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No Whites, No Asians

Race, Marxism, and Hawai'i's Preemergent Working Class

By the close of the nineteenth century, Hawai'i had become a newly annexed territory of the United States and was tightly controlled by a cohesive oligarchy of *haole*[1] sugar capitalists. The "enormous concentration of wealth and power" held by the Big Five sugar factors of Honolulu up until statehood was unparalleled elsewhere in the United States (Cooper and Daws 1985: 3–4).[2] In contrast, native Hawai'ians and immigrants recruited from China, Portugal, Japan, and the Philippines—in successive and overlap-

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ping waves—endured the low wages and poor working and living conditions characteristic of other agricultural export regions.

In the mid-1940s, the workers organized themselves into one large, militant union—the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU)—uniting a racially divided workforce. Organized on the waterfront and in Hawai'i's two basic industries—sugar and pineapple—they engaged in a consciously interracial class struggle in the sugar mills and in the pineapple canneries, on the plantations and on the docks.

Historical and sociological studies of the past two decades, most notably those working within Marxism, have shed much light on the making of this working class. However, race persists as a theoretical and empirical shortcoming in these studies of Hawai'i's working class, as it does in Marxist analyses of race and class in general. The studies' misapprehension of the role of race in the formation of Hawai'i's working class is largely prefigured by their misapprehension of the role of race in its preemergent interwar period, which is the specific focus of this essay. Why did the workers of Hawai'i remain racially divided and *not* seek to form an interracial working class before the 1940s? More specifically, why did Portuguese, Japanese, and Filipino workers, who comprised the vast majority of the workforce during the 1920s and 1930s, not "feel and articulate the identity of their interests" (Thompson 1963: 9)?[3] I begin with a theoretical overview of recent analyses of race and class in Hawai'i, discuss an alternative approach based on racial formation theory, and analyze the absence of an interracial working class during the two decades preceding World War II by piecing together available primary data.

Theoretical Issues

The study of race and class boasts a long tradition within sociology. Although Marxist studies within this literature demonstrate the greatest concern for explaining the racial dynamics of class formation, race remains an anemically theorized concept in these works. The recent surge of Marxist studies of Hawai'i's workers proves to be no exception. These studies undoubtedly provide a much needed conflict-based corrective to the earlier, more sanguine interpretations. However, in dealing with race, the studies suffer from two major weaknesses: oversimplification and class reductionism.

Oversimplification enervates most recent analyses, including, though not inherent or confined to, Marxist ones. It is most explicitly demonstrated by the work of sociologist Edna Bonacich. Drawing a comparison to California, she offers the following explanation for the formation of Hawai'i's working class: "The absence of a white settler class made class and race relations much simpler. . . . the class structure essentially consisted of white capital (plantation owners and related people) and Asian labor. Class and race coincided. . . . The simplicity of class relations in Hawaii was an advantage to Asian workers, in a sense. The enemy was clear. . . . Unambiguously, the main enemy was capital" (Bonacich 1984: 179–81). While her analysis may bolster her conclusion that the white working class, not white capital, impelled the racist exclusion movements in California, the comparison is less sturdy in dealing with Hawai'i, as it exaggerates the racial "simplicity of class relations." Aside from the exclusion of the Portuguese, my basic disagreement with the "simplicity" thesis stems from my contention that there were no "Asian workers" in Hawai'i.[4]

Studying race and class in Hawai'i, sociologists and historians tend to conflate outcomes and explanations: The formation of an interracial working class is tautologically explained by the lack or weakness of racial divisions among workers that is inferred from the formation itself. Hence, despite the fact that Filipinos and Japanese viewed themselves and were viewed by others as constituting separate races, analysts retroactively integrate them into "Asian workers."[5] An important consequence of such an interpretation is to not account seriously for the absence of an interracial working-class identity or movement before the 1940s: How and why did Hawai'i's workers identify and act racially to create and re-create divisions?

The theoretical reduction of the preceding question to one of class also weakens many recent analyses. There are two variants of *class reductionism*, corresponding to two recent Marxist approaches to the study of race and class in Hawai'i: a historicist approach and the capitalist world system approach.

Although historian Edward Beechert is generally skeptical of "static" theoretical schemes, even he at times recognizes that a classic Marxist formulation undergirds his own detailed narratives (Beechert 1984: 156; see also 1982, 1985, 1993). Concerning working-class formation, he paraphrases Marx's oft-noted remarks on "class-in-itself" (i.e., objective class) and

"class-for-itself" (i.e., subjective class): "The labor history of Hawaii provides ample evidence of the *potential* of the working class to see itself as a class. . . . This class consciousness does not depend on subjective factors. It is based, according to Marx, on the reality of the structure of property relations in the society" (Beechert 1985: 323; emphasis in original). The direct, parsimonious path from class-in-itself to class-for-itself paved here by Beechert evinces a reductionist logic in which "subjective factors" like race are consigned to the theoretically dubious concept of false consciousness.[6] Regarding the racially divided consciousness of Hawai'i's workers before the 1940s, Beechert (1984: 158) laments, "The responses of the working class, as they perceive their situation, are often incorrect. The problem of 'false consciousness' is one which recurs with a dismal frequency." Although he recognizes race as an all-too-real impediment to working-class formation, Beechert theoretically dismisses race as being external to it, rendering race an acknowledged but inadequately analyzed presence in his narratives.

As argued by sociologists James Geschwender (1981, 1982, 1983; Geschwender and Levine 1983; Geschwender et al. 1988) and John Liu (1984, 1985), the core argument of the capitalist world system framework is that Hawai'i's peripheral status provides the key to unlocking the workings of its political economy. This approach makes a valuable contribution to the study of Hawai'i's immigration history by placing international labor migration in the context of the world economy. Not seeing them as mutually exclusive explanatory strategies, Geschwender and Liu also perceptively straddle the debate between "orthodox" (Cox 1970 [1948]; Szymanski 1981; Reich 1981; Wilson 1978) and split labor market (Bonacich 1972, 1976, 1981; Wilson 1978) readings of Marxism by indicting both the haole capitalists' "divide and conquer" strategies and intra-working-class competition as sources of racial divisions among Hawai'i's workers, although they highlight the former as having been more operative.

Endemic to both readings of Marxism from which they draw, however, the most pressing weakness of Geschwender's and Liu's approach is a second variant of class reductionism. They conceptualize race as an epiphenomenon of struggles between classes and/or working-class fractions with contrary objective economic interests. Geschwender (1987: 155) summarizes: "It is evident that class struggle is the motive force leading to the creation of race and ethnicity, the emergence of an ideology of racism,

and the development of systems of racial/ethnic oppression." Theoretically convinced that race derives its salience and meaning from "class struggle," Geschwender and Liu do not examine what the meanings of race actually were in Hawai'i, effectively closing off the possibility of their explanatory significance.

In recent years, class reductionism has come to be perceived as perhaps *the* Achilles' heel for Marxist analyses of race and class, and it provides a focal point for re-theorizing.[7] One promising approach at theory reconstruction within (post-)Marxism has been centered on re-readings of Antonio Gramsci by scholars in the United States and Great Britain (e.g., Almaguer 1994; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Gilroy 1991; Hall 1980; Hall et al. 1978; Omi and Winant 1986, 1994; San Juan 1992). The most influential approach in U.S. sociology of the past decade has been the racial formation theory of Michael Omi and Howard Winant. Inciting a break with various reductionist theories of race, their innovative theory argues for the "treatment of race as a *central axis* of social relations which cannot be subsumed under or reduced to some broader category or conception" (Omi and Winant 1986: 61–62; emphasis in original; see also Hall 1980: 339).

The project of assaying how race is or can be central to class formation is of key importance to the above argument, since the theory—as one of its principal aims—seeks to undermine the class reductionism of Marxist approaches without undermining the continuing relevance of class and its relation to race. In essence, the theory partially turns previous Marxist thought on race and class on its head. As Omi and Winant argue (1986: 37; see also Gilroy 1991: 28), "racial dynamics must be understood as determinants of class relationships and indeed class identities, not as mere consequences of these relationships."

