Decolonizing HIV Care

History of Colonization in Hawaiʻi and Solutions for a “Post-Colonial” World

Kekoaopololū Kealoha
HIV Program Manager
Hawaiʻi Health & Harm Reduction Center
Timeline of Contact & Major Turning Points

1778: Captain Cook arrives in Hawaiʻi
1778: *TB and Syphilis arrives*
1804: Cholera arrives
1810: Kamehameha Unites Hawaiʻi
1819: ‘Aikapu abolished
1820: *American Missionaries Arrive*
1820: Influenza arrives
1825: Kaahumanu converts
1825: *Sugar established as industry*
1839: Mumps arrives
1840: First Constitution of Hawaiʻi
1848: *The Great Mahele*
1848: Measles arrives
1852: Revised Constitution
1853: Smallpox arrives
1875: Reciprocity Treaty
1887: *Signing of Bayonet Constitution*
1890: McKinley Tariff Act
1893: *Hawaiian Kingdom Overthrown*
1896: Hawaiian Lang. banned in schools
Putting the Pieces Together

- Rapid Population Decline
- Conversion to Christianity
- Western (American) Influence
- Land Privatization, Displacement
- Political Conquest, Theft of a Nation
Colonization in Hawaiʻi in Two parts

Christian Missions

Economic & Political Capital
Christianity and the Gender Binary

Christian missionaries used religion as a tool to enforce gendered rules in all societies. Christian conversion in Hawaiian society has led to oppression of Māhū in mainstream society, forced underground.
Christian missionaries used religion as a tool to invalidate and eliminate same sex relationships or anything that deviates from heteronormativity or the “one man, one woman” relationship rule.
Economic Abandonment of Subsistence

An economy in transition forced the diversion of water from natural streams to sugar plantations. This forced Kanaka Maoli away from subsistence living and away their ancestral lands.
Economic Drivers of Displacement

The sugar industry boomed in the mid 1800s, led by American businessmen. This growing mono economy drove land privatization, relocation of a large number of people, and forced labor for “vagrants.”
American sugar growers intended to take control of the Hawaiian Islands specifically to aid in American imperialism and to gain a competitive edge on their product in the American Market. Consistent with “Manifest Destiny” ideology.
The Sociology of Colonization

- Two dimensions of relations based on subjugation:
  - Social relations with the colonizing power and its agents
  - Social relations with each other
  - Determines how, why, when, where people interact
- Inferiority complex imposed on the colonized
- Colonial prejudice perpetrated against the colonized.
- Colonization, by virtue of its violent and exploitative nature, leads to resistance.

This is based loosely on Frantz Fanon’s perspective and is not intended as an endorsement of his beliefs, but rather as a critical lens through which to examine the violent history of colonization across the world.
Social Determinants of Health

- Gendered health disparities reflect a colonial past
  - Women caregivers
  - Male “breadwinners”
  - Anti-Trans violence
  - Sexual “deviance”
- NH/PI disproportionately affected by CVD, Diabetes, reflects change in lifestyle and diet as a result of colonialism
- Racialized disparities reflect a colonial past
  - Displacement
  - Lack of resources and opportunities
  - Poor education
  - Economic inequality
  - Lack of political leverage
Lasting Impacts

- Loss of cultural roles that mitigate harmful effects of anti-LGBT bigotry
- Reconciling a history of exploitation and displacement
- Navigating western systems with distrust
- Embracing western norms, indoctrination that Hawaiian culture is “useless”
- Generational Trauma
Potential Solutions

- Reconnecting with culture and embracing that cultural perspective that validates one’s gender and sexual expression

- Acknowledging history of exploitation and displacement as motivation to improve social circumstances (legislative, community, or other action)

- Native Hawaiian representation in the healthcare system

- Intentional inclusion of cultural practices that affirm deeply rooted identities

- Respecting cultural boundaries, cultural humility and competency training.
Ke Ola Pono at HHHRC

Serving Kanaka Maoli

- Reconnecting Kanaka Maoli to culture
- Increasing presence in Hawaiian communities
- Reducing stigma among marginalized and disenfranchised people

Improving Outcomes

- Until 2020, NH/PI were more likely than any other group in the USA to be diagnosed with AIDS at time of HIV diagnosis. This is no longer true!
- Hawai‘i overall improved linkage to care during pandemic lockdowns
Colonization Throughout the Pacific

Hawai‘i is not alone. The entire Pacific region has a history of colonization that has had lasting impacts.
More Resources

Hawaiʻi HIV Surveillance Reports and Epidemiologic Profile: https://health.hawaii.gov/harmreduction/hiv-aids-surveillance/

HIV Care and Prevention Services in Hawaiʻi:
Oʻahu (HHHRC): www.hhhrc.org
Hawaiʻi Island (Kumukahi Health + Wellness): www.kumukahihealth.org
Maui (Maui AIDS Foundation): www.mauiaids.org
Kauaʻi: (Mālama Pono Health Services: www.mphskauai.org
Mahalo nui!

Kekoaopoloʻolu Kealoha
HIV Program Manager
Hawaiʻi Health & Harm Reduction Center

kkealoha@hhhrc.org

(o) 808-521-2437
(d) 808-853-3285
(c) 808-464-5803

HIV testing is a good way to take care of your sexual health.

“Get tested regularly to know my status and to set an example for my community.” — KEOLUA FROM MOLOKAʻI, HAWAIʻI

BE THE ROLE MODEL YOU WANT TO SEE. GET AN HIV TEST TODAY.