

Declaration of the Sovereignty of the Native Hawaiian Nation An Offering of the ‘Aha

Mai ka pō a ke ao (from the darkness to the dawn), the origin of all life, our ancestral lines emerged from this ‘āina. Our genealogical cosmology intertwined our very existence to the symbiotic kinship of our people and this ‘āina. The ancients rooted themselves here in comprehensive communal family systems inseparable from this ‘āina. The skillfully navigated migrations of subsequent ancestral lines brought forth the complex kapu system of divine ali‘i (lineal chiefs) to enforce the structure and kuleana (responsibility) of our population to cultivate and maintain the health and bounty of this ‘āina.

Our society evolved into three kuleana: nā ali‘i (chiefs) led and protected our lāhui (nation); nā maka‘āinana (common people) nurtured and fed our lāhui; and nā kaula and kāhuna (experts) maintained and perpetuated our ‘ike (wisdom). While the traditional structure has shifted over time, these three essential kuleana continue to exist today.

As we find our way forward as a lāhui, we will forever aloha our ali‘i of old for their example and dedication to purpose and to our people. Their resilience and adaptability in a changing world enabled them to mālama (care for) their kuleana to protect our people’s ability to mālama their kuleana to nurture, feed and perpetuate our ‘ike in accordance with our traditions and our ‘āina.

In the spirit of pono and aloha, we the ‘Aha gathered in February 2016, bring forward the following Historical Facts as some of the basis of the enduring Sovereignty of our nation, and our dedication to the present and future needs of our lāhui.

The arrival of the first Westerners brought the realities of a larger foreign world beyond to our shores. As King Kamehameha I unified the Hawaiian archipelago under one rule in the Kingdom of Hawai‘i, the ali‘i became increasingly aware of a threat to our ‘āina, our lāhui, and way of life.

King Kamehameha III, Kauikeaouli, established the Kingdom of Hawai‘i as a constitutional monarchy, as a strategy to protect our lāhui from efforts to colonize our beloved ‘āina under the disastrous policies of Imperialism and Manifest Destiny. Kamehameha III fulfilled his kuleana to the lāhui and secured recognition in the world of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i, as an independent, legitimate and Sovereign State. The treaties of our Kingdom are a testament to how the world, including the United States, viewed us as an equal sovereign in the family of nation-states.

Under the leadership of King Kamehameha III, our people flourished in education and achieved an unparalleled literacy rate. Kamehameha IV, and his Queen Emma, dedicated themselves to advancing education and providing for the expanding health needs of the lāhui, as leprosy and other foreign diseases decimated our population. Kamehameha V began a revival of traditional practices, and repealed laws banning the kāhuna. During his reign, he facilitated the recognition and use of la‘au lapa‘au.

King Lunalilo led our lāhui to more democratic institutions, and was the first aliʻi to be elected King. King Kalākaua led us to further affirm our place in the world by joining the Universal Postal Union in 1885, and building our first royal palace. Our beloved Queen Liliʻuokalani will forever be revered for her personal sacrifice and dedication to protecting the rights of our lāhui.

In our efforts to move forward as one lāhui, and recognizing our long and glorious history in Hawaiʻi since time immemorial, our lāhui continues to struggle to reconcile our present from a past where our Kingdom of Hawaiʻi was illegally overthrown. We endeavor to share our true history so the world may know and come to understand our cause towards self-determination through self-governance.

As foreigners came to our shores, a group representing business interests came to be known as the Hawaiian League. They organized to gain control of our lands for commercial purposes, and sought annexation of our islands to the United States.

In 1887, members of the Hawaiian League, backed by the Honolulu Rifles forced King Kalākaua to sign a new constitution, known as The Bayonet Constitution, stripping executive authority and imposing property and income requirements that reduced the electoral power of the native population while extending suffrage to European and American foreigners.

In 1893, Queen Liliʻuokalani sought to restore what was lost to our lāhui through the promulgation of a new constitution. An agent of the United States conspired with local insurgents to overthrow the lawful government of our Kingdom.

In 1893, the United States government played a fundamental role in our loss of control in our islands, when 162 troops from the U.S.S. Boston marched on ʻIolani Palace in support of the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom government. It also subsequently recognized the dominion of the provisional government.

Upon investigation by his special commissioner, Senator James Blount, on December 18, 1893, U.S. President Grover Cleveland, condemned the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom as “an Act of War” and recommended restoration of Queen Liliʻuokalani to the U.S. Congress.

On July 4, 1894, the Republic of Hawaiʻi was proclaimed, over the objections of Queen Liliʻuokalani and the Native Hawaiian people. Soon after, foreign powers that once recognized the Kingdom of Hawaiʻi, recognized the legitimacy of the Republic.

