

PRACTICING PILINA ON INCARCERATED ‘ĀINA: THE POWER OF QUEER RELATIONSHIPS OF KANAKA MAOLI GIRLS AT THE KAWAIILOA TRAINING SCHOOL

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This article examines how the Kawaiiloa Training School for Girls sought to control and criminalize Kanaka Maoli forms of pilina (intimacy and relation). By framing the incarcerated girls’ relationships—whether romantic, sexual, familial, or communal—as pathological or criminal, the institution cast Kanaka Maoli expressions of pilina as deviant or queer within a broader US settler colonial project. In spite of pathologization and punishment, girls continued to practice and express pilina for other girls at Kawaiiloa Training School. In conversation with this special issue on the *māhūi*, we argue that reclaiming the histories of so-called “queer” or “kolohe” girls can help restore erased or marginalized ancestral ties.

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<i>Kawailoa</i>	<i>The Long Water</i>
<i>I ke alo olu o Mauna Olomana</i>	<i>In the peaceful presence of Mt. Olomana</i>
<i>Hiehie oe e Kawailoa</i>	<i>Kawailoa stands in loveliness</i>
<i>Ia aina noho ia me ke aloha</i>	<i>A land in which love dwells</i>
<i>Kawailoa aloha e</i>	<i>Kawailoa the beloved</i>

—Mele composed and translated by Mileina McKeague,
April 20, 1949

This place is known by many names and landmarks: Olomana School; Ko’olau Boys’ Home; Ko’olau Girls’ Home; Maunawili Training School; Kawailoa Training School. Across from the women’s prison. Just past where you turn to go to Waimānalo at Castle Hospital. Behind Maunawili Elementary and the fire station. Today, the site is known as the Hawai’i Youth Correctional Facility—one of Hawai’i’s primary institutions for juvenile detention. Maile Arvin, co-author of this essay, grew up hearing about this place as simply “the girls’ home”—where her tūtū worked as a house mother. Her mom, aunties, and uncles remember attending Christmas parties in the girls’ gym.

While many of us—those that are kama’āina to O’ahu—may recognize this location, few know the history of the institution that opened there in 1929. Despite changing names and administrative hands many times over the years, that institution has effectively never fully stopped executing its main purpose: to incarcerate children. This essay explores that institution—the Kawailoa Training School—along with its history and role in settler colonialism in Hawai’i’s territorial period. We, the essay’s authors, focus specifically on the efforts the institution took to disrupt and control Kanaka Maoli forms of pilina (relation, intimacy) at multiple levels—including relationships among families, lovers, spouses, and the Kanaka Maoli lāhui at large.¹ Our thinking on pilina is shaped by Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio (2021), who invokes pilina as multi-faceted forms of intimacy that are communal and grounded in reciprocity and accountability. She writes:

Some pilina are pursued through sex, others through sharing a sunrise, and some even through the simple yet important act of sharing names. The abundant forms of Kanaka Maoli pilina stand in direct contrast to the singular presentation of heteronormativity. (p. 63)

The pilina practiced and expressed by girls for other girls at Kawaihoa Training School were indeed many things, born out of a shared experience of incarceration. But their pilina were also established from learning together on and about the ʻāina at Kawaihoa, whether they used their knowledge and relationships to survive their incarceration or to escape from their cottages and run away.

The intimacies that girls had—or were perceived to have—outside the confines of the training school had a lot to do with how they ended up at Kawaihoa. Girls were sent to the training school largely for sexual transgressions, charged with crimes such as “waywardness” or “delinquency,” which could encompass a wide spectrum: from mere associations with boys as playmates to instances of premarital sex—or even victimization through sexual assault and incest (Wallace, 1940, pp. 107–108). Such “crimes” were a stark contrast from the charges that landed boys in the training school at Waialeʻe—where truancy and petty theft were the majority of crimes. The intention of the training school for girls was explicitly to “rehabilitate” girls into chaste and passive gender roles understood as “proper” within white American social norms.

Yet, girls who were sentenced to the training school often defied such attempts at “rehabilitation.” We argue that the multiple forms of pilina practiced by girls at the Training School for Girls allowed them to evade the institution’s efforts to completely control their expressions of gender and sexuality. In doing so, their practices of pilina were powerful expressions of *ea* (life, sovereignty). As Noelani Goodyear-Kaʻōpua writes, *ea* is often glossed as political independence, yet in Kanaka Maoli understandings, “*ea* is based on the experiences of people on the land, relationships forged through the process of remembering and caring for wahi pana, storied places” (Goodyear-Kaʻōpua et al., 2014, p. 4). To learn from and celebrate the *ea* championed by these young wāhine, we have examined documents from the official archive of the Kawaihoa Training School—held at the Hawaiʻi State Archives—reading against the grain to amplify the voices and complex stories of girls who fought to be intimate with each other, their families, and the land at and beyond Kawaihoa.

In conversation with this special issue on the *māhūi*, we further argue that these girls’ practices of pilina were queer—in multiple senses of the word. Queer as in non-normative, even anti-normative. Queer as not necessarily heterosexual. Queer as not American. What we don’t mean by queer is the modern self-identification and politics of many lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender folks. At Kawaihoa, there were clearly sexual and romantic relationships among the girls—as we

discuss further in this essay. Even girls who had exclusively “straight” relationships with boys could practice queer forms of pilina by maintaining Hawaiian forms of relation that often contradicted the institution’s efforts to shape them into “proper” American women. Thus, we largely use “queer” not because we believe most girls at the training school would have identified as queer or lesbian—though some may have—but rather in the way Siobhan Somerville (2007) describes it as: “a way to denaturalize categories such as ‘lesbian’ and ‘gay,’ (not to mention ‘straight’ and ‘heterosexual’), revealing them as socially and historically constructed identities that have often worked to establish and police the line between the ‘normal’ and the ‘abnormal’” (p. 203).

The sexuality of the girls incarcerated at Kawaihoa was criminalized—both “straight” and “lesbian” relationships alike. More than simply punishing a few “bad” girls, the institution criminalized Hawaiian pilina. In Hawaiian society, norms surrounding gender and sexuality were, and to some extent still are, more fluid. Outside the institution and within their families, these girls—regardless of their sexual preferences or gender presentations—may not have been considered abnormal. However, their practices of pilina were rendered queer within—and threatening to—the context of the training school and the broader US settler colonial project in Hawai‘i.

We write this essay as two Kanaka Maoli wāhine with our own deep connections to this topic. As noted above, Maile began this research many years ago in part because her tūtū worked at Kawaihoa. Eliana joined Maile’s research project as a student research assistant in 2023. While conducting archival research on the history of Kawaihoa and other institutions that incarcerated children, we both have found deeper genealogical pilina to these institutions. Maile’s great-grandmother was held as a child in the Girls’ Industrial School in Mō‘ili‘ili—the precursor to the training school at Kawaihoa, which opened in 1929. Eliana’s great-great-grandmother was also held at the Mō‘ili‘ili site.

