***Dear Esteemed Students,***

***Thank you for taking the time to read this rough, incomplete draft of my book introduction. Please note that it is a work in progress, and I welcome your thoughts and feedback.***

***Sincerely,***

***Dr. L***

**Partitioning the Pacific**

**Carceral Geographies of Military Occupation in Hawai‘i**

**Introduction ~ Fences and Oceanic Indigeneity**

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 Photo taken by Ka‘ena lawai‘a (fisher), 2016.

The fence at Ka‘ena Point stands as a fragment of a constellation of partitions that span Hawai‘i and the entire Pacific. Yet, despite its linkage with this vast geography, the fence cutting through the island seascape on the western tip of O‘ahu is visibly degenerating. As a conservation infrastructure, its limitations are apparent: Oxidation from the relentless saltwater sea spray has caused its metal to rust, bringing the caged gates meant to regulate human access to remain stuck open. The rust combined with wind has collapsed the hood that was attached to prevent creatures from climbing over. Further, during low tide, a “coastal gap” enables critters to circumvent the fence. Despite the ongoing maintenance of the area by numerous institutions, the environment continues to assault the fence. But still standing, it slices through Ka‘ena Point, spanning 630 meters from shoreline to shoreline around an area thriving with fish, turtles, shellfish and monk seals living amidst coral and lava stretching into pulsating white waves, an imposing presence beneath the rocky cliffs topped with US military satellite trackers. Completed in 2011, its purported aim is to protect seabirds and native plants from predators such as cats, dogs, mongoose, and mice. Fishers photograph the fence’s decay as evidence that the natural elements will prevail against the technologies that manage not only the entry of animals into the space, but also the humans who have lived intimately with its land and water for generations.

“Conservation officers” policed, fined, and displaced fishers and houseless[[1]](#footnote-1) people in the area during the construction of Ka‘ena’s fence, leading many to view the infrastructure as part of a strategy to displace Hawaiian[[2]](#footnote-2) ways of life that is part of a longer history bound to the militarization of Hawai‘i. While the State of Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources and not the US military built this particular fence, it nonetheless stands as part of a genealogy of military occupation on the islands that has transformed entire ways of life by altering Hawaiian land tenure systems through displacement and the disruption of subsistence practices. Such partitioning enforces the regulation and containment of human-environment relationships while reconsolidating official state authority in the face of powerful grassroots claims to land. Yet while the institutions that build fences aim to master and control the environment, Hawaiian paradigms approach the ‘aina (land, that which feeds) as an elder sibling to respect and tend. Interdependence with the environment serves as a basis of abundance, livelihood, and survival. An active force wielding power to destroy fences, the natural world bestows ea, a Hawaiian word meaning “life, breath, and sovereignty.” This theory and way of life insists on interconnectedness between land and humans, promoting a vision of conservation premised on relationality rather than partition. Such ways of knowing and being premised on ancestral obligations to place forge the basis of solidarity across oceans (see Meyer, 1998; Katz, 2004).

Global in significance for both military strategy and grassroots movements against militarism and war, Hawai‘i functions as a key node amongst an archipelago of islands across the earth’s surface that serve as connecting hubs between other islands, multiple continents, its own region, and other oceans. The geography of oceans and islands have augmented empires since as far back as the 1500s, when European maps of shipping routes imposed knowledge and control upon vast stretches of water associated with lawlessness and disorder (Benton, YYYY). At the turn of the twentieth century during the Spanish American War, the ocean’s military significance grew, particularly for the United States as it began to advance expansive territorial dominance through island bases. Today, as the site of the Pacific Command, a formation established after World War II that has seen numerous configurations (footnote), O‘ahu hosts the headquarters for US military operations across the entire Pacific and Asia, spanning from India to the coast of California and from the Arctic to Antarctica, encompassing over half the earth’s surface and over half the world’s population. Islands also function as critical spaces for the emergence of resistance and resurgence movements, as sites shaped by multiple, overlapping histories. While imperial conceptions of the Pacific as an “American Lake” cast its islands as launching pads for hemispheric defense, many in Hawai‘i seize particular places to repattern socioenvironmental relations through the implementation of cooperative systems better suited for island economies. While some might consider Hawai‘i a “small place” in the language of Jamaica Kincaid, despite its size and isolation, I propose that these islands function as an axis point for the world, meaning a locale from which the world turns.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Examining the collisions between epistemologies that cast Hawai‘i as a strategic site versus a locus of place-based knowledge as departure point for expansive solidarities, *Partitioning the Pacific* is a geographical and historical study of the rhetorics and practices of everyday people confronting the United States military on O‘ahu’s contested land. These everyday people include fishers and farmers, houseless people, Hawai‘i community leaders, cultural practitioners, and veterans. This book focuses on the Wai‘anae Coast on the west side of the island of O‘ahu, where the US military controls 34% of Wai‘anae’s land (State of Hawai‘i, 2012a), with the satellite tracking station at Ka‘ena, three military bases, and a military “Rest Camp” on one of the coastline’s best beaches. The U.S. Census (2010) calculates that 62% of Wai‘anae residents are Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander compared to 21.6% for all of O‘ahu. In fact, the world’s largest concentration of Hawaiians live in Wai‘anae, with 23,609 of its residents identifying as Hawaiian, almost half of the region’s population, comprising a tenth of Hawaiians living in all of the islands (University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture, 2003; Honolulu’s Planning, 2002 in Fermantez, 2007). Wai‘anae’s population of approximately 50,000 has high rates of poverty, homelessness, and chronic disease (EPA, 2011). Based on this particular community’s narratives of military occupation, I argue that the military does not impose unilateral hegemony on Hawai‘i’s land and people. Rather, Hawaiian paradigms premised on human-environment interconnectivity persist and thrive, shaping the landscape of a highly militarized locale and posing an ongoing threat to US territorial domination.[[4]](#footnote-4) In particular, indigenous place-based stories, as creative geographical texts, map and make claims to land while shaping anticolonial efforts. In this context, military occupation in Hawai‘i does not function solely to open up markets and consolidate the power of the ruling elite (Klein, 2010), it also stands as part of a long history of contested efforts for US control of Asia and the Pacific to secure an “American” way of life premised on the capitalist consumption and patriotic conscription (Bacevich, 2013), US ideals (Friedman, 2001), and an entirely regulated relationship with the natural world.

