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## GENUINE SECURITY FOR WHOM?: MILITOURISM AND VIOLENCE AGAINST THE FEMININE IN HAWAI'I AND ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

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## **Genuine Security for Whom?: Militourism and Violence Against the Feminine in Hawai‘i and Asia and the Pacific**

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Assaults on ‘āina (land; that which feeds) are assaults on wāhine (women). Violence toward wāhine ‘ōiwi (Native Hawaiian women/feminine people) and the ‘āina is discussed through the context of the Missing and Murdered Native Hawaiian Women, Girls, Māhū (MMNHWGM) movement and its relation to militourism. Militourism is used to draw parallels between the violence experienced by wāhine ‘ōiwi in Hawai‘i and women in the Philippines and across Asia and the Pacific. The concept of “genuine security” is addressed as a step toward sovereignty and reducing violence against wāhine and ‘āina. Reflective solutions to the violent impacts of militourism are offered through the frame of radical healing.

In the summer of 2023, the International Women’s Network Against Militarism (IWNAM) convened in Olongapo, Philippines. The objective of this gathering was for representatives from each country to report on issues their homeland was facing due to militarism. These issues ranged from environmentalism, sexual violence, expansion of military bases, and violations of domestic and international law. The countries represented in this meeting included Guåhan (Guam), Marianas, Okinawa, Japan, Philippines, South Korea, the United States, and Hawai‘i. Although some of the aforementioned places such as Guåhan, Marianas, and Hawai‘i are often understood as being incorporated by the United States, the IWNAM and the authors choose to acknowledge these places as sovereign, even as their struggles for liberation are ongoing.

IWNAM is an international network of women dedicated to advocating for change in policies and practices to end military violence against women, children, and the environment. IWNAM also focuses on creating sustainable communities by enacting a shared vision of alternative ways of being through convening international meetings and

coordinated activities amongst sister organizations (IWNAM, 2015). It was founded in 1997 as a response to a sexual violence incident in Okinawa, in which three U.S. military servicemen kidnapped, beat, and raped a 12-year-old Okinawan girl. At the time of this incident, 71 Okinawan women organized against the military in response to this violence and founded the organization, Okinawa Women Act Against Military Violence (OWAAMV). Shortly after, a group of women from OWAAMV traveled to the United States as part of the American Peace Caravan to meet with American communities and politicians. While in the U.S., they demanded an investigation into all past crimes committed by U.S. military personnel in Okinawa and called for the permanent removal of the U.S. military from Okinawa. Women from the U.S. and around the world supported their efforts. From there, the East Asia-U.S. Women's Network Against Militarism was founded. Over the years, this network expanded to include other countries and was renamed to IWNAM. While IWNAM was initially founded to address the specific concerns emerging out of legacies of U.S. imperialism in Asia, the focus on sovereignty and environmental concerns ultimately broadened the network's reach to the Pacific Islands.

The authors of this article were members of the Hawai'i delegation at the IWNAM gathering in 2023. A critical aspect of our work in the Philippines was to introduce the Missing and Murdered Native Hawaiian Women, Girls, Māhū (MMNHWGM) crisis in Hawai'i. The MMNHWGM Reports are pursuant of HI H.C.R. 11 (2021) urging the creation of a state-wide Task Force to research and provide solutions to the MMNHWGM crisis. The work done on MMNHWGM in Hawai'i is part of the larger Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, 2Spirit (MMIWG2S) movement that originated on Turtle Island (the North American continent) in response to the disproportionate rates of violence experienced by Indigenous feminine peoples across the United States and Canada. Key data from this report was shared along with what other research needs to be conducted to better understand this issue. A key data point from the MMNHWGM Report I found that 25% of all missing children in Hawai'i are Native Hawaiian<sup>1</sup> and that the average profile of a missing child in Hawai'i is a 15-year-old, Native Hawaiian, female, missing from the island of O'ahu (Cristobal, 2022). Another finding was that, similar to national statistics, Native Hawaiians experience violence at higher rates than non-Native Hawaiians. For instance, in Hawai'i 40.5% of adults who experience intimate partner violence (IPV) are Native (HHDW, BRFSS, 2013). Further, Native Hawaiians<sup>2</sup> experience IPV at consistently higher rates than non-Native Hawaiians (OHA, 2018). In terms of sexual violence, Native Hawaiian girls, grades 6-12, are more likely than Native Hawaiian boys and girls of all other races to experience sexual violence, including rape (HHDW, YRBS, 2017).

For context, Native Hawaiians make up 21.36% of the population of Hawai'i. Native Hawaiian females comprise 10.57% of the population of Hawai'i, with 3.51% being Native Hawaiian females under the age of 18. Comparatively, Native Hawaiian males comprise 11.78% of Hawai'i's population, with 4.64% being Native Hawaiian

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<sup>1</sup> The term "Native Hawaiian" is used instead of "Kānaka 'Ōiwi" in instances where data is cited from a source that used this term. We recognize that the majority of national data sets and research studies use the term "Native Hawaiian" and that their racial meaning making of what defines a "Native Hawaiian" varies from ours.

<sup>2</sup> All data cited includes the category of "Native Hawaiian alone or in combination."

males under the age of 18 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). As a proportion of the total population size of Hawai'i, Native Hawaiians are disproportionately represented in the identified risk factors for Kānaka 'Ōiwi<sup>3</sup> to be murdered and go missing including sex trafficking, sexual assault, domestic violence, substance abuse, houselessness<sup>4</sup>, and child welfare involvement (Cristobal, 2022). The importance of highlighting the overrepresentation of Kānaka 'Ōiwi in these categories is not to allude to inherent deficiencies in Kānaka 'Ōiwi communities or individuals, but to bring to light the systemic, historically engrained injustices brought upon the Indigenous peoples of Hawai'i through a legacy of imperialism and capitalism that has tangible impacts on Kānaka 'Ōiwi in the present.

