

Decolonizing the Mind as an Exercise of Ea

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“Each child born has at birth, a Bowl of perfect Light. If he tends his Light it will grow in strength and he can do all things—swim with the shark, fly with the birds, know and understand all things. If, however, he becomes envious or jealous he drops a stone into his Bowl of Light and some of the Light goes out. Light and the stone cannot hold the same space. If he continues to put stones in the Bowl of Light, the Light will go out and he will become a stone. A stone does not grow, nor does it move. If at any time he tires of being a stone, all he needs to do is turn the bowl upside down and the stones will fall away and the Light will grow once more.”

Kailiohe Kameekua

INTRODUCTION

Native Hawaiians believe that every person is born with a bowl of perfect light. It is in our bowl of perfect light that our *mana* or supernatural divine power grows in strength to gift us the capacity to defy what we've been indoctrinated to believe. While we alone place stones into our bowl of light, the effect of colonization is that we become weighed down by illusions and fallacies created by colonizers to compel us to betray our light. When we choose to grow our light, however, only a simple overturning of the bowl releases the stones. After the stones are released, our bowl of light can once more become free.

The journey of learning *how* to overturn a bowl of light is unique to each bearer. The lessons we experience in life assist us in acquiring the tools we need to discover and return our bowls to perfect light. Nana Veary, a renowned Native Hawaiian healer, speaks of how we can discover our bowl of perfect light. According to Veary, sunrise gifts us a time of gratitude while sunset gifts us a time of forgiveness – the forgiveness of self, the forgiveness of others, and the forgiveness of any who attempt to inhibit our bowl of light. Within our silence, the sacred space of reverence necessary to hear and be all things, our gratitude, and forgiveness can help clear away all preventing us from finding our bowl of light.

When we do find our bowl of light, anything that initially stood between us and our bowl of light, is a small glimpse into the many layers of healing we have agreed to undertake over the course of our life. We will never be completely healed. Yet the gift of healing is that it assists us in transcending that which binds us now – our core wounds, ancestral trauma, any generational or karmic cycles, and any conscious or subconscious programming from our colonization – in favor of more autonomy. This is our truth. When we understand how we specifically must turn our bowl upside down so that all stones fall away, we begin to walk the path of *ho'ōla* or healing to become initiated as bearers of light.

A light bearer has enough *'ike* or wisdom to exercise *ea* or sovereignty by healing their spirit which in turn heals their mind. Whether a light bearer chooses to exercise that divine right is another question entirely. The cost of attaining such knowledge, and the wisdom it brings, is enough to rediscover the numerous ways we are asked to

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exercise our sovereignty throughout different stages of our life. If one understands the essence of this, then they have truly discovered the tools of development that lead to self-mastery.

In terms of colonization, the pursuit of cultural and political sovereignty is irrevocably tied to our ability to unearth our bowl of light and one day become light bearers. This is because the extent to which we can be sovereign within our minds directly correlates to our capacity to recognize what it means to *be* sovereign. As an Indigenous people, colonized by the United States, true sovereignty can only be attained when we are both free as a *lāhui* or nation *and* from the indoctrination wrought by colonialism in all its forms. Sovereignty is our birthright. We cannot even begin to understand how to remove stones from our bowl of light if we don't first know it exists. To unearth one's bowl, the first step is to begin decolonizing the mind as both a cultural *and* spiritual practice.

Part I of this article will introduce *ea* or sovereignty and connect it to Native Hawaiian healing. Part II will look at the effects of imperialism and colonization on Native Hawaiians to explain the necessity of *ho'ōla*. While part III of this article will introduce decolonization, part IV will explore the concept of decolonizing the mind. Part V will examine the intersectionality of decolonizing the mind and spiritual evolution. Part VI will then argue decolonizing the mind as an exercise of *ea*.