Expounding this argument, this book makes three contentions: First, the US military in Hawai‘i stands as a portion of far-reaching carceral geographies that span the entire earth’s surface. Here I stretch the analysis of carceral geographies beyond spaces of formal imprisonment and detention (also see Loyd et al, YYYY; Smith, 2001; Ngai, 2004) to interlink the militarized fencing I examine in this book with prisons cages, border walls, and even more mundane forms of partitions such as roads, highways, ports, and parking lots. Carceral geographies uncover how spatial and architectural logics regulate space to mobilize social control (Gregory et al, 2011, pg 64; Davis, 2006), partitioning land to shape social relations and global economic systems (N. Smith, 1992).[[5]](#footnote-5) Partitions stand as the material dimensions of the carceral, spatially restricting and containing conditions of possibility for individuals and communities. Today’s built environment defined by ubiquitous walls and fences that surround conservation sites, military bases, homes, neighborhoods, public institutions, and commercial spaces produce a society premised on the regulation of human-environment relationships, individualism, segregation, the nuclear family, and the preservation of property—pillars of the US nation-state and contemporary capitalism. Infrastructural partitions such as highways, parking lots, checkpoints, and ports control and manage the flow of people, vehicles, and goods in and through space for social control as the basis for the viability of global capitalism. A fundamental element of carceral geographies entails the subjugation of life-sustaining practices that include care, mutuality, bearing witness to history through the telling of stories, and intricate knowledge of an environment. Partitions in this context produce a social order that strangles certain vibrant forms of life through the repression of sustainable land tenure systems through continual displacement and the ongoing disruption of subsistence practices—a process I call *repetitive dispossession*, premised on the partitioning of land and ocean space that mandates the ongoing displacement of Kanaka and local[[6]](#footnote-6) communities in Hawai‘i. More than “keeping people in,” carceral projects reconsolidate control over places in the face of crises (Gilmore, 2008; Hall et al, 1978), which include powerful indigenous and grassroots claims to land.

Because of the persistence of activism and other ways people organize their lives to challenge, confound, or thrive within the partitioning of land, the production of carceral geographies relies on the criminalization of populations, the production of an enemy to justify ongoing warfare against particular populations. This is evident with the fining of fishers and homeless people at Ka‘ena, as they were required during fence construction to adhere to strict and seemingly arbitrary laws regarding camping at night. Similarly, people living on the beach on land that is not partitioned into private lots are also vulnerable to arrest, and one transgressing a fence surrounding a house or public institution or commercial space without express permission would be subject to trespassing charges. As we can see, on US territory, one is compelled to follow a set of laws when moving through partitioned spaces to avoid falling into the crosshairs of a criminal justice system. In this context, the racial capitalist state must cast certain populations as “threats” to society, enabling society as a whole to organize itself around these threats to shape entire ways of life (Loyd with Gilmore, 2013). This is a wholly territorial practice, and I borrow Mae Ngai’s definition of territoriality as “the defining and policing of national space.” Carceral geographies show that the production of spatial divisions goes hand in hand with social ones, meaning that the casting of some as criminals, enemies, threats, or otherwise outside a normative social order contour the lines of race, class, indigeneity, and gender—social divisions that correspond with material partitions. The layered production of multiple racial and colonial projects that manifest through partitions in Hawai‘i represents only a portion of a continuum of violence (Gilmore, YYYY) across the world. I call the expansive working of these carceral geographies, which are both local and global in scope, a *carceral continuum* that interlinks disparate sites of violence and struggle.

 Second, I contend throughout this book that in the face of mobilizations and countermobilizations (Woods, 2000), partitions function as “cement,” a connecting force that “holds a ruptured social formation together” (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clark, & Roberts, 1978), producing what I call an *economy of partitions*. This represents a productive spatial project premised on the division of land to cultivate economies, habits, and ideologies rooted in military infrastructures. At its core, an economy of partitions is an economy of dependence on capitalism and the militarism. While many I interviewed for this book expressed dissatisfaction and frustration with an economy of partitions and its qualities of alienation, precarity, and group-differentiated premature death (Gilmore, 2007), one interlocuter described the US military as “DNA,” woven into the lives and livelihoods of Hawaiians as well as Hawai‘i itself. Many Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders approach the military as a key source of economic security and mobility in a place where first plantations and now military bases have wholly interrupted local subsistence economies. At the same time, many who have attained secure livelihoods through the military also critique its domination of land and resources. As we can see, fences do not produce clear “dividing lines” that separate different groups from each other (e.g. native/settler, military/civilian), rather, they produce a particular set of contradictory relationships to land, capitalism, and dominant state institutions. Rather than advancing elimination, an economy of partitions shapes the conditions of possibility for life, survival, and resistance in a carceral, militarized state.