From our discussions with other delegates represented at IWNAM, it was clear that the MMIWG2S crisis was not specific to Turtle Island and Hawai'i. Rather, similar types of violence have manifested in every militarized region. Delegates from each country shared stories of their own versions of this crisis along with what they were doing to combat it. Common themes included the silenced nature of violence against Indigenous feminine people; the lack of government accountability in better documenting and preventing violence against Indigenous feminine people; and the role U.S. colonialism and imperialism plays in driving violence against both feminine peoples of U.S. military occupied communities and the land itself. Resistance strategies included, for example, Philippines advocates successfully organizing for the decommission of the U.S. military base in Olongapo, Philippines. Another resistance strategy discussed was the Okinawa delegation compiling a chronology of sexual crimes committed by U.S. soldiers in Okinawa since 1945, amounting to hundreds of cases, as a way to hold the U.S. military accountable for their violence and demand the de-occupation of Okinawa.

The intersection of the MMNHWGM crisis with our experience at the IWNAM gathering is the central focus of this article. In the first section of this paper, we provide a brief historical overview of the sexual exploitation of wāhine 'ōiwi (Native Hawaiian women/ feminine people) and the 'āina in Hawai'i. In section two, we discuss militourism and the logics that back its operation in Hawai'i, including the prostitution of paradise and the illusion of security. In section three, we highlight lessons that we learned from IWNAM, including formulating our understandings around what genuine security entails. In section four, we demonstrate the process of radical healing necessary to doing sustained liberatory work through a space of creation. Data about MMNHWGM is weaved throughout the article. The Philippines was the host nation for the 2023 IWNAM network meeting that the authors of this article participated in and is ancestrally connected to three of the four authors of this article. Similarities between Hawai'i and the Philippines are evoked to honor our ancestral connections to the Philippines and experiences at the IWNAM network meeting, but also because "...Hawai'i and the

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<sup>3</sup> We use the term "Kānaka 'Ōiwi" (Kanaka singular, Kānaka plural) instead of "Native Hawaiian" to refer to those whose ancestors are the autochthonous peoples of Hawai'i. The term "Native Hawaiian" was introduced by colonizers and many "Native Hawaiians" use the terms "Kanaka Maoli" or "Kanaka 'Ōiwi" to refer to themselves and others of "Native Hawaiian" ancestry. Exceptions are made when citing statistics that use the term "Native Hawaiian."

<sup>4</sup> We use the term "houselessness" to recognize that despite Kānaka 'Ōiwi being unsheltered and economically pushed out of Hawai'i, that they will never be homeless because Hawai'i is and will forever remain their home.

Philippines represent the first and most sustained American military occupations in Asia and the Pacific: they remain the linchpins of American domination in the region” (Gonzalez, 2013, p.3).

### **Background**

The concept of prostitution was foreign to Kānaka ‘Ōiwi society prior to the introduction of American and European sailors. The first documented case of sex trafficking was that of 8-year-old Polly Holmes, who had a Kānaka ‘Ōiwi mother and an English father. In 1815, Polly’s father sold her to American sailors for sex. Polly ran away and found refuge with Ali‘i Kalaimoku who denounced prostitution as a foreign practice. Starting in 1825, kapu (prohibition) were placed on prostitution, yet prostitution persisted due to violent riots from American sailors and growing naval power in Hawai‘i. Brothels became normalized as they were safer than ships (Arista, 2011). Today, there are over 100 identified businesses and locations used for sex trafficking in Hawai‘i (Popescu, 2016).

A dominant narrative is that prostitution is a consensual act for something of value. Although there are people who sell sex consensually and who find empowerment in such acts, the majority of those who are commonly referred to as “prostitutes” are in actuality victims of sex trafficking. Those who are victims of sex trafficking are most often low-income, women, girls, and non-gender binary people of color and immigrants (Polaris, 2021), while the majority of those who are willing prostitutes are most often white, upper-middle class American citizens (Chong, 2014; Raymond, 2013). Simply put, sex trafficking is a gendered and racialized organized crime.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2024), human trafficking includes,

the act of trafficking, which means the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons. The means of trafficking include a threat of or use of force, deception, coercion, abuse of power, or position of vulnerability. The purpose of trafficking is always exploitation. (n.p.)

Sex trafficking is a type of human trafficking where the method of exploitation is sexual in nature.

The U.S. military set precedence for sex trafficking across Asia and the Pacific, including in Hawai‘i. The United States established rest and relaxation or “R&R” locations throughout Asia and the Pacific for military personnel and, along with it, a demand for sex from local, Kānaka ‘Ōiwi, and rural feminine people (Weiss & Enrile, 2019). Prostitution is illegal in Hawai‘i and the Philippines, though normalized in practice. The practice of prostitution now presents more insidiously in the form of commercial sexual exploitation of feminine people that occurs in places of high tourist and military presence. Indeed, military bases and surrounding businesses such as massage parlors, bars, gambling rooms, hotels, etc., serve as modern-day brothels (Weiss & Enrile, 2019). In Hawai‘i, 64% of sex trafficking victims are Native Hawaiian, and 23% of sex trafficking victims reported being a child when they were first trafficked (Roe-Sepowitz & Jabola-Carlous, 2019). Data provided by the Susannah Wesley Community Center, one of the primary community-based organizations that serve those who have experienced trafficking, indicated that 46.8% of trafficking victims they serve were Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Sex Trafficking cases

(Cristobal, 2022). These findings show that sex trafficking, as one of the primary drivers of the MMNHWGM crisis, is about targeting vulnerabilities.

