

# The Hawaiians' Claims for Reparations

By Russ and Peg Apple

## Reparation Bills

**QUEEN LILIUOKALANI'S** overthrow in 1893 is the crux of the 1877 claims for reparations from the United States by native Hawaiians.

Hawaii's flag was lowered to be replaced by the American flag in formal ceremonies 79 years ago today at Iolani Palace. This flag exchange was the visible symbol of annexation of the Islands by the United States.

In 1898, Aug. 12 was Annexation Day for Hawaii.

Many Hawaiians stayed home that day and cried.

So did some other Island families of non-Hawaiian ethnic heritage.

**THEY, LIKE** most Hawaiians, took no part in the revolution five years before which ended the monarchy. They too suffered wrongs, and some of the same losses as did the Hawaiian people.

Many non-Hawaiians were loyal subjects of her Hawaiian Majesty Liliuokalani and loyal citizens of the Kingdom of Hawaii.

Non-Hawaiian citizens who did not help with the revolution in 1893 may have descendants in 1977 who could file claims against the U.S. for indemnity.

Descendants of the Hawaiian citizens are doing so.

## Overthrow

**AMERICAN CITIZENS** and units of the U.S. government joined some Island people born of American parents and grandparents to dethrone the queen and seize political control as well as the land which belonged to the kingdom and the throne.

Some Islanders of American heritage apparently did not join in the overthrow.

Seizure of the throne, land and control in 1893 was the major link in the American-led chain of events that climaxed in 1898 with U.S. annexation.

**IN THE OVERTHROW,** a U.S. diplomat, the minister to the Kingdom of Hawaii, helped depose Queen Liliuokalani while armed bluejackets marched up and down King Street, then bivouacked near the palace. Guns of the U.S. Boston threatened Honolulu town from the harbor.

U.S. Minister John L. Stevens was quick to give diplomatic recognition to the revolutionary government set up by Island businessmen with strong ties to America.

Queen Liliuokalani yielded to the superior force of the United States; her protests eventually reached Washington.

President Grover Cleveland publicly deplored the illegal overthrow, recalled the diplomat, withdrew from Congress plans for annexation, and called vainly for reparations to vindicate the honor of the United States for its act of war against the "government of a feeble but friendly and confiding people."

**FIVE YEARS LATER,** in 1899, under a different political administration in Washington, and under the stress of the Spanish-American War, the United States annexed Hawaii.

With annexation, among other things, the United States acquired the vast land holdings — the government and the crown lands — seized in the overthrow.

Private land holdings were not affected.

**NOW PENDING** in the U.S. Senate and House are duplicate resolutions generated by native Hawaiian organizations which would set up a commission to study claims generated by the overthrow and annexation.

**ALOHA** (Aboriginal Lands of Hawaiian Ancestry) and other Hawaiian groups say that among the wrongs was the acceptance by the U.S. of lands it helped steal from the kingdom's government and throne.

Both resolutions state that the vast land holdings taken by the United States "had been common property of the Hawaiian natives prior to the overthrow of their indigenous government."

"**NOT TRUE,**" claimed one Hawaiian group at recent congressional hearings in Honolulu on the resolutions.

Crown lands, it claims, were never common property but belonged only to the throne. Commoners and other chiefs had no claim to them.

Presumptive heirs to the throne have organized and hired an attorney to claim reparations for the seized crown lands transferred to the United States in 1898.

If the claim by the royal heirs of the throne to the crown lands is valid and upheld, that seems to leave only the government lands of the kingdom for descendants of the citizens in 1893 of the kingdom to claim.

Who were the citizens of the kingdom in 1893?

## Hawaiian Citizenship

**DON'T CONFUSE** citizens with residents or voters.

In the 1890 census, the Islands had a population of 89,990. Of these, 40,622 (45 per cent) were Hawaiians and part-Hawaiians, all citizens.

Here also were 7,435 non-Hawaiians who had been born in the Islands, also citizens. That makes 48,117 citizens by birth, or 53 per cent of the population.

