THE POLITICAL STATUS OF THE NATIVE HAWAIIAN PEOPLE

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More than 200,000 people now living in Hawai‘i are descendants of the Polynesian people, who had a thriving isolated culture in the Hawaiian Islands until westerners started arriving at the end of the eighteenth century. The Native Hawaiians lived in a highly organized, self-sufficient, subsistent social system based on communal land tenure with a sophisticated language, culture, and religion. Their self-sustaining economy was based on agriculture, fishing, and a rich artistic life in which they created colorful feathered capes, substantial temples, carved images, formidable voyaging canoes, tools for fishing and hunting, surf boards, weapons of war, and dramatic whimsical dances. The newcomers from Europe and the United States brought their technology, their religions, their ideas about

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2 See OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS, NATIVE HAWAIIAN DATA BOOK 13 fig.1.5 (Mark Eshima ed., 1998). At least another 70,000 people of Hawaiian ancestry live in other parts of the United States, about half of them living in California. See id. at 13 fig.1.5, 18 tab.1.8.

3 See generally E.S. CRAIGHILL HANDY & ELIZABETH GREEN HANDY, NATIVE HAWAIIAN PLANTERS IN OLD HAWAII (1972); JOHN PAPA II, FRAGMENTS OF HAWAIIAN HISTORY (1959); SAMUEL MANAIKALANI KAMAKAU, THE WORKS OF THE PEOPLE OF OLD (1976); LILIKALA KAME‘ELEIHIWA, NATIVE LAND AND FOREIGN DESIRES: PEHEA LA E PONO AI? (1992); PATRICK V. KIRCH, FEATHERED GODS AND FISHHOOKS: AN INTRODUCTION TO HAWAIIAN ARCHAEOLOGY AND PREHISTORY (1985); DAVID MALO, HAWAIIAN ANTIQUITIES (Nathaniel B. Emerson trans., Bishop Museum Press 1951) (1898).

4 The term “[N]ative Hawaiian” is defined in section 201(a)(7) of the Hawaiian Home Commission Act, 1920, ch. 42, 42 Stat. 108 (1921), reprinted in 15 HAW. REV. STAT. ANN. 331 (Michie 1997) [hereinafter HHCA], as referring primarily to persons with 50% or more Hawaiian blood, but in other federal statutes this term is used to cover all persons who are descended from the people who were in the Hawaiian Islands as of 1778, when Captain James Cook discovered the islands for the Western world. See statutes cited infra note 65. In this Article, “Native Hawaiian” is used to refer to all persons descended from the Polynesians who lived in the Hawaiian Islands when Captain Cook arrived.

5 See Joint Resolution to Acknowledge the 100th Anniversary of the January 17, 1893 Overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii, Pub. L. 103-150, 197 Stat. 1510, 1510 (1993) [hereinafter Apology Resolution].

property and government, and their diseases to the islands. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Native Hawaiian population had plummeted, its traditional practices and communal land structures had been replaced by Western models, the independent Kingdom of Hawai‘i had been illegally overthrown, Hawaiian lands had been taken with neither the compensation nor the consent of the Hawaiian people, and Hawai‘i had been annexed by the United States as a territory. Native Hawaiians are now at the bottom of


8 Estimates of the population of the Hawaiian Islands prior to the arrival of Captain Cook in 1778 range from 300,000, see OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS, supra note 1, at 4 tbl.1.1, to 800,000 or more, see STANNARD, supra note 6, at 30-58. By 1850, the population in the islands had dropped to 84,165, and, by 1872, it had dropped further to 56,897. See OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS, supra note 1, at 4 tbl.1.1. This population decline was due in part to venereal disease—resulting in sterility, miscarriages, and death—and epidemics such as small pox, measles, whooping cough, and influenza. Decline was also accelerated by a low fertility rate, high infant mortality, poor housing, inadequate medical care, inferior sanitation, hunger and malnutrition, alcohol and tobacco use. Over two centuries after European contact many of these situations still exist. Id. at 4.

9 See generally RALPH S. KUYKENDALL, THE HAWAIIAN KINGDOM 1778-1854 (1979) (providing a detailed history of these years); NATIVE HAWAIIANS STUDY COMMISSION, REPORT ON THE CULTURE, NEEDS, AND CONCERNS OF NATIVE HAWAIIANS 99-106, 147-62 (1983) (discussing the impact of Western contact on Hawai‘i); Neil M. Levy, Native Hawaiian Land Rights, 63 CAL. L. REV. 848, 848-66 (1975) (providing a historical overview of land changes during the 19th century); MacKenzie, supra note 6, at 3-10 (describing the transfer of lands into private hands); Jon Van Dyke et al., Water Rights in Hawai‘i, in LAND AND WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN HAWAII 146-76 (1979) (analyzing the impact of Western law on Hawai‘i’s water rights).

10 See Apology Resolution, supra note 4, 107 Stat. at 1513 (referring to the “illegal overthrow” of the Kingdom of Hawaii on January 17, 1893” (emphasis added)). The Senate passed this resolution on October 27, 1993, the House passed it on November 15, 1993, and President Clinton signed it on November 23, 1993. See id. at 1514. Congress drafted this joint resolution “with great care because it is an enforceable statute.” Lisa Cami Oshiro, Comment, Recognizing Na Kanaka Maoli’s Right to Self Determination, 25 N.M. L. REV. 65, 86 (1995). See also infra note 67 (discussing how joint resolutions are enforceable statutes and are treated as the equivalent of statutes by judges, lawyers, and scholars).

11 Apology Resolution, supra note 4, 107 Stat. at 1512 (“Whereas the Republic of Hawaii also ceded 1,800,000 acres of crown, government and public lands of the Kingdom of Hawaii, without the consent of or compensation to the Native Hawaiian people” of Hawaii or their sovereign government.”) (emphasis added)).

12 See Join Resolution to Provide for Annexing the Hawaiian Islands to the United States, ch. 55, 30 Stat. 750 (1898).
the socio-economic scale in their own islands.\textsuperscript{13}

Ever since the illegal overthrow of their monarchy and their annexation, the native people of Hawai‘i—who call themselves “Kanak Maoli,” or “Native Hawaiians,” or just plain “Hawaiians”—have been struggling to regain their culture, recover their lands, and restore their sovereign nation.\textsuperscript{14} Some argue that this process should be undertaken without any governmental assistance. Others believe accepting financial support from the state and federal governments is appropriate, because these governments have benefitted from their possession of lands that rightfully belong to the Native Hawaiian people.\textsuperscript{15} Some commentators have focused on regaining a land base and becoming economically self-sufficient, while still others have argued that restoring the Native Hawaiian Nation should come before any negotiations regarding the return of lands. Finally, some favor complete independence from the United States while others favor the establishment of a “nation within a nation” similar to the sovereign status of the large Indian tribes in the forty-eight contiguous states.\textsuperscript{16} Although considerable disagreement exists among different Native Hawaiian groups, the momentum behind the movement for a return of land and a restoration of sovereignty appears to be irreversible.

Some of the Native Hawaiian groups have worked closely with native people in North America and throughout the world, looking particularly at the successes of the Maori people in New Zealand, who have regained substantial economic resources and rights in the

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\textsuperscript{13} The average family income for Native Hawaiians in 1989 was nearly $9,000 below the average income for all families in the State of Hawai‘i, and the family income for about one-fifth of the Native Hawaiian families was under $15,000. See OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS, supra note 1, at 516. In the same year, 14% of all Native Hawaiian families were below the poverty level, compared to only 6% of all families in the state. See id. at 532. The unemployment rate for Native Hawaiians in 1997 was almost 1.7 times higher than the unemployment rate for the statewide population. See id. at 588 tbl.8.44.
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\textsuperscript{15} In 1994, the Hawai‘i State Legislature created the Hawaiian Sovereignty Elections Council as a semi-autonomous body to conduct an election to determine the views of the Native Hawaiian people regarding self-determination. An Act Relating to Hawaiian Sovereignty, ch. 200, § 1, 1994 Haw. Sess. Laws 479, 479. In 1996, the Council conducted the Native Hawaiian Vote, a mail ballot in which 73% of the voters indicated that they favored moving toward self-determination. HAWAIIAN SOVEREIGNTY ELECTIONS COUNCIL, FINAL REPORT 28 (1996). Some Native Hawaiian groups boycotted this process, viewing it as tainted because of its financing by the state government, and some have criticized its result, because fewer than half of the Native Hawaiians who received a mail ballot cast their vote.
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\textsuperscript{16} See Trask, supra note 13, at 88-94 (discussing the range of sovereignty options).
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The status of the Native Hawaiian people under federal law and their right to separate and preferential programs has been challenged in a long and heavily-footnoted *Yale Law Journal* article written by Stuart Minor Benjamin, a recent graduate of the Yale Law School now teaching at the University of San Diego. Because Professor Benjamin’s article

17 The Maori in Aotearoa (New Zealand) are the Polynesian cousins of the Native Hawaiians, and their efforts to recover land, resources, and autonomy parallel in many ways the efforts of the Native Hawaiians. The Maori, however, are considerably farther along in this struggle, and the courts of their country have acted repeatedly to protect and effectuate their rights.


19 *See* Apology Resolution, *supra* note 4, 107 Stat. at 1512, 1513 (referring to the “illegal overthrow” of the Kingdom of Hawai’i and the lack of “compensation” or “consent” in the acquisition of land during the overthrow).

20 *Id.* § 1(5), 107 Stat. at 1513 (stating that Congress “urges the President of the United States to . . . acknowledge the ramifications of the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii and to support reconciliation efforts between the United States and the Native Hawaiian people”).

21 *See infra* notes 88, 94.

was published in a prestigious journal, it is being cited by persons opposed to the Native Hawaiian movement as evidence that is improper and even unconstitutional for governmental bodies to support the efforts of Hawaiians to reestablish their sovereign nation and regain control over their own resources. Because Benjamin’s article has taken on a life of its own and is influencing public policy in Hawai‘i, the errors in its legal analysis must be exposed.

Professor Benjamin’s central thesis is that the United States Supreme Court changed the entire landscape of judicial review of legislation utilizing racial classifications in its recent decisions of City of Richmond v. J.A. Croson Co. and Adarand Constructors v. Pena. He maintains that these decisions affect programs benefiting native people because the classification of native people is, in his judgment, a “racial” classification unless it includes only natives organized in “Indian tribes.” Otherwise, Benjamin thus argues, the classification is subject to strict scrutiny. Professor Benjamin argues that compelling interests can be demonstrated only in extremely rare and unusual cases. His article

23 Its publication in a Yale periodical gives it a particular status in Hawai‘i, because Yale played an important role in bringing Christianity and Western values to Hawai‘i. It was at Yale College that a young Hawaiian man named Henry Opukahia first inspired the Reverend Timothy Dwight to take a heightened interest in Hawai‘i. Opukahia (he called himself Obookiah) arrived in New Haven about 1808 when he was 16 years old. Reverend Dwight invited Opukahia into his home for several months, during which time he taught the lad to read and write English and educated him in the tenets of Christianity. Opukahia later moved to the Foreign Mission School in Cornwall, Connecticut, to pursue his studies in Christianity. As a result of Opukahia’s presence in the New England community, the Foreign Mission School sent the first missionaries to Hawai‘i in 1820. See generally EDWIN W. DWIGHT, MEMOIRS OF HENRY OBOOKIAH (1990); ALBERTINE LOOMIS, TO ALL PEOPLE (1970).

It is also interesting to note that in 1894 the Yale Law Journal published a commentary on the constitution that had been written for the new “Republic of Hawaii” which also demonstrated substantial insensitivity to the rights and concerns of the Native Hawaiian people. See A.F. Judd, Constitution of the Republic of Hawaii, 4 YALE L.J. 53, 55, 57 (1894) (describing how a parliamentary government and suffrage for women would be appropriate constitutional measures for a “civilized and enlightened constituency” but would be “unsafe” in Hawai‘i’s “heterogeneous” and “polyglot” communities). Among the group of people who framed Hawai‘i’s new Constitution were four graduates of Yale. See id. at 55. As a result, the new constitution reflected the “current discussion” of the United States academic community. Id. Judd was a missionary’s son who served as Chief Justice for the Republic of Hawai‘i. See TOM COFFMAN, NATION WITHIN 172 (1998); THURSTON TWIGG-SMITH, HAWAII SOVEREIGNTY: DO THE FACTS MATTER? 29 (1998).

24 The lawyers representing Harold Rice in the litigation of Rice v. Cayetano, see discussion infra notes 160-175, 178-203 and accompanying text, have relied heavily on Professor Benjamin’s article and sent copies of it to many of Hawai‘i’s state legislators. The United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit cited Professor Benjamin’s article in Williams v. Babbitt, 115 F.3d 657, 663, 665 (9th Cir. 1997), and in Rice v. Cayetano, 146 F.3d 1075, 1079 n.10 (9th Cir. 1998), but neither opinion accepts his perspective. See discussion infra notes 178-204, 303-311 and accompanying text.


27 Benjamin, supra note 21, at 558-92.

28 See id. at 593-94.
acknowledges that preferential programs for native people have been viewed as “political” rather than “racial” classifications under the line of cases following *Morton v. Mancari*, but he argues strenuously that this “political” characterization applies only to natives organized into federally recognized tribes because of language in the United States Constitution and in the *Mancari* opinion. His highly technical analysis wishes away or ignores precedents and arguments opposed to his perspective. Moreover, he pays scant attention to the fundamental policy justifications for separate or preferential programs for natives and to the international law principles that confirm the validity (and even necessity) of such programs. By focusing on the trees, he has missed the forest.

Professor Benjamin’s article is particularly mischievous because it has the appearance of providing the definitive analysis of a previously unexamined topic. In fact, however, courts have addressed this issue in the past and have ruled consistently that programs for Native Hawaiians should be examined using the same level of review that applies to programs for other Native Americans. The academic commentary has generally supported the proposition that programs for Native Americans should be viewed as political, but few articles have been written on the specific status of the Native Hawaiian people.

The only article that thus far has commented on Professor Benjamin’s views is one by Professor Philip P. Frickey of the University of Minnesota School of Law. After summarizing Professor Benjamin’s thesis, Professor Frickey asserts that “in federal Indian law, lawyerly analysis that is devoid of broader historical and theoretical perspectives leads to misleading conclusions about the determinancy and substance of what the law ‘is’ at any given moment.” He points out that “the weak superstructure of *Adarand* and *Mancari* cannot support the dense superstructure of analysis that Benjamin creates.”

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30 *See* Benjamin, *supra* note 21, *at* 558-92.

31 *See* discussion *infra* Part II.A.4


33 The only article cited by the Ninth Circuit in *Rice v. Cayetano*, 146 F.3d 1075, 1079 n.10 (9th Cir. 1998), as providing an opposing view to that of Professor Benjamin is John Van Dyke, *The Constitutionality of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs*, 7 I. HAW. L. REV. 63 (1985).


35 *Id.* at 1767.

36 *Id.* at 1764.
Frickey’s comments are incisive and correct, but his substantive critique of Benjamin is relatively brief, as well as peripheral to Frickey’s main focus, which is a methodological critique of recent trends in the scholarship of Federal Indian law. A more expansive critique of the entirety of Professor Benjamin’s analysis, with particular attention paid to the ramifications of Professor Benjamin’s thesis in the context of Native Hawaiians, is still needed.

The present effort to provide this critique begins in Part I with a historical background. Part I introduces some of the specific programs that have been established for Native Hawaiians, paying specific attention to congressional enactments that recognize the “special relationship” between the United States and the Native Hawaiian people. Part II explains why the constitutional decisional language upon which Professor Benjamin relies does not support his conclusion that rational basis review applies only to programs favoring federally recognized “Indian tribes.” Part II introduces the numerous judicial decisions that have uniformly rejected Professor Benjamin’s view, and it examines the Croson and Adarand opinions to see if they are designed to affect programs for native people. This part also explores what judicial scrutiny should apply to state government programs designed to aid native people and whether the programs established for Native Hawaiians can meet the “strict scrutiny”/“compelling state interest” test.