On June 16, 1897, with Secretary of State John Sherman, the Hawaiian Annexation Commissioners of the Republic of Hawaiʻi signed a Treaty for Annexation with the United States. Led by the Hui Aloha ʻĀina and Hui Kalaiʻāina, our people rallied against ratification of the Treaty and restoration of our Queen by signing the Kūʻe petitions. Because of that effort, the Treaty of Annexation failed to be ratified by the U.S. Senate.

In 1898, Hawai‘i was unilaterally annexed to the United States without a Treaty, and against the expressed will of the Native Hawaiian people and others, through a Joint-Resolution. In 1900, the United States passed the Organic Act, creating the territorial government, and restoring to the lāhui the power to vote in the elections of local offices. Our lāhui was kanalua (of two minds) on whether to exercise that right to vote. True to our culture, we once again looked to our Queen Lili‘uokalani for guidance. On June 9, 1900, she said,

"Aloha to all of you: I did not think that you, the lāhui, were still remembering me, since ten years has passed since I became a Mother for you, the lāhui, and now the United States sits in power over me and over you, my dear nation. What has befallen you is very painful to me but it could not be prevented. My mind has been opened (ho‘ohamama ia) because of what the United States has now given to the lāhui Hawaii.

Here is what I advise - that the people should look to the nation's leaders, Mr Kaulia and Mr Kalauokalani. A great responsibility has fallen upon them to look out for the welfare of the lāhui in accordance with the laws that the United States has handed down, to ensure that the people will receive rights and benefits for our and future generations, and I will also derive that one benefit (ie, the welfare of the people). We have no other direction left, except this unrestricted right (to vote), given by the United States to you the people.

Grasp it and hold on to it; it is up to you to make things right for all of us in the future." (as reported in the Ke Aloha ‘Aina newspaper, and translated and printed in the Oiwi Journal Vol. 2, page 127.)

Our lāhui followed our beloved Queen’s words, and controlled territorial politics for the first 30 years. We elected Robert Wilcox and Prince Jonah Kūhio Kalaniana‘ole to serve as our first and second elected delegates to represent Hawaii in the United States Congress. Prince Kūhio sponsored the first bill for statehood in the Congress in 1919.

Over time, the United States supported a mass in-migration of American settlers to our island home, primarily through the expansion of a military presence in Hawaii.

In 1946, Hawaii was included on the UN’s list of non-self-governing territories scheduled for decolonization. In 1959, Congress enacted the Hawaii Admissions Act, and allowed all voters, including military personnel, to consider the question of statehood. The State of Hawai‘i was ratified, and Hawai‘i was removed from the UN list. The next year, the UN adopted the Declaration on Decolonization, requiring that full independence be an option for peoples to consider.

The United States military's actions have caused irreparable harms to our natural and social environment including: 49 years of bombing runs on our island of Kaho‘olawe; ongoing use of

vast areas of our limited land for military purposes, including Mākua Valley and Pōhakuloa: ongoing devastation to our marine ecosystems from biennial RIMPAC exercises in our Hawaiian waters; and ongoing economic and social impacts of United States and government subsidized housing, for nearly 49,000 United States military personnel in Hawai‘i.

On Nov. 3, 1993, the United States Congress officially apologized for its role in the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii, and committed to a process of reconciliation with the Native Hawaiian people. Public Law 103-150 was signed into law by President William Clinton.

We declare that these are but a few of the truths about the injustices our people and lands have endured, including the banning of our Native tongue, since foreigners came to our islands. Yet, in the triumph of our resilience, we have pressed for justice through more than a century of non-violent resistance to oppression, guided by the example of our great Queen Lili‘uokalani who, faced with the overthrow of her government, chose the path of non-violence “to avoid bloodshed.”

Today, we welcome the unfolding of time, the recovery of our language, and with it, the uncovering of our true history and cultural roots. We press forward to bring the ‘ike of our ancestors to mālama ‘āina and mālama kuleana. We welcome our renewed commitment to one another, and to our national sovereignty as a capable nation pressing forward for social, cultural and economic independence and self-sufficiency in Hawai‘i.

We recognize that under federal and international law, all indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination; and by virtue of that right, are free to determine our political status and pursue our economic, social and cultural development.

As the world moves toward justice, equality and self-determination for indigenous peoples, we acknowledge the unconquerable forces of pono and aloha, and stand for justice for ourselves as a collective, as a people, as a nation, as Hawai‘i. We reaffirm our commitment and understanding that in order to form our government, all Kānaka Maoli (indigenous Native Hawaiians) are free to choose whether to exercise their right to vote in a future ratification and election.

We support the development and implementation of educational and outreach plan to support the lahui’s ability to make an informed decision regarding any adopted documents, and the decisions we made together.

We mahalo our lāhui for allowing us to ‘auamo kuleana to work together. In the immortal words of our great warrior King Kamehameha I, “Imua e nā poki‘i a inu i ka wai ‘awa‘awa, ‘a‘ohe hope e ho‘i mai ai.” [*Translation: Forward my young brothers (and sisters) and drink of the bitter waters (of battle), there is no turning back (until victory is secured).*]