

Infamous Grant

There have been a lot of hoopla lately involving the "infamous" Cromwell cartoon. Well, I must say that these articles have made me sentimental about the society that we live in these days. So I would like to express why I love our society today.

I love our society because people can now point out that a certain newspaper opinion column is racist — before they've even seen it (probably the same people who think The Lion King is racist and homophobic).

I love our society because someone who is part haole, keeps a haole last-name, went to haole schools, graduated from haole colleges, works in a "haole-run" university, has a haole boyfriend, can finally say that she hates haoles...makes sense to me! ("She is a general term, of course, and in no way refers to anyone employed by UH.)

I love our society because a statement saying that one wants to gouge a haole's eyes out can finally be seen — not as racist or mean — but as a "spiritual healing."

I love our society because a student's cartoon making fun of a poem can be called bigoted, while someone writing in the Ka Leo that "Hawaii would be a better place with one less Haole in our land," is just fine — especially from a teacher.

I love our society because criticisms will no longer be tolerated, and people will not be entitled to their opinions. Yes, Joseph would be proud. (Stalin, that is.)

I love our society because people are now free — yes, free — to maliciously degrade haoles, and haoles can't do one damned thing about it.

I love our society because people need only read things at face value, without considering what the writer said was the purpose of the work.

I love our society because bigots are allowed to teach classes — objectively, I'm sure.

I love our society because the freedom of speech and expression no longer applies to all people. This freedom will now be determined by genetics, the way it was meant to be.

Finally, I love our society be-

cause I know that I can express my opinions and people will not have an open mind about it.

And that is why I love our society today.

(For those Trask supporters: you defend a bigot. You may not be defending her because she's racist, but that still doesn't make it right.)

Ken Kapoor
Anthropology

On his motives

Grant Crowell is disingenuous when he accuses Haunani-Kay Trask of assuming that "art must be dictated by her politics" (Oct. 11). He forgets to mention his "art" is not only politically but personally motivated, since he blames Trask and the Center for Hawaiian Studies for being fired by Ka Leo in 1991. But Crowell also engages in something worse. He purports to support Trask's right to freedom of expression while really trying to silence her.

Crowell highlights only part of Trask's collection and caricatures her intentionally to produce a portrait of a ridiculous, yet horrifying, monster. The distorted picture of a female creature dressed in a pareo, with bugged-out eyes and kinky hair, hunched over like a Victor Hugo nightmare, is the only image Crowell wants people to associate with Trask and Native Hawaiian aspirations to restore national independence. Crowell wants people to be afraid of Trask and afraid of what she represents — Native Hawaiian sovereignty. Similar tactics were used to try to muzzle poets like Langston Hughes and activists like Malcolm X.

But what is more galling than Ka Leo allowing Crowell's vicious personal vendetta to masquerade as legitimate news is that my student fees and my tax dollars subsidized it! At least Trask wrote her poetry on her own time and got it published at a private press. If you don't like Trask's poetry, don't buy it. Yet Native Hawaiian students have to see their money wasted on trash that abuses Native Hawaiian culture and Native Hawaiian advocates and leaders. Crowell gets rammed down our throats to stir up a readership at our expense!

We resent being used as grist for Ka Leo's publicity mill.

Kathleen Puahau Aki
Center for Pacific Islands Studies

Making a point

Is Haunani-Kay Trask being effective? I would like to applaud Haunani-Kay Trask for her courage and good will to help her Hawaiian brothers and sisters. Racism is an apparent part of every day life. After hearing the forum and reading the Ka Leo, it is apparent that the fruit derived from this discourse is anger, hatred, and a larger separation from fellow map.

Crowell's editorial cartoon may have been inappropriate, but who is to judge? What makes Haunani-Kay Trask's poem any more appropriate? Under the law, Crowell has a right to free speech and a right to express his racist opinions just like Trask has a right to express hers. Those without sin may cast the first stone.

Lastly, I would like to point out that the Hawaiians are not the only minority group here on campus or elsewhere. We have Chinese, Japanese, Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Polish people to name a few, who consider themselves to be minorities. Should we rally a forum for these people as well?