***EA* AND NATIVE HAWAIIAN WELLNESS**

Under international law, a nation-state is “an entity that has a defined territory and permanent population, under the control of its own government, and that engages in, or has the capacity to engage in, formal relations with other such entities.”¹ A nation-state is considered a sovereign political unity to which it has full legal status.² When recognized by other states, a state then possesses international statehood.³ Hawai'i, once a sovereign political unity with full legal status, is being actively colonized by the United States. The illegal annexation of Hawai'i brought imperialism, colonialism, white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism to Native Hawaiians. The effect of this is the violent and forceful attempt to separate Native Hawaiians from our ancestral knowledge, cultural and spiritual practices, and traditional food systems that are crucial to our well-being.⁴

Prior to colonization, Native Hawaiians worked in harmony with nature to ensure all basic needs were met without needing to exploit the *'āina* or land and resources.⁵ This *kuleana* or sacred reciprocal responsibility, of maintaining a relationship with the land grounded in love, reverence, and harmony, arises through kinship. This kinship relationship is because we are genealogical descendants of the land. We would not exist if not for our *'āina*. As we are born of our land and still connected, the ongoing oppression we experience harms our land just as the exploitation our land suffers affects us too.

'Āina, as a living being far more alive than we can ever comprehend, is also being stripped of autonomy due to colonization. Whether it be through the commodification of our *'āina*, the endless use of explosives by the United States military, or the influx of non-Native Hawaiians who displace us from our homes, our *'āina* is actively being harmed for the benefit of colonizers. Even now, an entire island has been rendered unusable by the United States after the military spent substantial time there detonating explosives. *'Āina* is not and can never be relegated to a thing – an object easily bought and sold to be disposed of once its capacity for usefulness (i.e. commodification, exploitation) expires. Sovereignty then must also be freedom for our land just as much as it is freedom for us.⁶

Ea or sovereignty is also defined as independence, life, air, breath, respiration, the act of rising, and of becoming erect.⁷ It is in our sovereignty that we rise to meet our best selves. It is in our sovereignty we are sustained as living beings and granted the gift of being. *Ea* is not merely sovereignty in the way that colonizers would have us

¹ CJS INTERNLAW § 5 (2023).

² CJS INTERNLAW § 5 (2023).

³ CJS INTERNLAW § 5 (2023).

⁴ Dr. Haunani-Kay Trask, *Settlers of Color and “Immigrant” Hegemony: Locals in Hawai'i*, 26 *Amerasia J.* 1, 24 (2000): “But as a people, Hawaiians remain a politically subordinated group suffering all the legacies of conquest: landlessness, disastrous health, diaspora, institutionalization in the military and prisons, poor educational attainment, and confinement to the service sector of employment.”

⁵ One of our most important cultural beliefs is *mālama i ka 'āina*, which means to respect or care for the land.

⁶ Freedom for our land must include Native Hawaiians remaining on the land. Just as we need our land to live, our land needs us there to survive as well. We are both aspects of the same as one cannot exist without the other.

⁷ *Ea*, HAWAIIAN ENGLISH DICTIONARY, (5th ed. 1986).

believe because it cannot be acquired outside of ourselves nor outside of our *lāhui*. It is the accumulation of all that has been and all that will be for us as Native Hawaiians. *Ea* is intrinsic and innate to who we are as a people who have been living since the beginning of time. Wonderfully and profoundly freeing, *ea* is our divine right.

It is in *ea* then that we find our inherent right to choose – to define who we are now and who we are becoming. This is because our divine right is exercised through our determinations.⁸ Whether it be cultural, political, or even spiritual determinations and whether such determinations be applied to us as individuals or to our *lāhui*, our sovereignty implicitly is our right to determine our truth. In our self-determination is where we find the gift of free will that grants us the choice to walk the path of *ho'ōla* to become light bearers.

However, the tools we need to walk the path of *ho'ōla* are tools grounded in the knowledge and wisdom of our ancestors which has been growing since time immemorial. With every new generation, the ancient ones built upon that which has always been known as they had the freedom to observe our cultural beliefs and practices without any inhibitions but their own. It is in this building of cultural beliefs and practices that we inherit the *ho'ōla* that adequately addresses our wellness.

