Note 3

Inclusion rather than exclusion:

“and” rather than “or” choices

The surest way to defeat a people is to divide a people against themselves.

We Hawaiians, whether identified by blood or by nationality, have been the victims of this division by the use of that small conjunction, “or”. We have been given a choice of our national identity as a “sovereign government within the U.S. government” or as an independent Hawaiian nation. This “or” conjunction has split communities, churches, civic organizations, informal relationships, families, and even individuals within themselves. It has divided our community into one or another camp, and as a result, we have lost track of the unity we must have as we move into our futures.

The conjunction “and” is an inclusive approach to the formation or reformation of our nation. It has the potential to welcome all of us under the same roof of Hawaiian sovereignty, broad enough to be respectful of one another’s view or belief. It can be a practical solution of unity.

How can the “and” conjunction work?

First, let us agree that we all operate from a basis of good faith. Second, we also operate from a common foundation of pono and on the same historical facts of illegality and bad conduct by the United States of America.

We all have practical realities as well as hear a common call of historical justice. Many of us want to retain, and are dependent on programs which exist or which are supported by programs and agencies of the State of Hawaii or the United States of America. We want to preserve and protect the Hawaiian Homestead Act, the continuation of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Bishop Estate/Kamehameha Schools, Queen Lili`uokalani Children’s Center, Federal Education and Library programs for Native Hawaiians, Social Security Benefits, Retirement benefits, etc. Yet, we also believe in the rightfulness of Hawaii independence, the restoration of our status of a free and independent Hawaiian nation, of the need for our control of these islands in order to stop the type of development which pushes our people out of appropriate shelters and becoming beggars in our own homeland.

Why must we deny from ourselves the reality we face in providing for ourselves and our families or that force which pulls our souls as Hawaiians to the reinstatement of our independent status as a full-fledged nation-state? Our reality is that we are both of these sides. A part of us want to retain what benefits and rights we have accrued under the U.S. colonial presence in our homeland. Another part of us hunger for the right to take our own course into the future as an independent nation.

By a simple switch to “and”, we can bring out people together and move forward united. We support a form of integration into the United States, and we support a Hawaiian independent nation. How we go about transitioning from one to the other is the challenge we need to meet. There are many opportunities for such a transitioning, once we switch our mind-set and think unity rather than division.