

# ‘IKE KŪ‘OKO‘A: INDIGENOUS CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN EDUCATION AND SOVEREIGNTY FOR KA LĀHUI HAWAI‘I

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‘Ike Hawai‘i, traditional Hawaiian knowledge, is essential to the maintenance of our Hawaiian identity, for our liberation from the forces of American colonialism, and to Hawaiian self-determination and sovereignty. As a space of knowledge production and perpetuation, education also is an important site in the struggle for Hawaiian sovereignty. This article theorizes Indigenous critical pedagogy as a useful framework for thinking through the connections that exist between education and sovereignty for ka lāhui Hawai‘i, the Hawaiian nation. This will be accomplished in part through an examination of ‘Ike Kū‘oko‘a—Liberating Knowledge, an Awaiaulu: Hawaiian Literature Project initiative to make Hawaiian language newspapers accessible.

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“If knowledge is power, then understanding is liberation” (Meyer, 2003, p. 1). This is an idea that Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians) understand well. We understand it because, in the generations that have passed since Western contact, we have witnessed the loss of much of our traditional Hawaiian knowledge through disease, depopulation, disenfranchisement, and colonial devaluation. We as a people have also witnessed the strengthening of our power through the revitalization of ka ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (the Hawaiian language), the practice of hula and other Hawaiian arts, and the restoration of other forms of Hawaiian knowledge and values. We have come to realize that deep understanding of ‘ike Hawai‘i, our traditional Hawaiian knowledge, is essential to the maintenance of our Hawaiian identity, to our liberation from the forces of American colonialism, and to our Hawaiian self-determination and sovereignty.

Education, as a space for knowledge production and perpetuation, is also an important site in the struggle for Hawaiian sovereignty. Indigenous critical pedagogy, which lies at the discursive intersections of critical pedagogy, decolonizing theories, and Indigenous epistemologies, may provide us with a useful framework for thinking through the connections between education and sovereignty for ka lāhui Hawai‘i, the Hawaiian nation. According to Burbules and Berk (1999), critical pedagogy focuses on education as a system which (re)enforces and (re)produces hegemony. Education also forms an important space for resistance, one in which individuals must recognize oppressive forces and actively work toward countering these forces in order to achieve social justice and freedom (Burbules & Berk, 1999). From an Indigenous point of view, social justice and freedom are not only thought of in an abstract sense but are inextricably linked to concrete notions of community, self-determination, and sovereignty (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Grande, 2008). L. T. Smith (1999) explained that the decolonization of Indigenous research “is about centring our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes” (p. 39). To contribute to Indigenous sovereignty, Indigenous critical pedagogy must begin with and be accountable to the needs and priorities of Indigenous peoples, honoring indigenous ways of knowing and being (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Grande, 2008; Meyer, 2003, 2008; L. T. Smith, 1999).

The purpose of this article is to theorize how Indigenous critical pedagogy can be centered by Hawaiian knowledge to serve Hawaiian needs. Through the course of this article, I will flesh out the central ideas behind Indigenous critical pedagogy by providing some background for what critical pedagogy entails, how Indigenous

scholars have borrowed from, criticized, and indigenized critical pedagogy, and how Indigenous critical pedagogy might be tailored for application to ka lāhui Hawai'i. Next, to provide an example of how Indigenous critical pedagogy might be used as an evaluative framework through which we can seek to understand the impact of educationally related programs and initiatives on Hawaiian sovereignty, I will examine the Hawaiian language newspaper initiative 'Ike Kū'oko'a—Liberating Knowledge as it relates to the preservation of Hawaiian knowledge and, thus, to the bolstering of ka lāhui Hawai'i. The Awaiaulu: Hawaiian Literature Project led this initiative, which harnessed volunteer power to transcribe Hawaiian language newspapers into searchable typescript to ultimately make this resource accessible.

## THEORIZING INDIGENOUS CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

In this section, I seek to accomplish the main goal of this article: to theorize Indigenous critical pedagogy as a potential tool for understanding the connections between education and sovereignty for ka lāhui Hawai'i. Starting first with a brief description of critical pedagogy, I discuss the distinguishing features of Indigenous critical pedagogy and how it might be contextualized to meet the needs of ka lāhui Hawai'i.

### *What Is Critical Pedagogy?*

According to the paradigm of positivism, which was primarily developed through the work of European scholars during the Enlightenment era, there is a universal Truth about the world that may be discovered through empirical observations and the employment of rationality (Elliott, 2009). Knowledge exists externally from human beings; it is independent of time, place, and, therefore, culture (Hudson, 1999; Meyer, 2001a). As a neutral object, it may be sought out and culled using only cold, hard, scientific means. Although originally devised in efforts to destroy the pervasive myths of religion, this positivist conception of knowledge has itself come to enjoy its own mythical status of sorts (Elliott, 2009). It is thought to be the way of the world, applicable within every context (Meyer, 2001a). Critical traditions in education, however, have seriously called this myth of positivism into question.