While many non-Indigenous people can separate spirituality from healing, Native Hawaiians are fundamentally unable to do so because our wellness can only be adequately addressed through a holistic approach. This is paramount as one can only remain *pono* and in *lōkahi* when the three levels of self are maintained in wellness.⁹ This concept, of addressing the *kino* or physical body, *kino wailua* or “second stream” of consciousness, and *'uhane* or spirit, in conjunction with the interconnectedness of all, informs the medicine for all imbalances.¹⁰

The *ho'ōla* or healing to address these imbalances can only be found in our cultural beliefs and practices because many of the issues that arise have existed since the beginning of time.¹¹ Imperialism, through our ongoing colonization, prevents us from accessing the *ho'ōla* we need because it actively works to stop us from unearthing and understanding those beliefs and practices.¹²

THE EFFECTS OF IMPERIALISM AND COLONIALISM IN ALL ITS FORMS ON NATIVE HAWAIIANS

Imperialism is “a total system of foreign power in which another culture, people, and way of life penetrate, transform, and come to define the colonized society” whereas colonization is the “behaviors, ideologies, and economies that enforce the exploitation of Native people in the colonies.”¹³ The function and purpose of imperialism, through the means of colonization, is the exploitation of the subjugated colony by the colonizing power: “its lands and oceans, labor, women, and, in the Pacific, its mythic meaning as a “South Sea paradise.”¹⁴ This connects imperialism and colonization to the tourism industry in Hawai'i that profits off of the appropriation and

⁸ Rebecca Tsosie, *Reclaiming Native Stories: An Essay on Cultural Appropriation and Cultural Rights*, 34 ARIZ. ST. L.J. 299 (2002).

⁹ *Pono*, HAWAIIAN ENGLISH DICTIONARY, (5th ed. 1986): “‘Pono’ refers to that which is right, proper, or good, or exemplifies balance, goodness, morality, excellence, and well-being.”

¹⁰ Rubellite K. Johnson, *Religion Section of Native Hawaiians Study Commission Report* (Office of Hawaiian Affairs, February 1983) pp. 225–250; The conceptual framework for the *Ola* (life) Triangle – that stems from the *Lōkahi* (unity) Triangle – articulates Native Hawaiian spirituality by utilizing a triangle to show the necessity of unity and harmonious balance regarding the three bodies: mind, body, and spirit.

¹¹ It's imperative to recognize that although we are all human, our needs may not be the same. For Native Hawaiians, there are spiritual aspects of living that must be addressed to live a full life. Our cultural practices inform our spiritual beliefs and vice versa. This is not the same for non-Indigenous Peoples as their spiritual and cultural beliefs are often not one and the same. The result of this difference in beliefs means that colonization cannot and does not account for spirituality as being integral to living a life of well-being.

¹² Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004): Per Dr. Silva, the banning of the Native Hawaiian language and culture resulted in many Native Hawaiians being unable to read the expansive literature of resistance in our mother tongue that expressed heartfelt opposition against colonization: “Songs, poems, and stories with the potential for *kaona*, or ‘hidden meanings,’ presented ever greater opportunities to express anticolonial sentiments. People made use of these forms, and they created and maintained their national solidarity through [the] publication of these and more overtly political essays in newspapers...there is no access to this body of thought except through the Hawaiian language.”

¹³ Haunani-Kay Trask, *From A Native Daughter*, 2nd ed (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999).

