

Antarctica—although there have been unconfirmed reports that the folks down there are cold chillin'.

NOTES

1. Joshunda Sanders, 'The Faces Behind the Numbers,' *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 29, 2002.
2. Ibid.
3. Eric Arnold, 'Keeping the Flame,' *East Bay Express*, October 8, 1999.
4. Sanders, 'Faces Behind the Numbers.'
5. Black Dynasty, 'Deep East Oakland (OG Mix),' Another Hit Records, 1995.
6. Nelson George, 'Introduction,' in Jim Fricke and Charlie Ahearn (eds), *Yes Yes Y'all: Oral History of Hip-Hop's First Decade* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2002).
7. Mike Dream represented Oakland and the Bay Area as a member of the Iric Posse, Hobo Junction, and the TDK (Teach Dem Knowledge/Those Damn Kids) Crew.
8. Eric Arnold, 'Pop Ya Colla,' *Source* magazine, November 2001.
9. Lyrics for 'Tough,' written by J.B. Moore, L. Smith, R. Ford, R. Simmons, 1982.
10. J. Herron Zamora, 'Oakland In Flux,' *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 29, 2002.
11. Eric Arnold, 'Black C on Hunters Point and S.F. Hardcore Rap,' *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, May 2, 2001.
12. Arnold, 'Pop Ya Colla.'
13. Lyric for 'Oakland Stroke,' written by Stephen Kupka, Emillio Castillo, David Garibaldi/Tower of Power, 1974.
14. Khayree Shaheed, interview by author, 2001.
15. This sample, recorded in Oakland, originally appeared on Parliament's *P-Funk Earth Tour*, Casablanca Records, 1977.
16. Lyric for 'Me and Jesus the Pimp in a '79 Grenada Last Night,' written by R. Riley, 1988.
17. See Lyric from 'Freaky Tales,' written by T. Shaw, 1987.
18. It seems like poetic justice that Shakur made his debut on 'The Same Song,' a ditty whose message is nothing if not universal. See lyric from '(All Around the World) The Same Song,' written by G. Jacobs, R. Brooks, T. Shakur, 1990.
19. Eric Arnold, 'Keeping the Flame,' *East Bay Express*, October 8, 1999.
20. Public Enemy, 'Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos,' Def Jam Recordings, 1988.
21. N.W.A., 'Fuck the Police,' Priority Records, 1988.
22. Tajai Massey, interview by author, 2002.
23. Eric Arnold, 'Del Tha Funkee Homosapien speaks on anime,' *Murder Dog*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 2002.
24. Eric Arnold, 'Underground is a State of Mind,' *San Francisco Bay Guardian* (January 2000), p. 26.
25. Lyric for 'Simple Ting,' written by I. Azim, 2001.
26. Lyric for 'Karma,' written by S. Gaines, A. Anderson, 2002.
27. Lyric for 'Shot Callin' and Big Ballin', written by the Whoridas, 1995.

6

Head Rush: Hip Hop and a Hawaiian Nation 'On the Rise'

Adria L. Imada

On August 12, 1998, I joined hundreds of people at 'Iolani Palace to protest the U.S. annexation of Hawai'i one hundred years ago. 'Iolani Palace was the seat of Hawai'i's government before it was illegally overthrown by White missionary descendants collaborating with U.S. Marines in 1893. After the overthrow Lili'uokalani, the deposed queen of Hawai'i was imprisoned in the palace for eight months by the new pro-American regime. The palace remains a powerful symbol and sacred site for Native Hawaiians, especially those rallying for Hawaiian self-determination today.¹ At high noon, the Hawaiian flag was raised to the top of the palace and reverential forms of hula and Hawaiian music were performed in honor of Lili'uokalani. The audience sat and watched these performances politely.

However, another kind of performance proposed a radical future from the past and got the crowd to its feet. An interactive play called *Forever Protest Annexation* revisited the annexation and rewrote Hawaiian history. Rather than watching helplessly as American soldiers stormed the royal palace, Hawaiian men disarmed them and proclaimed their resistance to U.S. annexation (see Figure 1). The play invited us to speculate: what would Hawai'i be like if it were still a sovereign country and not the fiftieth state? We began to see alternative futures in which we may all participate. The Hawaiian actors exhorted the audience to yell 'Kū'e!' which means 'resist, oppose, stand different' in Hawaiian. They proclaimed, 'It's never too late to kū'e!' and the bass started pumping. The young men on stage—members of the Hawaiian hip hop group Sudden Rush—broke into their signature song, 'Kū'e,' from their eponymous second album:

Back in 1893, the U.S. military dethroned and imprisoned my queen Lili'uokalani. All of these problems stay in my brain, I don't wanna, wanna go insane ... Feeling the pain ... 'Cause in 1997 ain't a damn thing changed.²

