

USA on Trial

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USA on Trial

USA On Trial:
The International Tribunal on
Indigenous Peoples and
Oppressed Nations in the
United States

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Testimony by representatives from the
Native American, African-American,
Mexican, Euro-American and
Puerto Rican Movements

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Lastly, this book is dedicated to The 1998 Group, organizations and individuals from the six island-nations and their allies, acquired by the US as a result of the Spanish-American War of 1898. This network is preparing coordinated anti-colonial celebrations and activities for the upcoming centennial commemorating 100 years of repression and resistance.

Alejandro Luis Molina
January, 1996

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Bryan Savage: May it please the Tribunal. I have two witnesses for you, one is Kekuni Blaisdell and the other is Elizabeth Parent. I would like to call Mr. Blaisdell first. Both of these witnesses will be presenting various documents to you which we will introduce into the record after the Tribunal has finished its receipt of evidence. If the US does appear, its representatives ought to have a time to examine the documents and object to them if necessary. I call my first witness, Kekuni Blaisdell. Mr. Blaisdell if you would take the witness stand there. Mr. Blaisdell's testimony at this point will be directed to the issue of genocide to the indigenous Hawaiian people. If I may approach him I would like him to identify one of the documents that we would like to submit into the record, for the purposes of identification it is titled evidentiary documents to the indictment of the federal government of the United States of America, for the commission of international crimes and petitions- and for orders mandating its proscription and dissolution as an international criminal conspiracy and a criminal organization. Mr. Blaisdell I take it that you have seen this document before is that correct?

Dr. Blaisdell: [Ae] Yes.

Bryan Savage: Does it describe the various documents that you are going to submit to the Tribunal today?

Dr. Blaisdell: That is correct.

Bryan Savage: What is your profession in the white man's world?

Dr. Blaisdell: In the white man's world I am a professor of medicine at the University of Hawaii School of Medicine.

Bryan Savage: And you direct your political activities through two groups, is that correct?

Dr. Blaisdell: In the Kanaka Maoli (indigenous Hawaiian) world I am convenor of the Pro Hawaiian Sovereignty Working Group which meets every week since 1989 and I am coordinator for Ka Pakaukau, a coalition of twelve Hawaiian sovereignty organizations which meets monthly.

Bryan Savage: Now I have handed you another document. What group does that document describe the political purposes and activities of?

Dr. Blaisdell: Yes, this is the definition mission and declaration of Ka Pakaukau, a coalition of twelve Hawaiian sovereignty organizations committed to the exercise of our inherent sovereignty.

Bryan Savage: And among the other documents that you are presenting there is a book called Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen. Is that correct?

Dr. Blaisdell: Yes sir, that is the story of our history, of genocide committed by the United States of America, as told by our Queen Lili'uokalani, who yielded her authority January 17, 1893 to the superior armed forces of the United States, temporarily until after presentation of

the facts the United States government would undo the actions of its diplomatic and military representatives and restore recognition of our sovereign Hawaiian nation. The full presentation of those facts and undoing of the crimes committed by the United States against our Kanaka Maoli people and nation have yet to be achieved.

Bryan Savage: Please date your explanation. When did the first foreigners come to Hawaii and what was the number of the population of native people at that time and what effect did the arrival of foreigners have on the native population?

Dr. Blaisdell: The first foreigners came to our homeland in 1778 in the form of Captain Cook, et. al., under orders from the British Admiralty. Current estimates are that our native population at that time was almost one million, which is also the current population of our islands. Due to the introduction of diseases and foreign ways beginning with the British, but shortly thereafter followed by the United States, traders, seamen, and subsequently missionaries, our population declined rapidly. In 1893, about a century, later at the time of the illegal armed invasion of our homeland and theft of our nation, our population had fallen from almost a million to forty thousand. That is over a 95% eradication of our people. Genocide and holocaust by any definition. And at that time, we were already out-numbered by 50,000 foreigners — 20,000 whites and 30,000 Asian indentured immigrant laborers to work on the plantations.

Bryan Savage: You spoke of a foreign invasion in the year 1893. Do you know what country perpetrated that invasion?

