Kapitani was seething with fury.

This dark-skinned man—and a number of his comrades—had been seized from his homeland at the behest of a U.S. national, Achilles Underwood, and taken to labor like slaves on a plantation. He and his comrades had been subject to frequent floggings, "often for the most trifling thing." The tipping point arrived when they were placed in a small house, "about six feet by eight feet, the floor having been covered with chopped branches of lemon and orange trees and so full that there was no room for any of them to lie down, except upon the thorny sticks, and [they] were kept there for four days, locked in, and never allowed outside for any purpose and [had] a drink of water given them twice a day. The outside of the house was laid thick with lemon branches, so that no one could approach and pass anything through the walls or roof to the imprisoned."

It was Underwood’s misfortune to approach this torture chamber just as Kapitani’s patience had snapped. Somehow this laborer was able to grab an axe, then “felled Underwood to the ground . . . struck him three times and most of those standing round had a blow at him, [then] they carried his lifeless body into the house and liberated their imprisoned fellows.” Strikingly, even those most close to the deceased swore that he was a cruel master. Referring to Kapitani’s story, his widow swore that “every word of it [was] true. . . . She had often warned her husband that someday they (the laborers) would retaliate upon him for his cruelty to them and cook and eat him.” Even Underwood’s son, Elias, “gave evidence of the cruel treatment inflicted on the prisoner and the other laborers.”

Where and when did this inhumanity—involving the familiar figures of the exploited dark-skinned and the heartlessly calloused melanin deficient—occur? The U.S. South before 1861? Brazil before 1888? No, this nasty event took place after the U.S. Civil War in Fiji, the South Seas archipelago that for the previous decades leading up to this 1871 murder had been subject to keen
influence from neighbors as diverse as Australia and Hawaii—not to mention the home of Achilles Underwood: the United States.

The writer Thomas Dunbabin has observed sagely that when “Abraham Lincoln entered reluctantly into the Civil War that was to end in the freeing of slaves in the United States, he never dreamed that that very war was by providing a market for labor of South Sea Islanders to give a new impulse to blackbirding [slave-trading] in the Pacific.” That is, the conflict in the U.S. South created opportunities for competitors who sought to displace the Confederates in the lucrative cotton and sugar markets in particular. Fiji and Queensland, Australia, were the major sites for this rise of bonded plantation labor.

“It is a remarkable thing,” commented one Australian cleric in wonder, “that just in the decade of the terrible American Civil War (1860–1870), which resulted in the emancipation of the last [sic] of the African slaves, the traffic in Papuan savages arose. It is as if the hideous fiend expelled reluctant from the American soil in the throes of a civil war in which 800,000 men [sic] perished, and swept out into the ocean by that overflowing sea of blood, had been cast upon the Australian shores, and eternal exile from America and the West Indies, found a cordial welcome and a congenial home in Queensland and the Fijis.”

According to one study, blackbirding, as this practice of luring Melanesians and Polynesians to toil for next to nothing was called, occurred between 1863–1904 and involved 61,610 people, mostly men but also some women and children. Another study estimates that 62,000 Pacific Islanders went to Queensland and at least 22,000 to Fiji—though others see these figures as rather low. For example, one analyst asserts, “From first to last over 100,000 blackbirds must have been taken from the islands of the Western Pacific. Sixty thousand were carried to Queensland alone.”

This abhorrent practice was an aspect of a time when the darkest skinned virtually worldwide were in jeopardy, capable of being snatched by whatever opportunistic navigator sailed into a port with the idea of transporting captives to a distant clime. This color coding was reflected in the very term “blackbirding,” which was said to derive from the custom of raiders going ashore at night clothed entirely in black. Though the Pacific islands were, for the most part, quite small, they were spread over a huge area, which at once contributed to their devastation in a way that challenges the worst depredations of the African Slave Trade and complicated the ability to apprehend the perpetrators. After all, “the first great fact of the Pacific Ocean is its enormousness. In area it occupies seventy million square miles, about one-third of the earth’s surface. It is the planet’s dominant feature.” The Pacific is 25 percent larger than all the
world’s land masses combined; thus, it can be said that events in this region drive the fate of the planet.

Of course, transporting bonded labor to distant climes was nothing new—even in the Pacific before the Civil War. European trading companies in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and even as late as the nineteenth century “transported a not insignificant number of African slaves into Asia, particularly into India and southwest Asia.” Madagascar slaves were also shipped to India and the East Indies during the high tide of the African Slave Trade. Londoners were surprised to find in their midst in 1820 two Hawaiian chiefs who had been blackballed, or “taken by an American schooner which sailed off with them to California,” and “after some time, during which they worked as slaves, an American captain, who wanted hands, was accommodated with the two warriors” before dumping them in London. A sailor reported in 1816 that the Easter Island natives’ hostility toward him was traceable to the theft eleven years before of ten women and twelve men by a shipmaster who needed help with his sealing operation. Then, U.S. nationals were instrumental in the propelling of the horrendous Peruvian Slave Trade in Polynesia as the Civil War was unfolding. It was as if the darkest skinned were entrapped in a cruel labor game of musical chairs, subject to being moved from one corner of the planet to another at the whim of their supposed superiors.

But, strikingly, a number of these same U.S. nationals often from the vanquished South, were to go on to play pivotal roles in the construction of a new kind of slavery in Fiji and Queensland, Australia. The magnitude of their role outweighed the size of their presence. Months after the ignominious Confederate surrender in April 1865, the British consul reported that there were 350 white settlers currently living in Fiji: 230 British, 70 U.S. citizens, 30 Germans and Scandinavians, and 20 of other ethnicities. These relatively sparse numbers should not obscure the importance of their presence because they were the “racial Leninists” in Fiji and the region, pioneering in developing forms of organization that had worked so well in their homeland as they took on the most intractable of tasks presented by colonialism. Like the Bolsheviks, they were a minority—but this simple term could only mask their potency. Moreover, the United States was a more sincere believer in “whiteness” than, say, their British counterparts, who were more sincere believers in monarchy and the priority of “English-ness” and the detritus of feudalism (e.g., a proliferation of earls, dukes, and the like). One post-U.S. Civil War visitor to Fiji noted how well known it was that “numbers of English in Levuka call themselves American subjects, merely in order to obtain the better protection which that country, rightly or not, is supposed to extend to her citizens”—not
subjects; it was felt that only titled royalty would receive the benedictions of London’s envoys. One “large landowner actually left the group for some time and resided in the United States, in order to qualify for American citizenship, and thus to vindicate certain rights of ownership which had been grossly violated by the chief of the district in which his property lay. . . . [This] decisive step promised to be successful, for . . . a vessel-of-war [was soon to] be dispatched from San Francisco to Levuka with the express object of enquiring into his claims.” Such gestures provided a wider basis for the United States’ imperial project, as it weakened the legitimacy of its chief rival in London. Consequently, it was not shocking when in hotly contested Fiji in February 1870, a self-proclaimed Anglo-American—“an Englishman born and brought up”—expressed the “fervent hope [that] England [would] leave [them] alone.” Why? “New Zealand,” the Anglo-American said, “and its miserable example may be a warning to us. British rule, indeed, perish the thought!” London was not simply aggressive enough in ousting the indigenes. Had not Britain pressed the then-nascent North American revolutionaries to curtail their seizures of the indigenes’ land, thus sparking London’s own ouster? Perhaps a similar process was needed in the Pacific, he thought, by dint of a “great Australasian federation” or having “an American flag hoisted.”

London’s man in the region in the late nineteenth century, Sir Arthur Gordon, was berated by a group of Euro-Australasians. This almighty bureaucrat with his “thin, lantern jaws” graced by a scornful expression and beard seemed to believe that all white men in the South Seas were “murderers and rogues and that every Native [was] an innocent, peaceful child of nature.” Europeans in New Zealand and Australia, it was said with feeling, “have had to force their way as pioneers among savage and semi-savage races . . . extending England’s rule by rough means, perhaps, but rough work had to be done and men were needed to do it and men stepped forward.” As in North America, London’s attempt to restrain colonists from further assaults on indigenes was not accepted blithely by these invaders and, strikingly, as in the late eighteenth century, this led to a further boost for Euro-Americans who were not as restrained. Hence, in 1870 an Auckland organ chortled that “the American is the flag which would be most warmly welcomed by settlers of all nationalities here.”