Neither of us knew—before we saw their names in archival documents—that we had kūpuna who were incarcerated as children in the institutions we were studying. In different ways, neither of us was exactly surprised to find our kūpuna wahine in the archives. For while we still don’t know all the details of their specific cases, we have lived with the stories—and silences—passed down about our ancestors. We know from personal experiences with our own families that when

Native Hawaiian families lose their children for years at a time, one consequence is ongoing intergenerational trauma. Holding the images of our kūpuna clearly in our minds, the goal of all our research and writing on this topic is to do justice to their stories and heal the ongoing effects of the hewa (wrongs) they experienced in our families—and so many others. This is kupuna wahine-led research.

COMPARATIVE CONTEXTS OF TRAINING SCHOOLS AND BOARDING SCHOOLS IN HAWAI‘I

In Hawai‘i today, “boarding school” has specific connotations that conjure images of relatively privileged institutions like Kamehameha Schools or Hawai‘i Preparatory Academy. Because of the wealth of resources and networks such schools offer students—if their families can pay the tuition—these boarding schools are seen as desirable. This perception differs greatly from the understanding of a boarding school with Native American contexts, where “boarding school” refers not merely to any educational institution that had dormitories but more pointedly to the long and traumatic history of Native American children being forcibly removed from their families and tribes and kept in abusive institutions meant to “kill the Indian, save the man” (Child, 1998; Lomawaima, 1995). In 2022 and 2024, the US Department of the Interior issued investigative reports on the history of “federal Indian boarding schools” in an attempt to confront and reconcile the painful histories of these places (Newland, 2022, 2024). Several institutions in Hawai‘i were named in these reports—including Kamehameha Schools and the Kawaioloa Training School for Girls.

How do we make sense of the fact that these two very different types of schools are both named in those reports? Many scholars have written about the history of education in Hawai‘i, and their work makes clear that in the territorial period, every form of formalized schooling was colonial. Schools—from private to public—punished children for speaking ʻōlelo Hawai‘i, Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, Pidgin, and more. Schools taught children that Native Hawaiians were “dying out,” and that the destiny of Hawai‘i was to be a uniquely American “melting pot.” Even Kamehameha Schools, which was founded to educate Native Hawaiian children, was shaped by the agenda of the haole elite (Taira, 2024; Goodyear-Kaʻōpua, 2014).

While the overall lessons of white supremacy and Native Hawaiian erasure were present across private and public schools, the Kawaioloa Training School for Girls—and its counterpart, the Waiale‘e Training School for Boys—was different in one major way. Children were not simply enrolled in these “schools.” Rather, children were *sentenced* by a judge to these training schools, which were operated by the territorial government. In this way, institutions at Kawaioloa and Waiale‘e have more in common with Native American boarding schools than most other schools in Hawai‘i: Children were forced into these institutions, which were largely located at a long distance from their places of origin, and kids were prevented from regularly seeing their families and communities. In other words, these institutions, and the meanings attributed to them by territorial Hawai‘i society, pathologized Native Hawaiian children and families, and implicitly or explicitly, Hawaiian culture at large, as “bad.”

Indeed, the histories of the training schools at Kawaioloa and Waiale‘e have rarely been mentioned in conventional historiography of the Territory of Hawai‘i, but they illustrate all too well the massive changes white American leaders were forcing onto Hawai‘i’s society and economy. The Territory of Hawai‘i’s government, officially established in 1900, was led by Sanford B. Dole, who was appointed governor by US President McKinley. Prior to the territorial government’s establishment, Dole had been one of the main architects of the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893 and subsequently was made president of first the “Provisional Government” (1893–1894) and later the “Republic of Hawaii” (1894–1898).

Sanford Dole was just one of many descendants of white missionaries and merchants who controlled Hawai‘i during the territorial period. His cousin, James Drummond Dole, started the Hawaiian Pineapple Company in 1901, which would later expand into the multinational Dole enterprise still operating today. The Hawaiian Pineapple Company was subsequently directed by Frank Cooke Atherton, a descendant of the missionary Cooke family, who, alongside the Castle family, operated the powerful firm Castle & Cooke. Castle & Cooke was one of the notorious “Big Five” companies (along with C. Brewer, American Factors, Theo H. Davis, and Alexander & Baldwin) that effectively held oligarchic power after they overthrew the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893 (Kent, 1983). Though Dole and the Big Five pushed for US annexation, when Hawai‘i became a US territory, these oligarchs were forced to contend with the reality that being a US territory extended democratic rights and suffrage to Native Hawaiian men. Thus, even while the Big Five held sway over the territorial government, from 1900 on, they were threat-

ened by Native Hawaiian legislators under the Home Rule Party (Williams, 2015). We can understand accordingly, then, that the training schools were one strategy for Dole and other haole settlers to enforce settler colonial ideals and structures in Hawai‘i—in response to ongoing challenges from Native Hawaiians.

As governor, Sanford Dole visited the Boys’ Industrial School at Waiale‘e (the counterpart to what would become the Kawaihoa Training School for Girls) soon after it opened in 1903. Dole offered the boys “encouragement,” and remarked that “a splendid start had been made” at the new facility. The *Hawaiian Star* report on this visit emphasized the assumed positives of the curriculum—namely, that boys would get good groundings in occupations including “farming, handling cattle, carpentering, blacksmithing,” and more (“Good Start,” 1903). What the report leaves unsaid, however, is that boys at the school were sentenced there after being convicted of a crime and were required to stay for as long as the court mandated. The institution at Waiale‘e was not brand new—its direct predecessor was a “kula ho‘opolelei a a‘o hanalima” (reformatory and industrial training school) located at Keone‘ula in Kapālama, just outside of downtown Honolulu. This earlier institution opened in 1865, under the Hawaiian Kingdom. But after the US territorial government took over, white leaders proclaimed that the reformatory allowed children to remain too close to the “urban vices” of Honolulu. Waiale‘e, located on O‘ahu’s North Shore, was deemed to be a more desirable site where boys, even if they ran away, would not be able to easily return to town. Similarly, an industrial school for girls began operation in 1904 at the former site of the reformatory in Kapālama, later moved to Mō‘ili‘ili in 1912, and finally relocated to Kailua on the rural windward side of O‘ahu in 1929.

