



Sean, Vaitoa, Teresia: Wellington 2003.

Teresia Teaiwa

In Memoriam

Jim Clifford

(posted on the UCSC History of Consciousness Department website)

Teresia Teaiwa, History of Consciousness PhD 2001, passed away on 21 March 2017. The cause was pancreatic cancer. Her untimely loss has devastated many friends and admirers. An enormous outpouring of love and support, from throughout Oceania and beyond, accompanied her final weeks. Her husband, Sean Mallon, and two sons, Manoa and Vaitoa, were with her in her last days.

Teresia was a prominent educator, academic innovator, and poet. She directed the Va'aomanū Pasifika unit (Pacific Studies and Samoan Studies) at Victoria University in Wellington, Aotearoa-New Zealand, the first and only program to offer a Ph.D. in Pacific Studies. (In this path-breaking project she has collaborated closely with April Henderson, History of Consciousness PhD 2007.)

Born in Honolulu and raised in Fiji, Teresia taught at the University of the South Pacific in Suva before moving to Wellington. Deeply concerned with Fijian culture and politics after a series of military coups, she strongly rejected all forms of ethnic absolutism. Her view of the world reflected a Pacific-centered internationalism. Her father is I-Kiribati (displaced to Fiji from the mine-devastated phosphate island of Banaba), and her mother African American. An understanding of the simultaneously rooted and mobile nature of islander histories and attachments permeated her scholarship, teaching, and creative writing.

An anti-nuclear activist, defender of West Papuan independence, and a critic of militarism, Teresia sustained many alliances and was a widely influential voice. She received prestigious academic fellowships and multiple teaching awards. Her poetry is widely published and appreciated.

A compendium of open access works can be found at:

<https://savageminds.org/2017/03/21/remembering-teresia-teaiwa-an-open-access-bibliography/>

In *History of Consciousness* Teresia played a central role in diversifying global feminisms through the Research Cluster for the Study of Women of Color in Collaboration and Conflict. She co-edited its publication, *Enunciating our Terms*, for the Center for Cultural Studies journal *Inscriptions*.

Teresia's dissertation, "Militarism, Tourism and the Native: Articulations in Oceania", rescued "the Native" from the simplifications of pastoral exoticism, nationalist apologetics, and postmodern condescension. It was an entirely original revision of the history and image of indigenous peoples in the light of experiences of travel and global entanglement. In this and subsequent writing, Teresia built on the work of Epele Hau'ofa, reconceiving the Pacific from the inside out. The region had long been oversimplified by Western exoticisms and in more recent military and touristic projections. Teresia refigured Oceania as a dynamic space, a native "cosmopolitanism." She explored how customary patterns of dwelling and traveling were being rearticulated in contemporary national and international contexts. Her approach to the lived "cultures of militarism and tourism" has been particularly important, probing specific personal investments and complex relations of power and reciprocity.

As chair of Teresia's thesis committee (the other members were Angela Davis and Barbara Epstein), I learned enormously from her insights, gentle prodding, and sense of humor. Her "style" was something unique. Teresia had charisma. At conferences she could address the most difficult points with political and analytic rigor, but always with a lightness of touch and a conversational eloquence that invited discussion.

A couple of weeks before she died, Teresia somehow found the energy to respond to a haiku by Matsuo Basho I had sent.

Wrapping dumplings in
bamboo leaves, with one finger
she tidies her hair

“Reminds me of the way my nurses balance blood taking with one hand, sometimes one finger...!”

Everyone who was touched by Teresia’s attentiveness, brilliance and grace will miss her immeasurably.

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If you would like to hear her voice I recommend:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lipupblZb6U>

And a good sample of her irreverent, loving manner can be found at:

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/372572>

For an overview of her book-in-progress, a complexly gendered analysis of the cultures of militarism:

<http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue37/teaiwa.htm>

We hope that as much of this work as possible can be edited and published before long.

Remarks by James Clifford: December 13th 2021. Launch for Teresia Teaiwa, *Sweat and Salt Water*, University of Hawaii Press, 2021.

