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# The Slyly Reproductive Lessons of Haunani-Kay Trask

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Today in an age of rapacious transnational capitalism, Hawaiians are beginning to think beyond the habitual boundaries of the state of Hawaiʻi, even of the United States. We increasingly assert genealogical claims as children of our mother—Hawaiʻi—and therefore, as caretakers of our land. This relationship as indigenous people, as the first nation of Hawaiʻi, places us in a different category from all settlers in Hawaiʻi. It is our duty, as Native people, to ensure this status for generations to come.

—Haunani-Kay Trask, *From A Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawaiʻi*

In her seminal work, Haunani-Kay Trask (HKT) brilliantly named and articulated the contours of what we call settler colonial violence and laid the important groundwork for the theorization of Indigenous feminisms. Trask's influential scholarship is accessible and clear, and written years before the aforementioned fields became acceptable in current scholarship. Trask's definition of settler colonialism emphasizes the need to identify who is a Native and who is a settler in any locale and the responsibility to do so for future generations. Emphasizing the genealogical caretakers in a given place, Trask contests Native erasure in settler colonial societies. Her theorizations of settler colonialism, Indigenous feminisms, and community-grounded political

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work has produced scholars, thinkers, and activists, including many Hawaiians, other Pacific Islanders, and Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island. She terms this ability to produce future progenitors of her theorizations and political organizing as “slyly reproductive.”<sup>1</sup> In this way, she challenges Western ideas of biological reproduction and instead plants expansive notions of genealogy and kinship. Her legacy inspires future scholars, thinkers, and ways of being in the world that serve as a foundation for future generations. In this essay, I discuss the multiple ways that Trask was slyly reproductive in her theorizations, political organizing with Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i, teaching, and emphasis on Indigenous futurities.

Trask was a cofounder of Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i (Native Hawaiian sovereignty group/ Native Nation), and her work included political organizing throughout the Pacific and with Indigenous communities of Moku Honu—Turtle Island. As a Kanaka ‘Ōiwi raised among one of the largest Hawaiian diasporas in California, HKT’s teachings and activism informed my community organizing, political work, and theorizations on trans-Indigenous recognitions.<sup>2</sup> Trans-Indigenous recognitions reproduce relationalities between and among Indigenous communities that are not bound or created by the state. Instead, Indigenous communities recognize each other both socially and politically with the political authority to do so. In this essay, I document these relationalities between Native nations and other Pacific Islanders as an embodiment of the legacies of Haunani-Kay Trask, including her theorization of settler colonialism and the groundwork she laid for Indigenous feminism. I begin with my own relationality to foreground how HKT’s work influenced my own. Next, I discuss Trask’s theorizations of settler colonialism and her grounding of Indigenous feminism. Finally, I link her teachings on kuleana and her work with Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i, demonstrating how both engage in trans-Indigenous recognitions as a means to create generative futures beyond the settler state.

## RELATIONALITY

Being a Kanaka ‘Ōiwi in Moku Honu, I feel it is important to contextualize the lands and the people that now host my family and me. Currently, I join you from the lands of the Tongva and Cahuilla Nations and people. Like other Indigenous peoples, Hawaiian epistemologies encompass worldviews, protocols, and customs that are grounded in a web of relationalities. These relationalities are with the land, the elements, nonhuman life, and the caretakers of the land. Genealogical responsibilities are detailed through creation stories that tie Indigenous people to place. From a young age, I was told my genealogy in order to situate my relationalities and responsibilities to both place and people. As a Native Hawaiian living outside of my homelands, I honor the land and the genealogical caretakers of the place that continue to sustain me. In the diaspora, I found a large Native Hawaiian community residing in the San Francisco Bay Area. Additionally, I was honored to build relations with others from Oceania and was raised in a vibrant and diverse community on Ohlone land. Not until my undergraduate education did I start to question why there was a significant community of Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders in the Bay Area.

Through my lived experience of being raised around a significant community of Hawaiians and others from Oceania in the Bay Area, I noticed that many had a desire to move back home; however, despite this longing, many spent their remaining life outside of the homeland. Countless Native Hawaiians left Hawai'i seeking better living conditions. Nonetheless, I witnessed many struggling socially, economically, and with poor health in California. Similarities and differences between Hawaiians back at home and those in California grew with my time spent back in Hawai'i.

At home, I listened to family members talk story of their daily struggles of being a Hawaiian in Hawai'i and their nostalgia for different times. It seemed that Hawaiians overall, no matter where they were living, were struggling. Throughout my youth, I witnessed the ongoing destruction of my homeland while also seeing the immense aloha—love and resistance of many to fight and contest this reality. I felt pain and anger from the encroachment of militarism and tourism, and I asked myself why Hawaiians were not in control of their own lands and resources. Overall, these reconstructions to home allowed me to grow in understanding my kuleana,<sup>3</sup> or responsibility, especially as it pertained to being a Kanaka 'Ōiwi residing in Moku Honu.

