

# TFH E05: Insurrection Part 2: How the Hawaiian Kingdom Was Overthrown

LENGTH • 41:31

## SPEAKERS

Ron Williams Jr, Tony Vega

**TFH intro** 00:01

Transmissions from Hawaii!

**Tony Vega** 00:18

Producer Tony Vega here and welcome to Transmissions from Hawaii. This is part 2 in our 3-part miniseries called insurrection. In part 1, we talked about the event that inspired this miniseries, the January 6th attack on the US Capitol. However, in this part, we're coming back to Hawaii to talk about one of the most significant events in Hawaii's history - the 1893 overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom. How exactly did it happen? What are the events that led up to it? And why didn't the people of Hawaii fight back? On this episode, you're going to hear a conversation that I had with someone who can answer all those questions, as well as many, many others.

**Ron Williams Jr** 01:05

So my name is Ron Williams Jr. I'm a visitor to Hawaii, but I've lived here for 26 years, I have a PhD in Hawaiian history and a Bachelor's degree in Hawaiian studies. And I also run a small business doing research and writing called Kauikeaouli Research and Writing.

**Tony Vega** 01:24

Wonderful. Okay. So let's just get right into it, then. I'm sure that many people listening are familiar with the broad strokes of the history of the overthrow, um, I myself have a general understanding, but I definitely don't know enough to be able to explain it. So could you give us some context and can you explain some of the events that led up to the overthrow? And for example, who exactly the people responsible for it were, and just anything that you think is important for people to understand.

**Ron Williams Jr** 01:59

Sure, sure. Well, and it's just a note about historiography, the process of the creation of history: you know, this is a great time to ask, because we've just over the last 20 or 30 years, folks like myself and many others who have Hawaiian languages and asset can go back into the Hawaiian language record and start to read what Hawaiians wrote instead of just reading when foreigners wrote. So we've really kind of, it's not that everything was different, but we're getting at much more complicated view of these events through native voice, so it's a good time studying. So yeah, so I think one of the first points to make is that this wasn't a theleologic thing, it wasn't a thing that naturally occurred from the first arrival of foreigners to then the overthrow happened. You know, there's a Pacific historian that wrote a book about 30 years ago called "Fatal Impact", and his theory was that basically, white men went throughout the Pacific and natives fell at their wayside and white people took over. Now, well, that might have been partially true that it happened, what that does is remove any native agency and the struggles that Hawaiians, that natives had, and the power that they had in Hawaii, in particular.

### **Ron Williams Jr 03:03**

So first foreigners arrive in Hawaii in the 1780s, the missionaries arrive in 1820. But it's important to note that first mission, it was a congregationalist mission, and they had a mission of bringing the Gospel of Christ to Hawaii. So whether do you see that as good or bad, their mission, and in fact, they weren't allowed to take part in government, run a business or so forth. Most people today kind of see it as "well, the missionaries arrived in 1820, and then they took over the country in 1893." The problem with that theory, among many things, is that those people were long dead, but what happened was in 1863 was really the inflection point. Kamehameha III had done something pretty unique and amazing in world history, and that is he had turned his absolute monarchy, his, you know, he was considered a divine ruler, Kamehameha III was Kamehameha III. He wrote from the 1820s into the 1850s. And again, he was an absolute ruler. If you want to say that, you know, there was no ownership of property or whatever, he basically owned everything, and anything he wanted done was done - he had absolute power. But he's also intelligent, and he starts to meet with, and bring on board some foreigners that are arriving in the islands, and he realizes that there's this thing that's going on in the Pacific that, where the Europeans are kind of taking over the Pacific. The Spanish had taken the Marquesas islands, the Germans would take Samoa, and Hawaii was going to be next, there's no question; it sits in the center of the Pacific, right around the, along the travel routes between Asia and the United States, so Hawaii was no question going to be colonized by some country. The only chance he had to stop that from happening was to turn his government into a government that European and American powers would recognize and respect. Now it's a million to one shot, right, he's get there's one of the, you know, they've nothing about law there, they've, you know, literacy is barely 20 years old, but he decided to take on the task. And so he proclaims the first constitution in Hawaii in 1840. So in 1840, you have this divine monarchy become a constitutional monarchy, and he voluntarily gives up two thirds of his power, he creates a 3-tiered system of government, with a legislature, a judiciary, and an executive branch. So he's the executive, but