Thus, the Ku Klux Klan had arisen in Fiji at the same time that Achilles Underwood was meeting a sad fate. As one analyst put it in 1870, “there is a small party indeed . . . which I may fairly call the American party, that objects altogether to dealing with the ‘nigger’ on terms of equality. They were, and are, for carrying matters with a very high hand.” This “American party” took on the difficult task of routing the indigenes who were not prone to accept ex-
appropriation of their land and second-class status in their homeland. Later this KKK chapter was transformed into the more respectable sounding British Subjects Mutual Protection Society\textsuperscript{21}—though this bow to the more tender sensibilities of the colonial power in Fiji cannot elide the point that subjugating the indigenous involved the kind of tactics honed in the U.S. South. The tactics mirrored the men, as the South Seas—from at least the time of the settling of the colonies of Australia in the eighteenth century—had long been a dumping ground for the most incorrigible cutthroats.\textsuperscript{22} The United States being a major whaling nation also contributed to a disproportionate presence of its nationals in the region, men who had “been turned ashore from whaling-ships” or otherwise stranded or dumped on South Sea Islands for various reasons.\textsuperscript{23} This was part of “an invasion by bestial scoundrels, including escaped convicts, licentious and ignorant,” a bunch of “human outcasts who began the diabolical trade in human beings and continued it until their outrages compelled effective intervention.”\textsuperscript{24} Queensland also witnessed the presence of U.S. nationals. In fact as bonded labor arose in the South Seas, this trend was helped along mightily by a kind of White Pacific/White Atlantic of planters who were instrumental in developing this new regime. Thus, the area near Brisbane contained former West Indian planters from Jamaica, Demerara, St. Kitts, while “Robert Muir of Beenleigh came from Louisiana” and the cosmopolitan John Ewen Davidson had “learnt his avocation in Demerara, Jamaica, Mauritius, Honolulu and Louisiana before embarking on operations in Queensland.”\textsuperscript{25}

In short, the movement of U.S. nationals westward did not end with the “closing” of the frontier on the North American mainland. Of course, “the frontier impulse and the imperial impulse were related in source and performance,” rendering impotent a meaningful distinction between the two.\textsuperscript{26} Thus as the nineteenth century proceeded toward its end, U.S. nationals continued moving toward the sun, traversing the defining region of the planet—the Pacific Ocean—often engaging in unsavory practices that had been first imposed on their native soil at the cost of blood and treasure. Their particular skill in the praxis of brutality served their nation well as the early stages of imperialism mimicked the early stages of the settling of the United States itself.

At this juncture, “despite the great distance between California and Australia, San Francisco was just as far away from America’s East [Coast] ports (by way of Cape Horn) as from Sydney.”\textsuperscript{27} Sydney was better able to supply California in the mid-nineteenth century than New York or London.\textsuperscript{28} And, as the Australian colonies developed, so did California.\textsuperscript{29}

An early U.S. explorer in the region, Charles Wilkes, observed more than
170 years ago that the West Coast was slated to “keep up an intercourse with the whole of Polynesia, as well as the countries of South America on the one side and China, the Philippines, New Holland and New Zealand on the other. Among the others, before many years may be included Japan.” Wilkes’ words proved prescient when the first American armed intervention in Asia took place in the 1830s in Sumatra.

As such, it is well to seek to understand what is now the U.S. West in relation to the Pacific and not just to the region east of the Mississippi River, particularly in contemplating the matter of race. Thus, the White Australia Policy arose as “similar policies began at much the same time in places of much the same character: British Columbia, California, Oregon, New Zealand” and for much the same reasons, though “studies of restriction in all these places have too often confined their attention to one country, have peered and pottered and wondered at local minutiae, sometimes becoming lost in intricate and heated debates about origins or procedures.” The point is that similar currents were coursing throughout the Pacific Basin helping to create commonalities between regions under the rule of various sovereigns.

Hawaii, under sovereign indigenous rule for much of the nineteenth century, was the strategic jewel in this quest. The fact that it was then ruled by a monarchy that emulated—like its flag—the modernity of Great Britain was seen as a critical impediment to overcome. “It is not practicable for any trans-Pacific country to invade our country,” said the leading U.S. naval theorist, A.T. Mahan, “without occupying Hawaii as a base. . . . The main reason why Hawaii is a strategical [sic] point of value to the United States is that the Pacific is so wide that battleships cannot cross it from any foreign naval station to the Pacific Coast without re-coaling, and there is no place to re-coal except Hawaii.”

Hawaii was viewed as the foundation for Washington’s westward thrust. It was Lincoln’s Secretary of State, William Seward of New York, who shortly after the Civil War uttered a prophecy that his compatriots sought to fulfill: “The Pacific Ocean,” he began portentously, “its shores, its islands and the vast regions beyond, will become the chief theatre of events in the world’s great hereafter.” Europe, he thought, “would ultimately sink in importance,” by way of contrast. After all, two-fifths of the world was the Pacific and its size was “more than two and one-third times that of [the] Atlantic, with all its tributary seas.”

The Pacific was where the frontier’s closing encountered the dawning of the new age of imperialism: Hawaii—annexed infamously by the United States in the 1890s as the Kingdom had been seeking to knock together a re-
gional confederation that would have thwarted the plans of the major powers, including the United States—was the epicenter of this brutal confluence. It was in 1898 that Commodore George W. Melville, Chief Engineer of the Navy, detailed Hawaii’s strategic value—the “Gibraltar of the Pacific” bespeckling the sea-lanes that led to the West Coast while it served to bring U.S. outposts two thousand miles closer to Asia, the site of the bulk of the planet’s population. In a sense, the discovery of the Pacific’s importance was related to the closing of the frontier. “In the year 1830,” said Melville, “not more than 500 men of Anglo-Saxon race [were] west of the Sierra Nevada on the continental shore; much of the island territory of the South Seas was little known and yet unclaimed and as to Australia, not until 1845 was [the idea refuted] that there existed within its borders a great inland sea.”

The movement westward was occurring as the South Sea Islands were being explored and Australian indigenes were under siege in a manner not unlike that of their North American counterparts: those of the U.S. West were in an advantageous position to play key roles in these two crucial and virtually simultaneous developments—the frontier’s closing in their fatherland and the dawning of U.S. imperialism in the Pacific.

Suggestive of this critical linkage was that the transcontinental railroad, which moved settlers and troops into previously contested territory, also “opened a new era for the islands of the Southern Sea. The great through route to Japan, China, New Zealand and Australia via San Francisco [was] now an accomplished and very successful fact.”

There was also a binding linkage between the United States, the Kingdom of Hawaii, and the colonies of Australia in the nineteenth century—a connection that mirrors the structure of this book. In 1864 as the Civil War was raging, Secretary of State William Seward was informed that the New South Wales government was eagerly awaiting the completion of the Pacific Railway so that they could establish a direct mail line of steamers between Sydney and San Francisco, touching at the Sandwich Islands. This was a trade route, a migration route, and thus, a political route.

Indeed, it was as if Washington kept one eye peeled on the Pacific even as it was steamrolling westward over indigenous Americans. According to scholar C. Harley Grattan, “Citizens of the United States have played an active role in Pacific Basin affairs from the earliest years of the Republic. Save omnipresent Europe, no area of the outside world has persistently held their interest, not even South America, nor has any external area, again save Europe, played a larger role in the thinking of Americans about the national future.”

Military and geopolitical considerations were not the only reason the
Pacific became increasingly prominent at the end of the nineteenth century. Overproduction was a hallmark of U.S. woes. Surplus products from factories and farms glutted the home market, sparking an economic crisis, widespread unemployment, and unrest. Secretary of State James Blaine, presidential hopeful and “architect of empire,” was not alone in declaring that foreign market expansion was one way to “guarantee economic prosperity and social peace.” The leading Maine republican came to believe that overseas markets were not just necessary but crucial to preserving the American system. The Pacific contained island stepping stones leading inexorably to the most populous market—Asia. Consequently, between 1821 and 1896 the United States exported only about 5 percent of its goods to Oceania and Asia—a figure that jumped to 35 percent by World War II, a conflict the United States entered after Hawaii was bombed.

