VISUAL MEDIA REVIEWS

Act of War—The Overthrow of the Hawaiian Nation. 1993. Video, 58 min., color. *We Are Who We Were: From Resistance to Affirmation.* 1998. Video, 15 min., color. *The Tribunal.* 1994. Video, 84 min., color. *Mākua —To Heal the Nation.* [1996]. Video, 32 min., color. Directed by Nā Maka o ka ʻĀina; produced by Nā Maka o ka ʻĀina in association with various groups. Nāʻālehu: Nā Maka o ka ʻĀina (P.O. Box 29, Nāʻālehu, HI 96772–0029; fax 808–929–9679; <video@namaka.com>; http://www.namaka.com/). US$15 to $165.

E Ola ka ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi (May the Hawaiian Language Live). 1997. Video, 28 min., color. Directed by Nā Maka o ka ʻĀina; produced and distributed by ʻAha Pūnana Leo (http://www.ahapunanaleo.org/). US$20.95.

Reviewed by J. Kehaulani Kauanui, Wesleyan University

Imaging Hawaiian Struggle and Self-Determination Through the Works of Nā Maka o ka ʻĀina

MUCH OF THE DISCOURSE on Pacific peoples' use of video production focuses on "preserving culture" through documenting oral histories, indigenous languages, and family genealogies. In Hawaiian contexts, most videos zoom in on resistance to the ongoing neocolonial threats to Hawaiian culture and the suppression of the exercise of Hawaiian sovereignty. Production company Nā Maka o ka ʻĀina is the most prominent force in Hawaiian video creations. Made up of an independent, two-person collaborative team of Puhipau and Joan Landers, Nā Maka o ka ʻĀina has produced more than

fifty videos that have screened around the world—primarily throughout Europe, Asia, and the Pacific. Its works document traditional and contemporary Hawaiian history, culture, and politics. Together the team has been—as the very name Nā Maka o ka ʻĀina suggests—"the eyes of the land": witnessing and documenting struggles on the land. Along with their trans-Pacific circulation, Nā Maka o ka ʻĀina videos have made their way among more Hawaiians than any other videos on Hawaiʻi. More importantly, they have furthered the cause of Hawaiian sovereignty and self-determination, exposing the plight of Hawaiians on-island, proving to be one of the most potent galvanizing forces for both educational and activist purposes.

Adapting technology for emancipatory purposes, these videos work to disrupt common notions that perpetuate myths of Hawaiʻi as a land of no trouble, marking the Islands as site of contestation, where multinational tourism and U.S. militarism perpetuate indigenous invisibility and dispossession. Nā Maka's videos powerfully represent the complexities of struggle: land occupations, arrests, police brutality, county-police destruction of homes, native protests, marches, legal interventions, testimonials, vigils, and public prayer. The relationship between indigenous Hawaiian media and political projects for self-determination grows stronger with the visibility that these videos help to enable. These videos engage the viable models of self-governance, working to highlight Hawaiian national identities, indigenous agency, visual culture, legacies of political activism and social history, self-representation, and historical reenactment. It is no wonder that the team has earned awards from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Hawaiʻi Filmmakers, Hawaiʻi International Film Festival, Columbus International Film Festival, and CINE.

This video review examines five works by Nā Maka o ka ʻĀina. The release of *Act of War—The Overthrow of the Hawaiian Nation* earned Nā Maka o ka ʻĀina broader visibility outside of Hawaiʻi. *Act of War* was funded in part by the Native American Public Broadcast Consortium and the Independent Television Service (I.T.V.S.), a nonprofit funded by the U.S. Congress. It has aired on the Public Broadcasting Service channels numerous times since its release in early 1993 and has been included in many film festivals internationally, winning awards around the globe. Nā Maka o ka ʻĀina created *Act of War* in association with the Center for Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa, with Professor Haunani-Kay Trask as executive producer, Professor Lilikalā Kameʻeleihiwa as the primary historian, and the late Hawaiian novelist John Dominis Holt as contributing writer.

Act of War is in documentary form, with a focus on the events that led to the U.S. overthrow of Queen Liliuʻokalani. With historical enactments using various forms of documentation, *Act of War* is also quite powerful in that its

history is narrated by four contemporary Hawaiian sovereignty activists, including Trask and Kame'eleihiwa, along with Jon Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio (professor of Hawaiian studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa), a Hawaiian historian in his own right, and prominent leader Kekuni Blaisdell, M.D. This video offers a very detailed account of the actors involved in the overthrow situated within a broad account of U.S. imperialism.

