Spring 5-6-2020

Racial Politics and the U.S. Annexation of Hawaii

Joseph Hearl

Racial Politics and the U.S. Annexation of Hawaii

Joseph Hearl

HIST 485

Dr. Claudine Ferrell

Abstract

A highly complex racial debate preceded the 1898 U.S. annexation of Hawaii, the diverse population of which served as a political tool for annexation proponents and opponents alike. Annexationists used this ethnic diversity to stress racial difference and the differing degrees of assimilability in the Island populace. Through this rhetoric, annexation proponents simultaneously emphasized a white supremacy that was expansive, indomitable, and adaptable to racial difference—convenient for their economic goal of globalized trade. Contrarily, opponents used Island diversity to highlight "inferior" races and defined the entire population by the negative stereotypes of singular racial demographics, thus homogenizing the Islands as collectively nonwhite and a threat to white America's wellbeing. Anti-annexationists typically framed this opposition in terms of economics, climate, tradition, and disease, constructing a white supremacy that was dependent on segregating and preserving the racial homogeneity of the white populace. The ultimate results of this debate were two divergent constructions of Hawaiian demography and white identity, both politically fashioned to suit the respective party's broader economic goals.

For nearly fifty years, U.S. annexation of the Hawaiian Islands stuttered and stalled, abandoned amid the Civil War and Reconstruction eras only to be reappraised with the 1893 overthrow of the Islands. Despite significant opposition and a foundering 1897 treaty, acquisition of the Islands was finally fructified in an intensely debated 1898 joint resolution. For decades, dreams of breaching oriental markets through Pacific expansion had suffused economic theories, and conceptions of sea power as a strategic necessity infatuated military minds with potential Pacific outposts. Through the 1898 arrival of the Spanish-American War and its consequent nationalist fervor, congressmen suddenly found yet more justification for pursuing a Pacific empire. With each passing year, interest in the "Hawaii Question" had amplified, and war with Spain flung the Islands into a confluence of economic, militaristic, and social debate integral to achieving annexation.

Fundamental to this debate was the issue of race. Increasingly reliant on imported contract labor, the Hawaiian Islands were one of the most ethnically diverse regions in the sphere of nineteenth-century America's influence.[1] Politicians, business magnates, and even the general public were acutely conscious of this diverse populace, and they constructed their positions on annexation accordingly. Underlying nearly every facet of the debate was a question of race—would nonwhites be in economic competition with whites? Was the homogenous white ideal of

[1] According to the 1896 Hawaiian census report, the Island population totaled 109,020, including native Hawaiians, "Part Hawaiians" ("any admixture of Hawaiian blood"), Americans, British, Germans, French, Norwegians, Portuguese, Japanese, Chinese, South Sea Islanders, and a small (600 persons in total) group of "Other Nationalities." The report noted that all demographics continued to grow at significant rates excepting native Hawaiians, whose numbers continued to drop, though at a diminished rate from prior censuses (9.9 percent versus 13.9 in the prior census). It should be noted that this census did not account for demographic overlap in children of foreign-born parents; "in assigning nationality that of the father [was] always taken," potentially altering the apparent degree of diversity in nationalities. General Superintendent of the Census, *Report of the General Superintendent of the Census, 1896* (Honolulu: Hawaiian Star Press, 1897), 31-34.

American identity compatible with racial diversity? What were the implications of nonwhite Hawaiian citizenship and suffrage? These were but a few of the racial dilemmas annexation posed, and to debate them was to interrogate American racial identity at a fundamental level. Annexation thus offers profound insights into 1890s U.S. racial politics, and relegating those politics to the periphery of economics and strategy, as many scholars have, hampers a comprehensive understanding of the annexation.[2]

Despite its glaring historiographical absence, race's role in the annexation is being increasingly examined. At the forefront of this racial scholarship have been historians like Lauren Basson and Eric Love. Basson's *White Enough to Be American?* (2008) describes the multiracial nature of the Islands as an obstacle to annexation.[3] According to Basson, introducing the racially, as well as geographically, diverse territory into the U.S. challenged notions of American identity that hinged on ethnic homogeneity and contiguous geography. Her 2005 study of the post-annexation 1900 Organic Acts debate similarly assessed annexation's challenges to

[2] Few annexation studies address race, and even fewer have it as their subject. Prolific diplomatic scholar Merze Tate produced the first strictly race-oriented analysis, though she focused on early annexation attempts rather than the Hawaiian Republic period. Pacific historian Thomas Osborne, in his 1981 analysis of anti-annexationists, did address race; however, he did so only marginally and ultimately dismissed it as inconsequential to the debate. Finally, historian Roger Bell's 1984 monograph, *Last among Equals*, presents a highly intersectional discussion of racial politics, colonialism, and Hawaiian statehood—though the majority of his discussion pertains to the post-annexation era rather than the events surrounding annexation. See Merze Tate, "Slavery and Racism as Deterrents to the Annexation of Hawaii, 1854-1855," *Journal of Negro History* 47, no. 1 (January 1962): 1-18; Thomas Osborne, *Empire Can Wait: American Opposition to Hawaiian Annexation, 1893-1898* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1981); Roger Bell, *Last among Equals: Hawaiian Statehood and American Politics* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1984).

[3] Lauren Basson, *White Enough to Be American? Race Mixing, Indigenous People, and the Boundaries of State and Nation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

white identity, as well as congressional attempts to limit nonwhite rights.[4] The heterogeneity of the Hawaiian populace indeed shaped the annexation debate extensively, though Basson does not examine the ways in which each party utilized this diversity to its own political advantage. A closer examination of the debates demonstrates that ethnic diversity was not solely a political obstacle but also a tool; annexation opponents could homogenize the entire population according to the stereotypes of individual ethnicities while annexationists emphasized the "whiteness" of some races over others—among other equally nuanced uses.

This idea of emphasizing whiteness was dissected by race historian Eric Love in his 2004 book *Race over Empire* and later essay "White Is the Color of Empire" (2007), both of which mark the most in-depth racial studies of the annexation to date.[5] Seeking to overturn prevailing notions of imperialists as paternalists set on civilizing campaigns, Love argues that annexationists "abandoned" their paternalist and assimilationist rhetoric, fearing that white benevolence would be politically unpopular in light of the country's considerable racial tensions.[6] Instead of noting nonwhite Islanders, asserts Love, expansionists emphasized the white descendants of American sugar planters and missionaries on the Islands to define Hawaii in exclusively white terms and thus make annexation more acceptable to mainland politics. Love's

[4] Lauren Basson, "Fit for Annexation But Unfit to Vote? Debating Hawaiian Suffrage Qualifications at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *Social Science History* 29, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 575-98.

[5] Eric Love, *Race over Empire: Racism and U.S. Imperialism, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2004); Eric Love, "White Is the Color of Empire: The Annexation of Hawaii in 1898," in *Race, Nation, and Empire in American History*, ed. James Campbell, Matthew Guterl, and Robert Lee (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 75-102.

[6] Love, *Race over Empire*, 119-20.

scholarship traces the annexation from pre-revolution Hawaii to the Spanish-American War, and his research on racial politics is invaluable.

Despite being a powerful thesis, however, it is misdirected. Far from having "abandoned the rhetoric of racial uplift, Christian mission, the 'white man's Burden,' benevolent assimilation, and any other language that placed nonwhites at the center of their initiatives," annexationists consistently used the rhetoric of paternalism and civilization in discussions of Hawaii.[7] The Spanish-American War, which Love argues affected little in the congressional racial calculus, was regularly trumpeted as an opportunity to protect Pacific races; if expansionists were truly fearful of emphasizing diversity, why would they make it such a prominent tactic of their war promotion? Love's thesis, while complicating the more generalized narrative of imperialism, dismisses the inherent complexity of white supremacy and racial politics. Constructing whiteness was one of many annexationist racial tactics rather than the overarching political strategy that Love asserts it to be—one of several points this research hopes to demonstrate.

From these as well as other studies, several points can be synthesized regarding annexation. First, historians Merze Tate and Thomas Osborne have provided more than enough evidence that the root of annexation politics was economic.[8] In the years leading up to annexation, expansionists vigorously sought a Pacific pathway to lucrative Asian markets, while

[7] Love, *Race over Empire*, 120.

[8] Osborne, *Empire Can Wait*; Merze Tate, *Hawaii: Reciprocity or Annexation* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1968). Equally valuable to understanding the extensive history of U.S.-Hawaii relations is Tate's earlier monograph, which, though problematic in its apologetic depictions of U.S. imperialism, remains an invaluable work of Pacific diplomatic and political history. See *The United States and the Hawaiian Kingdom: A Political History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965).

opponents warned of a path toward imperialism deleterious to domestic interests.[9] This opposition was composed of primarily Democrats and a small sect of dissident Republicans, who, while favoring market expansion, resisted the global scale many expansionists proposed.[10] Nascent notions of imperial sea power and social Darwinism, as described by historian Julius Pratt, offered strategic and social arguments conducive to this larger economic impetus.[11] The onset of the 1898 Spanish-American War, itself predicated on many of these ideas, only hastened annexation through the rhetoric of nationalism and patriotism, as demonstrated by diplomatic historian Thomas Bailey's trendsetting research.[12] Additionally, Noenoe Silva's groundbreaking analysis of Hawaiian language sources describes native Hawaiians' prominent roles in opposing annexation, both on the Islands and the mainland, and their significant impact on the Hawaiian and American annexation discourse.[13] Finally, Basson's and Love's aforementioned scholarship

---

[9] Osborne, *Empire Can Wait*, 122-30. Osborne also notes that annexation opponents "did not come close to envisioning the extensive commercial empire" of McKinley expansionists, and while they "favored commercial prosperity[,] few . . . were militant trade expansionists" (102).

[10] According to historian Robert Beisner, Democratic congressmen were generally opposed "to the expansionism of McKinley's Republican administration"; however, their overall support for the anti-imperialism movement was tepid and politically tactical. Osborne further describes this expansionist ambivalence, asserting that while Senate Democrats were initially supportive of annexation in 1893, those in the House were vocally opposed. President-elect Grover Cleveland's opposition to the 1893 annexation treaty stifled this early Democratic Senate support. The 1898 partisan divide was similar, and, overall, Republicans appear to have had the most party unity, rallying behind expansion. Robert Beisner, *Twelve Against Empire: The Anti-Imperialists, 1898-1900* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1968), xii. Osborne, *Empire Can Wait*, 4-8.

[11] Julius Pratt, *Expansionists of 1898: The Acquisition of Hawaii and the Spanish Islands* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1936).

[12] Thomas Bailey, "The United States and Hawaii during the Spanish-American War," *American Historical Review* 36, no. 3 (April 1931): 552-60.

[13] Noenoe Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004). Fluent in Hawaiian, Silva authored the first analysis of native Hawaiian resistance movements and sources such as the 1897 anti-annexation petition, signed by more than 21,000 Hawaiians. Silva's scholarship marks an important shift in annexation historiography, drawing attention to the intense opposition of native Hawaiians to annexation and criticizing earlier scholars like Ralph Kuykendall and William Russ for marginalizing native resistance movements. Silva

adeptly evinces how congressmen filtered all of these concerns through a politically conscious racial lens, acutely aware of Hawaii's diverse population and its political implications.

Such complexity produced racial politics significantly more intricate than this literature reveals, however. Hawaii's diversity allowed annexationists to stress racial heterogeneity and differing degrees of assimilability in the Island populace. Proponents could then highlight the white minority and tout the assimilability of "semi-civilized" groups like native Hawaiians while simultaneously emphasizing the racial threat of a Japanese invasion. Paternalism was thus presented in a way that preserved American Yellow Peril prejudices and stressed white interests. Annexationists expressed this heterogeneous racial ideology through arguments of paternalism and strategy, and in doing so defined a white supremacy that was expansive, indomitable, and adaptable to racial difference—convenient for their economic goal of globalized trade.

In contrast, opponents used Island diversity to highlight "inferior" races and defined the entire population by the negative stereotypes of those specific racial groups. This approach effectively homogenized the Islands as collectively nonwhite and a threat to white America's institutions and supremacy. Such xenophobic othering was both politically viable and integral to anti-imperialist economics that stressed defending domestic manufacturers. Anti-annexationists typically framed this racial opposition in terms of economics, climate, tradition, and disease, constructing a white supremacy that was dependent on segregating and preserving the racial homogeneity of the white populace. The ultimate results of this debate were two divergent

---

argues that "the lack of historical reference to such a large and organized resistance is typical of colonial situations, in which the archive in the language of the colonizer is privileged to a high degree over that of the vernacular," and the only way to truly examine annexation is to engage with the thus-far underutilized Hawaiian sources. Silva, 125. For the primary subjects of Silva's historiographical criticism, see also Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom: Volumes 1-3* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1938-67); William Russ, *The Hawaiian Republic (1894-98) and Its Struggle to Win Annexation* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1961).

constructions of Hawaiian demography and white identity, both politically fashioned to suit the respective party's broader economic goals.

A core tenet of annexationist thought was exemplified in an 1898 meeting of the Sunset Club, an intellectual symposium for Chicago's prominent businessmen.[14] On a winter evening in early February at the Palmer House Hotel, the Club conducted its eighty-eight meeting. The topic was "the very interesting and timely subject" of Hawaii's annexation to the U.S.[15] This was no ordinary annexation discussion, however; in his preliminary remarks, Club Secretary Howard Smith noted, with awe, that the chairman for the evening would be "a native" of the Islands. "I must say," the secretary began, "the chairman . . . did not meet my ideas of what a native of the Sandwich Islands was." He continued, chronicling how their peculiar "brother left his savage home amid the plantains and the palm trees" and "plung[ed] with great success" into the commerce of Chicago, a "center of progress and culture," and having "abjured all heathen practices" adopted the language and cultural accoutrements of a civilized business professional. Concluding his remarks, the secretary implored his audience to "disclose to [their] acquisitive gaze one of the natives of the Sandwich Islands," as he introduced Chicago Title and Trust Company president David B. Lyman.[16]

---

[14] Ultimately disbanded in 1901, the Club was formed in 1889 purportedly "to foster rational good-fellowship and tolerant discussion" among prominent male Chicagoans such as lawyers and entrepreneurs. J. Seymour Currey, *Chicago: Its History and Its Builders; A Century of Marvelous Growth* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing, 1912), 1: 182.

