Introduction to the Ethnic Studies Story:
The Political Economic Environment

The anatomy of Civil Society is to be sought in political economy.
– Karl Marx, Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy

The Ethnic Studies Story is about the social struggles of Hawai‘i’s people. It is their story, acted with passion that revealed the politics underlying the tourism society built in the 1950s and exposed discrimination in many aspects of social life against the lower sections of society. In those heady days of the “Democratic Revolution” and its political figures, modernization and economic growth became the main goals presumed to create an infrastructure supporting “first-class citizenship.” Plantation society gave way to jet-age tourism, and the workers’ movement became coopted into a new political alignment of Democratic Party politics. The way was paved for US capital to dominate the Islands’ political economy and integrate the Big Five (Amfac, Castle and Cooke, C. Brewer, Alexander and Baldwin, and Theo Davies) into the structures of a new international economy.

Expansion of US capital into Hawai‘i (and the Pacific) made possible the creation of a huge middle class and a new, multi-ethnic elite class. Long gone was the old haole (white) oligarchy with its authoritarian rule of the Islands, even though a majority of the ruling elite class remained haole and included the newly transformed, Big Five haole families. But many of these elite-class haole were liberal Democrats such as John Burns, Tom Gill, and Frank Fasi, who participated in the “Democratic Revolution” and the subsequent transformation of Hawai‘i’s society and economy.

The demise of Plantation Hawai‘i as a consequence of global capitalist transformation, on the one hand, and the new political realignment locally, on the other, gave way to American culture and the values associated with it. Subsequent socio-political developments institutionalized American cultural values and whole generations became socialized through them. These were the days of the “melting pot” mythology, which still lurks in many people’s imaginations and which, in whole or part, still passes for one of the “truths” governing social relations.

The evictions that took place in the 1960s and the 1970s to pave the way for new real estate developments, such as in Kalama Valley, and the anti-eviction struggles these engendered belied the myth of the “melting pot.” They also demonstrated the ethnic and class inequities resulting from capital investment that formed the infrastructure of a tourism society. A majority of Kānaka Maoli (indigenous Hawaiians), Pacific Islanders and Filipinos, who were largely working class or poor, derived little benefit from these developments. In fact, it can be cogently argued that the tourism society that replaced Plantation Hawai‘i developed at the expense of those in the lower sections of society, especially the Kānaka Maoli.

Such developments in Hawai‘i received sustenance and validation from an entire body of social theory that had little relation to social reality. Opposing viewpoints to the dominant paradigm were virtually absent in the academy. However, that reality was significantly altered by subsequent developments. The 1950s and 1960s witnessed significant changes in the global political economy that also expressed themselves in the US social arena. As a consequence of its triumph in World War II, the US extended its economic and political influence to Europe, primarily through the Marshall Plan and the US troops stationed there, and to the Pacific, through its occupation of Japan and colonization of the Philippines and other Pacific Islands. The US had no choice but to reconstruct Europe and Japan to insure a strong international capitalist system that
could stand against the Soviet Bloc. The US became the leader of this new capitalist arrangement, especially after 1956 when it successfully parried the challenge by Great Britain and France to its dominant position after the latter two countries and Israel were forced to withdraw their invading forces from the Suez Canal Zone in Egypt.

The US used this dominant international position to press ahead with the Cold War. That war and US economic expansion overseas went hand in hand and required a solid home front which was not possible until the national political power structure agreed to abolish de jure discrimination against the various ethnic and national groups in the country. Opposition to this strategy came primarily from the southern local structures who were very comfortable with their hold on power until the Civil Rights Movement began the long road towards black integration into the larger society. Simply put, de jure integration of minorities of color was the sine qua non for domestic stability, essential for the US economic push overseas, but the southern power structures decided to fight the social change demanded by the logic of capitalist development. The Civil Rights Movement, with its black leadership, had to fight for every gain it achieved.

The war in South East Asia (the “Vietnam War”) complicated matters on the home front. Martin Luther King, Jr., was opposed to the war; he saw common ground between the struggles of the blacks and other minorities of color in this country and the fight against colonialism in Africa and Asia. The triumph of the Civil Rights Movement by the late 1960s, to end at least de jure discrimination, and the withdrawal of the US from Vietnam by 1975, were the price of power that the US ruling circles had to pay for internal stability. But global economic gains by US-based transnational corporations and high finance more than justified the price, and the Civil Rights Movement was prevented from going beyond a certain threshold designated by the ruling circles. Consequently, the push of Martin Luther King, Jr., to defend the rights of workers (both black and white) was met with stiff resistance by the national power structure just as the Watts Rebellion of 1965 was crushed by that same power, because it threatened to go beyond the goals of Civil Rights and move towards workers’ rights.