Many in the audience immediately started dancing: children, sovereignty activists, even American tourists (see Figure 2). The first person I saw dancing was a *kupuna*, a Hawaiian elder, who looked like she was well into her seventies. Sudden Rush transformed the sacred steps of the palace into a space of Hawaiian hip hop/techno-culture with heavy beats, rapping in



Figure 1 Sudden Rush in Forever Protest Annexation at 'Iolani Palace, August 12, 1998 (photograph by Adria L. Imada)



Figure 2 Hip hop at annexation protest, August 12, 1998 (photograph by Adria L. Imada)

the Hawaiian language, and a generous sampling of traditional Hawaiian chanting. The first hip hop group to craft rap lyrics in the Hawaiian language, Sudden Rush explicitly promotes resistance to U.S. annexation and the continued occupation. As the cultural critic George Lipsitz writes, 'Culture enables people to rehearse identities, stances, and social relations not yet permissible in politics ... Popular culture does not just reflect reality, it helps constitute it.'³ Rather than being regarded as disrespectful, Sudden Rush moved people to dance, experience pleasure, and celebrate survival in Hawai'i. Through these performances we could enact, however provisionally, an improved future.

Hawaiians are arguably disempowered in their own land, where they comprise 20 percent of its population. Hawaiians suffer from the lowest life expectancy, highest cancer mortality rates and incarceration rates, and are the least likely to complete four years of college.⁴ Nearly 50 percent of incarcerated juveniles are Hawaiian.⁵ Meanwhile, Hawaiian entitlements are continually subjected to political retrenchment on local, state, and federal levels. White and Asian residents of Hawai'i, backed by conservative organizations in the continental United States, have challenged Hawaiian institutions and legal claims in state and federal courts.⁶ The Hawai'i State Admission Act of 1959 gave the state government of Hawai'i control of 1.4 million acres of 'ceded lands,' or Hawaiian Kingdom Lands that were 'ceded' to the U.S. government after the 1898 annexation. The state was obligated to hold these lands in trust and use them to benefit Native Hawaiians. However, historically the state has violated this trust agreement by not regularly allocating land-use revenues to the semi-autonomous Office of Hawaiian Affairs.⁷

In the 1980s, Hawaiian sovereignty groups began rallying for Native self-governance and today several organizations propose different models for self-determination. One group, Ka Lahui Hawai'i, which was most prominent in the early 1990s, calls for a nation-within-a-nation model similar to that of Native American tribes; The Nation of Hawai'i and the Hawaiian Kingdom Government, are pro-independence groups that favor complete independence from the United States.⁸ The sovereignty movement has gained widespread support among Native Hawaiians and non-Native locals in Hawai'i over the past two decades, but activists face an uphill battle.

Sudden Rush's hip hop activism has emerged from this self-determination and nationalist movement, and in turn, their music has enlarged the terrain of political resistance in Hawai'i. As Hawai'i's most prominent hip hop group, Sudden Rush has become known in the islands for their activist, youth-oriented 'island music.' Taking a musical form most often associated with urban Black experiences and dissent, Sudden Rush has indigenized hip hop. They mix U.S. hip hop, reggae, and contemporary Hawaiian music into their own brand of 'versa-style' hip hop, offering forceful critiques of Hawaiian history and U.S. neo-colonialism. While encouraging young people

to enjoy their lives, Sudden Rush also wants to empower a Hawaiian nation 'on the rise.' Their music, both defiant and hopeful, allows new publics to envision and work toward more just political futures in Hawai'i.

On the east coast of the island of Hawai'i, in the town of Hilo, three young Hawaiian men—Shane Veincent, Caleb Richards, and Don Ke'ala Kawa'auhau—began performing Hawaiian hip hop in the early 1990s. With a population of 38,000, Hilo is more geared toward the production of macadamia nuts and coffee beans than cutting edge music. Twenty-eight year old Shane Veincent grew up here, not far from Pane'ewa Hawaiian Homelands, the residential areas for Native Hawaiians that are administered by the state of Hawai'i.⁹ A rebellious teenager, Veincent spent ten years with his uncles and cousins in Pane'ewa beginning at the age of 13. In the family house he listened to Hawaiian slack key guitarists like Gabby Pahinui as well as American musicians like Roy Orbison. Veincent received an introduction to hip hop in the early to mid 1980s through popping and breaking. Every day he arrived at his intermediate school with a stereo and favorite piece of cardboard. His love of crowds and public performance led him to rapping and singing in high school. After putting rhymes together, he battled his classmates at school and house parties. Eric B and Rakim were his favorite rap artists, and he enjoyed hip hop as 'party music.'