¹⁴ *Id.* at 251.

commodification of our land, culture, and people, as well as the high number of Native Hawaiian women, girls, and *māhu* being forcibly trafficked in the sex trade in places like Waikīkī.¹⁵

As articulated by Dr. Lorinda Riley in *Ke ala i ka Mauiola: Native Hawaiian Youth Experiences with Historical Trauma*, “the traumatic effects of colonization, especially the forced relocation from land that sustained their [Native Hawaiian] life and health, have led to complex, interconnected health disparities seen today.”¹⁶ Dr. Riley shows how historical trauma in Native Hawaiians directly correlates to instances of substance use, depression, suicidality, as well as other mental health disparities at high rates.¹⁷ This is further “compounded...through persistent racism, microaggressions, and epigenetic expressions reflecting environmental trauma in genetic makeup.”¹⁸ To combat Native Hawaiian historical trauma, Dr. Riley notes the differences in the effect of historical trauma between individuals.¹⁹ This shows that even though we may experience similar effects of colonization as Native Hawaiians, every individual has a unique reaction that shapes how subsequent generations will inherit such trauma. The *ho’ōla* Dr. Riley suggests is cultural engagement and knowledge.²⁰

DECOLONIZATION

Cultural engagement and knowledge are both aspects of decolonization. Decolonization, as defined by Dr. Haunani-Kay Trask, is the “collective resistance to colonialism, including cultural assertions, efforts toward self-determination, and armed struggle.”²¹ At the heart of our resistance to colonialism is love – love for *‘āina*, for our culture, and for our *lāhui* including ancestors past and descendants to come. We are because of our *‘āina*, our culture, and our *lāhui* which means our survival is dependent upon the survival of all. While who we are as Native Hawaiians is innately political due to our subjugation by the United States, Dr. Trask also argues that it is psychological.²²

Colonialism in all its forms is indoctrination – indoctrination into white supremacy and our racialization, indoctrination into the hierarchies of race and the fallacy of our inherent inferiority, indoctrination into capitalism and the normalization of our commodification, and indoctrination into systemic oppression. This indoctrination works by shaping our beliefs and dictating our truth consciously and subconsciously. If we do conform to the system, in accordance with our indoctrination, we have no choice but to sacrifice ourselves. This is because the settler-state is innately at odds with our indigeneity as its purpose is our extinction instead of our preservation. Our indoctrination, therefore, works to make us complicit in our demise by colonizing our minds.²³

Cultural nationalism, Dr. Trask argues, becomes both a cultural and political assertion as it’s a crucial way to “fight cultural hegemony in the imperial enterprise.”²⁴ It is the assertion of culture in forms such as language revitalization that “seeks to preserve the core of a way of thinking and being that is uniquely Native.”²⁵ As our language shapes our relations through our uniquely Indigenous way of thinking and being, the attempt at defining “Native Hawaiian” by all but us has had a profound impact on our psyche. Decolonization then must also consider the effect of colonization on the mind.

DECOLONIZING THE MIND

Decolonizing the mind is the active unlearning of all indoctrination from colonization through the pursuit of knowledge, cultural and spiritual assertions, and lifelong healing that assists us in unearthing layers of ourselves as

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ Lorinda Riley, *Ke ala i ka Mauiola: Native Hawaiian Youth Experiences with Historical Trauma*, 34 AM. INDIAN L. REV. 123 (2010).

¹⁷ *Id.* at 1.

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.* at 27.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ Trask, *supra* note 13 at 251.

²² *Id.* at 42.

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.*

we become progressively liberated from the effect of colonization on our minds.²⁶ Decolonizing the mind *is* resistance to colonialism as it is the active undoing of the indoctrination continuously imposed on us as subjugated people. It is a choice we must reaffirm every day (sometimes many times throughout the day) as colonization in all its forms is always working to keep us bound from our light. An additional difficulty that arises is how to affirm our choice to free our minds without betraying our light. This is because a duality of “truth” often emerges – *the* truth and that of the colonizers.

The initial inclination upon understanding colonization is to immediately release all illusions and fallacies in favor of truth – the truth of historical accounts, the truth of systemic racism, and the truth of indigenous power. But as active participants in the colonial system, we are often forced to reconcile with colonized fiction as being *our* truth. Not only is such fiction imposed on us and others through indoctrination, but we are also vilified and scapegoated the moment we speak *the* truth. Our ability to survive becomes reliant on our capacity to retain all colonized fiction even as we simultaneously work to unearth the truth and choose our light. This is the paradox we are forced to contend with as we decolonize our minds.