Ethnic Studies in the Social Movement

Such was the national environment in which Hawai‘i operated. The Islands also played a role in the war in South East Asia. Consequently, the anti-war movement grew here. This confluence of the international and national situations and local land and housing evictions, gave rise to a broad social movement in the Islands against evictions and for the assertion of a local identity, especially among the youth. The motion to establish an Ethnic Studies Program at the University of Hawai‘i, was part of that movement. With the “melting pot” mythology breaking down in the Mākua Valley and Kalama Valley evictions, the nascent social movement rejected the way in which Hawai‘i’s students had been educated about history, as seen through the eyes of the haole oligarchy, even though that oligarchy’s rule had been destroyed. The Euro-centric perspective carried over to the newly formed local power structure, despite its ethnic diversity. In fact, that change was possible, because it conformed with the requirements of the global reach of the US. “First-class citizenship” could have been achieved only through the wedding of local social forces, who wanted to dismantle the old power structure, and US capital – and that natural wedding was cemented by a common world outlook anchored in Euro-centrism.

The struggle to establish Ethnic Studies at the University of Hawai‘i had to confront the local power structure, as the latter was committed to modernization regardless of the price paid by communities not integrally tied to Democratic Party politics. However, elements of the local power structure, primarily based in the trade
union movement, had an opening to argue that opposing an Ethnic Studies Program on campus was untenable, given the commitment of the new Democrats to equality among various ethnic groups. However, the establishment of the Ethnic Studies Program could not have happened without a fight. The local power structure was ultimately embarrassed into agreeing to a temporary program that it sought to contain, coopt or destroy. The Program was regarded as a threat to the dominant paradigm in higher education, which is based on a disciplinary philosophy, a positivist meta-theoretical commitment, and a functionalist separation between student and teacher. The paradigm serves the dominant economic powers and this was consonant with the establishment of the institution in 1907 as an agricultural college in the service of the plantation system and its power structure.

The Ethnic Studies Program had diametrically opposed commitments: It was interdisciplinary, it had a meta-theoretical commitment grounded in interpretive philosophy, and undergraduate students (in the role of Lab Leaders) who assumed considerable responsibilities in teaching and curriculum development, and it wanted to be of service to the lower sections of the multi-ethnic community rather than to the dominant power structure. Important research was conducted on the Bishop Estate, on interlocking directorates, on eviction struggles, on the nature of the tourism society. New courses were developed also in conjunction with this research on the political economy of Hawai‘i. More research and courses were developed on the plantation experiences of the various ethnic communities and Kanaka Maoli history. Histories were told that had not been told at the premier institution of higher learning in the Islands. The Ethnic Studies Program broke the silence and the siege that a colonial mentality had constructed around the multi-ethnic and multi-national society. The slogan of the movement, “Our History, Our Way,” was implemented and, like a renaissance, generated much excitement among the student body at the University and brought about significant support from faculty members across campus who saw in Ethnic Studies a vehicle that effectively challenged the racism and the dominant paradigm at the University and in the larger community.

The fight to make the Program permanent in 1977 was successful primarily because of the long-lasting alliance between working-class and farming communities fighting evictions on the one hand and the Program on the other. Members of the Program took active part in the struggles in Chinatown, Waialohi-Waikane, Save our Surf, and Ota Camp. Members of those struggles were also part of the Program.

It was in this political and social environment that Marion Kelly took a leading role in the struggle to establish Ethnic Studies. In that early period, Marion was a guiding force to the Ethnic Studies students and staff. She never compromised on matters of principle and kept her eyes on the prize: permanence for the Ethnic Studies Program at the University. She also helped design several courses such as ES 221 (Hawaiians); ES 320 (Hawai‘i and the Pacific); and ES 350 (Economic Change and Hawai‘i’s People). She furthermore designed ES 340 (Land Tenure and Use Change in Hawai‘i); and PACs 392 (Modern Polynesia), which she taught in Pacific Island Studies (subsequently cross-listed as ES 392). Marion’s research yielded other benefits to the Ethnic Studies Program; it accorded academic credibility to the fledgling Program.

Marion’s upbringing prepared her for the role that she was to play in that early period of the Ethnic Studies Program. Born in Honolulu on June 4, 1919, she grew up on the Waialua sugar plantation with her maternal grandparents through whom she learned humanitarian values. She deplored prejudice and discrimination, much of which she saw practiced on the plantation. Her father, William Greig Anderson, was a famous schooner captain and sampan fisherman. He and his wife, Thelma Anderson, often traveled in the Pacific. In 1934, Marion visited Fiji, Aotearoa (New Zealand), Rarotonga, and Tahiti with her parents. She first learned about the South Pacific and her Cook Island roots (her father was part Cook Islander) from such trips.
After graduating from Roosevelt High School, Marion enrolled at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM) and graduated with a degree in business and economics in 1941. After graduation, she worked in Honolulu for organized labor, the AFL (American Federation of Labor) and then the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organization). After the war, she and her husband, John Kelly, whom she met in 1939 when both were young musicians, left for New York. Marion attended Columbia University to further her studies in economics. She wrote a paper for Dr. Karl Polanyi’s Primitive Economics Seminar on subsistence economy and the indigenous Hawaiian relationship to the land. Marion had to ask her mother to send her whatever little information was available in Honolulu, as there was hardly any at the Columbia University library. This experience set her on a course to become the preeminent authority on land tenure and use change in Hawai‘i. Her thesis on *Changes in Land Tenure in Hawai‘i: 1778-1850* at the Pacific Island Studies Program at UHM, which gave her the Master’s degree in 1956, is now a classic in the new school of critical history of Hawai‘i, which in recent years have made impressive progress with the works of many Kanaka Maoli scholars, examples of which are included in this volume.

