

21-2 | Deposed Queen Pleads for Her Island Kingdom
LILIUOKALANI, *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen*
(1898)

In 1898, when the United States entered a war with Spain over Cuba and the Philippines, Congress passed a resolution annexing the Hawaiian Islands, part of a growing colonization interest among many policymakers to extend the power and influence of the United States around the world. Hawaii was key for its strategic position in the central Pacific and for its trade, promoted by American business interests who in the early 1890s engineered the overthrow of the island's Queen Liliuokalani. Her 1898 memoir, published amidst failed efforts to lobby American politicians to oppose annexation, presented her island's plea for its restored sovereignty.

I have felt much perplexity over the attitude of the American press, that great vehicle of information for the people, in respect of Hawaiian affairs. Shakespeare has said it is excellent to have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous to use it like a giant. It is not merely that, with few exceptions, the press has seemed to favor the extinction of Hawaiian sovereignty, but that it has often treated me with coarse allusions and flippancy, and almost uniformly has commented upon me

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adversely, or has declined to publish letters from myself and friends conveying correct information upon matters which other correspondents had, either willfully or through being deceived, misrepresented. Perhaps in many cases *libellous* matter was involved. Possibly the press was not conscious of how cruelly it was exerting its strength, and will try, I now trust, to repair the injury.

It has been shown that in Hawaii there is an alien element composed of men of energy and determination, well able to carry through what they undertake, but not scrupulous respecting their methods. They doubtless control all the resources and influence of the present ruling power in Honolulu, and will employ them tirelessly in the future, as they have in the past, to secure their ends. This annexationist party might prove to be a dangerous accession even to American politics, both on account of natural abilities, and because of the training of an autocratic life from earliest youth.

Many of these men are anything but ideal citizens for a democracy. That custom of freely serving each other without stipulation or reward which exists as a very nature among our people has been even exaggerated in our hospitality to our teachers and advisers. Their children, and the associates they have drawn to themselves, are accustomed to it. They have always been treated with distinction. They would hardly know how to submit to the contradictions, disappointments, and discourtesies of a purely emulative society.

It would remain necessary for them to rule in Hawaii, even if the American flag floated over them. And if they found they could be successfully opposed, would they seek no remedy? Where would men, already proved capable of outwitting the conservatism of the United States and defeating its strongest traditions, capable of changing its colonial and foreign policy at a single *coup*, stop in their schemes?

Perhaps I may even venture here upon a final word respecting the American advocates of this annexation of Hawaii. I observe that they have pretty successfully striven to make it a party matter. It is chiefly Republican statesmen and politicians who favor it. But is it really a matter of party interest? Is the American Republic of States to degenerate, and become a colonizer and a land-grabber?

And is this prospect satisfactory to a people who rely upon self-government for their liberties, and whose guaranty of liberty and autonomy to the whole western hemisphere, the grand Monroe doctrine, appealing to the respect and the sense of justice of the masses of every nation on earth, has made any attack upon it practically impossible to the statesmen and rulers of armed empires? There is little question but that the United States could become a successful rival of the European nations in the race for conquest, and could create a vast military and naval power, if such is its ambition. But is such an ambition laudable? Is such a departure from its established principles patriotic or politic?

Here, at least for the present, I rest my pen. During my stay in the capital, I suppose I must have met, by name and by card, at least five thousand callers. From most of these, by word, by grasp of hand, or at least by expression of countenance, I have received a sympathy and encouragement of which I cannot write fully. Let it be understood that I have not failed to notice it, and to be not only

flattered by its universality, but further very grateful that I have had the opportunity to know the real American people, quite distinct from those who have assumed this honored name when it suited their selfish ends.

But for the Hawaiian people, for the forty thousand of my own race and blood, descendants of those who welcomed the devoted and pious missionaries of seventy years ago,—for them has this mission of mine accomplished anything?

Oh, honest Americans, as Christians hear me for my down-trodden people! Their form of government is as dear to them as yours is precious to you. Quite as warmly as you love your country, so they love theirs. With all your goodly possessions, covering a territory so immense that there yet remain parts unexplored, possessing islands that, although near at hand, had to be neutral ground in time of war, do not covet the little vineyard of Naboth's, so far from your shores, lest the punishment of Ahab fall upon you, if not in your day, in that of your children, for "be not deceived, God is not mocked." The people to whom your fathers told of the living God, and taught to call "Father," and whom the sons now seek to despoil and destroy, are crying aloud to Him in their time of trouble; and He will keep His promise, and will listen to the voices of His Hawaiian children lamenting for their homes.

It is for them that I would give the last drop of my blood; it is for them that I would spend, nay, am spending, everything belonging to me. Will it be in vain? It is for the American people and their representatives in Congress to answer these questions. As they deal with me and my people, kindly, generously, and justly, so may the Great Ruler of all nations deal with the grand and glorious nation of the United States of America.

READING AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What strategy does Liliuokalani use in her memoir to convince Americans to resist annexation? What does she imply will be the consequences for America of its overreach into the Pacific?
2. Whom does she blame for the political crisis in Hawaii? What inferences about American foreign policy can you draw from her assessment of Hawaii's experiences?