Hawai'i's multiethnic history is steeped in the importation of people across Asia for cheap plantation labor, including from the Philippines. Today, with the economic domination of the military sector, Hawai'i is firmly established as one of the naval gas stations of the Pacific. The United States Department of Defense (DoD) is the world's largest institutional consumer of oil (Crawford, 2019). The U.S. Navy Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility on O'ahu, for instance, is the DoD's largest underground fuel storage facility and was built to store up to 250 million gallons of fuel (CNRH, 2023). In 2021, a fuel leak at Kapūkakī, colonially known as Red Hill, poisoned the drinking water, causing illness in thousands of residents. As a result of large-scale community demand and environmental rights litigation, the fuel tanks at Kapūkakī are in the process of being defueled. The fuel from these tanks is being transported and stored at the U.S. military base in Olongapo, Philippines (Sierra Club of Hawai'i, 2024), elucidating the parallels between how imperialism presents in Hawai'i and in nations across the Pacific.

The 'Ōlelo Hawai'i (Native Hawaiian language) word, "piko" can be translated to "navel, umbilical cord." Framing Hawai'i as the piko of the Pacific, we see that Hawai'i is connected by a long string to other Asian and Pacific nations. The piko that connects Indigenous, independent nations across Asia and the Pacific nurtures our collective strengths as Oceanic peoples. When we observe and reflect upon our shared histories and cultures, both pre- and post-colonization, we see that many Indigenous nations in Asia and the Pacific hold deep similarities surrounding ceremonies, mo'olelo (stories), and our relations with the 'āina (land; that which feeds) as nā Akua (Gods/ Goddesses) and kūpuna (ancestors). We also see that our piko has been poisoned by U.S. imperialism. U.S. imperialism runs through our piko causing us to view each other as separate peoples and separate nations whose prayers belong to patriotism for our colonizing countries instead of to our relations with the kai (ocean), 'āina, kūpuna, and each other as has always been our way.

Hawai'i is 3,990 km (2,479 mi) from Los Angeles, California, 6,478 km (4,025 mi) from Tokyo, and 7,768 km (4,827 mi) from Washington D.C., making Hawai'i one of the most geographically isolated land masses in the world. Just as the piko, the umbilical cord, carries nutrients to help a fetus grow, Hawai'i as the piko of the Pacific means we are a nucleus that moves vital goods and services across the Pacific to help imperialism grow. Our geographic positioning and our current condition as a U.S. military occupied nation, makes Hawai'i a cogent site for moving products and people across the Pacific and Asia. Hawai'i's history of military occupation started with Hawai'i being a prime location to replenish supplies and fuel for U.S. warships in the Pacific (Coffman, 1998). The importing and exporting of humans for labor, including sex, coincides with the U.S. Navy oil and supplies importation and the demand for R&R in Hawai'i.

The catalyst for statehood in 1959 was WWII and the use of Hawai'i as a strategic military outpost. Consequently, between 1930 and 1940, the number of U.S. military personnel and dependents in Hawai'i rose from 19,000 to about 30,000, and defense expenditures jumped from US\$35 million to US\$45 million with the construction of two airfields, a naval air station, and a naval magazine. (Tengan, 2008, p. 30)

Today, there are over 250,000 military personnel and their families living in Hawai'i (HDE, 2022). Statehood, combined with the collapse of the sugar cane industry, served as the impetus for the rise in tourism. At statehood, Hawai'i residents outnumbered tourists by more than 2 to 1, and by the 1980s tourists outnumbered residents 6 to 1, and Native Hawaiians by 30 to 1 (Nordyke, 1989).

### **Militourism**

The impacts of gender-based violence in Hawai'i must be understood through the intersection of militarism and tourism, where both strategic and commercial interests drive the dual systems of occupation that endanger women and girls. Since the 18th century, the Hawaiian Islands have been an R&R location for European, American, and Asian sailors and businessmen. Hawai'i became commodified for R&R for the U.S. military starting in the 19th century and for tourism in the 20th century (Teaiwa, 1999). Teresia Teaiwa (1999) defines militourism as "a phenomenon by which military or paramilitary force ensures the smooth running of a tourist industry, and that same tourist industry masks the military force behind it" (p. 251). In Hawai'i, the tourism and the military industries are symbiotic. Tourism has the ability to make the presence of the military in the islands seem innocuous, and the military has the power to economically fuel hotels, bars, and restaurants for R&R (Teaiwa, 1999).

Militourism contributes to MMNHWGM because it is a driver of the supply and demand of Kānaka 'Ōiwi for sex. The mechanisms of militourism operate through the "softer" power of tourism working to efface the landscape of the "harder" power of militarism, leading to the operations of both being "hidden in plain sight" (Ferguson & Turnbull, 1999, p. xiii). Though tourism is often distinguished as the "softer" of the two, tourist systems proliferate militouristic desire throughout Hawai'i, causing materially violent impacts on women and girls specifically. Militourism as a catalyst for the MMNHWGM crisis contributes to the silenced and normalized nature of MMNHWGM. Just as militourism is "hidden in plain sight," those who suffer the consequences of militourism the most, namely wāhine 'ōiwi, are also hidden in plain sight (Ferguson & Turnbull, 1999).

A prevalent reason that MMNHWGM is "hidden in plain sight" is because MMNHWGM is a complex crisis that sits at the intersection of a complex array of societal problems. MMNHWGM has been deemed a "silent crisis" because it is created by forms of violence that everyone sees, yet not enough people care to or know how to properly acknowledge. MMNHWGM is a crisis of contradiction: it is condemned widely, yet normalized; it happens physically close to all of us, yet we mentally distance ourselves from it; we all know about it by virtue of being alive, yet we all remain ignorant of its deeper truths. MMNHWGM is a "silent crisis," but more accurately, it is a crisis that is systematically erased from our collective consciousness through being intricately folded into the injustices of our past that materialize in the inequities of our present.

Rather than being simply about military bases and tourist resorts existing in tandem, militourism is concerned with how the military and tourist industries capitalize on each other at the expense of Indigenous lands and people (Teawia, 1999). Hawai'i is ground zero for militouristic desire that relies on the defiling of not only wāhine 'ōiwi bodies but also on the desecration of the 'āina for the perverse profiteering of paradise.