Marion now teaches full time and has a full research agenda at the Department of Ethnic Studies where she is respected and loved by her colleagues for the service she is performing for Hawai‘i.

The National Political Scene

The Ethnic Studies Program began institutionalization with the hiring in 1978 of Franklin Odo as its first permanent Director. This process occurred in the post-Civil Rights and post-Vietnam War period, a time of economic crisis in the US where “stagflation” (stagnation and inflation combined, a relatively recent term in bourgeois economics), brought into question many of the assumptions of that discipline. This was also the beginning of a backlash against Affirmative Action fueled by the economic crisis brewing.

The Reagan years were not far behind. Reaganism and Reaganesomics dominated the American political and social scene for 12 years. The US imperial mission, expressed as “protecting our vital global interests,” and the backlash that that role created around the world, fed national chauvinism. Anti-Arab and Anti-Iranian feelings heightened, especially after the Iranian revolution and the taking of hostages in Tehran, Iran’s capital, in 1979. The 1983 explosion of the Marines barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, added fuel to the fire of national chauvinism. US citizens of Arab and Iranian origin or any one so mistaken were targets of hate crimes.

Reagan portrayed the international situation as though America was under siege, and as if he were the knight in shining armor with a plan to rescue America from the barbarians abroad and from the social and economic malaise at home. His strategy was two-pronged: First, hit them abroad, mining their harbors, invading their countries, creating and supporting armed opposition against enemy states, and conducting undercover military operations. Second, on the domestic level, blame the economic crisis on “big government,” “big labor,” and the “welfare queens,” and protect “traditional values” against the onslaught of liberal ideas. Reagan, as a representative of the conservative wing of the ruling class, instituted supply-side economics, which emphasized cutting taxes for the rich and corporations and cutting expenditures for social services, while increasing military spending and deregulating government (which, in fact, was started under President Carter in 1978). All was done in the firm belief that the supply-side policies would create jobs, generate more tax revenues from workers, and reenergize free competition.
It is important to remember that Reagan passed his legislation through a Democratic-dominated Congress, a fact that underscores that Reagan’s policies were regarded as essential to rescue capitalism from the crisis that befell the economy. The conservative and liberal wings of the ruling class were in disagreement on how to deal with the economic crisis; but they found much common ground, as the legislation that passed Congress so clearly indicates. Economic and social policies in the Reagan years resulted in relatively high rates of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) growth. But they also yielded high budget deficits that quadrupled the national debt, increased the number of the homeless, and toughened the criteria to qualify for welfare, food stamps and Medicaid. Furthermore, the assault on labor in the Reagan years had been systematic and resulted in fewer unionized workers and fewer benefits and lower wages for these workers. Those were the days of LBOs (leveraged buyouts), mergers, downsizing, and bankruptcies.

International Trends and Hawai‘i’s Political Economy

Labor in the Islands was affected adversely by these policies; as were people who relied on social services to maintain at least a poverty-level living standard. Measured by macro indicators, however, the Hawaiian economy had been doing well, averaging more than 5% GSP (Gross State Product) growth rates.

The popular political mood in both the Islands and the continental US shifted to the right. In the 1980s, progressive social movements in the Islands subsided and became virtually non-existent, save for a few organizations, such as coalitions to fight against social services cuts in the federal budget and to protest increases in the military budget.

The effects of global competition wreaked havoc on the sugar industry in the Islands, and the 1980s witnessed the closing down of sugar operations and worker layoffs. In the face of this development, the International Longshoremen and Warehousemen’s Union (ILWU) could do no more than negotiate the best severance deals for workers affected or agree to concession packages to delay the inevitable shutdown. Oftentimes these agreements with the sugar companies necessitated government intervention to provide or guarantee loans for sugar operations. As a result of global competition, Hawai‘i now has only three sugar operations left, and its pineapple industry has been eliminated.

Governor Ariyoshi practiced fiscal conservatism throughout his tenure. He also relied on a conservative-dominated Democratic Party, one that favored business over labor, but at the same time he was dealing with the leadership of the public union workers to ensure that labor would cooperate with government policies intended to shore up the profits of the corporate sector. Public sector labor leaders were willing to oblige so long as their workers received some wage and salary increases, however paltry those salaries may have been. Ariyoshi’s biases against labor were apparent for all to see during the October 1979 United Public Workers’ strike. He broke the six-week strike aided by a union leadership that grew increasingly unpopular with the rank and file.

Also significant were Ariyoshi’s business and political connections with leading Republican figures such as Hebden Porteus even before he won the race for Lieutenant Governor in the 1970 Gubernatorial elections. George Cooper and Gavan Daws’ Land and Power in Hawaii (Benchmark Books, Honolulu 1985) documents the connections among Democratic politicians, business, and labor pertaining to a considerable number of land deals made in the first 25 years of Democratic rule in the Islands.

When a 1983 Forbes article accused the state of Hawai‘i of being anti-business, Ariyoshi took umbrage. Since statehood, overseas (including US) investment made
possible the expansion of the Hawaiian economy and tourism, which was one leg of the economic triad (the two others being military spending and agriculture) and took off to replace agriculture (sugar and pineapple) as the leading economic sector. However, business interests wanted all kinds of business regulations removed. Small business sided with corporate Hawai‘i to ask that the state provided more incentives, such as lower taxes on business and a restructured worker’s compensation package that favored the employer.