As I left for college, I began to ask why there were not a lot of Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, or Indigenous people attending my private liberal arts institution or attending higher education in general. Additionally, those who came from Hawai'i were disproportionately not Kanaka Maoli; this reality was directly tied to a growing Native Hawaiian diaspora—those who could no longer afford to live in our homelands. It was during my undergrad years, outside of my formal course work, that an Asian American administrator exposed me to the work of Haunani-Kay Trask. Trask's theorizations of settler colonialism, her political work, and her groundwork for Native feminisms provided the context for my lived experience.

Years later, as a young scholar and teacher committed to community-grounded research because of HKT, I was continually reminded of her powerful legacy in multiple ways. Through Trask's work, we are more informed of the various ways that settler colonialism, white supremacy, and heteropatriarchy in Hawai'i have wrought violence against Kanaka Maoli people and lands. We are also educated as to how Kanaka Maoli fight those structures daily by creating different desires and relationships unbound by settler ideologies and practices. HKT's work critiquing colonialism, settler colonialism, militarism, and tourism is slyly reproductive and has given confidence to many Pacific Islander/Native and Indigenous students who now have the language to talk about US empire and its material effects on Indigenous culture and people. Throughout my educational journey, the work of Haunani-Kay Trask has influenced my research, teaching, and writing, beginning with her theorization of settler colonialism, groundwork on Indigenous feminisms, and relational building between and among other Indigenous communities, including those in Turtle Island.

## SETTLER COLONIALISM

Haunani-Kay Trask's theorization of settler colonialism distinguishes who is a Native and who is a settler in a given place. For example, she details the power and genealogical

authority of Hawaiians to define who are settlers in their own land. Trask states, “Our indigenous origin enables us to define what and who is indigenous, and what and who is not indigenous. We know who the First Nations people are since we were, historically, the first people in the Hawaiian archipelago. Only Hawaiians are Native to Hawai‘i. Everyone else is a settler.”<sup>4</sup> With this assertion, Trask affirms the self-determination that Indigenous people have in defining who and what is Indigenous. She asserts that only Hawaiians are the Indigenous people to Hawai‘i and everyone, including non-white immigrants, are settlers. Poignantly, she recognizes kindred among Indigenous people as the first people and genealogical caretakers of a place. Although non-Kanaka Maoli continue to create and stake claims to Hawai‘i, Trask makes clear that Hawaiians are the only group that has a genealogical responsibility to mālama—care for āina—land of Hawai‘i nei. These understandings of responsibility to take care of land helped me to recognize the need to identify Indigenous caretaker(s) wherever I resided in the diaspora.

Trask’s theorization of settler colonialism and her assertion that only Kanaka Maoli are the Indigenous people to Hawai‘i provoked settler anxieties in Hawai‘i, especially among those who had ascended to political and economic power. Her direct condemnation of how the United States and others benefit from the continued suppression of Kanaka Maoli generated harsh backlash professionally, politically, and socially. Additionally, Trask identified the ways that settler anxiety reproduces identities and narratives that recast settlers as the Native people of Hawai‘i.<sup>5</sup> For example, “local” identity is tied to narratives of a glaringly exploitative Asian immigrant plantation history that forges claims to Hawai‘i through hardship and hard work.<sup>6</sup> However, these claims to Hawai‘i and ascendancy to both political and social power never contest the ongoing system of settler colonialism and the continuing claims of Native sovereignty. By challenging local identity and settler claims to Hawai‘i made by non-Hawaiians, Trask’s theorizations identify how settlers recast narratives to reclaim land and suppress Hawaiians as the Indigenous people to Hawai‘i. Trask also details how such appropriation operates within the democratic system in Hawai‘i and overall in the United States.<sup>7</sup>

Trask problematizes settler systems of democracy through discourses of in/equality and ideas around “access” and “rights.”<sup>8</sup> Within Hawai‘i, fallacies around local identity include glossing political power and capital acquired through the persistent subjugation of Native Hawaiians. These identifiers continue to circulate through settler systems of democracy that allow settlers to gain access to land and resources that Native and Indigenous people have never relinquished. Additionally, Native and Indigenous peoples are situated within the US multicultural framework as ethnic minorities and not communities with inherent political sovereignty. In Hawai‘i, discussions around “access” and “rights” thus obscure the ongoing loss of a national land base and government for Native Hawaiians.<sup>9</sup> Juxtaposing the discourses of rights to the notion of responsibility, Trask grounds the genealogy of responsibility among Hawaiians. This assertion of kuleana—genealogical responsibility and authority that Hawaiians protect and maintain a homeland—produces ongoing resistance to the United States and the “inclusion” associated with the identifier of “American.”

