

HO‘OMĀHŪ

Rethinking Gender in Māhū &
Native Hawaiian Queerness

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Leeward Community College

Hawai'i lawmaker looks to introduce bill similar to Florida's 'Don't Say Gay' law

China Bans Effeminate Men From TV

'Parents' Rights' bill in North Carolina has LGBTQ curriculum ban

The Trans Divide

Sex education bill lights up debate with talk about "pleasure," "gender identity"

The disagreement over scholarly debate about gender identity rages on.

Non-binary elementary school counselor sparks social media debate

Nearly half of LGBTQ youth seriously considered suicide, survey finds

May 5, 2022 · 6:46 PM ET

Homelessness linked to poor mental health among LGBTQ youth, report finds

Homeless LGBTQ youth are two to four times more likely to report depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicidal thoughts compared to housed LGBTQ youth.

Queer youth much likelier to have considered or attempted suicide during pandemic than their peers

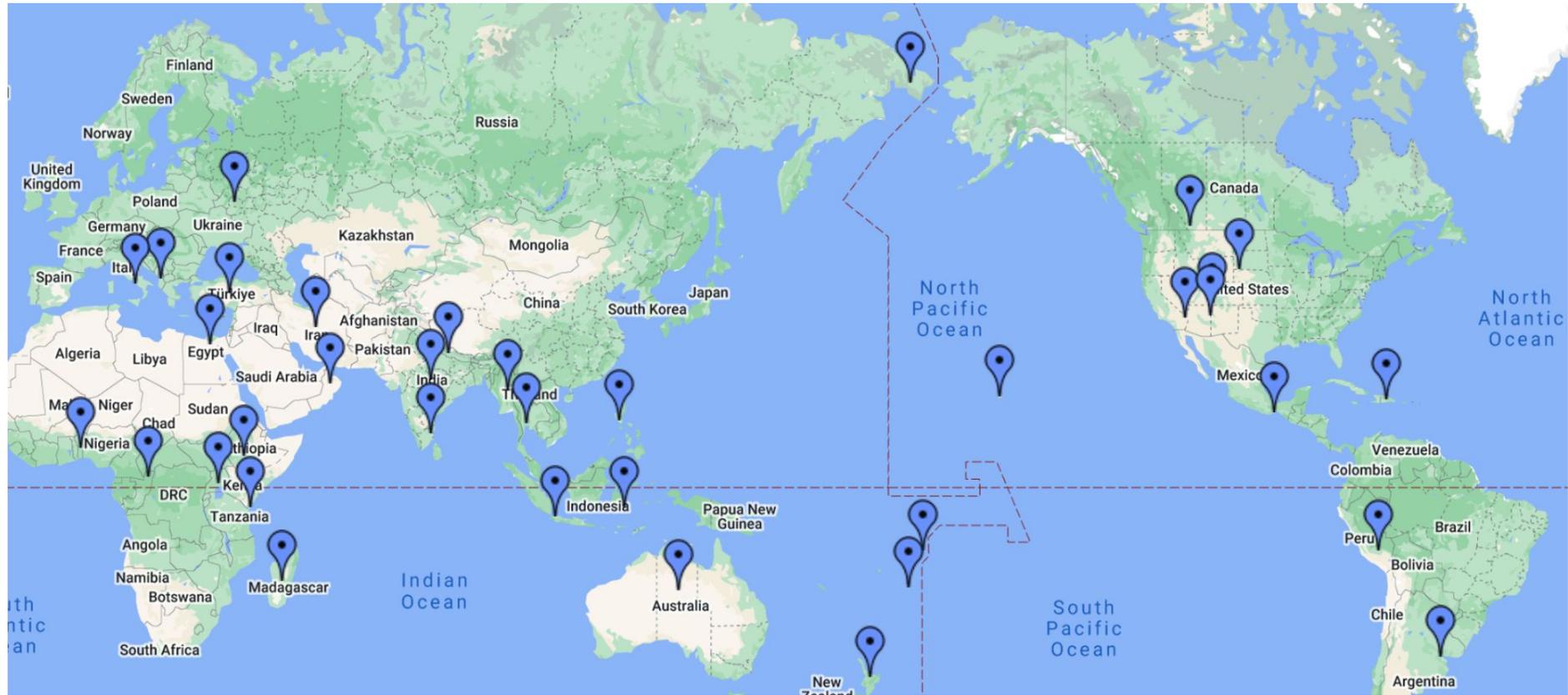
*I ka wā ma mua,
ka wā ma hope.*

The future is secured by the past.