## Prostitution of Paradise

As Vernadette Gonzalez (2013) states, “paradise is not a generic or static term—it specifically refers to an idea of passivity and penetrability engendered by imperialism as an alibi for domination” (p. 7). The concept of paradise is constructed in the “American imaginary” as a place that is beyond the physical; a place that is exotic, desirable, docile, and awaiting foreign men to occupy, take ownership of, and consume paradise for pleasure and profit (Arista, 2011). For “paradise” to be considered “paradise,” it needs to be accessible to a certain type of foreigner who has capital and systemic power, such as U.S. military men and upper middle-class American tourists. “Paradise,” as a constructed place within the American imaginary, necessarily includes access to Indigenous lands *and* Indigenous people for pleasure.

The violence of colonialism and imperialism has always been structured through logics of race, gender, and sexuality. Invasion of and settlement upon Indigenous land occurs through both the language and material acts of rape and penetration. Conquest of “virgin” and “fertile” lands is not simply metaphorical; it is congruent with the racialization and feminization of Indigenous peoples, most significantly women, girls, and gender-nonconforming peoples, and their lands. Within the context of U.S. imperialism in the Pacific Ocean, islands and tropical climates were subjected to rubrics of paradise that depicted lands as passive, penetrable, and open to settlement. At the same time, these islands were symbolized through imagery and rhetoric of “hospitable,” “welcoming,” and “alluring” Native women (Gonzalez, 2013).

Tourism as a form of cultural prostitution or the exploitation, appropriation, and commodification of culture for capitalistic gains, is forced upon Kānaka ‘Ōiwi through economic control by the United States (Trask, 1999). The desecration of the ‘āina through the building of hotels and military bases upon sacred sites, the eroticization of Kānaka ‘Ōiwi through the foreign, depraved distortion of traditional practices such as hula, and the appropriation of Kānaka ‘Ōiwi culture for profit and entertainment, make up the fabric of Hawai‘i’s economy. The prostituting of paradise, that is, the lands and feminine people of a particular place of economic desire, can be amply exemplified in postcards and movies depicting the oversexualized and exotified hula dancer. In the Philippines, feminine people are affordable products for foreign men that take on the motif of economically desperate, passive, and penetrable mail-order brides and “sex workers.” The sexual exploitation of wāhine ‘ōiwi is an intended consequence of a capitalistic economy based on the perverse product that is paradise in exchange for the illusion of security.

The main narrative that justifies the passive and penetrable nature of “paradise” and those who embody paradise (i.e., Kānaka ‘Ōiwi and Southeast Asian feminine people) lies in the idea of security. Penetrability of “paradise” is ironically justified by protection. The narrative that the “poor, destitute, brown natives” need the protection of imperial nations such as the U.S. and the financial security of tourism is the pretense for human rights violations, including violations of the land, and is at the root of the missing and murdered Indigenous peoples crisis worldwide. The United States views Hawai‘i and the Philippines “as feminized territories needing discipline and protection,” and with that discipline and protection, “so too [does] its soldiers expect eroticized relations with the people they disciplined and protected” (Gonzalez, 2013, p. 13).



We can observe the impacts of militouristic desire on both feminine people and land through an increase in commercial sexual exploitation during the Rim of the Pacific Exercises (RIMPAC), hosted by the United States Indo-Pacific Command—the world’s largest international wartime exercises. Occurring biennially on O‘ahu, the most recent exercises held in 2022 brought 26 participating countries and more than 25,000 military personnel to the islands. RIMPAC has been distinguished as a time of increased environmental harm in Hawai‘i, with Kānaka ‘Ōiwi and kama‘āina (local) communities calling attention to the carbon footprint of live-fire training and sunken ships (Compoc & Muneoka, 2014). Running parallel to the abuse of our ‘āina during RIMPAC is the abuse of our women, girls, and māhū. Aligned with trends of increased sexual exploitation of local women, girls, and gender non-binary people during events that cause a sudden influx in transient males, a potential repercussion of RIMPAC is an increase in sexualized encounters between servicemen and wāhine ‘ōiwi (DHS, 2018). Clubs and bars across Honolulu that are proximate to bases sell the promise of paradise to RIMPAC participants, complete with the exotic Hawaiian girl, warm weather, and mai tais. Precisely because these sexualized encounters are actively facilitated within militouristic structures of power, R&R exemplifies that sexuality in this context is defined by “intimate and persuasive manifestations of social control” (Ginoza, 2016, p. 588). Both the tourism and military industries offer security; the former through economic security and the latter through protection from evading nations.

### **The Illusion of Economic Security**

The military and the hospitality and tourism sectors are large employers of Kānaka ‘Ōiwi; however, Kānaka ‘Ōiwi are overrepresented in the lowest-paying and lower-ranked positions in these sectors (DBET, 2017; DVA, 2016). Tourism and the military are systems that groom the economic dependence of Kānaka ‘Ōiwi by minimizing Kānaka ‘Ōiwi avenues for sovereignty via the polluting and desecrating of natural resources and sacred sites (Teaiwa, 1999). The desecration and pollution of sacred sites and natural resources, combined with militourism occupying large areas of land, reduces Kānaka ‘Ōiwi connection with the ‘āina as an ancestor and literally as “that which feeds.” An effect of this systemic disconnection and displacement of Kānaka ‘Ōiwi from the ‘āina ensures that Kānaka ‘Ōiwi rely largely on imported food, with 80-90% of Hawai‘i’s food being imported (Jany, 2024). Foundational to sovereignty is an Indigenous population’s ability to feed themselves. Although Kānaka ‘Ōiwi traditional mahi‘ai (farming) practices are intrinsically sustainable and the ‘āina of Hawai‘i is generous in providing sustenance, the forced dependency of Kānaka ‘Ōiwi on militourism means a forced dependency on imported, processed foods. Consequently, Kānaka ‘Ōiwi are 2.5 times more likely to be diagnosed and die from diabetes (Murphy et al., 2021), are 80% more likely to be obese (CDC, 2020), and are 10% more likely to be diagnosed with coronary heart disease (Galinsky et al., 2017) than non-Hispanic whites. Further, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders have the second-highest rate of cardiovascular disease mortality in the United States (Woodruff et al., 2023). These trends do not exist in Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations who lead a traditional lifestyle of eating ancestral foods grown from the ‘āina (Foliaki & Pearce, 2023).