From the perspective of critical pedagogy, knowledge is not neutral nor does it exist independently from the world of human beings, waiting patiently to be discovered (Fitzsimons & Smith, 2000). Instead, knowledge is the product of human interactions, which themselves are situated within specific social norms and interests (Hudson, 1999). This being the case, it is always already political. One grievous problem with the positivist paradigm, then, is its propensity to allow the political origins of various pieces of knowledge to go unnoticed. When this happens, we, the consumers of knowledge, become blind to who created that knowledge, from what perspective, or for what purpose. We become blind to the power structures which dictate who has the license to create knowledge and who has been systematically left out of the equation. This is the central problem that critical pedagogy aims to address.

The work of critical pedagogy begins through identifying the relationships that exist between knowledge and power as well as how these relationships are reproduced within and by educational settings (Cho, 2010). Through this process, answering questions of who has power and where power is located is imperative. Of utmost concern, however, is coming to understand how power operates and via what mechanisms (Cho, 2010). Critical pedagogues examine how hegemony functions both through the official, explicit discourses of educational settings as well as through their structured silences (Hudson, 1999). Keeping in mind that hegemony as a mode of control must be constantly reinforced to maintain its power, critical pedagogues also see the potential for resistance that exists within educational spaces (Hudson, 1999). By first identifying the structures and functions of hegemony, critical pedagogy may be used to work against these structures and functions in efforts to construct alternative forms of knowledge, and therefore power (Cho, 2010; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Freire (2003) describes this process as follows:

The radical, committed to human liberation, does not become the prisoner of a 'circle of certainty' within which reality is also imprisoned. On the contrary, the more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can better transform it. This individual is not afraid to confront, to listen, to see the world unveiled. This person is not afraid to meet the people or to enter into dialogue with them. (p. 39)

From Freire's perspective, then, the goal of critical pedagogy is to achieve human liberation. In working toward this ultimate goal, contemporary critical pedagogues tend to take part in three distinct, but related projects: the project of experience, which calls individuals to claim their own experiences in the critique of dominant ideologies; the project of anti-system, which emphasizes nonhierarchical authority and participatory democracy; and the project of inclusion, which advocates for the inclusion of diverse perspectives within educational institutions (Cho, 2010). At the center of these three projects, and thus critical pedagogy, lie cultural politics (Cho, 2010; Giroux, 2004). Giroux (2004) argues that this is appropriate because cultural politics provide "the pedagogical site on which identities are formed, subject positions are made available, social agency enacted, and cultural forms both reflect and deploy power through their modes of ownership and mode of public pedagogy" (p. 32). Critical pedagogy seeks to liberate by empowering individuals to give credence to their own subjectivities and to assert their own senses of agency (Cho, 2010).

### *What Is Indigenous Critical Pedagogy?*

As it calls us to pay heed to the seemingly invisible power relationships at work within educational systems, critical pedagogy can provide a useful lens through which Indigenous peoples may consider education as a site for power negotiation and potential liberation. However, in and of itself, it is not appropriately equipped to conceptualize and to serve the purposes of Indigenous communities. For Indigenous communities to be able to use critical pedagogy, critical pedagogy must first be indigenized.

Before attempting to flesh out the central points of Indigenous critical pedagogy, I believe it is imperative to consider first who Indigenous peoples are and what their experiences with education have been. According to L. T. Smith (1999), the term *indigenous peoples* "internationalizes the experiences, the issues and the struggles of some of the world's colonized peoples" (p. 7). It is a term that allows peoples, across cultural differences and geographical distances, to identify with one another through common histories and lived experiences of colonialism. This being the case, colonialism, which allowed for the global expansion of the European economy through the subjugation of Native communities and civilizations (L. T. Smith, 1999), can be seen as the tie that binds Indigenous peoples. Grande (2008) provides further insight into this concept as she explains that "the colonialist

project was never simply about the desire to ‘civilize’ or even deculturalize indigenous peoples. Rather, it was deliberately designed to colonize Indian minds as a means of gaining access to indigenous resources” (p. 235). Thus, the colonial subjugation of Indigenous peoples for European purposes has involved not only physical but also cognitive and spiritual violence (Grande, 2008; Meyer, 2008).