However, perhaps because they develop and illustrate their theory by empirically examining the past four decades of U.S. racial history, Omi and Winant (1994: 82) direct their analytic gaze almost exclusively toward the state, which they argue to be "increasingly the preeminent site of racial conflict." Their rapt focus on the state curiously results in an analysis that adroitly critiques class reductionist theories of race but, aside from the programmatic statement above, provides little direction, theoretically or empirically, in constructing a new understanding of race and class: How does race indeed determine class relationships and class identities?

With its emphasis on investigating the historically specific meanings of race and their effects on social practices, one way in which racial formation theory can enhance our understanding of class formation is to undermine strictly "materialist" conceptions of class interests by recognizing the causal importance of racial discourses or ideologies in shaping them. Intently focused on isolating objective, usually economic, sources of race and racism, previous Marxist analyses of Hawai'i's working class ignore the *content* of racial discourses and their potential "material effects" on class dynamics. They fail to recognize that workers do not act on interests that exist objectively outside their subjectivities but rather on what they collectively construct their interests to be. Racial discourses matter because they inform how workers (and employers) theorize and act on their material conditions, "chang[ing] the boundary of rational behavior" (Boswell 1986: 353–54).

In my analysis of Hawai'i's workers during the 1920s and 1930s, *Americanism* appears as a particularly salient racial discourse informing the constructions of workers' interests. This salience of Americanism as a racial discourse calls attention to a second underdeveloped aspect of racial formation theory: the relationship between race and nation.

Mounting a paradigmatic challenge to nation-based theories of race (e.g., internal colonialism), Omi and Winant (1994) offer a sweeping critique of them similar to the one they direct toward Marxist and other class-based theories.[8] They convincingly argue that nation-based theories ultimately analogize and reduce race to nation and hence "neglect the specificity of race as an autonomous field" to be analyzed on its own terms (ibid.: 48). Furthermore, not confining the scope of their critique to the nation-based theories' ineffectiveness as sociological explanations, Omi and Winant (ibid.: 111) also take them to task as failed political ideologies of the nationalist racial movements of the late-1960s and 1970s: "Considered critically, none of these political projects succeeded even remotely in forging an oppositional racial ideology or movement capable of radically transforming the U.S. racial order." Just as nation-based theories of race falter as sociological theories because they reduce race to nation, Omi and Winant (ibid.) reason that nationalist racial movements falter as social movements largely because the nation-based theories around which they mobilize reduce race to nation.[9]

To their theory's detriment, Omi and Winant's hasty dismissal of

nation-based theories—not only as sociological theories but also as political ideologies—prevents them, I argue, from attempting to *explain* the historically recurrent nationalist impulse among racial groups, among both dominant and subordinate groups. Why are "the discourses of race and nation . . . never very far apart" (Balibar 1991: 37)?

Before venturing an answer, let me specify what I mean by the concepts, race and nation. Omi and Winant (1986: 68) define race as "an unstable and 'decentered' complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle." Decisively breaking away from reductionist theories of race, they "decenter" or empty the concept of any trans-historically stable meaning.[10] Though mostly in agreement, I would add that the common thread, which makes race recognizable as race across space and time, is the deeply held—though biologically untenable—schema of "separation of human populations by some notion of stock or collective heredity of traits" (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992: 2).[11]

Concerning the concept of nation, I employ the definition given by Benedict Anderson (1991: 6): It is "an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign." At first glance, my using Anderson's definition may seem ironic, given his strongly asserted disassociation of race and nation (ibid.: ch. 8). Because he conceives race as being imagined *only* in immutable, biological terms, Anderson sees it as an ahistorical concept and thus theoretically far removed from the history-laden concept of nation: unlike racism, "nationalism thinks in terms of historical destinies" (ibid.: 149). But, as philosopher David Theo Goldberg (1993: 79) points out, such a "narrow construal" of race—which not only includes a notion of stock or collective heredity of traits but also is exhausted by it—misses "the changing *historical* connotations of race and so rides roughshod over its specific significance at various historical moments" (emphasis added).

In addition to overlooking the historically contingent dimension of race, Anderson implicitly suggests more affinities between race and nation than he is willing to recognize explicitly. Like nation, race provides people with a deep sense of belonging to an imagined and limited community. Identifying racially is to *imagine* a communion of "fellow-members." It is imagined as *limited* since no race "imagines itself coterminous with [hu]mankind." And, race is imagined as a *community* since, "regardless of the actual inequality"

between and within racially defined groups, people conceive their race "as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 1991: 6–7). Moreover, the notion of stock or collective heredity of traits is functionally similar to language in Anderson's concept of nation: It infuses race with a sense of belonging to a pseudo kinship or common descent; hence, it intimates a shared history of a time immemorial, a "horizonless past" (ibid.: 144). So, although race, like nation, is a modern concept, there is a paradoxical temptation to view it as a natural category, as always having been.[12]

I submit that the preceding conceptual affinities lie at the heart of why the discourses of race and nation are continually interfused. In recognizing such affinities, we can then begin to understand why, as Goldberg (1993: 78–79) finds, "the great nationalist drives of the late nineteenth century, as well as their imperialist counterparts, commonly invoked the banner of race as a conceptual rallying cry; and legislation restricting immigration this century in Australia, Britain, Germany, France, and the United States—legislation imposed in the name of national self-consciousness—was in each case explicitly or implicitly racialized." Or, in interwar Hawai'i, why Americanism proved to be a potent racialized nationalist discourse, one effect of which was the (re)production of racial hierarchy and divisions among workers.

Drawing on the preceding discussion, my analysis begins by briefly outlining the persistent racial hierarchy that existed from the 1920s to the mid 1940s. I contend that the hierarchy in itself, however, remains ambiguous in its implications for how and why workers of various races did not seek to form an interracial working class in interwar Hawai'i, prompting us to pay closer attention to the meanings of race and their effects. I argue that Portuguese workers distanced themselves from the other workers and labor organizing in their pursuit to become haoles. Addressing a void in the current sociological and historical literatures, I then explore in depth how Japanese and Filipino workers faced fundamentally distinct racisms, which shaped their divergent politics during the 1920s and 1930s. Especially powerful in effecting this divergence was the discourse of Americanism. And, in the process of outlining the racial complexities of class relations in interwar Hawai'i, the analysis also serves to debunk the "simplicity" thesis.

Analysis

When one examines the occupational structure of Hawai'i from the 1920s to the mid 1940s, a clear pattern emerges. There was a racial hierarchy with haoles, Portuguese, Japanese, and Filipinos occupying positions in descending order of power. Haoles were almost entirely confined to managerial and professional positions, and Filipinos were almost entirely confined to unskilled labor positions, with the Portuguese and the Japanese falling in between (Lind 1938: 252). In 1920, we find that 42.1% of haole, 19.7% of Portuguese, 1.3% of Japanese, and 0.3% of Filipino employees in the sugar industry held low supervisory positions; the racial disparities were progressively further skewed at higher levels of management (Reinecke 1996: 144). Although there was not a strict caste system with no overlaps in occupations, this racial pattern proved to be durable. Using the broad categories of "skilled" and "unskilled," the Olaa Sugar Company on the Island of Hawai'i, a fairly large and representative plantation, reported that all 34 haoles on the plantation payroll were classified as "skilled" in August of 1929; the broad category of *skilled* included not only skilled workers but also all levels of management. In contrast, 43 of 176 (24.4%) Portuguese employees, 29 of 856 (3.4%) Japanese employees, and 6 of 1,783 (0.3%) Filipino employees were classified as such (Olaa 1929; see also Lind 1938: 324).[13] The same plantation reported a similar pattern three months prior to the Pearl Harbor attack: 33 of 35 (94.3%) haole employees, 18 of 88 (20.5%) Portuguese employees, 32 of 604 (5.3%) Japanese employees, and 4 of 837 (0.5%) Filipino employees were salaried, "skilled" employees (Olaa 1941). Even at the tail end of the war, just at the beginning of the major organizational campaign by the ILWU in 1944, 33 of 34 (97.1%) haole employees, 31 of 86 (36.0%) Portuguese employees, 56 of 636 (8.8%) Japanese employees, and 15 of 691 (2.2%) Filipino employees were salaried, "skilled" employees (Olaa 1944).[14] So, while the numbers and percentages of "unskilled" labor shrank over time, the relative positions of the four racial groups remained stable. Furthermore, within the broad categories of "skilled" and "unskilled," a similar racial ordering prevailed in terms of occupations and pay. For example, the average monthly earnings of nonsalaried, male sugar workers in 1939 for haoles, Portuguese, Japanese, and Filipinos were $76.00, $56.23, $50.94, and $46.92, respectively. And, the differences were even

more stark, if the differential values of their perquisites like housing were considered (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 1940: 52–53).[15]