Though called “schools,” all of these reformatories, industrial schools, and training schools were effectively child prisons. The “crimes” for which children were incarcerated, and the sentences they received, are difficult to understand by modern standards, even when we recognize past and ongoing structural racism in systems of incarceration. Imprisoned children were as young as nine and as old as twenty-one, though the majority were in their teens. Commonly, boys received sentences of one to several years for truancy or petty theft. Girls were almost always sentenced for violating white expectations of female sexual purity before marriage. Girls’ “crimes” in this vein included “sexual waywardness,” “immorality,” and “sexual incorrigibility.” They were similarly sentenced, usually as teenagers, for one to several years—often until they reached the “age of majority,” which varied over the years between eighteen and twenty-one.

In the vocabularies of their time of operation, and in references to these institutions today, both Kamehameha Schools and the Kawaihoa Training School for Girls are often referred to as “boarding schools,” “industrial schools,” or “training schools.” Indeed, both institutions historically housed children who received education that was commonly described as “industrial” or “training.” During both the territorial period and today—in contexts such as the Department of the Interior’s report—these institutions are similarly categorized. Despite these similarities, however, we argue that the “training schools” at Kawaihoa and Waiale‘e were substantially different from Kamehameha, as they were, in both intent and practice, literal prisons for children.

Children at Kawaihoa and Waiale‘e had limited, legally restricted contact with their families. Children could not leave the site until their sentences were complete. Children of any race could be sent to the institutions at Kawaihoa or Waiale‘e, but in practice, Native Hawaiian children were consistently overrepresented, and it was rare to see haole children there. Children who broke institutional rules while at these places were punished—often by being put in solitary confinement or “dark cells.” Further, while all children incarcerated in these places were subject to such processes of settler colonial discipline, Kanaka Maoli culture was specifically targeted as something that was not only stigmatized but became practices that were meant to be forms of punishment. At Waiale‘e, where boys were forced to work in lo‘i kalo (taro terraces) and a loko wai (freshwater fishpond), they often reported not reaping the fruits of their own labor. In 1915, over fifty boys tied up a teacher and escaped, citing hunger. At Kawaihoa, girls could be punished by being placed in a detention cottage, having their hair cut short, or being forced to wear holokū. The institution sought to stigmatize holokū as a Native Hawaiian style that was backward and out of fashion, embodying this ideology in the practice of wearing holokū as punishment. To call these institutions “training schools,” therefore, is euphemism, to say the least. These children were “trained” to despise the very practices that defined and sustained the lāhui (caring for, feeding, and beautifying bodies of both ‘āina and kānaka). It is no wonder, then, that the physical, mental, and intergenerational colonial violence of these places persists to this day.

The forced “training” that children received at each institution suggests how important capitalist, gendered labor roles were to the new territorial government. Whereas the reformatory that opened under the Hawaiian Kingdom originally made no distinction between boys and girls, gendered differences were very stark in the territorial period. Boys were drilled in US military formations. They practiced trades such as blacksmithing and worked in agriculture, both on their

campus and at nearby sugar and pineapple plantations. Girls cooked, did laundry, and made crafts such as lauhala or quilts, which the institution sold (and kept the majority of profits). Boys often ended up in Oʻahu Prison after their terms at Waialeʻe. And as we discuss later in this essay, girls were largely paroled into jobs as maids or domestic labor, or they were released upon being married—if the marriage was approved by the bureaucrats that oversaw the training schools. These bureaucrats were leaders in the haole-dominated offices in charge of the schools: first, the Board of Education, then the Board of Industrial Schools from 1916, and finally the Department of Institutions, from 1939 through statehood.

Much of the historiography on plantation labor in Hawaiʻi glosses over Native Hawaiian participation in plantation labor, suggesting that Native Hawaiians played a marginal-at-best role in the sugar and pineapple industries behind waves of immigrants from China, Japan, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Korea and elsewhere (Takaki, 1983; Okihiro, 1991). But examining the work of these industrial and training schools suggests that Native Hawaiians always played a key role—as forced child labor—in the industrializing economy of the territory.

We understand the many instances when these incarcerated children ran away, or otherwise defied authority, as challenging not only the immediate confines of the training schools but also their forced participation in gendered labor within a plantation economy. When we speak to people in Hawaiʻi today about this history, we have found that it is sometimes difficult for them to immediately accept such an argument. This is in part because the idea of juvenile detention is now taken for granted. Indeed, the Kawaioloa Training School for Girls effectively never closed: It merged with the Koʻolau Boys' School in 1963 to become the Hawaiʻi Youth Correctional Facility. Many in Hawaiʻi grew up knowing the training schools as a familiar threat—being told some version of the following: “You better behave or you’ll get sent to the bad boys’ school.” Whether issued in jest or in earnest, such quips reflect a deep internalization of what the training schools taught—namely, that children sent to Kawaioloa or Waialeʻe were “bad” and deserved to be sent away. The shift we hope our research encourages is to understand that the institutions—and the colonial, white supremacist and heteropatriarchal social norms they enforced—were bad, not the children sent there. Nonetheless, as we discuss further below, Native Hawaiian children and families did not simply accept these false ideologies about Hawaiian children being bad. We hope to convince our readers that we—those looking back and grappling with this history—should not either.

PATHOLOGIZING KANAKA 'ŌIWI EXPANSIVE KINSHIP PRACTICES

When Eliana's great-grandmother, Bertie Lou Chang Massey, was a young girl, she often traveled with her mother from Pearl City, O'ahu, to Waipi'o, Hawai'i, to visit their 'ohana. In a letter to her granddaughter, she reminisced:

We would meet my grandfather "up the Valley." He had horses saddled and waiting for us, he would walk alongside holding the rein and we would go down the Valley thru a muddy path to get to his house. There was no electricity then, kerosene lanterns was used then and my aunt washed clothes in the stream. It was the way of life and everyone was family. (B. L. C. Massey, personal communication, 1990)

For countless generations, Kānaka 'Ōiwi have maintained expansive familial networks and traveled across islands to maintain these relationships. As Eliana's great-grandmother wrote, the sense that "everyone [is] family" is central to the Kānaka 'Ōiwi "way of life." However, haole institutions viewed these expansive familial networks as a threat, and this "way of life" was pathologized and criminalized during the territorial period. For example, in 1913, Rose K., a 25-year-old Kanaka 'Ōiwi mother from Pālolo Valley, was committed to the insane asylum for over a month and diagnosed with "mania a potu" or "madness from the drink." The Territorial Commission of Insanity reported that her primary delusion was the belief that "she is related to almost every Hawaiian she sees." Even after being examined by a doctor, the commission expressed disappointment that "she maintained her delusion as to relationship with all Hawaiians in sight." The report also cast doubt on her familial ties by noting that shortly before her commitment, her husband deserted her and she briefly left her children in her mother's care to travel to Wailuku, Maui, where she had "relatives" (stated to be the Kepoikai family). Upon release, she resumed living with her mother and caring for her children in Pālolo Valley but was required to report to a parole officer every two weeks until the end of her parole (The Commissioners of Insanity, 1913, pp. 6–7).

