THE NEW HAWAIIANS

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Hawaiians, pure Hawaiians, are a dying race. When Captain Cook arrived, 1,000 years or so after the first Polynesian settlers discovered the Islands, there were an estimated 300,000 Hawaiians. A century later their number had declined an appalling 80 percent, decimated by introduced diseases—measles, syphilis, even the common cold. By 1976 there were fewer than 8,000 full-blooded descendants, although one authority claims the correct figure is closer to 1,000. Pockets of them survive in such places as Ke'anae, Hana, and Kaupo on Maui, and on the privately owned island of Ni'ihau, but it is only a matter of time before the last pure Hawaiians will disappear from the face of the earth.

There are, however, over 140,000 part-Hawaiians who constitute about 18 percent of the total population. These so-called "hyphenated Hawaiians" are also the most rapidly expanding ethnic group, and if they continue to increase at the present rate (nearly 30 percent of babies born here in 1973 were part-Hawaiian), by the year 2000 there may be as many part-Hawaiians as there once were pure Hawaiians.

These are the modern Hawaiians, a vastly different people from their ancient progenitors. Two centuries of enormous, almost cataclysmic change imposed from within and without have altered their conditions, outlooks, attitudes, and values. Although some traditional practices and beliefs have been retained, even these have been modified. In general, today's Hawaiians have little familiarity with the ancient culture.

Not only are present-day Hawaiians a different people, they are also a very heterogeneous and amorphous group. While their ancestors once may have been unified politically, religiously, socially, and culturally, contemporary Hawaiians are highly differentiated in religion, education, occupation, politics, and even in their claims to Hawaiian identity. Few commonalities bind them, although there is a continuous quest to find and develop stronger ties. In short, they are as diverse in their individual and collective character as any other ethnic population.

Malihini no na keiki o ko la kou aina pono'i iho—'the children of the land are strangers in their own land'. It is an observation often made about those who once possessed a proud civilization and all the lands and resources of the Islands. Now they are the most dispossessed and disadvantaged of Island peoples. The cumulative material and psychological destruction has also left them disillusioned, alienated—and in serious trouble.

The evidence is compelling: Hawaiians are more than half of the population of the State youth correction facility, almost half of the residents in adult correctional facilities, and a high percentage of those on parole. They also lead all other ethnic groups in serious crimes committed and arrests in proportion to their percentage of the population.

Economically, Hawaiians are at the bottom of the ladder, with one of the lowest income averages of any ethnic group. Hawaiians are the largest racial group —27 percent—on State welfare and occupy the greatest number of public housing units. Less than 1 percent of Island doctors and lawyers are of Hawaiian extraction.

Hawaiian schoolchildren have one of the highest rates of absenteeism, suspension, and dropping out. Less than half of Hawaiians over twenty-five have completed high school or, put another way, Hawaiians number 30 percent of the school population but only 5 percent of high school graduates. Of course the percentage of college graduates is even smaller; in fact Hawaiians comprise only 10 percent of enrollment in the University of Hawai'i system.

Not all Hawaiians are so disadvantaged, but the effects of this litany of failure are shared by all. As one Hawaiian put it, "Too many of us are overwhelmed by our own sense of inadequacy and feelings of inferiority."

For many Hawaiians this negative self-image becomes deeply imbedded at a young age. According to a study of Hawaiian youths on the island of Hawai'i—fittingly entitled "Stranger In Their Own Land"—frustration and failure in school result in self-disparagment. The "dumb Hawaiian" has become "a living, breathing self-image" by the age of eighteen. This is manifested in their narrow selection of work options, pretty much confined to service occupations, unskilled and semi-skilled labor. In other words, they rule themselves out of the professions, management, technical and

scientific fields. The study concludes that the sense of self-disparagment is heightened by awareness of the rewards of achievement in school.