Occupying the most privileged positions in the plantation economy, haoles predictably identified themselves as or with the ownership and management of the Big Five sugar factors and their plantations. But, what are the implications of the above racial order for the workers, more than 90% of whom were Portuguese, Japanese, and Filipino (*Hawaiian Annual* 1931: 21)? How do we explain the absence of an interracial working-class identity or movement during the 1920s and 1930s? Can an adequate answer be found in the interest of the haole planters—the owners and the managers—in keeping the workers divided and weak, as the orthodox Marxists contend, and/or in the interest of higher-paid racial groups of workers in maintaining their relatively advantageous positions, as the split labor market Marxists contend?

Especially for the period prior to the 1910s, the orthodox "divide and conquer" explanation holds a measure of cogency, as the haole planters attempted to divide workers along racial lines through the recruitment of workers of diverse origins, selective hiring of strikebreakers, occupational stratification, and differential pay (Takaki 1990; see also Geschwender 1982; Liu 1985). But, insufficiencies and ambiguities remain. First, due to ever tightening immigration restrictions, the first two of the four strategies became increasingly impotent in the 1910s. When the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907–8 between the United States and Japan halted the immigration of Japanese laborers, the Philippines became the planters' only source of additional labor, effectively ending their ability to consciously manipulate the racial makeup of the workforce.[16] Similarly, the ability of the planters to hire varying racial groups as strikebreakers waned, as Filipinos were essentially the only ones involved in union organizing and also the only ones readily available as strikebreakers during the 1920s and 1930s. Second, vis-à-vis the latter two strategies of occupational stratification and differential pay, the "divide and conquer" explanation is left wanting because it does not explain the racial groups' relative positions in the racial order: The workers were not merely *horizontally divided* but occupied *vertically unequal* positions. Third, the haole planters' imputed interest is too narrowly economic and calculated. The more taken-for-granted racial notions and dispositions that underlay and enable even the most deliberately divisive strategies are

thereby ignored.[17] Fourth, the "divide and conquer" explanation tends to minimize the workers' agency in the making of their own histories, portraying them as dupes to the planters' divisive tactics.

Against the latter tendency to strip the workers of their agency, the split labor market theory stands as a welcome, albeit partial, counterbalance. Emphasizing the material interest of higher-paid racial groups of workers—the Portuguese and the Japanese, in our case—in maintaining their positions, the theory focuses on their role in the racial splitting of the working class (e.g., Bonacich 1972). But, again, insufficiencies and ambiguities remain. First, if this theory pertains to interwar Hawai'i, why did workers seek to organize interracially in the mid-1940s, when the workers' relative positions seemed to be just as split along racial lines as during the 1920s and 1930s? That is, if higher positioned groups continued to have a material interest in keeping the labor market racially split, how and why did workers identify and act racially to reproduce the splits prior to the 1940s but strive to bridge them thereafter? Second, as demonstrated in the following discussion, the narrowly economic interest imputed to the workers, namely higher wages, would not capture the interests as actually perceived and acted upon by them. As shown in this essay, understanding the divergent and contrary goals and politics of Portuguese, Japanese, and Filipino workers requires an examination of the prevailing meanings of race, which also clarifies the ambiguity posed by the previous point. Third, in the process of rehabilitating the agency of workers, the split labor market theory would unduly absolve the planters of their role in the production of racial conflicts among workers, portraying them as racially indifferent and merely seeking out the cheapest labor (ibid.). While the "divide and conquer" explanation's assumptions of the viability, economic calculatedness, and near omnipotence of the haole planters' racially divisive stratagems need to be questioned, its implication of the haole planters is nonetheless instructive. In interwar Hawai'i, the haole planters were vital—in fact, disproportionately powerful—actors in the production of racist discourses and practices, which, in turn, shaped the workers' constructions of their racially divergent interests and practices. Hawai'i's workers indeed made their own histories, to paraphrase Marx, but not in the circumstances of their own choosing.

The Reciprocity Treaty of 1876 between the United States and the Kingdom of Hawai'i, under which unrefined sugar from Hawai'i could enter

the U.S. market tariff-free, caused a veritable boom in Hawai'i's sugar industry, paving the way for large-scale corporate farming controlled by the sugar factors. However, along with their access to the U.S. market, the planters faced increased political pressure not to recruit labor from Asia. On the mainland, white workers on the West Coast were leading a racist exclusion movement to halt Chinese labor immigration. And, with the signing of the treaty, they were joined by U.S. sugar producers in condemning Chinese workers in Hawai'i and the penal labor contract system under which they were recruited and worked (Beechert 1985: 80–86).

The largest group of workers to arrive as a result of the planters' consequent efforts to Europeanize the workforce was from Portugal. The experience of this European group differed sharply from those of the Chinese before them and the Japanese immediately after them, reflecting both the planters' perception of the Portuguese, as a people of European origin, as racially akin to themselves and their "deep-seated racism" against non-Europeans (ibid.: 86). First, the planters were willing to bear the much higher cost of recruiting the Portuguese. In 1886, bringing a Portuguese worker to Hawai'i cost the planters $112.00 compared to $65.85 for bringing a Japanese worker (Liu 1985: 137). In addition, the Portuguese were brought to Hawai'i as families in the hopes of encouraging their permanent settlement, which further escalated the planters' costs (Estep 1941a). By contrast, Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino recruits were predominantly, though in varying degrees, single and male. Second, the planters paid the Portuguese higher wages, which quickly usurped their Chinese predecessors' and outpaced those of the Japanese from the beginning (Liu 1985: 137). Third, in addition to receiving higher wages for the same jobs performed, the planters favored the Portuguese over other workers for foremen and skilled craft positions. Their preponderance in these positions continued through to the mid-1940s (Geschwender et al. 1988; Fuchs 1961: 57). Fourth, as immigrants from Europe, the Portuguese were legally entitled to the rights of franchise and citizenship, both prior to and following annexation, which were denied their counterparts from Asia.

However, although their European origin afforded them their higher position vis-à-vis workers from Asia, the Portuguese were never accepted into the dominant racial group as they were on the mainland. According to the most thorough analysis of race and the Portuguese, their nonacceptance

as haoles was predicated largely on their being *exclusively* laborers upon their arrival, whereas the other sizable groups of European ancestry were represented in the capitalist and professional-managerial classes (Geschwender et al. 1988; see also Baganha 1991). Moreover, until indentured servitude was abolished through the formal annexation of Hawai'i by the United States in 1900, immigrant laborers arrived and initially worked under penal labor contracts, which further underscored the debased distinction of the Portuguese vis-à-vis others of European origin. Consequently, the Portuguese were constructed henceforth by the haole planters and the larger public as constituting a race distinct from the haoles, as evidenced and reinforced by the racial categories ubiquitously used by the haole planters and the territorial government (e.g., Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association 1928–35; territorial vital statistics as reprinted in *Hawaiian Annual* 1910–40; *Honolulu Advertiser* 14 January 1929, 16 January 1929, 18 January 1929).