As the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s reached, or came close to, the end of the their cycle, the Kanaka Maoli movement burst on the political scene with the landing on Kahoʻolawe in 1976. A flurry of activities in Kanaka Maoli circles popularized the social struggle for indigenous land rights, and Kahoʻolawe became the symbol for a gathering political force. The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA), created by the 1978 Constitutional Convention, became the mechanism through which the state government kept a handle on the indigenous movement. The Constitutional Convention introduced new leaders of Kanaka Maoli descent, such as John Waihe’e, to the political scene. Waihe’e became Ariyoshi’s Lieutenant Governor and later Governor for two terms (1987-1994).

Ethnic Studies Academic Development and the Political Environment

The institutionalization of the Ethnic Studies Program took place in this national and local political environment. In 1978, the Program had 3.75 positions and several lecturers who, with the help of Lab Leaders, taught a range of courses such as: “Introduction to Ethnic Studies,” “Hawaiians,” “Japanese in Hawai‘i,” “Chinese in Hawai‘i,” “Caucasians in Hawai‘i,” and “Filipinos in Hawai‘i.” Other courses about ethnic identity, immigration to Hawai‘i, economic change, social movements, and Hawai‘i and the Pacific were also taught in the 1970s.

Since its inception, the Ethnic Studies Program pioneered several innovative academic methods, primarily in the field of instruction, which, until today, Ethnic Studies has not received credit for, neither by the UH administration nor by the UH community as a whole. Today’s buzz concepts of “interdisciplinary inquiry,” “service learning,” “peer teaching,” and “community scholar in residence,” have been integral to the establishment and development of Ethnic Studies at the UH. In the early years, a considerable amount of research had to be undertaken to create new course materials that were not available in the academy, which, for a long time, had neglected to study and teach about Hawai‘i’s multi-ethnic, multi-national society from the perspective of those groups. Instead, the research and the teaching were informed by a Euro-centric paradigm whose meta-theoretical commitments intentionally neglected to integrate minorities into what passed for scholarship about their social and political interactions. Stanley Porteus’ work remains a living example of the racism that still pervades the Euro-centric paradigm, however much that racism was concealed within layers upon layers of sophisticated academic jargon, and regardless of the seeming innocence/objectivity that such concealment bestowed on the paradigm.

A group of university students and individuals from the community, with the help of a few academics took it upon themselves to develop needed course materials. That group conducted archival and library research that gave substance to the slogan, “Our History, Our Way,” which was the first real challenge in Hawai‘i’s academy to the Euro-centric paradigm. Of necessity, the research had to be interdisciplinary; several supporters were “community scholars;” and the concept of “peer learning/teaching” gave birth to the Lab Leader institution. As mentioned earlier, Lab Leaders were undergraduate students and individuals from the community who helped instructors in conducting research and teaching courses. Lab Leaders had been the link to the
community as well. Students visited communities to learn more about their struggles against evictions, and they helped those communities by conducting research about the entity that the community had been confronting. They conducted research and action in the service of the community. Community people also came and addressed students in Ethnic Studies courses. These things were previously basically unheard of at the UH, and the Program had to experiment with them all, usually with the UH administration offering much criticism and no help. Instead of celebrating and encouraging the new paradigm in education, many on the UH faculty, prisoners to their own paradigm and smitten with what futurist Joel Baker calls, “paradigm paralysis,” exhibited prejudices against the Program and wanted to see it expire. Nevertheless, the Program continued with its interdisciplinary, University-community interaction. It also began to win increasing support from forward-looking faculty members, some of whom had been teaching in the newly established New College/Survival Plus Program (of the late 1960s and early 1970s). Many of the students in this Program were also supportive of Ethnic Studies. It introduced innovations in teaching, but despite its name, it did not survive. It was unable to establish deep roots in the community.

By the time the fight arose for permanent status at the UH, the Ethnic Studies Program had developed a substantial support from faculty and students across campus. With such overwhelming support, the UH administration had to give in and, as mentioned before, permanence was achieved. But permanence did not mean full support. The UH administration never saw fit to lend support to Ethnic Studies in the form of more positions so that more Ethnic Studies courses could be taught. Until March 1997, the Ethnic Studies Program (which became a department in June 1995) was housed in wooden temporary offices across from the Biomedical building on East-West Road. The move was ironically to another temporary wooden structure behind the Korean Studies Center.

Miriam Sharma was hired Interim Director for the academic year 1977-78 while a search for a permanent Director took place. As Director, Franklin Odo shepherded the Program through its institutionalization process from Fall 1978 until the early 1990s. In an era of political conservatism and Program permanence, the Program had to work within the academic system while remaining true to its original mission – “Our History, Our Way” – in teaching, research, and community service.

