

sional government. Now to avoid any collision of armed forces and perhaps the loss of life, I do under this protest and impelled by said force, yield my authority until such time as the Government of the United States shall, upon the facts being presented to it, undo the action of its representatives and reinstate me in the authority which I claim as the constitutional sovereign of the Hawaiian Islands. [Kuykendall, vol. III, 1967]

The mood in Honolulu is somber tonight.

Today marked the death of the Hawaiian Kingdom. There are those who are overjoyed at this turn of events. There are those who weep at the thought of the American flag flying in place of the flag of the Kingdom of Hawaii. Whether the monarchy will be reinstated by Grover Cleveland, president of the United States, no one knows. Only time will tell. It has been a sad day for the Hawaiian people.

### Questions

1. What was the Committee of Safety?
2. What was the role of American Minister Stevens in the overthrow?
3. What evidence shows that Queen Lili'uokalani believed she would regain her throne?

### Queen Lili'uokalani and Lorrin Thurston

The following reading is presented not as a conversation but as two monologues expressing opposing views on the overthrow of the monarchy. The content of the reading is based on the autobiography of Queen Lili'uokalani and the memoirs of Lorrin Thurston, a Honolulu publisher and the leader of the Committee of Safety.

After you have read the opposing views, you will be asked to participate in a dramatic reading of the monologues.

**Thurston:** As I think over the events that led to the fall of the monarchy, I cannot but believe that it was the result of fate, foreordained from the beginning of things.

**Lili'uokalani:** The loss of the monarchy, the rightful guardian of the people, was not the "result of fate." It was the result of a plan, designed and carried out by a small group of men whose goal was to take absolute control of Hawaiian affairs.

**Thurston:** As early as July 1892, several others and I

discussed the subject of Hawaiian affairs, and we agreed that it was only a question of time until the Islands would have to be annexed to the United States; we formed an annexation league for that purpose.

**Lili'uokalani:** The annexationists were not satisfied with the prosperity they already had and the power they held within the Hawaiian government. Their push for annexation was merely another effort to enhance their own prosperity and gain a tighter hold on Hawaiian affairs.

**Thurston:** Certainly economic matters had an influence on our desire for annexation. If Hawai'i were part of the United States, there would be no more barriers to selling Hawai'i's sugar to our largest customer. We also knew that the queen wanted a new constitution.

**Lili'uokalani:** It is true that I wanted a new constitution. But I was not alone. Two-thirds of my people were dissatisfied with the Constitution of 1887, which was forced upon my brother King Kalākaua. That constitution, known as the Bayonet Constitution, took away power from both the monarchy and the Hawaiian people and put it in the hands of foreigners.

**Thurston:** We knew that the queen had evil designs and that we would have to do something to protect ourselves. Those of us concerned about Hawai'i's future could not stand by to watch as the freedom and prosperity for which we had worked was changed by the action of a single person

In 1892 the Annexation Club sent me to Washington to discuss the possibility of annexation. After we explained the situation, B. F. Stacy, secretary of the navy, advised us: "If conditions in Hawai'i compel you people to act as you have indicated, and you come to Washington with an annexation proposition, you will find an exceedingly sympathetic administration here." Of course, John Stevens, U.S. minister to the Hawaiian Kingdom, had long agreed that annexation was the logical step.

**Lili'uokalani:** Even the U.S. Minister John Stevens was influenced by the annexationists. As a diplomat, he was to foster a friendly, trusting relationship with the Hawaiian government. Instead, he often criticized the monarchy in public. I complained to the U.S. government about Stevens's attitude and conduct, but no action was taken.

**Thurston:** The people's moral sense was shocked by the actions of the queen.



Queen Lili'uokalani (Courtesy of Hawai'i State Archives)

**Lili'uokalani:** I was accused of signing into law a lottery bill. Yet the lottery bill had already been passed by the Legislature and the cabinet. According to the Constitution of 1887, I was obligated to sign all bills they approved. Still, I did favor the lottery bill. The profits would go into public works projects, such as railroads, which would have benefited everyone.

**Thurston:** The Reform party opposed the lottery bill. The party also opposed the queen's efforts on behalf of opium promoters.

**Lili'uokalani:** It is impossible to stop opium smuggling and the bribery and corruption it brings. So I thought it wise to try to control the trade instead. I followed the example of the British government and Queen Victoria.

**Thurston:** The queen was determined to use the opium and lottery promoters to gain support against the leaders of the Reform party. She was determined to drive them out of office so she could take total control.