Dr. Blaisdell: That was “an act of war,” so said President Grover Cleveland in 1893. An act of war committed by his government — the United States of America — against our nation. An armed invasion and theft of our government, our treasury, and all of our lands.

Bryan Savage: As a result of that invasion, did the troops and peoples of the United States of America occupy the Hawaiian land?

Dr. Blaisdell: Yes. Since that date the United States of America has illegally occupied our nation and has illegally persisted in administering this foreign government imposing itself on our nation.

Bryan Savage: What conditions of occupation were imposed upon the Hawaiian people?

Dr. Blaisdell: In 1893, the US minister recognized the illegal, so-called provisional government of local American white business men. That provisional government by its own admission, was established to pursue annexation to the United States. The subsequent illegal act, the 1898 annexation to the United States, was unconstitutional. It was a violation of the United States constitution, because it was perpetrated, not by a treaty between the two countries, but merely by a joint resolu-

tion of the United States Congress. A resolution, of course, merely expresses intent and is not a statute of the law. The 1898 annexation was the acquisition of foreign territory without treaty, but by resolution, because the US Congress at that time could not muster the 2/3rds majority vote in the Senate to ratify a treaty. US annexation compelled us, Kanaka Maoli, citizens of our own nation, to become US citizens in violation of our own inherent sovereignty, as well as the Constitution of the United States. The annexation resolution also officially called for the theft of our lands which were transferred by the local white [haole] provisional government, which then called itself the Republic of Hawaii, to the United States of America in 1898.

Bryan Savage: Have you investigated whether the occupation by the United States has resulted in the introduction of any fatal diseases into the native population? Can you tell the Tribunal whether the occupation did result in such an infection?

Dr. Blaisdell: Indeed, the illegal occupation of our nation by the United States has persisted in worsening our health, social, economic as well as political conditions. In our homeland today, we Kanaka Maoli constitute only 20 percent of the total population, out of a total population of about a million, we number now only 200,000. Of that 200,000 only 6,000 are piha Kanaka Maoli. That is, pure indigenous Hawaiians. It is projected that by the year 2040 there will be no more piha

Kanaka Maoli. We will be officially extinct as a pure race. We suffer the worst health profile of all ethnic peoples in our homeland. The shortest life expectancy. The highest rates of death for the major fatal diseases, and chronic illnesses. We also have the worst educational record. Less than 50% of us have high school diplomas, while 15% of those arrested are Kanaka Maoli, 40% of those in jail are our people.

Bryan Savage: Please explain to the Tribunal the effect of the invasion and occupation on the Kanaka Maoli religion.

Dr. Blaisdell: In 1820, the US government, through the Calvinist missionaries purposefully attacked and destroyed our religion. That is why they came. The first missionary, Hiram Bingham described our ancestors as "chattering, naked savages," and asked, "Can these be human beings?" The United States minister in 1893 (at the time of the illegal armed invasion) said it was the white man's burden to civilize and christianize (us) politically incompetent natives. The missionaries took our language, transformed it and used it for their purposes. They infiltrated our government. It was missionaries who drafted our first constitution in 1840. It was missionaries who drafted the mahele, a series of laws during 1848-1850 that privatized and commodified our lands. These laws legalized the theft of our lands so that, within one generation, our lands were controlled by the missionaries and their descendants. Even today,

the government continues to destroy and desecrate our historic and religious sites.

Bryan Savage: Please develop that theme a little more.

Dr. Blaisdell: The H-3 freeway under construction right now in Halawa Valley, costing an estimated 3 billion dollars, is destroying our Heiau, that is, sacred temples with its bulldozers and concrete pourers, in spite of our protests. In September 1992, just last month, we protested and held religious ceremonies there. We have representatives here who were in that protest. Those protesters were jailed for "trespassing." Our own people jailed for practicing our religion on our own lands!

Bryan Savage: Do you know whether the detrimental effect on the culture and the religion of the Kanaka people was perpetrated in part by missionaries from other types of religions? Do you know whether those missionaries, on the basis of your investigation and knowledge and experience — came under the auspices of the United States government?