[15] Howard Smith, *The Sunset Club, 1898-99: The Meetings of 1898-99 and a List of Members to September, 1899* (Chicago: Sunset Club, 1899), 39.

[16] Smith, *Sunset Club*, 39-40. The secretary hedged on the "heathen" remark, qualifying "at least so far as was necessary to permit him to engage in the practice of law" (40).

Lyman jested that in the Chicago climate he was "obliged to forego short skirts" before recounting a Hawaiian history celebratory of sea-faring Europeans and Americans. According to Lyman, these industrious immigrants "christianized" and "civilized" the "little speck right in the center of that entire [Southern Pacific] ocean," Hawaii. Ever diffident, the speaker conceded, "I am a simple barbarian."[17] Though an amusing narrative, Lyman's claims were not altogether true. In fact, David Brainerd Lyman was the son of David Beldman Lyman, an American missionary to Hawaii. His mother was Sarah Joiner, born in Vermont. Indeed, Lyman was born in Hawaii, but he was far from the indigenous "barbarian" that he and his audience assessed him as. He was part of the white American missionary and planter class, a group Queen Liliuokalani condemned as "pseudo-Hawaiians" for marginalizing native Islanders and falsely claiming indigeneity to promote annexation.[18] In the secretary's introduction, he noted that "much of the argument for and against annexation hinge[d] upon the character of the natives."[19] He hoped that Lyman's appearance would put that question to rest: as would be seen, Lyman and the natives were, in every stretch of the word, white.

The Sunset Club's meeting embodies a popular annexationist tactic of inventing whiteness and asserting fraternity with the white Island minority, a racial tool well-analyzed by historian Eric Love. In the halls of Congress, and—as suggested above—throughout America,

---

[17] Smith, *Sunset Club*, 40-42.

[18] Liliuokalani, *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen* (Boston: Lothrop, Lee, and Shepard, 1898), 325. By Liliuokalani's time, the white missionary and planter class had profoundly influenced Hawaii, having reshaped legislative, racial, and economic politics on the Islands to best suit white business interests. For an extensive accounting of white Americans' expanding political and economic influence on the Islands, see Jonathan Osorio, *Dismembering Lahui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002).

[19] Smith, *Sunset Club*, 39.

annexationists sought to emphasize the white presence in Hawaii to refute opposition arguments that the Island populace was "inferior," incapable of assimilation, and detrimental to white American society. As Love has shown, congressmen often diminished the presence of nonwhites on the Islands by inflating numbers of white Americans and Europeans as well as frequently counting the Portuguese population as white to construct an Anglicized Hawaii.[20] Multiple mainland annexationists spoke in fraternal terms of their white Hawaiian counterparts and asserted that few if any nonwhites existed on the Islands.[21] Some went so far as to claim that those few who did reside there would inevitably face "extirpation" by whites or die off regardless.[22] By promoting a white man as the face of native Hawaii, organizations like the Sunset Club thus made a compelling argument for racial solidarity and annexation.

However, while Lyman's presence reflected one tactic, his rhetoric evinced another. Throughout his narration and later exchanges with fellow attendees, Lyman asserted another major annexationist talking point—that, when provided the proper environment, Hawaiians were so fundamentally assimilable to white culture as to become nearly indistinguishable from

---

[20] Love, *Race over Empire,* 146; Love, "White Is the Color of Empire," 90.

[21] Love, *Race over Empire*, 152; Love, "White Is the Color of Empire," 95. According to Love, "white racial brotherhood became a vital leitmotif of pro-resolution debate."

[22] Marion De Vries, *Hawaiian Annexation: Speech of Hon. Marion De Vries, of California, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 17. De Vries elaborated that "the experiences of mankind demonstrate that all inferior races decimate and become extinguished before the march of Anglo Saxon civilization and laws. The annexation of Hawaii, with the Chinese exclusion condition quoted, means the extirpation from Hawaii of the Chinese, Japanese, and Hawaiians now competing in open market with our laborers. The invasion by Anglo-Saxons following annexation of these islands so guarantees" (17). Notions of whitening Hawaii through ethnic cleansing were frequent, as seen in the comments of Representative Charles Pearce that white intermarriage would increase "mixed Hawaiian stock" and decrease "natives of full Hawaiian blood." See Charles E. Pearce, *Annexation of Hawaii: "Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Sway"; Speech of Hon. Charles E. Pearce, of Missouri, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 15.

"civilized" white Americans.[23] Integral to annexationist politics was the idea that Islanders, while inferior, were capable of development. At an annexationist address to the Grafton and Coös Bar Association, former representative and influential politician Harry Bingham described native Hawaiians as having "a peaceable, law-abiding disposition" and as "educated and intelligent."[24] The Hawaiian Commission, an 1898 annexationist congressional committee tasked with investigating annexation prospects, similarly described native Hawaiians as "a kindly affectionate people, confiding, friendly, and liberal," and emphasized their willingness "to associate and intermarry with the European or other races."[25] Annexationists did not seek solely to whiten Hawaii, but also to perpetuate a stereotype of "peaceable" and "affectionate" Hawaiians naturally predisposed to adopt the superior white culture.

This innate predisposition was not enough for civility, however. To annexationists, Hawaiian racial development could be cultivated only by a white overseer, trimming the errant weeds of incivility and barbarism destined to entrap the Hawaiian at any moment. Former Minister to Hawaii John Stevens, architect of America's role in the 1893 coup and inexhaustible annexationist, while complementing Hawaiians as "good debater[s]" and "fluent talker[s]," warned that they were "just the material . . . to fall prey to demagogic arts" and presently risked

---

[23] Smith, *Sunset Club*, 41. Silva has described the *haole*, or non-native Hawaiians like Lyman, as "sons of the missionaries who were determined to eradicate Kanaka culture because it was savage, dark, and inferior" and who were "imbued from birth with a sense of their own superiority to the natives; their parents and grandparents had come to Hawaii in order to bring enlightenment and civilization." Lyman's story, with its indigenous erasure and themes of white civilization, thus reflects a larger racial narrative endemic in the nineteenth-century white missionary culture. See Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 126.

[24] Harry Bingham, *The Annexation of Hawaii: A Right and a Duty* (Concord, NH: Rumford Press, 1898), 16; Bingham, *The Annexation of Hawaii*, 10.

[25] Hawaiian Commission, *The Report of the Hawaiian Commission* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1898), 3.

"a drift back to barbarism."[26] In his popular *Picturesque Hawaii* (1894), Stevens crafted a history of Hawaiians as violent pagans subject to alcoholism and corruption without the guiding hand of white government officials and missionaries.[27] In an extended romanticized description, Stevens fully embraced the theme of white cultivation, proclaiming the "Anglo-Saxon" as the "author" of Hawaii and the cultivator of its tropical flora, including the "rubber tree," "baobuab," "avocado," "mango," and even palm trees.[28] "Most people . . . do not know that when the white man came, Honolulu was a treeless, sandy plain . . . . Honolulu . . . is the creation of the foreigner," asserted Stevens, who claimed this fruitful paradise to be evidence "of the beneficent transformations that . . . foreigners [have] effected in Hawaii."[29] To Stevens, Hawaiian progress required whites.

Like Stevens, annexationists regularly reminisced on the industry of white immigrants, particularly missionaries, who, in the words of Representative Albert Berry, "found [Hawaiians] in an almost barbarous condition and set to bring about a condition of civilization."[30] By virtue

---

[26] John Stevens and William B. Oleson, *Picturesque Hawaii: A Charming Description of Her Unique History, Strange People, Exquisite Climate, Wondrous Volcanoes, Luxurious Productions, Beautiful Cities, Corrupt Monarchy, Recent Revolution and Provisional Government* (Philadelphia: Hubbard Publishing, 1894), 14-26.

[27] Stevens said the Hawaiian "religious instincts may carry him to extremes from modern Christianity to a resuscitated heathenism, and he may not be able himself to tell where he belongs at times. He needs a rudder to guide him in these respects, as in many others." Stevens and Oleson, *Picturesque Hawaii*, 29. To stress what this barbarism would entail, Stevens described violent, "grotesque," and likely exaggerated customs prevalent before the civilizing arrival of missionaries, such as when "a little child had her eye scooped out for daring to taste a banana." Stevens and Olseon, *Picturesque Hawaii*, 3.

[28] Stevens and Olseon, *Picturesque Hawaii*, 50.

[29] Stevens and Olseon, *Picturesque Hawaii*, 50.

[30] Albert Berry, *Proposed Annexation of the Hawaiian Republic: Speech of Hon. Albert S. Berry, of Kentucky, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 4. Republican Representative Edwin Burleigh similarly described how "American missionaries reclaimed their [Hawaii's] natives from barbarism" in his advocacy for annexation. Edwin Burleigh, *Annexation of Hawaii: Speech of Hon. Edwin C. Burleigh, of Maine, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 5.

of Hawaii's diverse populace, annexationists could emphasize the presence and role of whites throughout Hawaiian history. In doing so, they constructed a paternalist narrative that gradually evolved into white obligation to assist "struggling races."[31]

While historians like Love dismiss the role of the "white man's burden" and paternalism on Hawaiian annexation politics, examples abound of annexationists describing their nation as a father obliged to nurture and uplift his Hawaiian children. The aforementioned Hawaii Commission referred to natives as "childlike," and Bingham similarly spoke of Hawaii's relationship with the U.S. as "like a child to its father."[32] Popular political cartoons in magazines like *Puck* regularly infantilized depictions of the Islands, personifying the nation as a wailing dark-skinned infant, obstinate schoolchild, and other demeaning caricatures always juxtaposed with a fatherly, and very white, Uncle Sam.[33] Republican Representative George Ray phrased it thusly: "It is the mission of the United States to elevate, educate, and ennoble . . . all the peoples of the earth," situating annexation in a larger narrative of "uplifting . . . the human race."[34] To annexation proponents, Hawaiians had an inherent potential for assimilation and civil virtue, and

---

[31] Galusha Grow, *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands: Speech of Hon. Galusha A. Grow of Pennsylvania, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 5.

[32] Hawaiian Commission, *Report of the Hawaiian Commission*, 3; Bingham, *The Annexation of Hawaii*, 7.

[33] See, for example, Udo Keppler's "A Trifle Embarrassed," depicting manifest destiny delivering an infantile Hawaii, among other territories, to the "U.S. Foundling Asylum." It is one of many of Keppler's expansionism cartoons to include a childlike Hawaii. Keppler, "A Trifle Embarrassed," Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, accessed April 6, 2020, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2012647587/. Interestingly, Silva notes that political caricatures of Queen Liliuokalani and Hawaiians were often based on preexisting stereotypical black caricatures, and cartoonists thus used existing prejudices against black people to convey similar racist notions regarding Hawaiians. This racist model was recycled even further in popular cartoon depictions of Filipinos during the 1898 Philippine-American War. See Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 176-78.

[34] George W. Ray, *Annexation of Hawaii: Speech of Hon. George W. Ray of New York in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 4.

their current success and stability were the products of a white population nurturing that potential. For annexationists, then, to abandon Hawaii was akin to abandoning a child.

Not everyone on the Islands was fit for assimilation, however. Annexationists were keenly aware of American labor's animus toward Asians, a vehemence fostered from years of Chinese immigration perceived by American workers as depressing wages and threatening their jobs.[35] The significant Asian population on the Islands thus threatened many Americans and was an ever-occurring racial talking point of annexation opponents. To make their annexation arguments politically acceptable, proponents excluded Chinese and Japanese citizens from their assimilation rhetoric, using the ethnic diversity of Hawaii to delineate between racially tolerable and intolerable ethnic groups.

Republican Representative Jacob Bromwell, for example, simultaneously described "the inhabitants of Hawaii" as "desirable" and likely to "become homogeneous" with whites while denigrating the "undesirable class of Asiatics."[36] Representative Albert Berry asserted that Hawaiians were "honest" and "not . . . savages," but assured fellow legislators that "the Chinaman, when he gets together a few hundred dollars, will go back to die in the happy Land of the Sun from which he came."[37] Native Hawaiians, Portuguese, and other races denominated as not white by annexationists were regularly classed in different terms and levels of assimilability separate from Asians, who most condemned and claimed would promptly leave the Islands.

---

[35] Matthew F. Jacobson, "Annexing the Other: The World's Peoples as Auxiliary Consumers and Imported Workers, 1876-1917," in *Race, Nation, and Empire in American History*, ed. James Campbell, Matthew Guterl, and Robert Lee (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 120-24.

[36] Jacob Bromwell, *Remarks of Hon. J. H. Bromwell, of Ohio, on Hawaiian Annexation, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 11.

[37] Berry, *Proposed Annexation of the Hawaiian Republic*, 12-13.

Anti-Asian sentiments were not just rhetorical. The joint resolution excluded the existing Chinese population from immigrating to the U.S., and it stipulated that restrictions on further Asian immigration to the Islands would also accompany annexation.[38] These measures were undoubtedly added to avoid contravening the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, but they were also to appease popular xenophobia toward Asians. Incorporating Asian prejudice into annexation swayed at least one congressman's vote, with Representative Albert Todd contending that, were Asian citizens not excluded from annexation, he would "oppose the measure with all [his] power."[39] While annexation opponents would use Hawaii's ethnic diversity to highlight an undesirable Asian populace, annexationists frequently used it to minimize Asians in favor of other races. This racial heterogeneity thus allowed annexationists to promote racial paternalism without challenging popular prejudice.

At the same time, annexationists were relying on a perception of white supremacy as expansive and racial superiority as immutable and intrinsic to the individual. Wherever white Americans traveled, according to proponents like Minister Stevens, industry and civilization followed, and the white minority on the Islands served as a testament to the civilizing nature of whites. Native Hawaiians and their fellow "inferior" races possessed the racial aptitude for civilization and political participation so long as they were under the watchful eye of a white presence. This appeal to white superiority was strengthened by fictitious constructions of a predominantly white Hawaii and claims of indigeneity by white men like David Lyman. The

---

[38] "Joint Resolution of July 7, 1898, Public Resolution 55-51, 30 STAT 750, to Provide for Annexing the Hawaiian Islands to the United States," National Archives Catalog, accessed April 6, 2020, https://catalog.archives.gov/id/5730378.

