Injustices of Hawai’i

Thesis: Music is powerful.

Thesis Map: Songs such as “Living in a Sovereign Land,” “Couldn’t Take the Mana,” and “EA” are iconic representations of the injustice of the Hawaiian people.

I. “Living in a Sovereign Land”
   A. Injustices
   B. Message

II. “Couldn’t take Mana”
   A. Injustices
   B. Message

III. “EA”
   A. Injustices
   B. Message

Restated Thesis: “Living in a Sovereign Land,” “Couldn’t take the Mana,” and “EA” give an insightful look into the many injustices of the Hawaiian people.
Injustices of Hawai‘i

Music is powerful. It serves multiple purposes and touches each and every human being in a special way. It can bring joy, happiness, comfort, inspiration, and healing. It also can help to tell a mo‘olelo, or story, which for the Hawaiian culture, is very important. Songs such as “Living in a Sovereign Land,” “ Couldn’t Take the Mana,” and “EA” are iconic representations of the injustice of the Hawaiian people.

One of the most notable Hawaiian artists to vocalize about the oppression of his people is the legendary Israel Kamakawiwo‘ole. He co-wrote “Living in a Sovereign Land” and performed it with the Hawaiian Style Band, still an extremely beloved mele (song) about the blatant robbery of Hawaiian lands. With his enchanting voice, he sings about coming together for the future generations. He pleads, “What’s been taken must be returned. Give our children what they deserve!” referring to the overthrow of the Hawaiian kingdom and restricting the practices of Native Hawaiian culture. With this mele, he pushes for his people to do what is right for them, for the land, and especially for the keiki (children).

Another important individual fighting to protect the Hawaiian culture is Mana Kaleilani Caceres, who penned the popular hit, “Couldn’t Take the Mana.” He talks about desecrating sacred lands just to build more roads, freeways, and hotels. He repeatedly mentions how they (the United States government) took everything from the Hawaiian people, but “they couldn’t Last N To highlight injustice. IZ sings this song, painting a painful image about the overthrow of the Hawaiian kingdom, gentrification, and defeat.
take the mana,” which is a divine or supernatural power one possesses. Through this song, Caceres proves that although the Hawaiian people have lost a lot, they still have their mana, and that alone, is a victory worth remembering. It also continues to bring renewed pride and hope for Native Hawaiians today.

Possibly the most controversial song relating to Hawaiian activism is “EA” by a group known as Sudden Rush. “EA,” which means sovereignty and independence is passionately chanted throughout the song, reinforcing exactly what it is Native Hawaiians truly want. They intensely speak of many wrongdoings, such as the destruction of sacred heiaus and idiotic distribution of Hawaiian lands. Like many others, they want to know “where the justice went,” and angrily state that the “lack of compensation in insufficient.” Verse after verse, their passionate calling for rectitude promotes a conscious awareness for Native Hawaiians to fight for what is rightfully theirs.

“Living in a Sovereign Land,” “Couldn’t Take the Mana,” and “EA” give an insightful look into the many injustices of the Hawaiian people. The theft and desecration of their lands and the suppression of the people needed to be voiced and spoken of. The lack of integrity and reparation is abominable, but no matter what, the resilient and unyielding relentlessness of the Hawaiian people will continue on. “A ‘ohe pu’u ki’eki’e ke ho’a’o ‘ia e pi’i.” No cliff is so tall that it cannot be scaled. No problem is too great when one tries hard to solve it.”