Not accepting them as haoles, the haole planters, in turn, kept the Portuguese out of higher management positions, thereby rendering them a "middleman" minority between the haole management and the other workers. Reviewing this situation, a third-generation Portuguese summarized, "It is a shame that just because our ancestors came here as laborers, with low economic status, that their children, for generations, have been made to feel keenly inferior through prejudicial practices in the Islands" (Estep 1941b: 12, as cited in Baganha 1991: 283). Thus, prior to World War II, the core assumption governing the racist discourse and practices of the haole planters in relation to the Portuguese was that they were racially proximate to, but not quite, haoles.

The Portuguese middleman status engendered a singular racial consciousness, which provides one piece of the puzzle for the lack of an interracial working-class identity or movement before the mid-1940s. Though provisionally accepting their wages of near-haoleness, this "slighted race" resented their exclusion from the haole category, especially since they were aware of their fuller whiteness on the mainland (*Honolulu Advertiser* 5 March 1937). The racial aspirations and frustrations of Hawai'i's Portuguese, as well as the incongruity between Hawai'i's and the mainland's racial categories, are appositely captured in the following letter to the editor written by a Portuguese man. Having recently registered for the draft, the man wrote that he had identified himself as a "Portuguese" to the registrar, who

had asked the origin of his last name. Filling out the registration card, a document issued by the federal government and thus employing mainland racial categories, the registrar's choices were limited to "White," "Negro," "Oriental," "Indian," and "Filipino." The registrar resolved the dilemma by "cross[ing] out 'Indian' and insert[ing] above it, in precise handwriting, 'Portuguese.'" His "ire rising like the hackles of a game cock," the writer concluded his letter by insisting "that the Portuguese are of the Caucasian race, and therefore white" (*Honolulu Advertiser* 29 October 1940; see also *Honolulu Advertiser* 16 January 1929, 5 March 1937; *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* 11 April 1947; Kimura 1955).

Reflecting this conflicted racial identity, the principal ambition of Portuguese workers prior to the 1940s was not to engage in a class conflict against the haole planters, and they refrained from any major labor actions or organizing efforts. Rather, it was to aspire to be accepted as haoles, deemphasizing any perceived differences with haoles and emphasizing any perceived differences with other non-haoles (Estep 1941a; Fuchs 1961: 58–59; Kimura 1955: 46–47). Illustrating the Portuguese aspirant claim to haoleness, a Portuguese worker exclaimed to a rude immigration officer upon his 1911 arrival, "See my arm? See the skin? It's white. I did not come here to be driven as a slave in this free country of America" (*Pacific Commercial Advertiser* n.d., as quoted in Baker 1912: 330). Once on the plantations, the Portuguese racial identity manifested perhaps most visibly in the behavior of the *lunas*, among whose ranks the Portuguese predominated (Fuchs 1961: 57); lunas were the straw bosses who mediated between the haole management and the mostly Japanese and Filipino field laborers. Regarding the lunas of the late 1920s and 1930s, a retired half-Portuguese sugar worker recalled, "They [the Portuguese] were the lunas. And they were the slave-drivers. And they were the worst you could get on the sugar plantation." Explaining how the Portuguese lunas had strongly identified with the haole management and not with the workers, he recounted reprovingly, "Everything would be for the plantation. Nothing for the workmen" (Holmberg 1976: 96).

In terms of racial differentiations among workers, one of the least understood is the one between the Japanese and Filipinos prior to the 1940s. As already noted, most analysts tend to elide differences and subsume both groups under "Asian workers." Compounding this tendency is the relative

dearth of studies of Filipinos, rendering their history more vulnerable to such elisions. Of course, the tendency toward homogenizing the experiences of Japanese and Filipino workers is not totally without basis. As the case of the Portuguese illustrates, there was certainly a racial line drawn around Europe, endowing people of European ancestry with a privileged, if uneven, position vis-à-vis the economy and the state. But, what have frequently been overlooked by homogenizing the "Asian worker" experience are the fundamentally different racisms faced by the Japanese and Filipinos.

The recruitment of Filipinos by the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association (HSPA) began in 1906, just four years after the end of the bitterly fought Philippine-American War, during which an estimated 250,000 Filipinos died (Francisco 1987). As cultural theorist E. San Juan Jr. (1992: 47) reminds us, "the context [of Filipino immigration] then was the violent colonization of six million Filipinos." The context of the immigration and settlement of the Japanese in Hawai'i was Japan's emergence as a modern nation-state and its colonialist projects in Asia. Haoles in Hawai'i projected divergent racial imaginings onto a people colonized by fellow Americans and onto a people who represented an imperialist rival. As in the Philippines, Filipinos in Hawai'i were constructed as a "primitive" race "in an adolescent stage of development," not unlike Blacks on the mainland (Porteus and Babcock 1926: 58–70; see also Anderson 1984: 12–14). The Japanese in Hawai'i were constructed as the "yellow peril," an inscrutable race beholden to their nation of origin and carrying out its colonialist cause from within (Okihiro 1991: 80). So, whereas the racist discourse concerning Filipinos revolved around the unquestioned assumption of their racial inferiority, underlying the racist discourse concerning the Japanese was the *fear* that they were not racially inferior.

The momentous dual union strike of 1920, in which both Filipino and Japanese workers participated, illustrates how the haole planters and the larger public conceived the two groups racially in dissimilar terms.[18] The five-month strike involved 8,300 Japanese and Filipino workers on O'ahu, representing 77% of the island's workforce. It was conducted by O'ahu members of two separate unions, the Federation of Japanese Labor and the Filipino Labor Union, with Outer Island members continuing to work and contributing their wages to the strikers. Both unions struck for higher wages, eight-hour workdays, overtime pay, maternity leave, and better health

and recreational facilities (Reinecke 1979: 95).[19] The strike ended in defeat with the planters making "no concessions whatsoever, either direct or implied" (Waterhouse 1920: 8).

From the beginning of the strike, the HSPA adopted the interpretation that the "action taken by the Japanese Federation of Labor is, as we see it, an anti-American movement designed to obtain control of the sugar business of the Hawaiian islands" (as quoted in Okihiro 1991: 78).[20] The two mainstream dailies wholeheartedly agreed with the industry's assessment of the strike. Drawing on and magnifying the public's preexisting fear of an imperialist takeover by the Japanese "alien race" and fusing it with the nationalist rhetoric of Americanism, the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (2 February 1920) editorialized:

> The strike is an attempt on the part of the Japanese to obtain control of the sugar industry. It is in line with Japanese policy wherever they colonize. It is of a part with the Japanization of Korea, Manchuria, Eastern Inner Mongolia, Shantung, and Formosa. . . . the Japanese evidently think that they can use [their methods] with equal success in Hawaii. They evidently fail to realize that it is one thing to bluff, bulldoze and bamboozle weak oriental peoples and another thing to try to coerce Americans.

Depicting Hawai'i as "a buffer outpost on the border line" between the United States and Japan, the same paper later urged its readers to "fight . . . until all of Hawaii is unquestionably American" (*Pacific Commercial Advertiser* 6 March 1920: 4). The *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* (13 February 1920) rhetorically asked, "Never lose sight of the real issue: Is Hawaii to remain American or become Japanese?" The characterization of the Filipino strikers contrasted sharply. When not being conspicuously ignored, they were portrayed as blind followers of the Japanese. Casually calling them "ignorant," one paper wrote, "As regards to the Filipinos, there is good reason to think that they are mere catspaws, used by wily Japanese agitators to further the interests of the subjects of the Mikado" (*Pacific Commercial Advertiser* 27 January 1920).