[39] Albert Todd, *Hawaiian Annexation and Extension of American Influence: Speech of Hon. Albert M. Todd, of Michigan, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 7.

conception of an expanding and insurmountable white supremacy was crucial to furthering paternalist arguments and integral to annexationists' broader goal of expanding trade. Proponents of annexation could thus couch that economic goal in the language of white civilization and racial uplift while utilizing a diverse population to navigate anti-Asian politics.

Such themes of racial uplift and indomitable white supremacy often led annexationists to situate Hawaii in a larger narrative of white global conquest. Representative Henry Gibson prefaced his speech on the joint resolution with a meandering summary of the "hardy and adventurous race . . . known as the Vikings," whose "spirit of adventure" led them westward in conquest.[40] According to Gibson, "the English descendants of [those] Vikings" colonized the U.S., and with "the spirit . . . still raging in their breasts," they traversed and conquered the West, now setting their sights upon "the whole boundless ocean."[41] Gibson perceived Hawaiian annexation as the natural progress of white civilization into the Pacific and a necessary step for attaining global white supremacy.

Gibson was not alone in his supremacist assessment. In a *Chicago Daily Tribune* article titled "Vantage in Hawaii," U.S. Civil Service Commission Chair John Proctor trumpeted the "potency" of white Americans' "propensity to acquire land" and the "colonizing instincts . . . inherited from [their] sea-roving ancestors." He continued:

> The English-speaking peoples . . . have advanced more in material wealth during the century now closing than in all the previous centuries in the history of our race . . . . [O]ur race has the means of unlimited expansion without imperiling national unity.[42]

---

[40] Henry Gibson, *Hawaii, the Great Ocean Crossroads: Speech of Hon. Henry R. Gibson, of Tennessee, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 3.

[41] Gibson, *Hawaii, the Great Ocean Crossroads*, 3-4.

[42] John R. Proctor, "Vantage in Hawaii: John R. Proctor Reviews its Import to United States," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 21, 1898.

Proctor, like Gibson, situated annexation in a narrative of white conquest. Historian Julius Pratt has stressed how the supremacist mentalities of social Darwinism and manifest destiny had a considerable influence on annexationist policy, and such expansionist notions of white supremacy were crucial in conveying annexationists' larger policy of economic expansion.[43] By fitting Hawaii into this racial grand narrative, annexation proponents like Proctor and Gibson could not only defend its acquisition but also inspire solidarity and racial pride among white Americans.

The presence of missionaries on the Islands inevitably led to religious interpretations of this racial triumphalism. Representative Galusha Grow, for example, perceived annexation as "part of the plans of Divine Providence" leading toward "[t]he millennium, long promised" and preached of the "lightenings of heaven" and the arrival of a "vigorous race."[44] Grow argued on "behalf of struggling races" and condemned past President Grover Cleveland's failed plan to restore the monarchy as "kiss[ing] the extended hand of [Hawaii's] dusky Queen" and "recreant to liberty."[45] Representative William Mesick similarly characterized the U.S. as "under the

---

[43] Pratt, *Expansionists of 1898*, 2-11.

[44] Grow, *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands*, 6. The entirety of Representative Grow's statement bears inclusion, if only because of its sheer homiletic fervor: "The moral law was first proclaimed in the thunders of Sinai, and the earthly mission of the Saviour of mankind closed with the rending of mountains and the throes of the earthquake. The Goddess of Liberty herself was born in the shock of battle, and amid its carnage has carved out some of our grandest victories, while o'er its crimson fields the race has marched on to higher and nobler destinies. . . . . [F]reedom's cannon furrows the fields of decaying empires and seeds them anew with human gore, from which springs a more vigorous race to cherish the hopes and guard the rights of mankind" (6). The influence of Spanish-American War nationalism on Grow's annexation policy is evident.

[45] Grow, *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands*, 5. President Cleveland staunchly opposed annexation and supported Liliuokalani's restoration, characterizing the provisional government as owing "its existence to an armed invasion by the United States" and the overthrow as "an act of war, committed with the participation of a diplomatic representative of the United States and without authority of Congress." James H. Blount, *Foreign Relations of the U.S., 1894: Affairs in Hawaii. Report of U.S.*

guidance of Divine Providence," while Representative Jacob Bromwell touted "the progress of [Hawaii] from a state of paganism to the highest plane of Christian civilization."[46] These religious interpretations of expansion and racial paternalism were bolstered by the arrival of war with Spain, which congressmen characterized as a "holy war" in which annexation was a necessity.[47]

Annexationists thus saw white supremacy, and therefore Pacific expansion, as naturally and divinely ordained, and the Hawaiian Islands were an important step in the realization of Christian white supremacy. Requisite for this supremacy was military dominance. By strengthening military influence and strategic capabilities, the U.S. could ensure the protection of racial and commercial supremacy. Naval Officer and historian Alfred Thayer Mahan's hagiography of naval power in *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* (1890) had a profound influence on this strategic debate. [48] Mahan understood international relations in highly competitive terms, characterized by self-interested nations locked in a tumultuous struggle for economic and strategic hegemony. International dominance in this contested sphere depended on

---

Special Commissioner James H. Blount to U.S. Secretary of State Walter Q. Gresham Concerning the Hawaiian Kingdom Investigation, 53rd Cong. 3rd sess., 1894, quoted in Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 134.

[46] William S. Mesick, *Proposed Annexation of Hawaii: Speech of Hon. William S. Mesick, of Michigan, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 6; Bromwell, *Remarks*, 6.

[47] Representative Pearce, for example, characterized the conflict as "a just and holy war," calling Spain "a blight upon civilization and a curse to downtrodden millions of the human race" and asserting that Hawaii was integral to the war effort. Pearce, *Annexation of Hawaii*, 7. In his concluding remarks, Representative Grow took this rhetoric yet further: "The starry banner of our fathers, baptized in patriot blood in the first and second war of American independence, and rechristened in the mighty conflict of arms in the history of the race, will henceforth . . . be the emblem of liberty, justice, and the inalienable rights of mankind." Grow, *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands*, 8.

[48] Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1890).

economic production, the preservation of which was inextricably linked to sea power. By ensuring a continual domestic production of goods, protecting and exporting those goods with an insuperable navy, and colonizing regions to extract and export additional resources, a nation could attain international authority, according to Mahan.[49]

An incapable navy thus hindered commercial expansion and protection to the advantage of global competitors. Mahan's thesis prompted international efforts at naval expansion, dominating the military thought of Americans, Europeans, and the Japanese, whose naval policy was even "more Mahanian than America's," according to naval specialist George Baer.[50] However, Mahan asserted that naval expansion offered few if any benefits without concomitant territorial growth. To truly utilize a navy required strategic overseas outposts; these would not only offer overseas markets for domestic overproduction but also be invaluable in refueling, coordinating, and deploying naval vessels. Mahan explicitly linked this theory to the U.S., writing, "Having . . . no foreign establishments, either colonial or military, the ships of war of the United States . . . will be like land birds, unable to fly far from their own shores."[51] By Mahan's logic, U.S. hegemony thus necessitated commercial, naval, and territorial expansion.

---

[49] Thomas F. Varacalli, "National Interest and Moral Responsibility in the Political Thought of Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan," *Naval War College Review* 69, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 108-10. While the popular promoter of these views, Mahan was not necessarily their progenitor; in an analysis of the *Record of the United States Naval Institute*, Benjamin Apt found discussions between naval strategists that "presaged Mahan's vision of a salient international role" for the U.S. Navy which he characterizes as "proto-Mahanian." According to Apt, Mahan "helped make real what had existed only in the dreams of naval reformers." See Benjamin L. Apt, "Mahan's Forebears: The Debate over Maritime Strategy, 1868-1883," *Naval War College Review* 50, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 94-95.

[50] George Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power: The U.S. Navy, 1890-1990* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 121. For an analysis of Mahan's significant influence on the Japanese Navy, see Sadao Asada, *Culture Shock and Japanese-American Relations: Historical Essays* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 53-83.

[51] Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power*, 83.

The Influence of Sea Power shifted the gaze of America's military to the Pacific, and annexationists clamored for Hawaii as a stepping stone in creating a Pacific military hegemony. Mahan swiftly endorsed annexation as well, opining in an 1893 article in *Forum* that Hawaii was valuable for commercial and military security.[52] By 1897, newspapers and popular media were emphatic in their support of annexation as a strategic necessity, and the arrival of the Spanish-American War would only heighten this rhetoric.[53] Accordingly, nearly all proponents for annexation cited military advisers, generals, and naval experts during the joint resolution debates, promoting Hawaii as a Pacific panacea for naval power.[54]

In these strategic arguments, Hawaii's racial diversity would once again play a key role. A recent "rapid increase" in Japan's navy made the nation strategically suspect to many

---

[52] Alfred Thayer Mahan, "Hawaii and Our Future Sea Power," *Forum*, 15 March, 1893, 1-11. For thorough analysis of Mahan's influence on the U.S. amid the annexation debate, see Pratt, *Expansionists of 1898*, 12-22.

[53] In 1897, for example, the West Virginia *Wheeling Intelligencer* declared, "Hawaii is desirable for the United States navy as a strategic point, and in this respect is of incalculable value to this country. It would . . . be almost a crime . . . to permit any foreign nation to gain control of the islands." Similarly the *Detroit News* asserted, "If the Sandwich Islands were only barren rocks in the midst of the ocean, they should be ours lest they might become the property of another and perhaps hostile nation. . . . The cordon of fortified islands and stations which Great Britain has drawn around our Atlantic front should be warning enough . . . to arm patriotism against a similar danger in the pacific." An accounting of these and other contemporary newspapers' positions is provided in "Annexation of Hawaii by Treaty," *Chautauqaun*, August 1897, 5.

[54] In the 1898 debate, for example, Representative John Barham, claiming that the "strategic importance of Hawaii has been demonstrated by facts developed during the pending war with Spain," read a letter from U.S. General John Schofield and cited Admiral George Dewey's victory at Manila as evidence of the archipelago's strategic import. John A. Barham, *Annexation of Hawaii: Speech of Hon. John A. Barham, of California, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 8-10. Representative Joseph Graff, having "yielded to . . . the experts of the Army and the Navy," also cited Schofield, as well as Admiral John Walker, asserting that annexation "would be taking a point of vantage instead of giving it to the enemy." Joseph V. Graff, *Remarks of Hon. Joseph V. Graff, of Illinois, on the Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 3-4.

proponents of annexation.[55] Beginning in the 1870s, Japan had pursued policies of significant naval expansion, incited in part by rising tensions with China culminating in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95.[56] As noted, Mahan's 1890 thesis offered further impetus to Japanese naval expansionists as well. Compounding this naval concern was Japan's extended history of economic relations with Hawaii; by 1893, Japanese contract laborers composed nearly 40 percent of the Islands' population.[57] Numerous annexationists used this Japanese presence to incite fears of a villainous Japanese government seeking to annex the archipelago.[58] According to Representative Horace Packer, a rejection of annexation would lead to "many thousand more Japanese . . . invad[ing] the islands" who would then "gain the supremacy." "The interests of Japan . . . in the Pacific will continue to increase," Packer warned, and there was "danger in delay."[59] Former Representative Bingham concocted a theory of Japan sending "her people to emigrate in great numbers to Hawaii" to "obtai[n] . . . control" in a "repugnant" scheme.[60]

---

[55] John W. Foster, *The Annexation of Hawaii: An Address Delivered before the National Geographic Society, at Washington, DC* (Washington, DC: Gibson Bros., 1897), 6.

[56] J. Charles Schencking, *Making Waves: Politics, Propaganda, and the Emergence of the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1868-1922* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 48. According to Schencking, the early naval expansion of the 1870s was hampered by politics and bureaucracy; however, by the 1890s, expansion was hastened significantly, as "with China and Russia exhibiting clear and unmistakable signs of military self-strengthening, and with territories such as Hawaii, Annam, and Burma coming under foreign control, a strengthened navy was crucial for the continued prosperity of Japan." Success in the 1894 Sino-Japanese War (as well as a 360 million yen postwar indemnity from China) only intensified growth, spurring "cyclonic" expansion. Schencking, *Making Waves*, 68-79.

[57] Asada, *Culture Shock*, 58-59.

[58] Importantly, such paranoia of Japanese ascendency in Hawaii was not exclusive to the annexation debate, nor to the 1890s; as Gary Okihiro has shown, the Japanese population on the Islands was consistently perceived as a threat, by both the planter class and mainland Americans, well before annexation and throughout the first half of the twentieth century. See Gary Okihiro, *Cane Fires: The Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865-1945* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991).

[59] Horace B. Packer, *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands: Speech of Hon. Horace B. Packer, of Pennsylvania, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 7.

Bingham described a conniving "Japan, emerging from semi-barbarism and in the morning twilight of her civilization, peering across the vast water of the Pacific" toward Hawaii.[61] While Japan indeed had Pacific interests—mostly in Hawaiian debt—such a conspiracy was highly unlikely; however, the growing Japanese population provided a politically valuable specter of Asian threat.[62]

Likewise, former Secretary of State John Foster warned of the "danger of Asiatic ascendency," citing a steady increase in the number of both Chinese and Japanese populations creating "a source of great anxiety."[63] Unlike supposedly passive native Hawaiians, the Japanese were "inclined to be turbulent," and were "a brave people, with military instincts" who "would fight if aroused to violence"—a racial characterization clearly influenced by the recent Sino-Japanese War.[64] Foster's inclusion of Chinese with Japanese populations, while grossly ironic

---

[60] Bingham, *The Annexation of Hawaii*, 9.

[61] Bingham, *The Annexation of Hawaii*, 8-9. Similarly, Representative Ray warned that "thousands of Japanese have settled there, and who knows how soon that nation may assert a right to control the island? She may send war ships into Pearl Harbor any day, land an army, and defy the United States." Ray, *Annexation of Hawaii*, 7. The 1897 treaty debate also featured fears of Japanese control, as the *Washington Post* reported that "the sentiment in the Senate seems to be that Japan in no way should control the islands or get a foothold there. This argument has been used to prevent even notice of abrogation of the present treaty tariff bill. It is said that such notice might be followed by Japanese occupation, and the island could not be regained by the United States without a struggle." See "Hawaii Waits a Sign," *Washington Post*, June 1897.