Although much discussion of the settler/native binary has occurred—including the introduction of terms that distinguish white settlers from immigrants or arrivants,<sup>10</sup> Trask’s theorization of settler colonialism distinguishes who has genealogical responsibility to oversee a specific place. In other words, whose genealogical responsibility is it to take care of land/area and resources for the next generations? This question helps identify the Indigenous caretaker(s) of a place as those who have intimate knowledge of *mālama ʻāina*—care for the land. Additionally, this notion challenges critiques of colonialism that center capitalism and the disbanding of the commons, which obscure Indigenous knowledge and responsibilities to land and people.<sup>11</sup>

As Trask laid bare the authority and power among Hawaiians to define who and what was Indigenous and who was a settler, she also highlighted the institutions of settler colonialism and how they worked in concert to uphold US empire. Detailing the loss of Native Hawaiian self-governance and the collusion of the military and the tourism industry to maintain land and resources, Trask astutely links these processes to the commodification of Hawaiian culture for profit. In her essay “Lovely Hula Hands,” Trask provides the groundwork for an articulation of Indigenous feminisms that includes the gendered contours of colonialism and settler colonialism. Specifically, she details how the commodification of Hawaiian culture through corporate tourism has had disproportionate gendered effects on women and female-identified bodies.<sup>12</sup> Commodification—in order to sell Hawai‘i as an experience to the masses, portrays Hawaiian culture as “naturally giving and entertaining.”<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Trask details how these gendered notions are extended to Hawai‘i as a land that is gendered female. She states, “Hawai‘i is she, the Western image of Native ‘female’ in her magical allure.”<sup>14</sup> Trask thus links the commodification of culture to sell Hawai‘i and the portrayal of Hawaiian land to an image of its people as violable for foreign domestication and dominance.

Considering Trask’s enduringly relevant interventions, what could her theorizations of settler colonialism teach Hawaiians in the diaspora and, more importantly, how can we apply her teachings in our collective resistance to settler colonialism? Through Trask, I learned how Hawai‘i was portrayed within the guise of foreign speculation, and I wondered how settler colonialism functioned unevenly among Indigenous communities. I reflected on the modes whereby settler colonialism reproduced Native erasure in distinct and specific ways to uphold the nation-state. For example, I questioned what the gendered contours of colonialism and settler colonialism were in California, and what I could learn from Trask’s teachings about being a Hawaiian in Moku Honu. Also, what was my *kuleana* as a Hawaiian residing on the lands of the Ohlone, Tongva, and Cahuilla? Additionally, what was my relationship to *ea*—sovereignty while in Moku Honu, and how could the teachings and work of Trask assist in my understanding?

As a young practitioner of education in Moku Honu, I felt it was important to build relationalities with Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders, and Native/Indigenous peoples. Haunani-Kay Trask showed that Indigenous people need to work together and support one another in each other’s liberation.<sup>15</sup> She emphasized the links among empire, military, and environmental degradation in the Pacific and the similar

and unique ways that Indigenous people resist and thrive all over the world. As a co-founder of Ka Lāhui Hawai'i, she forged links to Indigenous communities internationally, including those in Moku Honu—Turtle Island. As a Hawaiian in California, I was influenced by Trask's teachings in understanding how I could fulfill my kuleana in the diaspora. From Trask, I learned that Hawaiians and other Indigenous people have knowledge and power that predate settler and colonial nation-states. Trask believed in a different future: one in which Indigenous people determined what was best for their own communities and could fulfill their kuleana to place and people.

## KULEANA

Through her teaching and political organizing, Trask reminded Hawaiians of their kuleana to the lāhui—nation—and asked her haumāna—students—how they will work to contribute to and benefit the lāhui as a whole. In a personal interview, Dr. Erin Kahunawaika'ala Wright, an associate professor of educational administration at the University of Hawai'i, Manoa, recounted her time as an undergraduate in Hawaiian studies when she was influenced by her teacher and mentor, Haunani-Kay Trask. She described how Trask challenged her personal conception of kuleana through rhetorical questions, such as, "What will you do for your lāhui, your nation or your people? That should be the driving force behind your life as a Hawaiian!"<sup>16</sup> Reflecting on Trask's notion of kuleana, Wright says, "For her it doesn't matter what you do as a Hawaiian person, it just needs to some way contribute back to the lāhui and for the betterment of the lāhui."<sup>17</sup> In these framings and questions around kuleana, Trask was slyly reproductive in educating thinkers to link personal kuleana to the overall lāhui. Trask's broad framing assisted Wright in her own construction of kuleana. She asserted, "So I always felt like kuleana was this really expansive thing, but was also focused. For me, that really was super helpful in thinking about how I would use my life to do that and for me that's been the question that's driven me to do my research."<sup>18</sup> In this way, kuleana helped Wright understand her function and place in the greater community as much as it served her in creating a sense of responsibility. Additionally, kuleana allowed her to think about how her life's work should contribute to the Native Hawaiian community in Hawai'i and even in the diaspora.<sup>19</sup>

Addressing kuleana while being away from home and her growing conception of lāhui, Wright explained:

I think a lot of the tenets still fit. I always had that in mind like how am I going to contribute to my lāhui and not just the lāhui, island bound, but also just your people. Then I remember that's probably the first time I expanded that notion of lāhui and it would be different again for me in Hawai'i. Lāhui is different for when I'm away, but I did expand it. My thinking about who I have responsibility for, and who I'm responsible and accountable to, and for me [it] was other Pacific Islanders and it was also the Native folks of wherever I was in California.<sup>20</sup>

