

Kicking the Bucket: It's All About Living

Kekailoa Perry

Beware so that your complicity doesn't create capitulation within the system...we need to be discerning of our complicity in the [educational] system.

—Graham Smith, International Hui on Indigenous Research and Systemic Change (2009).

What exactly does Graham Smith mean when he warns us to not be complicit? When I hear the word “complicit” I think about criminals working together to rob a bank or commit some other kind of crime. When the felons are caught, the driver of the getaway car might say that he was not part of the robbery because he never actually entered the bank. The driver's defense is that he did not hold the gun and had no part in the robbery. That defense almost never works because the law says that even the getaway car driver is guilty or “complicit” in the crime. Essentially, the driver's involvement is part of the doing.

The legal principle relating to criminal liability is known as accomplice liability, accessory, or, in more colloquial terms, “aiding and abetting.” The legal encyclopedia *Corpus Juris Secundum*, section 132, states that, “depending on the circumstances, an accused may be charged as a principal, or under an aiding and abetting theory as an accomplice or accessory after the fact. To be convicted as a principal under the Bank Robbery Act, it is not necessary that the defendant actually hold the gun.” The American Jurisprudence legal encyclopedia, section 59, further notes that, “Liability for aiding and abetting the commission of a bank robbery extends to all parts of the robbery, including the escape phase. Thus, a person who aids the escape may be found guilty of aiding and abetting the armed robbery, rather than just an accessory after the fact” (citations omitted). In Hawai'i a person can be held criminally liable for a crime even if they are not the actual perpetrators so long as a person knows the crime will occur, helps in some way with the commission of the crime, or does not attempt to prevent the crime from occurring.¹

Criminal complicity means that everyone involved in the crime has some level of responsibility. And, if we are close enough to the criminal activity, such as a getaway driver or supporter, we can be held just as responsible as the principal or person actually carrying out the crime.² Complicity, then, is a serious offense and a very serious accusation to make.

Is Smith suggesting that educated natives (in my case educated Hawaiians) are party to some kind of illegal activity? Is he calling me a crook, fiend, or criminal? Am I being lumped into some category of criminals because of who I am or where I live? Well, this would not be the first time a native was profiled as some kind of lawbreaker. For me, that was a long time ago. Back then I had no college degree and looked like “a criminal”—you know, brown skin, long hair, lots of time on my hands, and always smiling. But times have changed and I am wondering how Graham Smith can dare call me a criminal now? I have a law degree and two bachelor degrees, have a professional job, and wear shoes (well at least some of the time). I no longer fit the stereotypical Hawaiian criminal profile, right? Maybe, or maybe not. In many ways, I still look like the same brown-skinned, long-haired dude who smiles for no reason (just can't trust those happy natives). Still, I doubt that this is the gist of Smith's comment.

What exactly is this new liability or complicity that gives us cause for worry and concern? Is it our education? I was told years ago that to lift up our people we needed to further our education, get college degrees and take over key positions of power. Education is the “equalizer” in a world where the colonizer/occupier maintains their dominance over the less powerful in

society. Education, higher education in particular, is the tool that we can snatch from the master to lift us up from oppression. I invested hook, line and sinker in the nationalist message made popular in the 1980s and celebrated in music by local reggae artist Butch Helemano, who chanted that “higher education is the healing of the [Hawaiian] nation” (Helemano, 2003). So, I went to school. I borrowed a lot of money to educate myself and knowingly participated in the educational industrial complex that has a history of maintaining U.S. hegemony over native peoples (A. Smith, 2009, pp. 38–43, 46, 51; L. Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, pp. 63–66). I followed many Hawaiians who made the college trip before me. I got a job, first in politics, and later in education so that I could better the condition of native Hawaiians.³

As I write this paper I wonder how far we’ve come since my parents and grandparents’ generations. There is a little more disposable income and some of us can now afford some form of health insurance. But beyond the illusions of middle class ascension, the station of the native person and Hawaiians in Hawai’i do not appear to be drastically different from the past. Perhaps this is what Smith meant when he told us to beware that our “complicity does not create capitulation”? This makes sense. Perhaps I am getting closer to understanding Smith’s prophetic warning.