Nurturing a mind, body, and spiritual connection with the ‘āina is central to Kānaka ‘Ōiwi well-being (McGregor et al., 2003). The ‘ōlelo no‘eau, *he pilina wehena*

*‘o/e*, describes the inseverable relationship between Kānaka ‘Ōiwi and ‘āina (Pukui, 1983). In Kānaka ‘Ōiwi belief systems, Kānaka ‘Ōiwi are physically and metaphysically descended from the ‘āina, specifically the ancestor Hāloa whose kinolau (bodily form) is the kalo (taro) plant. To harm the ‘āina is equivalent to harming a Kānaka ‘Ōiwi’s relative and assaulting their holistic sense of self. Traditionally, the ‘āina was divided, not by private ownership, but by self-sustaining segments of ‘āina called ahupua‘a that ran from mauka (mountain) to makai (ocean). Resources from an ahupua‘a were not owned but stewarded for the collective (McGregor et al., 2003). Militourism relies on severing the relationship between Kānaka ‘Ōiwi and the ‘āina by piecemealing the ‘āina into privatized parcels and depleting the ‘āina’s natural resources. Just as the ‘āina suffers through privatization and predatory consumerism, so too do Kānaka ‘Ōiwi through economic dependency on the systems that serve to sever the inseverable relationship between Kānaka ‘Ōiwi and ‘āina.

One way that militourism attempts to sever the inseverable relationship between Kānaka ‘Ōiwi and ‘āina is through forcing many Kānaka ‘Ōiwi to hold multiple forms of employment. Being systemically channeled into low-wage labor and the ever-increasing cost-of-living is contributing to Kānaka ‘Ōiwi being more susceptible to houselessness than any other population in Hawai‘i. Hawai‘i has the highest cost-of-living index in the U.S. at 193.3, which is two times higher than the national average (WPR, 2023). The minimum wage in Hawai‘i is \$14.00/ hour, yet the living wage for a family of four is \$35.41/ hour (MIT, 2024). Tourism drives up the cost-of-living for single family housing, causing families to spend a larger share of their income on housing while encouraging foreign investment in land, which drives inflation. As a result, many Kānaka ‘Ōiwi do not earn enough in the tourism industry to account for the high cost-of-living in Hawai‘i (Trask, 2010).

In 2023, the lack of affordable housing was proclaimed a “crisis” by the Hawai‘i State Governor’s Office (Office of the Governor, 2023). The average family in Hawai‘i spends 40% of their income on rent, which is higher than any other state (DBEDT, 2020). Native Hawaiians comprise 50% of the houseless population on the islands of Kaua‘i, Maui, and Hawai‘i Island (PIT, 2023). Kānaka ‘Ōiwi are being actively displaced through houselessness or through being economically forced to move out of their own homelands. As of 2021, over 50% of Native Hawaiians live on the continent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021).

The Department of Hawaiian Homelands (DHHL) is the entity responsible for carrying out the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920, which is intended to “provide for the rehabilitation of native Hawaiians through a government-sponsored homesteading” (HHCA, 1920, n.p.). To qualify for a Hawaiian Homestead, an individual must be able to prove they are 50% native Hawaiian by blood quantum. Many Kānaka ‘Ōiwi do not have the blood quantum level or cannot prove they meet the 50% blood quantum requirement based on colonial standards of defining “Hawaiianness” (Kauanui, 2005). Those who do qualify for a DHHL residential plot, on average, spend 23 years on the waitlist (SMS, 2019). DHHL holds a total of 203,981 acres of land in Hawai‘i, with 4.67% of these lands (9,508 acres) designated for residential purposes (DHHL, 2021). The pattern of defining “Native Hawaiian” by blood quantum, using colonial documentation standards, and not having enough DHHL land to meet housing needs ensures the continued displacement of Kānaka ‘Ōiwi and exacerbates the root causes

that drive violence against Kānaka 'Ōiwi feminine people.

The U.S. military is a large landholder in Hawai'i and contributes directly to the displacement of Kānaka 'Ōiwi. According to the Hawai'i Military Land Use Master Plan (HMLUMP) released by the United States Indo-Pacific Command in 2021, the U.S. military leases 221,981 acres of land across the Hawaiian archipelago, which equates to about 5.5% of the land total in Hawai'i. This arrangement can be traced back to 1964, when the state of Hawai'i and the U.S. military mutually agreed upon 65-year leases, with the U.S. military paying \$1 per lease for the full 65 years. The majority of the land that is occupied by the U.S. military is Hawaiian trust lands, which would revert back to state control upon expiration of any leases. The sheer acreage dedicated to military life and training directly feeds into Hawai'i's ongoing housing crisis which has seen the current disturbing trend of more Kānaka 'Ōiwi living on the U.S. continent than in Hawai'i (SMS, 2019).

Militourism drives the rate of houselessness and displacement of Kānaka 'Ōiwi. A preliminary finding from the MMNHWGM Report II indicates that houselessness is a primary risk factor in sex trafficking that can lead to feminine people going missing and being murdered (Cristobal et al., *in progress*). A report on sex trafficking in Hawai'i found that two-thirds of sex trafficking victims reported being houseless (Roe-Sepowitz & Jabola-Carolus, 2019). Further illuminating the relationship between houselessness and violence, 22% of O'ahu's homeless Native Hawaiian population report experiencing intimate partner violence compared to 18% of non-Native Hawaiians. Of the 22%, 14% are unsheltered compared to 11% of non-Native Hawaiians (Cristobal, 2022; OHA et al., 2020). These statistics exemplify how interwoven displacement and violence against Kānaka 'Ōiwi are and how conversations about ending violence must include conversations about ending displacement.