Third, I show throughout this book that from the self-organization of homeless people to activism against live-fire training in a valley deemed sacred to Hawaiians, anticolonial place-based stories give rise to grassroots community initiatives that reveal significant capacity to shift the logics undergirding militarization. In addition to activism and other ways people organize their lives to challenge, confound, or thrive within the partitioning of land, the environment itself holds incredible power. It not only decays fences, but it is also the basis of abundance and vibrant forms of social life. Here we see layered dialectics: between ocean and land, race and indigeneity, place-based counternarratives in Hawai‘i and carceral geographies that are global and local in scope, between everyday life in a small part of Hawai‘i as a lens into a broader understanding of racemaking, warmaking, and resistance in the Pacific and the world. I call this theory and method that derives from Pacific worldmaking and resistance *Oceanic dialectics,* drawing from Epeli Hau‘ofa’s (2004) “Our Sea of Islands” that breaks out of confinement—analytical and otherwise—that limit the conception of the importance and power of Pacific environment and peoples. In contrast, Oceanic ways of knowing and being reveal the significant capacity of indigenous worldmaking systems to shift the structures and logics undergirding militarization, both in Hawai‘i and globally. Reckoning with this territorial push and pull, the US military and auxiliary institutions make concessions and adapt to grassroots efforts confronting military occupation, all the while criminalizing these practices. In sum, military occupation and the indigenous dispossession that it mandates are perpetually incomplete—in spite of the apparently overwhelming power of the militarized state.

Based on these arguments, this book illuminates a theory of indigenous resistance both against and in the shadows of a militarized carceral state. World War II martial law in Hawai‘i, the longest institutionalization of martial law in US history, represents a distinct turning point in the genealogy of military fences that I present here. The widespread construction of fences responded to anxieties regarding Japanese invasion (say more about this history). Yet it is important to note that martial law did not mark an entirely new moment of militarization, rather it represented an intensification of a long history of warmaking waged upon Hawai‘i that can be traced to the moment when the first documented vessel—the HMS Resolution, a war ship of the British Royal Navy—entered Hawai‘i’s waters in 1778 (Niheu, Turbin, & Yamada, 2007). It also represented a continuation of the wars of 1898, when the US military mounted a full-scale military occupation of strategic islands bases, including Hawai‘i, amidst the Spanish-American War. While this book traces the islan -based imperial strategy that marked the end of the nineteenth century up until the military occupation of today, the legacy of World War II martial law stands clear as a critical pivotal moment. Lasting from the December 7, 1941 bombing of Pearl Harbor to October 14, 1944, the U.S. military dominated Hawai‘i’s land, government functions, and social life while constructing fences all over the island of O‘ahu (also see Nebolon, 2017). These fences partitioned land where people grew their own food and caught fish to eat (Kelly and Quintal, 1977), consolidating a security infrastructure that continues to police indigenous and non-native local populations to this day.



 Recent years have proven to be critical in Hawai‘i due to the increased traction of claims for Hawaiian independence, and its proponents’ contention that the U.S. military’s significant hold on land poses an impediment to self-determination (Perkins, 2015). A study of Wai‘anae opens a window of the everyday lives, perceptions, and experiences of a predominantly poor and working class community, many of whom identify with a “Hawaiian” way of life in contrast to the urban life of neighboring Honolulu. In this and other senses, Wai‘anae itself, even though it’s a coastal region of a larger island, stands on its own as an island due to its geographic and social segregation. Both natural and human-made partitions surround this space, as the coastline stretches for seventeen miles sandwiched between the Pacific Ocean and the Wai‘anae mountain range, a “majestic curtain” that guards the region (Krauss et al, 1973). Unless one is hiking or has access to military roads, there is only one way in and one way out: the Farrington Highway. In addition to two major military bases controlling Wai‘anae’s land, two landfills, an oil-fired power plant, a waste treatment plant, an industrial park, unmarked dumpsites from former plantations and military bases, and numerous fast food chains define the region’s landscape. According to lifelong resident and community leader William Aila, “Wai‘anae pays the social and environmental price for the economic viability of the rest of the island.” In this way, Wai‘anae itself acts as an axis point for the rest of Hawai‘i, and a particularly crucial edge, or interface for competing claims to land and sovereignty.

 A meditation on questions of geographical scale and resistance, this book demonstrates how Hawaiian and Oceanic paradigms predicated on human-environment interconnectedness shape landscapes in the face of carceral geographies that span the world. By focusing on everyday life in a small area of Hawai‘i as a lens into a broader understanding of racemaking, indigeneity, and war in the Pacific, I not only reveal how the military and other state institutions engage in containment strategies in the face of powerful grassroots claims to land, I affirm the significance of locally situated relationships to broader struggles for environmental justice. In this endeavor, I also theorize a locally and regionally oriented conception of Oceanic connection in relation to global efforts for demilitarization. A primary aim of this analysis of indigeneity, race, and military occupation then is to rethink the centrality of Hawai‘i and the Pacific to global resistance movements against US warmaking endeavors.

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**Partitioning Oceania: Situating Hawai‘i on the Axis**

The partitions that structure US militarism forge a geographical resolution to global insecurity, with this resolution enacted through the control and denial of land, resources, and political power to poor and insurgent communities across the world, including the people of Wai‘anae (see Friedman, 2001; Gilmore, 2007; Robie, 1990). The source of these insecurities is multifaceted; they include geopolitical contestations, indigenous resistance, efforts to redistribute wealth and resources, and movements opposing environmental racism. Top-down responses to these problems primarily entail the fencing, dividing, and partitioning of land and people to enforce order and security. In this context, just as statemaking represents a territorial resolution to crises of legitimacy and monopolization of power (Gilmore, 2002; Mann, 1988; Tilly 1985), the partitions and bordermaking that make states possible consolidate such efforts spatially. This shapes the earth’s surface on a global scale, for example, through the production of command regions that enables the US military to operationalize its power (Cole et al, 2013) while constructing local environments through the containment and control over access to land and natural resources. As such, state power emerges through the control of broad territories as well as local environments, operationalized through partitions, and facilitated by the production of threats. Such threats entail the manufacturing of perpetual enemies that must always be fought yet can never be vanquished, including the “criminal,” “alien,” (Gilmore, 2009), and, in the case of Hawai‘i, particularly the “Chinese barbarian” and the unruly indigenous subject that I map in the following pages. (Note: I still need to do some more work to map this out.) Warmaking and fences simultaneously produce spatial and racial divisions while “mask[ing] the ruptures” that statemaking and warmaking have produced (Teaiwa, 2010).

