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Thank you, Mr. President
for having the vision &
determination to carry this
Initiative forward.

It's been trying and
fulfilling!

These are conversations from
the Hawaiian Islands & L.A. for
your consideration. Best to you!
AE Ole

Race In America:
A Message From Los Angeles,
1/17/98



September 10, 1998

PRESIDENT'S ADVISORY BOARD ON RACE

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HAWAII RACE REPORT

Hawai'i stands at a crossroads. A multiracial community marked by changing demographics, a shifting economy, and heightened racial awareness, Hawai'i is beginning a painful process of dealing with its historical racial injustices and its current racial problems. Hawai'i can travel down a path of racial denial, or it can proceed to struggle with the realities of both racial grievance and healing.

America as a nation finds itself at a similar critical juncture. Since major regions of the United States increasingly resemble Hawai'i demographically, the choices made by Hawai'i's people and government about its race relations may well illuminate important problems and possibilities for the country's racial future.

This summary report first describes the myth of Hawai'i as racial paradise and then explains Hawai'i's racial realities, both problems and promise. The report concludes by describing Hawai'i's relevance to the national discussion on immigration, mixed race identity, multilingualism, indigenous peoples' claims, impact of a service economy, multiracial coalitions, ethnic politics, local versus outsider tensions and culturally sensitive dispute resolution.

The Myth of Hawai'i as Racial Paradise

Hawai'i is a racial paradise. That is the myth. The myth speaks of the melting pot, the ethnic rainbow, the place where racial groups live in harmony without effort. And the myth enjoys undying popularity with the media and commentators across the political spectrum.

One aspect of this fiction holds Hawai'i up as a model of racial harmony. As one commentator suggested, Hawai'i is a melting pot of "beauteous combinations . . . of exotic peoples and landscapes where George and Abe and Andy grace the currency and English is the binding tongue."¹ A model of racial tranquility, Hawai'i offers the rest of the nation lessons in tolerance and peaceful race relations. Hawai'i has thus attained a plane of racial enlightenment to which other communities should aspire.

The reverse side of the racial paradise myth casts Hawai'i as drastically different from the rest of the nation -- a racial anomaly. Lou Cannon, a nationally known political reporter and biographer of former President Reagan, wrote of Hawai'i: "While California was rising up in wrath against its multi-ethnic future by passing a demagogic anti-immigration initiative, this peaceful outpost of democracy was reaffirming its melting-pot destiny by electing [Filipino American] Ben Cayetano as governor." Blessed by a rich natural and cultural environment, as well as the celebrated "aloha spirit," Hawai'i is an oasis amidst a wasteland of racial discord.

The racial oasis, however, is a mirage.

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Hawai'i's Racial Realities

Hawai'i's mythical uniqueness and enlightenment pose significant problems. The myth of uniqueness excludes Hawai'i from any serious national dialogue on how to address racial discrimination and violence. The myth of enlightenment masks the complexities of a society marked by subtle racial and ethnic conflict. While Hawai'i may not suffer the constant racial turmoil of other locales, its many racial controversies signal critical issues in need of interrogation -- both here in Hawai'i (in the interest of peaceful co-existence) and in the rest of the country (in the interest of learning from a multiracial microcosm in demographic transition).

Like most of the United States, modern Hawai'i is a society that rests on a legacy of racism. In 1848, American businessmen and missionaries orchestrated the "Mahele," importing Western legal concepts of private property that paved the way for dispossessing Hawaiians of their lands.² In 1893, American businessmen and missionary descendants, with the support of the United States military, forcibly overthrew the Hawaiian monarchy. These injustices, along with the systematic repression of the indigenous language, religion, culture and agriculture from the mid-1800s through the early 1970s, contributed to Hawaiians' highest rate of prison incarceration and infant mortality, poorest health, homelessness, and low overall income levels.³

Hawai'i's present racial realities also trace their roots to the segregation of plantation-era society. The plantation's "divide and conquer" system maintained a rigid race-based hierarchy in wealth, education, housing conditions, and employment opportunities, with whites at the top, Portuguese as overseers, and Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Filipino laborers at the bottom, in descending order.⁴ Over the years, Hawai'i's economy has evolved from agriculture and military spending to service industry. Racial stratification persists in what has been described as a modern-day plantation system centered around tourism. Those struggling at the socioeconomic bottom now include Samoans, Hawaiians and Tongans, and Korean, Southeast Asian and Filipino immigrants. Many of these groups perceive distinct, although often subtle, racial and ethnic discrimination in jobs, schools and housing.