If the activism of Japanese and Filipino workers briefly crossed paths for the duration of the strike, they found their paths quickly diverging after it. The divergence had several probable causes. First, Japanese and Fili-

pino workers did not share the same structural position in the plantation economy. Filipinos were relegated to the most menial jobs on the plantations, while the Japanese could increasingly be found in low supervisory, skilled, and semiskilled positions. Second, having immigrated earlier and with a higher proportion of women, the Japanese were fast becoming a second-generation population and consequently a citizen population, while the more recently arrived and more male Filipino population continued to be disenfranchised; the Naturalization Act of 1790 deemed only "white" immigrants eligible for naturalized citizenship. By 1920, 44.5% of the Japanese were already native born, which increased to 58.2% by 1930. Only 11.2% of the Filipinos were native born in 1920, which grew to only 16.6% by 1930 (Lind 1938: 120). Third, the Japanese were increasingly leaving the plantation economy, resulting in the number of non-plantation workers equaling the number of plantation workers by 1920 (Tamura 1994: 211). Foreseeing a limited future on the plantations for themselves and their children, they left to join the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie, skilled labor, and independent farmers (Lind 1946: 17). More circumscribed in their opportunities, Filipinos overwhelmingly remained tied to the plantation economy as unskilled labor. Compared to 30.0% of the Japanese, 76.5% of Filipinos in Hawai'i were living on sugar plantations in 1928 (Butler 1928). Consequently, while the Japanese comprised 56.4% of all sugar workers in 1912 compared to 12.8% for the Filipinos, Filipinos outnumbered the Japanese by as early as 1922.[21] By 1932, Filipinos represented 69.9% of the sugar workforce compared to 18.8% for the Japanese (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 1940: 34).[22] Similarly, while the Japanese made up 29%, Filipinos constituted 57% of all pineapple plantation workers in 1939 (ibid.: 86).

In addition to these socioeconomic and demographic differences, the workers' defeat in the 1920 strike and the employers' uncompromising anti-union stance undoubtedly curtailed any proclivity among the Japanese toward building and sustaining an interracial working-class movement with Filipino workers.[23] However, the explanatory power of these various factors, though certainly significant, remains insufficient, considering that they were still largely operant in the mid 1940s when an interracial working-class identity and movement took shape.

The most decisive factor inhibiting a sustained Japanese involvement in a working-class movement during the two decades following the 1920 strike

may have been the ubiquitous racialized nationalist ideology of Americanism. The discourse of Americanism—which thoroughly melded race, class, and nation in regard to the Japanese, as evidenced during the strike—effectively winnowed the range of politics in which they could engage, leading the increasingly *nisei* citizen population away from class conflict and toward assimilationist politics.[24]

In the name of Americanization, Japanese newspapers, Japanese language schools, and virtually anything else Japanese came under intensified attack after the 1920 strike, resulting in a series of territorial laws governing their operations (Nomura 1987: 98). With the number of registered Japanese voters increasing from 658 in 1920 to 27,107 in 1940, becoming the largest racial group of voters, the voting behavior of the nisei was also carefully monitored, and any deviations from the haole elites' Republican politics were construed as racially motivated and anti-American. For the most part, the nisei did not deviate, with little mitigating effect on the continuing stream of accusations (Lind 1980 [1955]: 99–102). While the assimilation of the Japanese was the purported goal of the Americanization movement, the ideology of Americanism was also adapted to segregate public schools racially. Those haole parents who could not afford to send their children to elite private schools successfully organized to set up publicly funded "English standard schools," thereby preserving the "pure Americanism" of haole children (Okihiro 1991: 139–140). At the first one of these schools, only 19 Japanese children passed the English standard examination (compared with 683 haole children) during its first year, hence successfully replicating the racial segregation pattern of Hawai'i's elite private schools (Fuchs 1961: 276–77).

With the racially charged 1920 strike serving as the backdrop, issues concerning Americanization rapidly supplanted worker-led movements as the focal point of Japanese politics during the interwar period. In the strike's aftermath, any continued involvement in labor organizing by Japanese workers would have quickly drawn vehement accusations and suspicions of anti-Americanism. As a Japanese leader of the 1920 strike observed, "the Americanization movement swamped the Japanese" (*Nippu Jiji* 7 March 1921, as cited in Beechert 1985: 212). For the haole planters, who along with other haoles "thought of themselves as the only real Americans in Hawaii" (Reinecke 1979: 19), a central aspect of "Americanizing" the sugar industry

was to induce the nisei—the "New Americans," as they were euphemistically dubbed—to stay on or head back to the plantations as loyal, tractable workers.[25]

By the mid 1920s, faced with declining numbers of Japanese workers, the planters began to voice concerns about the "rising generation" of Japanese who "show[ed] no inclination of returning to the soil" (Hind 1925: 9). Such concerns became increasingly more urgent toward the end of the 1920s, as mainland exclusion movements and the Congress continually placed their only outside source of labor from the Philippines "in jeopardy" (Cooke 1929: 7). For example, in a series of highly publicized annual Conferences of New Americans backed by prominent haoles and Japanese, the invited haole speakers pounded home their "back-to-the-soil" message to the nisei audience assembled from all over Hawai'i. Under the intense gaze of the public, the conferences served to intertwine the desire of the planters for nisei workers and the desire of the nisei for full acceptance as Americans (*Proceedings of the Annual Conference of New Americans* 1927–41).

Initially, certain segments of the Japanese community criticized the planters' message, rightly viewing the plantations as not giving the nisei an equal opportunity to reach the higher echelons of management (e.g., *Hawaii Hochi* 7 August 1928, 9 August 1928, 16 August 1928).[26] As the Depression and unemployment took hold, however, earlier Japanese criticisms gave way to guarded endorsement (e.g., *Nippu Jiji* 18 September 1931, 16 November 1933; *Hawaii Hochi* 8 December 1930, 22 November 1933; *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* 14 March 1933). While the pineapple industry—producing what was considered a luxury fruit—was hit hard in the early 1930s, the sugar industry was relatively unscathed and continued to encourage the nisei to turn to it for employment. The industry's efforts took on renewed urgency when the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934, as feared, cut off its only external source of labor, the Philippines. Faced with shrinking employment opportunities in other industries, the nisei turned to the sugar industry in increasing numbers; the percentage of citizen sugar workers nearly doubled in six years, from 15.9% in 1930 to 31.4% in 1936 (Beechert 1985: 253).

The prominence of Americanism as a racial discourse had a dire effect on Filipino workers. Not feared as an imperialistic threat and with no significant citizen population, Filipinos were initially excluded from and, during the Depression, victimized by the Americanization movement. Viewed as

ignorant and primitive and from an impoverished U.S. colony which served as Hawai'i's sole external source of labor, the term "cheap labor" became synonymous with Filipinos. That they were hired exclusively as unskilled labor and were not seriously considered for advancement into higher positions hardly needed to be justified, which became acutely obvious during the Depression.

As the pressure of unemployment mounted, the sugar and pineapple industries targeted Filipino workers as the release valve. For its part in dealing with the territory's growing unemployment problem, the HSPA repatriated 7,421 Filipinos to the Philippines between March 1932 and April 1933. In addition to ex-sugar workers, over 2,000 of them were "indigents, mostly . . . those thrown out of work by the pineapple companies" (Butler 1933b: 10). The unemployment and repatriation of Filipino workers did not result simply from their lack of seniority, certainly not in the sugar industry. With the unquestioned understanding that American citizens—however challenged that status may have been for the nisei—would bear as little of the Depression's effects as possible, Filipino workers were being laid off from the sugar industry, as a matter of explicitly stated policy, at the same time nisei and other citizens were being hired (Bottomley 1930). In the year preceding June 1932, the number of Filipino male workers decreased by 700, while the number of Japanese male workers increased by 700 (Butler 1932). A year later, the HSPA reported, "During the period from February 1 to September 30, 1933, a total of 2,600 citizens were newly employed on sugar plantations. During the same period 2,700 Filipino men returned to the Philippine Islands through the Association" (Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association 1933). Furthermore, to secure the long-term employment of citizen workers, the planters—again as a matter of explicitly stated policy (Atherton 1931)—expedited their advancement, finding it "highly important to place qualified citizens in 'preferred' and semi-skilled jobs wherever possible" (Butler 1933a: 5; see also Naquin 1932). So, Filipino workers who did not lose their jobs found themselves being passed over for promotions and confined to the bottom of the racial hierarchy.