Suzanne Shedletsky
Architecture

Letter policy

Ka Leo welcomes letters to the editor on all subjects. All letters must bear the author's signature, *phone number* (for verification) and year in school. Letters must be 200 words or less, typed and double-spaced. The editor reserves the right to edit letters. Submission does not guarantee publication. Letters should be submitted to: Opinion Page Editor, Ka Leo building, 1755 Pope Road, #31-D, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822.

More Letters to the Editor

Dispossession

The dispossession of Native Hawaiians means the deprivation of land and political control as a people in our own homeland with the consequent sense of powerlessness. This dispossession dictates how we create our own reality. Haunani-Kay Trask's most recent vehicle in which to describe her own reality is poetry. The views expressed by Trask of violence, outrage, despair, injustice and disease in her poetry book *Light in the Crevice Never Seen* speak to the continuing historical struggle of Native Hawaiians. Make no mistake, though not original by Trask, these views have a long written history authored by Native Hawaiian scholars dating back some 120 years. Moreover, the dispossession of Native Hawaiians is not a matter of personal choice but one of a historical predicament apparently little understood by Ka Leo's Editorial Board members, and certainly beyond the mental grasp of Grant Crowell.

Injustices in the history of Native Hawaiians is what motivates Trask's poetry, not "feelings." A century of the historical theft of Hawaiian land began with the 1893 illegal overthrow of Hawaiian sovereignty with the help of the United States. 101 years later a new president, Bill Clinton, officially acknowledged that theft with an apology. Of course, Crowell has ignored all of this well-documented history. The violence Trask speaks to is one not initiated by her nor by Native Hawaiians, but by the United States perpetrated against Native Hawaiians over a very long period of time.

There is an underlying racist as-

sumption in Crowell's "art" and his commentary: The only worthy voice to speak for Natives is a white male's, in this case Crowell's.

Along this racist line of thought, Crowell draws the cartoon for the sake of the Native. Indeed, the title of his article speaks volumes about silencing the Native. Crowell must be the one who defines the Native because she or he is incapable of self-definition, so his odious thinking goes. Thus, instead of understanding the myriad ways in which racism works in the larger world as well as in the interpersonal one of everyday human intimacy, Crowell sidesteps the issue of racism. Instead, he resorts to visual distortion of the poem's personal anger with a racist white woman, arrogantly "speaking for the native." It is his voice and visual images, masquerading as "art," juxtaposed in Ka Leo, that tell us that Natives speak solely from an autobiographical position, completely ignoring the

preface's quite explicit historicity.

Finally, Crowell suffers from a deep inner uncertainty about who he is. The consequence is not only an individual with "serious flaws" in judgment, but a diseased soul, and a dangerous hatemonger.

Momi Kamahale

Value of words

The debate over Crowell's article in the past few weeks has unfortunately contributed a bit more to the devaluation of the term "racist." "Racist" is an emotionally loaded accusation which, taken too broadly, could be tagged onto anyone. The same sort of thing could be said of the word "communist" in the McCarthy era: instead of describing a particular philosophy of government, it came to mean "anti-American," and was used as the basis for censorship and defamation. "Racist" has similar potential, and its free use to discredit critics, no matter how biased

those critics may be, cheapens the word and excludes rational debate and explanation.

Robert Miller
Graduate Student, Oceanography

Racist depiction

Hiding behind a thin sheet of First Amendment protection, editor Jennifer Ablan and columnist Grant Crowell seek to transform Ka Leo O Hawaii into an expressive forum of the lowest order.

If one compares the column about Haunani-Kay Trask's poetry in a recent issue of Honolulu Magazine with the one provided by Crowell, it becomes quite clear his critique and cartoon is a defamatory assault upon Trask and Ka Poe O Hawaii, who are privileged to be called "local."

For those who do not understand the impact of such caricatures upon oppressed groups, I urge you to examine "In the Matter of Julius Streicher" found in Ward Churchill's recently

published "Indians Are Us." This exposition articulates the harm created by racist depictions and most importantly, underscores a tested remedy for those who participate in such behavior.