### **The Illusion of Physical Security**

Despite mass protests by Hawai'i residents against annexation and the fact that a treaty of annexation of Hawai'i was never signed into law, the United States military continued to occupy Hawai'i and declare war against Spain in the late 1800s. The United States attacked the Philippines as a way to weaken Spain's colonial rule. The militarization of Hawai'i came with Hawai'i being situated along the route of North America and the Philippines (Silva, 2004). The U.S. military occupying Hawai'i brought a level of physical threat that was not present prior to the occupation. The bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, for example, was not a bombing of the independent Kingdom of Hawai'i but was an attack against the U.S. military, which was using Hawai'i as a shipyard and refueling station (Coffman, 1998; Silva, 2004).

In addition to Hawai'i being under a consistent threat of military attack from opposing nations, U.S. military personnel stationed in Hawai'i cause direct harm to wāhine 'ōiwi. Military bases create "industrial or extractive camps, commonly referred to as "man camps"" (Gibson et al., 2017, p. 8). Man camps are land or premises where extraction or abuse of natural resources occurs, and the site is also used as a living quarter for a largely male labor force. Man camps are correlated with higher rates of sexual harassment and assault and increased demand for commercial sex within surrounding communities (Gibson et al., 2017). The first MMNHWG report found that 38% (N= 74) of those arrested for soliciting sex from a thirteen-year-old online through Operation Keiki Shield are active-duty military personnel (Cristobal, 2022). A lack of

data collection, sharing, and community collaboration from the United States Indo-Pacific Command contributes to the scarcity of data on the extent to which the military personnel enact violence against wāhine 'ōiwi. Senate Resolution 164 was created to address the U.S. military's role in violence against women and girls in the communities they occupy by urging the United States Indo-Pacific Command to be more proactive in sharing gender-based violence data and launching anti-commercial sexual exploitation programs across all Hawai'i's installations (S.R.164, 2023). Regardless of the ongoing lack of data transparency by the U.S. military, it can be surmised, based on the proportion of active-duty military personnel and the U.S. military having a majority foreign, male workforce in Hawai'i, that wāhine 'ōiwi are at a heightened risk of violence. Rates of violence against women, particularly Native women, increase in areas where extractive industries, such as the military, are established and where Native women are most often violated by non-Native men (Grisafi, 2020).

### **Summary**

In short, militourism is a powerful, preeminent pimp. Militourism requires that Kānaka 'Ōiwi and the 'āina are simultaneously used and abused with false promises of economic and physical security. The military and tourism industries purport to provide security while failing to take accountability for the exploitation of Indigenous lands and bodies needed to turn a profit that always weighs in the favor of those doing the exploiting. Consequently, a populace of Kānaka 'Ōiwi dependent on militourism has developed. Similar to victims of sex trafficking, the Kānaka 'Ōiwi population is left in a vicarious position— to be grateful to the systems that extract so much from their communities, culture, land, and bodies, to passively accept it; or to resist it. Again, similar to sex trafficking and other forms of gender-based violence, one's situation becomes less about choice if one cannot leave a situation without being punished in some way, including not having safe financial, physical, and mental alternatives. Militourism ensures the systematic disconnection of Kānaka 'Ōiwi from their 'āina and ways of knowing through houselessness, forced relocation, and a cycle of poverty. With this disconnection comes symptoms such as a greater likelihood of acquiring certain physical health ailments and experiencing violence such as IPV and commercial sexual exploitation that led to a complicated web of Kānaka 'Ōiwi erasure.

### **Lessons from IWNAM**

Although MMNHWGM is specific to Hawai'i, foundational aspects of this crisis, including sex trafficking, displacement of Indigenous and local peoples, economic dependency, and assaults to the land at the hands of the U.S. military are evident in all countries IWNAM represents. One of the primary concerns of IWNAM is to address pathways to sovereignty that have the power to collectively liberate us from the extractive and violent reality that U.S. imperialism imposes upon our bodies and lands.

Indigenous feminine people are murdered and go missing in the Philippines and in network sister nations for similar reasons as Hawai'i. Like Hawai'i, data is sparse on the exact rates of missing and murdered Indigenous people because of the lack of accurate data collection, lack of government accountability, and the pervasive normalization and silence about gender-based violence (Cristobal, 2022). A commonality that exists between Hawai'i, the Philippines, and IWNAM sister nations is that violence against Indigenous feminine people is allowed to occur because American colonialism is a stronghold in all places. Looking at the history of Hawai'i and the

Philippines, we see how state-centric sovereignty can be trivial when it comes to what countries are able to do for their people. During the IWNAM convening, it was apparent that the current model of state-centric sovereignty does not wholly prevent violence against feminine people and the land from occurring. This can especially be seen in our IWNAM network meeting host country, the Philippines, which is a sovereign nation, yet is heavily populated and controlled by the U.S. military. Conversely, Hawai'i is not recognized as a sovereign country by the United States, yet similarly, remains heavily populated and controlled by the U.S. military. MMNHWGM is a product of this occupation. The case of Jennifer Laude is a prime example of state-centric, gender-based harm the U.S. military does to feminine people. Jennifer Laude was a transgender Filipina woman who was drowned to death in 2014 in Olongapo by a U.S. Marine, who was convicted of a reduced charge of homicide and later received a complete pardon by Philippine President Duterte (Raval, 2018). The Philippines-United States Visiting Forces Agreement and the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement served the function of what state-centric sovereignty was meant for: to protect imperialism at the cost of the lives of local feminine people used for their bodies, then discarded like commodities. The Philippines delegation of the IWNAM advocates to bring justice to Jennifer Laude and her family to this day. They made it very clear that, although they are a sovereign country by law, the United States has permeated every aspect of their culture.