New Zealand and Australia, the twin outposts of the British Empire in this vast region of stepping stones, could not help but identify with the United States, though Washington’s relations with London were often strained during the nineteenth century, partly because of the glaring role U.S. nationals played in perpetuating the illegal African Slave Trade and the similarly iniquitous commerce in South Sea Islanders—both businesses the United Kingdom was sworn to eliminate. These Pacific settler colonies all had to deal with rebellious indigenes and, therefore, had a lot to learn from Washington in handling this troublesome matter. The founding of New Zealand occurred as the California population grew, buoyed by a rush for gold. One prominent Kiwi announced as early as 1854 that “New Zealand must daily Americanize” if it were to survive and thrive. The historian Frank Parsons averred in 1903 that New Zealanders were “the Yankees of the South Pacific. In fact, New Zealand is a little America, a sort of condensed United States. If all the nations of the world were classed according to the number and importance of their points of resemblance, the United States, New Zealand and Australia would stand in a group together.” In that vein, Australians drew upon the writings of Josiah Clark Nott to justify oppression of indigenes.

So close was the United States to the aspirations of Queensland that the colonial secretary in 1888 considered a scheme that would involve settling U.S. nationals in his immense, though thinly populated colony. He hoped that many Americans would be attracted to Queensland, particularly by the “liberality of [its] land legislation,” which facilitated the development of the kind of large plantations that had characterized the ante-bellum U.S. South. His interlocutor, General Stuart Stanley, did not seek to hide his own distaste for egalitarianism, a dislike he thought fit the United States perfectly and would
also be compatible with the realities of Queensland. “The average American who goes abroad to settle,” he declared, “[is] not in love with Mexico”—the immediate neighbor of his own California; “he has no desire to become a ‘greaser’ when by passing to Australia he may resume his place as one of a kindred race—a kindred people speaking a kindred tongue.” The confident former military man believed that the West Coast would be “only a halfway house between England and [the] Australasian colonies: that the latter country [would] be peopled from [America] rather than direct from Europe” in the “old Anglo-Saxon spirit of colonization.”

This prognostication proved to be overly optimistic. The bane of the existence of those who sought to develop plantations based on cheap—or free—labor as a necessary complement to the colonial and imperial project was the relative dearth of “white” labor and the relative profusion of the “colored” variety. What was “the most serious ailment plaguing settler societies in the age of industrial capitalism?” pondered one study: “the lack of cheap, durable and easily exploited labor.” By taking unfree labor to new heights of exploitation, the United States had provided one answer to this age-old question and the nationals of this mighty land were seeking to expand this trend further westward—though others would have preferred white labor for various reasons. Thus, it was a familiar occurrence in 1878 when S. G. Wilder, President of the Board of Immigration in Hawaii, was instructed on the “feasibility of engaging reliable and competent white labor for [Hawaii’s] plantations instead of Chinese and colored help”—but this assertion, too, proved to be wildly unrealistic.

Yet, the difficulties involved in attracting white labor to the Pacific had various consequences. It highlighted the role of the United States as a source for white labor in that it was rapidly becoming the most populous nation containing those of European descent. It illustrated a linkage that merits more extended interrogation—that between labor and global diplomacy. It underscored the skills of some U.S. nationals who transferred their corrupt ability to capture dark-skinned labor, thereby heightening the influence of a budding U.S. imperialism in the region. But by the same racial token, the influx of colored labor to redoubts of white supremacy (e.g., Queensland and Australia) generally raised probing questions in the self-proclaimed “lucky country” as to whether following such U.S. labor practices could eventually lead to the kind of explosion that had gripped North America itself from 1861 to 1865. “Look at the black labor difficulty in America—a difficulty that threatens the very existence of that mighty Republic,” said one Brisbane writer in 1892, as the high tide of blackbirding was receding and the Australian colonies were coming together as one on a platform of white supremacy. “Last
century,” he continued ominously, “the American people did not dream that there would ever be a black labor difficulty. The black population was comparatively small then, [just as in Queensland—but now look]. The presence of the alien race has already cost America a bloody Civil War; today it causes bitterness and bloodshed; in the future it may cost America her very existence as a free nationality. History has been defined as teaching philosophy by example.” The record demonstrated that deployment of bonded black labor presented a grave threat to the viability of white supremacy, he philosophized. “I apply the words of Lincoln to the question of the hour,” he thundered, referencing Lincoln’s speech about the inability of a divided house to stand. “Black labor cannot be confined permanently to one industry. . . . This land must be the white man’s only or the black man’s only,” and the latter possibility was too ghastly to contemplate. Exposing the grimy seams of the then prevailing progressivism, he proclaimed that “capitalism, in short, seeks to use the black man as a tool by which to crush the white democrat” and, therefore, curtailing the influx of the colored was an all-purpose remedy since “the mixing of the two races is an evil to both”—an evil propelled by greedy “planters [who] put business before humanity.”

As a partial result, blackbirding and kidnapping in the South Seas virtually ended in 1901 when the Commonwealth of Australia was formed. One of the conditions by which Queensland joined the Commonwealth was to end the importation of black labor. In 1901 an act was passed authorizing the deportation of any of these South Sea Islanders found in Australia after 1906.

There was an indelible implication of race throughout this process. This was the case with the subjugations of the indigenes in Melanesia and Polynesia—not to mention their being transformed into bonded laborers—and indigenes in the settler states ranging from New Zealand and Australia to the United States itself. Quite typical were developments in the crucial 51st U.S. Congress (January 1890–January 1891) where heated debates about all manner of racial matters were rife. These involved not only anti-Negro discourses but anti-Indian and anti-Chinese sentiments as well, which allowed for typically fractious regional disputes to be transcended, as southern democrats found it easier to bond with their counterparts in the U.S. West on the basis of white supremacy. Still, it did seem that the anti-Negro crusade animated the others and became “the model for the imperialism of the 1890s.”

Simultaneously, those of African descent in particular looked longingly to the Pacific as a sanctuary from their living hell in the Americas. Pacific indigenes and Africans in the Americas shared a mutual solidarity because both were subject to random kidnappings, dragged from one continent to another to
toil as unfree laborers. Only recently, the *New York Amsterdam News*, which targets that city’s burgeoning population of African origin, with a lingering bitterness referred to blackbirders (those “who captured the state’s free Blacks and sold them into slavery”). In the nineteenth century particularly, the term “blackbirding” represented a trans-Pacific fate, though—ironically—the darkest skinned of the Americas often found a kind of paradise in the South Seas.

By one estimate there were about two thousand West Indians in Australia alone in 1860, a development facilitated by their all being part of the very same empire. The means by which they all arrived from the Caribbean were diverse, and certainly it was not all via blackbirding. Perhaps unsurprisingly, when the notorious rebellion against British rule in Victoria, Australia, occurred in the 1850s, the first case tried in court was that of an American Negro named Joseph. It was not deemed overly unusual when Negro singers toured Melbourne as the U.S. Civil War was raging. A man hailed in the United States as a black history hero—the talented inventor Granville T. Woods—was actually born in Australia, as were his parents. Woods was actually probably only a quarter black; his maternal grandfather was a Malay Indian and “his other grandparents were by birth full-blooded savage... Australian aborigines, born in the wilds back of Melbourne.”

In 1820 Sylvia Moseley Bingham, the prominent U.S. settler in Hawaii, was surprised that Anthony Allen, a black man from Schenectady, New York, seemed to live more comfortably than anyone else on the island. By 1833, “blacks were so numerous in Honolulu that they had begun to feel the need for community organizations,” as nearly half of all whalers who docked there and the core of a royal band for King Kamehameha III were all of African-American descent. King Kalakaua, it was reported, was “unusually dark for a Polynesian and several of his features suggested a Negro inheritance,” a presumption that caused the Tokyo press to term him a “dark almost Black King.” He solidified his ties with Negroes by visiting Hampton Institute in Virginia—Booker T. Washington’s alma mater—which was modeled after a Hawaii school. (In turn, the otherwise moderate Washington “spoke forcefully against the hostile seizure of the Kingdom and against annexation” in 1898.) As sailors jumped ship and slave runaways made their way westward, Hawaii’s small Negro population increased accordingly.

