforgiving society shaped by the harsh enforcement of the maldistribution of resources. Some working class Hawaiians similarly find themselves choosing between participation in organised violence through underground economies or joining the military, a result of a long history of land theft that has resulted in trauma and concentrated poverty. Yet war relies on criminalisation, the same logic that empowers the policing of young men in systematically devastated communities such as Wai'anae. Facing the foreclosures on life chances that constitute carceral geographies, the people of Pu'uhonua o Mākuā devised a third option by harnessing *ea* as the basis of radical reterritorialisation.

Engaging multiple contradictions, abolitionist research delves into the blurry experiences that emerge from life amid partitions, rejecting the always-present risk of analytical confinement. Potential hazards abound. They include exoticising and romanticising research subjects by representing them in a conceptually bound space (Katz 1994), harvesting data without returning the fruits of research to the people who made the work possible in the first place, and naturalising existing systems of oppression. For the latter, researchers can present structures as static and totalising while neglecting the constant historical transformations that emerge from ongoing contestation. All of these possibilities pose danger to close off meanings while reifying divisions. An ethnographer can potentially function as a carceral agent, protecting specialised knowledge while engaging in knowledge production that reifies the territoriality of racism. As an abolitionist researcher, I am cognisant of this risk as I grapple with layered contradictions and obligations that include activism/scholarship, insider/outsider, and Hawaiian/non-Hawaiian. Approaching ethnographic research as a form of accompaniment can generate

syncretic analytical practices that join disparate struggles, people, and places (Gilmore 2008) to confront carceral geographies and open pathways for collaboration and abundance.

\* \* \*

This paper has traced the legacies of partitions widely implemented during World War II martial law in Hawai'i and consolidated during the Cold War, organising society and space against a fabricated threat to instigate and propagate US empire. In the face of carceral geographies, maroon communities such as Pu'uuhonua o Mākua in the 1980s and 1990s drew from a tradition of Indigenous resistance that is at once situated and global. The ongoing dynamic expressions of self-determination on the Wai'anae Coast draw from intergenerational wisdom to enact *ea* as a form of abolition ecologies. In response, dominant state institutions police and regulate relations with the natural world to maintain their monopoly on legitimate forms of socioenvironmental organisation. Accompaniment engages with these carceral geographies while facilitating the convergence of multivalent knowledge, experiences, and histories that can birth new spatialities and socialities.

Accompaniment prioritises the ongoing work of Indigenous, working class, and other marginalised people engaged in collective efforts for sustaining abundance while confronting elimination and containment. As a methodology for abolition ecologies, it uneasily crosses partitions while reconstituting knowledge and material conditions. While Wolfe (2013) advocates for the recuperation of binarism—between native and settler-outsider—particularly in the face of a facile, neoliberal multiculturalism that erases the violence of Indigenous erasure, constellations of co-resistance (Simpson 2017) are more important now than ever. Rather than binarism, our political, intellectual work would do well to recognise the nested, multiple antagonisms that constitute our political and socioenvironmental worlds.

## Acknowledgements

Thanks to Megan Ybarra, who invited me to participate in this special issue, and Craig Howes, Tess Jacobson, Manu Mei-Singh, Mohammad Wiswall, Megan Ybarra, Kalaniopua Young, and three anonymous reviewers who read versions of this essay and provided extraordinarily generative feedback. Steve McFarland introduced me to the term accompaniment, and Judith Hamera encouraged me to write an article about it. Lucy Gay and Kyle Kajihiro model transformative activist teaching and scholarship. Ruth Wilson Gilmore and Dean Saranillo forged and shaped these ideas through dialogue over many years.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> I use Hawaiian, Kanaka Maoli, Indigenous, and native interchangeably. Kanaka Maoli represents a decolonising practice and “indicates ... genealogical relationship to the lands and water of our islands” (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua 2014). “Hawaiian” reflects Hawai'i vernacular and reminds readers that Hawaiian does not indicate one's residency.

<sup>2</sup> The people of Mākua were houseless, not homeless, as the beach was their home.

<sup>3</sup> In contrast, Candice Fujikane (2018) describes her role “on the frontlines of decolonial struggles”, through activist scholarship that works alongside Hawaiians to shoulder the weight of colonial devastation and despair, leading me to believe that she is practicing accompaniment.

<sup>4</sup> PBI remains working Guatemala today; accompaniment teams in conflict areas support ongoing human rights, peace, and social justice efforts (see <https://pbi-guatemala.org>).

<sup>5</sup> Anna Kato calculated the fractional coverage of military land area in relation to the Wai'anae Census County District using geospatial data from the following three sources: Data.gov (<https://www.data.gov/>), US Census Bureau TIGER/Line Shapefiles (<https://www.census.gov/geographies/mapping-files/time-series/geo/tiger-line-file.html>) and the Hawai'i Statewide GIS Program Geospatial Data Portal (<http://geoportal.hawaii.gov/>).

<sup>6</sup> Terri Keko'olani, a Hawai'i Peace and Justice leader and Hawaiian independence activist, suggested I show films in Wai'anae to bridge local and global issues.

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