Wright described the responsibility to Native communities of the land that were hosting her. While living in California, she not only believed in fulfilling her kuleana to

the lāhui at home, but also started to expand her idea of the lāhui by including other off-island Native Hawaiians. Additionally, she began to relate herself to other Pacific Islanders and to broaden her understanding of the kuleana she held for local Native Americans. She stated:

I think that kuleana to each other, and that acknowledging that you're on somebody else's land, and you're using somebody else's resources to prosper yourself, so what are the ways in which you're going to contribute back so that you're not just a mana sucker. Because you want to ho'omanāo (recall or commemorate) them, but you know part of it too, it doesn't, and I don't feel like it takes away anything from my own identity. I feel like that's part of the identity and if you understand your place in the world then it really makes it a lot easier when you go to other places to figure out how you're going to behave in that way.<sup>21</sup>

Wright discussed how her understandings of kuleana allowed her to find grounding by acting responsible in a new place. Wright additionally expressed her belief that Hawaiians away from home should not just be taking advantage of resources; they must be conscious of how they are contributing to the land and to the local community in which they now reside. She described, for instance, the practice of taking resources without giving anything back, designating someone who engages in this practice as a “mana sucker.”

While articulating the embodiment of kuleana away from home and how Hawaiians should act outside of the homeland, Wright said, “I also think about how would I want people to act when they came to Hawai'i, so you want to be a contributor, and you want to make sure that you're doing things in the way that those folks would like it to be done because that's their 'āina.”<sup>22</sup> Through Trask's teachings, Wright believed that Hawaiians should conduct themselves as they would want non-Hawaiians to act in Hawai'i. Wright also had a growing conception of kuleana in the diaspora in which she personally related to other Pacific Islanders and the Native nations on whose land she was residing. Therefore, Haunani-Kay Trask and her teachings influenced Wright and others, including myself, to think about our relationships and responsibilities to other Indigenous communities and, through these relationships, how we could assist each other in our efforts to restore culture and resist ongoing settler colonialism. These understandings about relationalities between Indigenous communities were also demonstrated by her work in Ka Lāhui Hawai'i.

## KA LĀHUI HAWAI'I

As a cofounder and citizen of Ka Lāhui Hawai'i (Ka Lāhui), Haunani-Kay Trask played a key role, and her leadership and influence in this Native nation cannot be overlooked. A brief background of Ka Lāhui is necessary to understand the breadth of her involvement and impact. Ka Lāhui was formed in 1987 through grassroots efforts.<sup>23</sup> During the early 1990s, Ka Lāhui Hawai'i was one of the largest and strongest Native Hawaiian sovereignty groups in existence. They offered classes and workshops on self-determination and sovereignty domestically and internationally, and on overall political



education. During this time, there were eight thousand Native Hawaiian citizens of Ka Lāhui Hawai'i out of a membership of over twenty-three thousand.<sup>24</sup> Non-Natives could join Ka Lāhui and were encouraged to participate in debates and conventions but could not vote or hold office because the central goal was to achieve self-determination for Native Hawaiians.<sup>25</sup> Amanda Mae Kahealani Pacheco characterizes Ka Lāhui Hawai'i as "arguably one of the most mobilized and public native Hawaiian sovereignty organizations. Some of its key members held positions in the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, as well as the Center for Native Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawai'i."<sup>26</sup> While there were many Native Hawaiian sovereignty organizations, Pacheco notes that Ka Lāhui Hawai'i had a diverse citizenry composed of people who represented different constituencies such as academics, cultural practitioners, and state officials. The political composition and teachings of Ka Lāhui Hawai'i can be directly attributed to Haunani-Kay and her sister Mililani Trask. Mililani is a well-known international legal scholar who became *kia'āina*—prime minister to Ka Lāhui—for the first eight years of its existence.

Ka Lāhui Hawai'i was created as a Native initiative for self-governance. Ka Lāhui was most concerned with creating and maintaining a government structure that was culturally appropriate for Native Hawaiians and that would allow them "to interface with the United States and other Native nations."<sup>27</sup> Ka Lāhui Hawai'i's plan constitution, otherwise known as *Ho'okupu A Ka Lāhui Hawai'i*, outlines a structure of governance that was approved through consensus by both its citizens and honorary members. Haunani-Kay Trask described the self-determining practices of Ka Lāhui Hawai'i as "an alternative polity that was in opposition to federal and state entities."<sup>28</sup> Ultimately, Ka Lāhui Hawai'i cultivated political strategies to assist with developing and enhancing Native Hawaiian self-determination in the homeland and the diaspora. Ka Lāhui also cultivated relationships with other Indigenous communities with the purpose of strengthening self-governance for Ka Lāhui and Indigenous self-governance overall.