For many older Hawaiians the sense of inadequacy does not abate with maturity but becomes more ingrained. A noted authority on adult Hawaiian social behavior observes: "Too many Hawaiians, young and old, have a poor self-image. It's a vicious cycle because you can't expect parents who have a low opinion of their status to really do much for the self-image of their children."

The negative self-image is somewhat reflected in the unflattering popular stereotype that non-Hawaiians have long held—the fun-loving, lazy, undisciplined native. As with any stereotype, there is a great deal of distortion, as many non-Hawaiians would readily concede, but nonetheless it still has wide currency. This is partly reflected in the habit of local comedians, especially Hawaiian comedians, to poke fun at the lazy, too-fat, and "dumb" Hawaiians, although it must be said in fairness that ethnic jokes are popular and that every ethnic group gets its share of jokes at its expense.

The lazy Hawaiian stereotype is partly a throwback to early days of the sugar industry when haole planters failed to get Hawaiians to do the backbreaking, routine labor required. They were tabbed as lazy when, in fact, they simply did not care for the highly routine labor, nor for existing conditions and economic incentives. Objective historians and serious students all attest to the capacity of Hawaiians for hard work, especially when it involves a worthwhile goal and work with others in a group.

There is a positive side to the stereotype, which also describes Hawaiians as warm, generous, open, and carefree. There is an element of truth in this, although in the highly competitive, individualistic American society such virtues are difficult to practice. But the stereotype is also distorted by the purveyors of tourism who glamorize Hawaiians as exotic products of the tropics who love to surf, dance, play music, fish, and swim. To be sure, many Hawaiians do, but there are probably as many others who prefer other pastimes.

Stereotypes are, like statistical averages, only abstractions, but to the extent that they influence thought and action they are potent realities. It is

difficult to ascertain their impact on Hawaiian behavior, but a mental health authority suggests it has been damaging, particularly since it was never actually tested. For example, the "dumb Hawaiian" image stems in part from ignorance of the obstacles built into the school system whose values and standards are those of a haole middle class and whose teachers are trained and oriented to the same. Brought up in familial and communal settings with different values and concepts, Hawaiian students often have been turned off by school. Efforts have been made by the Department of Education and The Kamehameha Schools to develop and adapt special curriculum material and teaching methods for Hawaiian students, but only on a limited basis.

The stereotype betrays a certain amount of ambivalence and condescension, if not superiority, that non-Hawaiians feel for Hawaiians. The ambivalence, it is suggested, comes in part from a feeling of guilt and remorse about destruction of the old way of life and a need to make restitution for the loss. The sense of superiority has been manifested in manifold ways, from selective hiring to outright declarations of "I'm better than you are." On the other hand, non-Hawaiians have also shown admiration for the Hawaiian capacity to be hospitable and warm, to show aloha. For example, Hawaiians are regularly praised for being the true representatives of the aloha spirit, although to some this appears a bit contrived because of its obvious connection with the tourism industry.

Non-Hawaiians as a whole appear sympathetic to Hawaiians. They show increasing concern for Hawaiian problems and no longer regard them simply as matters to be dealt with by Hawaiian institutions alone. Conversely, Hawaiians are more ready to admit their problems are also problems of the community at large. (It is a point that has been made by the director of Hawaiian Home Lands, an agency long regarded as an orphan among State bureaucracies.) Non-Hawaiians also show greater and more active interest in the full scope of Hawaiiana—the hula, crafts, music, language, sports, and so on, indeed, so much so that being Hawaiian is becoming almost a vogue among non-Hawaiians.

Hawaiian reaction to such overtures ranges through suspicion, ambivalence, condescension, and good will. Many are suspicious because they feel the last 200 years of their history have involved exploitation, deprivation, and shame. Suspicion is particularly manifest among low-income groups to whom offers of help or demonstrations of interest by non-Hawaiians or

outsiders often appear as attempts to manipulate and exploit. On the other hand, many Hawaiians temper such feelings, if they have any at all, with an innate desire to 'make things right' (*ho'oponopono*). This is especially true of some older Hawaiians who believe reconciliation to be the Hawaiian way, as opposed to the confrontations which young Hawaiians seem to prefer.