there's also now going to be votes, there's going to be elections, there's going to be a legislature, and it will also be a judicial system. So he creates that and then moves forward to push diplomats from the Hawaiian Kingdom, including Timoteo Ha'alilio, a native Hawaiian, who went to England, went to France and went to the United States, seeking to have that country, his country recognized. And if, if you can gain international recognition, that means you have the same rights as every other nation, no, no matter how small or big, right, you've got the, it's a family of nations, you're, and you're in that group once again. But no non-European born nation had ever achieved that when he sent these ministers out, but he does. And so Timoteo Ha'alilio and William Richards go across the world, they get a kind of nod "maybe" from the United States, and they can, he went to Europe, where on October 2-, I'm sorry, November 28, 1843, the Queen of England and the King of France recognize Hawaii as a sovereign and independent nation on November 28, 1843. So this is, I mean, this is a huge, like, world changing view. Now this, this, the first nation in, the first peoples in the Pacific, and the first non-European born nation in the world has international, international recognition from England and France, and then other countries would come on, including the United States, as an equal, as a co-equal sovereign. So his mission was accomplished. So that's one of those things we look back on and we say, you know, 20 years ago, we talked about why the white man brought his law here and dominated way. Well actually, Native Hawaiians, brilliant that they were, used law to achieve the protection of independence for 50 years, right?! 1843-1893. So, so you have this sovereign independent nation that moves forward and being one of the most progressive modern nations on Earth. I talked about that 1840 constitution, there were women supreme court justices in Hawaii in 1840; you had island governors that were women, you had members of the Privy Council, which is kind of like the the House of Repres-, the Senate, who were women. So you had women in roles of power in Hawaii 100 years before they were in, in America and other countries. So really, really a progressive modern nation. You had in 1852, a second constitution proclaimed by Kamehameha III again, there was a kind of a move forward on the first and more separated powers, but also importantly, 1852 Kumu Kanawai, which is the Hawaiian word for constitution, proposed or gave universal manhood suffrage - so regardless of race, Chinese, Japanese, African, any race, any people, could come to Hawaii, become citizens, own property and vote. That's a decade prior to the US Civil War! In the 1860s, people, in the 1860s, the United States is literally killing itself over whether or not to own Black people and a, prior those same people could become citizens and voted away. So yeah, so you have this kind of, you know, this kind of hidden, progressive modern nation run by Native Hawaiians for 40, 50 years.

**Ron Williams Jr 08:26**

What happened was in 1863, there was a inflection point when Boston, the ABCFM in Boston, it was the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, they had sent the first missionaries here in 1820, again, with this mission to bring the gospel of Christ. In 1863, they declared success, they said, "You've done it, you've christianized Hawaii, they're an equal to the Christians of the United States,

you've done a great job, now come home." And Boston could use that success story to fund other missions and so forth. The problem was the sons have an issue. The sons and the grandsons of the mission had attained certain powers in Hawaii, they had gotten lands in the mahele, they had businesses that were running well, and they didn't want to go home, you know that this was their home, right?! they were born and raised here. So the sons of the mission, and they literally call themselves that, it's not a monoc- making up, there's this, the sons of the mission, around 1863, with this pressure from Boston to back off and turn the churches and terminate, you know, and so forth over to Hawaiians, developed a new mission, and that mission was based on property and wealth, and so forth. And you have to understand, most of these gentlemen had gone to school back in New England schools, so in their teens and 20s and they had gone to Harvard and Williams College and Yale, and so forth. And in that period, 1850s or 60s, you're talking about learning about Manifest Destiny, and Charles Darwin, and how the Anglo Saxons should run the world and so forth. And so this kind of incipient racism was brought back by the sons and grandsons of the missionaries. And they started to develop this idea that Hawaii should be run by whites. And they're very clear about it, you know?! I'm not pointing out racism where it doesn't exist, they write about it, they write about Hawaii needs to develop into an Anglo Saxon colony, and so forth.