Haunani-Kay Trask discusses *Ho'okupu A Ka Lāhui Hawai'i* in her book *From a Native Daughter* and includes a version of it in the appendix of her book. Ka Lāhui had a unicameral structure of governance created with the intention of providing equal power and representation among the people who came from non-urban, rural, and less populated islands. However, Ka Lāhui's governance structure initially included no representation for diasporic Hawaiians; but through the nation-building process, another caucus representing diasporic Hawaiians referred to as *Moku Honu* was formed. Acknowledging diasporic Native Hawaiians within Ka Lāhui Hawai'i as another island caucus has multilayered significance. First, the diasporic caucus was named and understood as an island, if not an extension, of the *āina* and *kuleana*. Additionally, Native Americans often reference North America as *Turtle Island*, a name stemming from an Ojibwe creation story of the continent.<sup>29</sup> Thus, naming the caucus *Moku Honu* refers to and recognizes the Native people of *Turtle Island* as much as it invokes Native Hawaiian protocols for place, community, and reciprocity. Hawaiians residing off-island participated in Ka Lāhui to fulfill *kuleana* to the *lāhui* island bound but were also representatives of the *lāhui*, or Native nation, by and through building

relationships with the Indigenous communities of Turtle Island. By extension, Ka Lāhui's work reinforced HKT's theorization and political organizing that encouraged relationalities both politically and socially among Indigenous communities.

## REPRODUCING TRANS-INDIGENOUS RECOGNITIONS

Haunani-Kay Trask's political organizing and theorizations emphasized the inherent power and authority of Native nations to define who and what are Indigenous. Additionally, HKT's work with Ka Lāhui stressed the importance of relationships among Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, and other Indigenous communities, or Indigenous-to-Indigenous relations. As I have written elsewhere, Ka Lāhui Hawai'i engaged in treaty making with several Native nations during the early 1990s. Previously, I documented a ratified treaty in 1993 between Ka Lāhui and the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, the Acjachemen Nation.<sup>30</sup> Specifically, I have analyzed treaty making as an expression of trans-Indigenous recognitions that affirms the power and agency among Indigenous people themselves to recognize each other both politically and socially. I term trans-Indigenous recognitions as the acts between Indigenous communities that recognize each other outside of the settler colonial structures and that lead to regeneration. As a cofounder of Ka Lāhui, HKT's philosophies regarding alliances between and among Indigenous communities were a part of the political and social agenda within Ka Lāhui. Therefore, Ka Lāhui engaged in trans-Indigenous recognitions between Native Hawaiian and other Indigenous communities including tribes that remain unrecognized by the United States.

As part of this commitment to bolster Indigenous nations' self-governance, Ka Lāhui Hawai'i signed and ratified a significant number of treaties to strengthen diplomatic relations between Native nations. Describing this achievement in 1994, Ka Lāhui's master plan stated, "To date, Ka Lāhui Hawai'i has negotiated and ratified 17 treaties with 85 indigenous nations on the American Continent."<sup>31</sup> Mililani Trask elaborated on the importance of treaties among Native nations. She explains that treaty making for Ka Lāhui Hawai'i represented: "Strengthening our communication and supporting the authority of [Native] nations to make treaties. I think it was appropriate in pointing out that we don't want people to interpret Indigenous national treaty making as something that was a historical anomaly or colonial practice. It isn't."<sup>32</sup> Therefore, Ka Lāhui Hawai'i as well as other Native nations were engaged in treaty-making as a continued expression of sovereignty that strengthens Native nations, and as actions that lead to the regeneration of both communities. Part of Ka Lāhui's strategic plan was to increase relationalities between Indigenous communities as expressed through treaty making.

Expressing Ka Lāhui's view, "The Ka Lāhui Hawai'i Platform on the Four Arenas of Sovereignty" specifies the different arenas of sovereignty Ka Lāhui Hawai'i defines. The four political arenas included: Native to Native, Native to Nation/State, the International Arena, and Nation to Nation. The Nation-to-Nation political arena discusses treaty making, noting: "Regardless of whether Nations/States (US) recognize indigenous nations whose lands they have colonized, Native nations can and must

solidify diplomatic relations between themselves and other Nations/States. Indigenous nations face common threats and issues in the international arena. Native nations need to forge unified positions in the global arena for the protection of their lands, territories and human rights.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, Ka Lāhui as a Native nation was engaging in diplomatic relations as a continuance of Native sovereignty and in efforts to unify Indigenous people and communities within the international arena. Organizing Indigenous communities internationally was part of Ka Lāhui’s masterplan.