First and foremost, militarization maps and divides land and territory to advance rule over multiple scales, including the local, regional, and global (Elden, 2010). Oceans, expanding over 80% of the planet, and islands as connecting hubs amongst these vast areas offer important strategic military functions for empires such as the United States, enabling expansive territorial control through island bases since the turn of the twentieth century (Lipman, 2008; Vine, 2009). The Pacific Ocean in particular, covering over a third of the earth’s surface, provides a “gateway” to Asia through its islands. Here the construction and production of ocean spaces serve the strategic interest of the US military, shapeshifting according to changing geopolitical conditions as well as political rivalries within the military itself (Cole et al, 2013). Global geographies are not fixed—like islands, they “are in flux: moving, changing, configuring, and reconfiguring.” Both security archipelagoes and the islands themselves that comprise them “are shifting, changing, negotiated relationships and connections arising from imperial rivalries and contestations, from domination and resistance, but also from cooperation and mutuality.” (Kauanui and Diaz, in Roberts and Stephens, 2017, pg. 67)

At the turn of the twentieth century, US naval policy spawned the expansion of US influence across oceans, particularly over Hawai‘i, a focal point in a constellation of strategically situated oceanic spaces. As a naval admiral and scholar of naval strategy, Alfred Thayer Mahan stands not as sole author of this sea power strategy, as other public voices supported US overseas expansion at the turn of the century. Yet Mahan’s cogent arguments regarding the military and commercial importance of Hawaii “crystallize[d] current thought” on Hawai‘i and other islands’ occupation, bringing matters “to take a definite shape.” (Livezey, 1975, pg. 180-181.) According to Mahan, controlling Hawai‘i would shape the entire world’s history and geography (ibid, pg. 178), calling it “key of the Pacific.” Control over Hawai‘i not only enabled control over the region and secured US influence over Asian nation-states, it also provided a strategic site in relation to the isthmus of Panama and thus the Carribean (Mahan, 1975), and by extension the Atlantic.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The rise of the US as global power coincides with “an unprecedented era of global ocean governance and militarization” (DeLoughrey in Perez, 2017), linked to aspirations for political and commercial global dominance. The Spanish American War and military reorganization that followed World War II both mark two key junctures. In 1843, Hawai‘i gained recognition as an independent state by the US, Belgium, Great Britain, and France. However, on June 1 and June 23, 1898 during the Spanish American War, a convoy headed to the Philippines and Guam violated international law by stocking up on coal in Honolulu. Then, on July 6, 1898, the U.S. Congress passed a joint resolution to annex Hawai‘i (Sai, 2004, p. 53). Decades later, following World War II, US bureaucratic institutions reached consensus to turn the Pacific into an “American Lake,” a “closed and unilateral sphere of influence,” an exclusively “American strategic preserve,” accomplished through mobile forces and creation of permanent bases on islands (Friedman, 2001, pg. xxv, 1).[[8]](#footnote-8) As part of a continuation of westward expansion, The growth of military capacity on islands importantly aided the expansion of global markets, particularly China’s, at the turn of the century, later again midcentury, and even today.


“Uncle Sam Catches the Ripe Fruit,” SF Call, January 23, 1893.

In a 1893 Forum article, Mahan calls Hawai’i “but a first fruit” of

many ripening fruits to pluck for US possession.

Here the policing, mapping, and control of the earth’s surface and its populations function as grounds for the constant expansion of economic and political spheres of influence. Settler colonialism in Hawai‘i—the elimination of native governance, cultural signifiers, and ways of life—is deeply dependent on racializing processes. For example, Mahan published a *New York Times* op-ed just weeks after the 1893 overthrow of Hawai‘i’s Queen Liliuokalani, brazenly titled, “Needed as Barrier: To Protect the World From an Invasion of Chinese Barbarism.” In it, Mahan implores the “civilized world” to consider the important geographic position of Hawai’i in relation to China. Primarily, he highlights the significant number of Chinese people relative to the rest of Hawai‘i’s population and iterates the threat of “a wave of barbaric invasion” that have buried civilizations in the past and could well do so again in the future. He concludes by stating “Our own country, with its Pacific coast, is naturally indicated as the proper guardian for this most important position” in Hawai‘i, requiring “a great extension of our naval power.” Later, targeting Japanese people in a 1898 letter from Mahan to a South Dakota senator, Mahan justifies possession of Hawai‘i because of the risk of Japanese “overrunning and assimilation,” a “grave military danger.” (1975, pg. 538). Mahan and other military strategists’ ambitious oceanic goals rely on the production of a threat, wherein the state “simulates, stimulates, and even fabricates threats of external war.” Such orientalist undertakings require an “imaginative geography” that casts the east as both a geographical unit and field of study subject to the whims of European imagination. This erases the complexities of vastly diverse societies, histories and traditions that emerge throughout Asia. Yet orientalism not only controls, manipulates and suppresses the East, it is also a productive method for defining Western identity (Said, 1979). Such racial projects enable and justify the perpetual war of the settler state (A. Smith, 2006).