GENDER ACROSS GLOBAL HISTORY

“ On nearly every continent, and for all of recorded history, thriving cultures have recognized, revered, and integrated more than two genders. ”

PBS



A Map of Gender-Diverse Cultures (PBS)

GENDER ACROSS GLOBAL LANGUAGES

“ Sexual diversity has historically been the *norm, not the exception*, among Indigenous peoples. Ancestral tongues prove it. ”

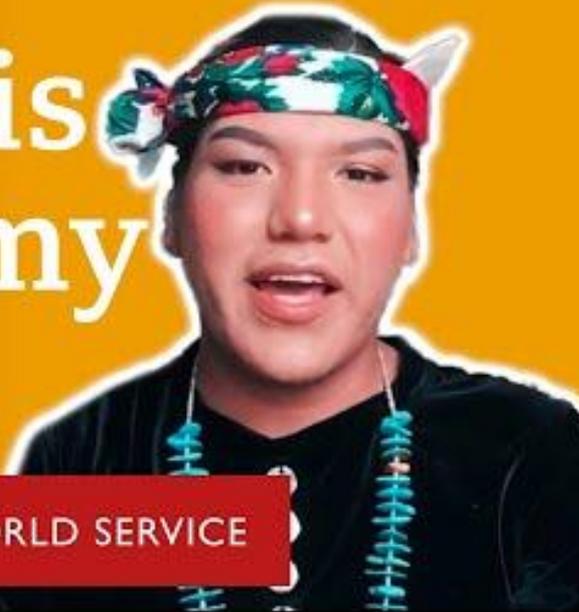
Picq & Tikuna

GENDER ACROSS GLOBAL LANGUAGES

Māhū Wakashu Hijra
Fa'afafine Babaylan
Avaka'ine Kathoey
Nàdleehé Insagoma
Asegi Okule
Winkte Travesti Mashoga
Quariwarmi

A stylized globe showing the Americas, positioned centrally behind the text.

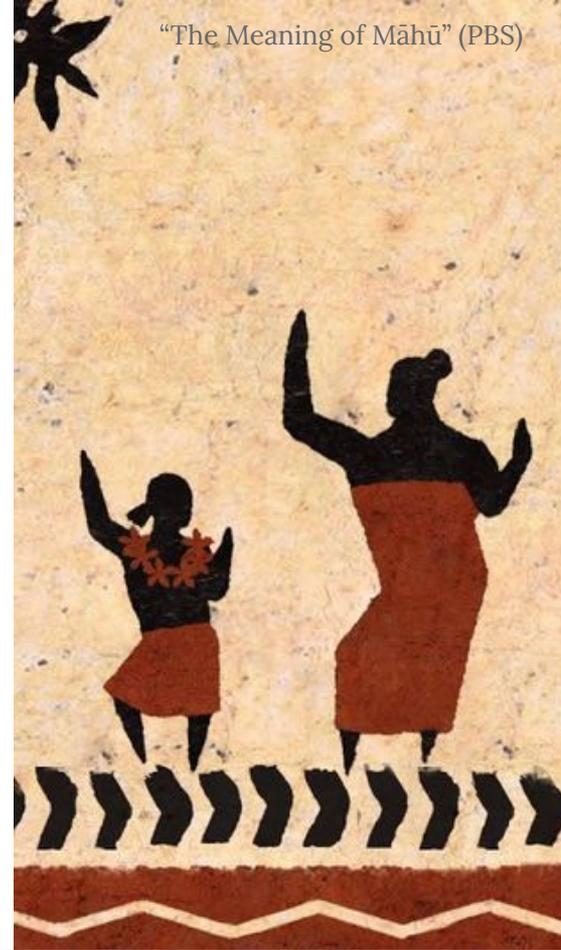
'Gender is
fluid in my
culture'