I'm very, very happy to be part of this launch for *Sweat and Salt Water*. My thanks to its editors, Katarina, April, and Terrence for including me, and especially for assembling this exciting collection of Teresia's more "academic" (I use that word with many quotation marks!), her historical, analytic and political writings. We all look forward to the sequel.

Such a rich and varied collection. Teresia wrote for so many contexts and interlocutors, in varied accents. I thought I knew her work pretty well, but this book was full of surprises.

16 essays and three very relevant poems gathered here. And this doesn't include some important co-authored texts. I appreciate how the editors have created three interrelated sections which reveal the **complexity** of her thinking, her characteristic manner of grappling with tough, sometimes thorny, contradictory issues, in a thoughtful, always engaging way.

And the book's cover image. Arresting. This is *not* someone we can easily grasp or passively consume, but a person leaning forward, *asking something* from us. Challenging us. (Seated on a stony, non-idyllic, Pacific beach... It calls to mind a phrase by Stuart Hall, telegraphing Gramsci, a Marxist who Teresia evokes more than once in these pages: "the contradictory, stony ground of the present conjuncture.")

The book's first section: "Pacific Studies." Here I particularly appreciate the centrality Teresia gives to her teaching. She shows us the thought emerging out of dialogues. This involves making and remaking intellectual "genealogies"—NOT established authoritative canons, but traditions-in-the making, with students participating. The wonderful program in Pacific Studies she built in collaboration with April Henderson at U. Victoria Wellington, and now including Emelani Case (from whom we'll hear more in a moment). This program, is an open-form exploration of a vast and diverse space. Teresia thought of its seminars as collaborative voyaging canoes. (more in a moment on those metaphors!) Also in this book section: a wonderfully inventive meditation on location-in-movement, "Losing/Loosing the Edge." It probed the specific site at the edge of a continent, of an influential conference at UC Santa Cruz in 2000 (organized by Vince Diaz and Kehaulani Kauanui). Writing in the spirit of her dear friend and inspiration, Epili Hau'ofa, Teresia tracked the networks and travels that brought everyone to this cliff-top. A site whose overview urgently needed to be supplemented and corrected by perspectives from among the waves and beaches below. The local details. And, thinking at a different scale, we find the brilliant essay, "On Analogies,"—the Pacific as a problematic, but necessary model for thinking comparatively in global contexts.

The book's second section: "Militarism and Gender." An essay on Micronesian women (an ongoing Feminist concern), Teresia's famous "Bikini" essay, inaugurating her passionate advocacy for a nuclear free Pacific. And there are essays that record sustained grappling with her beloved, flawed, adopted homeland, Fiji. Indigeneity, for Teresia could NEVER be something innocent or pure—especially given the history and present articulations of militarism, masculinism, and chiefly tradition in Fiji. The coups of the late 80s were traumatic for Teresia. And they revealed the darker sides of indigenous nationalism. It seems to me that she always preferred "Native" (capitalized) to "Indigenous" perhaps precisely because it is a colonially entangled word, a legacy that must be remade in political practice, dis-and re-articulated. This inheritance could not be REPLACED by something more

authentic and deeper, that risks smoothing over the bad, formative centuries of colonization. With characteristic complexity, her feminist analysis of militarism didn't content itself with radical, "outside," critique, but worked with the constraints and potential of women's participation INSIDE the Fiji and British armies. She "stayed with the trouble," as my friend Donna Haraway would put it.

And the subtitle of her late essay, "What Makes Fiji Women Soldiers"--"context, context, context," invokes a historian's specificity. (Recall her graduate work in historical studies at UH (with David Hanlon and colleagues), and her loyal commitment to the Pacific History Association, where she served as President and Secretary.

The Third section, "Native Reflections." This section speaks most directly to the issues we discussed when she was a PhD student in History of Consciousness at UC Santa Cruz.