#### **Ron Williams Jr 10:11**

And so, you have this fight starting this, this struggle for power starting in the 1860s. It continues on into the 70s, when, when the Mo'i Kalakaua, David Kalakaua is elected Mo'i, and he's kind of, you know, Kalakaua was a friend of the Americans, he had some sugar interests himself, he had businesses himself, and so he kind of gets along with Americans and sees that, sees the benefit of treaties that increase trade and so forth. But the people he's dealing with are starting to turn those deals against him. In the 1860s, there was a mission sent from the US Navy into Hawaii to scope out Hawaii as a possible port in the Pacific. I mean, Hawaii is the place to control the Pacific. So a man named Schofield, General Schofield, came to what you had a secret mission, came back and said, "it's the deepest water port in the area, easily protected, we need to have that for the US Navy." So a Treaty of Reciprocity is proposed by the United States and they say, "we'll give you something, you give us something." What the, what the sugar growers, not necessarily the maka'ainana, not necessarily the commoners, but what the wealthy white businessmen in Hawaii wanted was the tariff on their sugar be taken off when it went to America. So Hawaii is a foreign nation, right?! recognized by the United States. So any goods that went into the United States were taxed to help local goods. So beet sugar and stuff was grown in the United States, and so Hawaiian sugar was taxed. So these businesses want the tariff taken off their sugar so they can sell more sugar, which would make them incredibly, even more wealthy. And so what the United States wants back is Pearl Harbor. And so they say we'll trade you, you take, we'll take the tax off your sugar, and you give us Pearl Harbor. Hawaiians to the T, every single Hawaiian out there, said, "Absolutely not! We don't give up part of our country to another nation." That's us, and a man

named Iosepa Kaho'oluhi Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u, Joseph Nāwahī, he, he predicted it, he said, "This treaty of annexation is the first part in, then the tiger will fit, will, will, will follow." He brilliantly gives this speech, it's really remarkable, you know. When we talk about native Hawaiian intelligence and worldliness and the news they were getting before the United States was, because it was coming from Europe and Asia and so forth. Nāwahī gets up in the 1878 legislature, and he says to the, to the rest of his constituents, rest of his colleagues, he says, "I want to tell you a story about this great war that was happening between two nations. And it went on, and on, and people were being killed. And it kind of came to a standstill, and they were at this at this city walls, and, and both sides were at a standstill, when one of the sides offered the other side of gift, and it was a giant wooden horse." And he's and he's telling his con-, so here's this Hawaiian, here's this kanaka oiwi-an in the Pacific in 1878, relaying the story of the Trojan horse to his colleagues talking about the fact if we let America in, they're going to come in completely. So it's incredibly precious.

### **Ron Williams Jr** 13:15

But anyway, so that's the 1870s and 80s. The treaty did not go through at first, and so you had the United States actually gave up the tax on sugar, and just took back the release of tax on some of their goods in Hawaii, so they didn't get Pearl Harbor at that point. The Pearl Harbor Treaty, or the Treaty of Reciprocity is coming up for renewal in 1887. So 1885, 1886, some of those wealthy sons of the mission and businessmen, mostly American, but also some foreigners, some some Germans, some Portuguese and so forth, they started a secret league called the Hawaiian League. We have their constitution at the State Archives, we have their oath, we have their membership lists. They talked about pledging support to a white Hawaii, and you know, the whites should rule Hawaii. And so, what they did was they, there was only, there was no real military in Hawaii, there were Queen's guards and there was the police and so forth, but no standing military. And so the the most proficient and the largest "Army" or military in the kingdom was a private company called the Honolulu Rifles. The Honolulu Rifles were set up in the 1850s to help the king in case riots broke out or you know, seamen got unruly or so forth, he could call him the Honolulu Rifles, but they were a private group, kind of like you think about today Blackwater, yeah, a private army. So the Honolulu Rifles are going along, and this Hawaiian League takes over the Honolulu Rifles, they're already 95% white, and they create a new kind of branch of the Honolulu Rifles that is the, their military. And they start to develop the idea of taking over Hawaii. And so there's two real factions: there's the Thurston faction and the Dole faction. The Sanford Dole faction was a little bit more staid, he was a constitutional lawyer, he wanted to kind of follow the law, and so he said, "Let's present Kalakaua with the Constitution and force him to sign it and threaten him, you know, and it'll give us most of the power in the kingdom." Thurston, on the other hand, Lorrin Thurston said, "No, no, no, let's kill it. Let's kill the, let's assassinate the monarch take over Hawaii and declare a republic, and we'll run that republic, so it'll stay independent, but it'll be our republic." Dole's faction won out, and so they drew up a constitution that, that really pulled a lot of the power away from, from the monarch, that