Act of War clears a space for more radical voices that continue to develop models of self-governance. To understand this, it is crucial that the video's powerful catalyzing effect be situated in the pre-apology context in which it was released. On 23 November 1993, the United States offered an apology through a joint Senate resolution (Public Law 103–150) to the Hawaiian people for the armed and illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian nation. Before the U.S. apology, leaders within the many sovereignty groups were constantly asked to account for the details of the overthrow as there was little popular consensus expressed over the military conditions under which the United States overpowered the throne. Among many other admissions of U.S. governmental complicity and support of the overthrow, the apology law acknowledges that "the indigenous Hawaiian people never directly relinquished their claims to their inherent sovereignty as a people or over their national lands to the United States, either through their monarchy or through plebiscite or referendum." But the apology is only that, a sorry excuse that makes no promise to recognize expressions of Hawaiian sovereignty.

Act of War works to "set the record" in its revision of Hawaiian and U.S. history. It works as counternarrative to the notion that Hawaiian leaders were despotic monarchs who, in the end, were too weak to hold their position. It offers an alternative to the idea that the overthrow was a "revolution" and takes account of the troubling motives involved. But even before grappling with the overthrow, *Act of War* reckons with three main themes that assert new theses regarding discourses of native deviance, depopulation, and the breaking of the *kapu* (sacred) system. For example, *Act of War* uses the texts of foreign explorers, missionaries, and traders to describe the industrious and fine nature of Hawaiians. The video also asserts that the breaking of the *kapu* was part of an indigenous response to the painful loss of mass deaths of Hawaiians, due to foreign diseases, and that Christianity, as an offering of "everlasting life," made sense to people whose world was no longer *pono,* in perfect balance, through practices within the Hawaiian polytheistic belief system. Thus, *Act of War* recreates an indigenous genealogy—a refined claim to the land—and offers a new way to make sense of the losses.

By delineating the history of the overthrow and in speaking to the contemporary struggles for Hawaiian sovereignty, *Act of War* throws Hawaiian national identity into question. Through a "before and after" focus on Hawai'i

then and now," the video opens with Trask's forceful assertion, "We are not American." Its ending also resonates with this claim, asking rhetorically: "And what has been the result of becoming part of America?" Here, the video operates as a critical intervention in a pre-apology nationalist context, one that enables broader Hawaiian participation in the struggle for sovereignty by offering a genealogical connection among Hawaiians through recognition of far-reaching dispossession and a movement beyond that loss towards self-determination via a common claim. This emphasis is instrumental within off-island Hawaiian communities in linking them to the movement and the land-based struggles on-island. Considering that nearly half of the Hawaiian people reside on the U.S. continent, this is no small amount of potential impact. Hawaiians from all over are widely recognizing the stakes in supporting the restoration of Hawaiian sovereignty.

We Are Who We Were: From Resistance to Affirmation is a provocative retelling of the dubious way that the United States annexed Hawai'i. Using archival photographs, historical quotes, and film footage, it details the efforts of Hawaiian people to defeat a treaty of annexation in the U.S. Senate. This video—produced collaboratively with the Hawaiian Patriotic League—is based on "Ke Kū'ē Kūpa'a Loa Nei Mākou: Kanaka Maoli Resistance to Annexation," the vital new doctoral thesis of Noenoe Silva (assistant professor of Hawaiian language at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa) that details broad-based Hawaiian opposition to the annexation. This video offers a legal lineage of resistance that supports the contemporary Hawaiian case for independence. *We Are Who We Were* works to shine the "light of knowledge" on conditions previously unknown that are instrumental in Hawai'i's fate. The video begins by marking the date of the "annexation" with a careful rhetorical move that immediately highlights the legal problematic of the transfer of Hawaiian dominion: "or so it appeared"—hence, referring to it as "the annexation that never was." The video delineates a compelling argument, drawing on Kingdom of Hawai'i law, international law, and U.S. law to argue the illegality of the way that the United States incorporated Hawai'i.