**Lili'uokalani:** It is true that I wanted to give more power to the monarchy, and take away some of the powers of the cabinet and Legislature. But I also wanted to give the right to vote to my subjects, not to temporary residents. I wanted to restore some of the



Lorrin Thurston (Courtesy of Hawai'i State Archives)

ancient rites of my people. But supposing I had thought it wise to limit voting to those who were loyal to no other country. Is that different from the practice of other civilized nations on earth?

**Thurston:** It was with the noblest intent for the greatest ideals that we formed the Annexation Club. Our objective was to be ready to act quickly and intelligently should the queen decide to move against the constitution and revert to absolutism.

**Lili'uokalani:** Is there another country where a man can vote or seek political office without becoming a citizen, and then still be protected by foreign warships whenever he has a quarrel with the government under which he lives? Yet that is exactly what the Americans claimed, the right to do at Honolulu. They may have called themselves Hawaiians at one moment, but they called themselves Americans when it suited them later.

**Thurston:** It was Lili'uokalani's attempt to single-handedly abolish the Constitution of 1887 that finally pushed the opposition into irresistible force.

**Lili'uokalani:** The missionary party charged that I was unworthy to rule because by my own will alone I wanted to get rid of the Constitution of 1887. But the

constitutions of 1840, 1852, 1864, and 1887 were all granted by the authority of the kings, not by the Legislature, the cabinet, or the people. The Hawaiian throne does not exist separately from its people. It is the very essence of Hawaiian nationality. And as such, it is to be defended by every true Hawaiian until the time they themselves should wish to abolish it.

**Thurston:** We believed that at any moment the queen was likely to attempt to take matters into her own hands. In this event, we sought annexation to the United States. It was for the sake of maintaining law and order that we asked the United States Minister, John Stevens, to land forces from the U.S.S. *Boston*. Conditions had gone so far that we felt it impossible to maintain law and order, and we feared bloodshed.

**Lili'uokalani:** There was no threat of bloodshed, and there was no loss of law and order. Yet American troops were landed on Hawai'i's shores.

**Thurston:** We had only two choices: (1) to accept an authority who threatened to become an absolute ruler or (2) to revolt against that authority at the risk of losing Hawai'i's independence. I have long been an ardent supporter of independence for Hawai'i, but conditions had gone too far. Reluctantly, I was forced to resort to annexation.

**Lili'uokalani:** A small group of men, many of whom were missionary descendants, decided it was time for them to claim control over the Islands without the consent of the people.

**Thurston:** Much has been said about the participation of "mission boys," the sons and grandsons of American missionaries to Hawai'i, in the overthrow of the monarchy. That is true. I come within that classification. I have had a lifelong acquaintance with the mission boys, and a splendid body of men they were. These were the men who built up the country commercially, agriculturally, financially, and politically. Because of them, a civilized government was made possible in Hawai'i. Who could ask for men more qualified to decide the fate of the country than these educated and responsible citizens of Hawai'i? Politically, the majority of the people in Hawai'i are only children. They are not in a position to be consulted about their political destiny.

**Lili'uokalani:** Many of the mission boys seem to believe that the true representatives of Hawai'i are not

its native inhabitants, but the people who hold its commercial and material interests.

**Thurston:** The mission boys were among the most loyal of Hawaiian citizens, intensely proud of Hawaiian independence. Only when they faced the possibility of losing all they had worked for did they resort to securing their freedoms under the United States. If they had done any wrong, it was merely because they revered the American institutions of civil liberties and worked to have them extended to our confused country.

**Lili'uokalani:** The mission boys point to the noble causes of liberty and freedom. Yet they refuse to grant this liberty and freedom to the Hawaiian people, the very ones for whom they claim to have fought.

**Thurston:** We felt it our duty to bring the people out of the hands of a tyrannical and unreasonable ruler.

**Lili'uokalani:** It is for the Hawaiian people—the children of the soil—that I would give the last drop of my blood.

### **Activity: A Letter to the Editor**

Imagine that you are a citizen of Honolulu in 1893. Decide who you are and where your sympathies lie. You decide to write a letter to the editor of the local newspaper, expressing your views on the overthrow. Be sure to support your position with well-thought-out arguments.

Your letter should focus on at least three of the following points:

- Your attitudes toward Lili'uokalani's proposed constitution
- Your attitudes toward the Committee of Safety's right to overthrow the monarchy and set up a provisional government
- Your attitudes toward Lili'uokalani's yielding to the Provisional Government
- Your attitudes toward American Minister Stevens's recognition of the Provisional Government

When you finish, compare your letter with letters written by other members of your class.