Daris K. Ha'o
Graduate student

Ka Leo O Hawai'i

The point was First Amendment rights

Yesterday's forum at the Campus Center Courtyard was not only educational but informative. However, Haunani-Kay Trask's point that Ka Leo O Hawaii is a racist publication is fictitious. We published Grant Crowell's cartoon and column because he has a right, as a student and columnist, to voice his opinions on her book of poems, *Light In The Crevice Never Seen*.

Ka Leo doesn't necessarily support Crowell's opinions. However, we supported his right to express them. Ka Leo does not base a decision to print a column on whether or not a columnist is a good human being. Grant stated his opinions and backed them up with quotes and examples from other writers. He stated his opinion and "justified" them. That's one specification we ask of Ka Leo columnists.

Trask is a public figure who wrote a book on her opinions. Regardless of the fact that she says she is not an American and that Hawaii is a colony, the fact remains that Hawaii is a part of America, the fiftieth state to be exact — and she is still granted her freedom of speech.

Ironically, it is that same freedom that prevents her from being imprisoned as an "enemy of the state." The very principle that allowed *her* to speak yesterday is part of the American tradition she despises. How can we have a First Amendment if we decide who does or doesn't have a right to speak out? One cannot have one's "poi" and eat it, too.

Trask did articulate herself on the issues of the indigenous peoples of Hawaii being "raped" of their culture, land and language — that racism towards the Hawaiians and other minorities was and is still looming in the corners of Hawaii.

Calling Ka Leo racist and saying that it supports the disease called racism because we printed Crowell's work is "out in left field." Like Trask, Crowell has a right to express how he feels: he is a minority because he is Jewish, born and raised in Hawaii; he is called Haole by

Gay Awareness needed in story

It is so sad that the story you chose to publish on National Coming Out Day, a day designated to combat homophobia, was so full of fear.

Fear of coming out, fear of gays, fear of AIDS. Fears of this kind are called "homophobia."

There are so many coming out stories you could have run instead of the fear-filled one that you did. There's the story, for example, of the same-sex marriage hearings.

Do you realize that last November gay people of every gender, class, ethnicity and age gave testimony at the legislative hearing? It amounted to a mass public "coming out of the closet" here in Hawaii. People bravely stood in front of not only state representatives, but newspaper photographers and the television cameras.

No one knew who would be shown on the TV news that night. But everyone knew that if they were, chances were high that family, friends, bosses, coworkers and landlords would be watching.

This was a courageous act for every gay individual who hadn't already come out in every area of their lives.

Then there was the story of news organizations like Na Mamo being formed right under your nose. Na Mamo is a political action and support group of local people who are dedicated to empowering Polynesian gay women and men.

This is important because it is a group of Hawaiian, Samoan and other local people who have not come out before in any great numbers. What a story!

And how about the founding of the Kamehameha Schools Gay & Lesbian Alumni Association? Another historic coming out event.

By the way, all of these are stories of gay men and women working together and getting along. The idea that gay men and women don't get along may be reality for some people, but for most of us, it is a damaging and divisive myth.

Noenoe Silva
Graduate Student,
Political Science

Poem for Trask

I submit this poem in response to the collective articles that appeared in the Oct. 11 edition of (Ka Leo). I am a classified night student and felt compelled to respond upon reading the various articles about Crowell's editorial cartoon, but especially after reading the source of the controversy, Haunani-Kay Trask's poem. I offer no other comment.

Racist Woman

My heart tries to understand your rage.

Is it me or what I represent that drives you to consider such vengeful acts?

You equate the deeds of few with the faces of many.

But you haven't taken the time to know me.

And until you do you'll be frozen in the past.

Being in the present, exactly what you accuse me of being:

Both of us unable to take our rightful place as

Mothers of the children,

Caretakers of the land,

The ones who must lead the way into the future.

Pat Tompkins

More on Trask

Your editorial expressed concern that the Editorial Board's decision to run Grant Crowell's editorial cartoon and column on Haunani-Kay Trask may be an unpopular one.

Certainly not! Ka Leo should be applauded for informing readers of the back-scene maneuvers that occur with such issues.

An editor's responsibility is to serve the University by providing an open and truthful forum for ideas.

Then, individuals can supply that forum with facts and informed opinions. Crowell's satirical cartoon was no more racist than the poem he was skewering.

Patrick Grandelli
Ocean Engineering
Graduate Student