Prior to the U.S.-backed overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawai'i, the United States and the kingdom signed a treaty of friendship, trade, and navigation in 1849. Indeed, at that time, the Kingdom of Hawai'i entered into treaties with over twenty foreign powers. And although U.S. President Cleveland had declared the overthrow an "act of war" after reading an official report written by U.S. Minister Blount, McKinley was soon in office before the United States could move in to rectify the actions of Sanford Dole and his cohort who had formed the Republic of Hawaii on 4 July 1894. McKinley backed the treaty of annexation presented by the Republic of Hawai'i on 16 June 1897. However, the very next day, Queen Liliu'okalani submitted her protest

urging against ratification, noting its violation of international law. The treaty was withdrawn, spurred by this memorial that documented mass Hawaiian opposition.

Hawaiian resistance in the Islands was fierce. As the video shows, a Hawaiian patriotic league called Hui Aloha 'Āina was central to organizing these efforts to stop annexation. In a rally at 'Iolani palace, James Kaulia, president of the Hui Aloha 'Āina, said that agreeing to annexation was "like agreeing to be buried alive." Kaulia called for mass opposition that consisted of a two-month-long, full-scale petition drive. By boat, horse, and foot, the Hui Aloha 'Āina gathered more than twenty-one thousand signatures by November 1897. Another pro-Hawaiian group, called Hui Kālai'āina, also circulated a petition. Its petition called for the restoration of the Hawaiian monarchy, signed by over seventeen thousand Hawaiians. It is for the finding of these petitions that Silva is credited, since their existence had faded from public memory. Both petitions were formally accepted in December 1897 when representatives from each group traveled together to Washington from Hawai'i. Thus, the treaty of annexation was dead.

For a short time, annexation was stalled. But American empire builders gained a stronghold after the United States declared war on Spain. As part of the U.S. military efforts in the Philippines, Congress passed a joint resolution in July 1898 "annexing" Hawai'i by a simple majority of each house. After gaining McKinley's signature the document was presented by U.S. Minister Sewall to Dole (of the Republic of Hawai'i), who then yielded his authority to the United States. The video underscores the illegality of the transfer by underscoring the point that the resolution was assumed to possess the power and effect of a treaty of annexation.

The problems in *We Are Who We Were* stem from its assertion in the title itself, including its subtitle, *From Resistance to Affirmation.* While the underpinning of Hawaiian sovereignty claims is the insistence that Hawaiian sovereignty is inherent and not extinguished merely because governing mechanisms suppress it, the video ends on a problematic note by claiming that "there was no annexation": "What took place was nothing more than an illusion." Although the legal argument advanced in the production is convincing, this conclusion oversimplifies the legacy of that illegality. Nonetheless, *We Are Who We Were* incites the viewer to seriously ponder the effects of that legacy, legal and otherwise.

The Tribunal is a powerful video that documents the Peoples' International Tribunal, Hawai'i, conducted throughout the Islands for twelve days during August 1993. The tribunal—known in Hawaiian as Ka Ho'okolokolonui Kanaka Maoli—brought together a panel of independent judges consisting of international-law experts, human-rights activists, and indigenous-peoples'

advocates. These judges reviewed multiple charges brought against the United States by the Hawaiian people, represented collectively by more than thirty different Hawaiian pro-sovereignty groups. This video was produced by Nā Maka o ka ʻĀina in cooperation with the tribunal's convener, Kekuni Blaisdell, M.D., and offers a broad examination of contemporary Hawaiian political issues in their historical context. *The Tribunal* allows the viewer an opportunity to witness a variety of moving testimonials offered by Hawaiian people and historians of Hawaiʻi in response to the crimes allegedly committed by the United States: illegal appropriation of lands, waters, and natural resources; economic colonization and dispossession; cultural genocide and ethnocide; destruction of the environment; and violation of domestic trusts such as the Hawaiian Home Lands and so-called ceded lands trust. Perhaps needless to say, the United States did not send a representative to the site to respond to or defend the government against charges—reflected by an empty chair that was marked with a sign that read "U.S. Representative."