Unfortunately, within the context of colonialism, education has played a commanding role in the harming of Indigenous minds and subjectivities. The case of colonialism within the United States alone is fraught with examples. During the 1800s, reservation day schools and off-reservation boarding schools were developed by European American educators in efforts to teach Native American children basic academic subjects and, perhaps most importantly, to instill within them European values and customs (Adams, 1995; Child, 1998). Through this form of education, these children could then serve as the conduits of European civility for the rest of their families and communities in perpetuity (Adams, 1995; Child, 1998). Alaska Natives, who had been perceived as standing in the way of the progress of the Russian fur trade and later the expansion of the United States, were also subjected to enrollment in boarding schools for similar reasons (Jennings, 2004). Though Native Hawaiians may not have been forcefully enrolled in boarding schools, they too were bombarded with messages of Western superiority and Native inferiority through the illegal overthrow of the sovereign Kingdom of Hawai‘i in 1893 and the banning of the Hawaiian language in all public and private schools in 1896 (Kame‘eleihiwa, 1992; Silva, 2004). Sadly, Indigenous peoples across the globe have endured similar experiences and continue to do so. Benham (2004) explains that

For many native and indigenous peoples, the place of school is contested terrain; it is a place of conflict, struggle, and negotiation over content, values, instructional strategies, measures of accountability, and so on. Over time, the powerful influence of a dominant culture that values domination, hierarchical structures, competition, materialism and capital accumulation, and the individual over the community—values that have been reproduced in our school organization—has led to complex tensions that have served historically to marginalize native and indigenous communities. (p. 36)

In the present day, Indigenous peoples' relationships with and roles within such a "contested terrain" continue to be uncertain and tenuous. Though, on one hand, education has allowed for the hegemonic reproduction of Western knowledge and devaluation of Indigenous ways of being, on the other hand, education may also serve as a site for Indigenous resistance (Fitzsimons & Smith, 2000). Through education, Indigenous peoples may be able to develop the skills needed both to reject Western hegemony on its own terms and validate and perpetuate Indigenous knowledge, language, and culture (Fitzsimons & Smith, 2000; Grande, 2008).

Despite its attentiveness to the resistant potentiality of educational space, critical pedagogy cannot be applied seamlessly to Indigenous needs or contexts due to the Eurocentric assumptions, definitions, and values that lie at its core (Grande, 2008). In fact, since critical pedagogy is opposed to positivist claims of the universality of knowledge, it would be contradictory to assume that critical pedagogy itself could be applied universally to all contexts and situations (Henry & Pene, 2001). Grande (2008), in her development of Red pedagogy, a unique form of pedagogy that is rooted in Indigenous knowledge and driven toward decolonization and Indigenous critical praxis, calls attention to the discontinuities that exist between the assumptions of critical pedagogy and the concerns of Indigenous peoples. Whereas, from a Western frame, critical pedagogy emphasizes a pursuit of democratization, citizenship, and social justice that is brought about through the liberation of individual selves, Indigenous peoples are more likely to envision a form of social justice that is predicated upon the existence of Indigenous sovereignty, which involves the liberation of entire communities and nations (Grande, 2008). This sovereignty involves the rights and privileges of Indigenous peoples not in an abstract, theoretical sense but in one that is inextricably linked to and grounded by land, nature, and place (Grande, 2008; Meyer, 2008). Furthermore, whereas critical pedagogy might emphasize knowledge that is culled through individual reflexivity, Indigenous peoples also place value in knowledge that is tied to Indigenous cultural tradition (Grande, 2008). Finally, whereas critical pedagogy sometimes takes on an idealistic, speculative character through its emphasis on abstract ideals such as hope, democracy, and utopia (Cho, 2010), Indigenous peoples often emphasize the utility of knowledge if it is to be of value (Meyer, 2001a, 2001b). Indigenous critical pedagogy, pedagogy that allows for the resistance and empowerment of Indigenous peoples specifically, may be developed through the infusion of critical pedagogy with Indigenous epistemological, ontological, and axiological concepts. In this way, it can be made to reflect Indigenous knowledge, to assert Indigenous power, and to serve Indigenous needs for community survival (Brayboy, 2005).

The decolonization and indigenization of education, which may be strategized and implemented through Indigenous critical pedagogy, requires several steps. Despite the linear appearance of their presentation here, these steps should be thought of as occurring fluidly and recursively. First, we must come to an understanding that Western notions of knowledge, education, and research, especially those that come from a positivist paradigm, are in no way absolute. Meyer (2008), for example, discusses the limitations of Eurocentric empiricism and scientific objectivity in the construction of knowledge. As she theorizes a Hawaiian conception of meaning-making which involves three parts, the body, mind, and spirit, she notes that

The body idea in the triangulation of meaning is what science has cornered. It is expressed through sensation via objective measurement and evaluation. It is a valuable and rigorous part in the triangulation of meaning and the center of most research processes...The problem was that we assumed all the world could be described this way. (p. 226)