Still, I resist accepting the fact that education can affect us negatively. How is it possible that we can gain a good education and yet submit to more oppression by the West? How does our effort to uplift our community with higher education make us complicit and liable for some unknown crime against the native society? Damned if you do, damned if you don’t, right? Maybe.

Maybe Smith was talking to the really smart Hawaiians. I told myself, “Heck, he couldn’t be talking to me, I just made it through college. I don’t even know how I did it.” Of course, as soon as I say that, my family and friends slap my head and say, “If you think you are not good enough, you don’t need a brain; you are wasting it on stupid thoughts.” They are right; we are good enough even though we don’t always think it’s true. Such thinking may actually be the result of some post traumatic stress disorder brought on by our indoc-

trination through U.S. occupation. But that is a discussion for another day. O.K., Smith is talking to all of us natives. But what, then, makes any of us complicit?

Smith’s comments put us all, young and old, students and educators, administrators and politicians and grassroots activists on notice. He is not accusing us of a crime. Indeed, while the legal definitions discussed above reference forms of criminal activity, the concepts relating to the “liability of others” is very relevant to Smith’s discussion especially when applied to the native scholar’s responsibility to the liberation of their people. Smith is warning us that our achievement in the Western world is a perilous journey that is fraught with danger. Even though education can be our salvation, it also makes us dangerous if we are not purposeful and careful with our knowledge. The threat of complicity creates the need to take our education beyond the redundant use of those tools that Audre Lorde cautioned would never dismantle the hegemony of the current educational system that is the “Master’s house” (Lorde, 2007, pp. 100–113).

Smith is telling us to be conscious. His words speak to the “politics of truth.” The masses of educated natives become the hosts for those new transformative ideas, meaning, of course, that knowledge without consciousness, or lacking a goal to free the oppressed, will likely recreate and regenerate the dominant power structure into a new, more virulent strain of oppression. Smith recognizes the subtle “new formations” of oppression that are nurtured, unbeknownst to us, in the ivory walls of the academy. The new oppression is remade and recreated to keep up with the times and if we are not careful it will find its way into new, budding Western-trained leaders of the native communities. All of us who aspire to learn and do good things are forewarned to hold tightly to the truths and realities in our communities and to do so consciously.

Alas, I think I get it. We are the agents of our own change but may also become agents of our own repression.⁴ As agents, we have the ability to lift up our lāhui. We also have the choice to submit to the pressure of Western hegemony. Knowledge is power and can influence great change. However, unbridled power is corrupting and can cause damaging consequences. As educators, we walk a very fine line, the edge of Lili’u’s

pili grass blade if you will (Liliuokalani, 1917). Smith knows this firsthand and in his quest for conscientization (Freire, 2005), for a “kaupapa Maori” (G. H. Smith, 2004, pp. 8–15), or even a kaupapa for native peoples, he tells us to be the voice of positive advancement. As we gain our education and fill the seats of power it is our voice, not our silence, that will raise our issues to the next level.⁵ Complicity is not just a crime, it’s a path that waits for those who carelessly traverse the contested spaces of the academy alone, without community or the lāhui in mind.

To illustrate the point further, I recall a story, a myth, of the Hawaiian people that was introduced in the op-ed section of the Honolulu Advertiser in 2002.⁶ The story is new, not from the days of old. The myth is sinister and convincing to those who are searching for answers with no goal in mind. And, it may contribute to the caution that Smith prophesized. The story is part of a larger system of political myths that play a role in the indoctrination and assimilation of Hawaiians in this present U.S. political and social system. Graham Smith’s discussion at the Hui conference pushed me to revisit the story and it is offered now as a response to the growing need for our communities to find healthier, more productive ways of lifting each other up from obscurity.

The Myth of Crabs in a Bucket

In Hawai’i there’s a myth known as the alamihi crab syndrome. The myth is a creation of foreign origin used to explain a Western worldview of Hawaiians. The myth is deployed to explain everything from the 1893 overthrow of the monarchy to the reason why Hawaiians can never better their lives.

