

Bud Clark Interview (April 20, 2014)

1. Do you think the Hawaiian government and the Board of Health acted ethically in enacting and enforcing the 1865 Act to Prevent the Spread of Leprosy?

The 1865 Act was similar to other responses to Hansen's disease globally at least in terms of segregating the infected population. It seems the ethical problems are to be found in the details of the enforcement. Many 1st hand accounts from the 19th century recall a general lack of compassion for the patients. Many patients referred to themselves as prisoners. There was no support system to ease them into their confinement and a lack of facilities and infrastructure. These conditions contributed to the inhumane treatment of people who were already suffering from physical and mental stress – not to mention the stigma from their families and community.

2. Or was it within the government's right and responsibility to enforce the medical isolation of those afflicted with Hansen's Disease?

I'm not sure the term "right" works for this case...Did the Government have a responsibility to enforce the isolation? That is a hard question. If the Government honestly perceived Hansen's as a contagion then probably so... Think of the movie 'I am Legend' where the lack of or the inability to isolate the infected led to near extinction of the human race.

3. What rights do you think were violated for the patients?

Like I said in question 1 many patients especially early on in the process of segregation were stigmatized and treated as less than human.

4. If the government didn't separate those afflicted with the disease, what do you think would have been the best alternative in containing Hansen's Disease?

Perhaps an alternative to isolating the patients the Hawaiian government could have set up a program similar to Norway –

where patients had local nursing homes to attend to their needs. However, physicians in Norway thought Hansen's disease to be hereditary more than contagious. This perspective opened the door for negative racial claims about Leprosy and an attempt to forbid marriage and reproduction of those with a family history of the disease.

5. Do you think the American government or the state government learned anything from the history of this settlement or the perspectives of the patients?

The American government also had to deal with Hansen's disease at the same time as the Hawaiian government. There were isolation facilities throughout the US and Canada. I do not know if researchers were looking to Hawaii for answers... though Hansen's was considered to be a tropical disease.

Lastly, if you have any additional comments you'd like to share about your opinion of the settlement and its political and social impact in Hawai'i's history, please feel free to share.

I would argue that the dehumanizing stigma of those with Hansen's by the Hawaiian government, the community and even family shows us a huge moral deficiency in 19th century Hawaii. Our lesson in all of this can be echoed in the words of George Santyana, "Those who cannot remember the past, are condemned to repeat it".