Among Hawaiians there is a new kind of awareness about themselves and their problems. It is what some have called a psychological renewal—taking stock of what they are, as measured against what they want to be—an awareness evolved over a period of years. In part it involves recognition of their disadvantaged position vis-à-vis other ethnic groups, or what someone has described as "the discovery of their deprived status." But it also involves conscious effort to raise the level of their individual and collective aspirations and a resolve to achieve, at whatever the cost, a status equal to, if not better than, that of others in the community. In actuality, what is happening is part of the quest for a higher sense of communal pride and renewed sense of identity as Hawaiians, a search that has fluctuated in speed and intensity but never ceased.

This Hawaiian resurgence is most marked in politics and culture, and to a lesser extent in education and economics. The greatest activity—in terms of numbers participating, scope, and continuity—appears to be taking place in the cultural field. Some believe it is a genuine cultural renaissance, while others fear it may be faddish and a passing thing. But the evidence points to sustained and accelerated development.

To appreciate what is happening now, one need only recall the remark by a local cynic not too long ago that he was going to write the obituary for Hawaiian culture, for, like pure Hawaiians, it, too, was dying. The Hawaiian language was becoming an exotic anachronism for a few academic dilettantes. Hawaiian music was already in its death throes because hardly anybody listened to it and fewer played or knew very much about it. The hula, too, was on its last legs because it was being burlesqued into something unrecognizable and largely replaced by Maori poi balls, the flaming swords of Samoan dancers, and the Tahitian *tamure*. Hawaiian crafts had vanished from sight; Hawaiian games, except for surfing and canoeing, were extinct, etc., etc., etc.

But current cultural activism announces renewed pride and ethnic consciousness. First of all, the Hawaiian language is still very much alive. Young Hawaiians take keen interest in studying and teaching it, something almost unheard of until very recently. More students learn the language in schools and the university today than at any time in the recent past. In fact, interest in Hawaiian at the University of Hawai'i is so high that more instructors and money are required every year. Training young language teachers will likely lead to teaching positions in public schools, in turn creating more students at a much wider and younger level. And for the first time in years radio stations carry live Hawaiian-language programs. Since language is the key to the health and strength of a culture, this new interest, shown by young people in particular, is of great importance.

Hawaiian music has made a remarkable recovery from its near-fatal drowning in the cacophony of rock 'n' roll. While exact figures are hard to come by, the Hawaiian Music Foundation reports there are very likely more Hawaiians learning to sing and play their music, more teaching and more performing it, than at any time in the past decade. For the first time in recent memory, schools (*hālau*) offering instruction in steel guitar, slack key guitar, the making and playing of ancient Hawaiian instruments, and other such subjects have been established. More students are now learning to play the steel guitar—invented by a Hawaiian—than ever before. More serious research and writing on Hawaiian music are under way and, for the first time in Hawai'i history, a regular publication devoted entirely to Hawaiian music is available. Efforts by the music foundation and other organizations to create interest among Hawaiians, and non-Hawaiians as well is unprecedented.

The hula, outlawed by early missionaries and then revived by Kalakaua in the latter quarter of the nineteenth century, is recovering, as spectacularly as the *mele*. Hula has enjoyed popularity for many years, but never as great as now. There are now many more hula studios, instructors, and pupils—and notably males. The fact that more male Hawaiians are learning hula is extremely significant because, although it was often the male who performed the hula in ancient Hawai'i, any boy doing hula in modern Hawai'i was called a sissy. Now hundreds of boys of all ages perform. There is now greater interest in both teaching and performing ancient hula of all types. There is also keener interest among professional dancers in

hotels and nightclubs in perfecting skills and authenticating performances. In fact, in much Hawaiian entertainment offered to tourists lately there is much greater tendency to be authentic.