We are taught in schools, neighborhoods, and workplaces that the Native Hawaiian people behave like alamihi crabs trying to climb out of a bucket. Each time one is able to get to the top, another crab reaches up and pulls it down. Crabs in a bucket have a tendency to struggle and fight to escape early in their captivity. As time passes, the crabs in the bucket capitulate or give in to their depressing state of affairs. Many are observed as docile, lifeless, and almost dead. Life in the bucket can actually become common, regular, and the same old routine. Life in the bucket

also has the potential to be dangerously comfortable. In the bucket, crabs learn to be content with their captivity. They will even go as far as crawling over others who show signs of anxiety or restlessness to assure a more subdued environment. The bucket myth tells of a foreign worldview that sees the native as a directionless people unable to escape their lot because of their own undoing. In essence, the Hawaiian failure is the result of their cultural inability to adapt to the modern expectations of society.

This is the dominant or oppressive part of the alamihi crab story. Hawaiians are the crabs. The bucket, we are told, is the benefit of Western civilization. To the U.S. occupier, life in the bucket is most desirable and therefore the native should appreciate and enjoy that freedom. In short, assimilate and submit to U.S. dominance and life can be comfortable. Do it not, and you will struggle. Over the years people have accepted this fiction as truth.

There is another lesson to this myth. There are times when new crabs are thrown into the old bucket. Those new crabs don’t know, nor do they desire, the life in the bucket. They resist, fight back, search for a way out. The older more comfortable crabs are greater in number and labor to bring the bucket to order. It is not that the older crabs hate the young ones. Instead, the older crabs seem to fear the knowledge of the new crabs because it suggests change and points directly to the fiction of the bucket’s oddly comfortable life. In short, the younger crabs’ actions raise doubt and threaten the safety of those already established in the bucket. The older crabs have one advantage. In time, if there is no escape, the bucket theory will prove overwhelming and bring the new crabs down. That is, if there is no escape.

Though Native Hawaiians struggle daily to overcome the effects of the alamihi crab syndrome, the subtle attack on their identity undermines their souls’ aloha.⁷ When the alamihi story becomes part of the unspoken fabric of the school systems, economics, and government, attempts to overcome the negative stereotype become a momentous task requiring a lifetime of educating and soul-searching. In fact, Native Hawaiian people have gone so far as to live out the life prescribed for them via this fictitious story.

Today, there is no lack of *alamih*i examples when we look at OHA, Pūnana Leo, the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, Kamehameha Schools, the University of Hawai'i Center for Hawaiian Studies, Hawaiian Civic Clubs, and other Hawaiian institutions: Hawaiians, knowingly or unknowingly, pulling other Hawaiians down just as we've been conditioned to do.⁸ Life in the proverbial bucket becomes a mainstay for many who can no longer see the rocks and seashore on the other side. In fact, many Hawaiians have become rather comfortable in the bucket system and learn to do extremely well there.

One example is evidenced here at the University of Hawai'i (UH) where a new school of Hawaiian knowledge was recently established. Twenty years ago, there was widespread debate in the university questioning the viability and academic rigor of instituting a Hawaiian studies program. Ten years prior to that, students protested to save a small ethnic studies program from extermination by the UH administration. Now, even the political science department at UH has developed a new academic strand on indigenous political studies, demonstrating the shift in some pockets of the academic community to acknowledge (if not respect) native ways of knowing.

However, the caution Smith raises is not in the minimal, token improvements to the system, but in the degree and exercise of the native academic's "knowing." As we produce more educated natives and hand them the tools of the master we know that there is a very strong likelihood that their education will pull them physically and mentally further from the native center. Fanon (1963) calls it the development of the comprador class or the reinforcement of the bourgeoisie where the native is, by virtue of education and a newly acquired social status, "deified" in and by the oppressor and native communities (pp. 46–49; 2008, p. 3). Tuhiwai Smith elaborates by noting that, "attempts to 'indigenize' colonial academic institutions and/or individual disciplines within them have been fraught with major struggles over what counts as knowledge, as language, as literature, as curriculum and as the role of intellectuals, and over the critical function of the concept of academic freedom" (1999, p. 65).

