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### The Choice's that Resulted in Annexation

Hawaii's annexation began to formulate with just five boys on a mercantile ship. Teachers of Christianity believed these Hawaiian boys, as well as the people of the Hawaiian Islands, were in need of what they had to offer. They set sail towards Hawaii with Christian teachers, men, and women on board with the intention to spread the word of God and transform Hawaiian beliefs to their own Christian beliefs. The "missionary diaries testify to the perception of Hawaiians as a 'degraded' and 'ignorant' people; missionaries earnestly believed, however, that they might provide Hawaiian islanders with the dual gifts of civilization and salvation," according to Jennifer Thigpen in her article, "You Have Been Very Thoughtful Today: The Significance of Gratitude and Reciprocity in Missionary-Hawaiian Gift Exchange" (548-549). The Christian Missionaries played a central part in United States involvement with Hawaii, which ultimately led to Hawaii's annexation. However, the bonds that began to formulate between the missionary wives and the ali'i appeared to be a positive thing in the beginning, but this mutual trust was betrayed when the Hawaiians were stripped of everything they ever knew.

Hawaiians once had a society that had all their needs met and all of its residents were taken care of in every aspect. Their way of life may have been different than what Americans had seen or been used to, but it worked for them. The Natives prospered in their native land until Capt. James Cook discovered their island along with their generosity. His discovery didn't stay hidden long and, soon after, the Natives began to have numerous encounters with "western

travelers and traders.” Forty years later “The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, sent a band of Missionaries” to Hawaii in order to convert the natives. The wives who accompanied their husbands on this mission were forbidden to play a dominant role, but the women of ali’i began to formulate relations with the missionary wives and this intimacy is what led to the respect and trust of the missionaries. Although these relations were formed, both the ali’i and the missionaries had their own personal agendas that they were working toward fulfilling. The relationships did continue to progress due to the fact that each was getting their needs met, or the needs that seemed crucial at the time. They did not know that having their needs met by these relationships would be the beginning to an end (Thigpen 545-553).

As soon as the first boat of Christian Missionaries set sail, the Annexation of Hawaii began to formulate. This may not have been the intentions of the missionaries, but this journey to Hawaii was the start of events that led to Hawaii’s annexation. The Christian Missionaries got to work as soon as they arrived on the island. According to Irma Tam Soong in her article “Christianity and Dr. Sun Yat-Sen’s Schooling in Hawai’i,” the arrival of the missionaries took place in 1820 and by 1822 they had formulated “an alphabet and orthography of the Hawaiian language in order to spread the gospel through the written word [and in] less than twenty years the first public schools for the Hawaiians had been established” (76). The Hawaiians were given the opportunity to learn how “to read through Christian textbooks.” The missionaries were encouraging the Hawaiians to change their values, beliefs, and their way of life, but they were also offering something else in place of what they were giving up. Many of the Hawaiians were receptive to this change and open to learning about what the missionaries were offering (76). Henry Z. Niedzielski tells us in his article “The Hawaiian Model for the Revitalization of Native Minority Cultures and Languages” that after a few years English was the dominant language

used in schools. “This was, in part, because Hawaiian Chiefs, the ali’i’s, wanted their children to learn an international language. A law was even passed in 1860 making it illegal to give a child a Hawaiian name, unless an English Christian first name accompanied it” (369). This law quite may have caused some discomfort in the Natives and disrupted the relationships that they had begun to build with the missionaries

The missionaries’ objective when they showed up to Hawaii was to show the Hawaiians another way of life and convert them to Christianity. Their objectives changed along the way not by their own will, but by the specific needs of Hawaii. Helena G. Allen in her novel *The Betrayal of Liliuokalani Last Queen of Hawaii 1838-1917* states that the missionaries “came simply to ‘Christianize the heathen,’ [and] by economic need and by the request of the alii [chief] they [missionaries] entered into commerce and government” (144). The missionaries supposed that their own beliefs of “economic prosperity would be Hawaii’s also: there was, only one way to prosper the country; that was to Americanize it” (144). The Annexation of Hawaii falls upon the missionaries as well as some of the Hawaiians. They sought guidance and counsel from the missionaries and some, not all, believed it would be better for economic purposes to ally with the United States. King David “Kalakaua was a paradox; on one hand, he gave the Hawaiians exactly what they wanted; a flamboyant king, a leader reaching out to other nations, establishing an entity for his people; on the other, he gave the commercial classes exactly what they wanted: Hawaii’s first economic boost—and opening for annexation” (143). The king was doing what he could to keep the peace and ensure prosperity for his country, but ultimately he is one who must endure accountability for the annexation of Hawaii.

The last hope for Hawaii to restore their independence was with the reign of Queen Liliuokalani which was cut short. If she’d been given more time and had the support of the

United States through the missionaries, she may have been able to save her homeland from annexation. According to Vivian Ducat in her *PBS* television program *Hawaii's Last Queen*, Queen Liliuokalani took over the throne in 1991 after her brother died. The queen was “born in 1838 [and]... was trained by missionaries in Western academic disciplines and the ways of polite American society.” However, she never forgot where she came from. She valued her Hawaiian roots and was devoted to her people (“Hawaii’s Last Queen”).