changed suffrage rules and so forth. They went to Kalakaua with the army, and they, at literally the point of bayonet, they said, sign this or you die. So Kalakaua did sign on July 6 1887, he signed the Bayonet Constitution, and this is the first coup, you know, we always talk about 1893, this, this was a coup. This was, first of all, it was completely illegal, right? you can't, and the monarch doesn't have the power by himself to sign over, to sign over that, it takes the legislature and the monarch, and also it was done at gunpoint. Nonetheless, this is the constitution that, that people start to follow when it goes into effect, and it becomes the constitution for the Kingdom of Hawaii. It removes all Asians from voting, so where Chinese and Japanese had had the vote since 1852, for 30 years, now they can't vote anymore. And, and it's most kind of egregious legal thing that it did, was it enfranchise residents who were white, you didn't even have to be a citizen of the country to vote in Hawaiian Kingdom elections anymore if you were white, which is unheard of in national law, you have to be a citizen to vote. But so, they're so basically they're enfranchising a whole lot more Germans, Americans, Portuguese, and so forth.

**Ron Williams Jr 16:54**

So we're moving forward from 1887, you see the Hawaiian reaction in the creation of the first political party in Hawaii, and that was Hui Kālai'āina. And they say, we've got to get rid of this awful constitution, this completely illegal constitution, and that, that's a group called Hui Kālai'āina. And so they bring their, their work to the legislature. Now, even though the suffrage laws had changed and many Hawaiians were disenfranchised because that new constitution also raised the income clause, so you had to have a certain amount of money to vote, or own property. But, nonetheless, Hawaiians still outnumbered the haole by far, and so, they still had some political power in the elections. And so, some Hawaiians were elected into that legislature, and it was about 50-50. And in that legislature, that 18, eventually 1890 and 1892 legislature, you have Hawaiians pushing really, really hard within that legislature to create a constitutional convention, to, to, to get rid of Bayonet. And so there's, that's one route, route they're taking, is there's, 'cause there's two routes: they can go through the legislative route, to create a new constitution, or they can go through the executive and leg- and jud-, I'm sorry, or the executive and the cabinet route. So if they can get the monarch, which is now Lili'uokalani by 1891, if they can get the monarch to agree with them and the Cabinet to agree, then they can create a constitution that way, they can declare one, like it's been done before, or they can go to constitution convention. The constitution convention route never quite succeeded, they were always a few votes short. Petitions are coming in from, from maka'ainana, from Hawaiians around the islands, from Hilo, from Lihue, from Lahaina, from all over the islands saying we want a new constitution. So there's a big up, you know, upswell for it, but again, it doesn't happen in the legislature. So, two of the most prominent royalists who were pushing this idea, one of them is named William Pūnohu'āweoweo'ulaokalani White from Lahaina Maui. The other one is Iosepa Kaho'oluhi Nāwahīokalani'ōpu'u, Joseph Nāwahī, from Hilo. So these two gentlemen go to the Queen and they tell her we have to have a new constitution, you must do this. She wasn't sure, she wasn't sure she had,

you know, that there be enough support for it and so forth, so the, the group Hui Aloha 'Āina starts to send in petitions to her directly, and they pour in and she receives about 6000 signatures out of a mass of voters of 9500 potential voters saying, demanding a new constitution. So in her book, she talks about the fact that you know, part of the overthrow, the history of the overthrow as it's done nowadays, people talk about "well, the Queen had this greed for power, and she went and did this thing for herself." No, she, she did what her constituents were demanding. And she even says at one point, she says, to not listen to the voice of the people would be an error because the voice of the people is the voice of God. So, so the Queen starts to work with William White and Joseph Nāwahī to create this new constitution. Word gets out to the haole, right, and they know what's going on, too, and so there's kind of a race to get us, to this, this con-, this final confrontation. So on the haole, on the, on the foreigner side, and especially the white side, the big push comes from the appointment of a new US minister to Hawaii. Now remember, US policy at this time is a Treaty of Perpetual Peace and Friendship, they recognize Hawaii, they've got no business, you know, messing with Hawaii. The foreign minister's job is to carry out that policy. But nonetheless, the guy who was sent to Hawaii, as in 1891, is the new minister to Hawaii, he's a man named John Stevens. His father was a congregationalist minister, and he was an ardent proponent of annexing Hawaii. He had previously been a counsel at Nicaragua and tried to Nicar-, tried to have Nicaragua annexed, and he talks about how Hawaii needs to be American. So he starts to work in secret with Lorrin Thurston, Sanford Dole, WR Castle and all these men, and telling them exactly what they needed to do to make this happen. And so he lays out a plan for them, and this is all documented in the Blount report that was done later. But Stevens, the US minister meets with him and says, "Listen, if you take over the country, I'll recognize you as legitimate government, we can send a treaty of reciprocity, treaty of annexation to the United States and get it done before anybody knows what happened." Because you know, there's, there's no internet back then, there's no text messaging, you know, it takes a few weeks to get stuff from white to United States. So that's the plan. So they start to get more and more people on their side in this, in this secret group. They call themselves the Committee of 13. And they start to head towards that date also of this takeover. So the Queen ends the legislature, she abrogates the legislature, you know, because it's come to its natural end for the year. It's on January 14, 1893. And she has gotten the consent of her cabinet. So the cabinets, be under the Bayonet Constitution, the cabinet was appointed by the Queen, the monarch, but could be voted out by the legislature. So that, that non kanaka legislature kept, she kept appointing people and they kept knocking them out. At, but she finally at this point, on January 14, she had a cabinet in her, I think, believes her fourth cabinet, that said to her, "yes, we'll sign this new constitution, we need a new constitution." And that was even you know, there were, there were Haole on that, on that executive, that cabinet and others, but everyone kind of knew that this needed to happen. So she's, she has set it up, word has gotten out kind of around town, it's not much of a secret but it's supposed to be. So on January 14, she meets in the morning with Joseph Nāwahī and William White in the Blue Room of the palace, and she awards them the Knights order Kalakaua, the highest award in the kingdom. And this