Teresia was a member of an amazing cohort of Native Pacific and islander grad students who gathered in our program. Vince Diaz came first, in 1986. He found a receptive environment and spread the word. Teresia followed a few years later, then, over the next decade, Kehaulani Kauanui, Pamela Kido, Heather Waldroup, Noelani Goodyear-Ka'opua, April Henderson, Michelle Erai. And closely allied: Joanne Barker (Lenape/Delaware Native American, who co-authored with Teresia). I've stressed elsewhere that this cohort was not planned and recruited by our program. It was an emerging intellectual and political network that discovered us. I, for one, felt less like an academic advisor, and more like a recruit. I was Teresia's thesis advisor, but she also worked importantly with Angela Davis, Barbara Epstein, and a dynamic research group of feminist/anti-colonial students and faculty: "The Women of Color in Conflict and Collaboration."

Being part of this context, working with Teresia on her dissertation, and becoming her dear friend opened my thinking immeasurably, and is one of the most precious gifts of my career as an intellectual.

I recall that I had difficulty “placing” Teresia. (That Fiji-Inflected voice, so subtle and precise, engaging, and tough when a political or ethical principle was at stake!). She transgressed, muddled, exceeded my identity-categories. This was a decade, the 1990s when “Indigenism” was emerging as a global presence. The dissertation chapters we discussed grappled with a multiply-relational, both grounded and cosmopolitan, rooted and routed, “Native.” (This was when she gave me Hau’ofa’s “Sea of Islands.”) At that time, Postcolonial theory was influential, with its recognition of “hybridity.” Teresia accepted its critiques of purity, and essences. Like the cultural-studies theorists of diaspora and creolization she rejected a “confined,” “localized” colonial subject. But she worried that the Native was being lost in these critiques of Nationalism and ethnic absolutism. She wanted to both lose and loose the Native—and that’s what she has done. (Losing/loosing collapsed in a single word: we can discover a poetic prose, throughout this book: Language whose orality and lightness keeps the formative structures and locations open and mobile.

Teresia loved metaphors, she used them to get off-center, and to go somewhere. My favorite example is her comment on the uses and dangers of “theory.” It comes from a paragraph that evokes her time in *History of Consciousness* working in a context that she tactfully remarked “might appear to have overdosed on theory.”

She wrote: "I do not like theory when it's used as a weapon. I especially dislike theory when it's used like a silencer on a gun. I prefer to see and use theory as a frame, a magnifying-glass, a key, a plow, a sail, an oar."

We'll be hearing more of Teresia the metaphor magician, the poet-theorist, in Volume Two... And I can't wait.

2018 conference at UC Santa Cruz: "Pacific Island Worlds, Oceanic Dis/Positions."

Talks published in *Pacific Arts* Vol. 22, No. 1 (2022)

Introduction by James Clifford and Stacy L. Kamehiro (excerpt)

In important ways, the 2018 gathering grew out of the "Native Pacific Cultural Studies on the Edge" symposium, also hosted by UC Santa Cruz, nearly two decades earlier, and the powerful swells of inquiry and critique emerging at that time. "Pacific Island Worlds" was dedicated to the memory of Teresia Teaiwa, a graduate of UCSC's History of Consciousness doctoral program (2001) who had passed away in 2017 and whose academic, activist, and creative work profoundly inspired Pacific Studies scholars and artists around the world. Born in Honolulu and raised in Fiji, Teresia taught at the University of the South Pacific in Suva before moving to Wellington. Deeply concerned with Fijian culture and politics after a series of military coups, she strongly rejected all forms of ethnic absolutism. Her view of the world reflected a Pacific-centered internationalism. Her father is I-Kiribati (displaced to Fiji from the mine-devastated phosphate island of Banaba), and her mother African American. An understanding of the simultaneously rooted and mobile nature of islander histories and attachments permeated her scholarship, teaching, and creative writing. "Native Pacific Cultural Studies on the Edge," crystallized this understanding.

Our introduction is a story of two conferences, moments, pauses, in an ongoing flow of historical, political, and intellectual activity. The anchoring dates, 2000 and 2018, are somewhat arbitrary markers for currents (and eddies) of change beginning in the 1980s and extending into an unfinished present.

