

The Military Industrial Complex

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Abstract

Space and time are Western constructs in which Kānaka Maoli are confined to understanding the way in which the world operates. When individuals from Hawai‘i enlist in the military industrial complex, Xtorically, there’s a sense of safety, through being part of an entity that inserts domination and power. Xtory is a term I introduced and defined at a conference in 2022 related to Indigenous Peoples and the “history” surrounding our Peoples as the Western world extracts, exploits, and erases our stories. These same stories become the ways in which the military industrial complex is complicit in the process of assimilation and elimination of Kānaka Maoli identity that leaves enlisted soldiers and their families in the space of the in-between. This poem is about existing in many silos such as time and space, in a matrix of safety, and the constructs of the Black/white binary (Gines, 2013) and the ways Kānaka Maoli overcome these Western constructs by returning to our lands and listening or hearing the voices of our ancestors across time spans.

Indigenization Statement

As a Kanaka Maoli, I was raised all over the world with periods of time on my homeland on the Island of O‘ahu, Hawai‘i. My connections to understanding home have always been complex thoughts that negotiated belonging to community, land, and Lāhui (Nation). These complexities have always had to become part of words I used in poetry, due to the lack of understanding of my positionality in a world where Kānaka Maoli were not as present as we are today in the diaspora. Hawai‘i as a land that is near to my pu‘uwai (heart) but far from where I can plant my feet becomes spatial discourse with ebbs and flows of time. The limitations and constructs of Western time constraints are inconsistent with Indigenous ontologies that exist within a conflicting relationship with imperialistic entities.

Introduction

This acrostic poem (vertically) spells out the words “Military Industrial Complex” (MIC) and illuminates the realities of an imperialist system that is responsible for displacing Kānaka Maoli from our homelands while providing the illusion of a safety (Gonzalez, 2013).

Additionally, the MIC is a site of destruction upon lands and upon Black, Brown, and Indigenous bodies (Gonzalez, 2013; Niheu et al., 2006; Tuteur, 2021). Psychologically, the complex, as a system, also operates as a site of harm within the family unit, where violence may be enacted within households or mental health challenges (often leading to death) arise for both service workers and their dependents (Cristobal et al., 2024; Monteith et al., 2026).

This poem seeks to address the tension between the Western world's limited understanding and frequent dismissal of Indigenous worldviews, concepts, and relationships between people, land, and the non-linear understandings of time and space. While much of the poem draws from personal lived experience, many Kānaka Maoli adults who were raised as children within the American military industrial complex will be able to recognize and relate to the implications of being caught in places and spaces of the “in-between.” The “in-between” consists of constant relocation, unstable living arrangements, and displacement due to a parent's military deployment or reassignment. It also reflects the tension of existing within imposed binaries, where Kānaka Maoli may find themselves positioned outside of Western constructs, looking in, yet not fully accepted within either side of the binary.

The resistance in this poem is carried through the act of existing as Kānaka Maoli within a systemic power dynamic geared towards destruction and exploitation of lands and Indigenous Peoples. The intertwining of Indigenous Knowledges and Western worldviews reveals the complexity of navigating a world where ancestral and spiritual knowledge is often dismissed by civilians and officials within the American MIC as myth or fiction. The words to the poem are an act of resistance, revolution, and an ode to my Lāhui (Nation).

Military Industrial Complex

Memories from shadows of being a child, with an

Innocence that was wiped away over time/

Lands far away...

Institutional Going/ Coming/ Returning/ and Returning

Time and travels are (in)consistent

As time is never-ending and travels are quite confusing

Revolving with(in) the matrix of [safety, domination, and power]...

Yet the façade of harmony is out of balance

Internal destruction of **self**, internal destruction of **units**

Never understanding the binary constructs of which to exist

Denying a land rich with iwi kūpuna who speaks through the soil

Until their voices reach the *diasporic soul*

Sometimes they find us when we are not looking/

Till we come home and understand how we might be

Revolving with(in) the matrix of [safety, domination, and power]...

Island girl, raised all over the world

And gleaned from **resistance**, **revolution**, and **respect** through

Life's tribulations and joys of death and life and life and death

Community actions| developing | planning | and engagement

Overcoming tragedy time after time, revolving with(in) the...

Matrix of [safety, domination, and power]...

Persistence to remember when innocence was wiped away as a child in

Lands far away...

Explaining why my words are my resistance that hold

Xtories I have yet to unfold from being a child within the product

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