Veincent recalls first meeting Calèb Richards at a house party. 'I'd been in different rap groups. Caleb came to this party. "You rap, huh?" I asked him.' Veincent then challenged Richards, 'Bust a verse.' Sufficiently impressed with Richards' skills, Veincent decided to hook up with him. They became friends, meeting up after school to write their own rap songs with instrumentals. The duo won a talent show at a county fair in the early 1990s. Preferring to surf and make music, Veincent did not graduate from high school.

After performing for about a year, Veincent and Richards met up with their classmate's older brother, Don Ke'ala Kawa'auhau. Two years older than Richards and Veincent, Kawa'auhau is 'Da Rappa Nui' ('The Big Rapper' translated from Hawaiian Creole English) and the 'head man' of the group. Kawa'auhau also shares eclectic musical influences. Regardless of genre, Kawa'auhau liked musicians who were good storytellers. He admired Bruce Springsteen for telling empathetic narratives, but Kawa'auhau also remembers the impression that the local song 'Hawai'i '78' made on him. A mournful ballad by the late Hawaiian artist Israel Kamakawiwo'ole, it highlights the demise of the Hawaiian monarchy and the transformation of Hawai'i into a tourist playground. These were subjects Sudden Rush later would address forcefully in their music.

Throughout his Catholic school education, Kawa'auhau played 'ukulele, guitar, and took piano lessons. His approach to hip hop was more studied than Veincent's love of spontaneous live performance. While in high school Kawa'auhau used his first paycheck from Waldenbooks to buy his first rap tape, Sir Mix-a-Lot. With every new paycheck, he bought more rap—MC

Hammer, Heavy D, Run DMC, Ice-T—'even guys like Young MC, guys that people used to diss.' He ended up accumulating 'hundreds of tapes people never heard of.' He appreciated the flexibility of rap: 'You can fit a lot of stuff into one song. You're not stuck with verse, chorus, four lines here, four lines there.' Most importantly for him, however, rap allowed him to 'say exactly what you feel,' and as he would discover, it was a form that could also accommodate the Hawaiian language.

Kawa'auhau joined Sudden Rush in 1993, which was the hundredth anniversary of the U.S.-backed overthrow of the independent Hawaiian Kingdom. In January 1993, thousands of nonviolent protesters gathered at the royal palace, galvanizing public support for Hawaiian sovereignty and inserting Hawaiian rights into the public consciousness. Kawa'auhau had begun studying 'ōlelo Hawai'i (Hawaiian language) at the University of Hawai'i-Hilo and was inspired by the recent surge in Hawaiian political activism. He painstakingly composed rap lyrics first in English, then in Hawaiian. He listened to a beat, then wrote a line with Hawaiian words that rhymed. The result was the song 'Oni Pa'a' (Steadfast):

Ho'ohui, ho'ohui mai ho'olohe i ke aupuni/ Makemake lākou i kekahi
aupuni/ I hea? Ma O'ahu. Ua lohe 'ia./ Ma hope o ka wāwahi 'ia 'ana o
ka heiau./ Hewa loa kela, mālama i ka po'e, Mālama iā kākou.

Unite, unite! Don't listen to the government/ They like build another
street/ Where?/ On O'ahu. 'Ass what I heard/ After they destroy a heiau
(Hawaiian temple)/ Listen, that's what's wrong./ Take care of the land,
take care of the people, Take care each other.

'Ōlelo Hawai'i has only eight consonants, and when rapped very quickly with thick beats in the background, as it is in this song, the sound is both staccato and heavy on the vowels. When Kawa'auhau got up at the mic at a party and received an enthusiastic response, he thought, 'This could actually turn heads. People could either like it for the message, or like it for the music and hear the message. You can win more ways than one.' Veincent and Richards soon heard about Kawa'auhau's skills as a rapper, and after a session, the three clicked as a group in 1993. Kawa'auhau brought his knowledge of Hawaiian issues, while Veincent and Richards supplied the street credibility.

Sudden Rush cut their first album, *A Nation on the Rise*, in 1994, working with their producer Rob Onekea. A friend who owned a hip hop clothing store sponsored the album, which cost about \$2,000 to produce. Hawaiian music played with slack key guitar, steel guitar, and 'ukulele has usually been prized for its link to Hawaiian musical traditions. But Sudden Rush used the most alienating materials of modernity and post-industrialism—mechanical beats, digital sampling, urban technology—to declare Hawaiian resistance.

A few songs on their first album critiqued the U.S. colonization of Hawai'i, including the song 'Oni Pa'a': 'We're living on very land that was stolen. The first amendment is the freedom of speech. But what can we say when they're stealing our beach. Oh say can you see, America's a thief.' They also called attention to the growing Hawaiian sovereignty movement: 'By any means necessary, said one brother. Hawaiians say sovereignty one way or another.'