2000

"Native Pacific Cultural Studies on the Edge" was organized by Vicente (Vince) M. Diaz and J. Kēhaulani Kauanui. It brought together established scholars, graduate students, activists and artists from across the Pacific to explore possibilities for an Oceanian cultural studies. Many threads link it with "Pacific Island Worlds: Transpacific Dis/Positions:" an affirmation of inventive, cosmopolitan forms of "indigeneity," a refusal to separate academic work from activism, and an openness to diverse aesthetic practices. Several individuals were active at both events: Jewel Block (formerly, Jewel Castro), Michele Erai, James Clifford, and most pervasively, Teresia Teaiwa, recently deceased and much missed.

A selection of papers from the first conference quickly appeared in *The Contemporary Pacific* (2001).ⁱ Diaz and Kauanui, both graduates from UCSC's History of Consciousness doctoral program, defined the event's focus on "native productions of indigeneity. We wanted to feature the edges of what is normally taken to be traditional native territory; in the face of diaspora and globalization, but without relinquishing the groundedness of

indigenous identity, politics, theory, method, and aesthetics.”ⁱⁱ This awareness of deep local attachments, simultaneously engaged with contemporary structures and possibilities, was a hallmark of the complex concept, and practice, of “indigeneity” that was emerging in the conference discussions.

At that time, Teresia Teaiwa was a PhD student in Santa Cruz. She belonged to an extraordinary group of younger intellectuals (Oceanian, Native American, International) who were working with multiple, sometimes contradictory, perspectives: Indigenous, diasporic, feminist, poetic, activist, scholarly, postcolonial . . . Her dissertation, *Militarism, Tourism and the Native: Articulations in Oceania*, rescued “natives” from the stereotypes of pastoral exoticism, nationalist apologetics, and postmodern condescension.ⁱⁱⁱ In her work, and that of her cohort, “Indigenous,” never meant “Nativist” in a national, exclusivist sense. At stake was a more open, relational figure, always both a dweller and a traveler. Throughout Teresia’s career as an artist, critical thinker and educator, she challenged dichotomies, exploring the tensions, crossings and dreams that make Oceania a dynamic old/new place.

Something that might be called “critical Indigenous studies” was taking shape at UC Santa Cruz, a development allied with, but distinct from, the ethnically-defined programs (“Hawaiian Studies, “Native American Studies,” “Black Studies” or “Chicano Studies”) that had formed in the 1970s and 80s. By 2000, a diverse group had gathered, attracted by a campus with a deep history of interdisciplinarity and a willingness to support activist scholarship. The History of Consciousness Program harbored a vibrant cluster of Native Pacific and Island-savvy PhD students. Vince Diaz was the first to arrive, in 1986, after studying Political Science at the University of Hawai’i, Mānoa. A few years later, Teresia, with an MA in Pacific History from the same institution, followed. Then, after a Fulbright in Aotearoa, Kēhaulani Kauanui. Over the next decade, others joined the mix: Noelani Goodyear Ka’ōpua, April Henderson, Michele Erai, Pamela Kido, Riet Delsing (in Anthropology), and Heather Waldroup. Joanne Barker (Lenape/Delaware) was a close ally. A bit later, David Delgado Shorter and Kim Christen wrote dissertations based on long-term alliances with Indigenous communities. The subsequent careers and many important publications of these individuals can be found with help from Google.

The work at UC Santa Cruz was not unique. It was part of wider movements, feminist, queer, and postcolonial. The Pacific cluster overlapped with a group of largely South Asian students in History of Consciousness devoted to the critical study of “colonial discourse.” An earlier conference, “Traveling Theories, Traveling Theorists,” had grappled with many of the issues of post-/neo-colonial location that would be explored a decade later in Indigenous/Pacific contexts.^{iv} Another ally at UC Santa Cruz was an emerging research cluster (and annual film festival) for “Women of Color in Collaboration and Conflict.” Feminism, “racial formations,” “the politics of location,” and “intersectionality” were in the air.