When the Ethnic Studies Program by January of 1990 increased its strength from 3.75 to 7.75 positions, it was not because of a magnanimous UH administration, but because of legislative action initiated by legislators in both houses supportive of the Program. Through legislative action also, the Lab Leader institution was funded to ensure its permanence as a core element of Ethnic Studies. The late State Representative Roland Kotani and Senator Brian Taniguchi were instrumental in securing those gains. Both lawmakers had been associated with the Program in the 1970s, and Representative Kotani had taught in the Program during the 1980s. Both understood the role the undergraduate Program played in higher education, and the future need for Ethnic Studies at the UH as an important part of a college education instrumental in discovering knowledge about inter-ethnic relations in a complex society.

The Hawai‘i State Legislature demonstrated that, over the past few generations, it has understood Hawai‘i’s need for a UH research and teaching unit that can advance knowledge and educate the new generations about the Islands’ heritage, struggles, and possible multi-ethnic future. In many ways, the Legislature had anticipated the much-touted current UH strategic plan with its Hawai‘i and Pacific focus.

The Ethnic Studies Program’s new positions allowed the consolidation of institutionalizing activities. The often-heard criticism that the instructors (most of whom had been part-time) did not have Ph.D.s, were finally silenced. Faculty began to publish in academic journals and some published books. Until then, only Marion Kelly had been
in a position to conduct research as an Anthropologist at the Bishop Museum while teaching part-time at Ethnic Studies. Her groundbreaking research about Hawai‘i’s land tenure and use proved essential to the development of the curriculum and the academic standing of the Program.

Karl Marx once observed that men (and women) make their own history, not as they please, but within a given social and political economic setting. In the case of the Ethnic Studies Program, that setting took its toll. While the Program maintained and, in some ways, even deepened its connections with the community in the 1980s, that militancy was not there to the extent that it had been earlier. Though some may argue to the contrary, it could not have been otherwise. The Ethnic Studies Program reflected the times, but remained grounded in its academic research and teaching commitments to the concepts of class, ethnicity, race, nationality, and gender. There was always a faculty (primarily part-time instructors and lecturers) core in the Program who based their research and teaching on the political-economy framework and gave direction to Ethnic Studies. Marion Kelly has been indispensable in this regard.

The 1980s were years of robust economic development. Foreign investment poured into the state, especially in the latter half of the decade, where it saw huge profits in tourism and real estate development. From 1986 to 1989, Japanese investment totaled $5.2 billion compared with a total foreign investment of $8.4 billion from 1970 to 1989 (Aoudé, in Michael Haas (ed.) Multicultural Hawaii: The Fabric of a Multiethnic Society Garland, New York 1998). According to The State of Hawaii Data Book 1996 (Table 7.02) from 1980 to 1989, tourist arrivals jumped from a total of 3,934.5 to 6,641.8 million visitors. In the same period, the GSP, measured in 1982 dollars, jumped from a total of 13,690.5 to 18,589 billion (Table 13.02). The same source (Table 7.25) records tourism’s share of the GSP for 1989 at $6,450.6 billion and direct and indirect jobs generated by tourism at 156,700. The total civilian labor force for that year was 525,000 (Table 12.06).

The Islands were again the site of important land and housing struggles. Some lecturers took advantage of those struggles to maintain the Program’s ties with working-class communities. One such site was Ota Camp which fought evictions in 1974 and again was threatened by evictions from its Waipahu location in 1984. In 1974, the Ota Camp community, predominantly Filipino, had reached an agreement with the City according to which the community would be relocated, and after ten years its members would have the option to buy their homes. But in 1984, the City wanted to renge on its promise and evict the entire community. A few lecturers from Ethnic Studies, with the backing of the Program, went to render organizational support and advice about strategy to the community. Within a year, that fight was won through a combination of rallies, demonstrations, and legal action. A broad-based support from other communities and activists demonstrated to the City and governmental housing agencies that it would be best to honor previous commitments to the community.

Other housing struggles in Chinatown beginning in 1985 recalled some of the activity and protests of the 1970s. Again lecturers from Ethnic Studies, along with other community activists who had been previously associated with the Program, provided organizational support and advice on strategy. Those struggles were also successful. People Against Chinatown Eviction (PACE) prevailed on the City to reach an agreement with the developer to not evict tenants of Julie’s Hotel (a small rooming house on Maunakea Street) but to reinstate them after renovations with a nominal ($5) increase in their monthly rent. In another struggle, PACE was able to help organize the tenants of Smith-Beretania Apartments (a low-income apartment building on Nu‘uanu Avenue and Beretania Boulevard) to fight for their rights to stop tenants’ abuse by management.

Faculty from the Program were active in, and Ethnic Studies supported, struggles such as Nukoli‘i on Kaua‘i; the anti-geothermal fight to protect the rainforest on the Big Island; the return of Kahoʻolawe to civilian use; and the Sand Island eviction
fight. It is important to observe that in each of those struggles, the Kanaka Maoli issue was either the main or only component. The prominence of the indigenous issue reflected the qualitative shift in social movements in the Islands.

The housing and land struggles of the 1980s were also instrumental in preventing the Program from being devoured by the beast of conservatism, as Ethnic Studies was being institutionalized. This fact demonstrated the importance of agency (individuals and organizations as social agents of change) in maintaining a general direction of a movement or organization, however foggy and imprecise that may have been on account of immense structural changes in society.