Detailing a subset from the four arenas on sovereignty, the Nation-to-Nation section asked, “How can we benefit from or help other native nations who are dealing with similar health, housing, education, etc. problems and issues?”<sup>34</sup> In response to this question, Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i’s political agenda included forging trans-Indigenous recognitions expressed in treaty making with other Native nations. Part of the belief was that Native nations could help each other deal with similar issues of education, health, and the general welfare of their people. Additionally, Mililani Trask elaborates on the importance of Indigenous nations engaging in treaty making with each other. She states:

We did find it was time to use our opportunities to begin to make treaties with other Indigenous peoples. Also, we noticed there was a strong bias. People wanted to look at treaties between Hawai‘i and the United States and Hawai‘i and Japan, but just as important or perhaps more important were modern treaties that were made with non-colonizers. It was part of a broader effort and not only Hawai‘i, but in New Zealand and the Pacific. It was really to strengthen their [Native] nation and Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i and it was done in the anticipation that we have to work collectively on critical issues towards Indigenous peoples in a globalized world.<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, Ka Lāhui participated in the regeneration of Hawaiian political practices through modern treaty making with other Indigenous nations to demonstrate how their inherent sovereignty continues into the present. These ratified treaties were between Ka Lāhui, parts of the Pacific, and some of the Native nations of Turtle Island. Treaty making was a formal expression of the relationalities being built among Indigenous nations. Additionally, these relationalities were seen as strengthening the lāhui while acting outside of patriarchal norms—the settler state.

Mililani Trask describes the rationale for Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i to engage in treaty making with other Native nations as part of larger efforts and a movement derived from Indian country. As Mililani Trask explains, “The main motivation was to strengthen the ability of [Native] nations to engage in treaty making, to make a foundation for future collaborative work.”<sup>36</sup> The movement at that time was generated in Indian country and influenced by Wilma Mankiller of the Cherokee Nation.<sup>37</sup> Mililani Trask and others from Indian country believed it was important for Native nations to engage in treaty making in order to recognize themselves as international actors.<sup>38</sup> Mililani Trask also believed that this expression of Native self-governance fell outside the purview and frameworks of colonial nation-states. Mililani Trask says, “We did enter into treaty making as an expression of our right to self-determination outside of the context of [Nation] states because the right of self-determination is not qualified,

not restricted and not limited to states.”<sup>39</sup> Mililani Trask explains that treaty making was a praxis of Native self-governance, and that the treaties between Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i and other Native nations were the product of trans-Indigenous relationships. This brief example, along with the influence of Wilma Mankiller, highlights the connections that Ka Lāhui was making internationally, as a sovereign nation with the ability to act outside of the state and thus outside of patriarchal norms. Additionally, treaty making demonstrated the relationalities being built between Indigenous communities and the importance of these efforts.

These relationalities between Indigenous communities produced cooperatives that did not rely on the nation-state or utilize the nation-state as an intermediary. Instead, the trans-Indigenous recognitions that occurred among communities strengthened Indigenous self-determination and created Indigenous futurities not dictated or bound by the settler state. The intention of building and strengthening relations between Indigenous communities was to assist each other in their collective opposition to the obstruction of Indigenous lifeways. Although indigeneity is not monolithic, HKT and Ka Lāhui recognized the power in collaboration among Indigenous communities for their individual and collective well-being.

In her seminal text, *From a Native Daughter*, Haunani-Kay Trask discusses the likenesses and uniqueness shared among Indigenous communities. She states, “And yet, I believe, we share many more similarities than differences. We have a common heritage as aboriginal peoples, that is, as First Nations of the world. We are all land-based people, and some of us also sea-based people, who are attuned to the rhythms of our homelands in a way that assumes both protection of and an intimate belonging to our ancestral places.”<sup>40</sup> HKT’s research and political organizing with Ka Lāhui stressed that Indigenous people are the earth’s caretakers and have an intimate relationship with their surroundings, as creation stories dictated this inherent responsibility. Although colonialism and settler colonialism and its institutions attempt to delink these connections and responsibilities, they live on. As HKT and Ka Lāhui have emphasized, there is much to be gained when Indigenous people work together.

Just as many people have learned from the slyly reproductive teachings of HKT, trans-Indigenous recognition is a part of her legacy. The relationalities between Indigenous people can generate a shared community of members that recognize each other epistemically, politically, and socially outside of the state. This bond is important because Indigenous people can and should learn from one another in their efforts to preserve land, resources, health, and the culture of their people. This education is vital to Indigenous communities that are developing alternatives to colonial structures, and more spaces should be created for Indigenous people to learn among and from one another and engage in what I call trans-Indigenous education.<sup>41</sup> Additionally, Indigenous people can create futures influenced by each other instead of in relation to the nation-state. Regenerating futures based on Indigenous ecologies that are not tied to patriarchal norms is also part of HKT’s vision of Indigenous futures.