Part III synthesizes the material in Part II to offer a comprehensive standard the judiciary can use to evaluate programs designed to benefit native people. The conclusion that follows from this analysis is that preferential or separate programs for the Native Hawaiian people must be evaluated under the same “rational basis” standard of judicial review applicable to programs applied to other native groups and that such programs are rational and constitutional if they are designed to protect or promote self-governance, self-sufficiency, or native culture.

I. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Although Native Hawaiians controlled all of the land in the Hawaiian Islands when the nineteenth century began, almost all of it came under control of non-Hawaiians by the beginning of the twentieth century. The most significant event in the conversion of the communal land system to the Western system of private property ownership was the Mahele of 1848, during which the King conveyed about 1.5 million acres of the 4 million acres in the islands to the main chiefs, retaining about one million for himself (which became the “Crown Lands”) and assigning the final 1.5 million to the government (as “Government Lands”). Although it was expected that the common people would receive a substantial share during this distribution, only 28,600 acres were given to about 8,000 individual farmers. The fewer than 2,000 Westerners who lived on the islands were able to obtain large amounts of acreage from the chiefs and from the Government Lands, and by the end of the nineteenth century they had taken “over most of Hawai‘i’s land . . . and manipulated the economy for their own profit.”

Throughout this period, the Kingdom of Hawai‘i was recognized as an independent

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37 See id. at 1763-64.

38 See JOHN J. CHINEN, THE GREAT MAHELE 1-31 (1958); KAME‘ELEHIWA, supra note 2, at 201-318; MacKenzie, supra note 6, at 7.

39 See MacKenzie, supra note 6, at 9.

40 Levy, supra note 8, at 858.
nation and as a full member of the family of nations.\textsuperscript{41} It entered into four treaties with the United States,\textsuperscript{42} and signed treaties with a number of other nations.\textsuperscript{43}

In 1893, the Kingdom of Hawai`i “was overthrown and replaced by a provisional government,” which evolved into the Republic of Hawai`i. In the 1993 Apology Resolution, Congress acknowledged that the 1893 overthrow would not have been successful without the assistance of the U.S. troops who landed in Honolulu and the U.S. Minister, John L. Stevens, who indicated his support for the overthrow.\textsuperscript{44} The Apology Resolution characterized the overthrow as “illegal,” in violation of international law, and acknowledged that the United States had received the 1,800,000 acres of land “without the consent of or compensation to the Native Hawaiian people of Hawai`i or their sovereign government.”\textsuperscript{45}

In 1898 “[t]he United States accepted the cession of sovereignty of Hawai`i,” and “roughly 1,800,000 acres of crown, government, and public lands were ceded to the United States.”\textsuperscript{46} The Native Hawaiian people never had an opportunity to vote on whether they favored annexation by the United States.\textsuperscript{47} Petitions signed by 21,269 people (98\% of


\textsuperscript{42} The first of these four treaties was the Treaty with Hawaii on Commerce, Dec. 23, 1826, U.S.-HAW., 77 Consol. T.S. 34, reprinted in 3 U.S. DEP’T OF STATE, TREATIES AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ACTS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA 1819-1835, at 269 (Hunter Miller ed., 1933). The treaty was never ratified by the United States Senate, but the State Department considered it a valid international act, see 3 U.S. DEP’T OF STATE, supra at 274, and “for more than a decade, after Captain Jones had secured the signatures of Kaahumanu and Kalanimoku to this abortive treaty, American officials and residents of the Hawaiian Islands were seeking to impress upon the perplexed chiefs the sanctity of this agreement which the government of the United States refused to accept.” H. Bradley, Thomas Catesby Jones and the Hawaiian Islands, 1826-1827, 39 HAWAIIAN HIST. SOC’Y REP. 17, 25 (1931).


\textsuperscript{43} See Chock, supra note 40, at 464 & nn.7-18.

\textsuperscript{44} Apology Resolution, supra note 4, 107 Stat. at 1511 (“Whereas, without the active support and intervention by the United States diplomatic and military representatives, the [January 1893] insurrection against the Government of Queen Liliuokalani would have failed for lack of popular support and insufficient arms . . . .” (emphasis added)).

\textsuperscript{45} Id. at 1512, 1513. In Section 1 of the Act of June 30, 1997, the Hawai`i State Legislature referred with implicit approval to the historical summary in the 1993 Apology Resolution. See ch. 329, 1997 Haw. Sess. Laws 2072, 2073; see also supra note 18.

\textsuperscript{46} Rice v. Cayetano, 146 F.3d 1075; 1077 (9th Cir. 1998).

\textsuperscript{47} See TWIGG-SMITH, supra note 22, at 235-38 (defending the decision to deny the Hawaiian people the opportunity to vote on annexation); see also supra text accompanying note 69 (quoting language to this effect from the Apology Resolution).
whom were Native Hawaiians) were sent to Washington in 1897 to emphasize the lack of support for the annexation.48

From 1898 to 1959, Hawai`i was a territory of the United States,49 and during this period systematic efforts were made to discourage the use of the Hawaiian language and suppress expressions of Hawaiian culture.50 Although in earlier periods the United States had entered into explicit treaties with other native people whose land was taken, after the enactment of the Appropriations Act of 1871,51 the United States entered into no further formal treaties.52 The history of the status and treatment of Native Hawaiians (like that of the status and treatment of Alaska Natives) is thus different from that of American Indians in the 48 contiguous states. However, Native Hawaiians “developed their own trust relationship with the Federal Government as demonstrated by the passage of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act.”53 The remainder of the United States’ relations with Hawai`i would make this abundantly clear.

Indeed, the United States Congress could not be any more specific than it has been in affirming the existence of a “special relationship” between the United States and the Native Hawaiian people. In 1921, Congress enacted the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act

48 See Dan Nakaso, Anti-Annexation Petition Rings Clear, HONOLULU ADVERTISER, Aug. 5, 1998, at 1. These 21,269 petitions included the names of more than 50% of all the Native Hawaiians of all ages in Hawai`i at the time. See OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS, supra note 1, at 4 tbl.1.1.

49 The formal transfer of sovereignty from Hawai`i occurred on August 12, 1898, under the guidance of a residentially appointed annexation commission, see ch. 55, 30 Stat. 750, 751 (1898), but it was not actually until April 30, 1900, that the United States officially established the Territory of Hawai`i pursuant to the Organic Act of 1900. See An Act to Provide a Government for the Territory of Hawai`i, ch. 339, 31 Stat. 141 (1900) [hereinafter Organic Act]. See also 15 HAW. REV. STAT. ANN. 27 (Michie 1997) (describing in a historical note to the reprinting of the Organic Act the history of the transfer of sovereignty). It did so without any vote of the citizens of the former Kingdom of Hawai`i. See supra note 46 and accompanying text. This act recognized that the lands ceded to the United States were to be kept separate from the rest of the federal public lands and maintained in trust for the inhabitants of the islands. See id. § 73. The Hawaii`i Supreme Court later ruled that the United States had “no more than naked title to the public lands.” State v. Zimring, 566 P.2d 725, 737 (1977) (emphasis added).

50 See e.g., GAVAN DAWS, SHOAL OF TIME 309 (1968) (“Beginning in 1921 the schools were licensed by the territorial Department of Public Instruction. Teachers had to demonstrate a grasp of the English language, American history, and the ideals of democracy, and they had to pledge themselves to teach their students loyalty to the United States.”); KAME ELEHIWA, supra note 2, at 316 (“Once Hawai`i became an American territory in 1900, foreigners prohibited Hawaiian language and beat Hawaiian children for speaking it. As a result, we became ashamed to be Hawaiian.”); MAENETTE KAPE’AHIOKALANI ET AL., CULTURE AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN HAWAI`I 148-150 (1998) (describing the English-only policy during the 1920’s); NATIVE HAWAI`ANS STUDY COMMISSION, supra note 8, at 173-203 (describing the importance of and suppression of the Hawaiian language).

51 Ch. 120, 16 Stat. 544 (codified at 25 U.S.C. § 71 (1994)).

52 One provision of the Appropriations Act of 1871 required that, in the future, no Indian nation or tribe would be recognized as an entity with which the United States could make a treaty. See 25 U.S.C. § 71 (1994); see also Rice v. Cayetano, 963 F. Supp. 1547, 1553 (D. Haw. 1997) [hereinafter Rice v. Cayetano (II)]; FELIX S. COHEN’S HANDBOOK OF FEDERAL INDIAN LAW, supra note 17, at 105-07.

(“HHCA”), 54 which set aside about 200,000 of the lands the U.S. received in 1898 to provide residences and farm lots for Native Hawaiians. 55 Although this statute was well intended, the Homestead program had only marginal agricultural potential because of pressure from sugar interests that wanted to keep the best lands for themselves. 56 The program has never been properly funded, 57 and many of its lands remain undeveloped and unavailable for the many waiting applicants. 58

Even though the HHCA was an inadequate response to the needs of the Native Hawaiian people, its passage was nonetheless significant, in that it offered clear affirmation of the federal government’s trust responsibilities to the Native Hawaiian people. During the hearings that led to the passage of the HHCA, federal officials analogized the relationship between the United States and Native Hawaiians to the relationship that had previously been established between the United States and American Indians. 59

Subsequent developments reaffirmed the special relationship between the federal government and the Native Hawaiian people. In 1959, after a plebiscite in which the

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54 Supra note 3.

55 In this statute, “native Hawaiians” are defined as persons with at least 50% blood of the races inhabiting the Hawaiian Islands previous to 1778. Id. § 201(7). Hawaiian Homestead leases can be transferred to relatives who are only one-quarter Hawaiian. See id. § 209(a)(1).

56 See Levy, supra note 8, at 865; MacKenzie, supra note 6, at 17-18.


58 See MacKenzie, supra note 6, at 18. In 1995, as a result of litigation and a protracted negotiating period, the Hawai‘i State Legislature approved a $600 million settlement to the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands to compensate the Department for lands improperly conveyed from the Department during the territorial period, to be paid in $30 million increments over the next 20 years. See An Act Relating to Hawaiian Home Lands, ch. 14, §§ 6, 8, 1995 Haw. Sess. Laws 696, 700, 701; DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS, 1995 ANNUAL REPORT 1.

59 See Hearings Before the House Comm. on the Territories on the Rehabilitation and Colonization of Hawaiians and Other Proposed Amendments to the Organic Act of the Territory of Hawaii, 66th Cong. 129-30 (1920) (quoting Secretary of the Interior Franklin D. Lane as saying that the basis for granting special programs for Native Hawaiians is “an extension of the same idea” that justifies granting such programs for Indians); id. at 169 (quoting Representative Curry, the Chairman of the Committee, as saying: “[T]he Indians received lands to the exclusion of other citizens. That is certainly in line with this legislation, in harmony with this legislation.”); id. at 170 (quoting Chairman Curry, in response to a question from Representative Dowell about whether Native Hawaiians might be different because “we have no government or tribe organization to deal with,” as saying: “We have the law of the land of Hawaii from ancient times right down to the present where the preferences were given to certain classes of people.”); cf. Rice v. Cayetano (II), 963 F. Supp. 1547, 1551 (D. Haw. 1997) (quoting Secretary Lane as saying that Native Hawaiians should be “given as close identification with their country as is possible.”); Ahuna v. Dept. of Hawaiian Home Lands, 640 P.2d 1161, 1167 (Haw. 1982) (quoting Secretary Lane during the hearings as referring to Native Hawaiians as “our wards . . . for whom in a sense we are trustees”).
residents of Hawai`i voted overwhelmingly in favor of statehood, in the U.S. Congress admitted Hawai`i as the 50th state of the United States. In so doing, Congress required the new state government to accept responsibility for the Hawaiian Home Lands as a condition of statehood. Congress also conveyed, in trust to the state, another 1,200,000 acres of the lands that had been ceded to the United States in 1898. To emphasize the trust nature of these lands, the Admission Act stated that these lands had to be used for five listed purposes, including “the betterment of the conditions of the native Hawaiians.” However, “no benefits actually went to Hawaiians until the state constitution was amended in 1978.”

Since the early 1970s, Congress has enacted numerous statutes providing separate programs for Native Hawaiians or including them in benefit programs that assist other

60 Some Native Hawaiians have challenged the legitimacy of the 1959 vote because the only options given to the voters were to become a state or to remain a territory; they argue that the option of becoming independent or a freely associated state should also have been given to the voters. See Van Dyke, supra note 13, at 624 n.3. It is also sometimes argued that the United States violated international law by allowing large numbers of non-Hawaiians to immigrate to the islands thus depriving Native Hawaiians of their unique right to exercise self-determination in their native islands and thus undercutting the validity of the 1959 vote as an act of self-determination. See id.


62 See id. § 4.

63 See id. § 5(b).

64 Id. § 5(f), 73 Stat. at 6. The five stated purposes are:
[(1)] for the support of the public schools and other public educational institutions,
[(2)] for the betterment of the conditions of native Hawaiian, as defined in the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, 1920, as amended,
[(3)] for the development of farm and home ownership on as widespread a basis as possible,
[(4)] for the making of public improvement, and
[(5)] for the provision of lands for public use.

Id. This statute defined “native Hawaiians” by referring to the definition in the HHCA, supra note 3, which limited this category to persons with at least 50% aboriginal blood. See supra note 54.

According to Congress’s recent interpretation of the import of the Act, the United States “reaffirmed the trust relationship which existed between the United States and the Hawaiian people by retaining the legal responsibility of the State for the betterment of the conditions of Native Hawaiians under section 5(f) of the [Admission Act].” Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act Amendments of 1992, 42 U.S.C. § 11,701(16) (1994).

65 Rice v. Cayetano, 146 F.3d 1075, 1077 (9th Cir. 1998). The State had interpreted the Admission Act as allowing it to use the revenues for any one of the five purposes and had allocated all of it to public education. See MacKenzie, supra note 6, at 19.
native people. “The inclusion of Native Hawaiians in legislation promulgated primarily for the benefit of Native American Indians and the promulgation of legislation solely for the benefit of Native Hawaiians constitutes further compelling evidence of the continuing guardian-ward relationship between Native Hawaiians and the Federal Government.”


In two recent statutes—the 1993 Apology Resolution\textsuperscript{68} and the Native Hawaiian Education Act of 1994\textsuperscript{69}—Congress has explicitly acknowledged the special relationship that exists between the United States and the Native Hawaiian people. Congress confirmed in the Apology Resolution that Native Hawaiians are an “indigenous . . . people.”\textsuperscript{70} The Apology Resolution states that U.S. military and diplomatic support was essential to the success of the 1893 overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy and that this aid violated “treaties between the two nations and . . . international law.”\textsuperscript{71} Among the other findings in the Apology Resolutions are the following:

\begin{quote}
[The Republic of Hawaii . . . ceded 1,800,000 acres of crown, government and public lands of the Kingdom of Hawaii without the consent of or compensation to the native Hawaiian people of Hawaii or their sovereign government . . . .

. . . .