[62] Adding to these conspiracies were headlines that Japanese minister to the U.S. Toru Hoshi had protested to the State Department against annexation, and Hawaiian attempts to limit Japanese labor immigration had further frustrated the vocal Japanese government. See "Annexation of Hawaii by Treaty," *Chautauqaun*, August 1897, 5; "The Beauties of a Foreign Policy: Japanese Views Regarding Hawaiian Annexation Unchanged," *Saint Paul* (MN) *Globe*, December 9, 1897. Historian Thomas Bailey provides a valuable analysis of Japan's resistance to U.S. annexation of the Islands. See "Japan's Protest against the Annexation of Hawaii," *Journal of Modern History* 3, no. 1 (March 1931): 46-61.

[63] Foster, *The Annexation of Hawaii*, 11.

[64] Admiral John Walker, quoted in Foster, *The Annexation of Hawaii*, 12.

considering the war, was a step in creating a broader narrative of a white West versus an Asian East—a Yellow Peril-infused cultural war for which Hawaii was the proxy. As early as 1894, Minister Stevens had questioned "whether Anglo-Saxon civilization should protect itself against threatened submergence" by an "invasion" of "Asiatics" on the Islands.[65] This war had religious connotations as well; to many Americans, Asians were "pagans and idolaters" who threatened the Christianization and assimilation of native Hawaiians.[66]

The diversity of the Hawaiian Islands thus allowed annexationists to pit various races against one another—Christianized native Hawaiians against Asian pagans, and whites against Japanese—in a narrative that appealed to Yellow Peril prejudice and depicted Hawaii as a microcosm of a global struggle between East and West. This narrative was easily integrated into arguments of strategic and military exigency, and philosophies like Mahan's provided strategic and historical justifications, especially as war with Spain drew nearer. Japan's recent naval expansions, particularly in light of the Sino-Japanese War, exacerbated American fears of an Asian menace, however fictitious they may have been. The resulting argument thus appealed to overlapping notions of race, religion, and nationalism, all of which aided in solidifying support for annexation.

Crucial to promoting these ideas were the previous notions of assimilation and paternalism. By singling out native Hawaiians as racial inferiors dependent on the cultural enrichment of white Americans, annexationists could establish a relationship between global supremacy and a Pacific paternalist project. The white population on the Islands only enhanced this argument by giving supposed evidence of benevolent white influence and allowing

---

[65] Stevens and Olseon, *Picturesque Hawaii*, 37-38.

[66] Bingham, *The Annexation of Hawaii*, 9.

expansionists to create racial solidarity with Island whites. In the debate on annexation, David Lyman, John Stevens, John Proctor, and their congressional allies thus emphasized the heterogeneity of the Islands and promoted notions of white superiority as expansive. The result was a politically nuanced and intersectional racial ideology easily adaptable to a variety of political talking points and vital to promoting economic global hegemony. Opponents, however, came to radically different racial conclusions.

Domestic economic policy was the chief political lodestar directing annexation opposition. The 1896 National Democratic Party platform, for example, emphasized the "home market" and "home manufactories," rejected an "importation of foreign pauper labor," and argued for the "protection of American labor," making domestic economic policy a rallying cry that would shape much of the opposition's debate on annexation.[67] Expansionist talking points of Asian trade held little sway among political leaders and constituents who favored domestic over global markets, and Hawaii's incorporation into the U.S. was antipodal to these interests on several fronts. Especially problematic was the production capacity of Hawaiian sugar manufacturers.

Sugar was one of several commodities affected by the oscillatory tariff policies of the 1880s and 1890s. From 1879 to 1889, duties levied on sugar fluctuated from 45% to 70%, were eliminated in 1890 with the passage of the McKinley Tariff, were reinstated by the 1894 Wilson-Gorman Tariff, and had increased to 76% by 1899.[68] These policy shifts were tied to shifts in political power; as protectionist Republicans raised tariffs, free trade Democrats deflated them,

---

[67] E. L. Lomax, *National Platforms of the Republican, Democratic, Prohibition, National, Peoples, National Silver, and National Democratic Parties* (Omaha: Union Pacific, 1896), 7.

[68] Brandon Dupont, "'Henceforth, I Must Have No Friends': Evaluating the Economic Policies of Grover Cleveland," *Independent Review* 18, no. 4 (Spring 2014): 563-64.

and as political control alternated between the two, so too did economic policy.[69] Tariffs were an important source of revenue—comprising nearly 40–60% of all federal revenue in the decades between 1870 and 1900—and a means of protecting domestic manufacturers from foreign competition.[70] As such, tariffs were of immense consequence and highly politicized, and sugar refiners in the Midwest and Louisiana followed these fluctuations with great concern, especially as they related to the imported cane sugar of Hawaiian competitors.

The 1875 Reciprocity Treaty with the Islands permitted duty-free U.S. importation of sugar—and thus some degree of competition. Particularly galling for domestic producers had been sudden investments in Hawaiian plantations by sugar magnates like the oft-vilified Claus Spreckels, who bought half of the yearly sugar crop and thousands of acres of plantation land following the treaty.[71] Yet annexation would fully domesticate Pacific sugar in a manner that could lead to "the absolute destruction of the [Western U.S.] sugar industry."[72] Dorman Eaton, famed municipal reformer and former member of the U.S. Civil Service Commission, warned in

---

[69] David Epstein and Sharyn O'Halloran, "The Partisan Paradox and the U.S. Tariff, 1877-1934," *International Organization* 50, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 303.

[70] John M. Hanson, "Taxation and the Political Economy of the Tariff," *International Organization* 44, no. 4 (Autumn 1990): 530.

[71] Tate, *The United States and the Hawaiian Kingdom*, 335-36. According to Tate, after having "bought up half the estimated 14,000-ton sugar crop for 1877," Spreckels "purchased a half interest in 16,000 acres on the Waikapu Commons . . . , and leased 24,000 acres of adjoining crown lands for thirty years . . . , upon which he developed a sugar plantation called Spreckelsville and incorporated the new ten million dollar Hawaiian Commercial Co."—what would become the powerful Hawaiian Commercial and Sugar Company. Spreckels eventually established a near monopoly on Hawaiian sugar, exporting it through his private steamship company, and even opened a private bank in 1884. So-called sugar barons like Spreckels threatened domestic sugar growers, who had no hopes of investing in the Islands and competing on a similar scale, making Spreckels and others frequent targets of anti-annexationist and sugar industry vehemence. Tate, 336-37.

[72] John F. Shafroth, *An Imperial Policy Dangerous to the Republic: Speech of Hon. John F. Shafroth, of Colorado, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 10. Colorado had a not insignificant beet sugar industry, likely prompting Shafroth's concerns.

a series of pamphlets that Hawaiian sugar would "ente[r] the only (local) markets on which producers of domestic sugar [could] safely rely."[73] While local beet and cane sugar refineries had weathered reciprocity, complete annexation could provoke a domestic disaster. This domestic concern easily translated into race politics, however.

In a vociferous attack on annexation, Eaton wrote, "Let us protect *our own farmers* . . . and *our own labor and our own taxpayers*," asserting that "American capital" was best "*at home*."[74] To many Americans, local sugar producers and sugar beet farmers in regions like the Midwest and Louisiana were being forsaken for the gain of scheming "sugar kings" propelled by Hawaiian contract labor.[75] The ethnic demographics of this labor were highly diverse; for decades, Island sugar planters had racially calculated labor contracts to achieve peak diversity, believing that racial difference would stymie labor solidarity and thus limit the potential for revolts.[76] Many of these contracted laborers hailed from Asian nations, allowing anti-annexationists to harness existing anti-Asian labor sentiments to vilify the economic effects of annexation. Exemplifying this method was Arizona territorial delegate Marcus Aurelius Smith, who homogenized the population and preyed on existing fears of Chinese job-stealers, condemning the "Chinese or other alien cheap labor, dominated as they will always be by some

---

[73] Dorman Bridgman Eaton, *Hawaiian Independence (Not Annexation), Our Policy: A Domestic Industry Endangered* (New York: Dorman Eaton, 1897), 11. Eaton published various anti-annexationist pamphlets using "Junius" as a pseudonym.

[74] Eaton, *Hawaiian Independence*, 15.

[75] Marcus A. Smith, *Speeches of Hon. Marcus A. Smith, of Arizona, Delivered in the House of Representatives, April 7th, 1898, and June 15th, 1898: The Reorganization of the Army and our Relations with Spain, and the Hawaiian Question* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 13. According to Osborne, however, these oft-vilified "sugar kings" actually protested annexation, as it would render their inexpensive contract labor illegal. See Osborne, *Empire Can Wait*, 17-27.

[76] Ronald Takaki, *Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawaii, 1835-1920* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), 22-25.

enormous combine or trust."[77] Warning that "the very floodgates of China would be opened upon us through Hawaii," the delegate stoked fears of not only labor competition, but nonwhite labor competition.[78]

Smith, an obstreperous advocate for Arizona statehood and vehement racist—he once remarked on the appeal of funding "slaughterhouses" for Native Americans—gave an exceptionally powerful economic speech opposing annexation.[79] Although his speech focused heavily on demanding Arizona statehood—"Arizona is more entitled to home rule than these Japs and Chinese are to annexation," he exclaimed—the delegate's words aptly demonstrate how annexation opponents racially articulated domestic economics.[80] Invoking the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, Smith argued that the U.S. had "spent vast sums in keeping them [the Chinese] out," yet annexation would allow "25,000 Chinese" to be "free to leave the cheap wages of Hawaii . . . and directly compete with our educated labor."[81]

---

[77] Smith, *Speeches*, 12.

[78] Smith, *Speeches*, 13.

[79] Steven A. Fazio, "Marcus Aurelius Smith: Arizona Delegate and Senator," *Arizona and the West* 12, no. 1 (Spring 1970): 35.

[80] Smith, *Speeches*, 14.

[81] Smith, *Speeches*, 13. Similarly, Representative James Richardson condemned foreigners that would be "coming in competition with our laborers and demoralizing our people" and criticized that despite "formulat[ing] legislative anathemas against undesirable immigrants," annexation admitted "in one act . . . nearly 80,000 Chinese, Japanese, and Hawaiians . . . . We will probably by this act admit more Chinese than San Francisco now contains, besides many other obnoxious and objectionable foreigners." James D. Richardson, *Hawaiian Annexation and Our Foreign Policy: Speech of Hon. James D. Richardson, of Tennessee, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 10. It should be noted that annexationist representative Berry interjected that no Asians would be permitted as citizens to the U.S., to which Delegate Smith interrupted, "We are not considering their citizenship, but their presence." Clearly, opponents perceived nonwhites as a fundamental threat to white labor and were not solely concerned about legal questions of citizenship.

Anti-annexationists feared nonwhite competition partly because of its socially demeaning aspects—as Louisiana Representative Robert Broussard asserted, "competition was to be . . . white man competing against white man"—but also because nonwhites were perceived as more subservient and acclimated to labor, making them more productive and less expensive than whites.[82] This argument was often supported by climate-related rhetoric, as congressmen like Representative James Richardson of Tennessee warned of the "cheap cooly [*sic*] labor of the tropical colonies," and Indiana Representative Edgar Crumpacker asserted that "white labor never has gone . . . and . . . never will go" to "tropical countries."[83] Annexation would force whites into unfair competition with Islanders climatically and racially capable of manual labor on a scale incomparable to whites.

Through this racial interpretation of labor, anti-annexationists like Smith, Richardson, and Crumpacker placed limits on white superiority. Although nonwhite Islanders were seen as cultural and biological inferiors of white Americans, their inferiority did not ensure white superiority in all situations, such as in economic competition. As such, white economic supremacy required "white man competing against white man," or a homogenous labor force,

---

[82] Robert Foligny Broussard, *Hawaii: Speech of Hon. R. F. Broussard, of Louisiana, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 5. Representative Edgar Crumpacker similarly stated, "The dignity of labor is the glory of our [white] civilization," and "it is proposed to annex territory capable of supporting a million people, in which all labor must be performed by people of a very low order of civil and industrial life, and bring them into direct competition with the high-class, intelligent labor of the States." Edgar Dean Crumpacker, *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands: Speech of Hon. E. D. Crumpacker, of Indiana, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 3. Eaton similarly remarked on the competitiveness of "'contract' and coolie labor" contributing to "advantages . . . too great for our farmers and manufacturers to overcome *on anywhere near equal terms*." Eaton, *Hawaiian Independence*, 10.

[83] Richardson, *Hawaiian Annexation*, 10; Crumpacker, *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands*, 3. Crumpacker elaborated, "White labor will never contest with the half-civilized hordes of the Orient and the Pacific islands for industrial supremacy in that field, and natives and coolies must do the work. They are immunes; it is their element . . ." (3).

and the introduction of nonwhite laborers would drive down wages and force out whites, threatening that supremacy.[84] Whereas annexationists perceived white supremacy as capable of withstanding—or even destined to create—economic and labor expansion, annexation opponents feared the opposite, believing that the wider white influence spread the less secure it could be. That a partly Asian populace posed this threat only heightened fear and animosity.

All the more insulting to anti-annexationists was the economic benefit going to nonwhites rather than supposedly deserving whites. "I live in the West, and I love it and its people," Delegate Smith said. "Their hope and mine is to see it grow and flourish, as it will with half the help your course now offers to the foreign hordes. . . ."[85] The 1897 letter of a New Brunswick "old south sea trader" to the *New York Times* similarly complained that annexation would "enrich a handful of half-breeds" rather than deserving white Americans.[86] Notably, by annexing Hawaii, the U.S. government was not only benefitting the Island's sugar industries, but also assuming Hawaiian debts totaling almost four million dollars—over 124 million dollars in today's currency.[87] Many anti-annexationists lambasted these economic consequences for prioritizing nonwhites over whites. As Delegate Smith said, white civilization would "flourish" with "half the help" necessary for nonwhites, and thus it was only logical that such an investment

---

[84] Broussard, *Hawaii*, 5.

[85] Smith, *Speeches*, 13.