In other words, although there is some value in what we can know empirically, there is also value in the knowledge we can encounter through other means. And, whereas we have been taught through positivism that we can only know what can be detected through the use of our five senses, this is not the only way to know ourselves, to know others, or to know the world. Furthermore, if there are different ways of knowing than those presented to us via Western empiricism, then there are also different ways of constructing new knowledge through research. Though the scientific method teaches researchers to utilize objectivity and distance in their work, such concepts can be liabilities when conducting research within Indigenous contexts (Mataira, Matsuoka, & Morelli, 2005; Meyer, 2008). From an Indigenous perspective, research that originates from within Indigenous communities and involves trust, communication, and collaboration within these communities leads to the production of knowledge that is both authentic and useful (Henry & Pene, 2001; Kawakami, Aton, Cram, Lai, & Porina, 2007; Mataira et al., 2005). In Meyer's (2008) words, "objectivity is its own limitation" (p. 227).

Second, we must utilize education as a space through which we may develop better understandings about our selves, our histories, our traditions and, subsequently, secure foundations for our futures. L. T. Smith (1999) suggests that relearning

and reconceptualizing the past is a vital step to the decolonization process for Indigenous people since Westerners have told only one-sided accounts of our histories for so long. In transforming the knowledge of our histories through critical reexamination, we can also be better prepared to transform our contemporary identities. Grande (2008) asserts that Indigenous peoples should collectively examine their own communities and decide for themselves what beliefs and behaviors are acceptable and essential to their community identities. This might include critically examining the ways in which even some of what we consider to be cultural traditions have come to reflect colonial values and norms through time (Denetdale, 2006). Through engaging in such a mindful, spiritual process of reinvention and self-definition, Indigenous peoples exercise their rights as revolutionary agents (Grande, 2008). They empower themselves to push back against Eurocentric mainstream ideologies and create culturally responsive educational spaces, placing their own values, knowledge, worldviews, and concerns at its center (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Trinidad, 2011). Within these educational spaces, Indigenous peoples can arm themselves with what Matairea and associates (2005) call “empirical ammunition” for validating their realities and preserving their traditions for future generations (Grande, 2008). Thus, whereas critical pedagogy might encourage individuals to imagine a utopian future unlike anything before seen, Indigenous critical pedagogy might encourage Indigenous communities to envision a hopeful future “that lives in contingency with the past—one that trusts the beliefs and understandings of our ancestors, the power of traditional knowledge, and the possibilities of new understandings” (Grande, 2008, p. 250).

Finally, through it all, we must not pretend to be apolitical. By simply exercising our rights to participate in the act of knowledge production and preservation, we are taking a political stance (Freire, 2003). However, we must not forget the gravity of what that means in relation to our experiences with colonization. Just as hegemony can only maintain its control through reinforcement (Hudson, 1999), we must make constant and consistent efforts to assert our collective agency if we hope to maintain control of our own knowledge and our own educations. We must aim to counter hegemonic forces and to transform the institutional structures that have colonized us over the course of generations (Grande, 2008). Thus, as we work to develop knowledge and educational practices with our own subjectivities at the center through Indigenous critical pedagogy, we must make sure to consider these efforts as they relate to our rights to self-determination and to sovereignty as Indigenous peoples. In the process of striving toward the achievement and maintenance of self-determination and sovereignty, we may begin to heal from the traumas of colonization (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Grande, 2008).

In summary, Indigenous critical pedagogy calls for Indigenous peoples to reclaim education as a space for resistance against colonization and Eurocentric hegemony. This entails not only recognizing the limitations of Eurocentric ideas and ideals but also valuing and prioritizing Indigenous values, knowledge, worldviews, and concerns, and in the process asserting Indigenous rights to self-determination and sovereignty. Indigenous critical pedagogy suggests the existence of strong connections between education and sovereignty for Indigenous peoples. As Indigenous peoples assume their roles in the production and maintenance of precious knowledge, they simultaneously situate themselves as the rightful centers of power within their own communities.

*How Can Indigenous Critical Pedagogy Be Specified for Application Within ka Lāhui Hawai'i?*

Despite the many strengths of Indigenous critical pedagogy, it too has its limitations. Indigenous peoples represent a vast array of nations, each grounded by a particular place, each with its own linguistic, political, historical, and cultural roots, and each with its own dynamic knowledge (Cannon, 2011). Therefore, before attempting to apply Indigenous critical pedagogy within ka Lāhui Hawai'i, it is important first to recognize the Hawaiian nation's unique context. Prior to Western contact, Kānaka Maoli had established a flourishing society of an estimated 800,000 to 1,000,000 people, governed by highly developed systems of politics, subsistence, language, culture, and tradition (Abad, course notes, 2001; Stannard, 1989). These systems were primarily based on the traditional Hawaiian concept of pono (righteousness and balance), which linked human beings to one another, to the earthly world around them, and to the spiritual realm (Kame'eleihiwa, 1992). Westerners, however, have left numerous indelible marks on this thriving society since the first contact of Captain James Cook in 1778. Perhaps most devastating was the epidemic disease they introduced, which led to the death of fully 80% of the Kanaka Maoli population within just 40 years (Kame'eleihiwa, 1992).