During the 1980s and 90s, Oceania was not well represented at UCSC. A “Center for South Pacific Studies” had recently folded.^v No faculty members in the humanities,

social sciences, or arts were pursuing active research on Island Pacific issues. This did not deter Vince, Teresia, and those who followed. They brought with them local knowledge and ramifying networks. What they sought in graduate school was freedom to make connections, an open theoretical and interdisciplinary context that could support their work without forcing it into established academic molds. They found this in History of Consciousness and its affiliated faculty.

James Clifford, Donna Haraway, Angela Davis, Barbara Epstein, Don Brenneis, Chris Connery, and others served as advisors and committee members, willing to listen and to offer critical guidance in areas outside their academic expertise. The Pacific Island cluster at UCSC was not a planned initiative. Faculty found themselves recruited, interpellated by social and intellectual projects they could not have anticipated. Students formed loose networks based on friendship, political solidarity, and a commitment to critical thinking—a search for scholarship with a difference.

In her contribution to the 2000 conference, “L(o)osing the Edge,” Teresia traced the formation of academic links at a series of meetings around the Pacific during the 1980s. One result was a “motley group of Hawaiian, Chamorro, Fijian, Indo-Fijian, Samoan, Micronesian, and Filipino Pacific Islanders . . . [quoting Vince Diaz,] ‘in constant motion with the tides of change and growth . . . [who have] caught different waves, all of us, only to find ourselves beached, temporarily, out here in Santa Cruz.’”^{vi} “*Out here in Santa Cruz*”: the US mainland was conceived, not as a center, but as a margin, a stopping place in a dynamic Oceanic world. Epeli Hau’ofa’s “sea of islands,” provided inspiration during these years.

“L(o)osing the Edge” was divided into two columns, a counterpoint. One evoked the recent gatherings and networks that had come together in the 2000 conference. The other reflected on the conference theme, “edges,” places of power and perspective, both in the Pacific region and in intellectual work. Traveling natives/mobile theorists had to negotiate diverse locations, embodied perspectives. Teresia traced her own movement from Hawai’i to Santa Cruz and History of Consciousness, a place where nativeness could be conceived in relation to various “countercolonial discourses” and racial/ethnic formations. Her time in Santa Cruz offered “an intellectual luxury, away from the immediacy of nationalist struggles.” While there, she could “afford complex and theoretical formulations.”^{vii} However, this intellectual stimulus and overview brought with it blindness. She evoked a Hawaiian proverb contrasting the distant view from a clifftop (*tapu*) with the intimate encounters down among particular ocean currents (*noa*). Teresia explained that leaving Santa Cruz after five years for Fiji and a position teaching at the University of the South Pacific positioned her at a different “edge,” a meeting place for diverse populations from all over the Pacific. There she learned, face-to-face, about “people and relationships,” different local histories and struggles. Something was lost and something gained in the move (which would not be her last). “For me, Fiji and Santa Cruz embody this complicated tension between the *tapu* and the *noa*, the clifftop and the face-to-face.”^{viii}

Pacific Studies, as she and April Henderson later developed it at Victoria University, Wellington, would mediate continually between these two locations: one of comparative, critical overview, the other of local affiliation and activist engagement. And the same complex vision now characterizes the “Indigenous Pacifics” series at University of Hawai‘i Press, edited by April and Noelani Goodyear Ka‘ōpua. In their series introduction they write:

Recognizing that histories of exchange within and beyond Oceania shape the lived experiences of Pacific Islanders, *Indigenous Pacifics* seeks to create a space for generative and sustained conversations between the independent and the still-occupied Pacific Islands, between Natives and non-Natives, between academics, artists, activists and other cultural knowledge producers, between the Pacific and other regions.^{ix}

A recent book in the series, by Emalani Case, *Everything Ancient Was Once New*, develops the resonant Hawaiian concept of *Kahiki*, at once an ancestral homeland and a pathway to life beyond island shores.^x It explores the personal experience of a “traveling native” moving from Hawai‘i to Aotearoa, grappling with diasporic challenges and opportunities, while sustained by *Kahiki*, a mobile, form-shifting sanctuary.