Malcolm X (1989, pp. 28–30) makes this point more bluntly. He takes into account the native who may raise his/her social stock through the power of education but lose their moral and cultural value by ignoring their contribution to the maintenance of the occupying government's power structure. Malcolm X distinguishes these roles as the difference between the house slave and the field slave. The house slave is one who emulates the identity of the master, the native bourgeoisie. The field slave is the educated native who resists the trappings of the master's world, employing his knowledge to overthrow their system of oppression.

At the plenary session of the 2009 International Hui on Indigenous Research and Systemic Change, Graham Smith described this dangerous reformation of education as the "ratification of the possessive individual." He notes that native academic research and teaching is critical for native advancement. Alternatively, Smith adds that academia in the context of the possessive individual contributes to the social and cultural reproduction of our own underdevelopment thereby reinforcing only the intellectual knowingness of a particular academic's discipline (*ibid.*). As a result, the academy teaches the academic to develop a yearning to "deify" or elevate their positions of status creating a need to accumulate "points" around native knowledge that results in a system of "profiteering from community knowing" (2004, pp. 2–4, 11).

Smith and others offer important methods of identifying aspects of oppression that filter into many segments of our native communities. They also suggest ways of weeding out the unproductive or dangerous forms of oppression that make our community subject to social and political internal combustion. But for Hawaiians the question remains, what critique do we use for ourselves? How do we manage our advancement without alienating our people or segregating our families? What forms of knowing will help in our growth and which ones will drown us?

Hawaiians were slowly convinced that success in the Western education system, which was initially understood as a way out of the U.S.'s social and political dominance, required them to separate their native self from the more important, academic self. The "rigor"

and “scholarly” way is actually code for racial subordination and assimilation. (A. Smith, 2009, p. 43). In the academic world this means that a native scholar must prove their worth by adopting the methods, theories, and thinking of their oppressor. (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, pp. 5, 14). From that perspective, a native’s higher education may be doomed before they even enter the academy. Of course, that is not everyone’s experience and many native academics do return to their communities and awaken others from their bucket-induced comas. But the *alamihī* myth is didactic and manages the “benign bigotry” (Anderson, 2010) of the educational system quite effectively.

As a result, the bucket of higher education is a potential breeding ground for selfish gain and political manipulation. Some educators use their newfound economic power to leverage political influence and elevate themselves to higher social office. Other educated Hawaiians use their positions to gain greater political exaltedness.⁹ The result is that Hawaiian people and the programs that serve them fall straight to the bottom of the bucket.

The conclusion drawn here often incites anger because it calls into question the use of a master’s tool (higher education) that many Hawaiians (and other marginalized peoples) consider a necessary element toward salvation and freedom from U.S. oppression.¹⁰ Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) said as much when she called for the goal of creating 500 Maori PhDs. The goal is lofty but achievable yet we must be sure to remember Tuhiwai Smith’s context. Five hundred PhDs whether Maori or Pakeha, Hawaiian or Haole, is just a bunch of degrees. Without the intent to liberate and work toward the abolishment of Western hegemony (a.k.a., U.S. occupation and oppression) the native will occupy a strangely unique place in the academy where their “presence in the Western imagination” makes the educated native a modern day novelty—evidence that you can “kill the Indian and save the man”¹¹ (Churchill, 2004; *compare* Adams, 1995) and make him/her civilized—to the dominant, watchful gaze of Western education.

Graham Smith’s comment proves instructive here and should help address any ire this analysis instigates. He is not questioning the value of education. Nor is

he saying that a Western education through a Western worldview is evil. He argues that a conscious native who has higher education (or any form of education for that matter) at their disposal is dangerous because they have the power to liberate the state of their oppression. Yet, Smith also knows that the higher education process challenges our ways of knowing and scrutinizes our ability to speak to truth. The language of higher education is not always our own. It asks us to “prove” our notions of knowing by supplying “evidence” that will demonstrate the truth and reliability of that knowledge. Indeed, Tuhiwai Smith (1999) comments that, “One of the many criticisms that gets leveled at indigenous intellectuals or activists is that our Western education precludes us from writing or speaking from a ‘real’ and authentic position. Of course, those who do speak from a more ‘traditional’ indigenous point of view are criticized because they do not make sense” (pp. 13–14).