[The indigenous Hawaiian people never directly relinquished their claims to their inherent sovereignty as a people or over their national lands to the United States, either through
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{68} Apology Resolution. \textit{supra} note 4. The Apology Resolution is a statute of the United States Congress. It was passed by both chambers and then signed by President William Clinton on November 23, 1993, as a Joint Resolution, styled as Public Law 103-150, and prefaced with the caption “To acknowledge the 100th anniversary of the January 17, 1893 overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii, and to offer an apology to native Hawaiians on behalf of the United States for the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii.” \textit{Id.} at 1510, 1514. A “joint resolution” enacted by Congress as a public law and signed by the President is a statute of the United States and has the same effect as any other law enacted by Congress. \textit{See}, \textit{e.g.}, Ann Arbor R. Co. v. United States, 281 U.S. 658, 666 (1930) (treating a joint resolution as equivalent to any other legislation enacted by Congress); \textsc{Jack Davies}, \textsc{Legislative Law and Process in a Nutshell} 66(2d ed. 1986) (“A joint resolution originates in one house and, with the concurrence of the other house, has the force of official legislative action.”); \textsc{Robert U. Goehlert} & \textsc{Fenton S. Martin}, \textsc{Congress and Law-Making: Researching the Legislative Process} 42 (2d ed. 1989) (“In reality there is little difference between a bill and a joint resolution, as a joint resolution goes through the same procedure as a bill and has the force of law.”); \textsc{Hans A. Linde} \textit{et al.}, \textsc{Legislative and Administrative Processes} 110 (1981) (“The prescribed from of a proposal for a statute is generally called a bill, although Congress also uses the form of a joint resolution to enact legislation.”) (emphasis added); \textsc{Horace E. Read} \textit{et al.}, \textsc{Materials on Legislation} 129 (4th ed. 1982) (“In recent years much major legislation has taken the form of a joint resolution; it is no rather generally conceded that a joint resolution of Congress is just as much a law as a bill after passage and approval.”) (emphasis added); \textsc{L. Harold Levinson}, \textsc{Balancing Acts: Bowsher v. Synar, Garm-Rudman-Hoolings, and Beyond}, 72 \textsc{Cornell L. Rev.} 527, 545 (1987) (“Courts have consistently held that the legal effect of a joint resolution is identical to that of an enacted bill.”). Among the many notable joint resolutions that have been treated as having the effect of law are the joint resolution that annexed Texas to the United States, 9 Stat. 108 (1845); \textit{see} Texas v. White, 74 U.S. (7 Wall.) 700, 722, 726 (1868), and the joint resolution that annexed Hawai`i to the United States, 30 Stat. 750 (1898); \textit{see} United States \textit{v. Fullard-Leo}, 331 U.S. 256, 259, 265 (1947).


\textsuperscript{70} Apology Resolution, \textit{supra} note 4.

\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Id.} at 1510.
their moarchy or through a plebiscite or referendum. . . . 72

After documenting in detail the wrongs done to the Hawaiian people at the time of the illegal overthrow, including “the deprivation of the rights of Native Hawaiians to self-determination,”73 the Apology Resolution urges the President of the United States to “support reconciliation efforts between the United States and the Native Hawaiian people.”74

The findings in the 1994 Native Hawaiian Education Act reconfirm that “Native Hawaiians are a distinct and unique indigenous people,”75 that the Kingdom of Hawai‘i was overthrown with the assistance of officials of the United States,76 that the United States had apologized for “the deprivation of the rights of Native Hawaiians to self-determination,” and that “Congress affirmed the special relationship between the United States and the Native Hawaiians”77 through the enactment of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, the 1959 Admission Act, and other listed statutes.78 The description in these multiple federal statutes of the special trust relationship between the United States and the Native Hawaiians makes it clear that a “political” relationship exists.79

The State of Hawai‘i has also actively recognized the unique political, cultural, and socioeconomic position of the Native Hawaiian people in establishing separate and preferential programs for their benefit. In response to neglect in the administration of Hawai‘i’s trust lands,80 the delegates to Hawai‘i’s 1978 constitutional Convention proposed a series of amendments to Hawai‘i’s Constitution which were subsequently adopted by the Hawaiian people. One of these amendments affirmed that the State holds the ceded lands as a Public Land Trust, with Native Hawaiians and the general public as the two distinct named beneficiaries.81 Other amendments created the Office of Hawaiian

72 Id. at 1512 (emphasis added).
73 Id. § 1(3), 107 Stat. at 1513.
74 Id. § 1(5), 107 Stat. at 1513.
75 20 U.S.C. § 7902(1).
76 See id. § 7902(5).
77 Id. § 7902(8).
78 See 20 U.S.C. § 7902(7)-(13) (discussing a vast array of statutes).
79 See, e.g., Morton v. Mancari, 417 U.S. 545, 552-53 (1974) (describing the “special relationship” between Native Americans and the United States government as grounding their exemption from normal equal protection jurisprudence); see also infra part II.A. As we will soon see, the thrust from Professor Benjamin’s thesis is that the relationship between Native Hawaiians and the United States government cannot be characterized as a “special relationship.” See, e.g., Benjamin, supra note 21, at 558-592.
80 See supra note 63-64 and accompanying text.
81 HAW. CONST. art. XII, § 4. See Noelle M. Kahanu & Jon M. Van Dyke, supra note 13, at 446-451; MacKenzie, supra note 6, at 19.
Affairs ("OHA") and required the State to allocate a pro rata share of the revenues from the Public Land Trust to OHA to be used explicitly for the betterment of Native Hawaiians.\footnote{Id. art. XII, §§ 5-6. Section 6's reference to Native Hawaiians imports the definition from the HHCA, which is those with 50 percent or more aboriginal blood. See MacKenzie, supra note 5, at 19; supra note 50.}

Only persons who are at least one-half Hawaiian are eligible to receive homestead leases from the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands.\footnote{See HHCA, supra note 3, §§ 201(7), 208(1), 15 HAW REV. STAT. ANN. 331, 334, 357. Leases can be transferred to relatives who are only one-quarter Hawaiian. Id. § 209(a)(1), 15 HAW. REV. STAT. ANN. at 359.} At least four of the nine members of the Hawaiian Homes Commission must be at least one-fourth Hawaiian.\footnote{See id. § 202(a), 15 HAW. REV. STAT. ANN. at 358.} All nine members of the Board of Trustees of the OHA must be of Hawaiian ancestry,\footnote{See HAW. CONST. art. XII, § 5.} and only persons of Hawaiian ancestry can vote in the elections every two years to select Trustees.\footnote{See id.; see also discussion infra part II.A.4. In 1980, the Hawai`i Legislature determined that OHA should receive 20\% of the revenues generated from the ceded lands held in trust by the State of Hawai`i.\footnote{See HAW. REV. STAT. ANN. § 10-13.5 (Michie 1997).} Although substantial disputes remain regarding how much revenue OHA is owed, this revenue stream has already allowed OHA to accumulate more than $300,000,000 in funds.\footnote{Among the cases currently before the courts in which the OHA is seeking to increase its revenue base and prevent the State of Hawai`i from transferring ceded lands prior to a comprehensive settlement are: Office of Hawaiian Affairs v. Housing Financing Development Corporation, Civ. No. 94-4207-11 (Haw. 1st Cir. 1998) (seeking to prevent the State from transferring any of the ceded lands it holds in trust); Office of Hawaiian Affairs v. State, Civ. No. 94-0205 (Haw. 1st Cir. 1996) (concerning the revenues from the Duty Free Shops in Waikiki and other ceded lands’ revenues).}

More recently, in a statute enacted in 1993, the Hawai`i State Legislature recognized that “Native Hawaiians are a distinct and unique indigenous people” whose lands and sovereignty were illegally taken from them.\footnote{The statue read, in part: . . . the united States Minister and the naval representative of the United States cause armed forces of the United States to invade the sovereign Hawaiian Nation in support of the overthrow of the indigenous and lawful government, and the United States Minister thereupon extended diplomatic recognition to a provisional government formed by the conspirators without the consent of the native Hawaiian people or the lawful Government of Hawai`i in violation of treaties between the two nations and of international law . . . An Act Relating to Hawaiian Sovereignty, ch. 359 § 1(6), 1993 Haw. Sess. Laws 1009. 1010; cf. State v. Lorenzo, 883 P.2d 641, 643 (Haw. Ct. App. 1994) (stating that the Hawai`i State Legislature “has tacitly recognized the illegal overthrow”).} This statute created the Hawaiian Sovereignty Advisory Commission and initiated a process to facilitate “the efforts of native Hawaiians
to be governed by an indigenous sovereign nation of their own choosing.”90 The following year, the Legislature transformed the Hawaiian Sovereignty Advisory Commission into the Hawaiian Sovereignty Elections Council, citing the 1993 congressional Apology Resolution91 while again recognizing “the unique status that the native Hawaiian people bear to the State of Hawai`i and to the United States.”92 In 1996, the Election Council used funds from the State and from OHA to conduct the “Native Hawaiian Vote” to measure sentiment on pursuing a self-determination process.93 Only persons of Hawaiian ancestry were eligible to cast ballots in this election.94 In 1997, Hawai`i’s legislature again referred to the Apology Resolution and identified a process for returning lands to the Native Hawaiian people.95

The saga of the Native Hawaiian people demonstrates that the group has maintained strong historical and cultural bonds that have survived years of oppression. Native Hawaiians have lost their proper place in their own homelands, but their spirit, their link to their ancestors and heritage, and their determination to reestablish a sovereign Native Hawaiian nation continue. They are indigenous, native, aboriginal people under United States and international law and are entitled to their own cultural integrity, political autonomy, and all of the rights and privileges enjoyed by other native peoples.

II. THE GOVERNING JUDICIAL DECISIONS AND STATUTES DO NOT SUPPORT PROFESSOR BENJAMIN’S THESIS

Professor Benjamin argues that only those separate or preferential programs that are designed to aid “Indian tribes” formally recognized by the federal government are entitled to “rational basis” judicial review.96 Under his view, programs aiding any other collection of native people—especially after City of Richmond v. J.A. Croson Co. and Adarand


91 See supra notes 43-44, 69-73 and accompanying text.

92 Act Relating to Hawaiian Sovereignty, ch. 200 § 1, 1994 Haw. Sess. Laws 479, 479; see also 1 HAW. REV. STAT. ANN. § 6K-9 (Michie 1997) (stating that the Island of Kaho`olawe is to be transferred to “the sovereign native Hawaiian entity upon its recognition by the United States and the State of Hawaii”).

93 See supra note 14.

94 See Rice v. Cayetano (I), 941 F. Supp. 1529, 1535 (D. Haw. 1996) (observing that guidelines implemented by the Hawaiian Sovereignty Elections Council would restrict suffrage to Native Hawaiians); see also infra notes 106-167 (discussing litigation concerning the Native Hawaiian Vote).

95 See An Act Relating to the Public Land Trust, ch. 329, 1997 Haw. Sess. Laws 2072. The Act referred to Congress’s 1993 Apology Resolution as an accurate recounting of “the events of history relating to Hawai`i and Native Hawaiians” and called for a “lasting reconciliation” and “a comprehensive, just, and lasting resolution.” Id. at 2073. To achieve this goal, the Legislature provided partial funding to undertake a complete inventory of the Public Lands, see id. at 2076, and established a joint committee consisting of representatives of the Governor, the Legislature, and OHA to determine “whether the lands should be transferred to the Office Of Hawaiian Affairs in partial or full satisfaction of any past or future obligations under article XII, section 6 of the Hawaii Constitution.” Id. at 2079-80.

96 Benjamin, supra note 21, at 558-92.
Constructors v. Pena—must be reviewed under the “strict scrutiny” level of review which requires the government to demonstrate that it has a “compelling interest,” and that its policies are “narrowly tailored” to achieve that interest. 97 At the very least, he suggests, state (as opposed to federal) programs must be held to this higher standard. 98 He also contends it is almost impossible for programs designed to assist Native Hawaiians to meet this standard. The sections that follow analyze these contentions in some detail to explain their flaws.

A. Only “Indian Tribes” are Entitled to Have Preferential and Separate Programs Reviewed Under the “Rational Basis” Standard

As noted above, Professor Benjamin argues that only native people organized into federally recognized “Indian tribes” have the requisite “special relationship” with the federal government that justifies evaluating separate and preferential programs established for their benefit under deferential “rational basis” review. 99 He bases this argument (1) on the language in the Indian Commerce Clause of the U.S. Constitution 100 which gives Congress the power to regulate commerce “with the Indian tribes,” but, according to Professor Benjamin’s article, “not with Indians generally,” 101 and (2) on his view that Morton v. Mancari 102 “drew a sharp distinction between American Indians as a racial group and members of Indian tribes as a political group.” 103 Neither of these contentions is supported by logic or precedent. Indeed, federal and state courts have uniformly rejected Professor Benjamin’s position.

1. The Indian Commerce Clause

The Indian Commerce Clause authorizes Congress to regulate commerce with “Indian tribes.” Professor Benjamin argues that these are words of limitation that require nontribal natives to be treated differently from natives who are members of federally recognized tribes. 104 Nothing in the language or purpose of this clause supports this view. At the time our Constitution was drafted, Indian tribes were viewed as separate nations, and the relationship between the federal government and the tribes was formal in

97 Id. at 593-94.

98 See id. at 592-95.

99 Id. at 558-92

100 U.S. CONST. art. I, § 8, cl. 3 (“The Congress shall have Power . . . To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes . . .” (emphasis added)); see Benjamin, supra note 21, at 542-45, 561-62, 567, 585, 605.

101 Benjamin, supra note 21, at 561.


103 Benjamin, supra note 21, 558.

104 Id. at 561-62.
nature. Indians were not permitted to be citizens during the early years of our nation, even if they left their tribe or their tribal lands. The early decisions of the United States Supreme Court confirmed this formal relationship and held that state governments could not regulate activities on tribal lands and that state officials could not even enter such lands without invitation. It was perfectly normal for the framers of the Constitution to refer to “Indian tribes” rather than “Indians,” because all Indians were connected to tribal units and no efforts whatsoever were being made at that time to integrate the Indians into the larger citizenry.

The original Constitution does contain another reference to Indians in Article I, Section 2, Clause 3, which says that “Indians not taxed” shall not be counted for purposes of apportionment. Professor Benjamin argues that this reference should be disregarded as irrelevant today, because all Indians are now taxed. But his long footnote cannot erase the reality that the framers of the Constitution did recognize that individual Indians should be treated differently from other persons without regard to whether they were in “tribes.”

It is also important to recognize that the concept of a “tribe” has been malleable and elusive over the years. The leading treatise on Indian law states that “[t]he term tribe has no universal legal definition. There is no single federal statute defining an Indian tribe for all purposes.” Another leading book, written by a judge currently sitting on the Ninth Circuit, agrees that “there is no all-purpose definition of an Indian tribe.” A third author has written that:

[A] close scrutiny of the various executive orders, Congressional legislation, deparmental policies, Solicitor’s opinions, and judicial decisions since 1783 . . . discloses an astonishing oblivion of the need for an express declaration or statement regarding which

105 See, e.g., Cherokee Nation v. Georgia, 30 U.S. (5 Pet.) 1 (1831). Justice Marshall famously observed:

The numerous treaties made with [the Cherokees] by the United States recognized them as a people capable of maintaining the relations of peace and war, of being responsible in their political character of any violation of their engagements, or for any aggression committed on the citizens of the United States by any individual of their community. Laws have been enacted in the spirit of these treaties. The acts of our government plainly recognize the Cherokee nation as a state, and the Courts are bound by those acts.”

Id. at 16 (emphasis added); see also FELIX S. COHEN’S HANDBOOK OF FEDERAL INDIAN LAW, supra note 17, at 63 (“Treaties with Indian tribes are accorded the same dignity as that given to treaties with foreign nations.”).


108 Cf. U.S. CONST. amend. XIV, § 2 (reusing the term “Indians not taxed” in 1868 while stating that these individuals should not be counted when apportioning the U.S. House of Representatives).

109 See Benjamin, supra note 21, at 561-62 n.115.

110 FELIX S. COHEN’S HANDBOOK OF FEDERAL INDIAN LAW, supra note 17, at 3. See generally id. at 5-7.

111 CANBY, supra note 101, at 3.
Indian tribes were to be recognized, until the enactment of the Wheeler-Howard (Indian Reorganization) Act of 1934.\textsuperscript{112}

As a historical matter, “territorial officials who negotiated [Indian] treaties on behalf of the United States took the initiative in aggregating certain loose bands into designated tribes and even appointed many of the chiefs who signed the treaties.”\textsuperscript{113}

The reference to “Indian tribes” in the Indian Commerce Clause must be understood in a generic sense, referring to historical and cultural groupings of native people. Although Native Hawaiians were not historically organized in tribal units, they did have sophisticated and evolved forms of governance. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the islands became united under the leadership of Kamehameha I, and the Kingdom of Hawai`i was established, lasting nearly a century until its overthrow in 1893.\textsuperscript{114} Native Hawaiians are clearly the sort of historical and social grouping contemplated by the Indian Commerce Clause.