This massive depopulation made space for other changes imposed by American missionaries and businessmen, but not in the absence of continued assertions of sovereignty by Kānaka Maoli. In 1842, King Kamehameha III sent envoys to Europe and to the United States to garner formal, international recognition of the Kingdom of Hawai'i as an independent nation (Perkins, 2006). On November 28, 1843, what became known as Lā Kū'oko'a (Independence Day), the sovereign status of the

Hawaiian Kingdom was formally recognized by the governments of Britain and France through the Anglo-Franco Proclamation (Perkins, 2006). In spite of such efforts, the Hawaiian Kingdom was illegally overthrown, under duress and through no formal treaties, by the concentrated efforts of White American businessmen on January 17, 1893, and was later annexed by the U.S. government (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, Kauai, Maioho, & Winchester, 2008; Trask, 2000).

Osorio (2006) notes that the ensuing phase of American colonialism, which has involved American military occupation, the implementation of an American school system, and the evictions of Kānaka Maoli from public lands, among other things, has left ka lāhui Hawai'i in a state of huikau, or confusion. Through this huikau, we have lost sight of who we are as a lāhui; we have lost sight of our rights and values and of the choices we have with regard to our survival (Osorio, 2006). However, we are not without hope. Trask (2000) discusses the proliferation of various political, cultural, social, and economic groups, grounded by traditional Hawaiian values, seeking to improve the conditions of Kānaka Maoli. Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, Kauai, Maioho, and Winchester (2008) additionally offer education as a potential means through which Kānaka Maoli may find their way out of a state of huikau:

Contemporary Kānaka Maoli are more “huikau” about our collective identity than our kūpuna [ancestors] who lived through the 1893 overthrow. It is not surprising that we have become confused about our political identity as a lāhui, a nation, a people. We are surviving against more than 100 years of American-centric assimilatory education that has aimed to change the way we live and see ourselves in relation to our land, our history, and our country...If vigorous political engagement, informed community participation, and a commitment to aloha 'āina [love of the land] are hallmarks of a vibrant Hawaiian social body, schools must prepare our 'ōpio [youth] to actualize such a society. (p. 156)

Trinidad (2011) suggests that this type of education, through which Kānaka Maoli can develop the knowledge and skills they will need to counteract systemic inequalities and to bolster their Hawaiian communities, can be sustained beyond school walls as well.

Indigenous critical pedagogy can help to address the needs for this type of education within Hawaiian schools and communities. When grounded first in Hawaiian history and epistemology, it can guide us toward identifying how power has worked within Hawaiian educational contexts, valuing and cultivating Hawaiian traditions and forms of knowledge, and relating our knowledge and our works toward the purpose of Hawaiian self-determination and sovereignty. It is important to situate Indigenous critical pedagogy within a specific epistemological context because this context will dictate how we know what we know (Hays & Singh, 2012). Meyer (2001b) further highlights the importance of epistemology as she explains, “How one knows, indeed, what one prioritizes with regard to this knowing, ends up being the stuffing of identity, the truth that links us to our distinct cosmologies, and the essence of who we are as Oceanic people” (p. 125). If we begin with Hawaiian epistemology in our work with Indigenous critical pedagogy, we will give our work a Hawaiian identity, shaped by a Hawaiian way of sensing, knowing, and understanding the world. According to Meyer (2001b, 2008), Hawaiian epistemology, though both constant and changing, may be defined through the following ideas: that knowledge is drawn from and shaped by spiritual forces, that knowledge is impacted by our close relationship with the environment (aloha ‘āina; malama ‘āina, to take care of the land), that knowledge may be gathered through the use of our culturally mediated senses, that knowledge is mediated through our relationships with other people and other beings, that knowledge gains value through its application, that knowledge can be gained best sometimes in the absence of speaking, and that knowledge can involve feeling through a connected mind and body. Here, we see the great limitations of positivist conceptions of knowledge within a Hawaiian epistemological context. Kānaka Maoli acknowledge that there are many pathways and many facets to knowing, all of which are valuable and all of which belong within our educational environments.