Kānaka Maoli are, in fact, all related. We mean this in the broad sense of ethnicity and/or nationality being a category of people from the same culture who share a history and ancestry. More foundationally, however, Kānaka Maoli are related to both each other and other forms of life in Hawai'i, as many Hawaiian genealogies and cosmologies, including the Kumulipo, describe.² Not to mention, the 1910 US census only recorded 38,547 Native Hawaiians, making familial ties even closer than they are today (US Census Bureau, 1913). So why would a woman be institutionalized for recognizing this form of kinship, which is extensive but uncontroversial by contemporary standards? The Insanity Commission's discomfort with the idea of extensive Kanaka Maoli kinship can be interpreted in many ways. In this case, Rose K.'s reliance on her mother for childcare while grieving her marriage and seeking comfort from extended family and alcohol may have been seen as a failure to perform motherhood "properly." Rather than depending on a husband, she turned to her extended family by co-parenting with her mother and seeking support from physically distant relatives. The commission may have also doubted her epistemic authority simply because she was a Kanaka Maoli woman. This is perhaps most evident in their use of quotes around "relatives" and their clear skepticism that she could even accurately identify her own family.

This pattern of pathologizing and criminalizing expansive Hawaiian kinship practices extended beyond individual cases like Rose K.'s. A 1940 study on the "role of the family" in the lives of girls at Kawaihoa Training School similarly framed Kanaka 'Ōiwi kinship beliefs and practices as stubborn and deviant. It observed that the attitudes and beliefs of Kanaka 'Ōiwi girls toward sexuality and kinship were "colored" by "ancient practices relating to sorcery, family organization, and moral standards" (Wallace, 1940, p. 101). The study attributed these attitudes to the influence of their homes, specifically referring to customs such as punalua (relationships between two or more partners who are sharing a mutual partner), 'aumākua (ancestral guardians), and hānai (an open form of adoption of children by extended family or close friends). Among these, hānai was identified as the most referenced practice by the girls. The study reinforced colonial anxieties about Hawaiian cultural persistence, quoting University of Hawai'i sociologist

Andrew Lind (1934) in his essay, “Modifications of Hawaiian Character,” which suggested that aspects of traditional Hawaiian culture perniciously continue despite societal condemnation:

Some of the present-day “unsocial” conduct of the native shows the unmistakable imprint of the ancient culture. We may think of them as cultural attitudes so fundamental that contempt, ridicule, and legal prescription affect them but slightly or merely drive them beneath the surface to find expression in new and symbolic forms...The “hospitality” of the ancient order reappears in the excessive ratios of “crimes” of sex and property. (pp. 242–243)

Following this logic, the study linked being raised in a Hawaiian home or neighborhood with a significant Hawaiian population to the girls’ perceived delinquency, claiming that “residues of ancient beliefs” encouraged deviant sexual attitudes (Wallace, 1940, pp. 97–122).

Settler discomfort with Kanaka Maoli kinship practices and beliefs reflects frustration with Kanaka Maoli resistance to assimilation into capitalist and American nuclear-family structures. As noted in the letter from Eliana’s great-grandmother, not only did Kānaka Maoli have deep love and respect for extended and what western anthropologists would call “fictive” kin, but their pilina to their people, and to the lāhui, were also rooted in extensive histories on and responsible to specific lands, like Waipi’o. Mark Rifkin (2010) argues that Native American residency and kinship practices were seen by settlers as both deviant and disruptive to the foundational principles of American settler life. Rifkin contends that such relationships were perceived as undermining the “civil contract” of marriage, which in turn destabilized the broader social compact that upheld the American empire (p. 144). Similarly, Kanaka ‘Ōiwi expressing aloha to those outside their immediate households and to ‘āina rather than the US nation threatened the principles structuring the territorial settler society in Hawai‘i.

GOVERNMENT-APPOINTED SUPERINTENDENTS AT KAWAIOLOA INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL FOR GIRLS PATHOLOGIZE KANAKA ʻŌIWI SAME-SEX INTIMACY

The Territorial Board of Industrial Schools, and later the Department of Institutions, primarily appointed college-educated haole women as superintendents of Kawaioloa Industrial School. For instance, Miss Florence Brugger, a haole woman from Nebraska, served as superintendent from October 1937 to September 1938. Educated at Mount Holyoke University, she worked as a psychiatric social worker at Queen's Hospital for three years before assuming the role. She struggled to maintain control at Kawaioloa Industrial School and resigned before completing a year as superintendent, returning to psychiatric social work at the newly established Hawaii Mental Health Clinic at Queen's Hospital ("Board Elects Miss Brugger," 1937; "Miss Brugger Quits," 1938).

During her tenure, escapes and strikes were common. Amid these challenges, Brugger spoke publicly about the institution's issues. In a March 1938 *Honolulu Advertiser* article titled "Psychiatry Used as a Weapon Against Kawaioloa Delinquency," she addressed "certain irregularities in the lives of the girls" (p. 2). Brugger acknowledged the presence of "honey-loving," or intimate same-sex relationships, among the girls at Kawaioloa Training School. She theorized these relationships under the logic of situational homosexuality, suggesting they emerged as a response to enforced sex segregation within the institution. This explanation, however, ignores Kanaka ʻŌiwi cultural precedents—embodiments such as moe aikāne and mähū—that provide a deeper context for the same-sex relationships of Kanaka ʻŌiwi girls at Kawaioloa (Kahikina, 2024). Brugger attributed the higher prevalence of "honey-loving" behavior at the institution—compared to other private schools—to "the maladjusted condition most of the girls are in."

Brugger's reference to the girls' pre-existing "maladjustment" reflects not only the stigmatization of homosexuality but also the broader pathologization of Kanaka ʻŌiwi kinship practices and identities. Brugger even likened Kawaioloa Training School to a hospital, stating, "It's perfectly natural to expect a fever in a sick patient at a hospital. We have fevers here, times when our patients require special attention and treatment. Otherwise, they wouldn't be here." Although the article does not specify the nature of the "special attention and treatment" used to address "honey-loving" behavior, it emphasizes a clinical attitude toward non-heteronormative kinship formation at Kawaioloa Training School ("Psychiatry Used as a Weapon," 1938, p. 2).