We can see the similarities of how feminine people and places are used and abused by the U.S. military in the Philippines as they are in Hawai'i. For example, there are currently five U.S. military bases in the Philippines with plans for military expansion to four new strategic sites (Lema, 2023). Even in places such as Olongapo, Philippines where Indigenous and local anti-violence activists have successfully fought for decommissioned military bases, the land still feels the impact of the harm these bases caused. For example, the waters of Subic Bay in Olongapo were so heavily polluted by the U.S. military that the community can no longer gather fish and oysters from this area, thereby infringing upon food sovereignty rights.

In addition to the physical desecration of the lands of the Philippines, the social aspect of many areas is still distinctly American. In Olongapo and across the Philippines, militourism has a similar method of sexual exploitation of women, girls, and gender non-binary people as Hawai'i. Barrios are bar-type environments that cater to American tourists, especially those who seek to engage in sex tourism. These barrios are adorned with American flags and the flags of every military branch. These barrios are sites of heavy sexual exploitation and violence; they are modern-day brothels.

Suzuyo Takazato (2007), a founding member of OWAAMW, has strongly stated, "U.S. soldiers' sexual crimes know no national boundaries" (p. 17). Indeed, there is a history of multiple overlapping incidents of violence that have occurred between nations of the network. For example, in November 2005, four U.S. Marines stationed in Okinawa traveled to Subic Bay for war exercises, and during their recreational time, one of the Marines raped a woman while the other three watched (Takazato, 2007). While one was convicted in the Philippines court, he was quickly returned to U.S. custody, and many doubt that he served any sentence; the others were acquitted and immediately sent back to Okinawa. It is on the basis of these structural relations of violence that

women from the Philippines and across Asia and the Pacific, including Hawai'i organize and stand in solidarity with members of the network.

Two main lessons we learned from the 2023 IWNAM network meeting was that: 1) as long as our ideas and enactments of sovereignty remain tied to U.S. imperialism, violence toward Indigenous feminine people and the land will continue to be a crisis because imperialism infiltrates the fabric of the social, political, and economic structure of Asia and the Pacific and; 2) to end violence against Hawai'i's Indigenous feminine people and land we need to actively work with women in other nations who are similarly impacted by U.S. imperialism.

### **Moving Toward a Collective Praxis of Genuine Security**

During the first meeting of the network in 1997 in Okinawa, feminists from around Asia and the Pacific gathered to discuss the impacts of militarism on women and children in their own communities. Suzuyo Takazato stated, "We have the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, but it does not protect us. We need a new definition of security" (as quoted in Akibayashi et al., 2022, p. 92). The network thus worked to imagine and to define "genuine security" in opposition to the heavily militarized and masculinized articulation of "security" upon which U.S. militarism is premised.

Women from across Asia and the Pacific stood in solidarity against the violence the U.S. military enacts upon feminine peoples and the land and addressed the question of "what type of security does the military actually provide and for whom?" The U.S. military provides security for the interests of the U.S. government and for private corporations who hold the majority of the nation's power and resources, at the expense of Indigenous, Black, Brown, foreign, and poor feminine people and the land. Margo Okazawa-Rey, a founding member of IWNAM, discusses how "genuine security" is not just a reaction to or analysis of militarism, but rather is a deeper way to think about "what would constitute real security that's not militarized" (as cited in Akibayashi et al., 2022, p. 95). Genuine security was thus defined broadly and irrespective of imperialism as a notion of wealth that includes "everything that has the potential to enrich people and their communities: health and well-being, physical energy and strength, safety, time, skills, talents, wisdom, creativity, love, community support, a connection to one's own history and cultural heritage, and a sense of belonging" (Okazawa-Rey & Kirk, 2000, p. 121). Premised upon a "culture of life" rather than the production of death, genuine security centers principles of sovereignty, dignity, and sustainability.

Learning about the continued presence of the U.S military in the state-centric independent nations such as the Philippines and Okinawa, inspired our Hawai'i delegation to think about what genuine security that de-centers militarism and centers sovereignty could mean for Hawai'i. Below are working ruminations on what genuine sovereignty could be for Hawai'i:

- 1) True sovereignty is being able to protect lands and people from extraction.
- 2) True sovereignty is being liberated from patriarchy.
- 3) True sovereignty is the ability to create safety for all.
- 4) As much as Hawai'i wishes to be sovereign, we know that true freedom is being holistically independent from the United States and any other imperial power.

### **Radical Healing**

An enduring lesson that was deepened for us during the IWNAM network meeting is that exercising creativity and centering pilina (relationships) is just as

essential to the work of social change as actively combating inequities and injustices. The most effective way to counter violence is through creation. Through creativity and nurturing pilina with ourselves, our 'āina, our kūpuna, our kaiāulu (community), and our international networks of solidarity, we can generate solutions from a place of abundance instead of from a place of reactionary survivalism (Osorio, 2021). When resisting systemic oppression, methods such as quilting and poetry become radical acts of healing. Radical healing involves balancing colonial resistance with movements toward freedom (Lipe et al., 2020).

Balancing the weight of resistance and the lightness of creation can be seen in the art of sewing. Historically, the art of sewing has been commodified by capitalism as a method of modernity that drives consumeristic demand for fast fashion using cheap labor, namely from exploited Asian countries (Cachola, 2014). However, during the IWNAM network meetings, we see a strong reclamation of sewing as an expression of culture and genuine security rooted in true sovereignty. A hallmark of the IWNAM network meetings has been to sew a quilt, where each nation creates a square, and each square is sewn together to tell a shared story of our collective struggles and strengths (Cachola, 2014).

