Aloha in Drag

“Aloha in Drag” investigates why Native Hawaiians still perform aloha despite its commodification and often detrimental effects. I focus on the ways that “aloha,” loosely defined as love, is used to discipline Native Hawaiians and how Native Hawaiians in turn, negotiate their identification with aloha through performance. I examine how Native Hawaiian performers are rearticulating aloha and performing it in unpredictable ways to recuperate aloha for community recognition and belonging. Through an exploration of the work of two contemporary Native Hawaiian performers—a rapper who utilizes state logics of racialization to ground his indigeneity and a drag queen who hides her indigeneity to unsettle attempts to appropriate the indigenous subject—I provide a critique of neoliberal knowledge production and the desire to identify the “truth” or “essence” of Native Hawaiian indigeneity.