\textit{Morton v. Mancari} \textsuperscript{115} and its progeny\textsuperscript{116} state that preferences for native peoples are viewed as “political” rather than “racial” classifications, and are to be evaluated under a “rational basis” rather than a “strict scrutiny” test. The \textit{Mancari} case upheld a statutorily codified hiring preference for Indians in federally recognized tribes for positions in the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs (“BIA”).\textsuperscript{117} In an opinion written by Justice Harry Blackmun, the Court viewed this hiring preference not as a “racial” preference but as “an employment criterion reasonably designed to further the cause of Indian self-government and to make the BIA more responsive to the needs of its constituent groups. It is directed to


\textsuperscript{114} FELIX S. COHEN’S HANDBOOK OF FEDERAL INDIAN LAW, \textit{supra} note 17, at 799.


\textsuperscript{116} Among the many U.S. Supreme Court cases that follow \textit{Mancari} and uphold preferential or separate programs for native peoples are: \textit{Washington v. Washington State Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel Ass’n}, 443 U.S. 658 (1979); \textit{Wilson v. Omaha Indian Tribe}, 442 U.S. 653 (1979); \textit{Washington v. Confederated Bands and Tribes of the Yakima Indian Nation}, 439 U.S. 463 (1979); \textit{United States v. Antelope}, 430 U.S. 641 (1977); \textit{Delaware Tribal Business Committee v. Weeks}, 430 U.S. 73 (1977); \textit{Moe v. Confederated Salish and Kootanai Tribes}, 425 U.S. 463 (1976); \textit{Fisher v. District County Court}, 424 U.S. 382 (1976); \textit{Antoine v. Washington}, 420 U.S. 194 (1975). In each of these decision, the Court ruled unanimously that special treatment for native groups is permitted as long as the legislative program is rationally related to the government’s responsibility to promote or protect the self-governance, self-sufficiency, or culture of the native group concerned. \textit{See also} \textit{County of Oneida v. Oneida Indian Nation}, 470 U.S. 226, 253 (1985) (citing \textit{Mancari}).

participation by the governed in the governing agency.”

It is important to note that the Mancari preference was not free of racial overtones, because, as the Court observed, an individual did have to have “one-fourth or more degree Indian blood” to qualify for the preference. Although this racial criterion was necessary, it was not sufficient, because the individual also had to be a member of a federally recognized tribe to qualify for this particular statutory preference.

The Court thus recognized that it was dealing with a mixed political/racial category, but it nonetheless concluded without hesitation that the “rational basis” level of judicial review should apply, because the prominent feature of this category was the political relationship between the native people and the United States Government. The Court then concluded that the statute easily satisfied the rational basis level of judicial review because the statute was rationally related to the goal of promoting self-governance for the Indians. The link between being a member of a tribe and being eligible for this particular preference for BIA employment was also rational, because the primary responsibility of the BIA is to regulate tribal activities.

Professor Benjamin’s interpretation of Mancari focuses on footnote twenty-four of the opinion, where Justice Blackmun noted that the preference statute applied only to Indians in “federally recognized tribes.” Blackmun observed that this statutory limitation emphasized the self-determination and self-governance of the affected natives and provided further evidence for the view that the employment preference was “political” rather than “racial.” Benjamin’s reliance on this footnote is misplaced. The Supreme Court’s decisions that followed shortly after Mancari demonstrate that the Court itself did not view this footnote in the same restrictive light. In Delaware Tribal Business Committee v. Weeks and United States v. John, the Court upheld, under deferential judicial review, programs that provided benefits to or established separate legal regimes for individual Indians who were not organized into formal tribes.

Weeks involved a congressional statute that distributed assets to the heir of two recognized tribes, but the heirs receiving the benefits did not themselves have to be members of a tribe to receive the benefits. The majority opinion, written by Justice William Brennan, applied the Mancari test to the statute and ruled that the statute was legitimate and constitutional if it “can be tied rationally to the fulfillment of Congress’ unique obligation

118 417 U.S. at 554.

119 Id. (quoting 44 BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS MANUAL 33, § 3.1).

120 Id. at 546-48.

121 Id. at 553 n.24.


124 See John, 437 U.S. at 652-54; Weeks, 430 U.S. at 83-85. But cf. Benjamin, supra note 21, at 564-65 (attempting to distinguish these cases).

125 See 430 U.S. at 82 n.14 (“[S]ome nonmembers of the [Absentee Delaware] tribe are eligible [for financial benefits] under the statute.”).
toward the Indians.”126 Without making any special comment on the fact that benefits were going to individuals not affiliated with any tribe, the majority opinion indicated that Congress was free to “expand a class of tribal beneficiaries entitled to share in royalties from tribal lands”127 or to assign rights of individual Indians to the tribe.128 The bulk of the opinion for the Court discusses the claim by another group of nontribal Indians who sought a share of the distribution (the Kansas Delawares), and the Court ruled that Congress’s decision to exclude this group was rational and should not be disturbed under the rational basis level of judicial review recognized in Mancari.129

Of particular significance in the Weeks case is Justice Blackmun’s concurring opinion (joined by Cheif Justice Warren Burger), because Blackmun was the author of the earlier Mancari opinion. Justice Blackmun supported the majority’s conclusion in Weeks, but he criticized the majority’s facile conclusion that Congress rationally excluded the Kansas Delawares from the distribution.130 Nonetheless, Justice Blackmun concluded that “I am not persuaded that the Court errs in its conclusion.” He reaffirmed that the governing test is whether the congressional action was “unreasonable,”131 the very same test that had been applied in Mancari. Justice Blackmun also confirmed that the courts should set aside a legislative judgement only when it is completely without any foundation: “I conclude that we must acknowledge that there necessarily is a large measure of arbitrariness in distributing an award for a century-old wrong . . . . Congress must have a large measure of flexibility in allocating Indian awards, and what it has done here is not beyond the constitutional pale.”132

This decision obviously creates significant problems for Professor Benjamin’s theory, because both the majority and concurring opinions reject the distinction he tries to tease out of the Mancari opinion between tribal and nontribal Indians. If the author of the Mancari opinion has stated explicitly that “rational basis” review applies to Congressional enactments favoring nontribal Indians, how can Professor Benjamin remain adamant that a higher level of review is required by that decision? Professor Benjamin tries to distinguish Weeks by saying that the favored nontribal Indians could have been viewed as members of the tribe if a different requirement of membership had been used.133 This effort is neither persuasive nor successful in resuscitating the rigid distinction between tribal and nontribal

126 Id. at 85 (quoting Mancari, 417 U.S. at 555).

127 Id. at 84.

128 See id. at 85.

129 See id. at 85-90.

130 See id. at 90-91.

131 Id. at 91.

132 Id. (emphasis added). Justice Stevens dissented from the Weeks holding because he could find “no principled justification for the particular discrimination against the Kansas Delawares . . . . And . . . there is no reason to believe that the discrimination is the product of an actual legislative choice.” Id. at 97-98. Justice Stevens thus implicitly believed that it would be constitutionally permissible to distribute funds to nontribal Indians and explicitly agreed that such a distribution was required in this situation.

133 See Benjamin, supra note 21, at 565.
Indians that Professor Benjamin believes is the basis for the Mancari decision.

The John decision also presents an enormous problem for Professor Benjamin’s theory. While John is not an equal protection decision, the Court’s unanimous opinion—written by Justice Blackmun, the author of Mancari—completely ignores the supposedly crucial distinction between tribal and nontribal Indians that Benjamin reads into the Indian Commerce Clause. Instead, the John Court uses the Indian Commerce Clause to affirm Congress’s authority to establish a unique regime of criminal jurisdiction, preemptive of state jurisdiction, for nontribal Mississippi Indians. The Court did so even though the Indians were part of a mere “remnant of a larger group of Indians” that had long ago moved to Oklahoma. This separate regime was applicable to these Indians even though “federal supervision over them ha[d] not been continuous,” and even though the Solicitor for the Department of the Interior had noted that these Indians “cannot now be regarded as a tribe.” Justice Blackmun’s opinion stated that it was appropriate for the federal government to establish a separate program for them, because the federal government was nurturing a self-government process for these Indians and was anticipating more formal federal recognition in the future.

This decision effectively undercuts Professor Benjamin’s attempt to rely on Mancari’s footnote twenty-four to support his theory. The decision is also significant in demonstrating that separate legislative programs designed for nontribal natives who are in the process of attaining self-determination and becoming self-governing should be evaluated under deferential review. The Native Hawaiians are in this same posture, and are now going through a process of self-determination designed to examine sovereignty options and to decide what model is appropriate for them. If a separate legal regime established by the federal government to advance the self-determination process is constitutional for the nontribal Mississippi Choctaws, as the United States Supreme Court ruled, then it must be constitutional for the Native Hawaiians.

In a series of sentences with an uncharacteristic lack of footnotes, Professor Benjamin attempts to explain away the John decision by asserting that “John was a member of the Choctaw tribe.” But the Court’s opinion states that “there was no legal entity known as ‘the Choctaw tribe of Mississippi,’” so of which “tribe” was Mr. John a member? Professor Benjamin appears here to be using the concept of “tribe” in a more generic sense, and, if such use is permissible, it is hard to explain why the Native Hawaiians cannot also be characterized as a “tribe.”

134 437 U.S. at 653.

135 Id.

136 Id. at 650 n.20 (emphasis added) (quoting Memorandum from the Solicitor for the Department of the Interior (Aug. 31, 1936), reprinted in FELIX S. COHEN’S HANDBOOK OF FEDERAL LAW, supra note 17, at 273).

137 See id. (“[T]he Department of the interior anticipated that a more formal legal entity, a tribe for the purposes of federal Indian law, soon would exist.”).

138 See generally Kahanu & Van Dyke, supra note 13, at 430-36 (discussing the variety of arrangements adopted by other self-governing native groups).

139 Benjamin, supra note 21, at 565.

140 John, 437 U.S. at 650 n.20.
The overriding themes that emerge from these Supreme Court decisions are that judgements regarding the governance of natives are political in nature, that each situation requires an individualized solution because of its unique historical context, and that the courts must allow Congress the flexibility it needs to provide rough justice to each different native group. No absolutes—certainly not the rigid limitation against aiding nontribal natives upon which Professor Benjamin erroneously insists—have emerged to limit the power of Congress.

3. Mancari in the Lower Courts

The Supreme Court’s flexible and pragmatic approach is implemented in a 1982 decision of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit that addressed the unique situation of the Alaskan Natives in some detail. In Alaska Chapter, Associated General Contractors v. Pierce, an association of private contractors challenged the requirement established by Congress and enforced by HUD that contractors give a preference when awarding subcontracts on housing projects to “Indian organizations and Indian-owned economic enterprises.” The district court had ruled that this preference was unconstitutional because it fell outside what the district judge believed was the outer perimeter of the Mancari principle, which, according to the district court, allowed classifications based on race only for “functions designed to further Indian self-government” of native people. The Ninth Circuit reversed, citing Supreme Court cases decided before and after Mancari to emphasize that the Mancari opinion meant what it said when it stated that “the special treatment [of natives] need only be rationally related to the furtherance of Congress’ unique obligation toward the Indians.” The Ninth Circuit then concluded that programs designed to promote the economic well-being and self-sufficiency of the natives certainly fell within the boundaries of this test.

The Pierce decision is important, because it examines in some detail whether the Mancari standard of judicial review extends beyond programs governing Indian tribes to those covering individual Indians, while also addressing who exactly is an “Indian.” These issues were directly raised by the facts of the case, because the preference went to any Indian organization or enterprise and “Indian” was defined in the HUD regulations as “any person recognized as being an Indian or Alaskan Native by a tribe, the Government, or any state.”

The court explained that “Alaskan Natives have not historically been organized into

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141 694 F.2d 1162 (9th Cir. 1982).
142 Id. at 1164 (quoting 25 U.S.C. § 450e(b) (1994)).
143 Id. at 1167.
145 Pierce, 649 F.2d at 1167 (paraphrasing the language in Mancari, 417 U.S. at 555).
146 Id. at 1168 n.8 (quoting 24 C.F.R. § 805.102 (1998)).
reservations or into tribal units” but concluded that they had nonetheless been placed “under the guardianship of the federal government and entitled to the benefits of the special relationship” pursuant to the language in the 1867 treaty purchasing Alaska. All the different Alaskan Natives (including Eskimos and Aleuts) are thus entitled to be considered to be “Indians” under federal law, and programs established for their benefit are entitled to the same deferential “rational basis” judicial review given to programs for other Native American. Courts have uniformly followed the path of *Pierce* in interpreting the proper contours of the *Mancari* test.

### a. Judicial Decisions on the Status of Native Hawaiians

The state and federal courts in Hawai`i, as well as the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, have applied the *Mancari* approach broadly to cover all native people and have consistently ruled that separate and preferential programs for Native Hawaiians are “political” rather than “racial” and thus must be evaluated under the “rational basis” level of judicial review that applies to other native people. For example, the Hawai`i Supreme Court reached this conclusion in *Ahuna v. Department of Hawaiian Home Lands*. This case involved the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, which had been established in 1921 to provide housing for persons with fifty percent or more Hawaiian blood. To determine “the extent or nature of the trust obligations” owed to the Native Hawaiians by this department, the court turned to “well-settled principles enunciated by the federal courts regarding lands set aside by Congress in trust for the benefit of other native Americans, i.e., American Indians, Eskimos, and Alaska natives,” because it recognized that Native Hawaiians have the same legal status as these other native peoples: “Essentially we are dealing with relationships between the government and aboriginal people. *Reason thus dictates that we draw the analogy between native Hawaiian homesteaders and other native Americans.*”

The federal district court judges in Hawai`i have also ruled without exception that separate and preferential programs for Native Hawaiians should be evaluated under “rational basis” review. Judge David Ezra has written four opinions reaching this

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147 *Id.* at 1169 n.10.


149 640 P.2d 1161 (Haw. 1982).

150 *See supra* notes 53-58 and accompanying text.

151 *Ahuna*, 640 P.2d at 1168.

152 *Id.*

153 *Id.* at 1169 (emphasis added); *see also* Public Access Shoreline Hawaii v. Hawai`i County Planning Comm’n, 903 P.2d 1246 (Haw. 1995) (recognizing the traditional and customary rights of native Hawaiians).

conclusion, starting with Naliielu`a v. Hawai`i\textsuperscript{155} which held that the preference for Native Hawaiians given by the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands is constitutional because of its link to self-governance and self-sufficiency. Later, in Pai `Ohana v. United States\textsuperscript{156} Judge Ezra quoted from his conclusion in Naliielu`a that

\begin{quote}
[a]lthough Hawaiians are not identical to the American Indians whose lands are protected by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the court finds that for purposes of equal protection analysis, the distinction . . . is meritless. Native Hawaiians are people indigenous to the State of Hawai`i, just as American Indians are indigenous to the mainland United States.\textsuperscript{157}
\end{quote}

He later explained the Naliielu`a holding by saying that “[t]he court was convinced that the relationship between the Native Hawaiians as the aboriginal people of the Hawaiian Islands and the State of Hawai`i was sufficiently similar to that of American Indians and the United States to bypass the strict scrutiny requirement.”\textsuperscript{158}

In Silva v. United States\textsuperscript{159} Judge Helen Gillmor built on these decisions in upholding the constitutionality of the requirement that the Turstees of OHA be of Hawaiian ancestry. Citing Naliielu`a, Judge Gillmor concluded that “the limitation on OHA Board membership is permissible because it promotes the legitimate goal of fostering Hawaiian self-government.”\textsuperscript{160}

Judge Ezra returned to this question in the two opinions he issued in the case of Rice v. Cayetano\textsuperscript{161} Harold F. Rice, a Caucasian rancher living on the Big Island of Hawai`i, challenged state legislation and regulations stating that only persons of Hawaiian ancestry could vote in both the “Native Hawaiian Vote,” a mail ballot in 1996 to determine the sentiment of the Hawaiian people toward self-government, and the election for the Trustees of the OHA.\textsuperscript{162} These two opinions directly addressed the arguments offered by

