

from *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen*



ABOUT THE READING This reading is from a memoir by Liliuokalani, Queen of Hawaii. In 1895 she was placed under house arrest by U.S. officials and forced to abdicate her throne. After her abdication, Hawaii was annexed to the U.S. This excerpt begins with her house arrest.



As you read pay attention to what Liliuokalani was being asked to do and what the consequences were if she did not cooperate.

VOCABULARY

tread footsteps

prostration exhaustion

purported supposed; so-called

abdication the giving up of power

abject worthy of contempt

affixed added at the end

For the first few days nothing occurred to disturb the quiet of my apartments save the **tread** of the sentry. On the fourth day I received a visit from Mr. Paul Neumann, who asked me if, in the event that it should be decided that all the principal parties to the revolt must pay with their lives, I was prepared to die? I replied to this in the affirmative, telling him that I had no anxiety for myself, and felt no dread of death. He then told me that six others besides myself had been selected to be shot for treason, but that he would call again, and let me know further about our fate. I was in a state of nervous **prostration**, as I have said, at the time of the outbreak, and naturally the strain upon my mind had much aggravated my physical troubles; yet it was with much difficulty that I obtained permission to have visits from my own medical attendant.

About the 22d of January a paper was handed to me by Mr. Wilson, which, on examination, proved to be a **purported** act of **abdication** for me to sign. It had been drawn out for the men in power by

Liliuokalani writes that she was very tired and feeling ill when the rebellion against the American occupiers began.

Source: *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen* by Liliuokalani. © 1898. Rpt., Honolulu, HI: Mutual Publishing, 1990.

their own lawyer, Mr. A. S. Hartwell, whom I had not seen until he came with others to see me sign it. The idea of abdicating never originated with me. I knew nothing at all about such a transaction until they sent to me, by the hands of Mr. Wilson, the insulting proposition written in **abject** terms. For myself, I would have chosen death rather than to have signed it; but it was represented to me that by my signing this paper all the persons who had been arrested, all my people now in trouble by reason of their love and loyalty towards me, would be immediately released. Think of my position,—sick, a lone woman in prison, scarcely knowing who was my friend, or who listened to my words only to betray me, without legal advice or friendly counsel, and the stream of blood ready to flow unless it was stayed by my pen.

My persecutors have stated, and at that time compelled me to state, that this paper was signed and acknowledged by me after consultation with my friends whose names appear at the foot of it as witnesses. Not the least opportunity was given to me to confer with any one; but for the purpose of making it appear to the outside world that I was under the guidance of others, friends who had known me well in better days were brought into the place of my imprisonment, and stood around to see a signature **affixed** by me.

Liliuokalani says she was forced to say that she had been given the chance to talk with her friends and advisors before giving up power, but in fact she wasn't allowed to talk with anyone.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. Why does Liliuokalani say she signed the act of abdication?

2. Why do you think U.S. officials wanted it to look as though Liliuokalani had willingly given up her right to rule?