The Tribunal offers a rare glimpse of Hawaiians publicly testifying about their situations and desires for self-determination. Many draw from their own histories of dispossession such as family lands confiscated by the U.S. federal government, the missile test launched from sacred burial grounds on Kauaʻi, the ongoing problems with land evictions and ocean access for fishing and gathering, and the abrogation of water rights that affect food cultivation. The video sets the charges lodged against the United States within a serious legal and cultural history that moves through the complex shifts in Hawaiʻi's governance—from the time of the kingdom (1795) through the era of the overthrow (1893) and republic (1894–1898), to the time of annexation (1898) that paved the way for the territorial governance of Hawaiʻi as a U.S. colony (from 1900), to the time of the dubious statehood plebiscite (1959) that fell far short of meeting criteria of international law. Those familiar with the Hawaiian sovereignty struggle will recognize testifiers such as Mililani Trask, Lilikalā Kameʻeleihiwa, Jon Osorio, Puanani Rogers, Jeff Chandler, Henry Smith, Skippy Ione, Palikapu Dedman, Charles Maxwell, Larry Kimura, Emmett Aluli, and Colette Machado. The representation of the judges' participation also allows the viewer to locate Hawaiʻi's case within the context of global indigenous movements and its evaluation by important figures judging the case: Asthma Khader of Jordan, Hyung Kyung Chung of South Korea, Odo Makoto of Japan, Te Moana Nui a Kiwa Jackson of Aotearoa/New Zealand, Sharon Venne (Cree nation), Ward Churchill (Creek/Cherokee Metis), and prominent U.S. legal scholars Milner Ball and Lennox Hinds. The advocate prosecutors were well-known justice attorneys José Luis Morin, Maivan Clech Lam, and Glen Morris (Shawnee).

Like all of Nā Maka o ka ʻĀina's works, *The Tribunal* also includes a selection of Hawaiian songs and resistance music as well as scenic shots that under-

score the beauty of the land base under siege and the land battles that continue to rage. It is no surprise that this stunning tape won the Web of Time award and won at the Two Rivers Native Film Video Festival of Minneapolis. This video, while longer than the others, is well worth the time and is a number one choice for classroom teaching and community screening because it offers the most variety in screening the contemporary and historical—the documented and the determined.

Mākua—To Heal the Nation brings to the fore a specific case of land occupation and survival. Introduced to the site by Henry David Rosa, the viewer learns how the land at Mākua is being reclaimed for physical and spiritual sustenance. As the video piercingly shows, the people there occupied the land simply to survive. The video was produced and directed by Nā Maka o ka ʻĀina prior to the eviction by the state that took place in June 1996, after the Department of Land and Natural Resources had served the occupiers notice to vacate in March of that same year. Indeed, the work is explicitly an advocacy piece, televised on PBS throughout the United States.

Located at the western tip of the island of Oʻahu, Mākua is situated between beach and valley and has an ancient history of being a *puʻuhonua*, a place of refuge. The U.S. military utilizes the valley of Mākua as a range, just adjacent to the village of people who made Mākua their home. The video opens with Robi Kahakalau singing "Mākua"—a familiar *mele* to all in Hawaiʻi. *Mākua* acknowledges what Mākua means to the people who resides there, including some families who were based there for six years, such as the Kaimanas. We see in the video how people grow sweet potato, pumpkin, watermelon, and squash amidst the threat of the army installation, live ammunition firing, and explosives testing. *Mākua* raises important problems in the struggle to exercise self-determination and self-sufficiency. Aptly, *Mākua*'s subtitle is "to heal a nation." It makes the important linkage between Hawaiian homelessness and its impact on this particular community (which is one of many) to the larger move for Hawaiian recovery.

E Ola ka ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi (May the Hawaiian Language Live) is an informative and moving video about a form of cultural imperialism exemplified by the legal and cultural suppression of Hawaiian language. This work documents the struggle to revive the Hawaiian language and the ongoing work that enables Hawaiian people to proudly declare that it is indeed alive. The video tells the story of how a steadfast group of scholars and native speakers worked together to bring back the Hawaiian language. This video won the Hawaiʻi Filmmaker's Award and the best documentary under thirty minutes award at the Dreamspeakers Festival.

The Hawaiian language provides a genealogy of the past as well as a source of indignities committed against the Hawaiian people. In the wake of the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaiʻi, the Republic of Hawaiʻi (created by

those who orchestrated that coup) outlawed Hawaiian-language instruction and shut down over one hundred Hawaiian-language newspapers. An 1896 law declared, "The English language shall be the medium and basis of instruction in all public and private schools." This enforced law, along with other forms of political suppression, worked to sever much (but not all) of *ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi* from the tongues of Hawaiian people at large as they suffered systematic punishment and humiliation for speaking the language. As a result, today only a slim minority of Hawaiian people speak Hawaiian fluently, while the vast majority retain a broad Hawaiian vocabulary through familiarity with Hawaiian songs, chants, place names on the land, and the persistence of Hawaiian Creole English, which utilizes Hawaiian words as well as Hawaiian-language sentence structures, albeit with the "pidgin" content.