Prior to convening for the 2023 IWNAM network meeting, each delegation was tasked with creating a quilt square representing themselves, their lāhui (Independent nation), and 'āina. Each square from each nation represented (Guāhan, South Korea, Japan, Marianas, Okinawa, Hawai'i, the Philippines, and the United States) was sewn together to make a quilt of healing, and hope for a collective future free from military violence (see Figure 1). Each quilt square beautifully depicted the vibrancy and brilliance of each delegation, and clearly showed the ways that these women loved and carried their communities with them on this huaka'i (journey), and always. With intricate designs representing important waters, bright colors from natural dyes of their lands, liberation chants and phrases, depictions of mo'o kupua (supernatural lizards), manu (birds), and i'a (fish), each patch carried the legacy, love, loss, resistance and freedom of these women and their homelands.

**Figure 1. 2023 IWNAM Quilt**



In just a few days, lifetimes of mālama ‘āina (care for the land) and community were shared, profound pilina grounded in aloha were established, and commitments to our people, land, and sovereignty were reaffirmed. We had many discussions where we shared our struggles and celebrated our successes from a place of learning from each other how to be answerable to our ancestors and descendants and how to do it together.

In typical wāhine ‘ōiwi fashion, at the end of a long week hosting a group of 30 international visitors, the Buklod aunties of Olongapo gifted each member of our gathering a beautiful hand-sewn fabric to take home with us. Tita Alma Bulawan (lead community organizer and president of the Buklod Center for Women) described the cloth gifted to us as a symbol of solidarity and peace. The designs adorning the rich purple fabric are specific to wāhine: our power, resiliency, and our ability to create community anywhere we go. The designs, while vibrant with color and beauty, also represent the fierceness and strength that all wāhine inherently carry. The purple cloth background, Tita Alma tells us, is a color that the Buklod wāhine have declared to represent Women’s Rights in the Philippines and across the world. It is an incredible honor to carry the mo’olelo and the lessons that this small piece of cloth represents.

As a method of radical healing through no‘ono‘o (reflection), we created a physical representation of our solidarity and commitment to our shared liberation with our sister nations across Oceania using the fabric gifted to us. The quilt pictured in Figure 2 is a patchwork style quilt that features the Buklod symbols of strength and resilience that the purple fabric gifted to us represents. This fabric is combined with fabric stamped with traditional kāpala (stamp) printings of lau koa, or the leaves of the koa tree, which represents strength and resilience in our Kānaka ‘Ōiwi culture.

**Figure 2.** *Kuiki Kapa Aloha*





Reflecting on IWNAM gathering of wāhine whose lives and lands have been irreparably impacted by U.S military violence, there was immense kaumaha (grief). The stories and experiences that we shared with each other brought us feelings of heaviness, anger, and frustration. What do we do when we carry the kaumaha of our ancestors seven generations back? What do we do with our refusal to pass this kaumaha on to our next seven generations? How do we sew together the pieces of our community and collective sense of cultural identity that have been ripped from our seams?

This Kuiki Kapa Aloha is the product of answering these questions through radical healing and aloha. By stitching together the unseverable relationship between Kānaka 'Ōiwi and 'āina, the unseverable relationship is reinforced, for this quilt was sewn with the strengths gifted to us by our sisters across Asia and the Pacific. This quilt is a reminder that somewhere in the seams of our collective creations lies the answers to our liberation. This quilt is a reminder that,

Liberation is birthed not borrowed.  
We will never return them their normalcy.

Raised by the hands of matriarchs  
The mind is a womb that conceives paths to the revolution.

Our bodies were made to not only to bear children,  
birthing pains apply when pushing for a nation unbound to patriarchy.

Love is not nuclear, love is the revolution we dream of.

This revolution will not be televised  
It will be told through the lives of the mothers who carried us into this new world.

A world we did not “discover” but create every day, a world that we raise in the image of  
Kū and Hina.

In this new world, we are not looking for a flag to stake claim.  
But rather seek to see ourselves in each other,

To truly know one another.  
Is it not our mothers who first called us by name?

### **Discussion**

Precisely because the existence of imperial nation-states like Hawai'i, the Philippines, and all sister nations represented in the IWNAM are premised on racism and sexism, their institutions are simply incapable of achieving genuine security. For this reason, impacted communities from across Asia and the Pacific have come together to take on the task of advancing toward a reality of genuine security set in sovereignty for those who are amongst the most exploited, including Indigenous women, girls, and gender non-binary people and the land.

The answers to our liberation in Hawai'i are found only in the collective liberation of all Indigenous and feminine peoples. As we move toward freedom from the violence, extraction, and dependency militourism breeds, we must work together with our relatives connected to us via the ocean to hold the U.S. military and tourism industries accountable for their harmful actions toward the land and her people. Demanding accountability from such heavy-handed institutions committed to colonialism through social and economic control requires we reach into our own Kānaka 'Ōiwi ways of knowing and being as well as the na'auao (wisdom) of similarly occupied sister nations for solutions. We must also remember to always balance our resistance against systemic oppression with the healing necessary for freedom to flourish.

Further, we must reclaim the narratives of our feminized 'āina as being desirable to foreigners for profits, false protection, and the perverseness of a constructed "paradise." As Kānaka 'Ōiwi are descended from the 'āina, we must challenge the misogyny we have internalized from the colonizer that separates our bodies, particularly feminine bodies, from our 'āina. As 'āina gives life, so too does wāhine. Recognizing that the MMNHWGM crisis is one that is both gendered and racialized and is innately connected to the destruction of the 'āina is a primary step to understanding the complex weaving of systemically embedded inequities that cause our feminine people to be murdered and go missing. Assaults to wāhine are assaults to the 'āina. Assaults to 'āina are assaults to wāhine. We must protect and hold sacred our women, girls, and māhū, like we protect and hold sacred our 'āina if our descendants will know a Hawai'i that is genuinely secure.

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