Lawrence (1992) notes that conscious, minority educators seek a much deeper and fulfilling academic experience through the “Word.” The “Word”—the spoken, preached, whispered, written, and published word—is a “vocation of struggle against dehumanization, a practice of raising questions about reasons for oppression, an inheritance of passion and hope” (p. 2238). The minority scholar experiences alienation in the academy because of its apparent opposition to the Word of emancipation and liberation (*ibid*). At one level is the conscientization of the native scholar. On another level is the Western academic or objective scholar. Lawrence asserts that academia’s development of the objective scholar canonized the myth of the “true academic” as having a value-free inquiry process and ability to clarify the world rather than change it through unnecessary bias. The Western or objective scholar is, therefore, “guided by an orthodoxy that equates objectivity with emotional disengagement, cognitive distance, and moral indifference” (*ibid.*). The native scholar whose role is identified as subjective carries the stigma of being too close to the issues and therefore unable to clearly and objectively produce a level of scholarship equal to the standards of the academy. In short, the work we do may be too native. Or, put another way, the work we do is not “American”

or “smart” enough. Therefore, higher education is a struggle to remain real for native and minority people making the potential for manipulation and the redeployment of oppression a strong possibility; in other words, “the alamihi crab syndrome.”

For example, a few months ago, there was a discussion by several university educated Hawaiians about the viability or worthiness of a taro¹² cultivation class in a University of Hawai‘i Hawaiian Studies curriculum.¹³ The taro class taught the complexities of culture, law, and politics through hands-on methods centered on the traditional forms of growing wetland taro. To the unknowing eye, the class looks like a native gardening project with no apparent signs of serious academic rigor. The educated Hawaiians critiquing the course were in the midst of their advanced degrees as PhD’s and MA’s. Their major criticism was that the taro class could not meet the standards and academic rigor necessary for a “Research 1” institution like the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. Instead, they argued, the course is better suited for a trade school or community college type of learning environment suggesting that somehow these schools were less rigorous or advanced than a university course in Mānoa. Obviously there are many levels of discussion here that go beyond the focus of this vignette and will be the subject of a later, forthcoming essay on the arrogance of law, education, and social policy. For the moment, it is important to see how this story speaks to the debilitating powers of education and status, and the potential the academy has to reinforce dominant systems of knowing while erasing potentially powerful new ideas from finding a place in the structure.

The alamihi story relies on our continued belief that our survival is dependent on life in the bucket. Should anyone dare consider that there is life outside the bucket, the assimilated masses (even those who have achieved the highest level of education in the academy) are conditioned to pull the others down for their own good or for their own safety. Is this truly a Hawaiian point of view? Of course not. Yet, the pressure to assimilate and conform is constant. Those who dare to see the world outside the bucket are likened to a person yelling “fire!” in front of a firing squad. Very few have the courage to do so and accept the eventual

freedom (however painful) that comes with such an act. Against our better judgment, we doom ourselves to live the life of crabs in a bucket.

What many do not realize is that life in the bucket can also produce a “resistance” state of mind, a counter narrative. In this view, the crabs are not pulling each other down, they are testing the structure to see if there is a way out. They are learning, experimenting, compiling data, and developing knowledge from their perspective as being now in and once outside the bucket. Their capture makes them both insiders and outsiders at the same moment (Lawrence, 1992, p. 2239; Collins, 2009, p. 8). Thus, natives or minorities in the academy possess two distinct ways of knowing, a “double consciousness” or “dual subjectivity.” (DuBois, 1922, as quoted in Collins (2009) and Lawrence (1992).

The power of this double understanding cannot be understated. Collins (2010) provides a modern review to this well-established approach:

Disempowered people can develop, in the words of W.E.B. DuBois, a “double consciousness” concerning their placement in power relations. On the one hand, for reasons of survival, they must understand (but not necessarily believe) how the powerful see them, usually as less intelligent, less morally capable, less hardworking, less beautiful, or all of the above. Disempowered groups armed with this knowledge often mold their ideas and behavior to the expectations of more powerful groups...