Discussing the ways that Indigenous people have been affected by heteropatriarchal norms, including the ways that our families are organized, she states, “Our extended families have suffered incessant pressures to fragment into nuclear units of

only parents and children. In nuclear families, women's power, as the power of the mother is reduced to life giver to domestic servant."<sup>42</sup> HKT clearly lays bare the ways that patriarchy has damaged our generative family units and kinship models. Through a collective rejection of heteropatriarchal norms, we can create lifeways that have extensive kinship networks and can (re)generate Indigenous futures related to land as a relative, not defined through settler family or identification schemes. By rejecting heteropatriarchy, we can heal ourselves while creating Indigenous futurities that exist beyond the settler state and the extractive economic, political, and social norms. In this way, Haunani-Kay lay the groundwork for Indigenous feminisms that reject Christian heteropatriarchal values seeking to delink Indigenous communities from their land, their bodies, and lifeways. Instead, she calls on us to (re)imagine Indigenous futures based on understanding ourselves as the genealogical caretakers of land and resources and the caretakers of honua—earth. In this (re)imagining, she is slyly reproducing future thinkers, political organizers, and educators who challenge heteropatriarchal settler values based on domination and extraction and cause harm to our lands, families, and communities. HKT called on all Indigenous people and allies to challenge the status quo as well as the New World Order for future generations and for the sake of our planet.<sup>43</sup> In a poem titled "Sons," Trask embraces the reproduction of resistance that will continue long after her.

I am slyly  
reproductive: ideas  
books, history  
politics, reproducing  
the rope of resistance  
for unborn generations.

This foundation of work continues to be taken up by Hawaiians in the homeland, Hawaiians living outside, the people of Oceania, Native people of Moku Honu, and Indigenous peoples internationally. Trask's legacy lives on through the reproduction of people committed to building futures by and for Indigenous people collectively. Through her definitions of settler colonialism, which identify the difference between the genealogical caretakers of the land and all others, those of us living outside of our homelands have a responsibility to the land and First Nations people with whom we reside. Trans-Indigenous recognitions empower Indigenous peoples to recognize each other socially and politically, and ideally align our struggles with larger social movements that can strengthen our people individually and collectively. Additionally, HKT's grounding of Indigenous feminisms helps us create futures outside of Western patriarchal norms, including the restrictive family units and definitions of our identities that are meant to disrupt and hurt our connections with our bodies, families, and land. Instead, HKT grounds her theorizations and political organizing within expansive genealogies and kinship models. These understandings create Indigenous futures based on Indigenous ecologies and kinship that are generative and not based on Western capitalist values.

Kanaka Maoli should be engaged in (re)creating relationalities with those of Oceania and Indigenous people overall. Reconnecting kinship ties among Oceania that have been impaired by colonialism and settler colonialism can create stronger alliances in the region, centering Pacific survivance. Haunani-Kay Trask understood the importance of these kinship ties and states, maintaining: “Native Hawaiians, like other Pacific Islanders, view the ancestral Pacific as the repository of their history, including great genealogies of fearless navigators who made their journeys from island to island and hemisphere to hemisphere with nothing but the stars to guide them. More the children of the sea than the land, Pacific Islanders know their survival as distinct peoples depends on the survival of the Pacific itself.”<sup>44</sup> Additionally, for those who remain in Hawai‘i, creating stronger relations with those of Oceania includes building relationalities with those now living in the archipelago as environmental refugees or from the direct effects of military incursions, Indigenous people who have been displaced from their homelands and suffer the effects of colonialism, settler colonialism, and imperialism. However, this new diasporic community of Oceania holds the potential for trans-Indigenous recognitions in Hawai‘i, which could forge stronger alliances throughout Oceania. Relationalities that demonstrate Indigenous understandings of land and lifeways can provide expansive networks while generating a community focused on mālama āina—caring for the land.

For Hawaiians living outside of the homeland, we have a responsibility to honor the kuleana to the āina and the lāhui at home, but must observe an additional kuleana for the land and people that host us. Because Native Hawaiians are now living and being buried on lands of other genealogical caretaker(s), fulfilling our obligations to the new land and people requires acknowledgment, work, and accountability with the Indigenous caretaker(s). These relationalities between land and people build Indigenous futures outside the patriarchal norms of the state. Requiring expansive understandings of āina by centering genealogical caretakers affirms the responsibility to protect āina and generates larger communities committed to the protection of āina. Trans-Indigenous recognitions affirms the lāhui at home and is part of our cultural protocol as Hawaiians.

As a teacher and political organizer, HKT slyly reproduced a genealogy of mentorship. She created educators, community organizers, health workers, and many others committed to doing work to fulfill their kuleana to the lāhui. Additionally, she inspired a cadre of Native Hawaiian and Indigenous feminists throughout the globe. Trask’s legacy continues to grow in Hawai‘i, throughout the Pacific, and thousands of miles away in California. Her work generates as much love and amazement as when her books and articles were first published. Without Trask’s foundational work, along with that of the many Kanaka Maoli scholars who have followed her—my own work could simply not exist. I, therefore, take Trask’s work as an incredible gift carrying a meaningful kuleana—responsibility and privilege that we continue to embody such fierceness, generosity, and aloha in our own writing, teaching, and activism.

As Trask details in the epigraph to this essay, Hawaiians are thinking beyond the borders of Hawai‘i and the United States. This expansive view includes creating relationalities between Indigenous communities that ensure life for the future generations.