BBC NEWS | WORLD SERVICE

GENDER DIVERSITY

- Gender diversity is centuries-old
- Social role vs physical form (Alegre)
 - Power in traversing genders
- Integral to the fabric of society



COLONIZATION & DISEASE

- Colonial epidemic disease (Blakemore)
 - Suppressed population growth
 - Mass death
- Decline in population (Swanson)
- Diseases attributed to immorality (Blakemore)



COLONIZATION & CONTROL

- *Sever the roots: Fear and shame*
 - Insist practices are dangerous, evil
 - Impose “moral” alternatives



COLONIAL TRAUMA

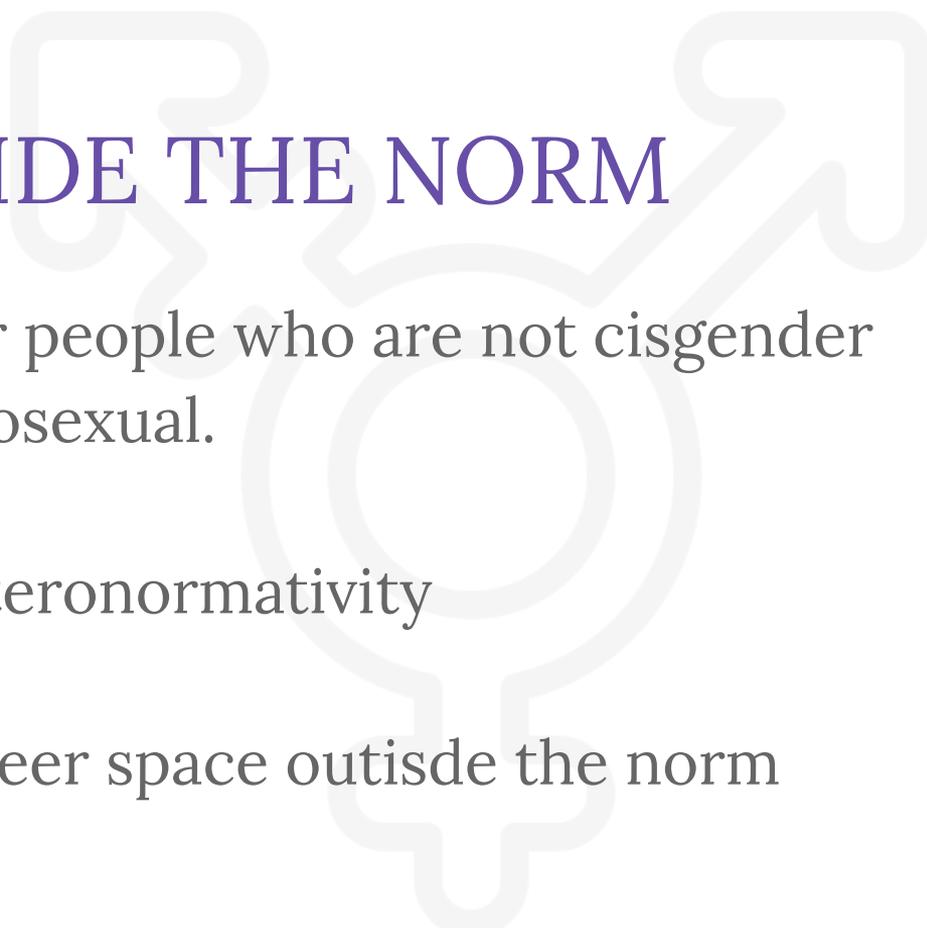
- Instilled fear of “queerness”
- Exclusion of groups
 - Māhū
- *Erase culture from history*