She formulated a secret plan to regain independence for her people and her country, but shortly after she began her reign, the United States rescinded Hawaii’s part in the “sugar market.” Due to this revocation, Hawaii was on the brink of economic depression, and the sugar growers believed there was only one way to avoid financial disaster and that was through the annexation to the United States. “The clash of interests that ensued drew plantation owners, native Hawaiians, the US government, and the Queen's cabinet into the fray.” The Queen did all she could, but all hope in saving her homelands was lost when “four boatloads of United States Marines armed with Gatling guns and hundreds of rounds of ammunition came ashore in Honolulu...heading for the palace. The following day, she surrendered at gunpoint, yielding her throne to the government of the United States. A provisional government led by wealthy white sugar growers assumed control of Hawaii and petitioned the US for annexation.” When the queen yielded her throne, Hawaiians were forced to yield their home (“Hawaii’s Last Queen”).

The Hawaiians trusted their Queen and were loyal to her until the end. The original missionaries, who went out to Hawaii, went with the intention to offer Hawaiians a better way of life, and they did for a short time. However, progenies of the missionaries became greedy and wanted to make profit from the sugar fields. Lilikala Kame’eleihiwa says in her article “Lil’uokalani” in order to increase their revenue “Lorrin Thurston... along with other

descendants of American missionaries led a coup d'état, in collusion with the U.S. minister to Hawai'i, John L. Stevens. Stevens ordered troops from the USS *Boston* ashore, ostensibly to support Thurston and what became known as the 'Provisional Government' so Hawaiian sugar could be marketed in America without payment of the duties imposed on foreign sugar" (par.3). Their greed overpowered their Christian principles that they were taught to live by, and the Hawaiians have suffered tremendously. Kame'eleihwa in "Lil'uokalani" expresses the people's loyalty to their Queen, as well as the Queen's brave actions and loyalty to her people. Hawaiians were so loyal to their Queen and they were ready to stand against the soldiers who came to steal her throne, but in order:

To prevent bloodshed, Queen Lil'uokalani forbade her people to engage militarily with U.S. troops or American citizens, although armed Hawaiian volunteers outnumbered the American forces. Hawaiians, regarding their queen as a spiritual as well as political leader, unhesitatingly obeyed. The queen sent emissaries to Washington, D.C., to seek peaceful removal of American troops, but the American military chose the Pearl Harbor lagoon as headquarters for the Pacific fleet. The United States annexed Hawai'i in 1898, without allowing the Hawaiian people to vote on the matter. Because the queen ceded the country under military threat, the coup has been deemed illegal under international law.

(par.3)

The Queen sacrificed her throne and her homelands so that her native peoples' lives could be spared. The United States took this for weakness, but her actions proved humble and powerful. They didn't get to keep their independence but they were able to keep their pride and morality through this injustice which is more than can be said for the greedy individuals responsible for this unspeakable act.

The annexation of Hawaii caused great controversy between US officials who disagreed on the benefits that could be made and the consequences that would have to be endured. Lauren L. Basson in her article “Fit for Annexation but Unfit to Vote” expresses what those disagreements were, “U.S. officials who favored annexation as a form of geographical and market expansion and those who opposed it due to the racial character of the Hawaiian population that would become eligible for U.S. citizenship,” this caused tension (575). Those who were pro annexation were equally prejudice towards Hawaiians as those who opposed it. Not only did the Natives lose their land, independence, and life as they knew it, but they were also forced to endure constant judgment and scrutiny from the people who now had control over their land, their laws, and their lives.

The Christian Missionaries went with the intention to save these people from their way of life and ultimately their presence destroyed every aspect of life as the Hawaiians knew it. Haunani-Kay Trask in her book *From a Native Daughter* testifies that “Native society was a familial relationship organized by tribes...in which the necessities of life—land, water, food, collective identity, and support were available to everyone” (25). The Hawaiians may not have had all the opportunities that people have in the United States, but it’s impossible to miss something that you’ve never had. They were content with the lifestyle they’d always lived. It’s the only lifestyle they’d ever known and the missionaries had to come in with the belief that they could show them something better. Who are they to decide what lifestyle is better? How are they qualified to make that judgment? They began with pure motives but ultimately were corrupted by material goods and money.

Our basic needs are food, water, and shelter. Next on the list would be security, love and safety. If the former is met, then we have what we need in order to survive; if the latter is met,

then gratitude should come into play because that brings about a sense of peace and serenity. The Hawaiians had these needs met before the missionaries came into the picture. Hawaiians, having experienced the new lifestyle, were now reformed to missionary standards and beliefs. However, been given the choice to go back to the lifestyle that brought about peace or a life of luxury only to later suffer agonizing pain and destruction. I would bet that many Hawaiians and Americans alike would chose the former. The United States can't go back and take back the irreparable damage that was done. The public apology was a start, but it will take a lifetime of performing living amends if we are ever to deserve forgiveness for the injustice that was done to the Natives of Hawaii.

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