But many of the songs—'Cruisin,' 'Wreck Shop,' 'Bouncin'—tended to be derivative of mainstream U.S. hip hop from the period, like House of Pain, Cypress Hill, and the Fu-Schnickens, with an emphasis on a distinctly Hawaiian party lifestyle. *Nation on the Rise* received minimal airplay in Hawai'i. Producer Onekea felt that Sudden Rush's music fell into a gap between contemporary Hawaiian music and mainland hip hop and did not fit easily in local radio programming. There is no dedicated 'urban' or 'hip hop' station in Hawai'i, and U.S. hip hop can be heard only occasionally on a few top 40 stations.

Despite the lack of airplay, by 1997 the group had put together their second album, *Kū'e*, which was another low-budget garage project featuring a large dose of Hawaiian rap lyrics. They called Hawaiian language rap 'nā mele pāleoleo': *mele* means song, and *pāleoleo* is talking loudly. For thousands of years, Hawaiian genealogy and history was passed down orally through chants, for there was no written language until the arrival of Christian missionaries in the 1820s. Hawaiian rap can be thought of as a continuation of Hawaiian oral culture. The group, however, also relied on a cheap karaoke machine to record lyrics over instrumentals and beats. They then sent the samples to Onekea on O'ahu, who remade the beats.

The album included hip hop tracks, a couple of 'Jawaiian' (hybrid Jamaican and Hawaiian) songs, and a few pop songs. Well-known Hawaiian musicians Guy Cruz, Willie K, and Keali'i Reichel contributed to the album without compensation. By this time the group had developed its own sound, which Veincent describes as 'versa-style'—a fusion of reggae, traditional Hawaiian chanting, U.S. hip hop, and R&B. For example, the song 'Kanakas Unite'¹⁰ references Marvin Gaye's 'What's Going On': 'Mother, mother, there's too many of you crying ... Hawaiian brother, brother, brother, there's too many of you dying.' Songs on the album might pull from Bob Marley, swing to the Hawaiian chanter Keali'i Reichel, and then drop a generous sampling of beats and idioms from mainland hip hop.

This time Sudden Rush hit the airwaves of Hawai'i and went into heavy rotation on contemporary Hawaiian music stations. *Kū'e*'s success was in part due to its hard-hitting critique of Hawai'i's neo-colonial status. The deposed Queen Lili'uokalani is pictured on the album cover along with Sudden Rush members who hoist an upside down Hawaiian flag, a symbol of Hawaiian resistance (see Figure 3). Coinciding with a period of economic crisis, *Kū'e* offered locals a way to understand the hardship that surrounded

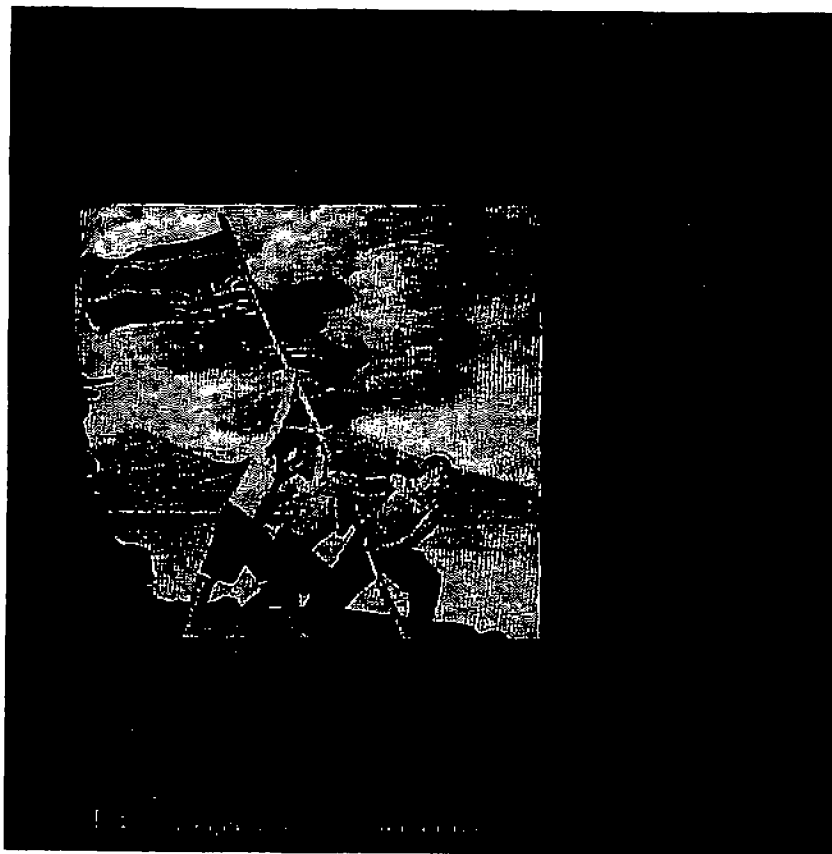


Figure 3 Cover of Sudden Rush's second album, *Kū'e* (courtesy of Sudden Rush)