Thus, within the context of ka lāhui Hawai‘i, Indigenous critical pedagogy calls Kānaka Maoli to recognize how colonialism since Western contact has impacted and continues to impact our lifeworlds in the present day. It calls us to resist colonial forces through the assertion and perpetuation of Hawaiian knowledge, which includes knowledge not only of Hawaiian culture and language but also of a

Hawaiian worldview such as described by Meyer (2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2008). Finally, Indigenous critical pedagogy calls us to consider how, through this resistance and epistemic disobedience in the face of Western hegemony (Mignolo, 2011), we contribute to the self-determination and sovereignty of our lāhui. As a framework, Indigenous critical pedagogy may be used by Hawaiian educators to develop culturally responsive educational programs for Hawaiian haumāna (students) that serve the needs of the Hawaiian nation. In the same vein, as an evaluative lens, it may also be used to help us consider how existing programs and initiatives may contribute to the ends of Hawaiian self-determination and sovereignty.

## EXAMINING 'IKE KŪ'OKO'A THROUGH THE LENS OF INDIGENOUS CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

In this section, to provide one example of how Indigenous critical pedagogy might be utilized in this way within a Hawaiian context, I examine 'Ike Kū'oko'a, a recent Hawaiian language newspaper initiative designed to help preserve Hawaiian knowledge. On November 28, 2011, Awaiaulu, an organization committed to “reconnect[ing] and bridg[ing] knowledge from Hawaiian historical resources to today” (Awaiaulu, 2012, n.p.), commenced its 'Ike Kū'oko'a Initiative to convert 60,000 digitally scanned pages of Hawaiian language newspaper written from 1834 to 1948 into a searchable, online repository accessible to the public (Awaiaulu, 2012). Meeting the lofty goals of this initiative would be no small feat. Awaiaulu (2012) estimated that 3,000 volunteers and 200,000 volunteer hours would be needed to transcribe 60,000 digitally scanned pages into approximately 1.5 million typed pages of historical accounts and stories that have been largely inaccessible from the annexation of Hawai'i until now. That being the case, it is already clear that this initiative was created with more than simple transcription in mind. 'Ike Kū'oko'a can be seen as one of the most important recent assertions of self-determination and sovereignty for ka lāhui Hawai'i as it seeks to reframe and reclaim Hawaiian history, recognize the vitality of ka 'ōlelo Hawai'i, and create a means for the further work of Hawaiian nation-building.

*'Ike Kū'oko'a as an Effort to Reframe and Reclaim Hawaiian History*

From the very outset, Awaiaulu has situated 'Ike Kū'oko'a within and as a part of Hawaiian history. The opening date of 'Ike Kū'oko'a, November 28, commemorated Lā Kū'oko'a (the Independence Day of the Hawaiian Kingdom), when in 1843 Hawai'i was formally recognized by Britain and France as an independent nation (Nogelmeier & Sai-Dudoit, 2011; Ka la 28 o Novemaba, 1854). Along similar lines, July 31, the closing date for the transcription phase of 'Ike Kū'oko'a, honored Lā Ho'ihō'i Ea, the Restoration Day of the Hawaiian Kingdom, when in 1843 the occupation of Hawai'i by Lord George Paulet of Britain came to an end and King Kamehameha III first uttered his famous words, "Ua mau ke ea o ka 'āina i ka pono" (the life/sovereignty of the land is perpetuated in righteousness) (Nogelmeier & Sai-Dudoit, 2011; Lā Ho'ihō'i Ea, n.d.; Perkins, 2006).

Through the framework of Indigenous critical pedagogy, we can further see how 'Ike Kū'oko'a asserts Hawaiian sovereignty through the vital part it is playing in the reframing and reclaiming of Hawaiian history. Elucidating the strong connection that exists between history and power for Indigenous peoples, L. T. Smith (1999) states,

History is about power. In fact history is mostly about power. It is the story of the powerful and how they became powerful, and then how they use their power to keep them in positions in which they can continue to dominate others. It is because of this relationship with power that we have been excluded, marginalized and "Othered."  
(L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 34)

Furthermore, when we allow colonizers to tell our histories, we become complicit in our own colonization (L. T. Smith, 1999). In this sense then, the reclamation of Hawaiian history can be seen as essential to the process of decolonization and the project of sovereignty for ka lāhui Hawai'i.

'Ike Kū'oko'a plays a key part in this process and this project by providing Kānaka Maoli with a source through which they may gain a fuller understanding of Hawaiian culture and history. Among the types of information printed in Hawaiian language newspapers were Hawaiian mo'okū'auhau (genealogies); Hawaiian mo'olelo (stories, histories, literature), mele (poetry, songs, chants), and

jokes; descriptions of Hawaiian cultural practices, such as bird catching, fishing, and canoe building; instructions on the correct usages of ka 'ōlelo Hawai'i; birth, marriage, and death announcements; as well as eloquent debates and comments on events of the day (Chapin, 1996; Hori, n.d.). This being the case, Hawaiian language newspapers are an important repository of 'ike Hawai'i, one that exists because our kūpuna enthusiastically embraced writing not as a replacement of oral tradition but as a vital technology for recording and sharing information of value to ka lāhui Hawai'i (ho'omanawanui, 2004). These newspapers include accounts of what our kūpuna were thinking through important times in the history of the Hawaiian nation, including the kingdom, constitutional monarchy, republic, and territorial periods (Zoellick, 2011). Highlighting the importance of such accounts, Nogelmeier and Sai-Dudoit (2011), respectively the executive director of Awaiaulu and the project manager of Ho'olaupa'i, the Hawaiian language newspaper project that is central to the work of Awaiaulu, add,

