

Reconciliation Roundtable
Session 1: The Critical Issues
Saturday, December 11, 1999
East West Center, University of Hawaii, Manoa

Aloha. I am Rowena Akana, Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA).

Mr. Berry and Mr. Van Norman, I am compelled to observe that had the United States in 1898 approached the question of annexation as you have approached the question of reconciliation, it is likely that a far different modern history of the Hawaiian people would have been written. But they did not do then what you do now and that is why we are here today.

The purpose of this first session is to identify the critical issues that must be addressed if a true reconciliation between the United States and the Hawaiian people is to take place. There will be many such critical issues raised this morning that I believe we will all share. For my part, I offer three issues founded on commitment.

First, there must be a commitment to *meaningful* self-determination. Second, there must be a commitment to acknowledge and implement the Federal trust responsibilities to the Hawaiian people. Third, there must be a commitment to recognizing and building upon the unique historical, economic, social and cultural heritage of the Hawaiian people.

If the reconciliation process is to succeed, it must be based on these three related commitments. Upon this foundation, a lasting relationship between the Hawaiian people and the United States can be built; a relationship through which we can begin to address the other important issues of education, housing, economic development, education and social justice which will be identified today.

For the United States, the answer is to discharge its duty to nurture, account for and ultimately restore Hawaiian sovereignty and lands.

Each of us as individual Hawaiians have a view as to what the proper relationship between the United States and the Hawaiian community should be. But none of the institutions or organizations we represent have a right to determine that question for all Hawaiians. At most, our institutions and organizations can . . . and should . . . work together and with representatives of the United States to create, maintain and participate in a process that leads to a free and *informed* collective decision by all Hawaiians on the relationship *they* want with the United States.

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Session 2: The Federal/Hawaiian Relationship
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For the record, Rowena Akana, Chair of the OHA Board of Trustees.

Earlier today, we shared our manao on the critical issues that must be addressed as part of the reconciliation process. It is all too common for some to over-emphasize the differences in voices. I am heartened to hear today an often over-looked consensus in goals.

In this session, we now confront that question of what should be the relationship between the Federal Government and the Hawaiian people. Ultimately, that decision must be reserved to the Hawaiian people. That is part of the commitment to meaningful self-determination that I identified this morning.

In looking to the future Federal/Hawaiian relationship, I believe we must start from an appreciation of what that relationship is today. At its core, I believe the United States is and has always been a trustee over -- not a beneficiary of -- the sovereignty and lands of the Hawaiian people. The United States has just very recently re-acknowledged this role and responsibility.

From that role as trustee comes three fundamental fiduciary duties that should guide its response to our collective vision of our future.

- First, the United States has a duty to preserve and nurture our sovereignty and lands.
- Second, the United States has a duty to account for our sovereignty and lands.
- Third, the United States has a duty to work towards the day, a day that hopefully will soon be upon us, to return our sovereignty and lands.