

Puerto Rico should learn how statehood affected Hawaiians

By Leslie Correa, Larson Ng and Kimo Cashman

In a January commentary, a former Hawai'i resident stated his case for Puerto Rico to become an official state of the United States of America. In order to justify his position, Jose A. Cabrera indirectly presented a view that Native Hawaiians greatly benefited from Hawai'i's statehood in 1959 ("Isles' statehood lessons for Puerto Rico," *Island Voices*, *Star-Advertiser*, Jan. 4).

Although it is clear that he did not purposely have any intentions of possibly offending Native Hawaiians, the incomplete facts used to substantiate his points were very misleading, to the general public.

Upon critical reflection, we, the

undersigned, submit these perspectives in the hopes of providing a more accurate context to that author's Native Hawaiian references.

First and foremost was the total omission of the overthrow of Hawai'i's last monarch. As everyone living in Hawai'i should be well-aware, Queen Lili'uokalani's removal from office was made possible with the planning and military assistance provided by the United States of America.

Second, although Hawai'i's annexation by the U.S. in 1898 was mentioned, another critical fact was bypassed: that Hawai'i's acquisition, as a U.S. territory, was illegal based on U.S. Constitutional law.

ISLAND VOICES



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Finally, there are the erroneous claims that the history, culture and language, as well as heritage of Native Hawaiians were protected after statehood. Since the illegal annexation of Hawai'i by the U.S., up to the present, Native Hawai-

ians have and continue to fight for the very same attributes that Mr. Cabrera says not only were preserved, but flourished.

Access to lands designated for Native Hawaiians' use, as well as the complex issues regarding the Thirty Meter Telescope on Hawai'i island, are indicative of the many negative effects Native Hawaiians continue to fight for every day.

It is obvious that the real effects of statehood to Native Hawaiians are not truly understood, not even by one-time Hawai'i residents such as Mr. Cabrera. A big decision for Puerto Rican statehood is at hand. To truly understand what statehood could mean for native Puerto Ri-

cans, a critical discussion with Native Hawaiians should, and can still, be had.

The four Hawaiian Royal Societies (i.e., the Royal Order of Kamehameha I, the 'Ahahui Ka'ahumanu, the Hale O Na Ali'i O Hawai'i, and the Daughters and Sons of Hawaiian Warriors), the Hawaiian Civic Clubs, as well as Hawaiian scholars serving in Hawai'i's academic and nongovernment organizations are all great resources. They have and can provide accurate information on the current social-economic, physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of Native Hawaiians today.

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