was the last two royal awards ever given out by the Hawaiian kingdom government, and she gave it to them for their work on the new constitution. So she prolongs the legislature, she walks across the street, right behind her is that group Hui Aloha 'Āina that have been pushing for the constitution, and they have that constitution written out on a silk pillow carrying it over there for her. So they're going to offer up this new constitution to her at the palace, she's going to offer it up to our cabinet, they're going to sign it, she's going to go out on the on the Lanai and proclaim that powers restored once again to kanaka 'ōiwi, to native Hawaiians. So she, they follow her over there, there's about 7000 people gather on the lawn at Iolani Palace, Hawaiians in their best dress, and men in their, in their top hats and the women in their dresses, and everyone's just excited. It's been, it's been really six years since the Bayonet Constitution, that they've had real power in the hands of Hawaiians, and it's gonna cap it once again. And so she goes into the Blue Room of the palace, she offers up the constitution to her cabinet, and two of the members back out, and they tell her they can't sign the Constitution. And she says, What are you talking about? I wouldn't have even done this had I not had your, your agreement. And they leave the palace physically. And it turns out, they're going to admit later in the testimony, they had been visited by, by Dole, not Dole, sorry not Dole, but Lorrin Thurston and the US minister the night before. And they had told them of their plan, they had said to these cabinet members, were going to take over the nation and you don't want to be on the wrong side. And to prove that they had the power to do that, the American minister said "I will land American troops to back up your, your coup, your revolution." So once they knew that, once they knew the US had-, now the important thing to understand here, this wasn't US policy, and this wasn't America, this was a rogue US minister doing this on his own. But, but what, but so once he, but once they knew that he was going to do that, they wanted to be on the right side, so they backed out of the Queen's plan. So in the palace, she's furious, they're not going to sign, they leave the palace. Instead of just proclaiming the Constitution, which had been done with a Bayonet, she goes out of the line, she speaks to her people, and she tells them to go in peace and that she will work on it and there will, there will be a new constitution. And the people are disappointed and they slowly leave the palace. That's January 14.

#### **Ron Williams Jr 24:55**

That evening, the, the Hawaiian League has a meeting, and they call all interested residents together to stop this bloodthirsty Queen from taking power and revoking the constitution, and so forth. And they formed a new group, they renamed themselves the Committee of Safety. The Committee of Safety was a group, that moniker went to a group of revolutionaries in the American Revolution, right?! And so they're trying to make these ties to the fact that "we're a revolutionary group, overthrowing a monarch," right, overthrowing a wicked monarch, and are portraying themselves that way. So they've got this, this Committee of Safety going, the Queen on, that's the 15th. On the 16th, which is a Sunday, the Queen holds an interdenominational prayer meeting at the palace, Anglicans, Christians, Buddhists, you know, everyone to come to the palace and pray for peace and pray for the right thing to be done. In the