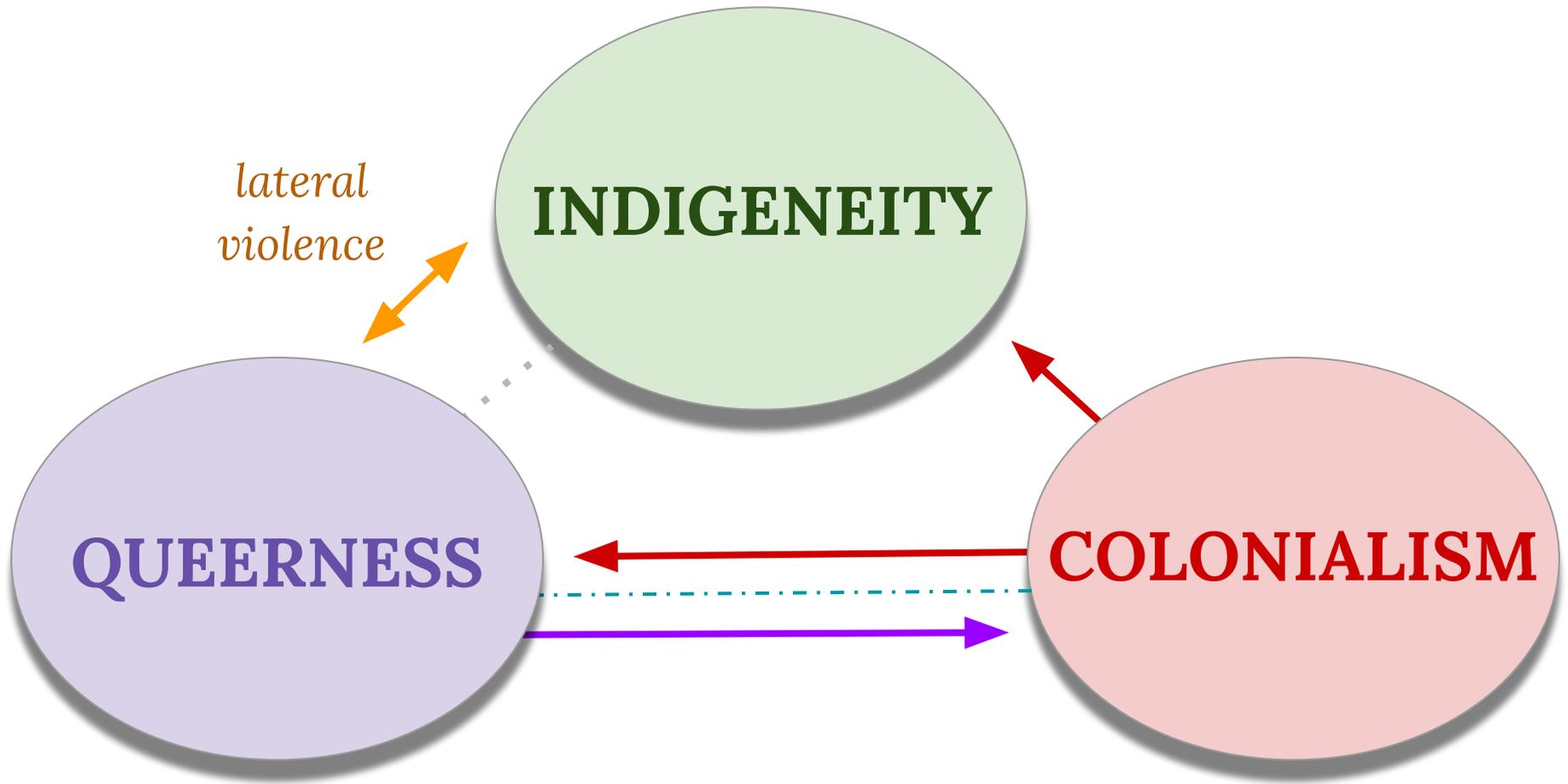
“MORAL” BOUNDS OF COLONIAL GENDER

- **Cisgender.** Term for someone who exclusively identifies as their **sex assigned at birth**.
- **Gender Binary.** A system of gender classification in which all people are characterized as **male or female**.
- **Heteronormativity.** Assumption that **heterosexuality** is the “default” or “correct” sexual orientation.