There is further evidence of Hawaiian cultural resurgence in such sports activities as canoeing. Not too many years ago a Hawaiian canoe was a rare sight, but today there are many, and many more being built. Canoe racing has been resurrected and there are clubs on all major islands, with over 5,000 members, male and female, organized into statewide associations competing on a regular basis. While many non-Hawaiians participate, there has never been anything on this scale in over 100 years. The level of interest grew spectacularly with the construction of the 60-foot (18-meter) double-hulled voyaging canoe *Hōkūle'a* in 1974-1976 and its achievement in twice retracing the immigration route of Polynesian voyagers.

Other indications of cultural revival may be found in such things as feather-work, the study and practice of Hawaiian medicine, and in handicraft work. Many other obscure and little-known aspects of the culture are being revived by Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians alike.

Politically, the new awareness has moved Hawaiians from passivity to dynamic, and at times militant, activism. Issues range from land rights to educational opportunities; groups consisting mostly of educated, middle-class, youth-oriented individuals have been involved in what has been called the "brown power" movement which, predictably, has waxed hot and cold as issues have arisen or subsided or as individuals and groups have emerged and dispersed. But it appears that the political consciousness of Hawaiians, especially of the young, has been stirred to the point at which the movement will sustain itself for a long while.

An example of militancy is the dramatic, and well-publicized, protest against the Bishop Estate—a large landowner whose income supports The Kamehameha Schools —by a group called Kokua Kalama (Help Kalama). They had objected to the estate's attempt in early 1971 to remove tenant farmers from Kalama valley, which the estate owned, and with a series of demonstrations tried to stop the removal. The incident dramatized an avowed purpose of the group to alter the society's power structure, dominated in part by big landholders. The open hostility, revolutionary rhetoric (some

favorite terms included *i mua*, or 'forward', and *huli* 'overturn') and the tactics of the group separated it from other Hawaiian groups, but while its style shocked many Hawaiians, in the words of a former activist "We at least shook 'em up and made them think—and made ourselves heard." For Kokua Kalama, which soon faded away, getting a hearing seemed to be the entire point.

Another fervent "nativist" group in the same period was The Hawaiians whose target was the Hawaiian Homes Commission, a State agency administering 190,000 acres (77,000 hectares) of land set aside for homesteading by native Hawaiians. The activist group complained that the commission had failed to make enough land available for qualified Hawaiians, some of whom had been waiting up to fifteen years for homesteads or home sites. They also objected that much land was leased to non-Hawaiians and corporations, and for very low rentals.

While the group focused on the Hawaiian Homes Commission, its larger goal was to gain "justice" for the Hawaiians, to improve their social and economic position, and to restore racial pride. According to its leader: "We don't want to go back to being the 'sleepy Hawaiians'." Claiming more than 7,000 members by 1972, The Hawaiians was the largest politicized group of its kind, yet by 1975 it, too, had receded into the background. But there would be other groups to take its place.

Less militant, far more vocal, and all-inclusive was another organization, the Congress of the Hawaiian People, formed in an attempt to bring together under one organizational umbrella the proliferating groups. Although its nominal head was the Rev. Abraham Akaka, a long-time champion of Hawaiian causes, actual leadership was entrusted to younger, more outspoken Hawaiian activists. It espoused and promoted a wide range of Hawaiian causes and activities in order to unify or coordinate the various groups—an elusive goal which in part seems to have contributed to Congress ineffectiveness. Later another organization, the Council of Hawaiian Organizations, was established as a loose confederation of Hawaiian groups. It provided a forum for regular contact and a minimal degree of coordination. Both the Council and the Congress were direct responses to the need for direction and solidarity by "brown power." They pointed to the perennial problem of finding leaders and issues around which Hawaiians can rally. So far no leader—no Kamehameha—has emerged, but there is an issue.