Despite facing a racism of their own, the Japanese were not just passive observers in the marginalization of Filipinos. Embroiled in the discourse of Americanism, most Japanese shared with the haoles and others a common

assumption—the assumption that being an American should entail privileges. With their racial identity firmly linked to proving their Americanness, the nisei—"Japanese by race and Americans by birth and citizenship and nationality" (*Hawaii Hochi* 2 August 1929: 2)—not only formed a racial identity vis-à-vis haoles, who assailed their rightful place in the imagined community of Americans, but also vis-à-vis Filipinos, who were unequivocally imagined, and at times literally displaced, out of the community. Japanese racial formation during the 1920s and 1930s was a collective project of both longing and rebuffing.

When the HSPA announced its policies of favoring citizens for employment and promotions, *Hawaii Hochi*—a widely read newspaper that claimed to speak to and for Japanese workers and progressive causes—only questioned the HSPA's sincerity (19 November 1930).[27] As in the mainstream press, the negative impact that such policies would have on Filipino workers who were already living and working in Hawai'i was not given much serious thought in the Japanese press. And, although discussions of citizen labor should logically have marginalized other noncitizen workers like the *issei*, only the Filipinos were isolated as the category of workers to be defined as "not citizen," revealing a distinctly racial logic.

Understandably most evident between the beginning of the Depression and the passage of the Tydings-McDuffie Act, *Hawaii Hochi* intermittently adopted a racist rhetoric that combined arguments regarding the nisei's rights as American citizens and the imputed racial characteristics of Filipinos:

> Filipinos will eagerly avail themselves of every opportunity to grab jobs by underbidding the citizen labor. . . . That is the reason that thousands of our own people, Portuguese, Hawaiians, Japanese and Chinese are unable to work. . . . [They] herd together in little tenement rooms like sardines in a can, living in the barest squalor . . . [and] save money on wages that would mean starvation to any American. . . . Things have come to a point where American citizens, born and raised here in what is assumed to be an American community, find that there is not any room for them in their own land because it has been flooded with recruited labor from an alien country! . . . Filipinos are of an alien race,

> of a stock that does not fit in with our social system. (*Hawaii Hochi* 7 February 1930: 1–2; see also 1 September 1929, 19 November 1930, 8 December 1930, 23 June 1933)[28]

Without a historical sense of irony, the paper took a position that resembled the one taken by white workers on the mainland and in Hawai'i.[29]

Not surprisingly, Filipino workers did not attempt to form an interracial working-class movement with other workers, as they were aware of their uniquely disadvantaged position in Hawai'i. Hit hardest by the Depression—being the first to be laid off in the pineapple industry and being cast aside as the Americanization of the sugar industry favored citizens—they embarked on a different course of action than the Portuguese and the Japanese. Building "an organization leaded [*sic*] by the Filipinos and not the other races" (Lihue Plantation Company 1938: 1) and "plac[ing] the responsibility for the unemployment situation in the Territory of Hawaii upon the sugar barons" (Manlapit 1934b: 2), Filipino workers mobilized on their own to revive the territory's labor movement, which had been moribund since an unsuccessful sugar strike conducted by Filipino workers in 1924.

Decrying the high rate of unemployment, the high cost of living, and the lack of opportunities, over 1,000 Filipinos gathered for a mass protest in Honolulu in 1932, at which there was a public announcement calling for the rebirth of the Filipino Labor Union. A vigorous attack by the Big Five subsequently interred the union underground, transforming it into a secret organization by the name of Vibora Luviminda.[30] In 1937, Vibora Luviminda initiated a strike on a Maui sugar plantation, which later escalated into a general strike of Filipino sugar and pineapple workers on Maui and Moloka'i. Although the strike ended with very few material gains for the workers, Vibora Luviminda did become the first plantation union to gain employer recognition (Beechert 1985: 219).

Largely due to the forced secrecy of the organizational drive, little is known about the internal workings of the Filipino Labor Union or Vibora Luviminda. However, available evidence suggests that Filipino workers felt themselves to be uniquely discriminated against, discerning that they particularly "fac[ed] a miserable condition [during the Depression] due to the fact that they [were] not American Citizens" (Taok 1933: 1). In 1935, E. A. Taok, the president of the Filipino Labor Union, wrote to the President of

the Philippine Senate that Filipinos in Hawai'i were "all the time subject of discrimination" and were treated worse than other groups (Taok 1935a: 1; see also *News-Tribune* 6 November 1933; Butler 1934; Manlapit 1934a, 1934b; *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* 14 April 1934; Taok 1935b). This notion of Filipinos' being singled out for the worst treatment seems to have been a major theme in the union's organizational meetings. At a meeting on the Island of Hawai'i, an organizer spoke to this theme: "The plantations should not treat the Filipinos lower than the other laborers, because we are just as good as they are." Explaining why they needed to join an exclusively Filipino union, another organizer received applause of approval from the workers when he averred, "We Filipinos are capable of organizing our own union without the help of others. . . . There are many Managers who treat the Filipinos different from others. Why can't these Managers treat us right, when we are just as good as the other nationalities? These people are treating us like mules" (Wishard 1937: 3–4; see also Wells 1937).

Conclusion

In the past two decades, the study of race and class focused on pre-statehood Hawai'i flourished, reinvigorated by a wave of Marxist works concerned with the making of Hawai'i's interracial working class. These studies did much to dispel the alluring image of Hawai'i as a Pacific paradise with little social conflict, which had too often tainted their predecessors. However, the progress forged by these recent studies has been stifled by their inadequate conceptualizations of race, theorizing it as either false consciousness or an epiphenomenon vis-à-vis class.

Informed by racial formation theory's insistence on historicizing race, I argued that what was vitally missing from the study of the 1920s and 1930s was an analysis of how the prevailing meanings of race—the previously ignored content of racial discourses—shaped the workers' racially divergent interests and practices. And, given the importance of Americanism as a racial discourse, especially in relation to Japanese and Filipino workers, I also explored the theoretical relationship between race and nation, suggesting that the discourses of race and nation are continually intertwined because they share conceptual affinities in the "style in which they are imagined" (Anderson 1991: 6).

During the 1920s and 1930s, Portuguese, Japanese, and Filipino workers encountered dissimilar racisms, which constrained and enabled their disparate politics. From the beginning, haoles understood the Portuguese, as a people of European origin, to be deserving of more consideration than their Asian counterparts. However, because they arrived in Hawai'i to be used exclusively as laborers, the Portuguese were never fully accepted into the haole racial fold. In part motivated by their less ambiguous status as "whites" on the mainland, Portuguese workers continued to seek acceptance as haoles during the 1920s and 1930s, refusing to participate in a working-class movement against the haole planters and maintaining their social distance from the other workers.

Imagining Hawai'i's Japanese as racially loyal to Japan and its colonialist projects in Asia, the haole planters and the larger public interpreted the Japanese workers' participation in labor organizing as intrinsically anti-American. In the wake of the bitterly waged 1920 strike, during and after which their loyalty to America came under severe suspicion and attack, Japanese workers withdrew from the labor movement for the better part of the next two decades.

Having immigrated from an impoverished and recently conquered colony of the United States, Filipinos were constructed as an unambiguously inferior, primitive race by the haole planters and most other non-Filipinos. Although they already occupied the bottom of the racial order, the Filipino workers' plight grew even more perilous when the Depression struck the islands; even the racially maligned Japanese participated in the unquestioning marginalization. From their marginalized position, Filipino workers re-formed the Filipino Labor Union and struggled against the haole planters on their own.

Given the racially divergent trajectories of Hawai'i's workers during the 1920s and 1930s, as outlined in this essay, how do we then explain the emergence of an interracial working class in the 1940s? While many factors facilitated the rapid rise of organized labor in postwar Hawai'i, two factors stood out in actuating the interracial convergence among the workers. First, World War II brought about a radical ideological break vis-à-vis race and the Japanese. During the 1920s and 1930s, both the Japanese and their "Americanizing" attackers had continually posed a war scenario, especially a war with Japan, as the ultimate test of national loyalty. Consequently, through

their disproportionate sacrifice and effort during World War II, Hawai'i's Japanese laid to rest the racially rooted, hegemonic prewar doubts of their "Americanism." Thus largely extricated from the debilitating discourse of Americanism, Japanese workers were once again able to participate actively in a labor movement.