[86] "The Problem of Hawaii: Real Designs of the American Residents Who Seek Annexation," *New York Times*, July 15, 1897.

[87] "Annexation of Hawaii by Treaty," *Chautauqaun*, no. 25 (August 1897), 5. The U.S. national debt was not small, either; in July of 1898, the U.S. possessed over 1.79 billion dollars in debt, the equivalent of over 55 billion in 2020. "Historical Debt Outstanding: Annual 1850-1899," Treasury Direct, United States Department of the Treasury, accessed April 23, 2020, https://www.treasurydirect.gov/govt/reports/pd/histdebt/histdebt_histo2.htm.

as annexation would be better directed toward white Americans.[88] It was in these arguments that opponents most tended to homogenize the Islanders and rely heavily on the language of "ours," "us," and "them," emphasizing a xenophobic narrative of nonwhite gains at the expense of white power.

While legitimate nonracial economic issues complicated annexation, much of the opposition's economic rhetoric was articulated in overtly racial terms. Anti-annexationists like Arizona Delegate Marcus Smith utilized the Asian population on the Islands to harness existing white fears of Asians stealing jobs and driving down wages, as well as to accentuate threats to white economic supremacy. Many opponents of the joint resolution homogenized the diverse ethnic groups on the archipelago, reducing them to simply nonwhite "hordes," and emphasized the social disorder and perceived unfairness of whites competing with nonwhites. In doing so, anti-annexationists stressed a version of white superiority and supremacy incompatible with Pacific economic expansion, using racism and xenophobia to augment their domestic-focused economic policies—largely across states and regions, though especially in those with sugar interests like the Midwest and Louisiana. This was not the only seemingly nonracial argument that opponents would racialize, however.

---

[88] Interestingly, one Democratic representative tried to moralize the issue in terms of slavery. Representative Adolph Meyer of Louisiana asserted that annexation was hypocritical in the face of emancipation: "The [Louisiana sugar] laborers are all blacks . . . . You pretended to be their friends when you gave them suffrage. Now you give them a stone, and your heart goes out to a horde of Asiatics, Japanese, Chinese, and others working under contracts—a state of quasi slavery. The 'man and brother' must go to the wall while you cultivate your new friends . . . ." Adolph Meyer, *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands: Speech of Hon. Adolph Meyer, of Louisiana, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 7. Hawaii as a resurrection of slavery was not an uncommon theme; the Kentucky General Assembly passed a resolution introduced by Representative Albert Charlton resolving that "annexation would be tantamount to the admission of a slave State, the representatives of which would necessarily work and vote for the enslavement of labor in general." See "A Field Day for Opponents of Annexation: Annexation Means a New Slave State," *San Francisco Call*, January 12, 1898.

Also central to many anti-annexationist positions were the topics of climate and, to a lesser extent, topography and geography. Hawaii's climate was exceptionally tropical; indeed, much of the travel adverts and popular literature of the time swooned over sunlit shores and sabulous reverie, romanticizing the Islands as tropical bastions of leisure and exotica. The terrain, often mountainous, also featured towering volcanoes. Such qualities were not only advantageous for tourist agencies but anti-annexationists as well, who ridiculed the terrain and climate as devoid of agricultural—and thus economic—value. "The interior of the islands is devoted to raising volcanoes," mused one sardonic senator amid debate of the joint resolution.[89] Likewise, Representative Richardson negatively remarked on the Islands' "rough, barren, [and] mountainous lands."[90] Hawaii's landscape would prove a valuable political tool for annexation opponents, though questions of agricultural potential were not the crux of their climatic arguments; the tropical and arid climate could offer fodder for racial rhetoric as well.

Although being slowly supplanted by novel ideas of biological racism, eighteenth-century notions of climate as racially determinist remained a prominent element of the nineteenth-century racial discourse. The "climate science" theory dictated that the climate in which one lived determined their complexion, physicality, and intellectual capacity; tropical sweltering climes, in the words of Representative Crumpacker, "stifl[ed] growth and imped[ed] progress in the individual, and . . . society."[91] Populist Representative John Bell's comments on annexation provide the most succinct illustration of popular views:

---

[89] John L. Mitchell, *Against the Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands: Speech of Hon. John L. Mitchell, of Wisconsin, in the Senate of the United States* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 4.

[90] Richardson, *Hawaiian Annexation*, 9.

[91] Crumpacker, *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands*, 4-5.

> [T]here is not a case in history where this [white] civilization has thrived under a tropical sun. The American civilization, the European civilization, is an incarnation of the temperate climate. It can not exist anywhere else. The African in Africa has lived through the centuries, but that torrid sun has never allowed the front brain to develop. He might live there until doomsday and he never could invent an alphabet, . . . a multiplication table, . . . an arithmetic, and he could never adopt a republican . . . government. The scientists have told us that since the dawn of civilization there has been a government suitable for every clime.[92]

Bell continued, elaborating on the correlation between temperateness and "where the front brain develops." Bell's remarks were not uncommon, and they demonstrate the overwhelming influence climate science had on the Hawaii debate. To anti-annexationists, whiteness and white superiority were scientifically predicated on a temperate climate.[93] This assertion entailed two conclusions: anyone, regardless of race, living in the intemperate portions of Hawaii would be incapable of civility and American republicanism, and, more importantly, the climate rendered it impossible for whites to exert a civilizing or assimilatory influence upon Islanders without risking their own degradation—undercutting a major racial argument of annexationists.

Both conclusions were amply used by annexation opponents. Representative John Shafroth noted, for example, that "the Hawaiian . . . islands [were] located in a latitude south of the Tropic of Cancer" and that "something in the climate of the torrid zone . . . saps the energies . . . and prevents that development so essential to good and enlightened citizenship of a

---

[92] John C. Bell, *Proposed Annexation of Hawaii: Speech of Hon. John C. Bell, of Colorado, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 9.

[93] To prove the adverse effects of intemperate climate upon white populations, Bell, somewhat oddly, decided to invoke Australians as his evidence. During his speech, Representative Bell declared, "You know the torrid sun of Australia has made the Australian a savage," to which Representative Sulzer interrupted, "Oh, no." Undeterred, Bell continued, "History shows it. The equatorial Australian is today a savage. The world knows it." Representative Slayden qualified, "Semibarbaric." Bell, *Proposed Annexation of Hawaii*, 10.

republic."[94] Senator Richard Pettigrew, combining a historical argument with one of climate, asserted that while the U.S. was traditionally expansionist, the territories gained were always "within the temperate zone," territories "which possessed climate, soil, and . . . people capable of governing themselves."[95] To these congressmen, the heat of Hawaii rendered its races a liability for U.S. institutions. The potential for a civilizing white presence, as expansionists attested to, was equally infeasible; according to Bell, white Americans were "a product of a temperate climate" and could not be moved "beyond the latitude of 55° or within 30° of the equator and maintain the high caste that pervades [their] homogeneous population." The idea of "Americanizing" such tropical locales was "a mere dream" and nothing more, he asserted.[96]

This conception of climate thus led to anti-annexationists adopting a differing construction of white supremacy and superiority than did expansionists. Whereas annexationists perceived whiteness as an overwhelming and indomitable force of acculturation predestined to uplift "lesser" races, opponents constructed an exclusive and fragile supremacy which hinged on precarious environmental characteristics rather than those inherent to the individual. Not only did they construct differing definitions of whiteness, however. Anti-annexationists also constructed differing perceptions of Hawaii itself. To ensure the validity of their climatic argument, anti-annexationists created a climatically and topographically homogenous Hawaii, much as they did with race. Although some, like Bell, conceded that "in Hawaii . . . you can get every climate that

---

[94] John F. Shafroth, *An Imperial Policy Dangerous to the Republic: Speech of Hon. John F. Shafroth, of Colorado, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 7.

[95] Richard F. Pettigrew, *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands: Speech of the Hon. Richard F. Pettigrew, of South Dakota, in the Senate of the United States* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 9.

[96] Bell, *Proposed Annexation of Hawaii*, 9-10.

is known to mankind," most opponents of annexation spoke in sweeping generalities, painting a picture of little more than sweltering crags and barren sands.[97] This rhetorical choice was important; despite having eight differing islands, all regions of the anti-annexationists' Hawaii were climatically and geographically identical, and thus all people—as racial products of their environment—were as well. This idea further instilled a notion of all nonwhites as identical, helping to further "other" Hawaii and its inhabitants from white Americans—an integral point of anti-imperialists' xenophobic arguments.[98]

Expansionists could offer little to counter climate science. The Report of the Hawaii Commission, for example, admitted that "the question whether white labor can be profitably utilized . . . is yet a problem," though they claimed that "some" planters thought it would "prove superior" to Asian labor.[99] The most prominent defense was celebrating the climate and terrain as fertile and economically productive. Representative John Barham lauded the "earthly paradise" and "perpetual summer," claiming that "the climate [was] almost perfect" on the Islands.[100] Similarly, Representative Charles Henry spoke fancifully of "beautiful lakes and sparkling rivers," with a "climate so pleasant that it is not injurious to anyone and is admired by all; with soil productive far beyond the conception" of Americans.[101] When anti-annexationists

---

[97] Bell, *Proposed Annexation of Hawaii*, 9.

[98] Climate theory also bolstered anti-annexationists' economic arguments. As Representative Thomas Ball noted, "White men can not work under a tropical sun," thus offering no labor benefit to white Americans. If anything, it threatened white labor. Thomas H. Ball, *Against the Annexation of Hawaii: Speech of Hon. Thos. H. Ball, of Texas, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 7.

[99] Hawaii Commission, *Report of the Hawaiian Commission*, 17.

[100] Barham, *Annexation of Hawaii*, 12.

[101] Henry, *Hawaii, the Great Ocean Crossroads*, 14.

questioned the racial impact of the climate, expansionists hurriedly changed the subject to romantic exoticism and agricultural profit, seeking to pivot to their more viable economic arguments.

Thus expansionists and anti-expansionists crafted two different constructions of Hawaii. Again, Hawaii's diversity, of climate and topography in this instance, allowed anti-annexationists to emphasize one characteristic over others, creating homogenized views of the inhabitants and an exclusionary white supremacy, the influence of which was limited by climate and region. This rhetorical technique was integral to perpetuating anti-annexation themes of "us versus them" and xenophobia, eliminating any possible similarities between the U.S. and Hawaii. Expansionist refutations, unable to completely denounce climate science, used tropical characteristics to change the subject and highlight their economic positions.

American tradition, whether diplomatic, expansionist, or political, proved yet another means of arguing against annexation. These arguments often entailed particular conceptualizations of American identity—as continentally confined, racially homogenous, and white—and they were foundational to major anti-imperialist talking points. Constitutional questions of rights and citizenship, or whether constitutional rights may "follow the flag" to annexed territories, were central to how congressmen judged whether annexation aligned with traditions of territorial expansion and republican government. The U.S.'s historical role, or lack thereof, in international diplomacy offered other means of assessing American traditions as well. A thorough analysis of anti-annexationists' rhetoric reveals that they viewed U.S. tradition and history in fundamentally racial terms and used Hawaii's ethnic diversity to warn of a nation on the precipice of forsaking its identity. In the process, they further limited the expanse of white supremacy from its economic and climatic limitations.

The Monroe Doctrine, as well as the less-mentioned Tyler Doctrine, implied protection rather than expansion to annexation opponents.[102] According to anti-annexationists, these doctrines were part of an international diplomatic framework disjunctive from westward continental expansion, and Hawaiian annexation conflated the two, derailing the U.S. from its traditional path of diplomacy. These were genuine nonracial arguments, and they embody the major constitutional, doctrinal, and philosophical disputes characterizing the annexation debate.[103] However, anti-annexationist congressmen often proposed racial justifications for these issues. The racial logic governing westward expansion, according to many opponents, was that western and southwestern territories were predominantly white; Texas, New Mexico, and California were "northern provinces" of Mexico peopled with a "very scanty Mexican population."[104] According to Representative Adolph Meyer, for example, the U.S. "left to Mexico all those portions of her country which were well populated by her own people."[105] Despite its political authority, the white population in Hawaii was marginal—as Meyer noted,

---

[102] The Monroe Doctrine was President James Monroe's 1823 assertion that the U.S. "should consider any attempt on [European powers'] part to extend their system to any portion of this [Western] hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety" and a "manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States." For a full text of the doctrine, see "The Monroe Doctrine (1823)," Basic Readings in U.S. Democracy, United States Department of State, accessed April 22, 2020, https://web.archive.org/web/20120108131055/http://eca.state.gov/education/engteaching/pubs/AmLnC/br50.htm. In 1842, President John Tyler expanded this anti-colonial doctrine to protect Hawaii from foreign influence as well. Anti-annexationists interpreted these doctrines as bulwarks against European expansion rather than sanctions for U.S. imperial projects in the western hemisphere.

[103] White Americans were not the only group to rely on constitutional and traditional arguments in opposing annexation; native Hawaiian resistance groups on the Islands adopted the language of constitutionality and even invoked the U.S. Declaration of Independence in articulating their opposition to both the provisional government and the proposed annexation. In doing so, Hawaiians appealed to U.S. traditions and history while simultaneously asserting their own rights and abilities of self-government. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 151-54.

[104] Meyer, *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands*, 10.

[105] Meyer, *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands*, 10.

the Islands were "filled up and running over with Kanakas and Asiatics"—and therefore annexation constituted a break with traditional expansionist doctrines that emphasized an existing white populace.[106]

Expanding into areas of nonwhite populations did not just redefine traditional doctrines of expansion; it also threatened U.S. traditions of white homogenous identity. Early historian Hermann von Holst, a staunch anti-annexationist whose language was frequently echoed on the congressional debate floor, argued in an address to the Chicago Commercial Club that racial "homogeneity . . . must be deemed indispensable" and that the necessary "degree of homogeneity" was entirely absent on the Islands.[107] Senator Shelby Cullom similarly explained that Hawaiians were of "mixed races and from different countries," rendering them "a different class of people" atypical of homogenous white identity.[108] Notably, race historian Lauren Basson has asserted that American perceptions of traditional identity as white and homogenous were integral to annexation opposition; to anti-annexationists, the U.S. was a nation based on white racial purity, and the "curious conglomeration" of which Hawaii was composed was antithetical to that ethnic identity.[109]

The rhetoric of heterogeneity was articulated most often through enumerating the nationalities in the 1896 Hawaiian census, which evinced an exceptionally diverse populace

---

[106] Meyer, *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands*, 11.

