

A Nation Rising: A review.

A Nation Rising is a most welcome account of "Hawaiian movements for life, land, and sovereignty," as its sub-title states, over the past half-century. Not only does it provide unprecedented detail, it describes the actions of ordinary people--not all of them Hawaiian--who are not included in other accounts of the modern political history of Hawai'i.

Its coverage of those events I attended and of people I knew--all a generation younger than its authors--is accurate and thorough.¹ I do not know of any other history like this one written so soon after the events described. In this book we have, if not all, at least as much as we are likely to get unless some of the actors write memoirs.

The resistance was not in evidence in 1966 when I arrived in Hawai'i. Earlier evictions from the Damon Tract in order to develop the industrial area around the airport proceeded with only a single protest in the newspapers. But when local farmers were evicted from Kalama Valley on Windward O'ahu organized protests began. And when Matsuo Takabuki, a leading Democratic politician, was appointed as a Trustee of the Bishop Estate in June 1971 more than a 1,000 Hawaiians from all walks of life turned out overnight to protest. Scores of protests against evictions occurred from this time on.

Ethnic Studies at the University grew out of the Kalama Valley protest and those that followed, as described in the book. Permanent status for Ethnic Studies was not achieved for many years, one of the reasons being that initially there were no regular faculty acceptable to the student activists and their leaders.² Another deterrent was that the program sought to finance itself by legislative appropriations outside the University budget. When these obstacles were later removed, Ethnic Studies became a regular Department.

Two of the key leaders from the beginning were Marion and John Kelly, especially Marion, who used her research into the history of local lands to support protests against eviction. A good example is the islet of Mokauea. The State Department of Transportation claimed that had been created by dredging a seaplane runway for World War I. Marion Kelly discovered an 1826 map which clearly indicated that the Island was once part of Moanalua, the most extensive

¹ I was in the boat pictured on p. 134, chaired the Dean's Committee that recommended the establishment of an Ethnic Studies Program, and testified as an expert witness at both trials of Walter Ritte, Jr., and the International Peoples Tribunal.

² Several students in my Department were involved in the first two years and reported strife between factions for control of the program resulting in rapid turnover of leadership. This did not end until Dr Franklin Odo was hired from the Mainland.

fishery on Oahu, occupied by Hawaiians since the 13th century. The Mokauea residents themselves were not aware of this history at the start of their struggle.³

Osorio's detailed account of the PKO's campaign to stop the bombing of Kaho'olawe and return the Island to Hawaiians' control is comprehensive and contains original testimony from those involved. I can add with regard to the motto, Aloha 'Aina, that the government, represented by the U S Navy in the second trial of Walter Ritte, Jr., claimed that it referred solely to a turn of the century political slogan. Anticipating such an argument I interviewed nine kupuna on Moloka'i in the spring of 1977. They had varying opinions of what the PKO had done, but they were of one mind about the meaning of *aloha 'aina*. On the basis of their knowledge I testified that *aloha 'aina* was a fundamental value in Hawaiian culture, past and present.

Dr. Kekuni Blaisdell receives proper recognition in the book for his role in the movement to restore sovereignty, and so does Kawaipuna Prejean. But Maivan Clech Lam does not. Her connections with international legal scholars and knowledge of developments in international law concerning indigenous peoples were crucial in assembling the experts and the Peoples' International Tribunal, Hawai'i, in August 1993.⁴

The chapter contains the eloquent testimony presented by Hawaiian people throughout the islands on the effects of rule by the U S as they have experienced them. The testimony that I presented addressed the imposition of that rule. It began in January 1893 when agents of the U S conspired with local Americans to take over the government. Based upon documents in the U S National Archives it is clear that the attempt would not have been undertaken and would not have succeeded without the landing of U S Marines and sailors, and their continued presence for a month afterward.⁵ Thus the U S government can be held directly responsible for the consequences described in the chapter. This is an important legal point, which the Tribunal judges addressed in their conclusions.

The title of the book, "A Nation Rising," refers in part to the re-establishment of a nation by indigenous Hawaiians. There is much debate in several chapters over whether this effort should be based upon the concept of a nation or an indigenous people, and under what international legal authority. One chapter deals with opposition to the Akaka Bill, which is based upon the concept of a nation within a

³ For a detailed account of the entire story see my book, [Land, Family, and Hawaiian Resistance](#) (2003), available on ScholarSpace.edu [ck] and Steve Shrader, Steve. 1975 The fishermen of Mokauea. [Hawaii Observer](#), 7/22/1975: 1-2.

⁴ Maivan Clech Lam, [At the Edge of the State: Indigenous Peoples and Self-Determination](#), Transnational Publishers, 2000.

⁵ Stephen T Boggs, [U S Involvement in the Overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy](#), mss, 1993, Hawaiian Collection, Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i.

nation. But whatever concept of a nation one holds, establishing a nation requires a special set of circumstances. The Baltic countries, for instance, only regained their independence because the Soviet Union collapsed: they could never achieve it today: witness the Crimea. Maintaining a nation requires effective organization, institutions, and everyday practice in support of those institutions. Virtually all of this is lacking in the case of Hawai'i. The world is full of newly established nations that are failing.

If circumstances do not favor an independent nation, what should Hawaiians be aiming to achieve as a people? The answer goes back to kahu Abraham Akaka's uplifting the Hawaiian people, and further back to Kalakaua's restoring the people. That attempt has been going on in the form of the cultural renaissance: language, dance, and knowledge, especially ocean voyaging. Cultural restoration appeals to the blend of pragmatism and poetry that exists in Hawaiian tradition. It calls for individual commitment to a group--an 'ohana, and results in institutions that can endure across generations, despite extensive intermarriage. Restoration of cultural tradition is the sort of goal that makes sense under the circumstances prevailing in Hawai'i now and in the near future.

The book contains several chapters that deal with restoration of cultural practices, and the struggles that are entailed in doing this. Particularly intriguing to me is the Makua Council, which prior to being forcibly evicted from the beach in 1996 had organized their village, shared food, water, and transportation of their children to school. (p 169). The hundreds of individuals and families who now camp near the University of Hawai'i Medical School in Kakaako are portrayed by the press far differently from those evicted from Sand Island in 1980. The latter were never described as "troubled," or in need of social services. Changing public perception of the so-called homeless from self-reliant individuals defending their right to live on land belonging to the Hawaiian nation to people unable or unwilling to take care of themselves disempowers those so described.