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\textsuperscript{155} 795 F. Supp. 1009 (D. Haw. 1990), aff’d, 940 F.2d 1535 (9th Cir. 1991).
\textsuperscript{156} 875 F. Supp. 680 (D. Haw. 1995), aff’d, 76 F.3d 280 (9th Cir. 1996).
\textsuperscript{157} Id. at 697 n.35.
\textsuperscript{160} Id., slip op. at 7.
\textsuperscript{161} Rice v. Cayetano (II), 963 F. Supp. 1547 (D. Haw. 1997); Rice v. Cayetano (I), 941 F. Supp. 1529 (D. Haw. 1996). Only the second of these opinions reached the Ninth Circuit. See Rice v. Cayetano, 146 F.3d 1075 (9th Cir. 1998); see also infra notes 178-204 and accompanying text.
\textsuperscript{162} See infra notes 85, 93.
\end{flushright}
Professor Benjamin and completely rejected them.\textsuperscript{163} In the first opinion, Judge Ezra concluded that the Hawaiians-only Native Hawaiian Vote constituted a constitutionally acceptable “political classification.”\textsuperscript{164} He cited the \textit{Weeks} and \textit{John} cases to support the conclusion that “[t]he Supreme Court has itself applied the rational basis test in reviewing preferential legislation for American Indians not belonging to federally recognized tribes.”\textsuperscript{165}

Judge Ezra observed that “Congress has clearly indicated that the Native Hawaiians have a special relationship with the United States government that closely parallels that of the American Indians,”\textsuperscript{166} and that this “special relationship with the United States . . . removes [the statute establishing the Native Hawaiian Vote] from heightened constitutional scrutiny.”\textsuperscript{167} The rational basis test applies because of this congressionally recognized “special relationship.” Judge Ezra concluded that the test is satisfied in the case of the Native Hawaiian Vote. Acting as “the appointed guardian of the Hawaiian home lands and as trustee of the public trust created by the federal government in the Admission Act,” the State of Hawai`i has a responsibility to promote self-governance, and the administration of the Native Hawaiian Vote was a logical step toward that goal.\textsuperscript{168} Judge Ezra’s second Rice opinion\textsuperscript{169} confronted the issue of whether it is constitutional for the State of Hawai`i to prevent persons who are not Native Hawaiians from voting to elect OHA’s Trustees. In this opinion, the judge examined in more detail the argument that the Mancari rational basis review approach “is not controlling because Native Hawaiians are not a recognized Indian tribe.”\textsuperscript{170} Judge Ezra first acknowledged that the Hawaiians are not a federally recognized “tribe” and noted that they cannot obtain that status under current federal law,\textsuperscript{171} which says that only “those American Indian groups indigenous to the \textit{continental} United States”\textsuperscript{172} are eligible for this status. Judge Ezra then observed, however, that “Native Hawaiians were incorporated into the United States twenty years after the treaty making era

\textsuperscript{163} Professor Benjamin saw the first of Judge Ezra’s Rice opinions prior to the publication of his article and says simply that the judge “addressed the question fairly briefly.” Benjamin, \textit{supra} note 21, 540. The judge’s analysis of the constitutional questions raised by the plaintiffs covers over 12 pages in the Federal Supplement, \textit{see Rice(I)}, 941 F. Supp. at 1539-52, with four of those pages focusing directly on the Equal Protection Clause issue, \textit{id.} at 1540-44.

\textsuperscript{164} \textit{Rice (I)}, 941 F. Supp. at 1541.

\textsuperscript{165} \textit{Rice (I)}, 941 F. Supp. at 1542.

\textsuperscript{166} \textit{Id.} (citing numerous federal statutes).

\textsuperscript{167} \textit{Id.} at 1543.

\textsuperscript{168} \textit{Id.}


\textsuperscript{170} \textit{Id.} at 1549.

\textsuperscript{171} \textit{Id.} at 1553 & n.7; \textit{see also Rice (I)}, 941 F. Supp. at 1542 n.16.

\textsuperscript{172} 25 C.F.R. § 83.3 (1998) (emphasis added).
with Native Americans was finished,” 173 and hence that the types of documents that regulate relationships with other natives were not developed for Native Hawaiians. Noting that Congress has recognized that a special relationship exists between the United States and Native Hawaiians in numerous enactments, 174 Judge Ezra ultimately concluded therefore that legislation favoring or providing separate programs for Native Hawaiians must be evaluated under the same rational-basis review that applies to other native groups because the Native Hawaiians have “developed their own trust relationship with the Federal Government. . . As it is the unique guardian-ward relationship that is paramount, not formal recognition, the court finds that Morton [v. Mancari] is equally applicable to Native Hawaiians as to formally recognized Native Americans.” 175 In reaching this conclusion, Judge Ezra ruled explicitly that the restriction of OHA elections to Native Hawaiians “is not based on race, but upon a recognition of the unique status of Native Hawaiians.” 176 Perhaps most compelling, however, are the conclusions of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, which has always recognized that Native Hawaiians are a separate people and have upheld and enforced the separate programs that have been established for them. 177 The Ninth Circuit has also repeatedly observed that the Admission Act’s ceding of land to the new State of Hawai‘i in the Admission Act gave rise to a “trust obligation” between the United States and Native Hawaiians. 178 One recent decision is particularly noteworthy. In 1998, the Ninth Circuit directly addressed the status of Native Hawaiians when reviewing Judge Ezra’s second opinion in Rice v. Cayetano, 179 which concerned the

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173 963 F. Supp. at 1553.
174 See id. at 1553-54 & nn.8-9; c.f. supra note 65 (listing additional statutes).
175 Id. at 1553-54 (emphasis added).
176 Id. (emphasis added).
177 See, e.g., Pai `Ohana v. United States, 76 F.3d 280 (9th Cir. 1996) (recognizing the existence and legitimacy of Native Hawaiian tenant rights created under the Hawai‘i State Constitution and state statutes); Napeahi v. Paty, 921 F.2d 897 (9th Cir. 1990) (concluding that submerged lands surrounding the Hawaiian Island were included in the public land trust, the proceeds of which should properly be used for the benefit of Native Hawaiians pursuant to the 1959 Admission Act).
178 See, e.g., Price v. Akaka, 928 R.2d 824, 826-28 (9th Cir. 1991) (holding that Native Hawaiians had standing to bring claims under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 to challenge expenditures of the Trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs because of “trust obligations” established by Congress in section 5(f) of the 1959 Admission Act); Price v. Hawai‘i, 764 F.2d 623, 627 (9th Cir. 1985) (examining the applicability of federal court original jurisdiction statute for Indian tribe cases, and observing that “native Hawaiians in general may be able to assert a longstanding aboriginal history” sufficient to give rise to standing under the statute, and that the 1959 Admission Act codified “a trust obligation” between the United States and the Native Hawaiian people “that constitutes a ‘compact with the United States.’”); Keaukaha-Panaewa Community Ass’n v. Hawaiian Homes Comm’n, 739 F.2d 1467 (9th Cir. 1984) (finding the same rights of action for the same reasons in a claim filed by Native Hawaiians against a county’s appropriation of trust lands).
179 Rice v. Cayetano, 146 F.3e 1075 (9th Cir. 1998), aff’g Rice v. Cayetano (II), 963 F. Supp. 1547 (d. Haw. 1997).
constitutionality of preventing non-Hawaiians from voting for the OHA.\textsuperscript{180} Although the opinion is written cautiously, it contains clear language recognizing the special status of the Native Hawaiian people. It concludes decisively that this separate program for Native Hawaiians is constitutional.\textsuperscript{181}

The opinion for a unanimous panel, written by Judge Pamela Ann Rymer, begins its substantive analysis by noting that “the constitutionality of the racial classification that underlies the trusts and OHA is not challenged in this case,”\textsuperscript{182} and that the only issue before the court is whether the restrictive voting system used to elect OHA Trustees is constitutional.\textsuperscript{183} The opinion then examines the issue under the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments and concludes that the restriction to persons of Hawaiian ancestry is constitutional because “the voting restriction is not primarily racial, but legal or political.”\textsuperscript{184}

The court reaches this conclusion even though it recognizes that the provisions in Hawai`i’s Constitution\textsuperscript{185} and statutes\textsuperscript{186} restricting voters to persons of Hawaiian ancestry do “contain a racial classification on their face.”\textsuperscript{187} The court notes that “restricting voter eligibility to Hawaiians cannot be understood without reference to what the vote is for,”\textsuperscript{188} After explaining that the OHA has limited rather than general governmental powers, the court draws a rough analogy between restricting the OHA franchise to those voters of Hawaiian ancestry and restricting the franchise of special purpose water-district elections to property owners, a longstanding practice which has been found constitutional by the United States Supreme Court.\textsuperscript{189} But the court also concludes that although the water-district cases have some “applicability,” they are not “dispositive,” because this case involves a

\textsuperscript{180} See supra text accompanying notes 81-87 (discussing OHA).

\textsuperscript{181} See Rice, 146 F.3d at 1082.

\textsuperscript{182} Id. at 1079. The footnote to this remark reads as follows: “In this connection, we note that the scholarly work upon which Rice relies—and others that we have read—focuses on the underlying arrangement and its constitutionality, not on the voting rights provision at issue here.” Id. at 1079 n.10 (citing to Benjamin, supra note 21, and Van Dyke, supra note 32).

\textsuperscript{183} See id. at 1079

\textsuperscript{184} Id.

\textsuperscript{185} See HAW. CONST. art. XII, § 5.

\textsuperscript{186} 2 HAW. REV. STAT. ANN. § 13D-3(b) (Michie 1995). See also id. § 10-2 (defining the term “Hawaiian” as “any descendant of the aboriginal peoples inhabiting the Hawaiian Islands which exercised sovereignty and subsisted in the Hawaiian Islands in 1778, and which peoples thereafter have continued to reside in Hawaii.”)

\textsuperscript{187} Rice, 146 F.3d at 1079.

\textsuperscript{188} Id. at 1079-80.

\textsuperscript{189} Id. at 1080 (citing Salyer Land Co. v. Tulare Water Dist., 410 U.S. 719 (1973); and Ball v. James, 451 U.S. 355 (1981)).
qualification based on “race instead of ownership of land.”

Judge Rymer next turns to the special status of the Native Hawaiian people and states that “the voting restriction for trustees is rooted in historical concern for the Hawaiian race,” citing the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, the Admission Act, and the 1993 Apology Resolution. She then recognizes the analogy between Native Hawaiians and other Native Americans: “In this sense, the special treatment of Hawaiians and native Hawaiians reflected in the establishment of trusts for their benefit, and the creation of the OHA to administer them, is similar to the treatment of Indians that the Supreme Court approved in Morton v. Mancari.”

Just as it has earlier said of the special-district voting cases, the opinion states that Mancari is not “controlling,” but Mancari appears to be at least helpful in convincing the court that this unique election procedure is constitutional. The opinion then connects the water-district and Mancari rationales to conclude that “to permit only Hawaiians to vote in special elections for trustees of a trust that we must presume was lawfully established for their benefit does not deny non-Hawaiians the right to vote in any meaningful sense” and therefore that Rice’s Fifteenth Amendment right to vote has not been violated.

After proceeding cautiously and carefully through the Fifteenth Amendment analysis, the Ninth Circuit provides a dramatic and sweeping Fourteenth Amendment opinion. Judge Rymer states without hesitation that restricting the vote to persons of Hawaiian ancestry meets the “rational basis” level of judicial review: “We have no trouble understanding why Hawai‘i would want the people who have an interest in the trust to vote for trustees, and it is rational for the state to make this decision in light of its trust responsibilities for Hawaiians and native Hawaiians.”

Then, in the climactic part of the opinion, the court rules that this electoral scheme also meets the “strict scrutiny” level of judicial review because of “the special trust

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190 Id.
191 Id.
192 See supra note 4.
193 Rice, 146 F.3d at 1081 (emphasis added) (citation omitted). The court also cited Alaska Chapter, Associated General Contractors v. Pierce, 694 F.2d 1162, 1168 no.10 (9th Cir. 1982), for the proposition that “preferential treatment that is grounded in the government’s unique obligation toward Indian is a political rather than a racial classification, even though racial criteria may be used in defining eligibility.” Rice, 146 F.3d at 1081. Pierce is discussed supra in text accompanying notes 140-147.
194 See Rice, 146 F.3d at 1081.
195 Id. The court distinguishes the classic Fifteenth Amendment cases, see, e.g., Gomillion v. Lightfoot, 364 U.S. 339 (1960); Smith v. Allwright, 321 U.S. 649 (1944); Lane v. Wilson, 307 U.S. 268 (1939), by emphasizing that the OHA election is “not equivalent to a general election.” Rice, 146 F.3d at 1081. The Court instead characterizes the OHA election as one to select persons to manage trust resources and concludes that it is perfectly logical to limit the voters to persons in the beneficiary class in order to “enhance representative governance and decision-making accountability.” Id. at 1081 n.18 (quoting Standing Comm. Rep. No. 59, reprinted in 1 PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION OF HAWAII OF 1978, at 644).
relationship” between the state and the Native Hawaiian people and the government’s responsibility to promote native self-government. This language, central to the opinion, is quoted here in full:

[E]ven if the voting restriction must be subjected to strict judicial scrutiny because the classification is based explicitly on race, it survives because the restriction is rooted in the special trust relationship between Hawaii and the descendants of aboriginal peoples—who subsisted in the Islands in 1778 and still live there—which is not challenged in this appeal. Thus the scheme for electing trustees ultimately responds to the state’s compelling responsibility to honor the trust, and the restriction on voter eligibility is precisely tailored to the perceived value that a board “chosen from among those who are interested parties would be the best way to insure proper management and adherence to the needed fiduciary principles.”

The opinion ends by addressing the “narrowly tailored” component of the “strict scrutiny” test, concluding that “the restriction on voter eligibility is precisely tailored” to allowing the beneficiaries to manage their resources, and that “there is no race-neutral way to accord only those who have a legal interest in management of trust assets a say in electing trustees.”

This important opinion does not resolve all of the constitutional questions concerning preferential and separate programs for Native Hawaiians, but it goes a long way toward clarifying these issues and putting to rest the view that all separate and preferential programs for Native Hawaiians are in danger of being declared unconstitutional. The opinion characterizes Native Hawaiians as “descendants of aboriginal peoples.” It explicitly recognizes the “historical concern for” and “special treatment of” Native Hawaiians by the governments of the United States and the State of Hawai`i and “the special trust relationship” that now exists. By focusing on the ultimate purpose for the establishment of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, i.e., to create a mechanism whereby the Native Hawaiian people could control their own land resources through their own elected representatives, the court recognizes that the important goal of promoting and facilitating


198 Id. at 1082.

199 Id.

200 Id.

201 Id. at 1080.

202 Id. at 1081.

203 Id. at 1082.

204 At two locations, the opinion quoted from Standing Committee Report No. 59 of the 1978 Constitutional Convention of Hawaii; that report emphasized that the purpose of creating OHA was to allow the Native Hawaiian people to elect their own representatives and to control their own assets. See 146 F.3d at 1081 n.18; id. at 1082.
self-governance for all natives also applies to the Native Hawaiian people. Although the opinion states cautiously that “[w]e express no opinion on the constitutionality of the underlying trust structure, or of OHA’s purposes,” the court explains why this “underlying trust structure” was established and concludes that Native Hawaiians, like other natives, are entitled to control their own resources through their own elected representatives. Unless the reasoning and analytical approach found in this opinion is completely rejected, a future court would have to conclude that the “underlying trust structure” and the establishment of OHA are also constitutional.

b. Other Decisions Rejecting Professor Benjamin’s Approach

The native population whose legal status is analogous to that of the Native Hawaiians is the Alaskan Natives. These natives, a heterogeneous mix of peoples including Eskimos, Indians, and Aleuts, were also excluded from federal benefit programs for many years. Like Hawai`i, Alaska became part of the United States after the period of signing treaties with Indians ended, and the rights of the Native Alaskans were largely ignored until passage of the Alaskan Native Claims Settlement Act (“ANCSA”) in 1971. Once Congress did begin enacting preferential and separate programs for the Alaskan Natives, the courts immediately recognized that it was appropriate to evaluate these programs under the same “rational basis” standard of judicial review that applied to programs for Indians in the lower forty-eight states.

In Morton v. Ruiz, issued four months prior to Morton v. Mancari, the Supreme Court discussed the special status of “Indians” in Alaska, thereby implying that all Alaskan Natives are “Indians” for purposes of determining the appropriate level of judicial review. In 1976, five years after the passage of ANCSA and two years after Mancari, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit stated that, when the term “Indians” appears in federal statutes, this word, “as applied to Alaska, includes Aleuts and Eskimos,” and that “the word ‘Indian’ is commonly used in this country to mean ‘the aborigines of America,’” i.e., all peoples that are native to what is now the United States.