[107] Hermann Eduard von Holst, *The Annexation of Hawaii: An Address by Hermann Eduard von Holts, Ph. D., Head Professor of History in the University of Chicago, Delivered before the Commercial Club of Chicago at its 140th Regular Dinner at the Auditorium Hotel* (Chicago: Commercial Club, 1898), 27.

[108] Shelby Cullom, *Congressional Record* (1899-1900), 4462, quoted in Basson, *White Enough to Be American*, 107.

[109] Basson, *White Enough to Be American*, 107.

totaling about 109,000 people.[110] Almost all annexation opponents invoked the document in what became a highly contrived ethnic itemization guaranteed to appear at some point in their laments. Senator John Mitchell honed this talking point to political performance art, delivering an extensive and exhaustively derogatory enumeration of Hawaiian ethnic groups, concluding that annexationists wished "to swallow at a gulp this variegated agglomeration of the fag-ends of humanity."[111] Mitchell's assertions, while particularly verbose, were not atypical of anti-annexation talking points; congressmen regularly maligned the population as "mongrel" and "conglomerate."[112] Yet again, Hawaii's racial diversity, cultivated by decades of contract labor, proved to be a valuable political tool in providing annexation opponents an ethnic antipode to homogenous white identity.

This approach should not be conflated with the racial delimiting that annexationists pursued. Despite bearing a superficial resemblance to annexationists' emphases on diversity, opposition rhetoric differed fundamentally. Opponents defined Hawaii as populated with different races, but, unlike annexationists, did not discriminate between those races; they were simply collectively nonwhite or mixed-race. Representative Champ Clark, for example, denounced the Islands' diversity yet simultaneously homogenized the entire population as "non-descript asiatico Polynesian ignoramuses."[113] Representative Richard Bland delineated between

---

[110] General Superintendent of the Census, *Report of the General Superintendent*, 34.

[111] Mitchell, *Against the Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands*, 8.

[112] Broussard, *Hawaii*, 11; John Gaines, *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands: Speech of Hon. John W. Gaines, of Tennessee, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 11.

[113] Champ Clark, *Congressional Record* (1898), 6019, quoted in Basson, *White Enough to Be American*, 103.

the various races, but ultimately accounted "a total population of 101, 818 that may be denominated as an inferior race," demonstrating that while Hawaii was racially diverse, those races were fundamentally the same to anti-annexationists.[114] This qualification was important, as emphasizing diversity potentially introduced addressing the white population on the Islands—something problematic to anti-annexationist talking points of barbaric homogenous Islanders. Paradoxically, anti-annexationists managed to homogenize heterogeneity, attributing stereotypes of singular ethnic groups to the heterogeneous whole.

This tactic was valuable to broader assertions that annexation would produce a domino effect of Pacific land acquisition in a "policy that would not end."[115] Hawaii's noncontiguous geography embodied a fundamental break with continental expansion and, to anti-annexationists, foreshadowed a redefinition of manifest destiny to include island nations, like the Philippines, Cuba, and the Fiji Islands. Many feared an American attempt at European colonialism unlikely to be satiated solely with the Hawaiian Islands.[116] Mahan's aforementioned colonialist urgings did little to assuage such fears. Hawaii's island identity thus implied island solidarity to many annexation opponents, who regularly invoked stereotypes of other islands during discussions of

---

[114] Richard P. Bland, *Proposed Annexation of Hawaii: Speech of Hon. Richard P. Bland, of Missouri, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 8. Additionally, Representative Crumpacker asserted that the annexationist talking point of excluding Asians was "no remedy, for the natives are equally objectionable." Crumpacker, *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands*, 5.

[115] "Debate on Annexation of Hawaii," *San Francisco Call*, June 12, 1898.

[116] For example, in a four-day speech that made frequent reference to the wars and colonialism of European powers, Senator Stephen White inquired, "Are we prepared to overturn the precedents written in our country's history up to the date of the passage of the resolution—April 20, 1898? It can not be successfully disputed that the annexation of Hawaii will constitute the entering wedge for an imperialistic policy as foreign to the purposes and views entertained when this Government was organized as are the objects and theories of the most despotic government upon the earth strangers to our system." Stephen M. White, *Annexation of Hawaii: Speech of Hon. Stephen M. White, of California, in the Senate of the United States* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 24.

Hawaii. Most typical were the Philippines, the population of which Representative John Rixey claimed were "little more than savages."[117] Representative John Shafroth, for example, dedicated much of his discussion of Hawaiians to also condemning Filipinos, alternating between the two as though they were synonymous.[118] The Philippines, however, were not the sole subject of Hawaii-fueled offense. Representative Clark passionately warned the House Speaker:

> [Y]ou will be called upon to recognize the gentleman from Patagonia, the gentleman from Cuba, the gentleman from Porto Rico, the gentleman from Greenland, the gentleman from Fiji, and, with fear and trembling, the gentleman from the Cannibal Islands, as he gazes with gleaming eyes and glistening teeth upon your imposing and tempting self.[119]

As Representative Clark's warning shows, Hawaii's ethnic diversity, coupled with its island identity, allowed opponents to denounce races not even present on the Islands in their Hawaii debate. By asserting that Hawaii's lack of contiguity would engender future island expansion, anti-annexationists could incorporate other islands into their discussion and equate them to Hawaii within a broader argument of traditional continental expansion.

Clark's cannibal congressman reveals another threat that annexation introduced: the erosion of republican political traditions. This dilemma was of two parts. First, to annex the Hawaiian Islands and not extend civil rights and representation to the population would, in the words of Representative Shafroth, "violate the very principle for which our fathers fought the

---

[117] John F. Rixey, *Proposed Annexation of Hawaii: Speech of Hon. John F. Rixey, of Virginia, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 5.

[118] Shafroth, *An Imperial Policy Dangerous to the Republic*, 7-9.

[119] "Debate on Annexation of Hawaii," *San Francisco Call*, June 12, 1898. Dampening the bombast of Clark's oratory was the unfortunate fact that the Speaker was not present to hear any of it, leaving Clark to emotionally apostrophize at an empty chair. This provoked extended laughter from House members. Cannibalism was not an uncommon attack, either; North Dakotan Senator William Roach referred to Hawaii as a "country of dusky ex-cannibals." William Roach, quoted in Love, "White Is the Color of Empire," 94.

Revolutionary War" and "overturn the guaranty of the Constitution."[120] Representative Meyer, emphasizing the political traditions of "state rights, local self-government, and individual freedom," similarly stated that to not extend those notions to the "inferior and mongrel races" of Hawaii would mean abandoning the "grand American system of free government with limited powers."[121]

At the core of this conversation was whether the constitution, in contemporary parlance, "followed the flag," raising troubling questions about the degree to which annexed territories, and their largely nonwhite populations, would be incorporated into the U.S. and bestowed constitutional rights.[122] Representative Bland, for example, asserting that the U.S. Constitution "provides that no citizen of the United States shall be disfranchised on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude," questioned, "When Hawaii becomes a part of . . . the United States, what shall be said as to the legal status of these 39,000 natives? May they not claim the right of citizenship, because the territory would then be a part of the United States? They would also be natives of that part of the United States."[123] This constitutional quandary prefigured the early twentieth-century Insular Cases, a series of Supreme Court cases judging the extent to

---

[120] Shafroth, *An Imperial Policy Dangerous to the Republic*, 7-8.

[121] Meyer, *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands*, 15.

[122] Representative Richardson, for instance, noted that expansionists "say commerce follows the flag," but questioned whether statehood, citizenship, and rights of self-governance did as well, asking, "Is [Hawaii] to become a State of the American Union? . . . If it is not to become a State, what then shall we do with it? Shall it be held permanently as a Territory? Will it be contended that the inhabitants of those islands can govern themselves by and through a Territorial legislature?" Anything otherwise "would be utterly and entirely in contravention of [U.S.] laws and institutions, which are rooted and grounded on the principles of equality and self-government." During Richardson's remarks, Representative Bland agreed, commenting, "The constitution makes every native of that island a citizen." Richardson, *Hawaiian Annexation and Our Foreign Policy*, 9-11.

[123] Bland, *Proposed Annexation of Hawaii*, 11.

which the Constitution provided for Spanish-American War acquisitions. While the Court ultimately ruled that the full application of constitutional rights depended on whether a territory was incorporated, the issue was far from settled in 1898.[124]

Most anti-expansionists held that the Constitution applied *ex proprio vigore*, meaning that full rights were extended the instant that sovereignty was transferred between a territory and the U.S.[125] This notion was based on precedents of prior acquisitions that by design were on the path to statehood—as Representative Robert Broussard stated, "Territorial possession . . . heretofore has only been the probationary stage to Statehood."[126] While expansionists at the close of the Spanish-American War would argue differently—asserting that recent acquisitions were results of war and thus in a constitutionally liminal state—most during the Hawaii debate agreed with their opponents; Hawaiians were to receive constitutional rights and citizenship, excepting the Chinese populace as per the existing Exclusion Act.[127] To do otherwise would challenge constitutional precedents of territorial expansion.[128]

---

[124] Kal Raustiala, *Does the Constitution Follow the Flag? The Evolution of Territoriality in American Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 83-84. The decision led to the famous description of island territories as "foreign in the domestic sense." Raustiala, 84.

[125] Andrew Kent, "*Boumediene*, *Munaf*, and the Supreme Court's Misreading of the Insular Cases," *Iowa Law Review* 97, no. 101 (2011): 128-30.

[126] Broussard, *Hawaii*, 12.

[127] For example, Representative William Mesick—an annexationist—declared, "That [American] flag is an emblem of what we are and of what we hope to be, and when it is planted over the Hawaiian Islands . . . it will mean universal education, light for every mind, knowledge for every child. It will mean that every citizen of those islands, native or otherwise, must be protected at home, in every State abroad, in every land, on every sea, and in every port and harbor." Mesick, *Proposed Annexation of Hawaii*, 6-7.

[128] Importantly, Roger Bell notes that the 1898 resolution lacked the 1897 treaty's phrase that Hawaii would be incorporated into the U.S. "as an integral part thereof," which potentially challenged the possibility of statehood. Additionally, many annexationists on the Islands actually opposed statehood, as it would subject their purposefully discriminatory constitution to the laws of the U.S. Despite this legislative adjustment, statehood continued to be a point of discussion in the 1898 debates. Bell, *Last among Equals*, 31-40.

To all parties, then, preserving American political values required extending them to a diverse nonwhite populace. This expectation led to the second contention of anti-annexationists—that permitting nonwhites to participate in a historically white government would ensure its collapse. Representative Bland asserted that Hawaiians were not "equals in any sense of the word" and were "wholly incapable" of comprehending republican government—yet by that government, "they [were] entitled to freedom."[129] Echoing other congressmen, he further questioned if extending suffrage to "the native inferior race" would not "place the whole Government in [their] hands . . . beyond hope of redemption?"[130] The Islanders' inferiority rendered them inept participants in the white realm of republicanism, and their mere corruptive presence could "impair true American institutions," regardless of their minority status.[131] To anti-annexationists, a "free and happy" government "must be a white man's government."[132] Any breach, however small, in racial homogeneity wrought a vitiating, if not altogether ruinous, effect on political institutions and threatened white supremacy. White political supremacy required white participation, and if congressmen truly expected to uphold their constitutional and territorial traditions, they would be forced to undercut that supremacy through the injurious participation of nonwhites.[133]

---

[129] Bland, *Proposed Annexation of Hawaii*, 15.

[130] Bland, *Proposed Annexation of Hawaii*, 12.

[131] Richardson, *Hawaiian Annexation*, 14.

[132] Meyer, *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands*, 16.

[133] Interestingly, Senator John Morgan, a leader of the annexation movement, visited Hawaii in hopes of convincing native Hawaiians to support annexation, asserting that their civil rights and enfranchisement would be equivalent to those of southern African Americans—apparently oblivious to the fact that native Hawaiians were well-aware of the inequity and disenfranchisement faced by African Americans, especially in the South. For more on Morgan's meeting, see Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 148. Morgan was not the only U.S. congressman to engage with native Hawaiian annexation opponents; anti-annexationist Senators George Hoar, Richard Pettigrew, and Stephen White, among others, met with

Thus, even in their own climate, even economically competing against their own race, if white Americans introduced Islanders into their traditionally white political institutions, they still risked degradation. Senator Mitchell likened the annexation to a Trojan horse, calling Hawaiians a "permanent menace" to U.S. government.[134] Representative Crumpacker attested that while he loved "to look upon my fellow-citizen with the consciousness that . . . he is the equal before the law" and will produce "a posterity that will bless humanity and glorify republican institutions," Hawaiians could not "keep pace . . . in [the] march to a higher destiny" and would "lower the dignity of our own citizenship."[135] With annexation, "mongrels" and "cannibals" would inevitably claim the very seats in which these legislators sat, lowering the dignity of both the political office and the citizenry. Within these notions of republican tradition and historically white institutions, annexation opponents thus insinuated an inherently limited white superiority dependent on racial exclusion. As with climate and economics, whites were capable of political supremacy only when their polity was homogenous and white.

As in previous talking points, anti-annexationists thus posited a white supremacy with stipulations; whites had to maintain racial segregation and political omnipotence to maintain racial supremacy. Nonwhites were not assimilable to whiteness, but detractors from it. Such a defensive construction of whiteness was integral to opposing U.S. expansion into the Pacific. Furthermore, the ethnic diversity of the Islands served as a political counterpoint to traditional

---

delegates from Hawaii in 1897, resulting in a concerted effort by these congressmen to publicize the native Hawaiian anti-annexation petitions and assert the illegality of annexation amid native resistance. The efforts of these Hawaiian delegates contributed significantly to the 1897 treaty's failure to pass the Senate. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 158-59.

[134] Mitchell, *Against the Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands*, 7.