**Ethnic Studies, University of Hawai‘i and Economic Crisis**

The Program’s consolidation by 1990 and the critical mass it achieved in faculty positions, allowed it to advance at a faster rate academically, achieving departmental status and offering a baccalaureate degree in 1995. In retrospect, it was propitious that the Program strengthened its position academically before Cayetano’s stark revelations about the state budget in 1995 and his subsequent drastic budget cuts, which also included cuts in UH funding.

On the basis of research by Ethnic Studies faculty about Hawai‘i’s political economy, the department anticipated heavy budget cuts in the state budget on account of the state’s over-reliance on tourism. The unlikelihood of scenarios propagated by the state machinery that a full-fledged high-technology sector would absorb the adverse effects of a declining tourist-based economy made for a pessimistic outlook. (Some of that research was published in 1993 in *Social Process in Hawaii: A Reader*, edited by Peter Manicas (McGraw-Hill, New York); and in 1994 in *Social Process in Hawaii* volume 35, edited by this writer).

No social movement exists that is capable of addressing the political effects of the economic challenges of the past several years. More importantly, a counter analysis to that of the mainstream is not sufficiently developed to point out the causes and the real culprits of the social and economic crisis engulfing the Islands. Mainstream analysis ordinarily lays the blame on some unfriendly behemoth (such as “big labor” or “big government”) and summons an invisible hand to do battle with it on behalf of business interests. Invariably, lobbyists on behalf of business recommend cuts in corporate income taxes, the General Excise Tax, and Worker’s Compensation benefits. Business interests also call for more public funds to promote the visitor industry and to help attract foreign investment to the state.

Governor Cayetano’s first term in office was devastating to lower- and middle-income wage earners and the un- and under-employed. He tried to minimize the negative effects of the economic crisis on business profits by slashing social programs and eliminating the state budget deficit. He also tried to stimulate the economy by spending $1 billion on infrastructure and attracting foreign and US investment. I have elsewhere (in Haas 1998, mentioned above) written on Cayetano’s economic strategy during his first term. Suffice it to mention here that his strategy is to stimulate the economy by diversifying the services sector (health care, education, banking, commerce, and insurance) and attracting high-technology firms. But all these ventures/adventures require huge incentives that could cost the state revenues sorely needed for social programs. In his second term, Cayetano promises more concentrated and aggressive plans to diversify the economy for the benefit of business. Tax cuts, eliminating “pyramiding,” downsizing government, and a Kaka’ako technology park, are schemes to help subsidize business and create more opportunities for it through privatization.
Despite all Cayetano’s support for business, right-wing free marketeers attacked his administration’s policies. They wanted more privatization, more support for small business, more tax cuts, more cuts in Worker’s Compensation benefits, more cuts in social services, more government deregulations, and more business subsidies. That such policies, if implemented, might create social upheaval along class and ethnic lines seem to be of no concern to those right-wing free marketeers. Fundamentally ideological, they attempt to fit social reality into the confines of their paradigmatic construct. In a globalized economy dominated by huge international corporations and financial institutions, those prisoners of their own paradigm still believe in the mirage of the free market and an economic world defined by small business. It seems that to them, life is all about supply and demand, and whoever gets in the way of a smooth curve and market equilibrium must be removed. Consequently, workers and their unions become primary targets of those free marketeers.

The economic crisis in which Hawai’i finds itself has wreaked havoc on the University. While budget cuts were instituted at the UH before Cayetano took office in 1995, they were not as severe as those that occurred during Cayetano’s first term in office. Whatever opposing social motion those cuts initially generated, its outer manifestations (rallies, marches, and speeches) quickly dissipated for a variety of reasons, including the perceived remoteness of the University from the community. In many ways, the community saw the University, especially the faculty, as essentially divorced from ordinary residents and their daily concerns. Cayetano was astute enough to play on that perception and isolate the thousands of University protestors from the community. Following the 1995 rallies and march to the State Capitol, Cayetano won the public relations battle in the media and the broad coalition against budget cuts in education became incapacitated.

Soon thereafter, talk about University restructuring filled these halls of learning. The UH administration, at Bachman Hall, couched the talk in terms of “autonomy,” “excellence,” “prioritizing,” “Asia-Pacific focus,” and “diversity.” It launched a fund-raising campaign to alleviate the effects of the budget cuts, but also to show that the University can be, at least in part, financially autonomous. In 1998, the administration finally succeeded in achieving partial autonomy for the University, a first step, perhaps, towards more autonomy in the future.

No sooner than autonomy was secured, the discourse on “restructuring” transformed into a discourse on “rightsizing.” The UH administration seemed intent on downsizing the University to its “right size.” It would be interesting to travel in a time machine to see what this “rightsizing” might ultimately look like – which units/departments are “right” and which are “wrong.”

All this downsizing, beginning with and driven by budget cuts, is implied (and sometimes stated) to be for the purpose of giving an active role to the University in uplifting the state’s economy. But to understand why some are skeptical about that University role, one must see what limitations the movers and shakers in the state suffer in turning the economy around.