While decolonizing the mind may seem like a response to colonization, especially within the construct of colonizer versus colonized, it should be more meaningfully understood as the rejection of all that we are not to embody our truth as Native Hawaiians. Our truth is our *’āina*, culture, and *lāhui*, and our kinship relationship to all. To decolonize the mind, therefore, is to walk the path of *ho ’ōla* to embody our truth by centering our well-being, as opposed to centering our relationship with the settler state.

If we recognize the *ho ’ōla* that comprises decolonization as being both a cultural and spiritual practice, we can begin to understand the decolonization of our mind as a form of healing. When coupled with the Native Hawaiian beliefs of *ho ’ōla* as healing the spirit as opposed to merely healing the physical, the act of decolonizing our mind becomes informed by the spiritual even more so than the physical. To receive the *ho ’ōla* of decolonization, and by extension the *ho ’ōla* to combat the colonization of our minds, we must be open to the spirituality that is innate to who we are as Native Hawaiians.

When we are sincerely open to the spiritual component of decolonization as much as the mental component, we begin to walk a path of *ho ’ōla* toward freedom.²⁷ This path toward freedom is innately an exercise of *ea* as its fundamental purpose is freedom from the indoctrination of colonialism in all its forms. It is on this path that we learn how to turn the bowl upside down so that the stones that impede our light can fall away. This is the path to becoming a light bearer.

THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF DECOLONIZING THE MIND AND SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION

While many discuss the journey of decolonizing the mind, there seldom seems to be any focus on *how* the journey begins. This could be because the impetus for conscious decolonization is unique to every person. Or, perhaps even more so telling, this could be because the journey often seems to start with a profound experience that forces us to confront the pain of compounded historical trauma. Yet, in mapping out the evolution of one’s spiritual growth, we can easily see the correlation between the decolonization of our minds with our spiritual evolution. It behooves us then to first consider our spiritual journey as Native Hawaiians because it may lend some understanding to how we can best progress forward in our journey to decolonizing the mind.

As discussed earlier, the three levels of self that are integral to Native Hawaiian health are the *kino*, *kino wailua*, and *’uhane*.²⁸ In other words, as explained by Rubellite Kawena Johnson, our *’uhane* is “the spirit that quickens life, personality, and consciousness in the *kino*” whereas the *kino wailua* “does not exist without the *’uhane*” as it

²⁶ In this context of decolonizing the mind, the pursuit of knowledge entails the building of ideology from the Native Hawaiian perspective, as well as from the perspective of other racialized peoples outside of the classroom. It involves the centering of our lived experiences and the centering of Native Hawaiian values.

²⁷ With every new generation, we become that much closer to liberation. Yet, due to systemic and structural racism, the extent to which we can be free will always be unduly constrained. Until the system is dismantled, we will always be subjugated and continuously indoctrinated into colonialism in all its forms. This does not mean that we cannot be free, but that we are stymied from reaching true liberation if the current systems and structures of power are maintained. Although the goal will always be true liberation, the gift of pursuing liberation in every generation is that we become a little freer than we were before albeit not the true liberation we innately deserve.

²⁸ Johnson, *supra* note 10.

is the “experience of the *‘uhane* while we live.”²⁹ It’s important to note the difference between the *kino wailua* and *‘uhane* as it not only informs burial rites but also shows the Native Hawaiian understanding of spirit as being “able to leave the body and reenter the body during the life of a person.”³⁰ The three levels of self are further expounded by the three *piko* or three spiritual centers that are fundamental aspects of Native Hawaiian identity.³¹

The three spiritual centers are the *manawa* or fontanelle, the *piko* or umbilicus, and *ma‘i* or genitals.³² These “fundamental aspects represent our connections to past, present, and future generations.”³³ While our *manawa* connects us to the past and to the *kūpuna*, the *piko* connects us to the present and the *ma‘i* connects us to the future, including all descendants. It is in our spiritual centers that our connections to others become more evident and why it’s so essential that the three levels of self remain *pono*. This is because to be in the state of *pono* not only refers to well-being or balance but also denotes the exhibition and enhancement of *mana*.