[135] Crumpacker, *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands*, 4-5.

white notions of homogenous American identity. However, unlike expansionists, anti-annexationists utilized that heterogeneity in an inherently homogenizing way, viewing all Island races as collectively inferior and indistinguishable—generalizing stereotypes across all ethnic groups. This political use of Island diversity, combined with an exclusionary white supremacy predicated on political, doctrinal, and expansionist traditions, allowed anti-annexationists to once more manipulate racial ideology to condemn policies of Pacific expansion.

The annexation debate was not just about who would be brought into the country, but what those people would be bringing with them as well. Racial conceptions of disease were especially endemic in anti-annexationist rhetoric, and both congressmen and the media repeatedly defined the nonwhite Hawaiian population as disease-ridden vectors hostile to white health. The association of race with disease was not a recent one, as both Native Americans and African Americans had been historically evaluated as immunologically inferior to whites; however, this Hawaiian variant had roots largely in anti-Asian xenophobia.[136] Nineteenth-

[136] According to historian Katherine Ott, African-American illness "was explained solely in terms of racial identity," and nineteenth-century Americans considered diseases such as tuberculosis "a test of civilization. . . . African-Americans became tubercular because of their innate degeneracies, whereas non-African-Americans . . . had a wider spectrum of etiologies open to them." Similarly, Christian McMillen notes that while there were many explanations for tubercular etiology in Native Americans, "none were more discussed and debated—and none held on with more tenacity—than theories of Indians' inherent racial susceptibility, virgin soil, and degree of Indian Blood." Katherine Ott, *Fevered Lives: Tuberculosis in American Culture since 1870* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 103; Christian McMillen, "'The Red Man and the White Plague': Rethinking Race, Tuberculosis, and American Indians, ca. 1890-1950," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 82, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 609.

It should be noted, however, that nonwhites were also perceived as immunologically resistant to tropical diseases; according to Warwick Anderson, races historically associated with tropical regions were believed to withstand diseases like "malaria, yellow fever, typhoid, scarlet fever, and dengue" that whites could not. This racial-immunological difference led to some colonialists even attempting "to transfuse the blood of Africans into 'non-acclimated whites' before they left for tropical countries to protect them." Such fears of white susceptibility to tropical disease undoubtedly affected perceptions of annexation. See Warwick Anderson, "Immunities of Empire: Race, Disease, and the New Tropical Medicine, 1900-1920," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 70, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 100-102.

century notions of biological inferiority and earlier determinist conceptions of climate led whites to perceive Asians not only as intellectually inferior and societally stagnant but incapable of comprehending white notions of cleanliness and health.[137] Biological understandings of race produced the idea of immunological inferiority as well: Asians were highly susceptible to disease, both due to their physiologically degenerative states and rice-based, rather than protein-rich, diets. Bodily aesthetics, like perceptions of Asians as sallow and sickly in complexion, further bolstered this theory.[138] Nineteenth-century Americans combined these racial beliefs with epidemiological evidence of disease in Asian populations to argue that Asians were virulent threats to white civilization—an argument easily and potently coupled with existing anti-Chinese labor rhetoric.

The preponderance of Asian immigration, particularly of Chinese, to the West Coast transformed these abstract fears into tangible threats, and the dilapidated living conditions of many urban Chinese workers exacerbated stereotypes of disease and filth, ultimately prompting legislation like the Chinese Exclusion Act.[139] Once again, the racial diversity of the Hawaiian Islands would prove useful to anti-annexationists. By homogenizing the Island populace in relation to its Asian residents, congressmen could associate these popular Asian disease stereotypes with everyone on the Islands. Representative James Richardson, for example, lamented the "diseased conditions" of Hawaiian immigrants and noted that "the fatal plague which unhappily afflicts [the Islands] . . . forbid[s] their general occupation . . . by our

---

[137] Guenter Risse, *Plague, Fear, and Politics in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 4-9.

[138] Risse, *Plague, Fear, and Politics*, 28-29.

[139] Risse, *Plague, Fear, and Politics*, 70-71.

people."[140] The press espoused this contagious conviction as well, with newspapers like the *Philadelphia Record* decrying the act of "tak[ing] in at one gulp the whole mass of diseased and depraved serfs" populating the archipelago.[141]

The existence of a leper colony on Molokai Island strengthened this argument even more. An 1897 article in the *North American Review* by prominent dermatologist and sexual disease expert Prince Morrow asserted that an analysis of Hawaiian leprosy was vital to the annexation debate. "The sanitary aspects of the scheme have received no attention," wrote Morrow, and "it becomes a serious question as to what will be the effect of the absorption of this tainted population upon the health interests of this country."[142] Morrow linked the presence of leprosy to early Chinese immigration to the Islands and blamed the disease for the decline in native populations, claiming that leprosy was "slowly sapping the life-blood of the Hawaiian people."[143] This issue concerned Morrow little, however, as "the Hawaiian is essentially insular to his tastes and habits" and was unlikely to immigrate to the U.S.; what was more problematic were "lepers . . . in their desire to escape Molokai" fleeing into the country.[144] Overall, the "principal danger would come from the establishment of more intimate commercial relations" encouraging Americans to travel to the Islands only to make "contact with the tainted

---

[140] Richardson, *Hawaiian Annexation*, 9. 1894 marked the arrival of the third bubonic plague pandemic, exacerbating already heightened fears of Hawaiian plague and only worsening anti-Asian prejudices. For a critical analysis of the 1894 pandemic, see Myron J. Echenberg, "Pestis Redux: The Initial Years of the Third Bubonic Plague Pandemic, 1894-1901," *Journal of World History* 13, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 429-49.

[141] *Philadelphia Record,* quoted in Love, "White Is the Color of Empire," 87.

[142] Prince Morrow, "Leprosy and Hawaiian Annexation," *North American Review* 165, no. 492 (November 1897): 582.

[143] Morrow, "Leprosy and Hawaiian Annexation," 587.

[144] Morrow, "Leprosy and Hawaiian Annexation," 588.

population."[145] Although Morrow ultimately considered the temperate climate of North America as "exert[ing] a marked inhibitory influence" on the disease, he cautioned that leprosy was "insidious," and that Hawaii should be contemplated "from a sanitary point of view" prior to annexing the Islands' "leprous population."[146]

Immediately, leprosy became the definitive Islander disease in annexation debates. Senator John Mitchell quoted Morrow at length in a long-winded virulently racist speech, warning of "some fourteen hundred lepers—doomed beings, who have shut to themselves the doors of their own sepulcher."[147] Not content with only Morrow's testimony, Mitchell quoted author Robert Louis Stevenson's account of visiting a Hawaiian leper colony, describing "abominable deformations of our common manhood," a "horror of delirium," and "the butt ends of human beings lying . . . almost unrecognizable" and concluding that the island was "a pitiful place to visit and a hell to dwell in."[148] "Here one breathes the atmosphere of affliction, disease, and physical disgrace," Mitchell quoted, later admonishing the government as "significantly silent" on the matter of leprosy.[149] The senator was not alone in his fears; Representative John Rixey warned that "many of the population of the Hawaiian Islands are afflicted with leprosy," and Representative Richard Bland, lacking the time to speak critically "about leprosy and lepers," noted that "no intelligent man here can be deceived as to the population of the Hawaiian

[145] Morrow, "Leprosy and Hawaiian Annexation," 589.

[146] Morrow, "Leprosy and Hawaiian Annexation," 590.

[147] Mitchell, *Against the Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands*, 7.

[148] Mitchell, *Against the Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands*, 8.

[149] Mitchell, *Against the Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands*, 8-9.

Islands."[150] The Mississippi *Natchez Daily Democrat* went so far as to call the Islanders "the most leprous people on earth."[151] The anti-annexationists' point was clear—to annex Hawaiians was to annex lepers.

The peak of this concern arrived during the speech of Representative John Gaines, an anti-annexation Democrat well-studied in medicine. Reviling the Islands as "stricken with leprosy since 1856" and characterizing their populace as "the refuse of all creation," Gaines combined the rhetoric of leprosy with political concerns to foretell a diseased and dreadful American future:

> This is the mass, the refuse of all creation, that will soon be knocking at the doors of Congress for statehood, that two Senators, leprous suspects, and two Representatives, leprous suspects, may be elected and sit in Congress to make laws for this country and that unfortunate people.[152]

Gaines's medical background likely made such perils of leprous legislators all the more impactful to his congressional colleagues, who throughout the debate referred to the general Hawaiian populace as lepers and diseased.

This approach was politically effective. A risk of Hawaiian disease provided a tangible threat to Americans already familiar with stereotypes of Asiatic contagions like plague and leprosy, and the ethnic diversity of the Islands allowed anti-annexationists to define them by their Asian population. Thus, annexation opponents could cast Hawaii in Asian and diseased terms to exploit existing popular prejudices. Additionally, this technique allowed opponents to circumvent questions of white superiority—while white Americans would undoubtedly be

---

[150] Rixey, *Proposed Annexation of Hawaii*, 5; Bland, *Proposed Annexation of Hawaii*, 15.

[151] *Natchez* (MS) *Daily Democrat*, quoted in Osborne, *Empire Can Wait*, 37.

[152] John Gaines, *Annexation of the Hawaiian* Islands, 11.

superior to the Hawaiian races, superiority did not ensure immunity to disease. As such, infectious immigrants could potentially destroy domestic white supremacy, and a white civilizing presence on the Islands would likely not withstand the Hawaiian diseases, effectively nullifying expansionists' paternalist talking points.

Annexationist attempts to refute the above claims were often limited because invoking the idea of leprosy would only emphasize it further. Regardless of population, disease transmission, or susceptibility, lepers were on the Islands, and so the best approach for annexationists was to ignore rather than refute the argument. For example, the Hawaii Commission limited their report's discussion of leprosy to a two-page section titled "Leper Settlement." In four introductory and unusually pithy sentences, the section notes a presence of "1,100 lepers" who were "fed, clothed, and cared for by the Government of Hawaii."[153] A dense and absurdly unrelated digression follows—still part of the leper analysis—offering idyllic scenes of "great crops of sugar," natives' skills at crafting mats, "lofty mountains," the "efflorescence of sulphur [*sic*]" from a "subterranean fountain," and one monumental summit—the "magnitude" of which "is hardly believed at first sight."[154] The Commission's closing comment in "Leper Settlement" aptly illustrates their approach to the leprosy question: "There is much timber land also found on the mountain sides."[155]

Not all annexationists, however, eluded and obfuscated questions of archipelagic disease. Walter Frear, in his "Report of Committee on Health and Quarantine," lauded the Honolulu Board of Health as having "a commodious quarantine station with a modern disinfecting plant"

---

[153] Hawaii Commission, *Report of the Hawaiian Commission*, 6.

[154] Hawaii Commission, *Report of the Hawaiian Commission*, 6-7.

[155] Hawaii Commission, *Report of the Hawaiian Commission*, 8.

that was "so efficient . . . that bubonic plague has never, cholera but one, and smallpox only a few times" troubled the Islands, while also blaming a "serious danger of introduction of epidemic diseases" on Chinese and Japanese ports.[156] He went on to describe the segregation of lepers, arguing that the number of afflicted would "diminish until it becomes nil" and emphasizing Hawaii's "stricter enforcement of [leper] segregation."[157] Similarly, Representative Albert Berry argued, "The [Hawaiian] race is gradually becoming extinct," and the "great bugaboo" of leprosy would die with them.[158] Emphasizing containment and decline was not the only approach. Conversely, Minister Stevens extolled the "liberal treatment of lepers" as exemplary of native Hawaiians' Christian goodwill and emblematic of how easily assimilated to white culture native Hawaiians were.[159] Still, these responses were rarities in the larger annexationist discussion, and invoking leprosy was typically avoided unless absolutely necessary, such as in analyses of health and sanitation.

Not only did anti-annexationists propagate fears of literal diseases like leprosy, but they also used disease-based rhetoric to refer to nonwhites, homogenizing them and characterizing them as both disease-carriers and a disease themselves. The aforementioned Arizona delegate

---

[156] Walter F. Frear, "Report of Committee on Health and Quarantine," in *Report of the Hawaiian Commission*, 114-15.

[157] Frear, "Report of Committee on Health and Quarantine," 115-17.

[158] Berry, *Proposed Annexation of the Hawaiian Republic*, 14. Representative Richard Wise dedicated the second half of his speech to medically refuting the leprosy thesis at length, stressing that the disease was "much misunderstood," and while "a loathsome disease," it was "not beset with the horrors with which it is painted." Wise, unlike many of his colleagues, came prepared with a myriad of medical sources detailing germ theory and the nature of leprosy, claiming the Hawaii debate had shown "the great ignorance on the part of some people in regard to this disease." While Wise's remarks were the most well-researched of any in the debate, they unfortunately were of little persuasion to opponents. Richard A. Wise, *Annexation of Hawaii: Speech of Hon. Richard A. Wise, of Virginia, in the House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898), 4-8.

[159] Stevens and Olseon, *Picturesque Hawaii*, 59.

Marcus Smith, after listing the multiethnic census record, condemned "taking into our body politic the virus here."[160] Representative Edgar Crumpacker asserted, "The infusion of that exotic into our national currents will . . . corrupt our whole system; it will be a festering sore in the body politic, to irritate and annoy for all time."[161] During his anti-annexationist address to the Chicago Commercial Club, Hermann von Holst relied on similar rhetoric, asserting that to annex the Islands was to "consciously insert into the nation's lifeblood a foreign body which cannot be assimilated."[162] To anti-annexationists, the Hawaiian population was not just contagious but a contagion, and it was one that endangered the health of white America's institutions and identity.

For annexationists, this method proved even more difficult to defeat than tangible fears of leprosy and plague. Characterizing Islanders as a disease infecting the white body politic shifted the race conversation into abstract rhetoric, and the only viable means of refutation was to shift to the equally abstract assimilation arguments noted previously. Unfortunately, arguing that nonwhites would assimilate rather than metaphorically infect fell apart when confronted with the idea of literal disease. Whether assimilated or not, if Islanders carried disease, the U.S. was at risk. In racial conceptions of disease—and diseased conceptions of race—anti-annexationists thus found a talking point nigh-impossible for annexationists to refute.