The following is a short list of recent Hawai'i race controversies that hint at the simmering problems:

- In 1997, a public high school yearbook featured a picture of three African American students lip-synching to a love song with a caption below proclaiming: "I like pigs feet! I like hog mollz! Where da collard greens? Who got the chintlinz?" The following year, another public high school yearbook published a photo of a student in what appeared to be a Ku Klux Klan robe.

- In early 1998, in a low-income public-housing neighborhood, police fatally shot a Samoan male 14 times from 10 feet away. According to some witnesses, he had held two knives, but did not threaten anyone; according to others, he "lunged" at police. His killing sparked protests against police brutality in Samoan and Hawaiian communities.

- The Association of Asian American Studies recently rescinded its award to local Japanese American author Lois Ann Yamanaka for her book, "Blu's Hanging," in response to the Filipino American community's outcry that her book perpetuated damaging stereotypes of Filipino men as "sexual predators."

- After months of protest, and despite strong resistance, the Regents of the University of Hawai'i voted to remove the name of well-known former professor of psychology, Stanley Porteus, from one of its buildings. His "scientific" writings -- even into the 1960s -- depicted non-whites in Hawai'i as mentally defective and genetically inferior to Nordic whites. He advocated both immigration restriction and forced sterilization.

- Tensions between "locals" (mostly Hawai'i-born nonwhites) and "outsiders" (recent immigrants and "non-local" whites) persist over who controls Hawai'i's resources and environment and "ethnic voting" remains a crucial component of Hawai'i politics. Passionate debate continues over whether whites suffer from discrimination in Hawai'i and whether "haole" (literally "foreigner," commonly understood as "white") is a racist term.

The myth of racial harmony, of racial paradise, conceals past injustices and present problems among Hawai'i's many diverse groups.⁵ It also hides Hawai'i's struggles for racial justice.

Why Examine Hawai'i's Racial Conditions?

The promise of Hawai'i, then, is not that it is a racial paradise -- so ideal as to demand emulation, or so unique as to elude comparisons. Many other states and cities across the nation increasingly resemble Hawai'i racially and ethnically. Hawai'i's nascent efforts to come to grips with its historical racial injustices and current racial problems, described below, thus offer potential insights for others.

What kind of racial issues does Hawai'i share with the emerging racial populations of the rest of America? And how have the peoples and the state of Hawai'i attempted to deal with multiracial challenges? The list below does not represent the universe of Hawai'i's racial/ethnic problems and accomplishments; it does reflect issues common to Hawai'i and other U.S. localities.

- **Racial Demographics**

Hawai'i bears a critical demographic similarity to the near-future racial makeup of significant parts of the United States. Hawai'i is one of two states with no racial majority. While whites are the single largest racial group in Hawai'i, measured against all nonwhite groups, they are a numerical minority. Business and media power, however, continues to reside in the hands of whites, whether locally, nationally or through multinational corporations. By 2050, no race will claim a majority in the United States.⁶ As the acting director of the Census Bureau observed, these demographic predictions reflect Hawai'i's current demographics: "[I]t's clear that if you look at, quote, 'people of color' or racial groups, where the rest of the country tends to be going would be comparable to what we obviously have here in Hawai'i."⁷ How Hawai'i grapples with its multiracial population will likely provide valuable insight into the dynamics of an ever-increasingly diverse America.

- **Mixed Race Population**

In Hawai'i, 44% of civilian marriages are interracial. Of all civilian births, 60% are mixed race.⁸ Approximately one third of Hawai'i's population is of mixed race ancestry. In light of the recent changes to the Census multiracial reporting category, the ways in which Hawai'i's institutions and citizenry choose to handle issues of mixed race representation, marginalization and ethnic

identity deserve careful scrutiny. If national demographic trends continue, persons of mixed race will soon constitute a significant proportion of the U.S. population, requiring Hawai'i -- as well as the rest of the United States -- to change its basic assumptions about race, challenge its rigid understandings of racial categories, and explore the role of a mixed race population in a multicultural society.