Naturalized citizens alive in 1890 form an unknown number. But citizenship was granted over the years before 1893 to some Islanders born in China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Norway, Portugal, South America, the South Sea Islands, United States and other places.

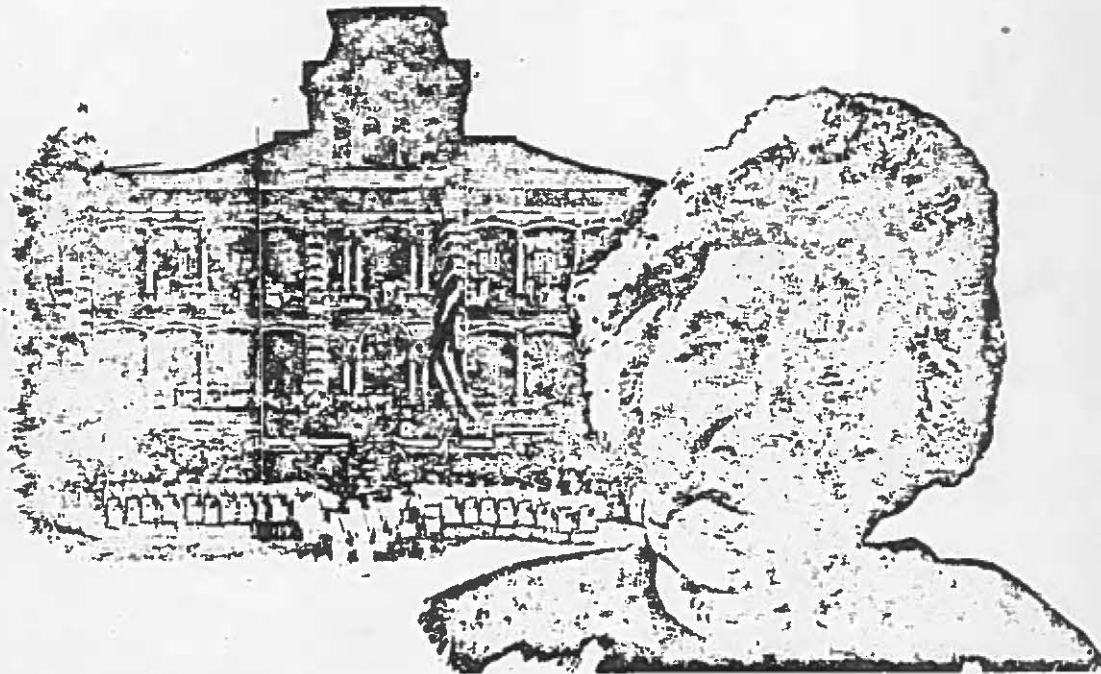
**HAWAIIAN CITIZENS** in 1893 may have numbered as high as 50,000, with Hawaiians and part-Hawaiians making up perhaps 61 per cent of the total citizens. About 19 per cent of the citizens consisted of non-Hawaiians born here or naturalized here.

Descendants of the Hawaiian and part-Hawaiian citizens of the kingdom have made claims for reparations.

Yet to be heard from are descendants of the non-Hawaiian citizens.

**PERHAPS AROUND** today are a few Cleghorns, Lycourges, Juds, Rawlinses, Silvas, Walkers and Woods whose ancestors were citizens, innocent and legally wronged by-standers, while a few revolutionists dethroned Queen Liliuokalani with the help of the U.S. Navy.

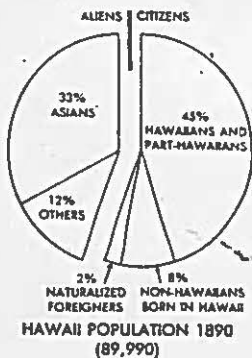
Among the rest of the residents were about 30,000 Asians, most of them field hands on the sugar plantations. Asians formed about 33 per cent of the total population.



## Voting

**MOST ISLAND** residents could not vote. Franchise was limited to males 20 years old and more, with property or income minimums. All voters had to speak, read and write Hawaiian, English or a European language — a requirement that effectively eliminated most Asians.