The Pacific here operates as the place from which “the West survives the East,” (Arvin, 2014) particularly amidst China and Japan’s unpredictable economic booms and busts combined with looming war anxiety, first from Japan’s imperialist adventures and now from China’s growing economic prowess and military arsenal as well as North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs. Whereas it previously sufficed to simply call Chinese “barbarians” and state the threat of Japanese “overrunning” Hawai‘i’s white population, today, commodified, multiculturalist notions of Hawai‘i as a racial paradise in fact bolsters its function as a military garrison (Man, 2015). Here we see the resolution of contradictory, fractured (Goldberg, 2002) relations through liberal racial discourses that obfuscate the racism and violence of US projects for global hegemony. Concomitant with these mollifying racial discourses, the militarized partitioning of land forges a spatial resolution to this global insecurity by controlling and denying land, resources, and political power to communities that threaten US political and commercial dominance globally.

While much has been written in the field of Asian American studies about yellow peril and US military strategies to contain and control Asian populations (Rafael, 2000; Cho, 2008; Nguyen, 2012), this book in particular centers the Pacific as a geographic unit, field of study, and space of resistance and indigenous resurgence. It brings together scholarship on carceral geographies and indigenous Pacific studies to address how contemporary militarism shapes colonial dispossession through environmental projects. Existing research examines the expanding penal and police system fueled by domestic and national security imperatives (James, 2007), as state bodies must constantly “simulate, stimulate, and even fabricate threats of external war” to promote their power (Tilly, pg. X, YYYY), an ongoing effort that shapes entire ways of life (Gilmore, 2013). Focusing on the carceral geographies of Hawai‘i, I am also in conversation with a growing body of work documenting ongoing efforts for Kanaka resistance (Silva, 2004) and resurgence (Goodyear-Ka‘opua, 2014) that are rooted in love and care for the land. In particular, I am in conversation with Noenoe Silva, Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘opua et al (2014), Davianna McGregor (2007), Marion Kelly et al (1977), and many otherswho foreground the lives and stories of everyday Pacific peoples in Hawai‘i—the maka‘ainana, or commoners. It builds upon existing histories by documenting the encounters of commoners with institutions propelled by aspirations for oceanic conquest, subverting and remaking these forces in the process while reshaping the surface of the earth across Oceania. These books as well as my own are part of growing work on the Pacific that approach the region as a space shaped by indigeneity, navigation, migration (Somerville, 2012; D. Chang, 2016), war, colonialism, resistance (Shigematsu and Camacho, 2010; Davis, 2015), and transnationalism (K. Chang, 2012). *Partitioning the Pacific* brings these distinct bodies of literature together to convey how security infrastructures contain the real possibility of alternative futures yielded by indigenous projects that are local, regional, and global in scope.

**The Military in Hawai‘i**

The “domestic” U.S. military base and surrounding area represent a particularly crucial locale where internal consolidation of a social order overlaps with external war making projects, and Hawai‘i’s vast and concentrated military geography is especially informative. Planner Mark Gillem (2007) describes the profound spatial implications of military outposts, describing features of “America Towns” as defined by pollution, cars, walls, gates, and fast-food restaurants. All of these stand as prominent features of Hawai‘i’s landscape. The military hosts 77 installations on the islands, using 204,305 acres (verify with most updated DoD base structure report), approximately 5.7% of the islands’ total land and 23% of O‘ahu, Hawai‘i’s most populous island (Kajihiro, 2009). Today, seventeen percent of Hawai‘i’s population is military-affiliated, and the 2000 Census found that Hawai‘i has a larger concentration of military presence than any other state (Kajihiro, 2009, pg. 273). Militarization contributes to dispossession, homelessness, loss of subsistence practices and culture, destruction of sacred sites, youth military recruitment, poverty, disease, and the stripping of Hawaiian self-determination (ibid; Trask, 1993; Niheu et al, 2007). Its environmental impacts are vast, as three of four O‘ahu Superfund sites designated for federal cleanup[[9]](#footnote-9) are associated with the military (EPA, 2010). The military acknowledges that activities such as these leave behind ordnance and emit significant air and water pollution (U.S. Army Env. Command, 2009). It is important to note that the US military has also shaped the built environment of Hawai‘i beyond its bases. For example, the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1959 funded highway expansion and solidified the islands’ position as “the crossroads of the Pacific” (Gonzalez, 2013, p. 69). These highways also connect military bases across the islands.

Military installations remain concentrated in Wai‘anae, shaping Wai‘anae’s environment and therefore the lives of its inhabitants. William Aila’s family spans generations in Wai‘anae, and he is a fisherman, Hawaiian cultural practitioner, and public official. He explained that the military literally resides in his backyard:

I grew up right up the road here (gestures toward Wai‘anae Valley), two miles into the valley, and we could always hear the training at Schofield [on the other side of the Wai‘anae mountains]. We can always see and smell the smoke from fires that they start…We can hear it today. You can hear the 155s shooting, you can hear the machine gun and the practices going on. … I remember as a young man watching bombs go off into the valley. Tufts of smoke, dirt flying in the air. I actually remember one time when I was fishing off of Mākua, the U.S.S. Missouri before it was decommissioned, fired into Mākua. Large 16 inch rounds.

Many others describe the blast of explosions from military practice as part of daily life, describing the regularity of shaking furniture, and one person recounting that blast vibrations once threw her off their couch. Military presence not only brings volatility to daily life, its domination of land produces uneven access to natural resources that could otherwise be used for more monetarily productive ends, like farming. This combination of volatility and poverty contributes a warlike quality to daily life in Wai‘anae, and one youth even described the daily inter-community violence in the region as a “war zone.” Militarization reaches into communities well beyond bases (Lutz, 2002).