- Immigration

As of 1996, over 15% of Hawai'i's population was foreign-born. Asian Americans (including many recent immigrants from Southeast Asia), and documented and undocumented workers from Mexico are among the state's fastest growing immigrant groups. Across the country, the influx of immigrants from Asia and Mexico is changing the face of the nation. Some commentators have suggested that increasing diversity may cause racial groups to "feel threatened and blame each other for what they perceive to be the downsides of change."⁹ On the one hand, like the rest of America, economic and social pressures may dictate Hawai'i's response to increased immigration. On the other hand, Hawai'i's treatment of its historically large immigrant population appears to reflect its unwillingness to engage in the nationally-charged immigrant backlash.

- Multilingualism

Hawai'i has two official languages -- Hawaiian and English. Its courts provide interpreters in Korean, Ilocano, Samoan, among others, to assure access to justice for its multilingual citizens. In distinct contrast to California's recent ban on bilingualism in schools, Hawai'i's immersion schools teach students from kindergarten to twelfth grade in the Hawaiian language. The ways in which multilingual Hawai'i functions, or doesn't function, culturally and economically may provide useful insights for the rest of the United States at a time of immigration pressures and increased multilingualism.

- Indigenous Peoples' Claims

Native Hawaiians increasingly employ sophisticated broad-based community demands for political and cultural self-determination and some form of governmental sovereignty. Some efforts to rectify the injustices to Hawai'i's indigenous peoples over the last 100 years have succeeded. Still, many Hawaiians remain dispossessed, continuing the cycle of disenfranchisement and frustration. This story of grievance and claims for redress is familiar to many American Indians and, in significant ways, African Americans.

- Service Economy

Hawai'i's social problems have deepened as its economy shifts to service industries employing in lower-end jobs a disproportionate number of minorities, including many recent immigrants from the Philippines and Southeast Asia. These workers serve as maids, house cleaners, janitors, entertainers, nursing aids and orderlies, and cooks -- all low paying jobs with little hope for advancement. At the same time, the mass tourist industry controlled largely by multi-national corporations commodifies and distorts Hawaiian culture. Hawai'i's struggles with the social impacts of a service economy appear to mirror the problems of other areas in the U.S. marked by large scale immigration and economic shifts away from agriculture and industry toward reliance on low-paying, service labor.¹⁰

- Multiracial Coalitions

Hawai'i's history of multiracial coalitions sheds light on the dynamics -- potential and problems -- of interracial alliances throughout the United States. The multiracial labor union movement of the late 1940s largely ended the plantation system of ethnic separation. While interracial tensions persisted, racial communities sometimes coalesced to address racial injustice. With a cautious mix of understanding and political necessity, they supported redress for interned WWII Hawai'i Japanese Americans; the establishment of the Civil Rights Commissions and Martin Luther King Day; the passage of the Hawai'i Equal Rights Amendment and state constitutional amendments recognizing Native Hawaiian rights.

- Ethnic Politics

Race and ethnicity play a central role in Hawai'i's political campaigns. As in large multiracial cities across America, communities often vote in blocs, with voters casting ballots according to the racial or ethnic background of the candidate, or even the candidate's spouse. Politicians must consider "racial balance" in their campaign strategies and appointments. Hawai'i's "inter-ethnic politics" have been both lauded and condemned. The more limited influence of white voters may provide a glimpse of future ethnic politics elsewhere.

- Local vs. Outsider Tensions

In addition to racial or ethnic identities, many people in Hawai'i ascribe to themselves a unique "local" identity. "Local" emerged as a collective identity from the plantation era in which ethnic workers often found themselves pitted against white owners and managers. The racial meaning of "local" shifted after statehood in 1959, thereafter signifying in-group efforts to maintain control of the economic, political and cultural future of Hawai'i against "outside forces."¹¹ Are "local vs. nonlocal" tensions similar to the problems generated by "American vs. foreigner" sentiments in much of the continental U.S.?

- Cultural Dispute Resolution

Hawai'i's courts have embarked on an experiment to employ indigenous forms of dispute resolution as an alternative to Western forms of mediation or arbitration. This culturally sensitive process, called *ho'oponopono*, was originally used by Native Hawaiians to heal physical and psychological wounds arising out of interpersonal or group conflicts, and includes a statement of the problem, discussion, confession of wrongdoing, restitution, forgiveness and release.¹² The courts' use of Hawaiian cultural dispute resolution practices provides insight into the potential for interracial and interethnic healing within a Western legal system.

