

Belonging and the Imperial Republic: Hawai'i, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico in the Shadow of Washington

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the United States and people of U.S. descent embarked on ambitious imperial projects in the Pacific and the Caribbean. This imperial turn transformed debates around status, governance, constitutionalism, and belonging on the U.S. mainland and in its outlying “possessions.” Officials aiming to reconcile U.S. empire both with its subjects’ interests and with U.S. legal and democratic traditions portrayed it as an improvement for peoples lacking mainlanders’ political experience and capacity. Territorial politicians in turn approached imperial officials in ways shaped by their pre-annexation political experiences, citing these as evidence of their ability to govern themselves, while seeking to frame their aspirations in terms of U.S. history and ideals. These struggles, which played out in courtrooms, legislatures, agencies, and periodicals, challenged U.S. constitutional norms, revolutionized the governance and status of millions of people, and articulated and tested assumptions concerning civilization and membership throughout the U.S. empire-state. Rachel St. John examines the pre-annexation evolution of competing notions of Hawai’ian nationhood, highlighting how the indigenous-headed Kingdom of Hawai’i and the whites-dominated Republic of Hawai’i deployed ritual, language, and law in pursuit of authority and legitimacy in the late nineteenth century. Turning to the post-annexation Philippines, Leia Castaneda investigates ways that social and intellectual elites called *ilustrados* employed transplanted legal and political ideology, institutions, and traditions to cement their preeminent status and challenge the American colonial agenda as proxies for the Filipino people. Shifting to the Atlantic, Sam Erman studies Puerto Rican politicians who found in interrelated mainland debates around the legacy of the U.S. Civil

War and the law and politics of U.S. empire opportunities to demonstrate their capacity and win self-government by equating island leaders with white southerners and U.S. governance of Puerto Rico with the Reconstruction of the South.

ASLH Paper Proposal

Dueling Nations:

The Hawaiian Kingdom, the Republic of Hawai'i, and Competition over National Identity and Authority in the Hawaiian Islands

Rachel St. John

In 1898 the United States annexed Hawai'i and incorporated the islands and their inhabitants into its sovereign domain. It did so at the invitation of the Republic of Hawai'i, but under protest from the Kingdom of Hawai'i which continued to claim its sovereign authority over the islands and the Hawaiian people. By the time of U.S. annexation, these two authorities—the monarchy and the government of the Republic—had come to represent opposing poles in a competition over claims to national authority and identity that had developed in Hawai'i over the course of the nineteenth century.

Focusing on the late nineteenth century, this paper will explore the evolution of these competing notions of what constituted the Hawaiian nation and who had the power to control it that emerged around the Hawaiian monarchy and the Euro-American political forces that would achieve their fullest expression with the formation of the Republic of Hawai'i in 1894. Despite the differences between these governments, the legitimacy of their claims to authority, and their power to enforce them, both the Kingdom and the Republic relied on similar ideas about national identity and sovereignty to defend and construct their claims to represent and rule the islands and their inhabitants. In their contest for control of Hawai'i, both indigenous Hawaiian rulers and the descendants of Euro-American missionaries and traders used law, ritual, language, diplomatic recognition, and political ideology in their attempts to transform the Hawaiian Islands into an internationally-recognized nation that would be able to channel the forces of capitalism and

imperialism that beset it. While both nations were officially subsumed within the United States after 1898, many of the ideas about national identity and authority that took shape in the nineteenth century would continue to influence debates over sovereignty and identity in Hawai'i throughout the twentieth century.

ASLH Panel Proposal

Inventing the Filipino People: Race, Rights, Representation and the Creation of an Elite Democracy in the Philippine Islands

Anna Leah Fidelis T. Castañeda

When the First Philippine Commission determined that there was “no Philippine nation, only a collection of peoples,” and thus the inhabitants of the Philippine Islands, most of which belonged to “wild and pagan tribes,” were “wholly unprepared for independence,” it rendered Filipino consent irrelevant to the legality of American colonial rule. Precluded by American democratic tradition from altogether dismissing the consent of the governed, the McKinley administration characterized “benevolent imperialism” to audiences at home, in the Islands, and abroad as a humanitarian civilizing mission designed to equip Filipinos with sovereign capacity and that fulfilled their true aspirations. Claiming that Filipinos desired only rights and political participation denied them by Spain and not yet independence, they constituted as representative of these people the views of the intellectual and social elites called *ilustrados*. Americans commandeered *ilustrado* efforts to forge a Filipino nation that had culminated in the Philippine Revolution and portrayed their program as realizing this earlier project.

This paper examines how interactions between U.S. officials and *ilustrados* within the American colonial framework constructed an elite Philippine democracy in the early twentieth century. Augmented by their official roles, the Islands’ natural aristocrats benefited from attempts to capacitate Filipinos after the “universal legal person,” as Barbara Welke has termed the American legal system’s paradigmatic actor. Replicating the liberal legal regime that enshrined the able white male’s property and privilege

secured the preeminence of the Hispanicized Christian Filipino male that *ilustrados* exemplified. Introducing democratic institutions further empowered *ilustrados*, for rather than elect one of their own, the masses, or *tao*, used their votes to repay their elite patrons, institutionalizing the patron-clientelism that defined Philippine social relations. Although deprived of sovereignty, popular government in the Islands enabled elected *ilustrados* to identify with the Filipino people and assert their vision as representing this public's interests.

ASLH Paper Proposal
Puerto Rican Reconstruction:
Race, Self-Government, and Rhetoric, 1898-1917
Sam Erman

U.S. invasion and annexation in 1898-1899 brought Puerto Rico into an empire-state still grappling with the aftermath of its Civil War. The legacy of that conflict between the United States was shifting: from union, emancipation, and racial justice to vilification of Reconstruction. Early-twentieth-century U.S. officials frequently portrayed Reconstruction as the imposition of misrule on the mass of southern U.S. whites by politically inept southern blacks, “carpet-bagging” northern whites, and southern white “scalawags.”

Grasping the power of these concepts, Puerto Rican politicians took them up. They compared themselves to Reconstruction-era white southerners, tarred local imperial officials as northern carpetbaggers, and sought a Puerto Rican Redemption.

During 1898-1917, the status of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans and the implications of those statuses for island self-government remained in suspense. Confusion bred contention resulting in legislative paralysis. For Puerto Ricans, Reconstruction metaphors became a means to seek self-government while avoiding status questions. The end of Reconstruction, after all, had reduced federal oversight without revoking southern citizenship or statehood.

By claiming the mantle of southern whites, island politicians deployed a racial and partisan message, implicitly reassuring mainland politicians – especially Democrats – that they could control locals of color. Loath to alienate such voters, however, island

politicians rarely made these points explicit. Instead, they criticized the men whom Washington sent to govern them, a strategy that endeared them to the Democratic opposition until 1913, when newly inaugurated President Woodrow Wilson began appointing Democrats to those imperial posts.

For nearly two decades prior to congressional extension of U.S. citizenship to islanders in 1917, Puerto Ricans entered and shaped debates central to U.S. law and politics concerning the relationship of the Civil War to empire. In so doing, they altered the constitutional and statutory underpinnings of and administrative practices implementing U.S. rule in Puerto Rico.