meantime, and she, she notes this quite significantly in her diaries, she says, while I was, it was a Sunday, and I had gone to church and then held this prayer meeting, these sons of the missionaries were often their law offices, you know, devising my overthrow. And they are, they're in their offices working on it, and they come up with the American minister, he puts out a note to or an order to the captain of the USS Boston, which is in P port at the time, and tells him to land American troops for "the protection of American lives and property." So that's going to be the ruse is that there's going to be this crazy rebel, you know, thing the queen is going to do, and it's going to cause bloodshed, and people are going to shoot each other. And so we need to protect Americans and American interests in Hawaii. So that's why we're bringing the troops ashore. Now, a really important legal note, on this point, America had recognized Hawaii as an independent sovereign nation, regardless of the reason they had no right to land troops on employing soil without Hawaiian permission. And the Queen as she knew, she protested, and her Minister of Foreign Affairs protested and said, "under what right are you landing your troops on our soil without permission?" right?! And they didn't really get an answer. But so US troops from Boston land on about 4pm on Sunday, the 16th, and they go down to Mililani Lane, which is right across the street from Iolani Palace, and they bunk there. Now other, the other head, American naval man in the islands at the time was Admiral Skerrett, and when he was asked the question, he said, "Well, if they were there to protect American lives and property, why didn't they go up to Nuuanu Avenue where those homes were, you know, instead of going across the sea from palace were there were no American lives and property." So it was a, you know, it's an obvious ruse, but, but it was their way of landing troops. So the Queen protests, it's January 16, she puts out an order of calm to her people, and she said she promises not to invoke a constitution without doing it the right way, without going through her cabinet, and so forth. And then on the morning of the 17th, the Hawaiian League, or the Hawaiian League had become the Committee of Safety, in ex- their final step of the plan, and that is to declare themselves the government. Now understand that, you know, I could declare myself the government right here, and it doesn't doesn't really mean it, right, doesn't mean anything, unless you get formal recognition of that from a government, from another government, right?! And so there's, there's really important rules internationally for how you do that. When Saddam Hussein was, was toppled, when Gaddafi was toppled, you know, there's a certain point when things are on the ground are the right way when other countries can recognize kind of the revolutionary group and say, yes, you're the real government now, and that is when they have complete control of the police station, the jud-, the judiciary, and the country, right?! They have to show they're in charge. That's why when you see a coup, like in South America, or something like that, they, they rush to the legislature building, because you have to show you're in control of the points of power. So the Provisional Government, again, doesn't have much of an army, they've got, you know, about 400 US soldiers that are, that are bunk there. But they've got no real army themselves, they've got, you know, several dozen men who were fighting for them. They go down to the side of the executive building, and they read a proclamation on the steps of the side of the building, and witnesses say there was barely anybody there, like they were reading to

an open. And they, on the side of the building, they read a proclamation and they say, "we declare a new provisional government for the rule of Hawaii in abrogation of the monarchy, until such time as a treaty of annexation can be, can be signed with the United States." So they hadn't, you know, they, they had their plan set up, they weren't about, they had no intent on running Hawaii, they were going to take over what he had handed over to the United States. So they declare that on the 17th.

**Ron Williams Jr 29:31**

Just about that time, almost the exact same time, there's a man named John Good Jr, who was a soldier in the American military, who came to Hawaii as a kind of, a signed up military guy, and he's working for the Committee Safety also, he's in charge of their weapons. He's carrying guns and weapons from EO Hall and Son's, one of the missionary sons' places downtown, and a native Hawaiian policeman stops his wagon and says, "Wait, what are you doing?" And he pulls out a gun and he shoots the native policeman. The native policeman was named Leialoha, and he was shot in the shoulder. You know, we often hear, we most always hear it was a bloodless revolution, but not to him, I mean, he was shot. He lived, but, but that shot brought people downtown, you know, to focus around that area, and that's why there was really nobody over at the executive building when he's reading his declaration. But so they declared this, they declared this provisional government, which again, doesn't mean anything, I see declarations on Facebook constantly, they don't really mean anything. But about, about, within an hour of their declaration of provisional government, the US Minister Stevens recognizes them as the de facto government of the Hawaiian Islands. Now, there's, there's two recognitions, there's, there's, there's de facto and then there's two types of government: de facto and de jure. "De facto" means in fact, you're literally running the country; "De jure" means you have, you have the right to run the country, you have the legal right, you own sovereignty. And I used to tell my students, I said, you know, if I'm teaching, I'm the de facto teacher, and I'm also the de jure teacher, I'm the one hired. But if somebody in class comes up and knocks me out and starts teaching, he may not be the de jure your teacher, but he's the de facto teacher, right, he's teaching. So Stevens declares them the "in fact" government of the Hawaiian Islands at about 2 o'clock pm on the 17th. Now, there's been lots of, there's been lots of testimony, there's been lots of things that have talked about the fact that that wasn't true, that they didn't really have power at that time and so forth. But it's always been a yes or no, you know, back and forth thing until recently, about two years ago, within the WO Smith papers at the Archives, there was found a letter from Stevens to Dole, and he says, "Do not, do not tell spread word of my recognition of the government until we actually have control of police station." It's kind of like the smoking gun, it's like, you know, and so, so, and everyone else testifies, too, they didn't have control.

