is deeply scientifically and technically complex. The fate of whole firms and industries came to rest on the subjects daunting to nonspecialists, like biological and chemical properties of fertilizers. By synthesizing so much material, therefore, Jones and Osgood have done many other scholars a tremendous service. Ultimately, though readers expecting a clear narrative will be disappointed after the first two chapters, the book delivers in exchange a series of enormously comprehensive and revealing portraits of the Hawaiian sugar industry at crucial moments in its history.

David Singerman
Research Associate
Harvard Business School
Cambridge, MA


Historian John Rosa makes a compelling case for returning to the infamous 1930s Massie case that rocked the Hawaiian Islands and garnered national attention. In Local Story: The Massie-Kahahawai Case and the Culture of History, Rosa prioritizes a local perspective to illustrate how this watershed moment helped form and consolidate a “local” identity. The Massie case centered on Navy wife Thalia Massie’s account of being kidnapped and assaulted by “some Hawaiian boys” (p. 1). The case against the defendants ended in a mistrial as a result of contradictory testimony and mishandled evidence. Local Story discusses the implications of this trial and events leading to a second trial, which resulted from the kidnapping and murder of one of the defendants, Joseph Kahahawai, by Thalia’s mother, her husband, and two Navy men. Found guilty and sentenced to ten years of hard labor, their sentences were commuted to one hour by Governor Lawrence Judd.

Local Story is less about the details of what happened that fateful night or a comprehensive retelling of the trials. In five chapters and a brief introduction and epilogue, Rosa instead “examines the complexities of telling and retelling the case’s historical events as a local incident in the islands as opposed to an American one that cast Hawai‘i as merely a small outpost of the United States” (p. 3). In addition to centering place, class, and gender in the development of a local identity in Hawai‘i, the book uses “local” in several other senses including: foregrounding the perspectives of Hawai‘i’s people; focusing on
how these events reverberated within the islands long after the 1930s; incorporating local practices like talking story to re-narrate history. The chapters build Rosa’s case by focusing on the five accused local boys (chapter 1) and marking their distinction from haoles through a discussion of Thalia Massie, geography, and the protection of white womanhood (chapter 2). Chapter 3 illustrates how Kahahawai’s murder fractured relations between haole and Hawaiian elite and led to Hawaiian resistance alongside other local people of color against haole oppression. We return to the courtroom of the Massie-Fortescue murder trial in Chapter 4 to see how its conclusion provided a sense of closure for continental audiences, but for locals it remains an “open wound” (p. 66). The final chapter, like the introduction, positions this book and its author within the corpus of representations of these incidents. The epilogue offers an interesting discussion of how the book, itself, is an exercise in local storytelling, highlighting the place-specific and culturally informed ways people tell and retell stories in order to craft local senses of belonging.

Local Story primarily reveals how the Massie-Kahahawai cases constituted a racial project that shaped a local identity by employing a U.S. racial logic that privileged haoles over nonhaoles. “American dominance included powerful ideologies from the continent” (p. 32) rooted in the U.S. Black/White context. These ideas, such as the threat nonWhite men posed to White womanhood, “were then transplanted onto the terrain of Hawai‘i” through the U.S. military, the law, news accounts, and haoles’ perceptions of locals. The book’s second contribution is its attention to the discursive role of storytelling and the “aliveness” of history, a term Rosa uses to demonstrate how fact and fiction coalesce to shape our memories of the past in ways that impact human relations long after a structuring event. Focusing on the “nature of historical storytelling” (p. 3) highlights peoples’ roles in the construction of the “culture of history,” (p. 7) illustrated by Rosa’s skillful self-reflexivity when he weaves himself in to the book’s narrative. The author’s life story, which spans the neighborhoods in which Kahahawai and the Massies lived and includes time on the continental U.S., informs his interpretation of the material.

A few questions remain: How did some haoles become local haole? What is the role of local women in the formation of a local identity and through their relationships with haoles? And how might our understanding of island dynamics—and the actual court cases—benefit from an engagement with the experiences and perspectives of African Americans? For instance, Thomas Massie testified that Kahahawai admitted to the assault when he stated, “We done it,” (p. 69) which then filled Thomas’s mind with the image of his wife’s rape. Rosa argues that this is an unlikely verbal response, since it does not reflect Pidgin English. However, perhaps we could also consider how Thomas’s use of African American Vernacular English may reveal how he
read Kahahawai through notions of Black men that circulated in his native Kentucky. Additionally, Rosa bookends his text by mentioning two narratives about Black men in Alabama: one about the Scottsboro Boys and the other an oral history of sharecropper Nate Shaw (b. Ned Cobb). Local Story introduces the specter of overlapping racism on the U.S. continent and in the Territory of Hawai‘i that, fleshed out further, illustrates how African Americans—and not just haoles—have shaped island dynamics.

Rosa centers the voices of Hawai‘i’s people and deploys local practices in his retelling. The book incorporates storytelling through a dialogic and narrative mode that makes it well suited for undergraduate students. The structure of the chapters is at times confusing and the writing repetitive; nonetheless, this slim book is relevant for courses on Hawai‘i’s history, localism and power, and race and the law. Its attention to geography through the mapping of race, class, and gender upon the topography of Honolulu provides an excellent case study in critical geography and contributes to the scholarship on history and culture.

Nitasha Tamar Sharma
Associate Professor, African American Studies,
Asian American Studies
Northwestern University
Chicago, Illinois


In hindsight it was a disaster waiting to happen. On May 21, 1944, a small fleet of U.S. Navy landing ship tanks (LST) were anchored off West Loch, Pearl Harbor to prepare for the invasion of Saipan. As a result of the diversion of ammunition vessels to support the Allied invasion of France, these vessels took on not only U.S. Marines and their equipment, but also a volatile cargo of high octane gasoline and munitions. Despite this delicate mix, stevedores that day were careless in loading ammunition. Lax discipline allowed sailors and Marines to smoke cigarettes in close proximity to highly combustible cargoes. At 1508, an explosion occurred on LST 353 and within a matter of seconds, several nearby vessels were quickly engulfed in flames. Within a few short hours, several hundred men were dead or grievously wounded and six