Here, in the 2018 conference, and in many other places, we encounter echoes from the mobile theorists, Indigenous and “postcolonial,” who gathered out on the Santa Cruz edge. Links to that moment can also be found in the first volume of Teresia’s selected works, *Sweat and Salt Water*, which recently appeared at University of Hawai‘i Press.^{xi} Reading early essays such as “L(o)osing the edge,” “bikinis and other s/pacific n/otions,” and “Yaquona/Yagoqu: Roots and Routes of a Displaced Native,” reminds us how words like “indigenous” and “native” can evoke mobilities and interconnections, relational forms of identity and sovereignty. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, who was part of the Santa Cruz conversation, has shown the emergence of contemporary indigeneity to be a multi-scaled, non-guaranteed, globalizing “project.”^{xii} Her account describes what was happening on the UC cliff-top: networks made of specific contacts, travels and affiliations.

At UC Santa Cruz in the 1990s and early 2000s “nativeness” was fashioned through relations with other decolonizing and liberatory discourses. An important context, the research cluster for “Women of Color in Collaboration and Conflict,” opened links between Island Pacific and Native American experiences of colonization. With Joanne Barker, Teresia co-authored “Native Information,” an experimental essay published in the occasional journal *Inscriptions--Enunciating our Terms: Women of Color in Collaboration and Conflict*.^{xiii} The essay reacted to a new visibility and normativity for Indians/Natives. It worked to make space for something more, a critical, subversive edge to the indigenous, and a sense of becoming. Refusing to be “native informants,”

authentic insiders, the authors offered an open-ended scrapbook of indigenous perspectives: “information” rewritten as “in-formation,” historical process.

[. . .]

ⁱ “Native Pacific Cultural Studies on the Edge,” a special issue of *The Contemporary Pacific* 13(2), 2001.

ⁱⁱ Vicente M. Diaz and J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, “Native Pacific Cultural Studies on the Edge,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 13(2), 2001, 315-6.

ⁱⁱⁱ Teresia Teaiwa, *Militarism, Tourism and the Native: Articulations in Oceania*, Ph.D. thesis, History of Consciousness, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2001.

^{iv} James Clifford and Vivek Dhareshwar (eds.), *Traveling Theories, Traveling Theorists* (Santa Cruz: University of California, Santa Cruz; Group for the Critical Study of Colonial Discourse; Center for Cultural Studies, 1989).

^v The Center for South Pacific Studies records and publications (1943–94) are housed at the University Archives, Special Collections, University of California, Santa Cruz.

^{vi} Teresia K. Teaiwa, “L(o)osing the Edge,” *The Contemporary Pacific*, 13(2), 2001, 349.

^{vii} *Ibid.*, 351.

^{viii} *Ibid.*, 353.

^{ix} Noelani Goodyear-Ka’ōpua and April K. Henderson, series description for “Indigenous Pacifics,” <https://uhpress.hawaii.edu/bookseries/indigenous-pacifics/>, accessed Feb. 28, 2022.

^x Emalani Case, *Everything Ancient Was once New: Indigenous Persistence from Hawai‘i to Kahiki* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2021).

^{xi} Teresia Kieuea Teaiwa, *Sweat and Salt Water: Selected Essays*, compiled and edited by Katerina Teaiwa, April K. Henderson, and Terence Wesley-Smith (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2021).

^{xii} Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, “Indigenous Voice,” in *Indigenous Experience Today*, ed. Marisol del la Cadena and Orin Starn (New York: Berg, 2007), 33–67.

^{xiii} joannemariebarker and Teresia Teaiwa, “Native InFormation,” in *Enunciating Our Terms: Women of Color in Collaboration and Conflict*, ed. Maria Ochoa and Teresia Teaiwa, *Inscriptions* 7, The Center for Cultural Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz, 1994: 16–41.