Whether born into a Native Hawaiian family that adheres to cultural beliefs and practices or not, the *mana* our ancestors passed on to us is an accumulation of ancestral power since time immemorial.³⁴ *Mana*, although often defined as supernatural divine power, is not static nor is there any English definition that is comparable to the cultural understanding of it. However, the inability of colonialism to recognize the existence of our *mana* does not render it obsolete. It still exists even now. If not properly exhibited, our *mana* may become destructive as our cultural practices were an integral part of remaining *pono* which allows us to maintain and thereby enhance our *mana*. This, in conjunction with systemic inequities and our compounding historical trauma, may provide some insight into why Native Hawaiians might choose substances as a form of coping. To be able to then maintain our *mana* once more, in the reclamation of our birthright, our *kūpuna* or ancestors may intervene.³⁵

Our *kūpuna* are typically seen as the Indigenous ancestors of our physical lineage. Our *‘ohana* or family is also comprised of *nā ‘aumākua* or family guardian spirits in addition to the *kūpuna* and *nā akua* or gods.³⁶ It is through our life experiences that we are forced to go inward to confront our wounds whether they be a product of our physical or spiritual lineages.³⁷ Our *kūpuna*, along with *nā ‘aumākua*, are the guides we rely on to navigate those life experiences. They bring to us what we need for our evolution, protect us in all ways, comfort us as we walk the path of *ho‘ōla*, and love us—their *mo‘opuna* or grandchild—unconditionally. It is during the incipient stages of our healing process, when we consciously make the choice to begin to decolonize our mind, that our *kūpuna* allow us a glimpse into the ever-present historical trauma from our ongoing colonization compounding even now.

This glimpse, a foreshadowing of what’s to come if we choose to continue to walk the path of *ho‘ōla*, is a gift. Because we don’t have any memories of what it feels like to *not* carry such trauma, we may not have ever known it was there or that it wasn’t all ours if not for this glimpse. Moreover, as a people literally born from our land, we also carry the pain and trauma of our *‘āina* that we may be asked to transmute. This is only an aspect of what the interconnectedness of all means for Native Hawaiians.

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ Crabbe, Nainoa, et al., *Mana Lāhui Kānaka* (Honolulu: Kamehameha Publishing, 2017).

³² *Id.* at 23.

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ Mary Kawena Pūku‘i, Lawrence Kalainaina Haertig & Catherine A. Lee, *Nānā i ke Kumu, Look to the Source*, Vol. 1 (Honolulu: Hui Hanai, 1972); *Mana* is not linear nor static which means it can be enhanced and also diminished.

³⁵ Although I utilize the word “reclamation,” I do so through the lens of unearthing that which has always been as opposed to the process of claiming back something that has been lost. I choose to utilize this lens of perspective as we can never be fully severed from our ancestors, our cultures, our lands, our languages, and anything else that colonization seeks for us to perceive as “lost.” That is the deception of white supremacy because it detracts from the innate power of us as Indigenous Peoples. Therefore, we need not repair a connection that has been severed but excavate our connection from all that colonization has done to hide it from us.

³⁶ Koko Willis & Pali Jae Lee, *Tales From the Night Rainbow* (Honolulu: Bess Press, 1994): “Help was given to us in many ways. Our spirit family – who knew the way of the light so well, and knew the power and the problem of the stones – they blessed us, surrounded us with love, their light, and gave us dreams to help us understand and to learn, watched us fall on our faces, helped us up, and started us on the pathway of light again, and again, and again.”