“On the other hand, disempowered people can develop a distinctive consciousness or “way of knowing” about their oppression that stems from having to adjust their behavior in response to the whims or the demands of more powerful groups...

“Applying the notion of double consciousness to the realm of education identifies some challenges for students and educators, especially those who have been marginalized in the U.S. society...

“Stated differently, disempowered learners must find a way simultaneously to survive within institutions that were not set up with them in mind and to synthesize the best of what the school teaches and what they know from their life experiences. (pp. 9–10)

Lawrence (1992) provides a more sobering reveal of the burden/ gift of dual consciousness. He maintains

that dual consciousness will “allow those who bear it to recognize and articulate social realities that are unseen by those who live more fully within the world of privilege. But our duality can also be experienced as disabling when the seduction of privileged status or internalization of insider values threatens to subvert the Word’s liberating insight.” (p. 2239)

Again, Smith is instructive here. Conscientization provides the catalyst for our greater awareness and understanding as we occupy the spaces of the academy. Cognizant of our world and the analysis of the world that defines us, the native should find the bucket existence unproductive at best thereby creating a more persistent need to agitate the comfort zones of those who desire to maintain oppression. Life in the bucket is not static but constant. The role of the captured native changes over time as our understanding of that place of oppression becomes more acute. Higher education should, therefore, serve as a heightened experience for our cultural critique that would “disrupt and even deconstruct those cultural productions that were designed to promote and reinforce domination” (hooks, 1990, p. 2, 15–18) against the native.

In traditional times, Native Hawaiians never kept crabs in buckets. In fact, there were no buckets until Captain James Cook and his diseased crew fell upon our shores. Whenever Hawaiians needed crabs, they collected them from the environment, where they thrived in coexistence with other creatures. The natural habitat for the crab is atop the rocks, a solid foundation. In their natural environment, the alamihi crabs do not tear each other down. There’s no need, because there is a place for all of them on the stable foundation of the ‘āina.

When we realize this simple truth, we understand that the Hawaiian life in the bucket is alien, unbalanced, and insecure. In the bucket, humanity gives way to violence, and integrity is replaced with unethical behavior. This should not be surprising, considering the intent and purpose of the story: to keep everyone in Hawai’i believing that the native people should fare no better than the lowest in society, thus keeping Hawaiians trapped in a soul-strangling lifestyle.

In the end, the alamihi crab syndrome is just a story. It lives because we allow it. Our education and

efforts to strengthen our lāhui are powerful tools but alone they do nothing except reinforce the old regimes of knowing. Smith’s cautionary note that we should beware so that our “complicity doesn’t create capitulation within the system” is very prophetic in this day where so many Hawaiians (and marginalized peoples) are increasing our numbers in higher education (500 PhDs and counting). Collins, Lawrence, hooks, and others urge us to use that knowledge to promote critical resistance and produce a cultural critique that will generate stronger movements toward liberation. Therefore, the knowledge we acquire is not our own, it belongs to our people. And, we have a duty to use it in practice for the betterment of the lāhui by extinguishing the apparatus that enables hegemony to exist.

So how does higher education free us from the bucket life? Angela Davis (2010) espouses an answer in her famous speech on liberation via her Frederick Douglass slave narrative lectures. She says, “The collective consciousness of an oppressed people entails an understanding of the conditions of oppression and the possibilities of abolishing these conditions” (p. 66). Davis continues her analysis by attacking the structures of higher education accusing the academy of compartmentalizing and formulating generalizations of history and facts that maintain myths—such as the alamihi crab syndrome. Though she focuses on the discipline of philosophy, Davis’ response is critical for our role as members of the academy:

*My idea of philosophy is that if it is not relevant to human problems, if it does not tell us how we can go about eradicating some of the misery in this world, then it is not worth the name of philosophy. I think that Socrates made a very profound statement when he asserted that the *raison d’être* of philosophy is to teach us proper living. In this day and age “proper living” means liberation from the urgent problems of poverty, economic necessity and indoctrination, mental oppression. (p. 66)*

Smith’s comment on complicity tells us that knowingly participating in the bucket game means we cannot blame the Westerner or Haole for all of its vagaries and ills. We are less victim and more agents of this system. We, the higher educated, share the role of the getaway car driver at the robbery. We may not

have created the bucket or put the native in it, but our knowledge and lack of action may very well make us “complicit” and “aiders and abettors” in the doing. The alamihi crab syndrome lives, but no longer is it a story of the native Hawaiian demise. Instead, it survives as a burden and gift for all.