QUEERNESS: OUTSIDE THE NORM



- **QUEER.** Umbrella term for people who are not cisgender and/or who are not heterosexual.
 - Outside the binary, heteronormativity
 - Māhū “pushed” into queer space outside the norm



CULTURAL COLLISIONS, AGGRESSIONS, & TRAUMA

“ [Gender] is purely energetic. In that context, one who is physically male can vibrate female energy, and vice versa. That is where the real gender is. ”

Malidoma Somé



“ People tend to focus on the physical aspect.
[]...but that is rather shallow in terms of how we
acknowledge the person. **Their mindset, their
heart set, their emotions, their spirit, and who
they are. And so as kanaka, we are clear about
these things.** We know that there’s a wonderful
space, an in-between, to exist in. ”

Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu

MĀHŪ

“ *A Place In The Middle* ”

Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu

PONO

HINA

Mother, Wahine

Left side

West

“leaning down”

KŪ

Father, Kāne

Right side

East

“rising upright”

MĀHŪ

accept attributes of both kāne and wahine

Kāne

who strongly
express
Hina energy

Fluidity,
varying degrees
of **Kū** and **Hina**
energy

Wāhine

who strongly
express
Kū energy

“ When you find that place in yourself to acknowledge both male and female aspects within and accept the capacity to embrace both... that is where the māhū exists and true **liberation** happens. ”

Kaumakaiwa Kanaka'ole



SOCIAL ROLE: LE‘A, KULEANA

- LE‘A (*joy, pleasure*)
 - Fulfillment in life, self & others
 - Pursued through creativity & **kuleana**



“The Meaning of Māhū” (PBS)

MĀHŪ DESCRIBED: KULEANA

- *Duality: Kū and Hina energy*
- Teachers, priests, and healers
- Passed down traditions (Olores)
 - Hula and chant
 - Genealogies
 - Naming of keiki



“The Meaning of Māhū” (PBS)

I ka wā ma mua...

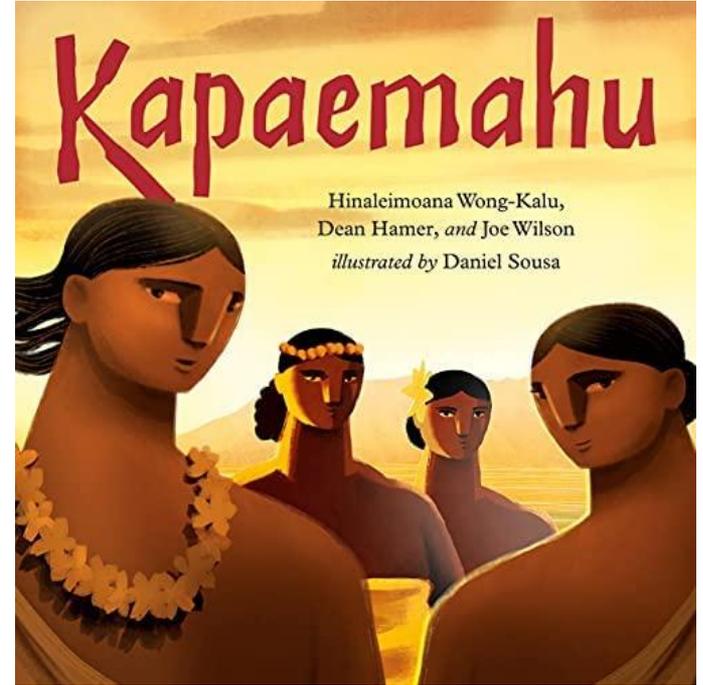
“ To be māhū is to know what māhū meant before you, or to know the māhū before you. ”

Ākea Kahikina



Kapaemahu & The Healer Stones

MĀHŪ & REDISCOVERY



MĀHŪ & DESCRIBING “THE MIDDLE”

- Māhūwahine, māhūkāne (Kumu Hina)
Transgender woman, transgender man
- Kāne-wahine, wahine-kāne (Kumu Hina)
Girl-boys, boy-girls
- Keka lua ‘ole, keka lua waena (Manalo-Camp)
Non-binary / no gender, intersex
- Queerness: LGBTQIA+, resistance

Internal Experience
(emotionally, spiritually, psychologically, culturally)

Ha'akāne

Ho'okāne

Ha'awahine

Ho'owahine

Take on externally what is felt internally



“ I was blessed with
this duality in my life.
I have more
responsibility in my
life. ”

Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu

HEALING

- *I ka wā ma mua*: Gender diversity as a centuries-old reality
- Colonization as a wide-reaching cultural trauma
- Decolonizing, embracing the indigenous and the queer, can recapture many ways to be human
- Heal how we think about gender

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION...

RESOURCES & READINGS

go.hawaii.edu/rHx