



THE KINGDOM OF HAWAI‘I

From the desk of the King

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Honoring the Dakota 38+2: Reflection, Remembrance, and Sovereignty

Shared Histories and the Call to Remember

Across oceans and continents, we find ourselves united by the enduring bonds of history. The experiences of other nations echo in our hearts, their struggles and victories weaving a tapestry that transcends time and distance. On this beloved *‘āina*, we gather to listen with reverence to the voices of our relations, carried by the wind, and answer their call with deep compassion.

Harmony with Nature and Common Values

Our cultural foundation rests on harmony—with the land, with people, and with the divine. This belief extends beyond our community to our First Nations relatives, who also sought the return of their ancestral lands through colonial legal systems, though their efforts were met

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Nou ke Akua Ke Aupuni O Hawai‘i

with disappointment. Promises made in treaties with the United States often proved empty, written for appearance and later disregarded.

Commemorating the Dakota 38+2

Today, we honor the Dakota 38+2, who lost their lives for standing by their beliefs. President Abraham Lincoln could not prevent them from defending their starving and suffering people. Rather than providing relief, he authorized their execution. Their story endures as one of resilience; their memory is a sacred flame, *p̄hetá wówačhiŋ*, safeguarded across generations and kept alive by their descendants. Even here, on distant islands, their legacy reminds us that the breath of our ancestors endures.

The Dakota's Struggle and Memory

In 1862, the Dakota people rose up during the U.S.–Dakota War, not as rebels, but out of *wówačhiŋ th̄an̄ka*—a desperate determination to protect their children and elders from starvation caused by broken treaties and stolen lands. The United States withheld promised food and annuities, leaving the Dakota to endure winter unprepared.

Survival required resistance, as sovereign people must. In the aftermath, 303 Dakota men were subjected to rapid military trials—*iwán̄ka wówaŋspe šni*—without fairness, counsel, or their own language. President Lincoln commuted many sentences but approved the execution of 38 men. On *Čhaŋté Máza Wi* (Iron Heart Moon), December 26, 1862, these 38 were hanged together in Mankato, Minnesota—the largest mass execution in U.S. history. Two more, *Šakpé* (Shakopee) and *Wakáŋ Óžahan* (Medicine Bottle), were captured in Canada and executed in 1864. The Dakota 38+2 are remembered as *akíčhita* (warriors) who gave their lives for their people.

For the *Dakota Oyáte*, this is a living memory, recited in ceremonies and commemorated annually in the Dakota 38+2 Memorial Ride. Each winter, riders journey 330 miles from Lower Brule to Mankato, leading a *sunka wakhán̄* (spirit horse) with no rider, symbolizing the ancestors'



presence. This ride is not a protest, but a prayer—*wóčhekiye*—for healing, reconciliation, and the restoration of Dakota dignity and sovereignty.

The Dakota community heals by remembering together, honoring their ancestors, and teaching future generations that they descend from protectors, not rebels—*wóuŋspe wówačhiŋ thāŋkA*.

Parallels with Our Own Journey

As King of the Hawaiian Kingdom, I see our history mirrored in the story of the Dakota 38+2. Just as treaties with the Dakota were violated, so too were agreements with the Hawaiian Kingdom. In 1893, deception and force brought about the overthrow of Queen Lili'uokalani, leading to her imprisonment and the loss of our islands without the people's consent.

Where the Dakota were condemned and executed as if their sovereignty was irrelevant, the Hawaiian Kingdom was dismissed as obsolete, as if a nation could simply be erased. We, too, became strangers in our homeland, subject to foreign laws that claimed to uphold “the Rule of Law,” but were instead the impositions of those who took what was rightfully ours.

Yet neither the Dakota nor the Hawaiian people have disappeared. We endure, carrying the breath and mission of our ancestors—our *iwi kūpuna*—to restore what was wrongfully taken. The Dakota ride for their *akičhita*; we gather to honor our *ali 'i* and defend our sacred spaces. Our journeys unite us: sovereign peoples determined to reclaim their rightful place among nations.

The Way Toward Healing and Sovereignty

The remembrance of the Dakota 38+2 is not meant to spark resentment, but to encourage healing. Their annual ride teaches that reconciliation is rooted in truth—recognizing injustice, honoring the fallen, and keeping future generations in mind. This sacred act is echoed in the Hawaiian *lāhui*, as we revive our language, protect our *mauna*, and assert that our Kingdom endures.



True healing does not come from forgetting but from remembering with *čhaŋté wašté*—a good heart—justice, compassion, and faith that *Wakāŋ Thāŋka*, the Great Spirit, is with us.

Conclusion

May the Dakota 38+2 always be honored. Their sacrifice inspires Indigenous peoples seeking the path back to sovereignty. May the spirit of *Aloha* Walk alongside the *Dakota Oyáte* as we move forward together—not as remnants of history, but as living nations.

He inoa no nā iwi kūpuna — In the names of the ancestors.

Ua Mau ke Ea o ka 'Āina i ka Pono — The life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness.

Aloha Ke Akua,

Mahalo iā 'oe, e ka Makua Makua, no kāu aloha iā mākou a pau.

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