

## Editorial Note

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The realization of this special issue arrives with the urgency for the field of island studies to recognize and address its role in limiting diversity, equity, and inclusion in its scholarship. This special issue of the *Okinawan Journal of Island Studies (OJIS)*, guided by feminist methods of collaboration, and our call for research on social justice island activism has brought forth an issue that centers the perspectives of Indigenous islanders and women. Our collection contains disciplinary and interdisciplinary research papers, a range of contributions in our forum section (essays, curated conversations, reflection pieces, and photo essays), and book reviews centered on island activist events and activities organized locally, nationally, or globally. We are particularly pleased with our forum section; its development offers alternative forms of scholarship that combine elements of research, activism, and reflection. Our editorial objective has been to make visible diverse approaches for conceptualizing island activism as a category of analysis. The selections of writing here offer complexity and nuance as to how activism shapes and is shaped by island eco-cultures and islanders' lives.

Activisms encompass multiple ways that people engage in social change, including art, poetry, photographs, spoken word, language revitalization, education, farming, building, cultural events, protests, and other activities locally and through larger networks or movements. This volume brings together island activism that inform, negotiate, and resist geopolitical designations often applied to them, such as small, distant, vulnerable, and feminine. We understand island activism as oriented by the protection of place, an investigative approach in pursuit of equitable treatment and sovereignty, and by the development of island leadership and movement organizing.

This issue reflects the numerous ways we might seek to engage with activism and resistance, personally and collectively, to challenge the status quo and entrenched power dynamics, protecting against injustice and imperialism, promoting feminisms, anti-racism, environmentalism, or rejecting conventional categories of *human* and *nonhuman* in the interest of preserving life's potentiality. As scholar-activists, we continually confront the challenge to recognize scholarship as activism—a form of resistance and a new path forward. We believe the pieces contained in this issue showcase an island activist approach to scholarship (and island-centered scholarship on activism).

### Research Articles

Applying a range of methodological approaches, the articles in this issue address decolonial responses to militarism, gender oppression, and cultural dispossession across islands.

Geographically, the islands in this section include Papua New Guinea, Prince Edward Island, and the island groups of Kanaky, Okinawa, and Fiji. Meghan Forsyth's "'La langue vient de la musique': Acadian Song, Language Transmission, and Cultural Sustainability on Prince Edward Island" engagingly examines the "sonic activism" of the francophone community in Prince Edward Island. Also focused on visibility and access, David Robie's article "'Voice of the Voiceless': The Pacific Media Centre as a Case Study of Academic and Research Advocacy and Activism" substantiates the need for bringing forward journalistic attention to the Pacific. Robie emphasizes the need for critical and social justice perspectives in addressing the socio-political struggles in Fiji and environmental justice in the Pacific broadly. A third article, "My Words Have Power: The Role of Yuri Women in Addressing Sorcery Violence in Simbu Province of Papua New Guinea" by Dick Witne Bomai, shares the progress of the Yuri Alaiku Kuikane Association (YAKA). YAKA is a community-led peace movement that applies culturally rooted concepts to advocacy and peacebuilding initiatives that are also harnessed to help prevent gendered violence in Papua New Guinea. Finally, the article by Anaïs Duong-Pedica, "'La Pause Décoloniale': Women Decolonizing Kanaky One Episode at a Time," provides a discussion of French settler colonialism and the challenges around formal decolonization processes in Kanaky. Attuning us to women's political activism and the collaborative practice of the podcast and radio show "La Pause Décoloniale," this article demonstrates how sovereign futures are imagined and enacted.

### **Alternative Forms of Scholarship**

Our forum section is a result of inclusive feminist thinking to make space for a range of approaches combining scholarship and activism. The abundance of submissions to this section demonstrates the desire for academic outlets that stray from traditional models of scholarship. Feminist and Indigenous scholar-activists seem especially inclined towards alternative avenues for expressing and sharing their research. We contribute to a trend happening across academia to make scholarship more accessible and offer the forum section as our own form of resistance to normative and patriarchal approaches in scholarly publication.

Remarkably, the activist and reflective writings or documentation of actions, events, and organizations coalesce around recognizing where one is spatially by acknowledging who was displaced. This set of forum essays also makes clear that documenting islands compels the specificity of lived experiences. These detailed approaches to island lives build capacity for recognizing connections across islands, making subtle comparisons, or identifying parallels for the pursuit of justice, equity, and decolonization across islands.

The methodological and theoretical approaches engaged here also illuminate the significance of place-based orientations and the particularities of islands. Overall, the forum contributors confront crucial themes and issues facing islands and islanders such as: Indigenous erasure; oceanic solidarity (Kēhaulani Vaughn, Brandon J. Reilly, Alfred Peredo Flores, and Juliann Anesi; Tabitha Espina and Josephine Faith Ong; Karin Hermes) and non-Indigenous allyship (Gwyn Kirk); youth and the environment (Francielle Laclé); workers' rights, health, food, and well-being (Brenda Cangah; Francesc Fusté-Forné); community-based filmmaking

(Sylvia Frain); and climate change resilience (Ilan Kelman). The forum showcases the expanse of island activisms occurring in Aotearoa, Australia, Guåhan, Okinawa, Sāmoa, Turtle Island, and in diasporic island communities globally.