As this century was concluding, another African-American, T. McCants Stewart, found himself in Hawaii. As the *Negro World*, journal of the nationalist movement led by Marcus Garvey, recounted with wonder later, Stewart went there at the behest of British entrepreneurs to represent their interests. Subsequently, he was instrumental in codifying Hawaii’s laws. Then he was
mentioned prominently as a possible governor of the islands. Later, the same British interests that persuaded him to go to Hawaii persuaded him to head to Liberia, \(^{63}\) exemplifying a historic though little understood trend: how U.S. white supremacy often induced African-Americans to ally with the real or imagined foes of Washington, a trend that did not begin—and did not end—with Paul Robeson. At any rate, Stewart was not \textit{sui generis}, as it was another Negro man, Nolle R. Smith, a prominent local contractor and republican, who came to Hawaii in the first quarter of the twentieth century and served a few sessions in the Hawaiian legislature soon thereafter, at a time when his kind were painfully rare in such bodies on the mainland.\(^{64}\)

Reportedly, W. D. Fard—the inspiration for the grouping in the United States now known as the Nation of Islam—was of Hawaiian parentage.\(^{65}\) In May 2005, the NOI detailed the deep spiritual connection it felt with the Ratana Church of New Zealand. Ratana, comprised largely of Maoris, is remarkably similar in many ways to its U.S. counterpart.\(^{66}\) U.S. Senator Barack Obama, presently one of the most popular members of this body, spent his early years in Honolulu where his brown skin made plausible his grandfather’s otherwise implausible assertion to tourists that Obama was the great-grandson of King Kamehameha.\(^{67}\)

The examples of Allen and Stewart suggest that the Pacific was viewed quite positively by African-Americans particularly, persecuted severely as they were in their ostensible homeland. At the same time, their Euro-American counterparts often viewed the region’s indigenes as being quite similar to those who had been enslaved in the United States, with the latter often providing a template for how to proceed in bonding labor. This may have been driven by the simple fact that many of the indigenes of the Pacific resembled Africans or, in fact, \textit{were} “Africans.” Writing for a Fijian audience in 1918, one analyst recalled,

\begin{quote}
A few years ago I visited Natal, and at Durban the first thing that struck me was the extraordinary similarity of the men who were coaling our liner with the Solomon Islanders at Malata in Solomon Islands. They worked in the same quick, jerky way, rushing at their work, whistling instead of breathing heavily, chaffing, challenging, chattering and making a game of work, as I have so often seen the Malata men doing; even their speech and manner of speaking was similar. Their skins were of the same color, their build and stature similar. . . . The Central East African was the first immigrant to populate the Melanesian Islands, [or alternatively, this region] was probably populated from South Africa.
\end{quote}
Then there were the supposed similarities shared by the Masai of Kenya and indigenous Fijians.68 Speaking personally, as a dark-skinned African-American with “woolly” hair, I found during my research trips to Hawaii and Fiji that it was not easy to distinguish my appearance from that of the indigenes. Thus, even the otherwise liberal Mark Twain occasionally referred to indigenous Hawaiians as “niggers” in his journal and observed that they were “almost as dark as Negroes,”69 comments not unique to the Mississippi River sage. Samuel Chapman Armstrong was born in Maui in 1839 and later became associated with the historically black Hampton Institute in Virginia; he was a mentor of sorts to Booker T. Washington and was not alone in seeing similarities between African-Americans and indigenous Hawaiians. He avowed darkly, “Give the African or Polynesian unlimited political power and, unless restrained, political death will follow.” Interestingly, the disreputable Mississippi Plan meant to destroy Negroes politically was to provide the model for disenfranchisement in Hawaii,70 just as for various reasons, African-Americans and West Indians were to be encountered Zelig-like at particularly fraught moments in the Pacific.

A significant difference was that in Hawaii, disenfranchisement swept within its ambit a group not of “pure European descent,”71 which (unlike the
indigenes and U.S. Negroes) had a powerful patron to object on their behalf. Tokyo objected strenuously when those of Japanese origin in Hawaii were not accorded full suffrage rights. In 1889 Count Okuna Shigenobu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, spoke bluntly to the new government in Honolulu that only recently had clipped the wings of the Kingdom: “The Imperial Government desire to have Japanese subjects in Hawaii placed on the same footing as Europeans and Americans,” even though the new constitution did not give the “franchise to Japanese residents.” A stern protest was in order, he thought, and this conflict was a notable step toward the Pearl Harbor debacle of 1941.

The British Empire was also not pleased with annexation. Wellington took the unprecedented step of informing President McKinley directly of New Zealand’s staunch opposition to the proposed U.S. annexation of Hawaii.

This was part of a larger pattern of big power jousting in the Pacific that included not only Hawaii, Japan, France, the United States, and the United Kingdom, but Germany as well. The latter four powers had profound differences between and among themselves but were all united in opposition to Hawaii’s conception of a Polynesian confederation—which had been conceived in the context of an alliance with Tokyo—that would have provided Honolulu a form of hegemony in Fiji, Samoa, and elsewhere. U.S. Secretary of State Thomas Bayard brought his “grave doubts” directly to the attention of Hawaii’s representative in Washington. Tokyo, on the other hand, was developing a special relationship with Honolulu, a tie that had brought thousands of Japanese immigrants to reside in the Kingdom in recent years—the monarchy was adamantly opposed to the kind of blackbirding that had ensnared Fiji and Queensland—and was not as exercised about Hawaii’s regional pretensions. Yet the maneuvering of these budding imperialist powers for influence, especially the bickering between Tokyo and Washington, was to explode in war a few decades later with matters of “race” being readily visible.

In short, this book concerns a series of tightly woven interrelated issues: just as the Americas relied heavily on slave labor from Africa for production, Queensland and Fiji sought bonded labor in the South Seas. That is, labor automatically implicated a kind of diplomacy. This was occurring as the frontier was closing in the United States and an imperialist phase was opening, which led to a lurch toward Hawaii. For the Hawaii Kingdom, an alliance with Japan meant not only a hedge against being swallowed whole by the United States, but also a source of labor. Simultaneously, the Australian colonies were consolidating on the basis of whiteness, which meant an expulsion of bonded labor of a darker hue. Just as blackbirding involved notions of ra-
cial superiority to rationalize the exploitation of bonded labor, imperialism required something similar in order to deny self-determination to Hawaii, Samoa, and the South Seas generally. The problem here was that these cocksure theoreticians of white supremacy did not altogether contemplate the rise of Japan, which led directly to December 7, 1941.

As this book covers points within the broad expanse that is the Pacific, readers may want to examine the chapter summaries below to ascertain the route of this text:

Chapter 1, which focuses heavily on the colonies of Australia, also sets the stage for a major theme of this book—the rise of white supremacy in the region.

Chapter 2 concentrates on the rise of blackbirding as the U.S. Civil War unfolds and focuses particularly on the role of U.S. nationals in the process.

Chapter 3 provides an extended examination of perhaps the most notorious blackbirder, William “Bully” Hayes, who may have been related to Rutherford B. Hayes.

Chapter 4 concerns Fiji and how beginning in the mid-nineteenth century this nation’s destiny became entangled with that of the United States, especially when U.S. nationals began flooding there after the Civil War and establishing plantations deploying various levels of unfree labor.

Chapter 5 extends the discussion of Fiji as it examines the rise of the Ku Klux Klan (and KKK tactics) there, a development which, in a sense, led to the archipelago embracing British colonialism as a way to avoid what was thought to be the harsher fate of embracing the United States.

Chapter 6 concerns the attempt by the Hawaiian Kingdom to blunt the thrust of the major powers in the region by providing assistance to nations like Fiji. This trend was seen as inflaming by these same powers.

Chapter 7 provides context for the run-up to the so-called Bayonet Constitution of 1887, which effectively clipped the wings of the Hawaiian monarchy and followed quickly in the wake of Honolulu’s closer ties to Tokyo; this was exemplified by the influx of thousands of laborers of Japanese origin beginning in 1885, a development that was facilitated by the king’s rapturous reception in Japan a few years earlier.

Chapter 8 looks at the role of African-Americans and West Indians in the region and the often influential roles they played, which served as a counterpoint to the efforts of their Euro-American counterparts.