Without the 1 million or more pages worth of newspaper material that Hawaiians generated for themselves and their descendants, the *de-fuzzing* of the past can never happen. If that entire cache can be made accessible, through a Hawai'i-centered initiative, it will engage thousands, introducing everyone to a body of Hawaiian knowledge that's been beyond reach for a century. (p. 34, original emphasis)

Engagement with this body of Hawaiian knowledge and the “de-fuzzing” of the Hawaiian past is essential for the contemporary survival of Kānaka Maoli. Whereas English-language historical documents tell the tale of colonialism from the point of view of the colonizers, Hawaiian-language historical documents highlight Hawaiian resistance to this colonization at every turn (Silva, 2004). According to ho'omanawanui (2004), the mo'olelo and traditional 'ike (knowledge) as told by our kūpuna inspire us “to continue to *kū'e*, to resist and to stand in opposition against colonization and against foreign domination, suppression, and appropriation of who we are and what our culture is and means to us” (p. 89). Thus, by giving Kānaka Maoli access to Hawaiian accounts of history, 'Ike Kū'oko'a provides us with the opportunity to reconceptualize our history and our collective identity on our own terms, a process which, according to the framework of Indigenous critical pedagogy, is vital to the decolonization of our self-determined futures.

*'Ike Kū'oko'a as an Effort to Recognize the Vitality of ka 'Ōlelo Hawai'i*

'Ike Kū'oko'a does well to provide Kānaka Maoli with access to the voices of our kūpuna in light of not only the written information and stories these kūpuna left behind but also the medium in which they left these mana'o (thoughts, ideas): ka 'ōlelo Hawai'i, our traditional mother tongue. This is important particularly within Hawai'i's context of colonial racism. Mignolo (2011) explains that, through the logic of colonial racism, only those languages related to Greek and Latin have been considered the domain of sustainable knowledge. All other languages, along with the people who speak them, have been marked as inferior and as not suitable for rational thinking (Mignolo, 2011; Waziyatawin, 2005). Enforcing this logic of colonial racism shortly after the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom, the new illegitimate government banned the use of ka 'ōlelo Hawai'i in public school instruction through Act 57 in 1896 (Kawai'ae'a, Housman, & Alencastre, 2007). Kawai'ae'a, Housman, and Alencastre (2007) further explain the devastating effect this had on Kānaka Maoli:

Implementing a Western-based pedagogy in Hawai'i's education system created a disconnect between academics and literacy from the Hawaiian language and culture. As the last of our native-speaking kūpuna have shared, they were shamed and punished as young children for speaking Hawaiian at school. This negativity was attached to being Hawaiian and permeated society, penetrating the very na'au [gut, heart] of our kūpuna. (p. 197)

In making the use of ka 'ōlelo Hawai'i both illegal and shameful, Act 57 took from Kānaka Maoli a vital source of Hawaiian knowledge, for ka 'ōlelo Hawai'i carries within it Hawaiian epistemologies and codes of being (Kawai'ae'a et al., 2007; Meyer, 2003). Meyer (2003) illustrates this idea in her explanation of the deeper meanings of the word na'auao:

Body and mind are not separate. *Na'auao* teaches us this. *Na'auao* in Hawaiian means wisdom. It is a poetic term that refers to the stomach region, which also refers to the idea of feeling, emotion, and intelligence...It is a richly metaphoric way in which we refer to knowledge and emotion. *Na'au* is also the word for heart. Viscera, intelligence, wisdom, heart. (p. 59)

Through this example, we see how the Hawaiian language tells a story that is not easily translated into English. We see how the Hawaiian epistemological concept that the body and mind are one and that wisdom is tied to feeling and emotions emerge through ka 'ōlelo Hawai'i.