³⁷ *Id.* at 46: “We were taught also in things we had always known, but had not been taught. These were called *‘ohana* knowledge. These were things we had brought with us from other lifetimes. We studied ourselves and why we had returned at this special time and place. Each person’s lesson was different at this time. Each of us was her own teacher. We had to go into ourselves for every answer.”

DECOLONIZING THE MIND AS AN EXERCISE OF EA

In the interconnectedness of all is how our *kuleana* arises as a sacred, reciprocal obligation.³⁸ This is because our interconnectedness, as evinced by the three *piko*, is what assists us in understanding how we impact others and how others impact us. Because our “spirituality and even our mortality consist[s] of the mediation, negotiation, and actualization of *pono* and *kuleana* in daily life with respect to their effects on the mana of all” Native Hawaiians, we are motivated to heal for the betterment of the collective.³⁹ It is our love for those we are connected to – our culture, *ʻāina*, and *lāhui* – that motivates us to rise and choose our light. Yet, while our love can be and often is profoundly motivational, *ea* still enables us the free will to make that choice.

Ea encompasses our inherent right to determine our truth. This determination is essential to us as both a *lāhui* and as individuals because who we are as individuals is intrinsically tied to who we are as Native Hawaiians. We are one and the same. It is within this lens of understanding that our political and cultural sovereignty becomes irrevocably tied to the sovereignty of our minds

Political sovereignty pertains to the sovereign political unity of a nation-state with full legal status whereas cultural sovereignty pertains to sovereignty over culture, including all tangible and intangible aspects.⁴⁰ It is in our political and cultural assertions of *ea* that we actively fight settler narratives that seek to impose upon us fallacies of being that are anything but true. It is also how we can declare our choice to rise. As we rise to once more determine and embody our truth, we are then able to experience the fullness of our humanity. The evolution of our spirit, in alignment with our evolution of understanding the interconnectedness of all, is what brings us closer to experiencing the physical embodiment of all that we are. To fully experience the physical embodiment of being, we must heal enough to overturn our bowl of light to allow our light to be free. This is because the stones in our bowl, products of our indoctrination from colonization, take up space and limit our expansive capacity to feel. Our experience on earth then is woefully stymied if we don’t overturn our bowl to release the stones.

While it may seem like *ea* is the freedom to choose whether we’d like to overturn our bowl or not, *ea* in such a construction can only be applied if we have reclaimed enough of our culture to know our bowl exists yet healed enough to perceive its truth. Only then can the self-determination that flows from *ea* assist us in determining how to reclaim our bowl of perfect light. This is why decolonizing the mind is an exercise of *ea* – we must be free enough to perceive what it means to *be* free. Without this capacity, our indoctrination will continue to dictate our beliefs. In turn, our indoctrination then dictates our truth.

CONCLUSION

Native Hawaiians are inherently deserving of the return of all that has been stolen from us. Yet, whether it be our light or our capacity to feel, the return of what’s ours is now irrevocably tied to our path of *hoʻōla*. In our recognition of the choice we have to heal, we then exercise *ea*. Decolonizing the mind, as a cultural and spiritual practice, becomes how we reassert who we are by releasing the layers of indoctrination that seek to control us. In that way, decolonizing the mind is how we can be free now.

³⁸ Crabbe, Nainoa, et al., *supra* note 31 at 38; Just as *mana* is not static, nor is *kuleana* static: “An individual had multiple and simultaneous *kuleana* to the land, to his or her family, to the community, and to the gods. Fulfilling *kuleana* by acting in *pono* ways was considered an important way for Native Hawaiians to maintain and enhance mana. Failing to act in *pono* ways, or failing to fulfill a *kuleana*, would result in diminished mana. As such, much of the foundation of ancient Hawaiian spirituality and morality consisted of the mediation, negotiation, and actualization of *pono* and *kuleana* in daily life with respect to their effects on the mana of *kānaka*.”

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ Tsosie, *supra* note 8.