Chapter 9 examines how elites in the Australian colonies began souring on the growing role in the economy of bonded labor from the region. They see the multiracial experiment of the United States as a negative example. Strikingly, a
notably vicious example of blackbirding involving a Euro-American accused leads to maximum publicity and a general revulsion toward this practice.

Chapter 10 looks at parallel developments in Hawaii as local elites scramble—unsuccessfully—to find an alternative to Japanese and Asian labor. They overreach when they finally dislodge the monarchy in 1893, as this leaves them exposed to increased pressure from Tokyo—a development foiled (or so it is thought) when annexation by the U.S. occurs in 1898 as Washington verges on war with Spain, which announces more formally the rise of U.S. imperialism. The story is brought up to date as the current bane of slavery and forced labor is discussed, along with the efflorescence of the independence movement in Hawaii.
CHAPTER 1

Toward a “White Pacific”

The system of transporting British and Irish convicts that brought so many Europeans to Australia in the late eighteenth century was, in a sense, a variant of the slave mode of production, thus possibly easing apprehensions toward blackbirding in the region’s superpower. With U.S. independence, London lost this huge land as a dumping ground for the indigent and the island continent emerged as a substitute. Strikingly, the use of New South Wales as a convict colony was suggested by the North American loyalist James Matra. Some who had fought against London in North America wound up in New South Wales. From its inception, Australia had the earmarks of its former trans-Pacific empire counterpart in that “bonds of ethnicity” complicated the ability of poorer Euro-Australians to pursue “irreconcilable class differences” with those responsible for their exile. According to historian Kay Saunders, “It is probable though not conclusive that all categories of servants worked in conjunction with the proprietors to exterminate” the Aborigines, who—as in the United States—were often routinely referred to as “niggers.”

Continuing the blood-feud with London, which only recently had culminated in revolution, U.S. nationals continued their mischief by hauling convicts improperly from Sydney and landing them on South Sea Islands. Flexing their developing muscles, U.S. nationals sought to bring goods to the region from India and China in defiance of the king and the East India Company. The relations between Australians and U.S. nationals at the Bass Strait grounds deteriorated to the point where violence took place between Americans led by Amasa Delano (President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s ancestor) and Australians. At this point there was a mordant fear in London that if New South Wales colonists were allowed to flourish and prosper by the development of commerce and industry, they too could revolt in emulation of the Yankees, just as there were similar concerns in Washington about London’s intentions in Texas, Oregon, California, and Hawaii.
Suspicions were aroused in London when “about fifty American seamen were the first white [sic] people to settle in what is now South Australia” as they sought fur seals about two centuries ago. 7 In search of business, U.S. nationals were also encroaching in the Dutch sphere of interest in Java as early as 1799, 8 though the less populous Australia seemed a juicier target for poaching.

As London continued utilizing Australia as a vast refuse bin for dissidents of all types, more possibilities were created for U.S. involvement in the region. Thus, when in the 1830s London dispatched Canadian rebels down under, a number of U.S. nationals along the border with this northern neighbor were swept up in this ambit and found themselves thousands of miles away from home. 9
U.S. seamen, whalers, and searchers for sandalwood were also frequently found in the South Pacific. By the 1840s, there were scores of U.S. whalers active off the coast of Australia. It was the sandalwood that led directly to “raiding for slaves. As the precious wood grew scarcer, it had to be sought with greater thoroughness. . . . The first Melanesians ever shipped to Australia came from Lifu and Uea. They were imported into New South Wales in 1847.” The principal figure responsible for this—Ben Boyd—had spent time in California.

Boyd’s sojourn in California and activity in the South Seas was suggestive of how the Pacific had become an immense highway moving U.S. nationals—and their antipodean counterparts—back and forth. In the 1840s, U.S. readers were apprised that the male population of New South Wales was much larger than the female population and that “many a worthy young bachelor is mourning over the want of a suitable wife.” Tragically, it was thought, some married native or Negro women. “An importation of white maidens would find a good market,” mused Thomas Jefferson Jacobs, “and I am surprised that no Yankee has undertaken this speculation.” Transporting white women from what was rapidly becoming their most populous site—the United States—was an urgent necessity since “the mongrel or mulatto children of the Bush Rangers [were] perhaps destined to form a new race of men that [would] people the interior of [the] vast island continent and who [would] thereafter be a source of much trouble to the British colony.” A glimpse of the supposed downside of “race mixing” could be easily ascertained in North America.

Indicative of the parallels to be drawn between Australia and the United States was the fear that existed in both lands, at least among whites, about miscegenation. Evocative of why transporting Euro-American women to Australia may have been bruited was the widespread concern in Port Phillip in the 1840s when a rumor persisted that a white woman was being held captive by indigenes. This rumor fueled wildly anti-Aboriginal sentiments and provided justification for taking their land. Of course, the mystery woman was never found.

This was all reflective of the concern often expressed by U.S. visitors about the plight and fate of this huge penal colony. In 1849, Levi Holden of the United States visited Sydney and expressed wonder that the “convict portion of the population never [sought to] intermarry with the others or honest settlers. . . . What will be the result of a society formed by the exclusive intermarriage of convicts? This is a subject for curious speculation,” he mused.
exploited in their own land. Lieutenant George M. Colvocoresses of the U.S. Navy made such a comparison during his journey southward in the period leading up to 1852—except he found the Aboriginals’ appearance “far more hideous; in fact, imagination cannot conceive the extent of their ugliness. . . . [They were] perfectly satanic in appearance; . . . one fancies himself in the midst of a horde of sooty imps just escaped from the dominions of his cloven-footed majesty.” These barely human individuals, he thought, were of the “lowest depths of barbarity . . . exhibiting but a slight superiority over the beasts of the field.”

That the indigenes of the region were seen as equivalent to Africans made it easier to subject them to the fate that had befallen so many of this grouping in North America—slavery. When Amasa Delano of the Roosevelt clan arrived in 1791 in the land that was to be known as Papua New Guinea, he thought the “natives” were “Negroes or woolly-headed, . . . well known to hate white people so much as to reward an individual by making him a chief when he will bring them a white man’s head, . . . [though] when Europeans first visited New Guinea the natives manifested no spirit of enmity. But the Europeans seized and carried them away as slaves, in a most treacherous manner.”

Thinking of Pacific indigenes as Africans—a broad grouping whose alleged suitability for enslavement was well established—facilitated bondage for Melanesians and Polynesians; minimally, enslavement of Africans had served to “normalize” bondage generally. When Polynesians were being dragged off to Peru in the 1860s in yet another bondage induced by the U.S. Civil War, a British man remarked, “their treatment is nearly the same as Negroes in the time of slavery,” while another commented, “the Polynesian emigrant, like the Negro . . . is ignorant of his destination; like the Negro he is sold; and like the Negro he has real interference in the contract which is realized upon his person.”

The antipathy for the indigenes and sympathy for the settlers—an unsurprising development coming from Euro-Americans in the midst of consummating a process also embarked on by Euro-Australians—was nevertheless bracing. A U.S. national who identified herself as Mrs. Charles Meredith was in Tasmania when one of the world’s major genocides was unfolding, yet she found that the white people there were “most erroneously believed to have been the aggressors.” There was “some peculiarity in the atmosphere around Van Dieman’s Land [Tasmania], which is adverse to the transmission of the truth,” she concluded, adding that events there were “so greatly misunderstood.”

On the other hand, the U.S. consul in New Zealand was hardly impressed with the indigenous Maoris. Writing in 1858, he found the indigenes to be “a
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lazy, drunken race resembling much in that respect the North American Indians. They are too indolent to work for themselves unless forced to it by necessity and too proud to work for the whites, . . . [yet] they are shrewd and instantly alive to injustice and will fight for their presumed rights with savage exasperation.”

Other U.S. visitors resorted to more ancient comparisons beyond the typical analogies to Africans and Native Americans. During an 1847 visit to Fiji, the U.S. diplomat and entrepreneur John B. Williams found the indigenes’ manners, traditions, and habits akin to those of the ancient Jews and concluded that they were “the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel.” Apparently this was not intended as a compliment since he concluded that “in trading they are perfect Jews.”