Brugger's framing reflects what Adria Imada (2022) calls "carceral medicine" in Hawai'i, a system where medical and legal institutions collaborated to incarcerate and study marginalized bodies (p. 8). This is most evident in Hawai'i's leprosy segregation policy (1866–1969), the longest and most severe case of medical incarceration in modern history (Imada, 2022, p. 4). Imada argues that leprosy surveillance and incarceration targeted Hawaiian kinship structures. Western physicians, health agents, and bureaucrats blamed the spread of disease on Hawaiians' communal ways of living, their mobility amongst extended families across islands, and their refusal to abandon sick relatives. For instance, a Canadian-American physician who served as a physician in the Hawaiian Kingdom wrote in 1886:

The habits and customs of these people disclose the causes of the wide and rapid spread of leprosy among them. The Hawaiians are the most amiable, good natured, social people on earth...They are always visiting from island to island and congregating together, never excluding any on account of disease, however contagious or loathsome. They surround smallpox sufferers and kiss, embrace and sleep with lepers without any suspicion of results." (Imada, 2022, pp. 18–19)

Both Kawaioloa Training School's treatment of non-heteronormative behavior and Hawai'i's leprosy segregation policies demonstrate how medicine was weaponized by settler colonial projects to discipline, isolate, and purge bodies from any kinship that defied western norms.

In September 1938, Miss Edith Field, a Kanaka Maoli woman and lifelong Hawai'i resident, replaced Brugger and became the first Kanaka Maoli superintendent of Kawaioloa Training School ("Edith Field to Head Kawaioloa," 1938). Educated at Punahou, the University of Hawai'i, and the University of California, she had worked as a juvenile probation officer and girls' counselor at Kalākaua Junior High ("Edith Field to Head Kawaioloa," 1938; "Edith Field Keen," 1968). Like her predecessor, Field struggled to control the girls. Between July 1, 1938, and June 30, 1939, the Department of Institutions reported 465 escapes from the school ("Kawaioloa School," 1939). However, Field was less concerned about the girls' resistance than Brugger had been. In a 1939 letter to the editor of the *Honolulu Advertiser*, Miss Field defended runaways arguing, "We must get away from the attitude

that running away is the worst crime a girl can commit within the institution.” She argued that granting them more freedom resolved many issues, including what she described as the “rampant homosexuality” that “naturally” arose in an environment where girls had “no natural opportunity to meet the opposite sex in school or out on parole until a girl reached 20” (“Edith Field Addresses the Public,” 1939, p. 10). She opted to “indirectly” discourage homosexuality “by permitting girls to associate with members of the opposite sex under normal but controlled conditions” (“Stress on ‘Petty Details,’” 1940, p. 5). She faced heavy criticism for this approach. In December 1939, she was controversially dismissed after a ninety-page Bureau of the Budget investigative report criticized her perceived leniency toward the girls and alleged that the girls “indulged extensively in homosexual activities” under her watch (Haller, 1940, pp. 1, 7). Following her dismissal, she defended herself stating three points: (1) “homosexuality is definitely no longer a major problem,” (2) there was “only one possible constitutional homosexual” at the time, and (3) “punishment would not cure the case” (“Stress on ‘Petty Details,’” 1940, p. 5). Field’s language demonstrates the continuation of a clinical perspective on same-sex relationships with the distinction between situational and constitutional homosexuality.

This distinction continued to be relevant to the institutional narrative until Kawaihoa Training School was transformed into the Hawaii Youth Correctional Facility. During a visit in 1963, the chief technical aid of the US Children’s Bureau Division of Juvenile Delinquency Service sought to counter the perception of Kawaihoa Training School as a site of “rampant homosexuality,” a view that historical newspapers suggest may have persisted for over two decades. This chief technical aid claimed that only “a few girls with strong homosexual tendencies [were] active in seeking partners and in interesting other girls in this type of relationship.” He recommended that “the staff should let the girls know directly that homosexual behavior is unacceptable, deal firmly with those who are active and support those who resist it” (Goodfader, 1963, p. 57). The extent to which punishment and isolation were employed to prevent non-heteronormative kinship formation throughout the institution’s history remains uncertain. Nonetheless, a 1950 newspaper article indicates that “homosexuals, psychopaths, and difficult disciplinary cases” were locked inside individual rooms at night at Kawaihoa Training School, thus associating homosexuality not only with psychopathy but also with resistance to authority (Lytle, 1950, p. 2).

THE REPRESENTATION OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN DOMINANT ENGLISH-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS DURING THE TERRITORIAL PERIOD IN HAWAI‘I

Between 1930 and 1940, the *Honolulu Advertiser* and *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, both founded and controlled by missionary descendants,³ made only a few direct references to homosexuality, which seem to appear mostly in book reviews, articles about foreign places, or articles related to the Kawaioloa Training School for Girls. During this period, book reviews linked homosexuality to haole men, such as Tchaikovsky, Marcel Proust, Adolf Hitler, and fictional characters from foreign places (“Prosit Proust,” 1939; “Maybe You Will Guess,” 1937; “Prize Essay,” 1937; “Upton Sinclair’s World’s End,” 1940; and Slaten, 1940). The newspapers framed local homosexuality primarily within the context of the Kawaioloa Training School, which disproportionately incarcerated Kanaka ‘Ōiwi girls and emphasized their sexual deviance and excess (“Edith Field to Head Kawaioloa,” 1938; “Edith Field Addresses the Public,” 1939; Haller, 1940; “Noted Sociologist,” 1940; “New Kawaioloa Head,” 1940; “Kawaioloa Escape Problem,” 1940; “Reasons for Escapes,” 1940; “Kawaioloa Escape Figures,” 1940; “Kawaioloa Runaway Problem,” 1940; and “Psychiatry Used as a Weapon,” 1938). This coverage may have reinforced associations between homosexuality, pathology, criminality, and haole identity. As a result, public discourse may have pressured Kānaka ‘Ōiwi to distance themselves from traditional practices, which could be pathologized as evidence of racial inferiority and misrepresented as haole homosexuality.

This coerced dissociation from traditional pilina was evident in a 1940 *Honolulu Advertiser* article, which reported that “the homosexual activities of the older girls were a community disgrace” (“New Kawaioloa Head,” 1940, p. 2). The shame associated with incarceration at institutions like the Kawaioloa Training School for Girls might be one of the roots of contemporary discomfort and ignorance in the Kanaka ‘Ōiwi community related to our Indigenous forms of kinship that might now be called “queer.” Likewise, the historical associations of homosexuality with both haole individuals and compulsory assimilatory institutions like the Kawaioloa Training School for Girls might help explain why some Kānaka ‘Ōiwi may fear that embracing their “queerness” is “desecrating” their “Hawaiianness” (Osorio, 2021, p. 2). Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio (2021) draws attention to how “the need to mark [herself] as queer today is a direct result of the way [she has] been erased systematically from [her] own history” (p. 6). Newspapers run by the descendants of haole missionaries, like the *Honolulu Advertiser* and

Honolulu Star-Bulletin, created the conditions for the systematic erasure of contemporary “queer” Kānaka ‘Ōiwi from their own history. They did so by simultaneously presenting same-sex pilina as foreign while associating it with racial inferiority and criminality, analyzing Kānaka ‘Ōiwi same-sex pilina through haole lenses of “situational” and “constitutional” homosexuality, and creating the false impression that same-sex pilina was absent from Hawai‘i’s territorial history because of the lack of coverage.