From the lens of Indigenous critical pedagogy, 'Ike Kū'oko'a, through its focus on making available a Hawaiian language medium, works to preserve an important source of Hawaiian knowledge and therefore power. In asking volunteers to type-script tens of thousands of scanned Hawaiian language newspaper pages to make an online, searchable repository, 'Ike Kū'oko'a is sending a message that ka 'ōlelo Hawai'i, which was predicted to become obsolete only a few decades ago, has value and is worth saving. It is playing a role in making sure that ka 'ōlelo Hawai'i remains relevant within ka lāhui Hawai'i today (Zoellick, 2011). Once the work of 'Ike Kū'oko'a is complete, speakers of the Hawaiian language will be able to inform themselves and their work with a source that presents Hawaiian historical information with all the fullness of meaning made possible through the Hawaiian language. Thus, 'Ike Kū'oko'a plays an important role in helping Kānaka Maoli develop better understandings of who we are, not only by connecting us to the mo'olelo of our kūpuna but also by doing so through a medium that in and of itself is revealing of Kānaka Maoli epistemological and ontological perspectives.

### *'Ike Kū'oko'a as Creating a Means for Nation-building*

A. Smith (2008) suggests that Native nation-building should follow a two-pronged approach of taking power, which involves opposing corporate and state powers, and making power, which involves creating models of governance that fulfill community interests and needs for the future. From the perspective of Indigenous critical pedagogy, 'Ike Kū'oko'a already contributes to the "taking power" approach to nation-building for ka lāhui Hawai'i in its work to value and to preserve

Hawaiian history and Hawaiian language as discussed in the previous sections. It also may be considered a nation-building project through its efforts to involve as many people as possible in its transcription and review processes. Nogelmeier and Sai-Dudoit (2011) have asserted that, by involving volunteers and avoiding foreign production, this “*will allow the Hawaiian community to invest and make a Hawai‘i-centered kuleana in the product*” (p. 34, emphasis in original). And, by making ‘Ike Kū‘oko‘a a kuleana (responsibility, concern, right, privilege) shared by the Hawaiian community, it impresses upon all volunteers the value of Hawaiian language and Hawaiian history while also instilling within volunteers a sense that they have the power to lend a hand in the continued building of ka lāhui Hawai‘i.

While this deliberate involvement of volunteers in its current efforts might be considered itself a process of making power, what remains to be seen is how the end product of ‘Ike Kū‘oko‘a, an online repository of Hawaiian historical knowledge, will be utilized by Kānaka Maoli to impact the goals of sovereignty for ka lāhui Hawai‘i even further. Nogelmeier and Sai-Dudoit (2011) posit that ‘Ike Kū‘oko‘a provides “a solid foundation for other steps in rearticulating historical knowledge, i.e. research, data assembly, translation, publications, scholarship, language continuity, cultural grounding” (p. 34). In other words, ‘Ike Kū‘oko‘a, in its work to preserve and make relevant Hawaiian language and Hawaiian history, makes additional projects and initiatives for improving the well-being of ka lāhui Hawai‘i possible. Such projects and initiatives themselves may also forward the efforts of Hawaiian sovereignty. These might involve the assertion of both communal autonomy, the power to have control over community resources and to interact with other nations on a nation-to-nation basis, and self-determination, which encompasses the ability to decide what to do with this autonomy (Brayboy, 2005). Providing a fuller concept of what sovereignty might mean for the Hawaiian nation, Basham (2010) asserts that the ea (life, breath, sovereignty, independence) of ka pae ‘āina Hawai‘i (Hawaiian Islands) is in fact its independent governance and that this ea, along with mo‘okū‘auhau, mo‘olelo, mele, ‘āina (land), and lōina (cultural practice) are the elements that form ka lāhui Hawai‘i. If our sovereignty and independence is indeed our life and breath as is suggested through the complexities of Hawaiian language, then it becomes clear that sovereignty is essential to the survival of our people (McGregor, 2010).

Thus, through the lens of Indigenous critical pedagogy, 'Ike Kū'oko'a helps to set the stage for the continued survival of Kānaka Maoli through the preservation of elements that comprise ka lāhui. It marks only a beginning to the nation-building process, one which, as indicated by the word *kū'oko'a*, further liberates and provides independence and freedom.

## CONCLUSIONS

According to a Hawaiian epistemological framework, the value of knowledge is through its function. Meyer (2008) suggests that, “function is the higher vibration of an idea, not the lower. How one defines function is first discovered in its meaning and then its interpretation” (p. 221). She further advises that Kānaka Maoli should thus aim to make their work useful through meaning and truth, for “knowledge that does not heal, bring together, challenge, surprise, encourage, or expand our awareness is not part of the consciousness this world needs now” (p. 221). Indigenous critical pedagogy proves useful for ka lāhui Hawai'i in the ways it can help us envision the connections that exist between education and sovereignty and in so doing, direct us toward creating knowledge that heals and brings us together as a people. In the end, through the framework of Indigenous critical pedagogy, we can come to appreciate that 'ike Hawai'i, traditional Hawaiian knowledge, is truly 'ike kū'oko'a, liberating knowledge, for our Hawaiian nation.

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