The second factor was the organization of the ILWU in Hawai'i, though not as typically framed. Following their class reductionist analyses of race and class in the 1920s and 1930s, most recent explanations for the workers' emerging solidarity of the 1940s have focused on the introduction of the West Coast–based ILWU's radical union leadership into Hawai'i (e.g., Geschwender 1981) or the workers' belated realization, through the ILWU, of their true, de-racialized class interests they had unknowingly shared all along (e.g., Beechert 1985). But, rather than an exogenous or a de-racializing force, the ILWU in Hawai'i represented and depended on the *local* construction of an *interracial* working-class identity.

Instead of promoting a color-blind brand of left-wing unionism imported from the West Coast, the ILWU, as it rapidly took shape in Hawai'i, reflexively recognized the need to address the preexisting racial divisions and hierarchy among the workers, which it did in three ways. First, it instituted race-conscious practices (what we would now refer to as affirmative action) to subvert the re-creation of racial divisions and hierarchy within the union, one crucial example of which was the express prevention of any racial group from monopolizing the union's leadership positions. Second, the elimination of the employers' racist practices became one of the most important and unifying goals of the union, resonating with and catalyzing the predominantly non-haole workforce. Especially important to Filipino workers, the ILWU refused to discriminate against noncitizen workers and actively fought against the employers' and the public's racist attacks that were specifically directed at the "alien" Filipinos. Third, through their struggles of the 1940s, the workers of the ILWU constructed an inclusive, interracial "narrative identity" (Somers 1994: 605). Selectively appropriating aspects of the workers' previously divergent racial histories and selectively forgetting others, the union's emergent narrative ideologically effected, albeit imperfectly and unstably, the coincidence of class (capitalists versus workers) and race (haoles versus non-haoles or "locals"), which many analysts have since taken for granted.[31]

Notes

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1 While "foreigner" is the literal translation, the Hawai'ian term *haole* is the racial designation for non-Iberian people of European descent. The Portuguese, the largest group of Iberian origin, have always been considered a distinct racial group in Hawai'i.

2 The Big Five sugar factors, or agencies, include Alexander and Baldwin, American Factors, C. Brewer and Company, Castle and Cooke, and Theo. H. Davies and Company, a tightly interlocked group of corporations.

With the signing of the Reciprocity Treaty in 1876, which permitted the exportation of unrefined sugar to the United States duty-free, these merchant capital firms provided the much-needed capital to increase production. Since sugar production was a capital-intensive venture and was becoming increasingly so, the effective control of the plantations quickly gravitated toward the Big Five, to the detriment of individual producers. As early as 1898, the year of U.S. annexation, the Big Five–controlled plantations were producing 73.6% of Hawai'i's sugar output (calculated from *Hawaiian Annual* 1903: 39–42). By 1930, the figure had risen to 95.2% (calculated from *Hawaiian Annual* 1931: 132–35).

The Big Five's influence in the maritime and pineapple industries was formidable as well. Four of the Big Five were the principal owners of Matson Navigation Company, which had outcompeted its rivals by the end of World War I and thereby "alone maintained Hawaii's lifeline" to the West Coast (Worden 1981: 47). With mainland companies taking part from early on, the pineapple industry, which did not begin to flourish until annexation, was never as completely dominated by the Big Five as the sugar industry. However, led by the Castle and Cooke–controlled Hawaiian Pineapple Company, which alone accounted for up to 40% of Hawai'i's pineapple output, the behavior of the employers in the two agricultural industries did not differ greatly (Brooks 1952: 106).

3 This article does not discuss native Hawai'ians or the Chinese. Although they had, in turn, constituted large segments of the plantation labor force during the latter

half of the nineteenth century, the vast majorities of both groups had long left the plantation economy by the 1920s and 1930s, the focal period of this essay.

4 In varying degrees, other students of race and class in Hawai'i (e.g., Liu 1984, 1985; Takaki 1983, 1990) tacitly agree with Bonacich's position, assuming "Asian" to have been a racially meaningful category. Without theoretical or empirical justification, they impose a two-tiered scheme of race and ethnicity in which Filipinos, Japanese, and other groups from Asia constitute subracial ethnic groups. While they usually acknowledge these intra-Asian divisions to have impeded working-class formation, most analysts at least partially subscribe to the "simplicity" thesis by placing them in the less power-implicated realm of "ethnicity." Consequently, a common pan-Asian racial identity is explicitly or implicitly assumed to have been a pre-made resource for the workers to have drawn from, thereby rendering the eventual making of Hawai'i's working class a simpler, if not an inevitable, outcome.

See also discussion of race and ethnicity in the following text and especially note 11.

5 Even to this day, in contrast to the mainland, pan-Asian categories (e.g., Asian, Asian American, and "Oriental") hold little social meaning in Hawai'i. And, when they are invoked, the terms usually exclude Filipinos (e.g., Okamura 1994: 161; Chang 1996: 140).

6 The concept is dubious because any consciousness other than a class one determined by the relations of production is adjudged false by theoretical fiat. That is, if workers do not achieve a presumably radical class consciousness as predicted, the workers rather than the theory are deemed false.

7 For a lucid discussion of race and Marxism, see chapter 1 of Roediger 1991.

8 Omi and Winant (1994) identify four major variants of the "nation-based paradigm": pan-Africanism, cultural nationalism, Marxism-Leninism on the "national question," and internal colonialism. The most influential of the four within sociology of race has been internal colonialism (e.g., Blauner 1972; Hechter 1975; Barrera 1979).

9 Given that they do not themselves proffer an alternative politics of race—although they seem partial to such a project—Omi and Winant's (1986) criticism of nation-based theories as inefficacious political ideologies rings somewhat disingenuous.

Subjecting previous "paradigms" of racial thought to criticism at two levels—as sociological theories explaining racial phenomena and as political ideologies—Omi and Winant's racial formation theory, as an aspiring paradigm shifter, may reasonably be expected to provide convincing alternatives at both levels. Thus, their silence on outlining a new politics of race consonant with their racial formation theory, which operates only at the level of sociological explanation, seems conspicuous. Their silence, however, cannot be readily attributed to mere oversight or neglect. I argue that it is immanent to their theory, which is fundamentally about "decenter[ing]" the concept of race (Omi and Winant 1986: 68), severing its essen-

tialist ties to previously supposed more fundamental concepts (e.g., class, nation), and seeing it as open to historical change and analysis. But, decentering the concept of race, which makes racial formation theory compelling and useful as a sociological theory of race, may work at cross purposes with constructing a new politics of race. As Nicholas Dirks et al. (1994: 32) write: "Politics consists of the effort to domesticate the infinitude of identity. It is the attempt to hegemonize identity, to order it into a strong programmatic statement. If identity is decentered, politics is about the attempt to create a center."

10 To be fair, Omi and Winant (1994: 55) do elaborate on their definition of race in the second edition of their book; they add that race is "a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies." Although their definition is much improved, I find the one by Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis (1992: 2) to be more precise and useful.

11 This schema also marks the theoretical boundary between race and ethnicity, the latter being understood as group differentiation based on shared or presumably shared "cultural" characteristics. However, there can be much overlap between the two concepts, since race is otherwise historically specific and thus largely an "empty receptacle through and in the name of which population groups may be invented, interpreted, and imagined as communities or societies" (Goldberg 1993: 79).

Although a good argument can be made that the racial groups examined here—haoles, Portuguese, Japanese, and Filipinos—also constituted ethnic groups, I refer to them as "races" for two main reasons. First, in pre-statehood Hawai'i, race was the concept through which Hawai'i's residents understood these groupings; the concept of ethnicity had no currency. Contemporaneous academic writings and other surviving records of public discourse—territorial government documents, employer documents, newspapers, magazines, speeches, and so on—point to this consensus. Second, within U.S. social scientific discourse, the concept of ethnicity is strongly associated with analyzing all racial and ethnic groups through the experiential lens of European immigrants. Hence, those who have applied the ethnicity concept to racially defined groups have usually been less concerned with racism and relations of dominance than with cultural differences and assimilation, which is clearly at odds with the intent of this article.

