Fall 1969 – Students and community supporters work with University of Hawai‘i (UH) faculty to develop a proposal for an Ethnic Studies Program at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM) Campus.

January 1970 – The working group propose to the UH administration an Ethnic Studies Program focused on the primary immigrant ethnic groups and the Native Hawaiians, the indigenous people of Hawai‘i.

June 1970 – The Ethnic Studies Program is established as a two-year experimental program with an allocation of $50,000, for the 1970-71 academic year. Dr. Dennis Ogawa, now Professor at American Studies at UHM, is appointed director.

February 1972 – Ogawa resigns; Larry Kamakawiwo‘ole, a Native Hawaiian and community supporter of Ethnic Studies, is appointed interim director.

February 1972 – President Cleveland sets up the Ad Hoc Committee on Ethnic Studies: Professors Stephen Boggs, David Cromwell, James Linn, Seymour Lutzky and Fritz Seifert. The committee is asked by Dean Contois to “make recommendations on the continuation of the Program, its organization, curriculum, personnel and governance.”

March 21, 1972 – Over two hundred Ethnic Studies students march on Bachman Hall after seven hours of discussion with Chancellor Richard Takasaki go nowhere. Takasaki forms the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee (AHAC) on Ethnic Studies with a mandate to review all other committees' recommendations. The AHAC has five members each from faculty, students, and community people. Concerned students demand to select the student and community members of the committee, but their demand is rejected by Chancellor Takasaki.

Spring 1972 – A three-night sit-in results in the People’s Committee being accepted as the review committee for Ethnic Studies.

April 20, 1972 – The College of Arts and Sciences Program and Curriculum Committee recommends that the “experimental status of the Ethnic Studies Program be extended for another two years.”

April 22, 1972 – The People's Committee of the Ethnic Studies Program rejects the recommendations of the College of Arts and Sciences. Instead, they demand that Ethnic Studies be made permanent.

Spring 1972 – The People's Committee proposes a curriculum and instructors for the Ethnic Studies Program and nominates Larry Kamakawiwo‘ole as its director. A Honolulu Star-Bulletin article (5/18/72) comments that this was the “first time in the University’s 65-year history that a joint faculty-student-community group had proposed a curriculum, director and staff for an academic program.”

May 3, 1972 – President Cleveland appoints Larry Kamakawiwo‘ole director of the Ethnic Studies Program.

May 18, 1972 – Kamakawiwo‘ole’s appointment is blocked by UH Regent Clarence Chang and delayed for 20 days. Supporters suspect harassment of Ethnic Studies by the
June 8, 1972 – Kamakawiwo'ole’s appointment as director of Ethnic Studies is approved beginning July 1, 1972. Between July 1 and September 1, 1972, there is a series of program directors. Finally in Fall 1972, Davianna McGregor, a graduate student, is appointed interim director and remains in that position until the Fall of 1977. Meanwhile, the Ethnic Studies Program is reviewed, declared provisional and otherwise threatened, forcing it to keep fighting for its existence as these and other administrative constraints continue.

Spring 1973 – Ethnic Studies students organize the “Hawai‘i Committee Against Racism and National Oppression.” Its members monitor UH Administrator Geoffrey Ashton’s “Genetic and Environmental Bases of Human Cognition” study and declare it racist. Ashton was opposed to the Ethnic Studies Program.

1974 – Ethnic Studies spearheads a campaign to overturn the Board of Regents’ decision to name the Social Sciences building after Stanley Porteus, a racist psychologist. The effort fails mainly because Ethnic Studies was embroiled in a fight for its own existence with the UH administration.

June 1975 – The Ethnic Studies Program is again given “provisional status” for the next two years and $80,000 in funds for the fiscal years 1975-77.

October 8, 1976 – Threatened again with the loss of the program, over three hundred UH students rally to support the permanence for the Ethnic Studies Program.

October 20, 1976 – A rally and public hearing to defend Ethnic Studies is held. Several hundred supporters hear more than 35 speakers, including representatives from labor, community and campus organizations, as well as individual students and faculty members who testify for several hours in the Campus Center Ballroom in support of Ethnic Studies. UH administration representatives refuse to speak, or even to attend.

November 1976 – Chancellor Yamamura recommends Ethnic Studies be abolished.

November 8, 1976 – The People’s Committee to Defend Ethnic Studies purchases a double-page ad in the student newspaper, Ka Leo O Hawai‘i, to bring its demands for permanence to the attention of the University administration in “An Open Letter to the UH Administration.”

November 19, 1976 – An Ethnic Studies Program Rally is held in the Campus Center Courtyard. Two hundred Ethnic Studies supporters march to the administration building to confront vice-president Durward Long and Mānoa Chancellor Douglas Yamamura for an hour and a half. Ethnic Studies demands the program be made permanent. Members of the People's Committee declare vice-chancellor Geoffrey Ashton’s reports a “gross distortion of fact” and “institutionalized racism.” Vice-president Long calls the People's Committee an “external” organization that will not be recognized by the university administration. Program supporters remind Long that university administrators are outsiders who come and go, while the people of Hawai‘i continue to fight for what is right.

December 1, 1976 – Over two hundred students and supporters of the Ethnic Studies Program demonstrate at Bachman Hall for the second time in as many weeks. UH President Fujio Matsuda refuses to talk with Ethnic Studies supporters.

January 24, 1977 – Ethnic Studies Program submits an updated program review report
April 25, 1977 – The UH Mānoa Faculty Senate Program and Curriculum Planning Committee and ASUH subcommittee submit a report that supports a permanent Ethnic Studies.