Yet military occupation is neither total nor complete. The “multidirectional flows of oceanic space” (Giles, 2017, pg. 434) give form and shape to the “archipelagraphy” produced by territorial struggles (DeLoughrey in McDougall, 2017, pg. 260). In contrast to imperial Oceanic strategies, grassroots communities in Wai‘anae articulate opposing environmental paradigms based on their own Oceanic analytics. Like the ocean, the military partitioning of land is contested, open, non-linear, and in flux. They change and adapt according to shifting political economic conditions. (Katz, 2004). In doing so, they collectivize projects for self-determination while challenging paradigms that rely on racial capitalism and war.

**Scholar-activist Research**

Place-based strategies rooted in mo‘olelo that center generational ties to the environment and the particular struggles of the dispossessed as well as oceanic strategies committed to partitioning the earth’s surface produce the history and geography of Hawai‘i and Oceania. As such, these competing forces give shape to the book. Its methodology and analysis engages with this dialectic between theory from the ground and military strategy from above to gain a fuller understanding of local, regional, and global dynamics. It foregrounds the mo‘olelo, lives, activism, and collective knowledge of everyday people in Wai’anae as a window into global processes. This research stems predominantly from ethnographic research supplemented by archival material. Dominant perspectives espoused by the generals and military strategists derive largely—but not solely—from government documents and secondary sources. This is because the workings and thinking of public officials are relatively well documented and preserved, while the ongoing work of maka‘ainana to sustain connections to place amidst repetitive dispossession faces the risk of relegation to the dustbins of history. By putting place-based knowledge, shared through oral history interviews and participant observation, on the same level as officially documented knowledge, I highlight the power and influence of grassroots knowledge and struggles in making places and environments throughout history.

 Collecting data on the Wai‘anae Coast of O‘ahu, I engaged in intensive research living in Wai‘anae for almost a year from September of 2013 to June of 2014, with additional ethnographic research visits starting in 2011 and ending in 2017. I conducted fifty interviews with a range of people connected to Wai‘anae, namely Hawaiian cultural practitioners, community leaders, fishers and farmers, homeless people, veterans, and military personnel. Although not a primary research method, I did speak to higher-level military officials when I was able to reach them through personal contacts and persistence. Through participant observation, I joined in the daily life of the community and supported the operations of community organizations such as the Wai‘anae Environmental Justice Working Group. Last, I examined multiple archives, including news articles and government documents. Archival research entailed excavating the extensive files of Hawai‘i Peace and Justice, a grassroots community organization (formerly the American Friends Service Committee Hawai‘i Area Program) that has confronted the social and environmental implications of military presence in Hawai‘i since the Vietnam War. While conducting research, I identified two recurring themes: the partitions that give shape to Wai‘anae, and mo‘olelo that assert ongoing interconnectedness between Kanaka and particular places.

The race, colonial, and class dimensions tied to the segregation of Wai‘anae became evident early on in my research. About a week after I moved to Wai‘anae, the worker who installed wifi in my unit told me that he was from California and sensed immediately that I was not from the area. I explained I moved to Wai‘anae for research, and he immediately responded, “What are you researching, animal behavior?” In addition to references to Wai‘anae inhabitants as animals, other comments that I encountered is the widespread conception that the entire region is “dangerous,” that their premature death is linked to “progress,” and that the people living there are in need of salvation. These comments speak to the normalization of racism and colonial paternalism typical of the ways in which often liberal-leaning people living outside of Wai‘anae often speak about the concentrated poverty of Hawaiians in Hawai‘i. These are also common perceptions of a highly segregated place shaped by intense race and class polarization.

These ideas offer telling portrayals of the race and class anxieties surrounding low-income neighborhoods inhabited by people of socioeconomically oppressed ethnic groups. Much has been written about the geography of urban centers in the continental United States, such as New York City and Chicago. These places developed along racial lines in accordance to race-based housing policies linked to Jim Crow segregation and federally-backed loans, which created a “dual housing market” enforcing racial segregation (Taylor, 2012). This resulted in white flight and concentrated poverty in Black neighborhoods that came to be associated with racist perceptions of a crime-ridden “ghetto” (Wilder, 2000; Coates, 2014). The dialectic of racist policies and grassroots activism shape such places (Gregory, 2011). At the same time, middle class people in highly segregated places define themselves based on their distance from poverty. In Hawai‘i, the interpolation of race, poverty, and place are similarly historically situated, yet followed different paths that center on iterations of colonization and war, infrastructural development tied to plantation economies and militarization, and conflicts over access to water, which I detail in the following chapter.

While many understood the importance of researching militarization in Wai‘anae, still people expressed surprise that I had decided to live and engage in political work there. I found myself explaining that as a product of multiple diasporas, my work on war, racism, and dispossession returns to realities that have defined previous generations in my family. For my parents, Hawai‘i represents flight—from massacre in Nanjing and revolution in China then casual racism in the US South, as the wars facing my mother’s family were ongoing; and from working class Jewish life in New York City after previous generations had escaped from pogroms in Eastern Europe, coupled with my father’s imperative to flee the Vietnam War draft. The desire for their mixed race child to embody the “American Dream” materialized through life in a sanitized Honolulu suburb in the ahupua‘a of Waikiki, now known as a famous tourist destination rather than place where multiple streams provided sustenance to its inhabitants. In many ways, the material and ideological conditions that forged my life have obscured ongoing histories of racism, war, and indigenous dispossession. I engaged in this project because I decided while I was taking women’s and ethnic studies undergraduate courses that I no longer wanted to flee: I felt the urgent need to confront some of the processes that had shaped my life yet remained “hidden in plain sight” (Ferguson and Turnbull, 1998).