**Ron Williams Jr 29:46**

So Mr. Stevens goes beyond his power and recognizes them as a de facto government, and then the question goes to the Queen, and she's faced with this decision, what, how does she react to that?

They're not really in charge, she still has people with her, her Marshall, Marshall Wilson, she confides in him and he says, "I've got enough guys to take these men, let's go outside and shoot them where they stand." Or she says, he says, kill them where they stand. But she talks to her cabinet, and they propose something else, and this is the brilliant twist again, with her and in her cabinet. Today, even you know, I've had students all the time say, why didn't Hawaiians fight? Why didn't they fight? If the Queen would have chosen to fight at that point, that would have been technically, legally a war, and the loser loses sovereignty, sovereignty passes that way, right?! You can only pass the sovereignty, you can only pass the sovereignty of a nation one way and that's through a treaty. So a treaty conquest, or treaty of cession. Treaty of cession means you bought it or they hand it over or so forth. Treaty of conquest, you win a war, you get their sovereignty. So at the end of World War II, the Japanese Admiral had to sign a treaty of conquest, turning over the sovereignty of Japan to the United States. Now, the United States gave it mostly back, except for Okinawa, but, but that's, that's the way to transfer sovereignty. So the Queen, if the Queen would have fought and killed 150 US soldiers, what do you think would have happened? There have been 10 warships there, you know, within two weeks, and then they would take over and sovereignty wouldn't we wouldn't be arguing about sovereignty today, because if, the question would have been settled. It would have been an unethical thing, but not an illegal thing, US would have sovereignty. But that's not what she did. She withheld sovereignty and said, I will step down as executive, you know, this, this, this position as an executive of the Hawaiian Kingdom until such time as the matter can be heard by the American justice system and be taken care of. And it was a brilliant thing to do, because at that point, sovereignty doesn't transfer, there's a, there's a question about it, you know, there's going to be legal recourse about it, there's going to be decisions by the President about it. So on January 17, 1893, she signs this protest, and says, I'm not turning over sovereignty, I'm just stepping down as Queen until this matter can be taken care of. She sends that into this provisional government. The Provisional Government, as planned, sends an annexation commission to the United States. Two days later, they've got it all set up. The Queen asks for permission to send her own representatives with, on that same ship and they turn her down. So those guys, she has to fight, to lease a ship two weeks later that is leaving. So the provisional government guys have a two week headstart and trying to get Hawaii annexed before people find out what really happened. And so those, those US annexation comm-, those annexation commissioners go to the US, they literally say, there's a report from the New York Times where one of them, I think it was Castle says, to the New York Times reporter, we don't care what the terms are, we just want you to take us, the one thing we won't, we can't have in Hawaii is universal suffrage. And they could, they you know, it's, everyone knows it's a country of 100-115,000 brown people and these 4000 white people have taken over and say they want to run the, run the country, so how are they going to sell that to the United States. So, so they say we want to treat of rec-, we want a treaty of annexation, but the only thing we ask is that there's no votes that not everyone gets to vote. So that absurd thing goes to the United States, President Harrison signs it sends it to Congress and needs a two thirds vote of the Congress. They can't get that right away

and so the new president coming in President Cleveland pulls the treaty sends a commissioner to want you to find out what happened, and then the whole argument starts about about revealing the truth. That's the overthrow.

**Tony Vega** 35:28

Wow. So, I mean, you mentioned that, that you've found, that well, that there has been, you know, new documents uncovered and things like that, like, do you still see like new aspects of this story coming out in the next years or decades?