The main, if obvious, point that seems ignored or misunderstood in its implications but which is obvious to most people, is globalization. The term is on their lips to “fix” the economy. They claim that their proposed remedies are necessitated by the mantra of globalization. They want Hawai’i to become more competitive vis-a-vis other countries and regions, especially in the Asia-Pacific theater. What is not up for debate with these “fixers,” is whether the economic woes and their political and social effects are a consequence of development towards globalization. For social scientists interested in analysis of social phenomena, the question is critical. But such an analysis would again bring into question the main assumptions of capitalist development in the age of the transnational corporations and high finance. This questioning could become more serious in its political implications than earlier critiques because of the current
crisis engulfing the global economy and its devastating effects on hundreds of millions of human beings world wide. Those effects were not present in the post-World War II period to the same extent as in the 1990s.

The recent gubernatorial race between Ben Cayetano and Linda Lingle was essentially a match about who could best serve business interests. Axiomatic in the debates was that serving those interests was Hawai’i’s only salvation from the grips of the economic crisis. No other option was available on the political level and, ideologically, these voters had to operate within the free market paradigm. Because of socialization into this paradigm, most people apparently find it difficult to imagine a solution outside that paradigm. However, the irony is that free markets do not exist, and solutions based on non-existing entities will have to concoct them for an imagined world. The result: a bigger crisis caused by solutions not based on social and economic realities. Such solutions block the realities of transnational corporations, huge institutional investors, and huge currency traders. More importantly, there seems to be a disconnect between these economic theories and the effects of economic policies generated on their basis, on the one hand, and the consequences of such policies in the political arena, on the other.

In Hawai’i, economic and social policies driven by such an ideology yielded a series of devastating results, especially to lower-wage earners. The free-market argument claims that globalization requires competitive pricing with international purveyors of goods and services, the state offering tax and other incentives to international investors and venture capitalists, and state deregulation and privatization. The latter are extra elements that supposedly would not only lure new businesses to the Islands, but also support existing ones.

There has been no significant challenge to this line of thinking. Instead, the main contention was between the Cayetano Economic Revitalization Task Force (ERTF), constituted primarily from big business interests with a token representation from small business and labor, and extreme right-wing representatives of small business. Despite labor’s presence on the ERTF, it subscribes to the same philosophy guiding the Cayetano administration.

Cayetano has promised that his second term will accomplish more of what he started in his first. It is significant that right after he won the election, Cayetano clearly enunciated that the narrow margin that put him on top was a wake-up call for the Democrats. This meant that the Democrats should be more in tune with the needs of business and move more boldly with privatization and downsizing government. That such drastic moves would further wreak havoc on lower-wage earners seems to be of no concern to initiators of capitalist policies. In the larger scheme of things, what matters, in the first place, is profitability, which, according to economic dogma, generates jobs and prosperity. What worked during capitalist expansion may not work under conditions of globalization. That a main characteristic of globalization is shrinking markets (despite the overvaluation witnessed in all major financial markets until Asia’s financial chaos occurred) has not dawned on theoretical wizards and formulaters of economic policy.

There is not much talk about the relationship between high-technology innovation in production and the delivery of services, on the one hand, and the loss of jobs, severe economic recessions (or even depressions), and the move to financial (and currency) speculation (which is primarily responsible for overvaluation on Wall Street and other markets), on the other. Instead, the misunderstood notion of globalization among planners is that Hawai’i’s economic and social policies must adapt to the realities of globalization so that the local economy improves. If more of these policies are implemented, more people will become economically marginalized, and there will be an increased potential for a social movement in opposition to such capitalist policies. Opposition already exists around the state, and some sections of the Kanaka Maoli
movement seem to be opposed to being coopted by the state government. While some individuals and organizations in those sections seem to believe that self-determination can be freely exercised under capitalism, others question this mode of thinking. An opposing political pole to capitalist policies does not yet exist, but so long as the economic and social situation keeps deteriorating for more people, regardless of ethnicity and nationality, a large multi-ethnic, multi-national social movement is likely to develop.

What role can Ethnic Studies play in the changing political-economic context to remain of service to the larger community? This is the challenge that we immediately face and for which we are working on devising a strategy. We must consolidate our traditional ties and move forward to be of service to those who are marginalized by the effects of globalization in the Islands, regardless of their ethnicity or national origin.

Summary of Articles

This volume includes a section that highlights critical dates in the life of the Ethnic Studies Program correlating with two articles and an oral history about the Program. John Witeck’s article locates the struggle for Ethnic Studies in the larger international, national, and local political context. It also shows the integral relationship between Ethnic Studies, on the one hand, and the larger student, anti-war, and anti-eviction movements, on the other.

Miriam Sharma’s article also situates Ethnic Studies in the larger context, but concentrates more on its rise as a field nationally. Sharma compares the early period of the Ethnic Studies Program, up to 1978, with that of the 1980s and 1990s. She points out the challenges that Hawai‘i and Ethnic Studies have faced in recent years and wonders which direction Ethnic Studies will take. Indications exist, she opines, that Ethnic Studies will continue to emphasize the class dimension, as it did in the mid 1970s, in its analysis of the multi-dimensional (ethnicity, race, nationality, class, and gender) society, as the class concept cuts across the other dimensions and integrates politics and economics.

Soli Niheu’s oral history is the perspective of a long-time Kanaka Maoli supporter of Ethnic Studies dating back to the “People’s Committee” days of the early 1970s. Niheu evaluates the Program’s history interwoven with the history of Kōkua Hawai‘i and other grassroots organizations. He also evaluates Ethnic Studies in the more recent period and discusses class and ethnic struggles and the importance of international alliances in social struggles.