Though transporting legions of white women to the South Seas to spare this region the supposed tragedy of miscegenation may have been pleasing in certain precincts in both London and Sydney, such gestures could not erode a general suspicion of the motives of some U.S. nationals—suspicions that increased when credible complaints arose alleging that some of these men were fostering Maori hostility toward London across the Tasman in New Zealand. Other than Hawaii, this latter nation had the most important U.S. consulate in the entire Pacific during this time, with the possible exception of that at Canton, China. British machinations were a factor when “American whalers in the area were almost completely driven out” and “American investments were all but wiped out . . . [as there was a] destruction of American interests in New Zealand.” But continuing this contradictory pattern of admiration and scorn is the fact that the “honor of being the first to introduce ground sluicing in Otago belongs to one James Graham, known as California Jim.” U.S. nationals also formed “what became Australia’s greatest coaching firm.”

That there was a gold rush occurring more or less simultaneously in California and in the region surrounding Melbourne increased trans-Pacific traffic tremendously. This mighty ocean was a transmission belt transporting men and women from one distant site to another. Thus, G. N. Parkinson, vice-consul of New Zealand in San Francisco in 1959, recalled that his great-grandfather and his father came to the Golden State in 1848 and earlier had migrated from the United Kingdom to New Orleans and Texas, before moving to Melbourne in 1853 and then later to New Zealand, where his family became engaged in violent conflicts with the indigenes. Robert S. Swanston, a British man born in India, was also a member of the Society of California Pioneers. “I went to California in September 1849,” he recalled, “and in February 1856 I left [San Francisco] in a schooner bound on a trading voyage, via the Marquesas and Tahiti to Samoa, on my way to Australia. In Samoa I remained eighteen months,
the latter nine of which I had charge of the U.S. Consulate there.” In 1857, he headed for Fiji where at various times he was a Hawaiian consul, acting British consul (for twelve months), and advisor and secretary to the Confederated Chiefs of North and East Fiji (for six years, 1866–1872). It is no surprise, then, that he could speak both the Fijian and Samoan languages fluently. 27 He was changing allegiances to governments casually, as if he were changing socks, a development that could have weakened the legitimacy of the nation-state, particularly if said state objected to discreditable policies such as kidnapping men and women.

The peripatetic Parkinson and Swanston were not unique in traversing the Pacific. It is estimated that about 9 percent of the first 100,000 gold seekers to reach Victoria were from the United States. “All were labeled Californians and were suspect...[and] unwelcome,” just as Aussie émigrés in California had a “reputation for criminal activities” and were “one of the most maligned immigrant groups in American history.” 28

Yet the Yankee merchant George Francis Train was not engaging in puffery when he wrote from Melbourne in 1853: “You would be surprised to see how fast this place is becoming Americanized... It is not an unusual thing to hear the movers of some undertaking that has been dragging its slow carcass along, remark: ‘if you want to have the jetty finished, you must let the Americans take hold of it.’” 30 Train’s glowing account does not necessarily contradict contrary assertions because in the nineteenth century there was an ambivalence—ranging from admiration to scorn—in Australia toward the United States. 31 In fact, it remains true that “if Britain is the mother of modern Australia, then the United States is the accidental father.” 32

This Yankee parentage may have made it easier to accept the blackbirding that was an offshoot of the African Slave Trade, which had transformed the United States so dramatically. Melbourne was indeed a “markedly Americanized city” in the 1850s. Such influences were not unique to Victoria; as early as the 1820s two of Sydney’s leading merchants were from the United States, though they were quickly naturalized by “special acts of the Legislative Council.” 33 But it was Victoria and its glittering gold that were attracting U.S. nationals like bees to honey. In 1852, thirteen American ships came to Melbourne; in 1853, 134 ships. As well, there were 16,000 American arrivals in Sydney and Melbourne during the years 1852–1856. 34 Yet the Pacific was not a one-way street, as Australian colonists poured into California when gold was discovered there 35 and were at times treated with the kind of disdain that Californians sometimes encountered down under, perhaps illuminating that intense attraction can generate friction.
Disdain was, perhaps, too mild a term to describe London’s reaction to U.S. nationals in the Australian colonies as the decade of the 1850s unfolded. In 1853 London’s man in Washington, John Crampton, detected a plan by U.S. citizens to “revolutionize Australia.” “There can be no doubt however,” he stated, “that a revolution in Australia, by which its connection with Great Britain should be severed, would be an event highly acceptable to the great mass of the American people . . . [since] the discovery of gold has awakened public attention to that part of the world.” He called on colonial authorities to exercise “extreme vigilance” since the majority of these perceived ruffians “would be found ready to encourage, if not to participate in, any factious proceedings which might be attempted by the Colonists themselves.” There was sympathy in the United States, he thought, for the Irish who were gaining influence in Australia. A Yankee expatriate in Australia, George Francis Train, was among those who recognized that the British authorities were gravely concerned about the “large body of republican Americans—including Irish-Americans—in their Australian colonies” who might be interested in an antipodean replica of 1776; they feared there was a “secret, foreign, largely American, movement for an Australian republic.”

These fears metastasized when there was an outbreak of sedition in the Victorian gold fields and it turned out that it was not just North Americans who were involved but African-Americans as well. John Joseph of New York was placed on trial in February 1855 and charged with treason, accused of leading a revolt against the queen, as a result of disputes about diggings. Just before his trial, the colonial governor declared, “There are those who continue to seize every opportunity to rouse a spirit of opposition to the law among the mining population . . . and attempt was being made to organize what was termed a Diggers’ Congress.” Dismissing peremptorily the alleged conspirators, he said they were “headed by men of no repute.”

Writing to his family back in the United States, Davis Calwell groused about “insufferable heat, tormenting flies and whirlwinds of dust” and “rain, rain, rain;” he enclosed a few flecks of gold dust redolent of his mission in Victoria, then got down to business. “Great changes have taken place,” he said with pointed portent. “The diggers goaded to desperation by the tyranny of the gold commission officials & exasperated at the contempt of justice in the decisions of the court took things in their own hands . . . [and] revolted: 130 prisoners were taken [and] about 30 [were slain] on both sides. . . . Martial law was proclaimed.” He exulted finally that the “outbreak [had] produced good effects.”

The charges were serious, however. Joseph and his comrades were accused of arming themselves with offensive weapons; they then “collected together
and formed troops and bands under distinct leaders, and were drilled and trained in military exercise.” They were said to have “fired upon, fought with, wounded and killed divers[e] of the said soldiers and other loyal subjects”; more than twenty were killed or wounded. A key moment arose when the chilling query was posed, “Did you hear anything about establishing a republic?” thereby deposing the queen.41

Joseph was seen firing a double-barreled gun in the direction of a Captain Wise, who later died from wounds. Also accused was James Campbell of Jamaica. Others provided equally damning sworn testimony, though for whatever reason the Negroes were the only defendants identified by color.42

About 120 were initially arrested and about 13 were then committed to trial with—for whatever reason—Joseph being selected first to stand trial. Six witnesses asserted that he was inside the stockade; two witnesses saw him firing a gun at the military. The charge of treason was supported by evidence that included a rebel’s flag, witnessing of the “drilling of armed bodies of men,” and the like.43

One analyst concluded that at trial “no hostility was apparent based on [Joseph’s] race or color, . . . [though] the Crown challenged the Irish jurors, together with publicans [sic] and other questionable persons.” Joseph did play the “class card” by objecting to “gentlemen and merchants” alike.44 On the other hand, some Aussies resented that Joseph’s color seemed to stop the U.S. consul from protecting him. “What sort of democracy was the United States?” it was asked. Others wondered how a U.S. Negro could be a traitor to the queen. After his acquittal, “men applauded so boisterously they were sentenced to a week in jail for contempt of court. A British-born Negro was quoted as saying that a sorry day had come for liberty in Her Majesty’s dominions when it had to be upheld by a black man from slaveholding America.”45

Not much is known about Joseph (tellingly, his name was at times spelled “Josephs,” suggesting the evanescence of his existence). He was “not an articulate person but neither was he as simple-minded as he made himself appear. From the outset he maintained a disarming air of bewilderment as his best defense. . . . He played his part well, grinning foolishly and sometimes whistling before answering questions,” illustrating a dissembling tradition that had been honed under slavery.46 It was a winning approach. Coming out of the courthouse after his acquittal, “he was put in a chair, and carried around the streets of the city in triumph with the greatest demonstrations of joy.”47

London’s man in Victoria, B. Lyon Milne, was unimpressed. It was a “remarkable day in the annals of Australia, . . . [this] trial for high treason [that resulted in an acquittal]. . . . Victoria thus sets the example of legalizing open
rebellion against British authority,” he said incredulously. This “demands the serious consideration of Downing Street,” he thought. “The British Government will very soon have more upon their hands than a Russian War and that pregnant with more disastrous consequences,” he added gloomily. Milne may have had a point. The Yankee merchant George Francis Train claimed that he was offered the presidency of the Australian Republic after the miners’ rebellion and that the leader of the uprising was James McGill, a U.S. citizen.