them. Tourism, the largest industry in the state, had nearly halted due to the Asian financial crisis in the islands. Local businesses went bankrupt daily and many Hawaiians and local Asians faced homelessness in one of the most expensive real-estate markets and militarized zones in the world. *Kū'e* reminded audiences about Hawaiians who were dying as they waited to receive homestead land from the mismanaged Department of Hawaiian Home Lands. On the song 'Think About It,' they paid homage to Kahale Smith, a Hawaiian man who burned himself and his house down rather than be evicted from his land.

Having grown up on Hawaiian Homelands or in Hawaiian communities, the men of Sudden Rush knew firsthand the perils faced by Hawaiians, but Kawa'auhau became the formal student of the group. After taking Hawaiian language and Hawaiian Studies classes at the University of Hawai'i-Hilo, Kawa'auhau decided to change his major to Hawaiian Studies. The Hawaiian language had been banned in Hawai'i's public school system since 1896, a few years after the U.S. takeover of the islands. But thanks to an activist-oriented Hawaiian language program, more young people like Kawa'auhau were learning the language. He began talking to teachers outside of the classroom, reading websites and books about Hawaiian traditions, and listening to Hawaiian sovereignty activists like Haunani-Kay Trask on public access television. Eventually, Kawa'auhau became a Hawaiian language teacher at an immersion preschool and at a local Hilo high school. He also shared what he had learned with Veincent and Richards.

'I learned so much about our struggle [as Hawaiians] since performing as a group,' relates Veincent. In order to make the music they wanted to, the group realized that they had to teach themselves more history. They each had assignments on Hawaiian history. One of Veincent's first book reports was on Queen Lili'uokalani. Sudden Rush also screened videos about Hawaiian legal issues, including *The Tribunal*, a documentary that placed the U.S. and the state of Hawai'i on trial for crimes committed against indigenous Hawaiians.

Although they consider themselves performers first, the members of the group belong to a distinguished genealogy of Hawaiian cultural activism. I loosely define 'cultural activism' as the self-conscious deployment of culture for political ends. Influenced by the civil rights movement on the continental U.S., the 'Hawaiian Renaissance' emerged in the 1960s and 70s. Mobilized by the U.S. naval bombing of the island of Kaho'olawe and the eviction of pig farmers in Kalama Valley, young Hawaiians and local Asians became conscious of Hawai'i's colonial history of land dispossession and racism. This period of political and cultural activism featured multi-ethnic social protests, the Hawaiian re-occupation of U.S. naval bombing sites, and the assertion of Hawaiian performance and language. Young Hawaiians who had never heard Hawaiian at home or in school found elders to teach them their language. Hula troupes no longer called themselves 'hula studios' but

halau hula (hula academies) and began teaching styles of hula performed with indigenous instruments and Hawaiian chant.

The Hawaiian musician George Helm emerged from this renaissance. A 26-year-old entertainer known for his sweet falsetto, Helm was a member of Protect Kaho'olawe Ohana, an activist organization that re-occupied the island used by the U.S. Navy for bombing practice. During an attempt to cross the waters to Kaho'olawe in 1977, Helm and another young activist disappeared. They were presumed either drowned or killed. Sudden Rush refers to this incident in the song 'Think About It,' suggesting that the activists were murdered by the U.S. military or government.

Although traditional Hawaiian music was frequently championed in Hawai'i during the 1960s and 70s as the soul of the people, it was blended freely with other forms of trans-local music. In the 1980s musical group Ho'aikane and singer Butch Helemano called themselves 'Jawaiian' (Jamaican-Hawaiian) and explicitly identified with the struggles of colonized Blacks in the Caribbean and the African diaspora. Helemano adopted long dreadlocks and his album covers were splashed with red, yellow, and green, the colors of Pan-African liberation.¹¹ These artists forged Jawaiian music to construct a larger collective political identity. This music features reggae beats and affected 'Rastafari' accents at times, but its lyrics assert the importance of Hawaiian land and experiences. 'Jawaiian' artists took a product from outside of Hawai'i and made it something that local people in Hawai'i could enjoy.¹²

Just as Jawaiian musicians forged a globalized music by drawing on reggae, Sudden Rush has done so by indigenizing American hip hop. They have incorporated Hawaiian politics and youth culture into music associated with urban Black experiences. While capitalism often values people of color more as consumers of Nike and Tommy Hilfiger products than as respected workers and community members, Sudden Rush deliberately consumes commercial culture and spits it back out in the form of hip hop. Like their Jawaiian contemporaries, Sudden Rush deeply identifies with African Americans and other people of color who have suffered under racial capitalism. In the song 'True Hawaiian' from *Ka'e*, lyrics flow about 'Uncle Sam's grand larceny' from the Atlantic to the Pacific:

I can't believe how can we follow a government that chooses to
deceive its own people
They tell us that we're equal
But if you look at history we're just another sequel
Started with America, go from desecration
They called Indians savages and threw them on the reservation
Then they took the African man from the motherland to this
other land to work for the master's plan

That wasn't enough they had to cross the big blue and when
they saw Hawai'i, yeah they took that too
They saw the hula and they called it paganist but they didn't
think, question it was ripping the Pacific

But they are also careful to make historical distinctions between African Americans and Hawaiians. In the song 'Message to the Wannabes (Be Hawaiian)' from *Nation on the Rise*, they point out:

The Black man was taken from his homeland
Taken to another land
Forced to work for another man
But they survived, they overcame
To the Hawaiian people, it is somewhat the same.
Not saying we were slaves, don't get me mistaken
To us, it's not the people but the land that was taken.

By making connections with other colonized and indigenous people, Hawaiians became part of a global political struggle and resisted the construction of themselves as isolated dots in the Pacific Ocean. Through a global medium Sudden Rush has created a politics of attachment. Hip hop and rap can help because of its power to communicate a people's struggle, as Kawa'auhau explains:

I'm not Black. I never wanted to be anything else than who I am. But if they [rappers] can make you almost feel what they went through, to me, that's cool. I don't know what it is to be this guy, but I can almost feel what he's saying. That's what we try to do. We don't want to make you want to be Hawaiian. But if you can understand us and feel what we're saying, then we're doing our job.

Onekea, who got his start in the music industry remixing hip hop music, was initially wary of producing Hawaiian rap. He recalled, 'When I first met them, I thought they were another bunch of local boys trying to rap. But when I heard them start getting into their flow, it kind of tripped me out. There was something different about them.' He thinks of Sudden Rush as the 'Hawaiian Public Enemy' for their ability to cut to the quick of contemporary Hawaiian life and amplify a message about social justice. Chuck D was Onekea's role model, a 'modern day Robin Hood.' He asserted, '*It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back* [was] one of the best hip hop albums ever ... I was just always into what they [Public Enemy] stood for. The way you treat Black people is wrong.' He added, 'I'm not an activist. I don't know how to debate in public, but I can make phat beats that make people listen, and the boys can put together lyrics that are catchy enough to remember.'

Because of their adoption of hip hop idioms and forms, Sudden Rush felt some apprehension over their reception by African-American audiences. Would they be censured for being 'wannabes' or adopting a style of music identified with Black people? When Sudden Rush first performed at a Honolulu nightclub whose audience was mostly African-American military personnel, Kawa'auhau recalled, the crowd booed them because they were not on the flyer. 'After they heard our songs, though, they cheered for us. Someone after the show compared me to Heavy D, Caleb [Richards] to Onyx, and Shane [Veincent] to a guy from the Fu-Schnickens,' said Kawa'auhau, laughing. 'One guy even said, "It was dope!"'

There is ample reason for Hawaiian men in particular to identify with young African-American men. African-American and Hawaiian men share a similar relationship to the state; both groups have been racialized in the social imagination as violent, oversexualized, and deviant. Since the arrival of Christian missionaries in the islands in 1820, Hawaiians have been constructed as a people unable to exercise self-control or prove themselves worthy of self-governance.¹³ In contemporary Hawai'i, Hawaiian men are frequently discussed in the media as hardened criminals, drug addicts, and welfare cases, with infrequent analysis of the neo-colonial context of contemporary Hawaiian struggles for land and sovereignty. Many of Sudden Rush's songs address young people, particularly men, and assess Hawaiian self-destruction as a consequence of government policies. Veincent put a personal face on this larger battle while dealing with drug addiction. He briefly withdrew from the group until he completed a rehabilitation program.

Sudden Rush's intervention offers another view of Hawaiians as people who care about their families and communities. The song 'True Hawaiian' reminds listeners of the values that make a 'true Hawaiian,' such as *ha'aha'a* (humility), *ha'aheo* (pride), and *lōkahi* (togetherness). They exhort Hawaiian youth to stick together and learn as much they can. Veincent reveals, 'The main reason why I do our music is to tell the story of our people to my generation and the generation to come. You can go to school, but music is how people really listen.' Despite their impassioned critique of U.S. colonization and the cannibalizing tourist economy of Hawai'i, Sudden Rush is not demanding that Hawaiians *kū'ē* violently. George Lipsitz asserts that the oppositional power of hip hop and its utility for contemporary global politics lies precisely in its 'desire to work *through* rather than *outside* of existing structures.'¹⁴ Indeed Sudden Rush does not encourage young people to kill cops who have assaulted Hawaiians or attack U.S. military personnel who occupy Hawaiian lands. Nor do they promote burning down multinational hotels that exploit the labor of Native Hawaiians and locals. Instead their rap lyrics emphasize Hawaiian pride, unity, and respect for one's elders.