The issue concerns former Crown Lands, taken first by the revolutionary Americans who formed the Republic of Hawai'i and then by the United States without compensation when Hawai'i was annexed in 1898. Inspired by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act which won large reparations from the government, the ALOHA (acronym for Aboriginal Lands of Hawaiian Ancestry) organization was formed in 1972 to seek $1 billion in reparations from Washington. While some Hawaiians had certain reservations about ALOHA leaders and tactics, no one denied that Crown Lands were taken and that it was now fair to seek compensation. How much compensation there should be, how it should be administered, and by whom and for what are among many questions proving troublesome, but there is an issue of importance with which almost all Hawaiians—and many non-Hawaiians as well—can identify. It is one of the most significant issues to come along in the last seventy years, but, despite that, it is doubtful whether the issue could have ignited the interest it has among Hawaiians, let alone non-Hawaiians, if there had not been the kind of Hawaiian consciousness that has generated the existing cultural and political resurgence. For Hawaiians, land is the most gut-level type of issue and is, therefore, closest to their sense of identity. Thus, to restore their lands is to restore their identity; to restore their identity is to return their sense of pride; and to return their pride is to rebuild their confidence.

An important dimension of Hawaiian resurgence is the rise of Hawaiian entrepreneurship, with more and more young Hawaiians entering business. Not too many years ago a Hawaiian businessman was so rare that it was commonly thought Hawaiians had no aptitude, a notion being changed as well-educated, young, competitive, achievement-oriented Hawaiians take up business careers. A recent study reported that several hundred Hawaiians now occupy management positions, including a few corporate presidencies, enjoying high incomes and all the other amenities of affluence.

In 1973 the Hawaiian Businessmen's Association was formed, the first such organization in modern Island history. Most members are young (below forty-five), but there are also older Hawaiians long established as successful executives. A prime purpose is to assit others interested in starting a business or pursuing a business career, especially young Hawaiians. On the premise that economics and politics go hand-in-hand, there is strong political orientation, although association leadership has no close links with any of the above-mentioned political activist groups.

This advance marks an important shift in Hawaiian occupational patterns—and reflects similar changes inevitable in other fields. Although it may take years before Hawaiians can make significant inroads into business power structure, this is a harbinger of a better economic future. It is also a source of pride that Hawaiians will be able to lead in an area from which they have been long excluded by other ethnic groups and thereby play a larger role in shaping the destiny of the state.

It has been said that Hawaiians have considered the past more important than the future, but events chronicled here suggest that "new" Hawaiians look to both the past and the future—the past for a sense of identity and the future for a greater role. Whatever that role may be, Hawaiians are agreed the road is long and arduous, one they must travel just as the Chinese, Japanese, and other ethnic groups have done.

Hawaiians must be educated and trained, not only in order to find better jobs but also to be able to compete successfully. More Hawaiians must seek positions in the professional and managerial world where leadership often bestows influence and power. Hawaiians must make sacrifices in order to achieve economic security and social respectability. They must also consolidate their numerical strength and organize themselves effectively so they can obtain political office and greater control over their own lives . . . and more.

If Hawaiians are to play any role at all in Hawai'i, they must retain their identity. It is the sum total of their human qualities, attitudes and values, their customs and traditions, and their history that makes them distinctive and unique as a people—and as a great resource. This distinctiveness and uniqueness can give strength, character, and purpose to Hawai'i as a pluralistic community with its delicate balance of competing ethnic "communities." In other words, Hawaiians and their Hawaiian-ness give Hawai'i its strongest sense of identity, to which all Island people—Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Portuguese, Korean, or Caucasian—can relate in a meaningful way, be it through Hawaiian music, dance, canoeing, or surfing, Hawaiian food, words and beliefs, the land or sea. In a real sense, Hawaiian-ness should eventually belong to anyone who claims or adopts Hawai'i as home. It is the common resource—*mana*—and to the extent that any person draws upon it, that person becomes Hawaiian.

The role Hawaiians are uniquely equipped to perform is that of helping all Island people become Hawaiians through a biological and spiritual fusion of the best qualities of all. Not all Hawaiians would concur with this, but it may happen anyway, in the natural evolution of Hawaiian society.