A Conclusion

Each step forward gains us better insight to our world as an oppressed people struggling to manage the reestablishment and governance of the nation. Education is a key factor in advancing a movement for greater self-governance but it is also so dangerously close to the under-tow currents of the status quo. Malcolm and Fanon reinforce Smith’s argument that the imperial system of oppression that has been present here for over 200 years is in no hurry to leave. In fact, in its sophistication, hegemony adapts to change quickly and uses the arrogance of our newfound knowingness to feed its appetite for domination. The current of that system is so strong and constant that even the best of our intellectuals or advocates can be pulled into its depths. This does not mean, however, that we should give up higher education or stop fighting. Instead, Smith tells us that there is much work to do and it will not be done if we relax our minds in the comfort zone of academic bliss and privilege. Like crabs on the rock of native knowingness, the room to move and thrive is vast and the nourishment found in our mind’s ocean is bountiful.

The Hawaiian, like the crab, was never meant to live in a bucket. Hawaiians must flourish on the solid foundation rooted in their spirituality, intellect, and culture. That foundation is not located in institutions or ideas that have no conscience to overcome oppression. In such cases, the people will continue to exist in the proverbial U.S. bucket. The foundation must be an independent one, and the people should always be encouraged to be consciously aware of their colonial-like situation.

Will such a thing occur? Not overnight, but it will happen. Of course, we need to be courageous enough to live beyond the bucket. In fact, this is one bucket we should all be willing to kick.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Hawaii Revised Statutes, §702-222, entitled, "Liability for Conduct of Another, Complicity."
- ² For more examples of the Hawaii Supreme Court's handling of cases relating to criminal complicity and aiding and abetting, see, *State v. Carvelo*, 45 Haw. 16, 361 P.2d 45 (March 24, 1961) (holding that a person who acts as a watchman while his friends commit a burglary is an accomplice guilty of the offense of the principal); *State v. Yabusaki*, 58 Haw. 404, 570 P.2d 844 (October 26, 1977) (holding that a person sitting in the car at the scene of a burglary with the conscious object of promoting or facilitating the crime can be convicted of first degree burglary on theory that he is an accomplice to the crime); *State v. Ebarra*, 39 Haw. 488, 1952 WL 7373 (Haw Terr. 1952) (A defendant jointly indicted for the crime who renders encouragement, and who stands ready to assist in its perpetration, may be charged as a principal); and, *State v. Hernandez*, 61 Haw. 475, 605 P2d 75 (Jan. 23, 1980) (A person is guilty of an offense if it is committed by the conduct of another person for which he is legally accountable when he

is an accomplice in the commission of the offense and where the accomplice simply aids the perpetrator in committing the offense).