Furthermore, these rhetorical strategies could both feed off of and reinforce popular fears of immigrant-born infection, acting in a reciprocal manner to strengthen domestic xenophobia. The multiethnic nature of Hawaii allowed annexation opponents to harness existing anti-Asian disease stereotypes and define the entire population with the prejudices of a single demographic.

---

[160] Smith, *Speeches*, 13.

[161] Crumpacker, *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands*, 5.

[162] von Holst, *The Annexation of Hawaii*, 27.

This politically adroit use of race offered yet another limit to white supremacy as well, without necessarily questioning white superiority. Through the racial rhetoric of disease, anti-annexationists once again utilized Hawaiian heterogeneity to craft politically nuanced and exclusionary conceptions of white supremacy and racial identity.

Clearly, the Hawaii Question of the 1890s was far from a simple one; the debate was highly intersectional, including topics of economics, strategy, environment, tradition, and even medicine. Linking these seemingly disparate discussions was the theme of race, and both supporters and opponents of annexation racially manipulated the Islands in ways advantageous to their greater economic goals. A diverse populace allowed proponents to draw boundaries between races and promote assimilation while simultaneously harnessing prejudice—in the process perpetuating a conception of white supremacy as expansive and indomitable. Opponents sought instead to generalize Island races and relied on diversity to apply racial stereotypes across ethnic boundaries. The result was a white supremacy under threat and predicated on climate, homogenous labor, and a white body politic. Regardless of the ultimate role race may have played in the debate's outcome, it thoroughly suffused that debate and was a valuable political tool for all involved. By investigating the politics of race rather than relegating them to the periphery of annexation studies, historians can better understand not only annexation but nineteenth-century American identity and racial ideology as well.

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

"Annexation of Hawaii by Treaty." *Chautauqaun*, no. 25 (August 1897), 5.

Ball, Thomas H. *Against the Annexation of Hawaii: Speech of Hon. Thos. H. Ball, of Texas, in the House of Representatives.* Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Barham, John A. *Annexation of Hawaii: Speech of Hon. John A. Barham, of California, in the House of Representatives*. Washington DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Bell, John C. *Proposed Annexation of Hawaii: Speech of Hon. John C. Bell, of Colorado, in the House of Representatives*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Berry, Albert S. *Proposed Annexation of the Hawaiian Republic: Speech of Hon. Albert S. Berry, of Kentucky, in the House of Representatives*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Bingham, Harry. *The Annexation of Hawaii: A Right and a Duty*. Concord, NH: Rumford Press, 1898.

Bland, Richard P. *Proposed Annexation of Hawaii: Speech of Hon. Richard P. Bland, of Missouri, in the House of Representatives*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Burleigh, Edwin. *Annexation of Hawaii: Speech of Hon. Edwin C. Burleigh, of Maine, in the House of Representatives*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Bromwell, Jacob Henry. *Remarks of Hon. J. H. Bromwell, of Ohio, on Hawaiian Annexation, in the House of Representatives*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Broussard, Robert Foligny. *Hawaii: Speech of Hon. R. F. Broussard, of Louisiana, in the House of Representatives*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Crumpacker, Edgar Dean. *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands: Speech of Hon. E. D. Crumpacker, of Indiana, in the House of Representatives*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

De Vries, Marion. *Hawaiian Annexation: Speech of Hon. Marion De Vries, of California, in the House of Representatives*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Eaton, Dorman Bridgman. *Hawaiian Independence (Not Annexation), Our Policy: A Domestic Industry Endangered*. New York: Dorman Eaton, 1897.

Foster, John W. *The Annexation of Hawaii: An Address Delivered before the National Geographic Society, at Washington, DC.* Washington, DC: Gibson Bros., 1897.

Gaines, John W. *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands: Speech of Hon. John W. Gaines, of Tennessee, in the House of Representatives*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

General Superintendent of the Census. *Report of the General Superintendent of the Census, 1896*. Honolulu: Hawaiian Star Press, 1897.

Gibson, Henry R. *Hawaii, the Great Ocean Crossroads: Speech of Hon. Henry R. Gibson, of Tennessee, in the House of Representatives*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Graff, Joseph V. *Remarks of Hon. Joseph V. Graff, of Illinois, on the Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands, in the House of Representatives*. Washington DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Grow, Galusha A. *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands: Speech of Hon. Galusha A. Grow of Pennsylvania, in the House of Representatives*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Hawaiian Commission. *The Report of the Hawaiian Commission*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1898.

Henry, Charles L. *Proposed Annexation of Hawaii: Speech of Hon. Charles L. Henry, of Indiana, in the House of Representatives*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Holst, Hermann Eduard von. *The Annexation of Hawaii: An Address by Hermann Eduard von Holts, Ph. D., Head Professor of History in the University of Chicago, Delivered before the Commercial Club of Chicago at its 140th Regular Dinner at the Auditorium Hotel*. Chicago: Commercial Club, 1898.

Joint Resolution of July 7, 1898, Public Resolution 55-51, 30 STAT 750, to Provide for Annexing the Hawaiian Islands to the United States. National Archives Catalog. Accessed April 5, 2020. https://catalog.archives.gov/id/5730378.

Keppler, Udo J. "A Trifle Embarrassed." Cartoon. *Puck*, August 1898. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. Accessed April 6, 2020. http://www.loc.gov /pictures/item/2012647587/.

Liliuokalani. *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen.* Boston: Lothrop, Lee, and Shepard Co., 1898.

Lomax, E. L. *National Platforms of the Republican, Democratic, Prohibition, National, Peoples, National Silver, and National Democratic Parties*. Omaha: Union Pacific, 1896.

Mahan, Alfred Thayer. "Hawaii and Our Future Sea Power." *Forum*, 15 March, 1893, 1-11.

Mahan, Alfred Thayer. *The Influence of Sea Power upon History: 1660-1783*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1890.

Mesick, William S. *Proposed Annexation of Hawaii: Speech of Hon. William S. Mesick, of Michigan, in the House of Representatives*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Meyer, Adolph. *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands: Speech of Hon. Adolph Meyer, of Louisiana, in the House of Representatives*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Mitchell, John L. *Against the Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands: Speech of Hon. John L. Mitchell, of Wisconsin, in the Senate of the United States*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Morrow, Prince. "Leprosy and Hawaiian Annexation." *North American Review* 165, no. 492 (November 1897): 582-90.

Packer, Horace B. *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands: Speech of Hon. Horace B. Packer, of Pennsylvania, in the House of Representatives*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Pearce, Charles E. *Annexation of Hawaii: "Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Sway": Speech of Hon. Charles E. Pearce, of Missouri, in the House of Representatives.* Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Pettigrew, Richard F. *Annexation of the Hawaiian Islands: Speech of the Hon. Richard F. Pettigrew, of South Dakota, in the Senate of the United States*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Procter, John R. "Vantage in Hawaii: John R. Proctor Reviews its Import to United States." *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 21, 1898.

Ray, George W. *Annexation of Hawaii: Speech of Hon. George W. Ray, of New York, in the House of Representatives*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Richardson, James D. *Hawaiian Annexation and Our Foreign Policy: Speech of Hon. James D. Richardson, of Tennessee, in the House of Representatives*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Rixey, John F. *Proposed Annexation of Hawaii: Speech of Hon. John F. Rixey, of Virginia, in the House of Representatives*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Saint Paul (MN) *Globe*. "The Beauties of a Foreign Policy: Japanese Views Regarding Hawaiian Annexation Unchanged." December 9, 1897.

San Francisco Call. "A Field Day for Opponents of Annexation: Annexation Means a New Slave State." January 12, 1898.

San Francisco Call. "Debate on Annexation of Hawaii." June 12, 1898.

Shafroth, John F. *An Imperial Policy Dangerous to the Republic: Speech of Hon. John F. Shafroth, of Colorado, in the House of Representatives.* Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Smith, Howard. *The Sunset Club, 1898-99: The Meetings of 1898-99 and a List of Members to September, 1899*. Chicago: Sunset Club, 1899.

Smith, Marcus A. *Speeches of Hon. Marcus A. Smith, of Arizona, Delivered in the House of Representatives, April 7th, 1898, and June 15th, 1898: The Reorganization of the Army and our Relations with Spain, and the Hawaiian Question.* Washington DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Stevens, John L. and William B. Oleson. *Picturesque Hawaii: A Charming Description of Her Unique History, Strange People, Exquisite Climate, Wondrous Volcanoes, Luxurious Productions, Beautiful Cities, Corrupt Monarchy, Recent Revolution and Provisional Government*. Philadelphia: Hubbard Publishing, 1894.

"The Monroe Doctrine (1823)." Basic Readings in U.S. Democracy. United States Department of State. Accessed April 22, 2020. https://web.archive.org/web/20120108131055/http://eca.state.gov/education/engteaching/pubs/AmLnC/br50.htm.

Todd, Albert M. *Hawaiian Annexation and Extension of American Influence: Speech of Hon. Albert M. Todd, of Michigan, in the House of Representatives.* Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Washington Post. "Hawaii Waits a Sign." June 15, 1897.

Washington Post. "Sugar is the Secret: Mr. Oxnard's View of the Agitation to Annex Hawaii." April 29, 1897.

White, Stephen M. *Annexation of Hawaii: Speech of Hon. Stephen M. White, of California, in the Senate of the United States*. Washington DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Wise, Richard A. *Annexation of Hawaii: Speech of Hon. Richard A. Wise, of Virginia, in the House of Representatives*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1898.

Secondary Sources:

Anderson, Warwick. "Immunities of Empire: Race, Disease, and the New Tropical Medicine, 1900-1920." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 70, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 94-118.

Apt, Benjamin L. "Mahan's Forebears: The Debate over Maritime Strategy, 1868-1883." *Naval War College Review* 50, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 86-111.

Asada, Sadao. *Culture Shock and Japanese-American Relations: Historical Essays*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2007.

Baer, George. *One Hundred Years of Sea Power: The U.S. Navy, 1890-1990*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993

Bailey, Thomas A. "Japan's Protest against the Annexation of Hawaii." Journal of Modern History 3, no. 1 (March 1931): 46-61.

Bailey, Thomas A. "The United States and Hawaii during the Spanish-American War." *American Historical Review* 36, no. 3 (April 1931): 552-60.

Basson, Lauren. "Fit for Annexation But Unfit to Vote? Debating Hawaiian Suffrage Qualifications at the Turn of the Twentieth Century." *Social Science History* 29, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 575-98.

Basson, Lauren. *White Enough to Be American? Race Mixing, Indigenous People, and the Boundaries of State and Nation*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008.

Beisner, Robert L. *Twelve Against Empire: The Anti-Imperialists, 1898-1900*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1968.

Bell, Roger. *Last Among Equals: Hawaiian Statehood and American Politics*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984.

Currey, J. Seymour. *Chicago: Its History and Its Builders; A Century of Marvelous Growth*. Vol. 3. Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing, 1912.

Dupont, Brandon. "'Henceforth, I Must Have No Friends': Evaluating the Economic Policies of Grover Cleveland." *Independent Review* 18, no. 4 (Spring 2014): 559-79.

Echenberg, Myron J. "Pestis Redux: The Initial Years of the Third Bubonic Plague Pandemic, 1894-1901." *Journal of World History* 13, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 429-49.

Epstein, David, and Sharyn O'Halloran. "The Partisan Paradox and the U.S. Tariff, 1877-1934." *International Organization* 50, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 301-24.

Fazio, Steven A. "Marcus Aurelius Smith: Arizona Delegate and Senator." *Arizona and the West* 12, no. 1 (Spring 1970): 23-62.

Hanson, John M. "Taxation and the Political Economy of the Tariff." *International Organization* 44, no. 4 (Autumn 1990): 527-51.

Jacobson, Matthew F. "Annexing the Other: The World's Peoples as Auxiliary Consumers and Imported Workers, 1876-1917." In *Race, Nation, and Empire in American History*. Edited by James Campbell, Matthew Guterl, and Robert Lee. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007. 103-129.

Kent, Andrew. "*Boumediene, Munaf,* and the Supreme Court's Misreading of the Insular Cases." *Iowa Law Review* 97, no. 101 (2011): 101-180.

Kuykendall, Ralph S. *The Hawaiian Kingdom: Volumes 1-3*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1938-67.

Love, Eric. *Race over Empire: Racism and U.S. Imperialism, 1865-1900*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2004.

Love, Eric. "White Is the Color of Empire: The Annexation of Hawaii in 1898." In *Race, Nation, and Empire in American History,* edited by James Campbell, Matthew Guterl, and Robert Lee, 75-102. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

McMillen, Christian W. "'The Red Man and the White Plague': Rethinking Race, Tuberculosis, and American Indians, ca. 1890-1950." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 82, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 608-45.

Okihiro, Gary Y. *Cane Fires: The Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865-1945*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991.

Osborne, Thomas. *Empire Can Wait: American Opposition to Hawaiian Annexation, 1893-1898*. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1981.

Osorio, Jonathan. *Dismembering Lahui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002.

Ott, Katherine. *Fevered Lives: Tuberculosis in American Culture since 1870*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Pratt, Julius. *Expansionists of 1898: The Acquisition of Hawaii and the Spanish Islands*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1936.

Raustiala, Kal. *Does the Constitution Follow the Flag? The Evolution of Territoriality in American Law*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Risse, Guenter. *Plague, Fear, and Politics in San Francisco's Chinatown*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012.

Russ, William Adam Jr. *The Hawaiian Republic (1894-98) and Its Struggle to Win Annexation*. Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1961.

Schencking, J. Charles. *Making Waves: Politics, Propaganda, and the Emergence of the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1868-1922*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005.

Silva, Noenoe. *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004.

Takaki, Ronald. *Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawaii, 1835-1920.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983.

Tate, Merze. *Hawaii: Reciprocity or Annexation.* East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1968.

Tate, Merze. "Slavery and Racism as Deterrents to the Annexation of Hawaii 1854-1855." *Journal of Negro History* 47, no. 1 (January 1962): 1-18.

Tate, Merze. *The United States and the Hawaiian Kingdom: A Political History*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1965.

Varacalli, Thomas F. "National Interest and Moral Responsibility in the Political Thought of Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan." *Naval War College Review* 69, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 108-127.

UMW Honor Code:
I hereby declare upon my word of honor that I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this work.

-Joseph N. Hearl