May 1, 1977 – The College of Arts and Sciences, Educational Policy and Planning Committee recommends making Ethnic Studies permanent.


May 6, 1977 – The UH Faculty Senate supports the Ethnic Studies faculty and a permanent interdisciplinary program in the College of Arts and Sciences.

May 12, 1977 – Dr. Yamamura enunciates the administration's position on Ethnic Studies: Status is “in abeyance,” not provisional/not permanent. He recommends appointment of another “advisory” committee to “take over running the Ethnic Studies Program” and make “periodic progress reports.”

May 16, 1977, Monday 7:30 p.m. – The Ethnic Studies Support Committee meets at Webster Hall. They voice continued support for strengthening the Ethnic Studies Program at UH, for retaining the present staff, for adding one additional member and for appointment of Davianna McGregor as interim director.

May 18, 1977, Wednesday, 1:30 p.m. – Defend Ethnic Studies/Make Ethnic Studies Permanent Rally is held at the Campus Center Courtyard.

May 18, 1977, Wednesday, 2:00 p.m. – Ethnic Studies staff, students and community committee members present demands at the UH Board of Regents' meeting to make the program permanent and appoint the well-qualified staff for the school year 1977-78. The UH Board of Regents vote “permanence” for the Ethnic Studies Program and hires Miriam Sharma, an anthropologist, as its Interim Director.

July 1, 1978 – Dr. Franklin Odo is hired as director of the “permanent” Ethnic Studies Program.

Fall 1980 – The program faculty collaborate to publish a volume of the Amerasia Journal on Hawai‘i issues (vol. 7, no. 2).

1990 – Ethnic Studies augments its faculty positions from 3.75 to 6.75.

March 2, 1991 – Ethnic Studies draws in the community to help plan the 21st anniversary celebration of the Program. The celebration is a huge success that helps renew many ties with the community.

1991 – One more faculty position is added to the Program for a total of 7.75.

June 1991 – The Program begins a series of steps in a concerted effort to develop a national and international academic reputation. Ethnic Studies hosts the 8th Annual National Conference of the prestigious Association for Asian American Studies (AAAS).

1991 – The Program develops a working relationship with the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs with headquarters in Copenhagen, Denmark.
1993 – The Program lends support to the Kanaka Maoli movement to hold Ka Ho’okolokonui Kanaka Maoli, The People’s International Tribunal, Hawai‘i.


May 1995 – Ethnic Studies organizes the Ethnic Studies Community Conference, “Community Politics and Socio-Economic Issues in Hawai‘i,” convened by acting director Ibrahim G. Aoudé. The conference is a result of collaboration between Ethnic Studies and members of the community.

1995 – In two different actions, the Board of Regents transforms the Program into a degree-granting (January) department (June).

1995 – When the French government launches a 1995-96 series of Nuclear tests in Moruroa, Tahiti, the Department is instrumental in creating the Hawai‘i Coalition Against Nuclear Testing, which enjoys broad community support. Since then we have kept close contact with Maohi in French Polynesia and in Hawai‘i as well as with international peace organizations.

May 1996 – Ethnic Studies hosts the Association for Asian American Studies Joint Regional Conference in conjunction with the 25th Anniversary Celebration of Ethnic Studies.

December 1996 – A seminar on Hawai‘i is organized by the University of Lund in Sweden. Faculty from Ethnic Studies are invited to speak in conjunction with their attending the European Society for Oceanists’ Conference, “Pacific Peoples in the Pacific Century,” in Copenhagen, Denmark.


1996 – Ethnic Studies is given an additional quarter faculty position. A total of 8 faculty positions allows the Department to hire a full-time faculty to teach the African American experience beginning in Fall 1997.

March 1997 – Ethnic Studies relocates to new temporaries at 1859 East-West Road after 27 years at its old location.

October 1997 – Franklin Odo officially resigns from Ethnic Studies after a three year leave without pay. UH administration takes away the faculty position. Total faculty positions decreases to seven. Ethnic Studies collaborates with Dr. Odo, now at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC, on projects related to the history of ethnic groups in Hawai‘i.

Fall 1997 – Ethnic Studies participate in fight to remove Stanley Porteus' name from the Social Sciences Building. The fight, spearheaded by Kanaka Maoli students and ASUH, is
Fall 1997 – Ethnic Studies becomes part of the national Service Learning Project aimed at securing student learning through community involvement. The following year, the Honolulu site is recognized as the leading site in the national effort.

June 1998 – Ethnic Studies hosts the 15th National Association for Asian American Studies Conference. The Department begins a campaign to restore the lost faculty position with full support from the AAAS. Ethnic Studies leads the successful effort within AAAS to rescind the Association’s Award for Lois Ann Yamanaka’s *Blu’s Hanging*.

October 1998 – Ethnic Studies recovers the faculty position vacated by Franklin Odo and expects to hire a Japanese in Hawai‘i and the US specialist in Fall 1999. Community support and a sound strategy were instrumental in convincing the UH administration to return the faculty position to Ethnic Studies.

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Our hard work has succeeded in making the Department known nationally and internationally for its academic achievements. We have hosted several international scholars conducting research on Hawai‘i. Ethnic Studies faculty conduct research of value to Hawai‘i’s people and thereby contribute to the discovery of knowledge in this interdisciplinary field. The Department continues to mentor students from the Continental US and across campus and to educate students about the history of Hawai‘i’s people and the important events that influence their lives. We also encourage students to participate in protecting those rights that the people have won over the years. We have won many battles, and we are still in the fight to secure a better future for Hawai‘i’s multi-ethnic multi-national people.

*Education for Liberation!*