

PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

Haunani-Kay Trask

Native Hawaiian activist, educator, author, and poet

“I break the ideology of happy Natives and that makes me dangerous.”

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Background Information

Born: October 3, 1949, Died: July 3, 2021

Born in San Francisco, California on October 3, 1949, Haunani-Kay Trask grew up in Hawai'i. Her family consisted of native Hawaiian descendants from the native Pi'ilani line of Maui. Trask lived in Hawai'i prior to its statehood into the United States in 1959. Dr. Trask received a master's degree and a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.ⁱ

Resistance

Dr. Trask was a founding member of Ka Lahui Hawai'i, an organization that promotes Hawaiian self-government.ⁱⁱ Trask was against the American government's continued colonization of native Hawaiian lands. She researched the ways colonialism, racism, and gender bias impacted Hawaii's indigenous groups. Decades before, the last queen of Hawai'i was overthrown and jailed. Afterward, Hawai'i became an American territory. In 1959 the region became a state. Trask famously proclaimed, "We are not American" as protestors gathered on the event anniversary. Haunani believed that Hawai'i was stolen from its native citizens. She challenged Hawaiians to embrace their ancestry and fight to restore the island. As an active participant in the Hawaiian Sovereignty movement, she spent decades in the battle for Indigenous rights. In the 1970s, Haunani joined the Protect Kaho'olawe 'Ohana. The grassroots organization successfully organized to stop the U.S. military from bombings on the island of Kaho'olawe.ⁱⁱⁱ In 1986, she became one of the first native Hawaiian women professors at the University of Hawaii. She is credited as a co-founder of modern Hawaiian Studies. Trask served as the founding director of the University of Hawaii Mānoa Center for Hawaiian Studies. Haunani was vocal about tourism's harmful effects on Hawaiian land and its culture during her life. In 1993 she published the book "From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawaii," a widely read collection of essays about the Hawaiian sovereignty movement.^{iv}

Achievements

Trask received numerous accolades during her career. In 2019, Trask accepted the Angela Y. Davis lifetime achievement award by the American Studies Association. In 2021, Trask was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.^v USA Today named Trask as one of the Women of the Century.

Essential Questions

1. How did Dr. Trask advocate for Native Hawaiian rights?
2. Dr. Trask was one of the first native Hawaiian women to become a professor at the University of Hawaii. How did she use her role at the college to impact Hawaiians?
3. Why did Haunani want Hawaiians to embrace their heritage?
 - a. How is this an act of resistance?
4. ***“I break the ideology of happy Natives and that makes me dangerous.”***
 - a. What does the author mean in this quote?
 - b. Why is it important to resist harmful narratives?

ⁱ <https://instituteforpr.org/pioneer-haunani-kay-trask/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/remembering-hawaiian-hero-haunani-kay-trask-and-her-fight-rights-native-hawaiians>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/haunani-kay-trask-renowned-scholar-who-fought-hawaiian-sovereignty-dies-n1273364>

^{iv} <https://www.staradvertiser.com/2021/07/04/hawaii-news/activist-retired-university-of-hawaii-professor-haunani-kay-trask-fought-for-hawaiian-rights-causes/>

^v <https://www.hawaii.edu/news/2021/04/28/trask-elected-to-prestigious-national-society/>