INTRODUCTION

After the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i, policies of colonization and assimilation systematically deprived Native Hawaiians of their language, culture, and identity. Because of this treatment, Native Hawaiians today are largely marginalized and suffer the worst socio-economic circumstances of any ethnic group in Hawai‘i. This story of colonization and assimilation is shared in many ways by indigenous peoples throughout the Pacific and the world.

Asian-Pacific Law & Policy Journal (APL&PJ) organized a symposium on February 24 and 25, 2005 at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa entitled “PROTECTING INDIGENOUS IDENTITIES: Struggles & Strategies Under International & Comparative Law” to reflect on the stories of such indigenous peoples. The symposium featured guest speakers Professor Rebecca Anita Tsosie and Maori Land Court Chief Judge Joe Williams, as well as a panel discussion centered on “Environmental vs. Development Interests: Effects on Indigenous Peoples in the Pacific Region.”

The following articles highlight Professor Tsosie’s keynote speech, Chief Judge Williams’ speech regarding colonization from across the Pacific, and Professor Melody Kapilialoha MacKenzie’s commentary about Native Hawaiians and the law.