Joseph’s triumph was ironic and contradictory. It boosted republican sentiments—and therefore Washington—though so many African-Americans had fled from the United States precisely because of its flagrantly anti-republican racist policies. The latter were to blossom shortly in the Pacific in the form of blackbirding, a kind of kidnapping that continuously threatened the well-being of the dark skinned globally. London, which was the major threat to these slavers, received a setback: radicals transnationally saw its monarchy as an atrocious repudiation of republicanism. Would these republican sentiments ultimately outweigh the rebellion against British authority, an authority that kept slavers and kidnappers in check?

It was not a simple question to answer, as the case of John Mitchel suggested. Just as Joseph was being acquitted, he escaped from Tasmania, stopped in Sydney, and sailed on to Batavia, San Francisco, and New York. He was hailed in Gotham by his fellow Irishmen in 1853. Yet during the Civil War, he championed the Confederacy and three of his sons joined their ranks. Again this rebellion against the crown and supposed advance for republicanism came weighted down by a crown of thorns all its own. His grandson became mayor of New York in 1916 at a time when various forms of Jim Crow continued to persist in this metropolis.

Or consider alternatively John Boyle O’Reilly. He was deported from the United Kingdom to Western Australia because of his Fenian activities, but he escaped by boarding a U.S. whaler and wound up in Boston. There he became a newspaper editor, orator, and champion of African-Americans. Association with the Aborigines had a “marked influence on his idealism in his later years” and as a result he “constantly took up the cause of oppressed minority groups such as the Jews, the indigenous Indians of America and, most especially, the Negroes.” Anticipating arguments that would not prevail until decades later, this late-nineteenth-century figure “exhorted Negroes to take pride in their race,” therefore “anticipating the cry of the 1960s ‘black is beautiful’” campaign. Going further, he adumbrated the notion of armed retaliations against lynchings and lynchers. Yet he had an abiding hatred of London, though this power was the primary force seeking to stem blackbirding, while his current
homeland—the United States, which had rescued him—by way of comparison was relatively indifferent to this blatant violation of human rights.\(^{52}\)

It seemed that Mitchel was more of an Australian indicator than Joseph or O’Reilly when it came to the question of slavery—an institution that enjoyed a new birth of freedom in the South Seas after it was driven out of North America. Certainly this was the distinct impression left by the triumphant three-week visit in early 1865 to Melbourne of the warship *Shenandoah* of the so-called Confederate States of America. The enthusiastic reception belied the obvious fact that the CSA was on the verge of collapse, which served to underscore the evidently sincere pro-slavery sentiments then prevailing in Victoria. Tellingly, Melbourne newspapers routinely ran stories from the *Richmond Daily Whig* and other major southern papers, as the readers were apparently concerned about the fate of the slave-holding CSA.\(^{53}\)

Certainly, London was quite concerned about gathering tensions with Washington. In late 1861, London told its emissary in Queensland that the United Kingdom could soon be at war against the United States. Further reason for anger with Washington was indicated when Downing Street had to arrange for the “troops sent from Australia at the breaking out of the war in New Zealand” to be “forthwith returned” to the island continent, thus potentially jeopardizing antipodean holdings.\(^{54}\)

The *Shenandoah*, a “handsome, smart-looking full-rigged steam sloop of 1260 tons, with engines capable of generating 240 horsepower,”\(^{55}\) and its officers and crew took to the hearts of the Melbourne people. The exclusive Melbourne Club entertained visitors lavishly, “crowds enthusiastically greeted the Confederate uniform whenever it appeared in the streets, [and] there were picnics and outings for officers and men alike.”\(^{56}\) This rousing reception may not have been atypical. The Australian colonies were replete with CSA veterans and forty-two men were recruited for the CSA during the warship’s brief visit. Then there were the rebels who chose to expatriate to Australia after their loss, indicative of how congenial they found the environment,\(^{57}\) since the prevailing public sentiment in Melbourne was pro-Confederate.\(^{58}\)

One inside account of the CSA ship’s docking in Melbourne avowed rapturously,

I do not suppose so much hospitality ever was or ever will be shown to another ship in that port, and there were few if any who sailed in the *Shenandoah*, who will not carry to their graves many pleasant memories of the days they spent on the shores of Australia. . . . Invitations to dinners and balls poured in from all sides, and every one was particular to mention that he felt
the warmest sympathy for the Confederate cause. . . . A scene of excitement was inaugurated which baffles all adequate description. . . . [There were] hundreds of men . . . [who] made application to join us here, but as we had no right to ship any in a neutral port, all were denied, reluctantly.

This Confederate memoirist also recounted another story:

An old lady came aboard with her little son. She was a southern woman, she said, and her boy had been born in the Sunny South, and she [told] Captain [James] Waddell to take him as the only contribution she had to offer to her country and educate him for the service. . . . [The warm greeting was replicated when] more than seven thousand people [came to greet their vessel]. . . . Had we been content to stay for six months in Melbourne, and charged an admission fee of one dollar to visitors . . . we could have paid a large installment upon the Confederate debt. . . . [It was] one continuous fete, . . . [overflowing with] balls, soirees and receptions followed in such rapid succession that the memory of one was lost in another, and, in brief, we were so persistently and continually lionized that we were in serious danger of becoming vain. . . . [As we were departing,] our ship's company had received a mysterious addition of forty-five men . . . [who said] they were natives of the Southern Confederacy.59

This was a real gain for the CSA, as the ship was so understaffed that the officers had to go against protocol, take off their coats, and help raise the anchors.60 At the same time, a number of the crew stayed in Melbourne, including at least one Negro, perhaps a slave.61

This evident enthusiasm for the pro-slavery CSA did not escape the notice of U.S. Secretary of State William Seward. Washington’s representative in Melbourne averred that the Shenandoah was actually the British naval vessel Sea King, seemingly an indication of the keen collaboration between the rebels and London. “Instead of being assisted by the authorities,” fumed William Blanchard, the U.S. diplomat based in Victoria, “I was only baffled and taught how certain proceedings could not be instituted.” Worse, “James Francis Maguire, late U.S. Consul here, as far as I could see and learn,” he lamented, “acted as Consul for the vessel and her officers.”602

This relative indifference to the obscenity that was slavery prepared the pathway for acceptance of the blackbirding that erupted as a direct result of the U.S. Civil War. That the victims were mostly dark skinned seemed almost “natural” in a world where these people were equally under siege in the
Australian colonies and New Zealand itself. That the United States, which was the exemplar for how advanced development could be generated through a vehicle as antediluvian as slavery, was also something of a role model for those in the South Seas chafing under the burden of London’s hand only served to heighten Washington’s influence in the region as it lessened the revulsion toward blackbirding.

The story goes that when Satan was cast out from heaven, he fell on the Garden of Eden and struck so hard that he drove it to the other side of the earth, where it appeared as the Hawaiian Islands. Unquestionably these strategically sited islands, sitting astride the route from the U.S. West to Australia and studded with lethargically swaying palm trees, black volcanic ash, and pristine beaches, were seen as a kind of Paradise Regained by those who set eyes upon it. This was particularly true of the United States and the original would-be colonizer, the United Kingdom. However, the rulers in Honolulu, as they espied the rise of leading powers in their neighborhood—all with imperial ambitions and willing to wink at the most severe tactics, including using kidnapping as a means to secure unfree labor—advanced rapidly on the path to modernization in the nineteenth century, only to become one of the initial victims of a burgeoning U.S. imperialism.