12 For example, even when confronted with the concept's modernity, introductory sociology students often have a hard time conjuring a pre-modern past in which race did not exist or matter. Another example is the debate over whether ancient Egypt is a part of Western history, as traditional Eurocentric scholarship would have it, or a part of African history, as Afrocentric scholarship would have it. Even its nonexistence in ancient Egypt does not prevent race from animating the debate, thereby once again beclouding its recent birth and history.

13 The Lihue Plantation Company (1930) on the Island of Kaua'i reported a similar pattern for August 1930: 29 of 29 (100%) haole, 24 of 140 (17.1%) Portuguese, 21

of 354 (5.9%) Japanese, and 0 of 1,588 (0.0%) Filipino employees were "skilled" employees.

14 The following are the comparable figures for the entire sugar industry in 1944: 668 of 715 (93.4%) haole, 472 of 1,917 (24.6%) Portuguese, 723 of 9,048 (8.0%) Japanese, and 120 of 11,641 (1.0%) Filipino employees were salaried, "skilled" employees (Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association 1944).

15 Although facts about the pineapple and stevedoring industries are not as well known or knowable as the more intensively studied and archived sugar industry, a similar racial pattern seems to have prevailed. For example, in 1938, full-time "Caucasian," Japanese, and Filipino pineapple workers earned on average $1,131, $814, and $659 per year, respectively; compiled by the U.S. Department of Labor, the earnings of haole and Portuguese workers were collapsed into one (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 1940: 111). Concerning the stevedoring industry, the same report (ibid.: 171) noted: "Among the salaried workers, exactly one-third (33.3 percent) were Caucasians and one-quarter Japanese. Filipinos had an extremely small representation in the salaried group."

16 Even prior to 1907, the sugar planters' express desire for a racially mixed work force had continually been frustrated in practice by recruitment costs and immigration restrictions (Beechert 1985).

17 For example, see discussion of the 1920 strike in the following text and especially note 20.

18 Regarding the lasting impact of the 1920 strike on the social and labor histories of Hawai'i, John E. Reinecke (1979: 87), the most authoritative historian of the strike, wrote: "The Oahu sugar plantation strike of 1920 was a traumatic episode in Hawaiian history. It can best be compared with the dock strike of 1949. . . . A later generation in Hawaii, witness to how the fears and resentments aroused by that strike had not wholly subsided fifteen years later, can appreciate how emotions aroused by the strike of 1920 influenced the thinking and emotions of islanders long afterward."

19 Despite the better financed and organized Japanese union's support of the Filipinos and the two groups' mutual aims, "the two unions acted independently," according to Reinecke (1979: 101), and did not represent an interracial working class in any meaningful sense.

20 The HSPA's racial attack has mainly been interpreted as a conscious ruse to steer the issue away from the workers' class demands. For example, historian Ronald Takaki (1983: 172) writes that the planters "deliberately stressed the racial issue in order to shroud the economic issue." While I partly agree with this argument, the extent to which the planters, along with the larger public, actually believed the Japanese to be a racial threat should not be minimized. That is, the HSPA's position was not merely an ideological shrouding of a material conflict. First, the planters were drawing on an enduring racist imagery—the Japanese colonial takeover of

Hawai'i via its furtive Japanese residents—the roots of which reach back to the end of the nineteenth century (e.g., Conroy 1953: 119–30). Second, the planters' collusive relationship with the military also argues against viewing their racism as merely utilitarian. For example, during the 1920 strike, George M. Brooke (1920: 1), assistant chief of staff for military intelligence, wrote a "highly confidential" letter to O. W. Collins, the manager of Pioneer Mill Company, informing him of the presence of "agents of the Japanese Consulate General" on the islands of Maui and Moloka'i. Brooke asked Collins to monitor them and also warned him that there were "great many more of these agents" on whom information was not presently being released. Such portentous information from the military was probably not taken lightly by the planters and undoubtedly affirmed and fueled their racial imaginations.

For the most comprehensive account of the military vis-à-vis Hawai'i's Japanese, see Okihiro 1991.

21 In 1922, Filipino and Japanese workers represented 40.2% and 38.5% of the sugar labor force, respectively (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 1940: 34).

22 The data for 1932 were only available for men. By this time, there were very few women working on sugar plantations.

23 Resolved to act more in concert following the strike, the planters institutionalized standard paternalistic practices, making improvements in housing, medical care, recreation, and other welfare programs (Okihiro 1991: 80–81). Of course, once established, the withholding of "perquisites," including the immediate eviction of workers and their families from their homes, became a favorite, coercive tactic of the employers. Furthermore, the territorial legislature passed a series of repressive laws aimed at preventing and breaking labor organizing. They included a broad-sweeping anticriminal syndicalism law, a law aimed at limiting the Japanese press, a law prohibiting picketing, and a loosely interpreted and enforced trespassing law.

24 The Japanese term *issei* refers to first-generation immigrants from Japan. The term *nisei* refers to their children.

25 An industrial survey conducted by the sugar industry in 1926 concluded that the industry should rely less on a constant flow of immigrant Filipino labor and more on "attracting native-born workers" (Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association 1927: 1).

26 See also *Honolulu Advertiser* 7 August 1928; Dr. Harry I. Kuriasaki, *Hawaii Hochi* 13 August 1928; *Nippu Jiji* 6 September 1928; Nomura 1987.

27 *Nippu Jiji*, the other major Japanese paper, took a more accommodationist stance toward the haole planters. The paper's less vitriolic stance toward Filipino workers can be more accurately read as stemming from its favorable assessment of management than from a favorable assessment of Filipinos.

28 Although other forms of documentary evidence are hard to come by, expressions of Japanese racism against Filipinos were not confined to editorial pages. For example, even in a very public forum like the Conferences of New Americans, which tended to mute strong opinions, some of the nisei delegates characterized Filipino workers in similar terms. Their statements portrayed the Filipinos as befitting their menial

positions on the plantations and the Japanese as being superior to Filipinos. One delegate from Wailuku, a sugar plantation on Maui, stated, "We have certain types of work that must be handled by [Filipinos]; we Japanese citizens cannot handle those jobs." He further asserted, "[The Filipinos'] living conditions are not on a par with those of the Japanese. . . . Naturally until the Filipinos improve their conditions or get out[, social conflict between the two groups] will be a problem for the Japanese citizens to tackle" (*Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the New Americans* 1937: 66–67). Less restrained expressions can be found in Masuoka 1931.

However, support for Filipino workers was not entirely absent within the Japanese community. *Yoen Jiho*, a smaller Japanese paper with a Marxist orientation, was a proponent of the renewed Filipino labor movement of the 1930s discussed later in this essay (e.g., 1 June 1937, 22 June 1937, 6 July 1937), a cause which a small number of Japanese individuals also surreptitiously aided financially (Hall 1966: 7).

29 For example, *New Freedom*, a newspaper that catered to haole workers and purported to be "devoted to progressive democracy" (Chapin 1996: 143), argued for cutting off Filipino immigration by similarly counterposing the citizen "jobless" and the "overflowing" "little brown brothers" who crowd city tenements "after a brief period of work with their wages intact in their pockets—plus what was gained in the gambling dens or cock-fighting pens on the sugar estates" (*New Freedom* 25 October 1930; see also 30 November 1928).

30 "Luviminda" is the nominal contraction of the three main groups of the Philippine Islands—Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao—suggesting a racial/national unity among Filipino workers. Also suggestive, "Vibora" was the nickname of the Filipino general Artemio Ricarte, a nationalist who, inter alia, had resolutely resisted American colonization of the Philippines.

31 For example, from the 1940s to the present day, the union's official narrative of the workers' pre-ILWU history has highlighted the haole planters' practices of "encourag[ing] racial divisions and suspicion," implicitly downplaying the workers' own participation in creating the racial divisions (International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union 1997: 36).

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