EXPRESSIONS OF DESIRE AND PILINA AT KAWAIILOA TRAINING SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

As evidence of Superintendent Field’s inadequacy in addressing homosexuality at Kawaiiloa Industrial School for Girls, a photograph was sent to the territorial legislature showing a wall covered with carvings of coupled inmates’ names or identification numbers underlined with words or phrases such as “love,” “sweetheart love forever,” “buddy love,” “pals forever,” “honey,” “honey bunch,” and “honey darling.” The language the girls carved into the walls of the institution clearly demonstrates same-sex pilina but resists straightforward classification within western notions of platonic or romantic relationships. Although the Bureau of the Budget labeled the girls’ carvings as “vulgar and licentious,” their vandalistic acts of aloha demonstrate how *ea* continued to flow in the relationships among Kānaka ‘Ōiwi girls within the institution (“Kawaiiloa Escape Figures,” 1940, p. 9).

In 1945, a handbook—issued by the Department of Institutions and approved by the territorial governor—was given to all girls upon their arrival at Kawaiiloa. The handbook detailed rules such as prohibiting the use of nicknames for other girls and requiring “not to scratch or mar any property here at the school, for it belongs to the Government and not to us.” The intimate phrases and nicknames the girls carved into the wall were seen as evidence of other violations as well. In the handbook, they were instructed to “be friendly to all, but not too intimate, with any other students.” “Too intimate” referred to not just sexual activity, but also kissing, holding hands, walking with arms around each other, discussing their pasts—particularly their hardships—with each other, sharing clothes, talking at the table during meals, and talking after lights out (Elder, 1945, pp. 4–29).

The comprehensive nature of these rules, which even prohibited talking during mealtimes, demonstrates that it was not just what we might perceive as “romantic” or “sexual” relationships between girls that challenged the institution—or the territory—but any unregulated, unsupervised expression of aloha between Kanaka ‘Ōiwi girls. The institution specifically feared that if the girls spent too much unsupervised time together, they might plan group escapes. These fears were founded as girls often shared information with each other about the outside world and helped each other escape. Though records of the girls’ perspectives on kinship and sexuality are scarce, the detailed rules against pilina between girls in the 1945 handbook can be read against the grain as evidence of girls’ diverse and creative expressions of desire and aloha for each other.

The Kawaihoa Training School for Girls’ student newspaper, *Hui Opio*, also offers some of the girls’ own (censored) words. For example, in the *Hui Opio* issue published on April 1, 1949, a brief student report reveals one girl’s surprising favorite part of her domestic sewing class:

If it isn’t stitching it’s buttons, snaps and last but not least fitting, which I like best because I can see all the pretty legs under those costumes, (Girls you’ll know what I mean when you see them in their act). Keep those legs in shape before Easter GIRLS. (Kajiwara, 1949, p. 4)

The intended purpose of the sewing class was to equip the girls with the skills necessary to make and repair clothing for their future husbands, children, or employers. However, the actual focus of at least this author, as evidenced by her remarks, was on the opportunity to see the “pretty legs” of other girls up close and to anxiously anticipate how beautiful and strong they would look during an upcoming holiday dance performance.

In the *Hui Opio* issue published on May 13, 1949, a student’s love poem full of yearning about an individual (whose gender is unspecified) was printed with a special note indicating that it was edited by the newspaper’s student staff. Even if this poem was written with a boy in mind, the newspaper staff felt the need to censor some of the author’s feelings, reflecting how the institution regulated and at times prohibited even “heterosexual” relationships:

*GOLDEN REMEMBRANCE (Edited)**I like to dream of those summer days**When time was least of my cares**With songs that held the words to say**Things we felt deeply and shared.**Oft time I wondered**If they could be true**Would those pleasures which May created**Be memories when summer is through**Would happiness be mine that we dated?**(L. L., 1949, p. 5)*

This poem poignantly captures one girl's longing to date someone, with the institution's constraints complicating her desire for any romantic relationship, regardless of gender. These limitations made memories feel more certain than the possibility of an autonomous, romantic future.

CREATING KIN IN KAWAIILOA TRAINING SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Though the Kawaiiloa girls did not seek to replace their pilina with those outside the institution, evidence shows that they created new forms of 'ohana within the institution. In 1963, a University of Hawai'i researcher, Dorothy Louise Gates, documented the existence of a formalized familial system within the Kawaiiloa Training School for Girls, which developed without the approval or involvement of the professional staff. In this system, when a new girl was released from the holding room after being admitted to the school, another girl would approach her and ask if she wanted to be her "daughter." Within these relationships, "mothers" and "daughters" fulfilled specific role expectations for one another. For example, one girl mentioned that she would turn to her "mother" when she felt like running away, and her mother would try to dissuade her. A "mother" would defend her "daughter," share her belongings, and help her adjust to life in the institution. Several girls emphasized that the most important responsibility of a "mother" was to guide her "daughter," particularly when the latter was feeling depressed or uncertain (Gates, 1940). Although the origins and duration of this

system are unclear, the practice of sharing belongings, which was against the institution's rules since at least 1945, suggests the system may have predated the rules (Elder, 1945, p. 5). If this familial system developed afterward, it deliberately went against the rules. Either way, it reflects the complex tension between institutional rules and the girls' relationships with each other. Gates also documented the presence of "aunts" and "grandmothers," as well as "fathers" and "brothers" through contact with boys at the Ko'olau Boys' School. Unfortunately, she did not explore this aspect of the familial system in their study.

These relationships provided a safe space for discussing sensitive topics—such as sex and pre-incarceration experiences—that the girls felt they could not share with social workers or house mothers for fear of being pathologized or punished (Gates, 1940). In 1939, 18% of thirty-six survey respondents at Kawaioloa Training School indicated that their female friends were their primary sources of sexual education (Wallace, 1940, p. 62). With limited opportunities to interact with their mothers and aunties, the girls at Kawaioloa Training School relied on one another for information to mitigate their sexual vulnerability. A 1940 *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* article reported:

It is common practice for girls who have run away and been apprehended to be returned to their respective cottages, where they entertain the other girls with tales of their escapades and conquests while on 'leave.' Their sex experiences are the choice bits of entertainment. ("Adequacy of Moral Training," 1940, p. 13)

While the author of the article above presented these details as evidence of the supposed inadequacy of moral training at Kawaioloa Training School, these practices can also be interpreted as a strategy employed by the girls to address their lack of sexual education. The storytelling sessions following escapes allowed the girls to share information about their bodies and the world beyond the institution's confines. While escapes directly challenged the institution's control, "talking story" after recapture can be seen as an equally significant form of resistance. Furthermore, these talk story sessions likely motivated further escapes.

