

# Cover Art: He Hawai‘i Au

He Hawai‘i au (I am Hawaiian). What does it mean to say these words, to live by these words, to *be* these words? I have spent my life knowing that I am Hawaiian. But, it wasn’t until my undergraduate studies at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa that I truly began my journey to understand the weight of these words. Being Hawaiian is not just having the koko (blood). It is about understanding and carrying the kuleana (responsibility) of our kūpuna (ancestors).

In the early nineteenth century, Western imposition and foreign diseases nearly obliterated the Hawaiian culture and people. Consequently, when the illegal annexation of the Hawaiian Kingdom occurred in 1893, there were only approximately 40,000 Hawaiians left in existence. Under U.S. control, Hawai‘i became a colonized and commoditized state; Hawaiians could not speak Hawaiian or conduct centuries-old cultural practices. In 1896 a supplication known as the *Kū‘ē Petitions* was signed by about 38,000 Hawaiians in direct opposition of the annexation (Silva). The petitions became a symbol of Hawaiian resistance and sovereignty.

The knowledge of colonization penetrates my heart deeply, not just because I am Hawaiian but because I am also a U.S. Army veteran. My genealogy is inextricably connected to the lineage of the lāhui (nation of Hawaiian people), yet my experience is coupled to my time in service as a combat medic. Exploring these themes in my art practice aims to sew together my experiences to honor my life and my kūpuna.

My focus as an artist is primarily in photography, mixed media, collage, and fiber arts. When asked to participate in creating the cover art for volume 6 of the *Horizons* undergraduate journal, I knew I wanted to represent the Hawaiian culture and pay tribute to the late Dr. Haunani Kay-Trask (October 3, 1949–July 3, 2021). Her powerful voice and lifelong service to the lāhui is a reminder of the kuleana we carry as Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians).

Seeking to learn and better understand my mo‘okū‘auhau (genealogy) through stories of mana wāhine (strong women) in Hawai‘i, I read *From a Native Daughter* by Dr. Trask and felt incredibly connected to her journey. I learned of the Hawaiian Renaissance in the ‘70s and how the lāhui came together to revitalize the Hawaiian culture through hula (Hawaiian dance), ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian language), music and traditional cultural practices (“Cultural Renaissance”). I was shaken to my core when I watched a video featuring Dr. Trask on the rotunda of

‘Iolani Palace on January 17, 1993 (the 100th anniversary of the overthrow). She shouted with her fist raised, “We are not American! We will die as Hawaiians; we will never be American!” (Anowar). I felt an ancestral cry deep within my na‘au (gut).

In this cover piece titled *He Hawai‘i au*, I pieced together a digital collage that would represent the lāhui and honor Dr. Trask. I included photographer Ed Greevy’s iconic image of Dr. Trask with her fist raised. Behind her is the hae Hawai‘i (Hawaiian flag) flying over the shores of Hawai‘i. I used Greevy’s image to create a vector placed in the foreground of the collage as a symbol of her powerful presence and message. The images in the background are ones that I captured during my undergraduate journey. I subtly weave in the *Kū‘ē Petitions* as a reminder to mai poina (never forget) who we are as a people and what we stand for.

In her decree to the Hawaiian people that cultural people have to become political, Dr. Trask, in 1985, said, “You cannot just dance hula and go to Hawaiian language class at night and think you’re going to get a land base. You can’t do that. Cultural people have to become political. It’s not just political people like me who need to be more cultural. Our culture can’t just be ornamental or recreational. That’s what Waikīkī is. Our culture has to be the core of our resistance. The core of our anger. The core of our mana.”

I dedicate this huaka‘i (journey) to our fierce leader and Kumu (teacher) Dr. Trask and all the mana wāhine past and present.

## Works Cited

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