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### Multimedia Review

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## Multimedia Review

### **Noho Hewa: The Wrongful Occupation of Hawai'i**

ANNE KEALA KELLY (Dir)

Kailua, Hawai'i: Kuleana Works Production, 2009. 1 DVD: 82 minutes.

*Noho Hewa: The Wrongful Occupation of Hawai'i* is a documentary by Native Hawaiian journalist, writer, and filmmaker Anne Keala Kelly. The film was directed, shot, and edited by Kelly, and took over six years to make, as an independently funded project. It received the Hawai'i International Film Festival award for best documentary in 2008 and the *Prix Special du Jury* at the *Festival International du Film Documentaire Océanien* (FIFO) in 2009.

The DVD cover and its promotional material utilise a striking image of a blindfolded and gagged person in headshot (the model, Mana Caceres, is credited on the back cover, along with photographer Ed Greevey, and other contributors to design and layout). In the backdrop there are red, white, and blue stripes; on the blindfold, white stars set in blue: an American menace is clearly signified. Upon closer examination, it becomes clear that the person in the image is male. He is long haired and goateed, with a triangular Native Hawaiian tattoo running vertically down his cheek: Kanaka Maoli or Native Hawaiian defiance is also being signified.

Advertising on the DVD cover promises to deliver what 'the TOURISTS don't see; the GOVERNMENT won't say... THE TRUTH ABOUT HAWAI'I'. The Hawai'i Visitors and Convention Bureau (previously known as the Hawaii Visitors Bureau) is proud of its history of 'marketing the islands of Hawai'i for over a century'. Approximately seven million tourists will visit Hawai'i every year, and it is they who are more often blinded by fantasies of tropical leisure than ordinary Kanaka Maoli. But tourist myths are not what this documentary focuses on—those have been perpetuated enough.

What is less well known is the history of the illegal overthrow of the sovereign monarchy of Hawai'i in 1893 by American settlers with US Marine backing, and the abiding military rationales for retaining the islands as American outposts in the Pacific. Several other documentaries have tried to tell that story—see, for example, *Act of War: The Overthrow of the Hawaiian Nation* (1993) made by Joan Lander and Puhipau of the production house Na Maka o Ka 'Aina, and *Then there were none* (1996) by Elizabeth Kapu'uwailani Lindsay.

However, while historical context is important for disrupting tourist fantasies, *Noho Hewa's* focus is resolutely on contemporary struggles around the militarisation of Hawai'i. The phrase *noho hewa* itself means 'wrongful occupation'. As part of research for the film, Kelly scrupulously mapped all the military installations in the Hawaiian islands (see <http://www.nohohewa.com/occupied-areas/>). As documentarian, she does track developments relating specifically to the military in the early twenty-first century, (for example, testing and training in Makua Valley, the Navy's proposal for a University Affiliated Research Center (UARC) at the University of Hawai'i (UH), the Mokapu Peninsula land acquisition, and the Stryker Brigade hearings), but the ultimate value of her film is in cataloguing a complex system of what I have described elsewhere as 'militarism's articulations' (Teaiwa 2001, 2005).

Through *Noho Hewa*, Kelly has carefully illustrated how the militarisation of Hawai'i both produces and is enabled by broader processes of land alienation, indigenous social dislocation, and late capitalism. Thus, the film draws into its purview the construction of gated communities and a Walmart over sacred sites, Monsanto GMO fields on Moloka'i, and a homeless community at Mokule'ia Beach. UH Professor and Hawaiian sovereignty activist, Hauani-Kay Trask describes these collusion of forces as a process of 'ethnic cleansing', defying the pacified and exoticised images of Hawai'i postcards.

Although her sovereignty commitments are in abundant evidence in the film, Kelly manages to avoid the pitfall of over-editorialising. One of the most stunning moments in the film documented the mutually respectful and even cordial exchanges she was able to have with military personnel engaged in the testing and training in Makua Valley, during exercises and in the midst of live fire. Kelly has not personalised her analysis of militarisation, and the soldiers and officers she interviews have no personal beef with her. Yet, no matter which side of the fence one might choose to position themselves in relation to the militarisation of Hawai'i, the images of vigorous activism, vigilant academic critique, corporate bulldozing, industrialised agriculture, and indigenous impoverishment captured in this documentary are more the stuff of sleepless nights rather than placid fantasies.

Running at 82 minutes in length, the documentary features interviews with Native Hawaiian academics and activists and some extraordinary original footage documenting both the relentless expansion of the militarised occupation and the determined resistance of Native Hawaiians. Soundtrack music by Sudden Rush, Billy Bragg, Jon Osorio, Black Square, and Kamehameha Projects reinforces the emotional impact of Kelly's story, and demonstrates the beauty and power of social and political commentary through the arts.

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