Furthermore, as a researcher, my contradictory positionality on insider/outsider borderlands became a fruitful space from which to develop knowledge. Many in Wai‘anae invited me into their homes and community spaces, openly sharing stories and happy that I understood the protocol of offering food as a guest in their space. Frequently, during interviews and meetings, rather than a one-way flow of knowledge from interlocuters to myself, we engaged in dialogue in which I contributed my own insights from activism, scholarship, and personal experiences, asking people to challenge, confirm, or expand on my own formulations. This co-creation of knowledge was made possible by my shared personal and political investment in Hawai‘i’s people and environment. At other times, my outsider positionality became eminently clear. Blunders early on due to limited understanding of Wai‘anae social protocol, my presence as a young woman living alone during early months in Wai‘anae, and my pronunciation of words and construction of sentences marked by years of formal education on the US continent—as opposed to the pidgin vernacular common in working class Hawai‘i communities that hybridizes English, Hawaiian, and Asian dialects—marked me definitively as an outsider. In Wai‘anae, I became more self-conscious of these factors than the fact that I am not Hawaiian. People in Wai‘anae identify fundamentally with their place-based positionality and many Hawaiians in Wai‘anae also maintain strong identification with mixed Asian heritage. My simultaneous outsider and insider status gave me critical distance for these and other insights regarding questions of race, indigeneity, class, place, and aspirations for Hawaiian self-determination and economic and environmental justice that function centrally to this book. Also, few would deny that Wai‘anae is a place for loners, oddballs, and outcasts—qualities that define me and brought me tight into the community orbit.

This location on insider/outsider borderlands encouraged me to reflect on my positionality as a researcher committed to developing research from the ground that finds strength in multiple perspectives. Centering both lived experiences and human-environment relationships, research and writing from the ground develops history and theory that foregrounds the ongoing work of indigenous, working class, and other marginalized people engaged in collective efforts for sustainable abundance. These projects are vital—not alternative—to the ongoing history of Hawai‘i and all indigenous lands marked by colonization and dispossession. Discussions about Hawaiian/non-Hawaiian political solidarity arose frequently in conversations with organizers and activists in the city of Honolulu, approximately 30 miles away from Wai‘anae. These conversations always challenged me to carefully consider my role in indigenous movements, which I understand as “accompanying.” This term appears to have originated in El Salvador through Latin American liberation theology, recognizing the power of the displaced to understand and remake their worlds. Accompaniment recognizes that the life experiences and professional training of the people with whom I conducted research are not identical to my own, yet together we are exploring the way forward based on a sense of kūleana—collective responsibility—for present and future generations. Accompaniment is prefigurative, modeling the world we hope to live in together (Lynd, 2012).

Scholar activism offers the potential to open, transform, and redefine our meanings of the world we are collectively making (Gilmore, 2008). My participation in community organizing efforts in New York City informed my methodology and analysis. It compelled me to participate in organizing efforts to meet community leaders and activists, and to familiarize myself with political conflicts unfolding over the course of my research. In addition to recording everyday life, participant observation and the writing of fieldnotes enabled me to chronicle discussions and dynamics in organizing spaces. Rather than participant observation, I engaged in “observant participation,” with an emphasis on participation. This provided “means to reflect on the effectiveness, transformation, reformulation, and application of everyday interventions” against oppression. In this sense, the reflexive note taking of organizing activities constituted a self-critique and form of praxis (Vargas, 2008, p. 176). This guided my community participation while enabling me to reflect on the purpose of this research: to generate dialogue that can inform organizing against global militarism.

Linking my teaching experience and field research to grassroots political education, I worked with the Wai‘anae Environmental Justice Working Group, particularly one of its leaders named Lucy Gay, to organize monthly movie screenings that compared issues in Hawai‘i with global processes. At our first Wai‘anae Film Series event on March 14, 2014 at Leeward Community College’s Wai‘anae campus, where Lucy is the Director for Wai‘anae Educational Opportunity, we showed Vanessa Warheit’s (2009) *Insular Empire* on U.S. colonialism in the Mariana Islands alongside *Makua: To Heal a Nation*, made by Na Maka O Ka ‘Aina (1996). After these films, attendees discussed in small groups issues that included militarization, resistance, and visions for environmental justice in Wai‘anae. Employing a similar format, our next screening explored parallels between another Hawaiian anti-eviction struggle on Sand Island and the Black power movement. The third event featured organizers from Hawai‘i Peace and Justice and examined the connections between military occupation in Hawai‘i and the global network of U.S. military bases. The fourth and last Wai‘anae Film Series screening explored Hawaiian independence movements in relation to questions such as global poverty and international debt. These events were free, open to the public, and provided organic and locally sourced meals made by community members and funded by groups such as KAHEA: The Hawaiian-Environmental Alliance.

As word spread, 100 people in this rural town of approximately 50,000 regularly attended these events. They spoke about kaumaha (grief) from loss of lands and erasure of culture, anger towards the military for their hold on land and other resources, sadness regarding the poverty and pollution in Wai‘anae, and inspiration to protest, organize, and restore Hawaiian ways of life and independence from the United States. They remarked on the importance of these forums to generate and share grassroots analyses of their conditions while envisioning alternative futures. As a result, I continued to work with community leaders to develop sufficient infrastructure so that the Wai‘anae Film Series could continue after I returned to New York City to complete my degree. During my years completing this manuscript, marked by Black Lives Matter, Standing Rock, Mauna Kea, and resurgence of anticapitalist political organizations, this book broadly aims to pave openings for solidarity between indigenous communities, people of color, and poor people confronting militarized violence. Through close engagement with one Hawai‘i community comprised of maka‘ainana, poor, and working class people, the methods and framework of this book offer insights regarding the collision between global militarized partitions and Oceanic analytics that emerge from local counternarratives as a basis of expansive solidarities.