CONTRADICTIONS OF “REHABILITATING” GIRLS’ SEXUALITY

The stories of the girls who ended up at Kawaihoa Training School often reveal the contradictions in the institution’s attempts to “rehabilitate” their “sexual waywardness.” Locking up teenage girls in one location sometimes made them targets of men who trespassed onto campus. Indeed, this concern was one reason cited for relocating the girls’ industrial school from Mōʻiliʻili, in urban Honolulu—where sailors in port were reported to visit and harass the girls—to the rural and isolated campus of Kawaihoa in 1929. However, by 1941, similar problems persisted. That year, two men were caught lurking in the bushes outside one of the cottages at Kawaihoa, attempting to persuade two girls to go out with them. Trespassing appears to have been such a substantial problem that the military police issued a special order in March 1941 (notably before the start of World War II) that banned military men from the Kawaihoa campus. This military-police order may have also reflected an anticipated or actual increased presence of the US Navy on the windward side, as the Navy began constructing a naval air base (what would become the Kāneʻohe Marine Base) at Mōkapu at Kāneʻohe Bay in 1939; dredging of the bay to build runways took three years. Even closer to Kawaihoa was Bellows, which was established as a “military reservation” in 1917 and officially designated an air force base in 1948. These installations placed military men near the girls, and reports of men trespassing onto the Kawaihoa campus continued.

While the girls were placed in Kawaihoa Training School for flaunting their resistance against white-American norms of chaste female sexuality—including “associating with boys” as well as being pregnant out of wedlock—some superintendents encouraged the girls to have “boyfriends” who could periodically visit. In 1940, a news article reports the rationalization of this strategy: “Before visitors outside the family were allowed, the homosexual activities of the older girls were a community disgrace. The beneficial social value of these visiting hours far outweighs any inconvenience to us, and certainly justifies our allowing them” (“New Kawaihoa Head,” 1940, p. 2). The rationale was that allowing girls to have boyfriends would prevent or reduce romantic or sexual relationships between the incarcerated girls. Notably, the very actions that sentenced girls to the training school were later permitted there—if under restricted and surveilled conditions. This suggests that white-American society in Hawaiʻi objected less to the practice of relationships (sexual or otherwise) between girls and boys, and more to the freedom or *ea* that Kanaka Maoli girls expressed when they formed such pilina on

their own terms. Moreover, homosexuality practiced by some girls at Kawaihoa was problematized, not simply or solely because such practices were socially taboo, but because they were freely chosen.

One way for girls to be paroled from the institution was through marriage. However, marriages required approval from the institution's governing body (initially the Board of Industrial Schools, later the Department of Institutions). Again, by exercising control over these girls' futures, the territorial government sought to curtail not only their sexual choices but also their broader practices of *pilina*, which exceeded and threatened white-American ideals. In 1934, Lang Akana, executive secretary of the Board of Industrial Schools, wrote to a judge thanking him for arranging the marriages of multiple girls, noting his personal belief that such unions "would be of immense help to their future welfare, and that of their prospective babies." The Board appears to have investigated prospective husbands, assessing their employment, income, and vices. For example, in 1937, the Board approved the marriage of a girl on parole from Kawaihoa—who was living with her sister, despite documented physical abuse from her brother-in-law—to a man who "does not smoke and does not drink and will make Lillian a very good husband." While this approval implicitly acknowledges that not all heterosexual marriages are safe, it still claims the authority to determine which ones were acceptable for these girls. The letter from the Board's executive secretary, Ethel M. Love, further reveals the contradictions of coercing girls into "proper" marriages without giving them full freedom of choice, wryly noting: "This letter will almost sound like an answer to an advertisement in a matrimonial paper" (Love, 1937).

Those who supervised the girls at Kawaihoa believed the best outcome for them was being set up to start their own nuclear family, in accordance with white bourgeois norms. A 1938 report explains, "The purpose of a correctional institution is twofold: Vocational training and social readjustment. In a girls' school, vocational training should emphasize home making, which is the probable and hoped-for ultimate profession of any normal woman." In this context, the report further argued that classes like art and music were not "fads and frills" but the "very best outlets for over-emotional people, and over-emotionalism is what brought most of our girls through the gates."⁴ Here, the girls are framed through the classic trope of the hysterical woman—dependent and incapable of functioning in modern society without the protection of a husband. Notably, however, this portrayal suggests that the girls were sent to Kawaihoa not because they were "over-emotional," but because they expressed their feminine emotions in improper ways. Without explicitly invoking race or class, such language echoed the pathologizing

ideologies discussed earlier. In effect, ideals criminalized Kānaka Maoli and other racialized, working-class girls in Hawai'i for creating, maintaining, and practicing pilina—intimacies with their families, friends, and lovers that threatened the fragile project of creating a white territorial Hawai'i.

CONCLUSION

Hui:

*Kawailoa he aina nani
Ke ala o ka pua lilia
I ka olu o Mauna Olomana
Ku kilakila oe i na maka
A he wahi hoonaauao
No na opio o Hawaii nei.*

Chorus:

*Kawailoa a land of beauty
With fragrance of the lilies
In the calm of Mt. Olomana
There she stands before all
It's a place of education
For the youth of Hawaii.*

—Mele composed and translated by Mileina McKeague,
April 20, 1949

Mileina McKeague was a Kanaka Maoli woman who likely lived at Kawailoa with her husband, Henry K. McKeague, Sr., who worked at the Ko'olau Boys' Home. She composed the mele cited at the beginning of our essay, with the chorus transcribed here. Like many mele, this composition expresses admiration and aloha for a specific land—Kawailoa—describing it as a place full of beauty, peace, and calm. It is a place “in which love dwells.” Yet, we do not know how true this mele would have rung to most girls who were kept at Kawailoa. Can a prison for children be peaceful? When making 'āina into a space that separates families and restricts the ea of girls, what does it do to the sacredness of that land? When we visit Kawailoa today, we sit with these irreconcilable things. The land is beautiful in part because it is relatively undeveloped—in contrast to the suburban subdivisions that it borders. And the land is relatively undeveloped because it has, since 1929 till today, housed buildings that incarcerate our youth.