Two years later, in 1978, Chief Judge James von der Heydt of the United States District Court for the District of Alaska issued an important opinion in the case of Eric v. 205

205 Id. at 1079 n.11.


209 See id. at 212.

210 Pence v. Kleppe, 529 F.2d 135, 138 n.5 (9th Cir. 1976) (holding that Alaskan Natives may file claims for allotments of public lands under the Alaska Native Allotment Act).

211 Id. (quoting United States v. Native Village of Unalakleet, 411 F.2d 1255 (Ct. Cl. 1969)).
Secretary of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development concluding without qualification or limitation that the “common law doctrine” that the “federal government stands in a fiduciary relationship to native Americans applies to Alaska natives.”

To emphasize this conclusion, he added that “[t]he fact that a treaty between the United States and Alaska Natives never existed does not affect the existence of the trust relationship.”

The dispute in Eric involved a claim brought by native villagers in western and northern Alaska that the United States had violated its trust responsibilities in administering the Barlett Act, which had been enacted to provide housing funds for Alaskan Natives. The court noted the Senate Report’s indication that this program was “directed at ‘the Eskimos, Indians, and Aleuts [who] are in urgent need of such assistance’” without any requirement that these natives be formally organized into federally recognized tribes. Citing Morton v. Ruiz, Chief Judge von der Heydt rejected the narrow arguments presented by the federal lawyers and stated that “[t]he trust doctrine is not limited to situations in which the government is managing property owned by an Indian tribe as defendants contend.”

The court also explicitly rejected the argument presented by the federal lawyers that it would be “impermissible” to provide housing for natives and not for nonnatives, ruling that “it is the very nature of the trust doctrine that it apply to Native Americans and not to others. Such a distinction is neither unusual nor impermissible.”

Numerous other decisions—including in particular the Pierce case discussed above—have treated Alaska Natives as “Indians” for a variety of purposes.

Although few courts outside of Alaska and Hawai‘i have confronted the argument that programs aiding nontribal Indians must endure “strict scrutiny, those that have addressed this argument have rejected it. They have ruled, for example, that it is not a


213 Id. at 46.

214 Id. at 46-47.


216 Eric, 464 F. Supp. at 49 (quoting S. REP. NO. 89-1455. 16-20 (1966)).

217 Id. (emphasis added).

218 Id.

219 Id. (citation omitted) (citing United States v. Antelope, 430 U.S. 641 (1977)).

220 See supra text accompanying notes 140-147.

221 See, e.g., Alaska Pacific Fisheries v. United States, 248 U.S. 78, 89-90 (1918); Territory of Alaska v. Annette Island Packing Co., 289 F. 671, 674 (9th Cir. 1923) (holding that nontribal Indians who had moved from British Columbia, Canada, to Alaska were nonetheless “wards” of the United States who stood “in the same relationship to the United States as do Indians on other reservations”), 263 U.S. 708 (1923); Aguilar v. United States, 474 F. Supp. 840, 846 (D. Alaska 1979) (holding that some high fiduciary standards that apply to other Native Americans also apply to Native Alaskans).
violation of federal statutes or the Constitution to spend federal funds on projects for Native Americans, even if the funding is given to an organization that is not an “Indian tribe” and even if the organization provides housing for nontribal natives.

The case most directly on point is *St. Paul Intertribal Housing Board v. Reynolds*,222 which examined the issue of whether federal funds administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (“HUD”) could be provided to a nonprofit corporation established to provide housing for low-income Indian families. The Office of Legal Counsel of the Department of Justice argued that HUD funds could not be provided to this nonprofit corporation because it was not an “Indian tribe” and because its benefits extended to nontribal Indians. The court rejected this argument, resting its decision on three bases. The first was the variety of congressional enactments promoting housing assistance for Indians generally,223 the second was the decisions in *Morton v. Ruiz* and *Eric v. Secretary of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development*,224 and the third was the canon of interpretation that “statutes passed for the benefit of Indians must be liberally construed in their favor.”225 The court therefore applied a rational basis test to this deployment of funds to nontribal Indians.226

Another relevant precedent is *Little Earth of United Tribes, Inc. v. United States Department of Housing and Urban Development*,227 which involved an effort by HUD to foreclose its mortgage on the Little Earth Housing Project in Minneapolis, “the only major, urban housing project in the country run by American Indians.”228 It was developed and run by the South High Nonprofit Housing Corporation, an organization created in 1971 for this purpose with the assistance of HUD, which insured loans and provided subsidy “interest reduction payments.”229 In 1975, South High was restructured under the sponsorship of the American Indian Movement and renamed the Little Earth of United Tribes, Inc.230 The court permitted HUD to foreclose on its mortgage, but, in the course of its opinion, it noted that “the long recognized trust relationship between the federal government and American Indians”231 justified the federal support of this project even though it was not operated directly by an Indian tribe and even though it benefited Indians who were not living as part of a tribe:


223  Id. at 1411-12.

224  Id. at 1414.


226  Id. at 1413.


228  Id. at 501.

229  Id.

230  Id. at 502.

231  Id. at 535.
This trust relationship creates a fiduciary obligation on the part of the United States government, including its various agencies, to act in the best interests of the American Indian people generally. United States v. Mason, 412 U.S. 391, 399 (1973).

The trust relationship extends not only to Indian Tribes as governmental units, but to tribal members living collectively or individually, on or off the reservation. Morton v. Ruiz, 415 U.S. 199, 237 (1974); St. Paul Intertribal Housing Board v. Reynolds, 564 F. Supp. 1408, 1413-14 (D. Minn. 1983). 232

This language was quoted with approval in a 1997 decision of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit, Loudner v. United States,233 in which the court approved the payment of funds to Indians who were lineal descendants of tribal members but who themselves were not members of any tribes. In a holding similar to that of the Supreme Court in Delaware Tribal Business Committee v. Weeks,234 the Eighth Circuit ruled that persons of Indian ancestry who were not members of any federally recognized tribe were entitled to benefit from a financial distribution program and that the U.S. government had a continuing fiduciary responsibility to these individuals.235

These cases demonstrate unequivocally that Mancari’s application of rational basis judicial review to preferential or separate programs for native people is not rigidly bound by a formalistic “Indian tribe” requirement. Professor Benjamin argues that, because Native Hawaiians have not been formally recognized by Congress as an “Indian tribe,” they cannot have any special status in our legal system. Benjamin’s perspective not only is at odds with established federal Indian law, but flies in the face of consistent recognition by the United States Congress236 and by multiple courts237 of the unique relationship between Native Hawaiians and the national government.

B. Judicial Review of State Programs for Natives

Professor Benjamin presents the additional argument that, even if federal programs benefiting Native Hawaiians are found to meet constitutional standards, the establishment of the OHA by the State of Hawai`i “might be subject to strict scrutiny in any event” because states do not have the same power to establish programs for native people as the federal government.238

It is true that courts have examined legislation affecting natives enacted by state legislatures more carefully than congressional enactments because historically state and

232 Id. (emphasis added).

233 108 F.3d 896, 901 (9th Cir. 1997).

234 430 U.S. 73 (1997); see discussion supra at notes 124-132.

235 108 F.3d at 899, 900-901.

236 See supra notes 65-78 and accompanying text.

237 See supra Subsection II.A.3.

238 Benjamin, supra note 21, at 592 n.217 (quoting Washington v. Confederated Bands and Tribes of Yakima Indian Nation, 439 U.S. 463, 500-01 (1979)).
local authorities have frequently been hostile to natives.\textsuperscript{239} Even today, “tense situations continue to arise over such matters as tribal economic development, hunting and fishing rights.”\textsuperscript{240} In many communities, however, the relationship between natives and nonnatives is constructive and friendly, and state governments are frequently able to provide assistance in a more direct manner than the federal government. Many state governments have a long history of productive relationships with the natives within their borders.\textsuperscript{241} States have frequently granted a special status to native groups that lacked federal recognition. The State of Maine, for instance, had “enacted approximately 350 laws which related specifically to the Passamaquoddy Tribe” between the time Maine was admitted to the Union as a state and 1975.\textsuperscript{242} The State of Hawai`i has been particularly involved in addressing concerns of Native Hawaiians, because the seat of the federal government is so geographically remote and the situation of the Native Hawaiians is unique.\textsuperscript{243} In actual practice courts employ a “strict scrutiny,” or otherwise enhanced level of judicial review, only if a state is acting in a manner that is incompatible with the approach taken by the federal government. In Washington v. Washington State Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel Association,\textsuperscript{244} for instance, the Supreme Court summarily rejected arguments that state fishing regulations protecting Indian treaty rights violated equal protection laws. In doing so, the Court applied a rational basis test.\textsuperscript{245}

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\item \textsuperscript{239} See, e.g., United States v. Kagama, 118 U.S. 375, 383-84 (1886) (“These Indian tribes . . . owe no allegiance to the States, and receive from them no protection. Because of the local ill feeling, the people of the States where they are found are often their deadliest enemies.”)
\item \textsuperscript{240} Goldberg-Ambrose, supra note 31, at 183
\item \textsuperscript{241} For a list of some of the many state-funded organizations designed to assist native communities, see Van Dyke, supra note 32, at 81-83. For a description of state-chartered corporations, state-municipal corporations, and political subdivisions established by states to promote self-governance and self-sufficiency by native people, see Kahanu & van Dyke, supra note 13, at 433-37, 453-61.
\item \textsuperscript{242} Joint Tribal Council v. Morton, 58 F.2d 370, 374 (1st Cir. 1975). The court upheld these laws because “[v]oluntary assistance rendered by a state to a tribe is not necessarily inconsistent with federal protection.” Id. at 378. For other examples of state aid for Native Americans, see United States v. John, 437 U.S. 634, 652 n.23 (1978) (describing efforts by the State of Mississippi to assist the Choctaw Indians remaining within its borders); Prince v. Board of Education, 543 P.2d 1176, 1183 (D. N.M. 1975) (describing approvingly the efforts of the State of New Mexico to operate schools and enforce compulsory attendance laws on the Navajo Reservation with the consent of the tribe and the federal government).
\item \textsuperscript{243} See supra text accompanying notes 79-94 for examples of programs established by the State of Hawaii for the Native Hawaiian people.
\item \textsuperscript{244} 443 U.S. 658 (1979)
\item \textsuperscript{245} Id. at 673 n.20; see also Mescalero Apache Tribe v. Jones, 411 U.S. 145, 148 (1973) (“The upshot has always been the repeated statements of this Court to the effect that, even on reservations, state laws may be applied unless such application would interfere with reservation self government or would impair a right granted or reserved by federal law.”). Professor Goldberg-Ambrose has similarly observed that “the lower federal courts have been generous in finding federal authorization for state Indian legislation.” Goldberg-Ambrose, supra note 31, at 182 n.66 (citing Peyote Way Church of God v. Thornburgh, 922 F.2d 1210 (5th Cir. 1991); Livingston v. Ewing, 455 F. Supp. 825 (D.N.M. 1978); St. Paul Intertribal Housing Bd. v. Reynolds, 564 F. Supp. 1408 (D. Minn. 1983)).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
A similar approach was used by the Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit in *Peyote Way Church of God v. Thornburgh*,246 which upheld under *Morton v. Mancari*’s deferential rational basis review, a Texas law providing an exemption from its peyote laws for Indian members of the Native American Church.247 This opinion specifically addresses the issue whether states may enact laws providing preferential programs for natives and rules that such enactments are appropriate if pursuant to “an implied congressional will.”248 The opinion also emphasizes “the settled principle of statutory construction that ‘statutes passed for the benefit of dependent Indian tribes . . . are to be liberally construed, doubtful expressions being resolved in favor of the Indians.’”249

Similar rulings among the lower courts abound. The Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in *Squaxin Island Tribe v. Washington*250 upheld vendor agreements promulgated by the Washington State Liquor Control Board that gave Indian vendors more favorable treatment than non-Indians: “No compelling state interest need be shown since preferential treatment for tribal members is not a racial classification, but a political one.”251 The United States District Court for the District of New Mexico, in *Livingston v. Ewing*,252 upheld a program established by the Museum of the State of New Mexico in Santa Fe that reserved the portal in front of the museum exclusively to Indian merchants selling genuine handmade Indian arts and crafts in order to protect and preserve the culture and economic prosperity of the Indians in the Santa Fe area. Similarly, *Krueth v. Independent School District No. 38*253 upheld, using rational basis review, a state statute allowing school districts without any explicit federal authorization to give preferences to Indians during reductions-in-force.

These decisions establish two propositions. First, that many states have had close and long-established links with these native peoples and have adopted separate or preferential programs for their benefit. Second, courts evaluate these programs under the rational basis test, unless they are directly contrary to federal programs. If the state initiatives promote self-government or are designed to protect native culture, then reviewing courts consistently uphold them. The only additional burden ever imposed upon these state programs is that they comport with general congressional policy and existing federal laws. Certainly the efforts undertaken by the State of Hawai`i to return land and resources to the Native Hawaiians and to facilitate self-determination, through the creation of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs and the other initiatives described above,254 are consistent with

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246 922 F.2d 1210 (5th Cir. 1991).

247 See id. at 1214, 1216.

248 Id. at 1219.

249 Id. (quoting Bryan v. Itasca County, 426 U.S. 373, 392 (1976)).

250 781 F.2d 715 (1986).

251 Id. at 722 (citing Morton v. Mancari, 417 U.S. 535, 553 n.24 (1974)).


253 496 N.W.2d 829 (Minn. Ct. App. 1993).

254 See supra notes 79-94 and accompanying text.
congressional enactments recognizing a “special relationship” with the Native Hawaiians and seeking a “reconciliation” with them. Hawai’i’s programs for its native population should, therefore, be reviewed under rational basis review and upheld.

C. Adarand and Croson

Professor Benjamin states that “[perhaps] the most significant point” in support of his position “is that Adarand Constructors v. Pena and City of Richmond v. J.A. Croson Co. have changed the constitutional landscape.” These decisions hold that courts should examine all governmental actions that rely on “racial” categories under the “strict scrutiny” level of judicial review. But within a few days after Adarand was issued, the United States Supreme Court made it clear that its new holding was not designed to alter the way courts should review preferential or separate programs established for Native Americans. In Oklahoma Tax Commission v. Chickasaw Nation, the Court unanimously reaffirmed the legitimacy of a preferential program (an immunity from state property taxation) for a native group without any reference to Adarand or any requirement that the government demonstrate a compelling interest to support the preference.

Professor Benjamin points out that the statutes involved in the Adarand and Croson cases included native people among the minority racial groups that were to benefit from the set-aside programs and that the Court did not suggest that any different review should apply to the natives than to the other groups. As Professor Benjamin also notes, however, no natives were involved as parties in these two cases, and the Court gave no special attention to the question of native rights. The list of minority groups that the City of Richmond used in the Croson case was taken from the list used by the federal government in a national set-aside program that had been upheld in Fullilove v. Klutznick, and the Court criticized the City for not narrowly tailoring its list to correspond to the past discrimination that had existed in its region. It may well have been that the inclusion, for instance, of Eskimos and Aleuts on Richmond’s list would not even have passed the rational basis level of judicial scrutiny, given the historical absence of members of these groups in the Richmond area. In any event, the Chickasaw case removes any doubt about the continued validity of the Mancari line of cases authorizing the use of rational basis review to scrutinize preferential or separate programs for native people.

Another post-Adarand decision reconfirming the unique status of Native Americans is Kiowa Tribe v. Manufacturing Technologies. By a 6-3 vote, the Court ruled that the

See supra notes 65-78 and accompanying text.

See Apology Resolution, supra note 4. See also supra notes 18-20, 43-49, 67, 69-73 and accompanying text (discussing the Apology Resolution).

Benjamin, supra note 21, at 567.


See Benjamin, supra note 21, at 567-68.

See id. at 568.