**Ron Williams Jr** 35:45

Oh, completely, completely. I mean, not only, not only is it new documents, but the, you know, the case itself hasn't been really thoroughly researched by anyone. I mean, a lot of people have spent their lives doing it, but, but there's so much there that. The Blount report, the report that Mr. Blount wrote about the overthrow is 1400 pages long. There are, and here's the, here's the important part: there are 125,000 pages of Hawaiian language newspapers. It's the largest ar- it's large archive of indigenous writing in the world, and we didn't even bother look at it until about 20 years ago, and that's because so few people spoke Hawaiian, right?! That was part of the plan. The, the Republic of Hawaii in 1896 mandated that all schools in the Republic of Hawaii, private and public, be taught to the medium of English language. And so, within two generations, Hawaiians aren't gonna be able to read what their kupuna said, and that's how, and so they, so they erase that, they erase all that accomplishment I talked about at a time, and they start this new narrative that well, Hawaiians aren't capable, and they're not smart, and they're, you know, barbaric, and that, you know, that, that they admitted themselves was wrong in 1863, but now they're bringing that back. And so if you're from here, anybody who's from here will tell you, what was it like in 1940s, and 50s, to be Hawaiian, the definition of a Hawaiian and back then was, well, you know, he's a government worker, not so smart, you know, that, you know, where that knowledge of one of the most progressive, you know, nations in the world go to? That was part of that cover up. And so, so by going into these papers, and reading the prolific, but brilliant speeches from Native Hawaiians about the law, about the people, by the people, and for the people. These petitions that they sent to the United States with 1000s and 1000s of their signatures on, they made the most eloquent speeches I've ever read about what was just and what was right. And the interesting thing about it is, this wasn't, you know, we need to be careful also about saying, "It's America" in big quotes, because this was a this was a group of people in America, right, definitely with power, but there was a significant anti-imperialist movement in America, there were a lot of people who were against this, there were folks in the US Congress who spoke out and said, this is wrong, this is a theft of a people's country. I wrote an article about 10 years ago, on collegiate debates over annexation in America. I had found in the Hawaiian language newspapers this article about a debate at Georgetown University over Hawaii annexation, I was like, Oh, my God. And so I started to go to the top universities in America and

get their microfilm of their school newspapers, and I found out that, that Harvard vs Yale, the first collegiate debate on the west coast of the US, which is which was Stanford school, Stanford was two years old, against the UC schools, which was Berkeley, and they argued, should we annex Hawaii? And in every case that no side won. So at the highest levels of academia in America, people were saying, "No, it's not right. We can't take a country that doesn't want to be taken." So that was, that was, you know, and that's why it wasn't taken in 1893, or 1894, or 1895, or 1896, Americans knew it wasn't right. But there was this military politician group that was pushing for it, and they got their big break ins-, when the Spanish American War kicked off. When Spanish American War kicked off, we needed Hawaii, we needed to take Hawaii to fuel ships going to Manila, you know, we always call that the Spanish American War, it was really the Filipino American War, right? We defeated the Spanish we have defeated the Spanish in no time, and Aguinaldo from the Filipino rebels had asked the US president to come free them from the slavery of colonization. And he said, okay, and he freed them, and then US took over. So instead of, instead of letting them become independent, we bought the Philippines from Spain, and we were the new colonizer. So we fought the Philippines for seven years, and that fight had to be fueled by Hawaii, yeah. And so we see it in the Congress, there was a closed door meeting of Congress, they couldn't get the two thirds vote necessary to annex the Hawaiian Islands. And so they close the doors or they held these secret meetings, those meeting minutes came out in 1959, not until 1959 they came out. And they showed that the military said, I don't care if it's right, I don't care if it's legal, we have to have Hawaii. And so they made up this plan to pass a resolution, which doesn't really work, but they're going to do it anyway. They had to make some kind of cover to pretend to take Hawaii legally. And that's what they did.

**Tony Vega 40:22**

For a link to Dr. Williams' academia.edu page, please take a look in the show notes. Transmissions from Hawaii is a production of Wasabi magazine. It's produced in the beautiful city of Honolulu by me, Tony Vega. If you haven't subscribed to the show yet, then please make sure to do that in your podcast app that not only ensures that you get all future episodes as soon as they come out, it also helps us out in the rankings in those podcasts app, so please hit that subscribe button. Also, don't forget to leave a rating and a review, and tell a friend or family member about the show. We want to keep producing the show, but we need your help to grow the audience. So please hit the subscribe button and spread the word. We'll be back soon with part 3 of insurrection. And in that installment, we'll be coming back to present day to talk to a representative of the government of the Hawaiian Kingdom. Mahalo for listening and see you next time on Transmissions from Hawaii.