Dr. Blaisdell: They were sent to Hawai'i by the American Board of Foreign Missions in Boston. Members of that board were officials in, or were very influential with, the US government. President William McKinley in 1898, referred to the illegal annexation as "nothing new, no change, merely a consummation after three quarters of a century." That is, beginning with the mis-

sionaries and traders in the early 1800's, the US colonized and conspired to seize Hawai'i. The first treaty between our nation and the US in 1826 was drafted and forced upon our government by a commander of a US warship in Honolulu harbor. The treaty forced our native government to assume the so-called debts of our chiefs at that time to US sandalwood traders. So the government of the United States was in collusion with its own traders to force that treaty on our government. This meant, forcing our people into enslaved labor to go up into the mountains to cut down the sandalwood trees to meet the demands of those US traders, who reaped huge profits for themselves while our people died.

Bryan Savage: On the basis of your own investigation, your knowledge and experience, will you tell the Tribunal what the Kanaka family structure was prior to the invasion and how the invasion and occupation affected it?

Dr. Blaisdell: Since time immemorial, western archeologists say for at least two thousand years, our ancestors founded our nation, in mid-Pacific islands later known as Hawai'i. That was before there was an England and, of course, long before there was a United States of America. Our lives were governed by a simple principle — O Ke au i ka huli wela ka honua. O ke au i ka huli lole ka lani — and that means, everything in our cosmos results from the mating of Wakea our sky father with

Papa our earth mother. Everything in our cosmos is living; not only living but conscious; and not only conscious but also communicating. And everything in our cosmos having the same parents means that we are all siblings. Our basic belief is — aloha aina, malama aina. (love the land, care for the land) Our people farmed the aina, (land) which was sacred, fished the Kai, (ocean) which was sacred, and shared the bounties of our nature gods with others. That is the way that we greeted and continue to greet all foreigners who come to our homeland. We gave and shared. But the foreigners who came did not come to live like we do or to believe like we do. They came to take, to exploit and that is why we are now at the bottom. We are the victims of our generosity to foreigners.

Bryan Savage: Can you tell me what the effect was, if any, upon the Kanaka educational system? Can you explain to the Tribunal how Kanaka children and people were educated and what change the occupying power of the United States made?

Dr. Blaisdell: Yes. The missionaries who came in 1820 attacked our traditional educational system, which was one of learning by doing from our Kupuna (elders), our experts. The missionaries replaced our system with the New England church schooling system, with themselves as the teachers. They transformed our language to meet their design, which was coercive assimilation. We were compelled by their education to think and be-

have like them. And that continues today. When the Americans officially took over in 1898, they banned our language, having already destroyed or attempted to destroy our religion. And they have purposefully perpetuated mis-education and disinformation so that most of our people, even today, are not aware of the facts that have been presented to you.

Bryan Savage: I would ask you to direct any other comments that you have to the Tribunal at this time.

Dr. Blaisdell: We Kanaka Maoli, that is indigenous Hawaiians, call upon you and all to help us in the pursuit of an alternative to the present ruling colonial administration which promotes exploitation of others, coercive assimilation, hostility towards indigenous peoples, militarism, subjugation of others and destruction of our sacred environment. We invite you to join us in: ho'ola'a that is reverence, for the dignity and diversity of all peoples, ourselves and others through full sovereignty, self-determination, independence from colonial rule and solidarity with all indigenous people. And ho'ihi that is respect for reason, justice, peace, non-violence, feelings, music, poetry, drama and dreams. And finally lokahi (oneness), pono (harmony) with all of nature around us, whose kinolau, that is many forms represent the great spiritual forces responsible for our origin, and essential for our survival as a distinct people with a common culture, united in single nationhood.

Dr. Rae Richardson: On page four of this handout *Genocide as Experienced by Kanaka Maoli*, in the fourth paragraph "in July 1898, the US forced annexation upon us Kanaka not by treaty but by a joint resolution of the Congress in violation of its own constitution and compelled us Kanaka to become American citizens." The resolution imposed a ceded, "stolen" lands trust of 1.8 million acres on Hawai'i, with the US as self-declared trustee and us Kanaka as beneficiaries. No pledged benefits have reached us Kanaka as of 1991." What were the pledged benefits that you were supposed to receive under this theft?