448 U.S. 448 (1980).

Kiowa Tribe was entitled to sovereign immunity from suit in any state court on a commercial promissory note it had signed, regardless of whether the note was signed on the reservation. The natives thus have a substantially broader immunity than would be given to a foreign government that had similarly defaulted on a commercial note. This protective opinion demonstrates again that the special status that natives have in our legal system is alive and well after Adarand and that Professor Benjamin is incorrect in asserting that Adarand has altered the constitutional landscape affecting native people.

D. Strict Scrutiny

Even if the “strict scrutiny” test were applicable to preferential and separate programs established for Native Hawaiians such as the Department of Hawaiian Homelands and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, these programs should meet this heightened scrutiny test: The programs are carefully designed to promote the self-governance and self-sufficiency of a native people, which is certainly an overriding goal of our nation, reinforced by emerging norms of international law. The right to self-determination is the most basic of human rights under federal and international law, and efforts to facilitate the exercise of this right are mandated by fundamental principles of human rights and human decency.

The Ninth Circuit’s 1998 Rice v. Cayetano decision explicitly acknowledged that restricting voters for the Office of Hawaiian Affairs to persons of Hawaiian ancestry would meet “strict judicial scrutiny” because “the scheme for electing trustees ultimately responds to the state’s compelling responsibility to honor the trust” and is “precisely tailored” to allow the beneficiaries of the trust to manage their own resources.

Under the strict scrutiny test, each program designed for Native Hawaiians would have to be examined individually to establish a compelling state interest and sufficiently narrow tailoring. This could be done standard. For instance, the 1996 Native Hawaiian Vote, a polling of persons of Hawaiian ancestry to determine their views, was a logical and appropriate step in the process of restoring the Native Hawaiian nation and should pass strict scrutiny review as a narrowly tailored procedure designed to promote self-determination. In fact, an earlier decision of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled that it was reasonable for the OHA Trustees to believe “that a referendum to determine Hawaiian opinion on the proper definition of ‘native Hawaiian’

263 See id. at 1708 (Stevens, J., dissenting).

264 In her opinion in Rice v. Cayetano, 146 F.3d 1075 (9th Cir. 1998), Judge Rymer includes the following footnote: “Although we questioned Mancari’s continuing vitality in light of Adarand in Williams v. Babbitt, 115 F.3d 657 (9th Cir. 1997), does suggest that Adarand may place some boundaries on when the Mancari rational basis test will apply to separate or preferential programs for natives “a complete monopoly on the casino industry or on Space Shuttle contacts,” id. at 665, indicate Judge Kozinski’s concern that natives should not receive unlimited references regarding matters that are completely unrelated to their status as natives. He acknowledges, however, that special or preferential programs for natives should receive rational basis review when they are designed to address the unique situation of natives, i.e., when they relate to “land, tribal status, self-government or culture.” Id. at 664.

265 146 F.3d 1075, 1082 (9th Cir. 1998) (emphasis added); see also Rice v. Cayetano (I), 941 F. Supp. 1529, 1544 (D. Haw. 1996) (concluding that rational basis review was appropriate but also stating that the state’s interest in conducting the Native Hawaiian vote was “perhaps even compelling in light of...the state’s unique obligation to Native Hawaiians as demonstrated by its constitution and the HHCA.”).

266 See supra notes 14, 92, 160-167 and accompanying text.
was for the ‘betterment of the conditions of native Hawaiians’ as presently defined.”

Similarly, the establishment and support of the activities of the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands and of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs are narrowly tailored to promote self-determination, self-sufficiency, and cultural integrity for the Native Hawaiian people.

Meeting the strict scrutiny standard should not be too difficult for most programs because the specific past discrimination against Native Hawaiians is patent, as acknowledged in the 1993 Apology Resolution and numerous other Congressional enactments.

Professor Benjamin acknowledges that Native Hawaiians have suffered discrimination and deserve support and protection. He contends, however, that strict scrutiny is so difficult to satisfy that the separate and preferential programs that have been established for Native Hawaiians would be found to be unconstitutional under this level of review.

Professor Benjamin appears to set the bar too high. In her Adarand opinion, Justice O’Connor went out of her way “to dispel the notion that strict scrutiny is ‘strict in theory, but fatal in fact.’” In doing so, she relied in part on the case of United States v.

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269 See, e.g., Benjamin, supra note 21, at 584 n.194 (“when the government chooses to assist Native Hawaiians (as I believe it should)’); id. at 585 n.199 (“This is not to say that the federal government’s actions did not harm Native Hawaiians; they often did.”).

270 Professor Benjamin describes the high standard that must be met as follows: To satisfy the compelling interest requirement, the state and federal governments could not rely on historical, societal discrimination against Native Hawaiians, nor could they rely on amorphous claims of discrimination in particular industries or spheres. Instead they would have to produce particularized findings sufficient to ensure that each challenged program was remedying the present effects of past discrimination in the relevant sphere. Moreover they would have to show that they identified discrimination with some specificity prior to enacting the relevant programs. In addition, relying on underrepresentation of native Hawaiians in a given industry or sector would be insufficient; the federal or state government would have to demonstrate “a ‘strong basis in evidence for its conclusion that remedial action was necessary.’” Such evidence, it appears, must rise to the level of a prima facie showing of discrimination against Native Hawaiians. Satisfying the narrow tailoring requirement, meanwhile, would depend upon a number of factors, including whether the relevant government considered race-neutral alternatives and found that they would not achieve the program’s aims; where the program excluded those who, though Native Hawaiian, “ha[d] [not] suffered from the effects of past discrimination” against Native Hawaiians; whether status as a native Hawaiian is a requirement for eligibility or merely one of many factors; whether the program was temporary or at least provided for periodic review; and whether the program’s effects on non-Native Hawaiians was significant or intrusive.

Benjamin, supra note 21, at 593-94 (citations omitted).

Paradise,272 which involved a state program to remedy discrimination by the Alabama State Troopers. All of the Justices agreed that a narrowly tailored race-based remedy would be constitutional because of the persistent and systematic discrimination that had pervaded that organization. What type of remedy is “narrowly tailored” will always depend on what wrong is being remedied and whether a spectrum of alternatives are available.273

Because the claim of the Native Hawaiian people is for the right to reestablish their sovereign government, which was overthrown with crucial United States military and diplomatic support,274 and for the return of their collectively owned lands, which the United States has acknowledged were taken without compensation to or the consent of the Native Hawaiian people,275 the programs established to benefit Native Hawaiians and promote their self-determination (like the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs) are narrowly tailored programs specifically designed to remedy past abuses. The strict scrutiny test requires that the “least-drastic alternative” be chosen, but, when the goal is to reestablish sovereignty and restore a land base, the only course of action is to proceed down a logical path toward those goals. Where justified claims for the re-establishment of a sovereign nation and for the return of collectively-owned lands are involved, programs developed by the state and federal government to facilitate the process of self-determination and to promote economic self-sufficiency must be viewed as narrowly tailored and as constitutional.

III. A COMPREHENSIVE STANDARD THE JUDICIARY CAN USE TO EVALUATE PROGRAMS FOR NATIVE PEOPLE

Professor Benjamin’s article fails to provide an accurate analysis of the status of Native Hawaiians under United States law because it is written from a narrow and technical perspective without an appreciation of the centuries of development of native rights law and the particular struggles of the Native Hawaiian people. The treatment of native people by the United States has been brutal and uncarining for most of our history,276 but in the past 35 years serious efforts have been made to redress these injustices,277 to honor commitments


273 In Williams v. Babbitt, 115 F.3d 657, 665-66 (9th Cir. 1997), Judge Kozinski argued that establishing a complete monopoly for Native Alaskans in the reindeer industry could not be viewed as a “narrowly tailored” remedy, because “[i]nlike a subsidy, set-aside or even a quota, an absolute ban deprives the disfavored racial group of all opportunity to participate.” He also argued that “a race-conscious remedy will not be deemed narrowly tailored until less sweeping alternatives--particularly race neutral ones--have been considered and tried.” Id. at 666. But excluding nonnatives in other contexts might well meet the “narrow tailoring” standard, because it might be the only effective way to protect the native culture and to allow the natives to govern themselves and to be economically self-sufficient.

274 See Apology Resolution, supra note 4.

275 Id.


made to native people, and to return to them the resources they need to maintain and develop their culture and to prosper economically. Native Hawaiians lag significantly behind other natives in the United States in reestablishing self-governance and control over their resources, but gains are now slowly being made. They are now engaged in a process of self-determination designed to reestablish a sovereign Native Hawaiian nation.  

Professor Benjamin’s crabbed reading of the law would apparently prevent the federal or state government from establishing any program to aid the Native Hawaiian people while this self-determination process is underway, unless the program meets what he calls the “enormous hurdle” of the “strict scrutiny” test. Under his views, governmental aid would be evaluated under the lower rational basis standard only if the Native Hawaiians were somehow finally recognized by the federal government as an “Indian tribe.”

This requirement is impossible for the Native Hawaiian people to meet. They are not culturally tribal nor are they “Indians.” But the Native Hawaiian people are without question “native” or “aboriginal” or “indigenous” people. They must and do have the same status as other native and indigenous people under U.S. and international law, and—as every court that has considered this question has concluded—preferential and separate programs for them are proper and constitutional if these programs are rationally related to their status as native people.

The technical analysis in Professor Benjamin’s article fails to examine the policies underlying the separate treatment of native groups, which are crucial to understanding why programs for native people have traditionally been evaluated under a separate legal regime. In addition to the policy reasons discussed earlier regarding the historical political relationships between the United States and its native peoples, other reasons based on equity and common decency also support allowing native people to maintain a separate status.

A. Why Are Native People Entitled to Separate and Preferential Programs?

Unlike most other ethnic groups who came to the United States understanding that

278 See supra text accompanying notes 13-14, 78-91.

279 Benjamin, supra note 21, at 594.

280 See, e.g., id. at 598-611 (examining the prospect of Native Hawaiians organizing themselves into a tribe in order to obtain deferential judicial review).

281 Native Hawaiians also face a practical hurdle under the current federal statutes, because these statutes do not allow them to achieve federal recognition since they do not reside in the “continental United States.” 25 C.F.R. § 83.3 (1978), quoted in Rice v. Cayetano (I), 941 F. Supp. 1529, 1542 (D. Haw. 1996).

282 See generally Van Dyke et al., supra note 13, at 632-35 (discussing internationally recognized definitions of “indigenous people”); id. at 641 (characterizing Native Hawaiians as “indigenous.”).

283 The applicable international law principles are discussed infra Part III.B.

284 See text supra Part II.A.4.

285 See Van Dyke, supra note 32, at 91.
they would be participating in a multi-cultural community. Native people never made such a commitment. They were here and the rest of us just arrived, without asking whether we were welcome.

Equally important is the fact that, unlike other ethnic groups who can look to their ancestral homelands to revisit their culture and see that their heritage is being maintained, native groups have nowhere else to look. If they have no separate arena within which to maintain and develop their culture here, it will be lost forever, to everyone’s detriment.

It is now widely recognized that a strong sense of one’s culture and heritage is an important element of personal well-being, and in communities across our country ethnic diversity is celebrated and nurtured. Because native groups tend to be relatively small in number and culturally unique, some opportunities for them to function with others from their group apart from the rest of us seems to be essential if they are to survive as distinct cultures and to evolve in a manner that is linked to their heritage.

B. What About International Law?

International law is part of the law of the United States. United States courts are bound by treaties made “under the Authority of the United States” and by customary international law, unless the norm of customary law is explicitly contradicted by a federal statute or unambiguous executive pronouncement.

Emerging norms of international law confirm that indigenous people are entitled to

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286 This rationale obviously does not apply to African-Americans whose ancestors were brought here against their will.

287 See Goldberg-Ambrose, supra note 31, at 184:

Very simply, if Indians do not have a protected land base and some substantial measure of self-determination, Indian culture will fade and ultimately disappear. The land, and communal definition of values, are too central to the existence of Indian societies. Unlike other American ethnic groups, Indians cannot rely on perpetuation of their tradition in a home country abroad. If Indian culture vanishes in America, it vanishes altogether.

288 See Goldberg-Ambrose, supra note 31, at 181 n.63 (“[P]reservation of Indian culture....expands the range of aesthetics, values, and ideas available to the general public.”)

289 See The Paquete Habana, 175 U.S. 677, 700 (1900).

290 U.S. CONST. art. VI.

291 U.S. courts are obliged to interpret federal statutes and executive pronouncements to be consistent with customary international law whenever possible, on the assumption that the United States intends to act in conformance with principles of international law. See, e.g., The Over the Top, 5 F.2d 838, 842 (D. Conn. 1925); United States v. Palestine Liberation Organization, 695 F. Supp. 1456, 1464-65 (S.D.N.Y. 1988).
separate and preferential programs. International law recognizes the right of self-determination of peoples as the most important of all human rights. Native Hawaiians are a “people” under U.S. and international law, and they clearly have a right to self-determination and self-governance.

The international community has recognized the rights of indigenous peoples in the International Labor Organization’s Convention Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (ILO Convention 169) and the United Nation’s Draft Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The principles accepted in these

292 See generally S. JAMES ANAYA, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN INTERNATIONAL LAW (1996); GORDON BENNETT, ABORIGINAL RIGHTS IN INTERNATIONAL LAW (1978); S. James Anaya, A Contemporary Definition of the International Norm of Self-Determination, 3 TRANSNAT’L L. & CONTEMP. PROS. 131 (1993); Raidza Torres, The Rights of Indigenous Populations: The Emerging International Norm, 16 YALE J. INT’L L. 127 (1991); Van Dyke et al., supra note 13, at 632-40. Each of these sources discusses the international treaties and resolutions that are summarized in the text that follows.

293 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Dec. 16, 1966, art. 1, 999 U.N.T.S 171, states that “[a]ll peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.” The Covenant was ratified by the United States on June 8, 1992. BARRY E. CARTER & PHILLIP R. TRIMBLE, INTERNATIONAL LAW: SELECTED DOCUMENTS 387 (1995).

294 See generally Van Dyke et al., supra note 13. In a report commissioned by the U.N. Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, Special Rapporteur Jose Martinez Cobo described the right of indigenous peoples to self-determination as follows: Self-determination, in its many forms, must be recognized as the basic precondition for the enjoyment by indigenous peoples of their fundamental rights and the determination of their own future.

. . . [Self]-determination . . . constitutes the exercise of free choice by indigenous peoples, who must, to large extent, create the specific content of this principle, in both its internal and external expressions, which do not necessarily include the right to secede from the State in which they live and to set themselves up as sovereign entities. This right may in fact be expressed in various forms of autonomy within the State. . . . Jose Martinez Cobo, STUDY OF THE PROBLEM OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS, U.N. ESCOR, Comm’n on Hum. Rts., Sub-Comm’n on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, 36th Sess., Agenda Item 11, at 74, U.N. Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.1983/21/Add.8, paras. 580-81, U.N. Sales No. E.86.XIV.3 (1983).

See also Torres, supra note 291, at 142 (“Self-determination can take a variety of forms along a spectrum from autonomy in particular subject matters such as cultural concerns, to full political autonomy, in which indigenous populations establish their own governments, design their own political systems, and enforce their own laws.”). In August 1998, Canada granted sovereign autonomy to Nisga’a people in British Columbia, conveying to them control of resources and internal affairs in an area of about 750 square miles near southern Alaska. See Anthony DePalma, Canada Pact Gives a Tribe Self-Rule for the First Time, N.Y. TIMES, Aug. 5, 1998, at 1.


documents are evidence of governing customary international law applicable in U.S. courts. ILO Convention 169 explicitly requires governments to assist native peoples in attaining self-governance and self-sufficiency. Article 2 of the Convention calls for governments to play an active role with indigenous peoples in developing and protecting their rights.\(^{297}\) Article 4 requires governments to take “special measures” to safeguard the institutions, property, and culture of native people,\(^{298}\) and Article 6(1)(c) requires governments, in appropriate situations, to provide the resources necessary to enable native people to establish their own institutions and initiatives.\(^{299}\) The current version of the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples similarly emphasizes their right to a separate and distinct status.\(^{300}\)

Although ILO Convention 169 has not yet received wide ratification\(^{301}\) and the Draft Declaration is still being worked on, these documents reflect current international thinking about the rights owed to native people by their governments. It would therefore be a violation of principles underlying international law for the United States to treat one of its largest native peoples in a manner that fails to recognize their right to a separate and distinct autonomous status.