Several forum contributions are focused on island activism from the Mariana Islands Archipelago, located in the misnamed subregion of “Micronesia” in the Northwest Pacific Ocean. The designation is an unfortunate imperial amalgamation imposed upon a vast area comprising more than 2,000 islands. Inextricably connected to the colonial history of “naming” in the Pacific, the terms also set geographical and political boundaries for generations (Diaz 2015; Hanlon 2009; Rainbird 2003). Throughout Oceania, there are varied forms of governance and political status. The language and terms used for these islands and archipelagos matters for understanding contemporary structures of colonial power and building decolonial futures (Na’puti 2020; Teaiwa 2014, 2020). The Mariana Islands Archipelago is divided by affiliations with the United States whereby the island of Guåhan is an “unincorporated territory” of the United States, and the fourteen other islands belong to the US Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). There are also Freely Associated States (Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau) or nations (Kiribati, Nauru) exercising various forms of self-governance and sovereignty. The colonial terminology for this vast subregion is facing increased critique, and we also forgo using these subregion names in this volume. Our interest in advancing critical and anti-imperial perspectives in and around island studies motivates us to instead use the specific island and archipelagic place names and languages.

The array of writings in the forum section begins with “Oceanic Activism: A Talanoa on Land, Love, and Resistance,” by Kēhaulani Vaughn (Kānaka Maoli) et al., which considers how ancestral connections and activism are manifest in Oceania and also reflect a twenty-first century reality of movement, migration, settlement, and displacement. In it, the authors refer to Oceania scholarship that spotlights how people “engage in acts of resistance to imperialism, militarism, racism, and other settler colonial formations that have often appeared in less recognizable forms.” Their essay addresses the significance of land and resistance from their respective positionalities and utilizes Chamoru, Sāmoan, and/or Kānaka Maoli cultural concepts to explore overlaps of activism in “various locales such as villages, sacred sites, schools, churches, and the home” throughout Oceania.

Also focused on Oceania, the essay by Filipino authors Tabitha Espina and Josephine Faith Ong, “Bonds of Island Activism,” and another by Karin Louise Hermes, “A Convergence of Hands and Waters,” overlap in their concern with militarism, decolonization, and strong forms of relationship in the Mariana Islands Archipelago. For example, in highlighting how online platforms such as everydayarchipelago.com center the roles and actions of Indigenous Chamoru and Refaluwasch peoples, Hermes’ essay orients us with stories of unification shared in the Northern Mariana Islands. Pacific communities recently lost a powerful Indigenous Refaluwasch-Chamorro community advocate and cultural pathmaker with the passing of Jacinta “Cinta” Kaipat in February 2023. Hermes’ essay foregrounds how Kaipat communicated decolonial and island

feminism perspectives that connected struggles and deepened relationality with Indigenous peoples.

Our forum section pays tribute to Indigenous women scholars and activists and the hefty labor and caretaking needed to tackle the impacts of colonialism and militarism on the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific. For example, Espina and Ong document the process and significance of place-based gatherings for shared struggles of gender violence within militarized islands like Guåhan. Sylvia C. Frain’s “Famalão’an in Film” describes how women’s creative production and films provide stories of activism that affirm relations among ocean, land, and family. Focusing on the stories of Lilo Ema Siope (as depicted in the film *LOIMATA, The Sweetest Tears*, directed by Anna Marbrook, and the 2022 Guam International Film Festival (GIFF)), Frain details how islands, as storied places, abound with lessons of ancestral lands and Indigenous lifeways.

Pacific studies scholars lead many of the forum essays, which together converge in sharing deep forms of Indigenous thought and theory toward everyday resistance. Recognizing and citing scholars, poets, and activists (whom are often one in the same), the forum contributors ensure that peoples of Okinawa and Oceania—Aotearoa, CNMI, Guåhan, Hawai‘i, Kiribati, Moorea, Sāmoa, and Tahiti—are centered as they address significant concerns to the region such as a nuclear free and independent Pacific, anti-militarism organizing, racism, gender inequality, and climate change. We hope that readers will refer to these forum essays to celebrate the legacies of scholar-activists from island places that challenge cultural stereotypes and work toward decolonization.

Finally, the forum section includes curated conversations that provide distinct ways of theoretical engagement and sharing scholarly work. For example, in “The Island Feminisms Project: Imagined Through Social Justice and Praxis,” Marina Karides and Noralis Rodríguez-Coss reveal an eagerness for alternative forms of information sharing such as their effort in the Island Feminisms Spring webinar series that attains global participation. As Rodríguez-Coss puts it, “I am more interested in the underlying message, and the forms of activism that do not receive any recognition. . . . I’m very curious about the certain ways of island solidarity.” In “An Island Conversation with Vehia Wheeler and Anaïs Duong-Pedica: Unsettling Knowledge Production about/in the French-Colonized Pacific,” a similar perspective is shared. Wheeler remarks, “Instead of the research being for the Empire, the research is for the people where you actually are. I’m located in Tahiti; it’s best that my research is in relationship to the Tahitian population, and what are our needs and wants and benefits and desires for our own place?”

While the latter conversation is transcribed and presented in this issue, an audio version is available as part of the Island Conversations Podcast Series housed on the Small Island Cultures Research Initiative (SICRI) website. Together, such conversations provide oral, written, and visual elements that ensure stories are shared across islands communities. Island feminisms can contribute to alternative futures with a different kind of academic research that we believe is enacted in the forum contributions and in the production of this issue.

Finally, we mention the wide range of book reviews submitted specifically for this issue of *OJIS*. Māori voices; indigeneity in Guåhan; climate action; Pacific studies, militarism, and gender; histories of Fiji, Aotearoa, Rekohu, and Rapa Nui are some of the subjects covered in the books

reviewed. By centering island feminisms and Indigenous activisms, the research articles, forum section, and book reviews collectively offer novel approaches to island scholarship. The contributions in this issue arrive not only from activists and scholars who have worked in island feminist and decolonial politics for generations, but we also showcase fresh voices in island scholarship informed by their sense of place. We hope readers enjoy and gain from the reflective, inclusive, academic, and activist approaches into island studies offered in the pages that follow.

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