Conclusion

The seductive myth of Hawai'i as a "racial paradise" impedes meaningful examination of Hawai'i's problems and promise. It also obscures similarities and differences vis-à-vis the rest of the United States -- and how these similarities and differences might bring fresh insight to the dialogue on race relations at the millenium. The myth also inhibits appreciation of the "unadulterated struggle"¹³ so necessary for interracial healing here in the islands and nationally. The reality is that Hawai'i presents a picture of multiracial America's demographic future. The manner in which the

diverse peoples of Hawai`i continue to grapple with pressing racial issues directly relates to the ongoing nationwide process for interracial justice. One scholar's observations on race relations in Hawai`i could easily apply to the nation as a whole: "Hawai`i is a progressive, cosmopolitan American society with critical problems and great inequalities -- as well as alarming signs that these matters are worsening. But there is also great promise that Hawai`i might still represent something that humankind might aspire to."¹⁴

Glenn Melchinger
Isaac Moriwake
Kekailoa Perry
Susan Serrano
Anyaa Vohiri
Eric Yamamoto

Honolulu, Hawai`i

¹ Clark Norton, *Paradise Found*, THE WASHINGTON POST, Oct. 15, 1989, at W21.

² DAVIANNA POMAIIKA'I MCGREGOR, PELE VS. GEOTHERMAL: A CLASH OF CULTURES 3-4 (1990); HAUNANI-KAY TRASK, FROM A NATIVE DAUGHTER: COLONIALISM AND SOVEREIGNTY IN HAWAII (1993); TOM COFFMAN, NATION WITHIN: THE STORY OF AMERICA'S ANNEXATION OF THE NATION OF HAWAII (1998).

³ See Report on the Culture, Needs, and Concerns of Native Hawaiians, Native Hawaiians Study Commission 102-104 (1983); DAVID STANNARD, BEFORE THE HORROR: THE POPULATION OF HAWAII ON THE EVE OF WESTERN CONTACT 30 (1989).

⁴ RONALD TAKAKI, PAU HANA: PLANTATION LIFE AND LABOR IN HAWAII 1835-1920 (1983).

⁵ Rev. Al Miles, *Racism in Hawai'i: Myths and Realities*, HONOLULU MAGAZINE, July 1995, at 67.

⁶ William Booth, *One Nation, Indivisible: Is It History?; Soon, No Single Group Will Comprise Majority*, THE WASHINGTON POST, Feb. 22, 1998, at A1 (citing U.S. Census Bureau statistics); Deborah Mathis, *Racial Diversity Could Prove Catalyst for More Conflict than Conciliation*, GANNETT NEWS SERVICE, Mar. 21, 1998.

⁷ Dan Nakaso, *Hawai'i Does Not Fit Mainland Mold*, HONOLULU ADVERTISER, Aug. 31, 1998, at A1 (quoting James F. Holmes, Acting Director of the U.S. Census Bureau).

⁸ John Balzar, *In Hawai'i, a Moment of Irony*, LOS ANGELES TIMES, Dec. 4, 1991 at 1 (citing 1990 State of Hawai'i Data Book).

⁹ Harold Hodgkinson, *The Challenges of Change*, Honolulu Advertiser, Aug. 31, 1998, at A6. See also BILL ONG HING, MAKING AND REMAKING ASIAN AMERICA THROUGH IMMIGRATION POLICY, 1850-1990 (1993).

¹⁰ See Jack Miles, *Blacks Versus Browns*, ATLANTIC MONTHLY, Oct. 1992, at 41.

¹¹ See Eric K. Yamamoto, *The Significance of Local*, 27 SOCIAL PROCESS IN HAWAII 101 (1979).

¹² E. VICTORIA SHOOK, HO'OPONOPONO: CONTEMPORARY USES OF A HAWAIIAN PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS 11, 46 (1985).

¹³ HARLON DALTON, RACIAL HEALING: CONFRONTING THE FEAR BETWEEN BLACKS AND WHITES (1995).

¹⁴ CHAD BLAIR, MONEY COLOR AND SEX IN HAWAII POLITICS 5-6 (1998).