C. What Level of Judicial Scrutiny Is Appropriate?

Although Professor Benjamin is wrong in concluding that courts should use “strict scrutiny” when reviewing programs for Native Hawaiians, he may be correct in thinking that something more than minimum rationality review is appropriate. Native people have been given a deferential standard of judicial review because courts have understood that their singular situations require flexible political responses. But some judicial boundaries are still appropriate to ensure that legislative enactments establishing programs for natives are linked to the overall political justifications for treating them differently. It is appropriate, therefore, for reviewing courts to determine whether a particular program is at least rationally linked to protecting or promoting the interests of the native people as natives.

Professor Benjamin is also correct in sensing that native people must have some cultural commonality and historical continuity in order for a legislative body to rationally provide separate or preferential programs to aid them. The programs established for native people should be rationally linked to their quest for self-governance, self-sufficiency, and cultural integrity. In evaluating these programs, courts should and usually do require some

\(^{297}\) See ILO Convention 169, supra note 294, at 1385.

\(^{298}\) Id.

\(^{299}\) See id. at 1386. In addition, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, an organ of the Organization of American States (OAS) with representation from the United States, has stated that “special protection for indigenous populations constitutes a sacred commitment” of all members of the OAS. IACHR, OEA/Ser.P.AG/doc.305/73 rev. 1, at 90-91 (1973); see BENNETT, supra note 291, at 61.

\(^{300}\) Language in the recent draft states, for instance, that “[i]ndigenous peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples . . .” and that they have the right to be protected against “any from of assimilation or integration by any other cultures . . . .” Draft Declaration, supra note 295, arts. 6, 7(d). The Draft Declaration also states that indigenous peoples have the right to autonomy in internal and local matters such as education, information, media, culture, religion, health, housing, employment, social welfare, land and resource management, and internal taxation. Id. art. 31.

\(^{301}\) Interview with Professor S. James Anaya (Oct. 6, 1998).
real link to one of these goals rather than exercising complete deference.

If the governmental program is logically designed to protect or promote self-governance, self-sufficiency, or native culture, it should be deemed constitutional even if it appears arbitrary or favors one native group over another, because the legislative body should be entitled to weigh the competing arguments and make the necessary judgments regarding the allocation of scarce resources.302

Under a “real rationality” approach, the court examines whether a program set up by a statute really has a rational relationship to its goals. In contrast, the “minimum rationality” approach allows the legislation to stand if it is possible to imagine one single legislator who would have concluded that the statute is rationally related to its goals. Under “minimum rationality” review, legislation is sustained unless only a “babbling idiot” would have supported it.303

A recent case that illustrates a “real rationality” approach is Williams v. Babbit,304 in which the Ninth Circuit overturned the Interior Board of Indian Appeals’ interpretation of the Reindeer Industry Act and allowed nonnatives to participate in reindeer herding, so as to avoid “grave” constitutional questions.305 Judge Kozinski began his opinion for the court by noting that “[c]ontrary to popular belief, reindeer are neither native to Alaska nor part of the Alaskan native way of life.”306 Because the reindeer were not intrinsically linked to the culture and traditional economic life of the Alaskan natives, the court was concerned that the Adarand “strict scrutiny” standard might apply if the statute were interpreted to grant natives a complete monopoly in the raising of the reindeer.

But the Williams panel did not conclude that Adarand had altered the basic principle of Morton v. Mancari, nor did it interpret Mancari narrowly to cover only legislation affecting “tribes.” Although the opinion cites Professor Benjamin’s article for two other propositions,307 it rejects his perspective that only governmental activity related to “Indian tribes” is protected by Mancari from the strict scrutiny mandated by Adarand. Instead, it says that “[l]egislation that relates to Indian land, tribal status, self-government or culture passes Mancari’s rational relation test because ‘such regulation is rooted in the unique status of Indians as ‘a separate people’ with their own political institutions.’”308 Two paragraphs later, the court says that Mancari shields “only those statutes that affect uniquely Indian interests” (using “Indian” in its generic meaning since the case involved

302 See, e.g., Delaware Tribal Business Committee v. Weeks, 430 U.S. 73, 91 (1977) (Blackmun, J., concurring) (“Congress must have a large measure of flexibility in allocating Indian awards . . . .”).

303 The “babbling idiot” formula is attributed to Professor Jerry Mashaw in DANIEL A. FARBER ET AL., CASES AND MATERIAL ON CONSTITUTIONAL LAW 284 (1st ed. 1993). Cases frequently cited as examples of applying the “real rationality” approach are City of Cleburne v. Cleburne Living Center, 472 U.S. 432 (1985); Department of Agriculture v. Moreno, 413 U.S. 528 (1973); Reed v. Reed, 404 U.S. 71 (1971).

304 115 F.3d 657 (9th Cir. 1997).

305 Id. at 666.

306 Id. at 659.

307 See Williams, 115 F.3d at 663, 665.

Alaskan natives who are not “Indian” in the more limited sense). To illustrate his perspective, Judge Koziński said, “we seriously doubt that Congress could give Indians a complete monopoly on the casino industry or on Space Shuttle contracts.”

What is especially instructive about this opinion is that even with the recognition that Adarand imposes some boundaries on when the Mancari “rational basis” review can be applied, the boundaries recognized in Williams v. Babbitt are considerably broader than those that Professor Benjamin would permit. Judge Koziński states explicitly that the rational-basis level of review applies to any matter affecting “Indian land, tribal status, self-government or culture.” Certainly the establishment and support of the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs would meet this standard, because they are designed to provide land to Native Hawaiians, to promote self-government, and to allow the Native Hawaiian culture to prosper.

D. The Three Permissible Goals: Self-Governance, Self-Sufficiency, and Native Culture

The three proper goals for programs designed to benefit natives—i.e., self-government, self-sufficiency, and native culture—are uniquely linked to the special status of native peoples and are the essential requirements for their survival as distinct units. Self-government is an obvious choice, and it was explicitly recognized in Mancari and Antelope as a proper governmental goal. The continuing integrity of the culture of the native people is also central to the purpose of recognizing their special status and should be easily acceptable as a proper goal, although disputes may arise as to what is the essential core of the native culture when it evolves from its traditional roots to take new forms in the modern era.

The goal of “self-sufficiency” may be controversial in some situations, especially when natives move into new economic activities. Enactments designed to protect the lands and resources of the native people are clearly proper and should be evaluated under the deferential rational-basis standard of judicial review. But what about statutes that give

309 Id. at 665.

310 Id.

311 Id. at 664.


313 The key language in Mancari is as follows:
   As long as the special treatment can be tied rationally to the fulfillment of Congress’ unique obligation toward the Indians, such legislative judgments will not be disturbed. Here, where the preference is reasonable and rationally designed to further Indian self-government, we cannot say that Congress’ classification violates due process. 417 U.S. at 555 (emphasis added).

314 The Antelope opinion responded to a challenge that a federal criminal statute applied to Indians was racially discriminatory by saying that: “[S]uch regulation is rooted in the unique status of Indians as ‘a separate people’ with their own political institutions. Federal regulation of Indian tribes, therefore, is governance of once-sovereign political communities; it is not to be viewed as legislation of a ‘racial’ group consisting of ‘Indians’. . . .” United States v. Antelope, 430 U.S. 641, 646 (1977) (quoting Mancari, 417 U.S. at 553 n.24).
natives preferences with regard to economic activities outside their own lands? A preference for natives fishing in traditional streams can be easily linked to their traditional practices and cultural heritage. But what if the preference involves an economic activity that did not exist in traditional times, which can assist the native group to prosper economically and this to maintain their cultural integrity and political autonomy?

In 1982, the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit upheld under “rational basis” review a preference for Alaskan Natives in subcontracts on housing construction projects, but in 1997 this same court suggested that “grave” constitutional questions would exist if it upheld an interpretation of 1937 Reindeer Industry Act that would give a monopoly to natives in the Alaskan reindeer industry. Congress passed the Reindeer Act to give the Alaskan Natives a viable economic option after white settlers had exhausted their natural food supply by overhunting and overfishing. If raising reindeer to sell their meat and antler velvet was not historically part of the native culture, should a legislative program that gives the natives a preference (or a monopoly position) in this industry be evaluated under the deferential “rational basis” review or the demanding “strict scrutiny” level of judicial review? Should natives be strait-jacketed into their traditional economic activities in a rapidly-evolving global economy in which everyone is forced to shift gears in order to remain competitive? The 1997 opinion in Williams v. Babbitt addresses serious questions that will require additional thinking, but it would be unfortunate if self-sufficiency were not seen as a valid goal for programs benefiting natives, and if this goal were not perceived in a flexible fashion that allows native economies to evolve in light of changing economic times.

E. How Would This Test Apply to Programs Established for Native Hawaiians?

Justice Blackmun’s opinion in Morton v. Mancari emphasized that the reason for using the more deferential “rational basis” review is to promote self-governance for native peoples. He thus recognized the crucial similarity shared by all native peoples: the destruction of their sovereign autonomy and authority over their lands and resources. This perspective points to the conclusion that rational basis review should apply to all programs promoting self-governance, self-sufficiency, and cultural integrity of native groups, whether or not they are presently organized into “tribes.”

315 See, e.g., Washington v. Washington State Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel Ass’n, 443 U.S. 658, 673 n.20 (1979) (upholding preferential Indian fishing rights recognized in a treaty); United States v. Decker, 600 F.2d 733, 740 (9th Cir. 1979) (applying “rational basis” review to uphold regulations exempting Indians from certain fishing restrictions).

316 Alaska Chapter, Associated General Contractors of America, Inc. v. Pierce, 694 F.2d 1162 (9th Cir. 1982).

317 Williams v. Babbitt, 115 F.3d 657, 666 (9th Cir. 1997).

318 Id. at 659.

319 Judge Kozinski’s opinion for the majority in Williams v. Babbitt is concerned about the fact that the Alaskan Natives were given a complete monopoly on reindeer raising, in light of the fact that raising reindeer was not historically part of the native culture. 115 F.3d at 665.

320 See supra text accompanying note 117.
As explained above, the Native Hawaiian people had their own internationally recognized independent nation until 1893, at which time that nation was illegally overthrown. Since then they have been working to restore their lost land and sovereignty. Native Hawaiians do not now have, and (in light of their unique Polynesian heritage) do not seek, formal federal recognition as an “Indian tribe.” But they have “developed their own trust relationship with the Federal Government as demonstrated by the passage of the [Hawaiian Homes Commission Act] and because Native Hawaiians were not being excluded from beneficial legislation in the same manner as unacknowledged mainland United States tribes.”

In the Antelope case, which Judge Kozinski cited in Williams v. Babbitt, the Supreme Court noted that “[f]ederal regulation of Indian tribes . . . is governance of once-sovereign political communities; it is not to be viewed as legislation of a “racial” group consisting of ‘Indians . . . .”’ The Native Hawaiians were also a “once-sovereign political community” and were in fact an independent country recognized by many other countries. The Native Hawaiians therefore have the same right as other native groups to have separate and preferential programs established for their benefit evaluated under rational-basis review. In order to ensure that this more lenient scrutiny does not become a carte blanche for bizarre programs that have nothing to do with their heritage and cultural autonomy, it is appropriate, as the Williams v. Babbitt opinion suggests, to ensure that the governmental program is in fact rationally related to promoting or protecting native “land, tribal status, self-government, or culture,” as long as these terms are interpreted generously to include other native resources and economic self-sufficiency. Once a real link to these goals is demonstrated, courts should defer to the judgments of the political branches of government and allow the programs to function.

CONCLUSION

Native Hawaiians are unquestionably native people in the United States, and thus—as long as Hawai`i remains part of the United States—they must be characterized as Native Americans. Although they are culturally and ethnically distinct from North American Indians and Alaskan Natives, their historical relationship with the United States is similar. Their lands and sovereign autonomy were taken from them without compensation or consent. Attempts were made to destroy their culture. Their population declined dramatically, and they occupy the bottom of the socio-economic scale in their own islands.

The United States Congress has repeatedly and explicitly recognized that the United States has a “special relationship” with and a trust obligation to Native Hawaiians. The State of Hawai`i has inherited and accepted a substantial portion of that trust responsibility along with the ceded lands it received in 1959 at the time of statehood. The efforts by the State of Hawai`i to facilitate Native Hawaiian self-government and self-sufficiency and to protect Native Hawaiian culture are consistent with Congressional initiatives. It is perfectly appropriate and long overdue for the federal and state governments to establish preferential and separate programs for Native Hawaiians. These programs are constitutional if they are rationally related to promoting and protecting self-government, self-sufficiency, or the

321 See supra notes 37-52,


324 115 F.3d at 664 n.6.
culture of the Native Hawaiian people.

The Supreme Court’s decisions do not support Professor Benjamin’s contention that rational basis review is limited only to “Indian tribes.” The language he relies upon in the Indian Commerce Clause and in footnote twenty-four of \textit{Morton v. Mancari}\textsuperscript{325} is too general and tenuous to bear the weight of his conclusions. The distinction between tribal and nontribal Indians which he thought was crucial to the decision in \textit{Mancari} was explicitly rejected by the very justice who supposedly authored it, and has not been followed by lower court decisions. Courts readily have recognized that the term “Indians” includes all native people in the United States, and that the term “tribe” also has a generic meaning referring to any historically and culturally distinct group of native people.

The decisions in \textit{Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Pena}\textsuperscript{326} and \textit{City of Richmond v. J.A. Croson Co.}\textsuperscript{327} do not alter or undercut the “rational basis” standard of judicial review applicable to legislation that establishes separate or preferential programs for Native Americans.\textsuperscript{328} But courts have imposed boundaries on programs designed for natives, and it is appropriate to apply a “real rationality” level of judicial review to ensure that the program is designed to promote or protect self-governance, self-sufficiency, or native culture.

If Professor Benjamin were correct, his analysis would lead to the odd and anomalous result that one level of judicial review would apply to legislative programs designed to favor one group of native people and a dramatically different level of judicial review would apply to programs for another group of similarly-situated native people. Native Hawaiians have never organized themselves into tribal units but they are otherwise just as “native” as other Native Americans. They have had a similar awkward historical relationship with the United States, in which the United States acquired substantial amounts of Native Hawaiian lands and made a systematic and concerted effort to destroy the Native Hawaiian culture. They now have a similar trust relationship with the federal government, which the State of Hawai`i has partially inherited, and numerous programs have been established for their benefit to compensate for past injustices and in recognition of their separate rights. If Professor Benjamin’s analysis were correct, then all these programs would be at risk.

States have historically helped native groups, particularly those that have not yet attained federal recognition, and state programs aiding natives that are consistent with federal goals should also be evaluated under the rational-basis standard of review.

Even if the “strict scrutiny” test were somehow to apply, most benefit programs established by the state and federal governments for the Native Hawaiians would be able to meet this test, particularly in light of the systematic past discrimination imposed upon the Native Hawaiians, who had their collective lands and sovereignty taken away from them, with the active participation of U.S. military and diplomatic agents, without compensation or consent. Creating and supporting organizations designed to allow a native group to regain its lands and sovereignty is a narrowly-tailored method of achieving these compelling interests. Emerging international law principles authorize and require governments to assist their native communities to attain self-governance and self-sufficiency.

\textit{The Native Hawaiian people} have their own unique “special relationship” with the

\textsuperscript{325} 417 U.S. 553, 553 n.24 (1974).

\textsuperscript{326} 515 U.S. 200 (1995).

\textsuperscript{327} 488 U.S. 469 (1989).

\textsuperscript{328} \textit{See, e.g.}, Oklahoma Tax Comm’n v. Chockesaw Nation, 115 S. CT. 2214 (1995).
United States and the State of Hawai`i. Although they are not “Indians,” they have a comparable legal status. They are entitled under U.S. and international law to govern their own land and resources, to maintain and develop their own distinct culture, and to prosper economically. Programs established by the federal and state governments to promote these goals should be evaluated under rational-basis judicial review.