Locals of all ethnic backgrounds and ages grooved to their message. Although their music is geared primarily to a local guy hitting the beach

with his surfboard, *Ka'ē* had something for everyone—a mix of political songs and 'party songs.' Sudden Rush does not want to merely preach. They are firm believers of the pleasure principle. In the single 'Polynesian Party,' different groups of Pacific Islanders revel in each other's company at a celebratory Oceanic house party: 'Yo, whatcha going to do right now, the Maori in the house? Paaarty! Whatcha going to do now, Fijians in the house, paaarty!!!' The inexorable and insistent beats urge you to move your body and have fun while you oppose. Maintains Veincent, 'We want people to hear our music but also have a good time.' 'Polynesian Party' became the most popular single of the second album and garnered the group more commercial attention and a larger audience. People who liked the song were pulled subsequently into the denser, more political songs on the album.

Ka'ē sold between 20,000 and 25,000 copies, an impressive number for a locally produced rap release. While 'Polynesian Party' became Hawai'i's youth anthem of the late 1990s, *kupuna* (Hawaiian elders) also perked up when Sudden Rush performed at community concerts. *Kupuna* approached Sudden Rush members, thanking them, 'We don't like rap music, but we like what you're doing.'¹⁵ As they traveled throughout the islands performing, the members of Sudden Rush listened to the stories of *kupuna*, whose homegrown wisdom is sampled on *Ka'ē*.

In addition to performing, Sudden Rush wants to set an example for the youth of Hawai'i. Besides doing concerts and nightclub performances, they participate in benefit concerts for Hawaiian language immersion programs and various Native Hawaiian sovereignty groups. None of the members is involved in a particular sovereignty group, mainly due to their reluctance to choose sides in what often seems like a contentious and personalized battle between different political camps. But if approached by a Hawaiian activist group, they lend their *kokua* (cooperation). Promoting unity instead of dissension, they are contributing to 'a nation on the rise, blowing up your tape deck.' Regardless of the current political reality of sovereignty organizations, in their minds a true Hawaiian nation already exists: it is a community of Hawaiians working together for social justice. Peace can also be found in one's family and community. The song 'Paradise Found' intentionally inverts the paradigm of Western 'discovery' of the Hawaiian Islands, with Hawaiians who discover paradise in one another: 'When I open my eyes, I see I found my paradise in my family, and in the eyes of all the *kamali'i* (children).'

Sudden Rush are just as moved by their music as their audience, and they savor their connection with live crowds. Veincent remembers performing in Las Vegas for a large audience of Hawaiians who had relocated to the desert. Vegas is sometimes referred to as the 'ninth island' by Hawai'i residents because of widespread emigration to Vegas for jobs and affordable homes. Thousands of miles away from home and receiving aloha from diasporic islanders, Veincent broke down and cried on stage. The group dreams of

performing across the U.S. continent and on other Pacific Islands, especially with the release of their third album, *Ea*, in 2002.

However Veincent, Kawa'auhau, and Richards do not see themselves abandoning life on the islands. They would like their music to spread far and wide, but their home is Hawai'i. 'I believe certain people belong in certain places,' Kawa'auhau said. 'When you go other places, that's okay, but that belonging, I feel that with Hilo.' Onekea's production company, Way Out West, reflects the group's sensibility. Sudden Rush wanted to put the West (i.e., the Pacific) on the international hip hop map with their music. Yet hip hop artistry alone cannot sustain a livelihood in the islands. After teaching Hawaiian language at a preschool and high school for five years, Kawa'auhau is now a DJ at an 'island music' radio station in Hilo. Veincent is a tattoo artist in Hilo, while Richards works two jobs at a restaurant and a bar in Honolulu.

'Hawaiian rap music, is this the wave of the future, or is this just a fluke?' Sudden Rush mused in an interlude on their second album. Sudden Rush's newest album, *Ea* (loosely translated as sovereignty) was almost five years in the making. While this album, like *Ka'e*, makes explicit reference to Hawaiian resistance, it is even more anti-colonial and critical of the United States than their previous release. Their music continues to imagine a future where Hawaiians are taking their bodies back from the modern statist project of tourism and global capitalism, a system that uses Hawaiians as tour bus drivers and hula dancers while paying a mere \$8 an hour. Reappropriating your own body can be a political act; Hawaiian bodies are not simply instruments for others' profit or wage labor.