*Closing Thoughts, By Way of Opening…* (Need to rework this, maybe axe it)

Carceral geographies uphold unsustainable, crisis-driven environmental systems, with crisis marking the inverse of sustainability. As an enduring condition, the term crisis describes formations that persistently fail to meet human needs (Strolovitch, 2013). For example, Wai‘anae faces *ongoing* crises of homelessness, poverty, and illness. As I outline in the next chapter, plantations and ranches diverted water from the lo‘i (taro water terraces) that provided sustenance to Hawaiian families in Wai‘anae. The theft of water advanced theft of wealth, a process that continues to this day. Further, plantations and ranches concentrated land in the hands of a few individuals andfacilitated military takeover. This historical trajectory of plantations and ranches to military bases emerges from the twin structural crises of war and capitalism. With war premised on the destruction of all forms of life, and capitalism requiring the ongoing expansion of markets, constantly seeking new opportunities in search of profits, both require ongoing conquest of land and ocean, a limited resource. As such, the twin formations of capitalism and war are not sustainable in the long term.[[10]](#footnote-10) Further, in addition to signifying an enduring condition, crisis signifies a moment of rupture: the dissolution of socioenvironmental worlds. Amidst this, reconstitution occurs. For example, today’s rupturing of agencies such as the EPA has garnered a renewed commitment to sustainability in communities and grassroots, municipal, and educational institutions. Again, crisis signifies the inverse of sustainability: Crisis is when things fall apart and sustainability marks ongoing creative and experimental efforts premised on longstanding wisdom to devise environmental relations and socioeconomic formations that will hold together for future generations

Further, while carcerality upholds unsustainable systems while enclosing other ways of life, carceral spaces are also wahi pana (storied places) budding with possibility. Wai‘anae mo‘olelo invoke intimate personal, familial, and spiritual connections to the natural world that inform the environmentalism of fishers as well as community efforts for resource protection. The indigenous intellectual traditions (Woods, 2000) of Hawaiian and non-native fishers, farmers, and houseless people make and remake socioenvironmental relations, reframing relations to places as rooted in collective and cross-cutting strategies of survival and resistance that counter the colonial logics of carcerality. As Cindi Katz (2004) argues, “Countertopographies can slice through the lethal binaries of ‘us’ and ‘them,’ calling forth political projects that can confront what it means to live—everywhere—in the shards of capitalist modernity, and make impossible the maneuvers of global capitalism and militarized adventurism that would use these shards as a weapon” (p. 259). It is precisely these ways of being and knowing that military and State institutions approach as threats to their control over land and land-based knowledge. Through carceral measures such as fences, contested institutions reconsolidate legitimacy through the containment of practices that yield alternatives to dispossession, war, and capitalist accumulation. In response to enclosure, Hawaiian intellectual traditions inform burgeoning efforts for sustainability and indigenous self-determination, with potential to shape movements against the crises of racial capitalism, carcerality, and war on a global scale.

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1. In Hawai‘i, many who live outside call the land their home and instead refer to themselves as “houseless,” redefining their subjectivity in relation to place. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. I use Hawaiian, indigenous, Kanaka Maoli, Kanaka, and native interchangeably. Kanaka Maoli represents a decolonizing practice and “indicates…genealogical relationship to the lands and water of our islands” of Hawai‘i (Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, 2014, p. 2). At the same time, I more frequently use “Hawaiian” to reflect the vernacular encountered through ethnographic research and convey how many people define themselves. “Hawaiian” further reminds readers that Hawaiian does not work as a residency marker, like “Californian.” Note that Kānaka or Kānaka Maoli (with a macron) can denote plural. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. To call Hawai‘i an axis point is not to call it singular or unique. Rather, it is to say that these islands comprise a portion of a more expansive archipelago of relatively small places that have a significant bearing on global developments. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. One high-level military commander that I interviewed for this book called Hawaiian presence and activism a “unique pressure” that the military must contend with in Hawai‘i. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. On how carcerality shapes ways of life, also see Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2008), “Forgotten Places and the Seeds of Grassroots Planning” in *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Politics, and Methods of Activist Scholarship*. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. “Local” reflects Hawai‘i vernacular to refer to long-time residents in Hawai‘i who are typically working class and non-Hawaiian. Eric Yamamoto (1995) argues, “local identity links Asian Americans with Native Hawaiians and other groups…by creating a collective culture and an oppositional Hawai‘i-based identity rooted in resistance to increasing external socio-economic control” (p. 46-47). However, Haunani-Kay Trask (2000) argues for the *specificity* of the genealogical ties and political conditions for Native people in Hawai‘i. In doing so, Trask critiques “local” as a term that celebrates Asian insider status in Hawai‘i while denying indigenous history and dispossession. Acknowledging these specificities, this book also endeavors to rethink possibilities for solidarity between Hawaiians and locals. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. In an 1895 letter to a senator, Mahan stresses the importance of controlling Hawai‘i and carefully weighs the benefits and disadvantages of acquiring ports in Guam, Manila or Subic Bay in the Philippines, near the mouth of Yang-tze Kiang in China, on the island of Pago-Pago, two near the Isthmus of Central America, and two in the Caribbean, particularly in on the Windward Passage between Cuba and Haiti, a calculation that led to control over Guantanamo. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Importantly, the United States was not the first to make such grandiose oceanic imperial claims. In the late 1800s, Yosaburo Takekoshi declared his aspirations to turn the Pacific into a “Japanese Lake,” asserting that “who controls the tropics controls the world” (Winchester, 2016). But even then, these ideas were not new. In 1524, Hernan Cortes declared, “He who controls the passage between the oceans may consider himself master of the world.” (Khanna, 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Superfunds are the product of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA). This is a U.S. federal law that devoted financial and institutional capacity to clean up sites that meet particular standards of contamination (Superfund sites). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Yet capitalism and war both constantly find spatial and other “fixes” to this problem. I plan to explore this more as I develop my theorization of crisis. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)