**MESSAGE FROM LOS ANGELES:
MOVING TOWARD MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY**

Introduced by Angela Oh

Edited by Gary Phillips and Russell Leong

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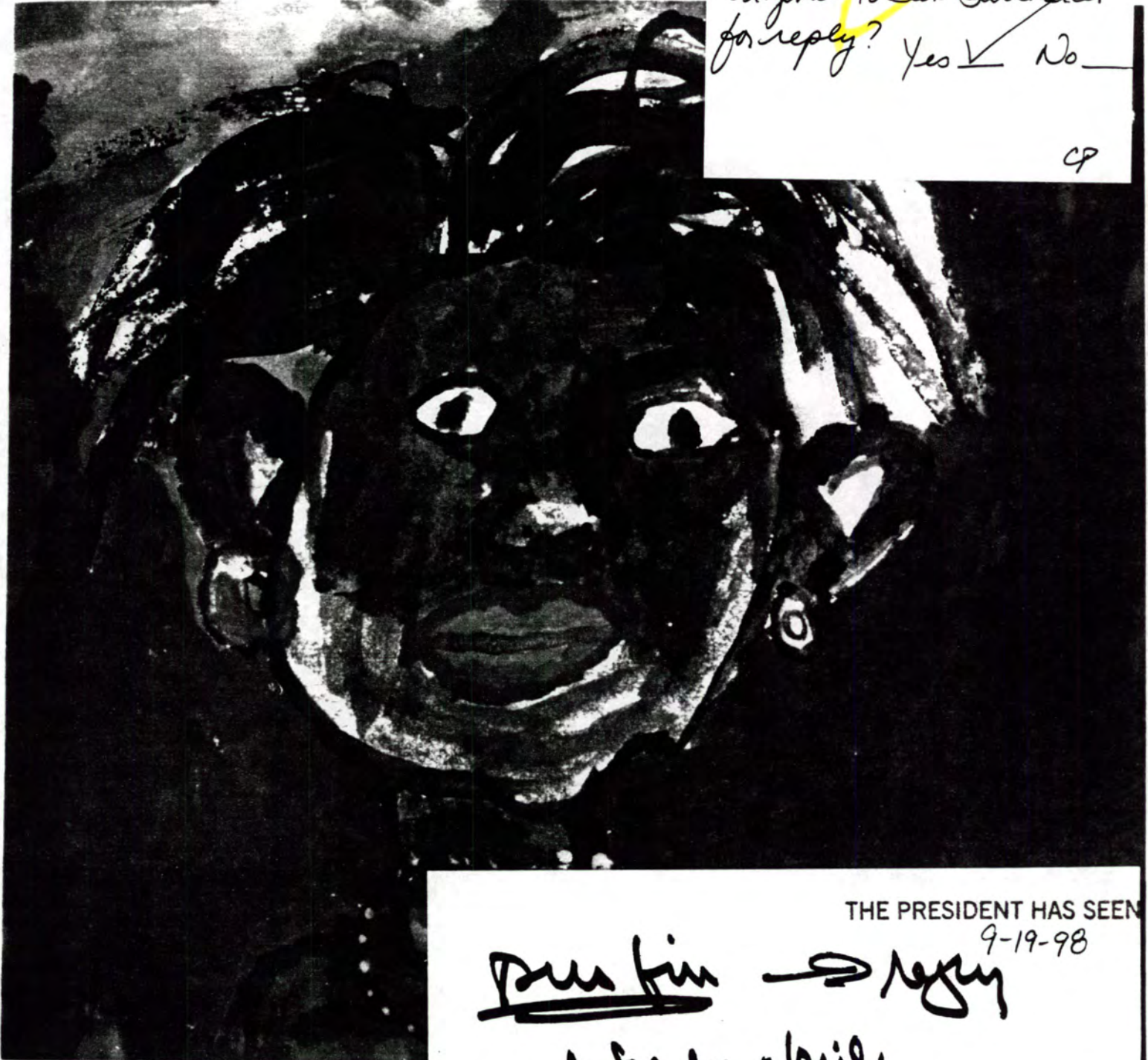
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CP



THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

9-19-98

Don Fin → reply

to Frank & kids

BZ

Cover art by:
Amber Clark
fourth grade
Oxford Elementary School
Oxford, Mississippi 1998