This is not to say, however, that the institution has remained unchanged over the years. Certainly, there have been major, positive changes at the site in recent decades. In 2018, the site was officially renamed the Kawaihoa Youth and Family Wellness Center. The Opportunity for Youth Action Hawai'i (<https://wearekawaihoa.org>), an extensive network of nonprofits, in collaboration with the state, now operates many non-punitive programs there. Mark Kāwika Patterson, former head of the Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility—now the only carceral entity that operates on the site—led the way in drastically reducing the number of youth who are incarcerated in Hawai'i. In 2022, the facility made national headlines for having no girls incarcerated there for the first time—since its opening in 1929 (Cicchello, 2022).

In many ways, those who care for the 'āina, the keiki, and 'ōpio at Kawaihoa are engaged in the daily project of making it a pu'uhonua (sanctuary, refuge). The Opportunity for Youth Action Hawai'i hui envisions an end to youth incarceration, advocating instead for the flourishing of Indigenous, community-based alternatives (Opportunity for Youth Action Hawai'i, n.d.). This is beautiful yet difficult work, made meaningful in part by the site's long and complex history since the opening of the training school. The contemporary vision of transforming Kawaihoa into a pu'uhonua also reaches backward and forward in time, affirming that this 'āina was—and could be again—a land that nourishes. Remnants of the Kukuipilau Heiau remain on the site. Some documents suggest that Kawaihoa was the name of a spring once part of the heiau, though further research is needed to uncover the mo'olelo of these wahi pana (Papakilo Database, n.d.).

We know that for many of the children incarcerated at Kawaihoa, the experience was difficult, no matter how lovely the land. Yet, by reading the official archival record against the grain, we can also reasonably posit that many girls incarcerated at Kawaihoa saw it as a place “where love dwells.” We mean this not only in terms of close friendships and same-sex relationships among the girls, but also in the broader sense of pilina and kinship—practices that Kānaka Maoli have long maintained, even though they were deemed non-normative, and thus, queer. Kahala Johnson and Mahealani Ahia (2022) have written beautifully of queering mo'okū'auhau in ways that illuminate the expansive kinship kuleana that exists between many lifeforms in Kanaka Maoli systems of knowledge. They apply their insights primarily to embracing “diasporaneity” within indigeneity, challenging the assumption that Kānaka Maoli who live “off-island” are irreparably severed from their communities and kin “on-island.” This logic of diasporaneity also applies to the girls at Kawaihoa—while physically “on-island,” they were nonethe-

less separated from their families. By incarcerating these girls and pathologizing them as “bad,” the settler state attempted to write them out of ‘ohana—denying the multiple, extensive practices of ‘ohana and mo‘okū‘auhau that Kānaka Maoli have thrived on for centuries.

Returning to the mele, another striking hi‘ona (feature) is its reference to Mount Olomana as female (in the English translation). As the composition speaks of Kawailoa as a place where love dwells, it is hard not to imagine this evoking the potential love shared among the girls between them and the ‘āina, land that perhaps provided warmth, shelter, and aloha as a surrogate mother for those in need of maternal affection. We may never know all the details of the relationships the girls formed with one another and with the mountains and gulches of Kawailoa. The archival record offers only brief glimpses of their stories in their own words. Yet, we do know that the multiple forms of pilina the girls practiced at Kawailoa threatened the institution and the broader project of making Hawai‘i American. Over decades, the training school’s superintendents and staff tirelessly sought to contain the girls physically and mentally, attempting to prevent them from experiencing Kawailoa as ‘āina—land from which they could cultivate deep pilina with one another and the wahi pana itself.

When we, the authors, imagine our grandmothers at the girls’ industrial school in the 1920s, we realize that in English, the designation of the prefix “great-” and “great-great-” before “grandmother” creates a sense of distance. They are our kin, yet they lived a hundred years ago, and in western society, we are not expected to feel close to them. We may not have lived in the same era as our kūpuna, and western frameworks may place us at different distances by accumulating “greats.” But within Kanaka Maoli understandings, our pilina can be a queer time-traveling device, activated by a simple desire to learn our kūpuna’s stories. We extend our aloha backward and forward through time—to our kūpuna wāhine and all kūpuna Kanaka who lived through the territorial period, as well as to all their descendants now living and to come.

Ultimately, we hope this essay encourages Kanaka Maoli readers to reconsider which ancestors may have dropped out of our collective ‘ohana’s re-telling of mo‘okū‘auhau or those kūpuna mentioned only as the kolohe or “bad” ones. As Ka‘imina‘auao Kahikina (2024) shows, engaging with different, more expansive formulations of Kanaka collectivity—such as the māhūi—“asserts an intellectual commitment to unmoor our people from incompatible and dangerous measures

of normalcy that center the white sexual citizen as a symbol of civilization” (p. 516). Indeed, confronting the history of attempting to impose white settler sexuality onto Kanaka Maoli girls at Kawaihoa Training School deepens and complicates the mo’okū’auhau of today’s disproportionate incarceration of Kanaka Maoli youth and adults, including women. Yet, despite the trauma and violence embedded in these genealogies, we want to emphasize the enduring, liberatory strength of diverse Kanaka practices of pilina, which the māhūi embodies so well. By continuing to learn how Kānaka Maoli perpetuated the practice of pilina with each other, we move closer to our kūpuna—by relating to one another in the same way they’ve done for centuries. That work begins with restoring ‘āina like Kawaihoa as wahi pana and protecting keiki as its descendants—cherished and free.

ARCHIVES CONSULTED

Bishop Museum Archives

Hawai‘i State Archives

Honolulu Advertiser (Newspapers.com)

Honolulu Star-Bulletin (Newspapers.com)

Kamehameha Schools Archives

Papakilo Database

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NOTES

1 We use multiple identifiers for people who are Indigenous to Hawai‘i in this essay, as a reflection of the multiple names we use today. These include Kanaka Maoli (used to describe a single person or a broad category of people), Kanaka ‘Ōiwi, and Native Hawaiian. The kahakō in “Kānaka” is used when indicating a countable plural number of people (as opposed to an undefined category).

2 See, for example, discussions of the Kumulipo and mo‘okū‘auhau in McDougall (2015).

3 The *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* was founded on July 2, 1856, by Henry M. Whitney, the son of members of the first company of New England missionaries. Originally a four-page weekly, it became a daily in 1882 and was renamed the *Honolulu Advertiser* in 1921. Except for the years 1870–1888, it remained under the control of missionary descendants until 1992. Whitney also launched the *Daily Bulletin* in 1882, which later became the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, making him the founder of Honolulu’s two major newspapers (Chapin, 1996).

4 Underlining in original. See “Biennium Report” (4).