- ³ See generally, MacKenzie, M. K. (Ed). (1991). *The Native Hawaiian Rights Handbook*. Honolulu, HI: Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation, pp. 43–76; Hawai'i Revised Statutes, Chapter 10. The term "to better the conditions of native Hawaiians" was first codified in the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1920. In that law, Congress intended to better the conditions of those natives who were no less than 50% blood quantum. Later, in 1978, the State Legislature enacted HRS §10 which became the enabling legislation for the State Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA). Chapter 10 also used the phrase "to better the conditions of native Hawaiians" but in this case, it did not restrict the betterment language to a specific blood quantum. The term has been further refined in activist circles to mean the liberation of Hawaiians. That last, refined understanding was the vision at the time I made my journey into higher education.
- ⁴ See generally, Churchill, W. & Vander Wall, J. (2002). *Agents of Repression*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press. While some controversy surrounds the work of Churchill, his book offers a very important insight in the use of members or "insiders" to infiltrate and undermine group leadership and positive advancement. The agents are not just the "authorities" who maintain police control of society. Agents are also members of the revolutionary elements who align themselves with the center.
- ⁵ Nelson Mandela, former President of South Africa, is said to have read the poem "our deepest fear" by Marianne Williamson (1992) at his Presidential inauguration address in Cape Town in 1994. The impact that his speech has made regarding the content of the poem is beyond measure.
- ⁶ Perry, Kekailoa. (January 27, 2002). It's Time to Kick Myths of Crabs in a Bucket [Island Voices]. *Honolulu Advertiser*, <http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/article/2002/Jan/27/op/op05a.html>.
- ⁷ For an insightful and thought provoking critique on the development of the "Aloha Spirit," see, Ohnuma, K. (2008). Aloha Spirit and the Cultural Politics of Sentiment as National Belonging. *The Contemporary Pacific*, 20(2), 365–394. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. For a contemporary analysis of the Hawaiian term "aloha," see, Chun, M. N. (2011). *Aloha: Traditions of Love and Affection*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Curriculum Research and Development Group.
- ⁸ This article is a self-reflective attempt to find clarity through the critical responses that it may attract. In many ways, this particular comment may, in fact, be self-incriminating since I either work or have some indirect association with these specific organizations. The point here is not to accuse the many great people who hold up these organizations of being unproductive in the plight to uplift the lahui. The point is that no place, no "Hawaiian" institution, should consider itself sacred and immune from the subtle application of the alamihi crab syndrome. We all experience some form of it, but the question is do we learn from it? Thus, the hope is that this piece will add to bell hooks' (1990) call for a strong "cultural critique."
- ⁹ See generally, Williams, P. (1987). Alchemical Notes: Reconstructing Ideals From Deconstructed Rights. *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*, 22, 401; and, Davis, A. Y. (2010). *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. San Francisco, CA: City Lights Publishing. Both Williams and Davis suggest, at different times in U.S. political history, that the power of higher education can be intoxicating and misleading. Overcoming such influences requires a constant, vigilant drive to use the basis of that knowledge to liberate the oppressed.

¹⁰ Many scholars assert, and rightly so, that higher education is essential for the positive advancement of the native Hawaiian or indigenous lāhui. The commentary here questions not the intent but the presumption of some who might argue that higher education, in and of itself, will raise the nation. See e.g., ho'omanawanui (2008) demonstrating the importance of 'ike 'āina based literacy to inspire and educate Hawaiian learners; Kana'iaupuni and Kawai'ai'a (2008) advocating for a cultural based education approach to develop successful Hawaiian learners; Goodyear-Ka'opua, et al. (2008) arguing that a curriculum centered on vigorous political engagement, informed community participation, and commitment to aloha 'āina will nurture a healthy lāhui; Benham and Stein (2003) showing the importance of the higher education model of the tribal college to uplift the wellbeing of the native communities; Barnhardt and Kawagley (2010) identifying the limitations of higher education and the importance of incorporating a blend of old and new ways of knowing.

¹¹ This quote refers to a very racist policy that is all too familiar to many, if not all, native peoples occupied by the U.S. Recalling Richard Pratt's "kill the Indian, save the man" rhetoric in this way, my premise attempts to redefine meanings for our peoples. I hope to balance the discourse and in a small way dispel the hegemony that has overstayed its time on this earth. As we forge new meanings with traditional knowledge let's also remember that Richard H. Pratt's version of the world is a lesson that should not be repeated. It's part of his-story and how we deal with it now, in our liberation, is our story. See, *Official Report of the Nineteenth Annual Conference of Charities and Correction* (1892), 46–59. Reprinted in Richard H. Pratt, "The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites," *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings by the "Friends of the Indian" 1880–1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 260–271.

¹² Taro, incidentally, is the genealogical ancestor of the Hawaiian people.

¹³ The class is entitled "Hawaiian Studies 351–Mahiai Kalo". I taught the course for two years as a service learning assistant and later assistant professor at the Kamakūōkalanani Center for Hawaiian Studies.