Kamehameha IV, monarch of the Kingdom of Hawaii, was widely considered to be both pro-British and anti-American, perhaps in part because of a preference for a faraway ally instead of one in closer vicinity. “He did dislike some American institutions and conditions . . . [and was a] great admirer of English institutions,” concedes the historian Ralph Kuykendall. “Queen Victoria of England was to be godmother of the Hawaiian royal child.” Besides being distant, London thought it had another advantage over its former North American colony. In 1851 London warned the Kingdom that the United States was “very hard upon the natives of the countries they obtain.” Later their representative, William Miller, attacked a proposed U.S. annexation of the Kingdom by “repeatedly raising the twin specters of slavery and racism as well as the treatment meted out to Indian tribes in the United States,” all this in an effort to influence the monarchy. Miller went further and instructed Honolulu that the “geographical location of the Sandwich Islands south of the Missouri Compromise line . . . would, under annexation, mean enslavement of native Hawaiians.”

It did not take much arm-twisting to convince the Kingdom of Washington’s encrusted racist biases. When Prince Alexander Liholiho traveled to Washington as the Civil War was about to engulf the nation, he was appalled.
“While I was sitting looking out of the window,” he remarked, “a man came to me and told me to get out of the carriages. . . . [I was] taken for somebody’s servant, just because I had a darker skin than he had.” The prince was beyond outrage. “Confounded fool,” he sputtered. This was the first time that he had ever been treated like this and, tellingly, this was not in Europe, but the United States. “In this country,” he cried, “I must be treated like a dog. I am disappointed [with] the Americans. . . . They have no manners.” In contrast, he said, exaggerating to make a point, “in England an African can pay his fare for the cars and he can go and sit alongside of Queen Victoria.”

Of course, London could only preen as a beacon of equality in comparison to the slave republic that was the United States, a development that outraged many in North America. “Our greatest source of trouble between us and other nations,” bewailed U.S. settler William Lee, writing from Honolulu, “[was London]. . . . The representative of Great Britain . . . is exceedingly tenacious and unreasonable on this subject and stirs up Englishmen to quarrel and strife.” Lee, a jurist, eventually became chief justice of the high court in Honolulu and was advantageously placed to ascertain what was occurring. These settlers provided London with substantial ammunition, he thought, since their “prejudices . . . against the natives on account of their color is very strong and most of the foreigners unconnected with the [religious] mission, seem to have very little charity or sympathy for anyone who bears a copper colored skin.”

Even France, whose anti-Haitian policies indicated that it was hardly sympathetic to the aspirations of the “copper colored” thought it could more than compete with the United States in what some considered the latter’s backyard. In 1843, London thought it desirable for its emissary in Honolulu to “constantly keep a vigilant eye on the proceedings of the French in the Pacific,” instructing him slyly that “the less you appear to watch them, the more surely you will be enabled to do [so] with effect.” But even then, London knew that an even closer eye should be kept on U.S. activities, adding the instruction that “you will also not fail to exercise the same vigilance with regard to the United States.” Repeatedly, London’s representative was told to continue to use “your utmost efforts to prevent the Annexation of the Sandwich Islands to the United States.” Seeking to “place the islands under the joint protectorate” of England, France, and the United States was suggested in 1854 as yet another way to blunt Washington’s obviously capacious ambitions.

G. P. Judd of U.S. origin was concerned with Paris, however, feeling their delegate “is every day becoming more troublesome and . . . will not be satisfied until he rules over us.” He also detected bad intentions from Russia’s
representative; indeed, he argued, “the French and English agents here are very thick with this Russian officer, and from their bitter hostility to Americans would naturally foment a measure such as I have hinted at,” that is, armed conflict. The United States had to take preemptive action, it was thought, to foil other powers and protect its own security. “Again,” Judd said. “If the United States hesitates and the Emperor of Russia should offer to purchase the sovereignty, what is to prevent the King from selling out?” This all raised alarm in his fevered imagination. Maneuvering to raise a U.S. flag over Hawaii “in case of hostilities” was his suggestion. This was in 1851 but was a clear precursor of the kind of imperialist jousting that was to devastate the prize that was Hawaii forty-odd years later.71

Just as the rush for gold had fueled traffic between Australia and New Zealand on the one hand, and California on the other, something similar occurred with regard to the Golden State and Hawaii. This increased traffic from all corners of the world heightened U.S. awareness of the importance of Hawaii to its own security. Moreover, a shot of economic adrenaline was provided by this thirst for the yellow mineral. One unnamed sojourner remarked in 1848, “Honolulu is emptied of goods, all gone to San Francisco to be sold & sold at enormous profits, e.g., 1 oz. of gold for a pair of shoes.” The “natives” were also fleeing eastward since they could earn $75 to $100/month in San Francisco, wages that dwarfed what could be earned in Honolulu. The “gold fever in California clears off a great proportion of our floating population,” it was reported.72

These ambitions were on display when Washington dispatched an exploratory expedition in 1838 to the South Seas led by Charles Wilkes. A colleague referred to Wilkes as “either crazy, beyond redemption or . . . a rascally tyrant & a liar,” and the massacres and deaths he and his crew left in its wake did little to dispel the harsh description.71 “There was a great contrast between the Tongese and Feejees,” he thought, referring to the people of Tonga versus Fiji. “The former being light mulattoes, while the latter were quite black. . . . It was pleasant to look upon the Tongese. . . . The contrast was somewhat like that observable between a well-bred gentleman and a boor.”74 The indigenes of Sydney, on the other hand, reminded him—“except in the color”—of the “coffee-carrying” African slaves he had encountered in Brazil.75 Wilkes was miffed when during his ten-day stay in Hawaii, one of his men encountered a colored man who threatened him with violence; later this crew member was seized by soldiers who brought him to trial where he received a $50 fine and a hundred lashes, “while the person who had been guilty of using the arms received but a nominal fine.”76 Wilkes was left to wonder what manner of land he
Figure 3. “Labor recruitment” in the New Hebrides in the 1890s: These scenes, eerily reminiscent of the unlaunted African Slave Trade, were inspired by events emanating from the U.S. Civil War. Courtesy of the Bishop Museum.
Chapter 1

had discovered where “white” men could be treated thusly by those who elsewhere would be deemed slaves; this was an early indication that the sovereignty of Hawaii presented a clear and present danger to white supremacy.

White supremacy was to prevail in Fiji, particularly after the Civil War when blackbirding surged, but even before then some Euro-Americans of questionable reputation were flocking to the archipelago. Extradition from Fiji was not easy, so absconding debtors and convicts made their way there.77 “These white chaps appear to have great influence over these natives,” it was said of Fiji in 1835. “Some few have been on the [island] a long time & talk the language quite fluently. . . . [However,] the white people on all these S. Sea [Islands] bear in general a very bad character . . . from which circumstances, they are obliged to remain a long time . . . [since] masters of vessels [were] not wishing to ship such characters on board their vessels.”78 Among these were the appropriately named U.S. national Charles Savage, a “tough seaman . . . who made himself the leader of a prime collection of renegade sailors, beachcombers and escaped convicts. . . . [These cutthroats] ushered in a new era, a period of muskets and civil wars, or rebellions, invasions and massacres. . . . [Savage] learned the native language, took all the best looking women for his harem, and provided . . . warriors with firearms.”79 Of course, some of these “white chaps” were not exactly in a forgiving mood; they were sometimes kidnapped from other vessels for various reasons. Even so, “chiefs spoke of their tame white men as they spoke of their canoes or other possessions.”80 As the whaling industry went into terminal decline in the middle of the nineteenth century, already horrendous working conditions and miserable pay declined further, providing a complement of rootless young men who were both ready to engage in disreputable activities (e.g., blackbirding), or susceptible to being enticed or kidnapped by Pacific indigenes.81

The larger point is that the arrival of the kind of ruthlessness that blackbirding involved was primed by the presence of a cast of notably unprincipled characters and a decided hostility to the dark skinned. That this unseemly practice flowered as an incipient U.S. imperialism began to extend its tentacles more deeply in the region was hardly accidental in that both these desperados and the more refined gentlemen who represented the country from which they hailed ultimately were more than willing to deploy violence to impose their diktat on those deemed to be lesser beings.