Some American and European aliens held enough property or had sufficient income to vote, and did vote, in the 1890 elections. No Chinese or Japanese were registered to vote in 1890.



Voter registration in 1890 was slightly more than 14,000. Property and income provisions eliminated many otherwise eligible Hawaiians and part-Hawaiians, all of them citizens, from the polls.

## Land Ownership

**BY 1893,** Hawaii's land can best be thought of as divided into, roughly, thirds — each third consisting of many detached parcels scattered over the Islands of Ni'ihau, Kauai,

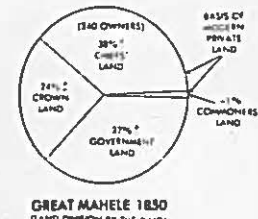
O'ahu, Molokai, Lana'i, Kaho'olawe, Maui and Hawaii.

One third was crown land and another third was government land. By 1893, much of the crown and government land was leased to sugar planters. Income helped support the throne and the kingdom's government.

Crown land was about a million acres, government land about a million and a half acres.

The final third — really about two-fifths of the entire land area (1,600,000 acres) — was private land.

**IN 1890,** out of the 89,990 residents, there were 4,695 fee simple land



owners (plus the government and the crown). Five per cent of the residents were the land owners.

Hawaii's other 95 per cent of the people lived on somebody else's land as tenants by lease or otherwise.

A relatively small number of Westerners reportedly owned more than one million acres. This was approximately 58 per cent of all the private land in the Islands.

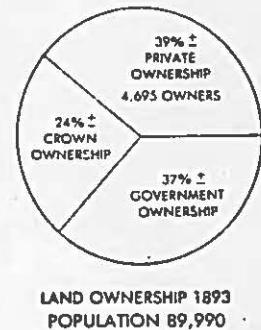
Today's activist Hawaiians rightly trace the largely landless status of modern Hawaiian people back to the Great Mahele, a land distribution in the mid-1800s which reinforced the long-standing ancient and early historic pattern of concentrated land ownership.

## Great Mahele

**KAMEHAMEHA** the Great, founder of the Kingdom of Hawaii, acquired absolute title to all of Hawaii's land by 1810 His son Liholiho (Kamehameha II) inherited it. When Liholiho died, Kamehameha the Great's second son, Kamehameha III, inherited all the land.

Kamehameha III, as its absolute owner, divided his land into "thirds." This was the Great Mahele.

One third he parceled out to 240 of



the highest chiefs to become the basis of today's private lands, including that owned by the largest estates.

One third of the land he gave to the throne — the crown land. Presumptive heirs to the throne now claim reparations for its seizure and then its acquisition by the United States. Descendants of commoner Hawaiians and lesser chiefs may also be claiming reparations for its loss.

One third of the land he gave to the government of the Kingdom of Hawaii — the government land. It too was seized in the revolution and

accepted in fee simple by the United States on annexation.

Hawaiian groups are claiming reparations for those acts.

In the Great Mahele, commoner Hawaiians, the bulk of the 1850 population, received less than one per cent of the total land.

## Who Lost What

Who lost what in the revolution of 1893?

Queen Liliuokalani lost the throne. The throne lost lands through seizure.

Heirs to the throne lost their right to income from the crown lands, lost their right to rule.

Hawaiians lost a nation — a Polynesian monarchy founded a century before by Kamehameha the Great.

Lost also was the hereditary right of Hawaiians to continue to be ruled by families of the highest chiefly rank.

Hawaiians lost a society and a culture based on rank acquired at conception.

Loyal subjects of the queen lost freedom through being jailed; lost jobs and status.

Loyal non-Hawaiian subjects of the queen lost their chosen life style in a monarchical form of government.

A constitutional government was lost.

Land belonging to that government was lost through seizure.

Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian citizens of that government lost their common property — the government land.

The United States lost honor and face when it broke a long standing treaty with a friendly kingdom, and violated international law, by armed intervention in the internal affairs of a foreign nation; and by later accepting land it had helped others to seize in that nation.