'If we could do for the Hawaiian people what Public Enemy did for Afro Americans as far as awareness and making people think, I would be pretty stoked,' said Onekea. Sudden Rush envisions a Hawaiian nation where Hawaiians are enjoying their *'āina* (land) and everyday lives. The beats of their music are moving islanders into new forms of collective action like those produced at the 1998 'Iolani Palace protest. They may be 'Way Out West,' but Sudden Rush has already convinced some people to make paradise in Hawai'i a permanent reality—not for tourists or the U.S. military—but for themselves and their families.

NOTES

1. Following modern Hawaiian orthography, I use diacritical marks—the 'okina or glottal stop and the *kahukō* or macron—for Hawaiian words and names (e.g., Hawai'i). I use 'Hawaiian' and 'Native Hawaiian' to mark any person of indigenous Hawaiian background, not to indicate residence in Hawai'i. Thus in my use 'Hawaiian' is *not* analogous to the term 'Californian.' Instead I use 'islander' or 'local' to reference people born and raised in Hawai'i who are not necessarily indigenous Hawaiians.
2. All lyrics cited with permission by Sudden Rush.
3. George Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Poetics of Place* (New York: Verso Books, 1994), p. 137.

4. For statistics on Hawai'i life expectancy from 1910 to 1990, see Table 2.10 in *State of Hawai'i Data Book 2004*. For cancer mortality, see *Hawai'i Cancer Facts and Figures*, 2003–04, pp. 12–13. For incarceration and education attainment, see *Native Hawaiian Data Book 2002*, pp. 29 and 24.
5. This figure is based on statistics analyzed between 1995 and 1999. Hawai'i State Department of the Attorney General, Crime Prevention and Juvenile Assistance Division, *Incarcerated Juveniles and Recidivism in Hawai'i*, Vol. 2 (February 2001).
6. Freddy Rice, a fifth-generation *haole* (Caucasian) resident of Hawai'i, challenged the state's process of having Hawaiians elect Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) trustees. In 2000, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Hawaiian-only OHA elections constitute a racial voting restriction in violation of the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments. After the Rice ruling, other legal cases opposed the constitutionality of Hawaiian entitlements. The federal case *Arakaki v. Lingle*, was filed in 2002 and challenged the legality of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands and other government agencies that support Native Hawaiians. Plaintiffs argued that these programs were race-based and discriminated against non-Hawaiians, but a federal judge dismissed the case in January 2004.
7. In 2001 OHA took the state of Hawai'i to court, seeking a moratorium on the sale of Hawaiian ceded lands to private owners. Four individual Hawaiian plaintiffs also filed suit against the state. See *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, November 18, 2001 and November 21, 2001. OHA also introduced state legislation in early 2004 to prevent the alienation of ceded lands by the state and ensure that payments of ceded land revenue are fully reinstated. See <<http://www.oha.org>>.
8. See <<http://www.hawaiiankingdom.org>>, the official website of the Hawaiian Kingdom Government. Many of these independence groups have gained membership from among those who oppose a federal Native Hawaiian recognition bill (also known as the 'Akaka Bill') that would make Native Hawaiians domestic wards of the federal government and subject Native Hawaiians to U.S. congressional plenary power. See <<http://www.stopakaka.com>> for more on anti-federal recognition activism.
9. The federal Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920 sought to 'rehabilitate' some Hawaiians through a government homesteading program. The act defined a 'native Hawaiian' as someone with at least 50 percent Hawaiian blood quantum, and the same quantum subsequently applies to all applicants for homestead lots. Today almost 30,000 Hawaiians are on a waiting list for residential or agricultural lots.
10. In Hawaiian '*kanaka*' means 'man' but it has come to refer to Hawaiians generally as a people.
11. Sudden Rush also emphasizes those identifications by using Jamaican dancehall on 'Run' about 'rudeboy' Hawaiians running from guns, police, drugs, and domestic violence.
12. Andrew N. Weintraub, 'Jawaiian Music and Local Cultural Identity in Hawai'i,' in Philip Hayward (ed.), *Sound Alliances: Indigenous Peoples, Cultural Politics, and Popular Music in the Pacific* (London: Cassell, 1998), pp. 78–88.
13. See Noenoe K. Silva, 'He Kānāwai E Ho'opau I Nā Hula Kuolo Hawai'i: The Political Economy of Banning the Hula,' *The Hawaiian Journal of History*, Vol. 34 (2000). Nineteenth-century Christian missionaries in Hawai'i associated hula with Hawaiian debauchery, idleness, and sexuality. They sought to ban the practice, believing that it made Hawaiians unproductive workers in the emerging capitalist economy of Hawai'i.
14. Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads*, p. 34.
15. Rob Onekea, interview by author, typescript, May 2002.