Senator Bob Nakata’s transcribed talk to ES 381 (Social Movements in Hawai‘i) students about Waiahole-Waikāne demonstrates the important role of ordinary people in protecting their own communities from maldevelopment that clashes with the interest of the majority. This is a case study of social movement organization that shows the indispensable need for sound strategy and tactics to win a fight. It also shows the importance of leadership and democracy in organizing. Senator Nakata’s talk is an empowering account to those who seek social change and development in response to ordinary people’s interests.

Ah Quon McElrath’s article discusses the development of race relations in the Islands through an account of labor history. Labor organizing became a central element in the development of our multi-ethnic society. McElrath reserves judgment on the future of race (and ethnic) relations in the Islands given the unpredictable nature and future direction of the many existing social variables.

David Stannard’s article was originally a report requested by and submitted in 1997 to the University of Hawai‘i Vice-President for Academic Affairs and the Advisory Committee formed to investigate whether the name Porteus should be removed from the Social Sciences Building at the UH. Stannard exposes the racism imbedded in Stanley
Porteus’ writings and recommends that the UH administration should not continue to honor racism by keeping Porteus’ name on the building.

Kathryn Takara’s article looks at discrimination along ethnic and class lines that was the hallmark of plantation Hawai‘i. Frank Marshall Davis, a black journalist, was first welcomed to Hawai‘i by the haole oligarchy. But because he threw his lot with the rising labor movement, doors began to close in his face. He remained defiant and exposed the injustices against the workers regardless of color or ethnic origin. Frank Marshall Davis’ writings (both poetry and prose) remain a monument to defiance and courage against great odds.

Franklin Odo’s article reminds us of the power of representation/misrepresentation of public history. His concentration on the museum as an “influential venue” of representation of public history provides a powerful argument that educators here in the Islands must pay more attention to. Odo’s examples of the little-known, little-credited impact of Japanese American (and other Asian American) artists on American Abstract Expressionism and about World War II internment, indicates that much can be done by museums to remedy that situation. More importantly, national museum coverage of Japanese American (and other minority groups) issues within Hawai‘i is a “powerful tool” that enables Japanese Americans to be supportive of social justice issues impacting all groups in Hawai‘i.

Ulla Hasager’s article views indigenous rights and practices from an international comparative perspective, from which she analyzes the indigenous situation in Hawai‘i. Hasager discusses some of those salient elements such as academe, governments, non-governmental organizations, and multinational businesses.

Davianna McGregor’s article demonstrates the importance of research in the service of communities. Her case study underscores the clash between cultural practices and beliefs on the one hand, and geothermal energy development on the other. McGregor discusses research methods appropriate for such an undertaking and the importance of history, including oral tradition, as recorded in chants, to her methodology.

Luciano Minerbi’s article discusses contemporary Hawaiian management models based on the ahupua‘a (land division from the mountain to the sea) concept. He also argues that it would be possible for the ahupua‘a concept, based on Hawaiian conservation values, to have a significant role in contemporary planning.

Mähealani Dudoit’s article deals with national resistance literature, which she situates in a legacy of Hawaiian resistance dating back to the 1870s. Her contribution connects the resistance literature of the past with that of the present.

Rodney Morales’ short story is a unique depiction of ethnic relations in Hawai‘i, which shows the absurdity of simplifying those relations to something as easily understandable and describable as state or federal statistics. These statistics, in themselves, are stereotypes or encourage stereotyping. We come in all shapes and colors and interact with one another in a multitude of ways. It is important to appreciate the complexities encountered in a multi-ethnic, multi-national society and to tolerate, if not respect, difference. Otherwise, our days might be “numbered.”

Li‘ana Petranek’s article is an eclectic treatment of the multi-cultural subject. She references phenomenology, post-structuralism, and Marxism to illustrate the politics and complexities involved in the interpretation of the self.

Noel Kent’s article is critical of the globalization myth as the salvation to Hawai‘i’s problems. He contends that the political economy of Hawai‘i deteriorated because of globalization. As it caused more people to suffer and become marginalized, the ruling circles’ response to the crisis can only exacerbate the problem. He calls for a people’s democratic revolution to reverse the onslaught of globalization on ordinary people. Local and personal identities, Kent opines, are important in this regard.
Ibrahim Aoudé’s article shows that the class dimension is central to resolving the main issues in Hawai’i’s political economy. As such, the Kanaka Maoli movement and the incipient people’s movement are integrally related; one cannot achieve its goals without the other. Social movements must take into account the political and economic realities that tie Hawai’i to the continental US as these movements begin to construct a theory of the Hawaiian revolution that can guide the people’s movement in completing its tasks.

Finally, three appendices are included. The first demonstrates the long road that Ethnic Studies has traversed since 1970. The other two appendices are testimonies given in support of removing Stanley Porteus’ name from the Social Sciences Building. The first is the testimony of the Department of Ethnic Studies and the other, of Marion Kelly. Both underscore the commitment of Ethnic Studies to fighting racism and discrimination in support of peace and justice in our Hawai’i.