The 1896 law remained on the books despite the fact that in 1978 the Hawaiʻi State Constitutional Convention determined that the Hawaiian language was to be an official state language, along with English. But it was not until 1987 that the Hawaiian language was finally being taught to children in public schools, beginning with the elementary schools. Before that time, Hawaiian culture keepers and strongholds in different Hawaiian communities gathered to discuss long-term ways to revive the use of the Hawaiian language. Inspired by the Maori preschool program called Kōhanga Reo, these Hawaiians helped to organize the Pūnana Leo (language nest) programs throughout Hawaiʻi beginning in 1984. The first school opened in the small town of Kekaha on Kauaʻi, with other preschools soon flourishing in Honolulu, Hilo, and other cities on neighboring islands. These began as family-based schooling and are an example of cultural autonomy that draws from Hawaiian sources. There are now more than twenty-one schools in the Islands with over a thousand children waiting to gain access to these language nests and the first intermediate and high schools to be run in Hawaiian in more than a hundred years! The newest development is a master's degree in Hawaiian language now offered at the University of Hawaiʻi at Hilo.

The video includes some of the well-known veterans in the movement for Hawaiian-language revival, including Ilei Beniamina and Larry Kimura. *E Ola ka ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi* also gives the viewer a look at the various Hawaiian immersion schools; protests and rallies in communities and at the State Capitol against finance cutbacks that threatened the programs; the many children speaking Hawaiian with a new sense of self; and an intervention made in the U.S. Congress by two prominent Hawaiian-language teachers in the face of proposed legislation to establish English as the official language of the United States, obviously without any respect to the indigenous languages.

My only critique of this work is that the producers from ʻAha Pūnana Leo do not address the issues of decolonization as they relate to curriculum and pedagogical practices. As a result, one does not get a sense of the values being

taught in the revived language. The form may be Hawaiian, but what is the content?

Now that the revival of the Hawaiian language is at an all-time high, the collective struggle to recover the language is bound to the struggle for land and indigenous empowerment. The push to learn *ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi* signals the broader move to restore Hawaiian sovereignty and exercise self-determination, self-assertion, and self-possession. This revival helps to more fully embody Hawaiian presence on the land on the terms of the Hawaiian people, not, for example, on those of the Hawaiʻi Visitors' Bureau.

The intimate participation of the videomakers in the world of Hawaiian land, struggle, and people certainly makes all of the difference in the ways these videos convey the complexity of the issues at hand with stunning perception that is crucially moving, and sometimes beautiful. The videos also reveal the various types of access available to the videographers—to the contested land sites and the various people, from multiple fronts with (often) competing agendas. This same open access indeed works as a double bond, insuring accountability among those from the local communities. In the works of Nā Maka o ka ʻĀina the stories are whole, and so is the word; whether in the racist utterings of a colonial thief long gone, declarations of past U.S. presidents, the status quo assurance of a state representative, the plea of a Hawaiian child insisting that her tent on the beach is her only home, or in the legal testimonial of a *kupuna* (elder) waving long-held land deeds in hand —the words are represented with integrity. Without any demeaning sound bites or sensationalization, these works succeed in bringing to life, once again, the emotional and material import of the struggle. The viewing of the videos has operated to draw the viewers closer to Hawaiʻi, both literally and actively, in the way of furthering inquiry into the political questions at hand and in reclaiming cultural identities and histories.

Lieweila: A Micronesian Story. 1998. Video, 57 min., color. A film by Beret E. Strong and Cinta Matagolai Kaipat. New York: First Run/Icarus Films (32 Court Street, 21st Fl., Brooklyn, NY 11201; fax: 718–488–8642; <info@frif.com>; http://www.frif.com/). US$390; $75 rental.

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Micronesia's rich traditional cultures and long and complex histories of colonization and change have only rarely been the subject of ethnographic film. *Lieweila,* "listen to our story," very effectively tells a small part of that history.

The film focuses on the migration and adaptation of the Refalawash (people