Dr. Blaisdell: Yes, Dr. Richardson thank you for that question. The language in the 1898 joint resolution of the United States Congress refers to what were called the "public lands." These were the government lands confiscated by the illegal Republic of Hawai'i and the "crown lands," that is, those lands that were the private property of the wearer of the crown of our kingdom, the kingdom of Hawai'i. The Republic of Hawai'i combined those two lands and called them the "ceded lands". Ceded, that is transferred, from their own illegal government, the un republican Republic of Hawaii, to the United States. So those are stolen lands, those are our lands. The resolution is a reflection of the perverted guilt of the United States. All the revenues from those lands, according to the resolution, were to go to "the inhabitants of the Hawaiian Islands." Inhabitants de-

finied as permanent residents, that is, us natives. The US declared itself, the United States government, the trustee, and us natives as the beneficiaries. But no pledged benefits, as indicated in that document, have ever reached us. The United States government and its constituent entities, such as the territory of Hawai'i which the United States government created in 1900 and the state of Hawai'i which the United States government created in 1959, those governments have continued to control those stolen lands and all the income from those lands have gone not to us as the designated beneficiaries, but to the thieves, the United States and its subsidiaries. 500,000 of those "ceded lands," acres are controlled by the US military, so that is why I referred to militarism continuing. The rest of those lands are currently controlled by the state of Hawai'i. They include the harbors, airports, and other lands leased to developers. The income from those lands goes right back to the thieves and not to us as they pledged. They are violating their own laws.

Francisca Villalba Merino: Is it possible to speak about the distribution of the wealth, the levels of unemployment for native peoples as well as that compared with the whites, the level of poverty, and the social situation?

Dr. Blaisdell: Yes, we have the highest rates of unemployment because many of our people prefer to survive by living off the land and the sea rather than to seek jobs from the foreigners who control the economy of

our nation. That is, foreigners have imposed a money, a market economy. They have imposed economic dependence on them. Many of our people refuse to participate in that system, preferring to live off the land and the sea. But the foreigners take more and more of our lands, and destroy our fishing grounds, so that is why we have the highest rates for unemployment. With reference to other social indices: we have the lowest median family income. We have the highest rates for poverty as defined by the foreign government which illegally occupies our nation. Our way of living is to fish from the sea and to farm the land and share, but the foreign government does not permit us to do that so we are impoverished.

Francisca Villalba Merino: I would also like to ask you if there are political prisoners who are struggling against this situation?

Dr. Blaisdell: Yes, I have just referred to those who protested against the destruction of our sacred and historic sites. One of our kupuna (elders) not too long ago, a traditional healer, was arrested for trespassing on our own lands. He had cancer and went to gather medicinal herbs to treat himself, and he was arrested and put in jail. At a gathering on June 11, 1992 just two months ago, on the birthday of our first and great King Kamehameha, at 'Iolani Palace which we consider the seat of our government, our people were arrested and put in jail. Some of them are right here with me and

participated in the chanting this morning. So imprisonment of our people for political reasons for asserting our own inherent sovereignty in our own way, on our own lands, means that we go to jail. But that is part of our resistance, to occupy our lands, to revitalize our culture and to provide for our livelihood. If it means that we go to jail, we go to jail. Our people at Anahola, Kaua'i in July 1991, did just that. The state, with the assistance of the attorney general and the county state troopers, arrested them and demolished their homes. We have a video outside here that shows that. At Sand Island in 1980, our own people living off the land and fishing, had their homes destroyed and burned and were jailed by the state.

Bryan Savage: Thank you, Dr. Blaisdell. I call my last witness on the issue of Genocide. We would like to call Ms. Betty Parent.

Bryan Savage: Will you tell the Tribunal how you are presently employed, Dr. Parent?

Dr. Parent: I am a professor and chair of American Indian Studies at San Francisco State University.

Bryan Savage: And are you affiliated with an Indian nation?

Dr. Parent: Yes, I am Ababaskan from Alaska, I am also part Ubik Eskimo.

Bryan Savage: How long have you been employed at the University?