This persistent connection with land and honua—earth—create endless possibilities brilliantly defined by our ancestors and their values. Trask encouraged Indigenous people to collaborate in response to the challenges in a globalized world. She slyly reproduced creators, thinkers, and healers who imagine a world in which land and Indigenous lifeways flourish. Trask’s legacy has inspired and forged trans-Indigenous recognitions that continue relationships with land including those in the diaspora. Trans-Indigenous recognitions emphasize the inherent authority of Indigenous self-governance and its nonreliance on the settler state, and creates futures based on a shared sense of responsibility for the generations to follow. Many of these themes are prevalent in Trask’s work and, like many, I humbly draw upon her teachings to meet our times and slyly reproduce scholars and thinkers who add to this growing genealogy of mentorship. Kū‘ē!

## NOTES

1. Haunani-Kay Trask, *Light in the Crevice Never Seen* (Corvallis, OR: Calyx Books, 1999).
2. Kanaka ‘Ōiwi, Kanaka Maoli, Native Hawaiian, and Hawaiian will all be used interchangeably to describe the Indigenous people to Hawai‘i.
3. Kuleana has expansive meanings including right, privilege, and responsibility.
4. Haunani-Kay Trask. “Settlers of Color and ‘Immigrant’ Hegemony: ‘Locals’ in Hawaii,” *Amerasia Journal* 26, no. 2 (2000): 6. <https://doi.org/10.17953/amer.26.2.b31642r221215k7k>
5. Trask, “Settlers of Color,” 2.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, 3.
8. Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai‘I* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1999), 79.
9. Haunani-Kay Trask. “Settlers of Color,” 4.
10. Emalani Case, *Everything Ancient Was Once New: Indigeneous Perspectives from Hawaii to Kabiki* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2021), 87.
11. Jodi Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques to Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2011), 204.
12. *Ibid.*, 140.
13. *Ibid.*, 137.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 61.
16. Erin Kahunawaika‘ala Wright (Native Hawaiian scholar) in discussion with the author, June 2014.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. For more information, please see David Yoo, Russell Leong, Keith Camacho, Roderick Labrador, and Erin Kahunawaika‘ala Wright, “Engaging Indigeneity in Pacific Islander and Asian American Studies,” *Amerasia Journal* 37, no. 3 (2011): 135–47.
20. Erin Kahunawaika‘ala Wright (Native Hawaiian scholar) in discussion with the author, June 2014.
21. *Ibid.*

22. Ibid.
23. Noe Noe Wong-Wilson, "A Conversation with Mililani Trask," *The Contemporary Pacific* 17, no. 1 (2005): 146. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cp.2005.0034>
24. Amanda Mae Kahealani Pacheco, "Past, Present, and Politics: A Look at the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement," *intersections* 10, no. 1 (2009): 353. [http://depts.washington.edu/chid/intersections\\_Winter\\_2009/Amanda\\_Mae\\_Kahealani\\_Pacheco\\_The\\_Hawaiian\\_Sovereignty\\_Movement.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/chid/intersections_Winter_2009/Amanda_Mae_Kahealani_Pacheco_The_Hawaiian_Sovereignty_Movement.pdf)
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., 147.
28. Haunani-Kay Trask, "The Case for Hawaiian Sovereignty and Ka Lāhui Hawaii," *Policy Sciences* 33, no. 3 (2000): 382. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1004870517612>
29. Leanne Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence* (Arp Books: Winnipeg, 2011), 69.
30. Kehaulani Vaughn, "Sovereign Embodiment: Native Hawaiians and Expressions of Diasporic Kuleana," *Hūlili Journal* 11 no. 1 (2019): 227–45. [https://kamehamehapublishing.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/38/2020/09/Hulili\\_Vol11\\_12.pdf](https://kamehamehapublishing.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/38/2020/09/Hulili_Vol11_12.pdf)
31. "Ho'okupu a Ka Lāhui Hawai'i, the Ka Lāhui Master Plan" (Ka Lāhui Hawai'i Constitution, Hilo, Hawai'i, 1994), 11. Used with the permission and written consent of Mililani Trask.
32. Mililani Trask (Native Hawaiian legal scholar) in discussion with the author, July 2015.
33. "Ka Lāhui Hawai'i Platform on the Four Arenas of Sovereignty" (The Government of Ka Lāhui Hawai'i, Hilo, Hawai'i, 1994), 12. Used with the written consent of Mililani Trask.
34. Ibid.
35. Mililani Trask (Native Hawaiian legal scholar) in discussion with the author, July 2015.
36. Ibid.
37. Wilma Mankiller, the first woman to be elected chief of the Cherokee Nation, served as chief for ten years between 1985 and 1995. Mililani Trask noted that Mankiller led economic development efforts on the Cherokee Nation that politically strengthened her nation.
38. Mililani Trask (Native Hawaiian legal scholar) in discussion with the author, July 2015.
39. Ibid.
40. Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 102.
41. For more information about trans-Indigenous education, please see Kēhaulani Vaughn and Theresa Ambo, "Trans-Indigenous Education: Indigeneity, Relationships, and Higher Education," *Comparative Education Review*, 66 no. 3 (2022): 508–33.
42. Ibid., 105.
43. Ibid., 59.
44. Ibid., 53.



