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Subject: Written Testimony on Reconciliation with the Hawaiian People

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written input on a very important issue pertaining to the descendants of the indigenous people of Hawai'i, also known as the Hawaiian people or the Kanaka Maoli. I talk of the Hawaiian people and not the people of Hawai'i, because the Hawaiian people are the indigenous people and the people of Hawai'i includes all of the people who have arrived since the arrival of Captain Cook and the Endeavour.

The history of the Kanaka Maoli, since the arrival of Captain Cook, is a tragedy that rivals that of the Cherokee Nation and their Trail of Tears. In our case, however, there was no trail, our tears "merely" soaked into our ancestral lands, which we could not own. They watered the bones of our ancestors, which were disinterred and moved to museums and far away lands to be "studied". Even in death we had no home. Meanwhile those who came after Cook enjoyed our hospitality (our aloha), perverted our culture and history to their advantage, and instituted new rules which denied us the very fundamentals required by our nation or any other nation - land and natural resources. There was a concerted and successful effort to disenfranchise our people through ridicule, deception and legal chicanery. The end result is what you see now, a people with no land, no resources, and seemingly without hope. We stand as a "proud legacy and testament" to America, the protector of the oppressed and of freedom - the America that has opened its doors to the poor and down trodden as long as they were from a foreign land and slammed these same doors shut on its indigenous people.

The Hawaiian nation was built upon a close union of the people with the land and all that grew upon it. Ours was a culture built upon stone and plants. We were a partner with nature - not its ruler. The land belonged to our gods, the ali'i administered it for our gods, we used it for as long as we lived and in death we became part of it.

Because of this special Kanaka Maoli to Nature relationship, the land and all of its resources became, and remain, the very foundation of our society and culture. They provided our houses, food, and medicines. They shaped our culture, beliefs, traditions and even our educational methods. Our language and music speak of this marriage to the land and its effects upon us, as a people. Our music speaks of verdant lands, beautiful waterfalls, life and death, love and hate, and epic poems of adventure. The native forests provided the koa trees to build our canoes, the mamani trees to build our homes, the pili grass to thatch our homes, the kauila trees to make our spears, food for our tables, plants for our medicines and a myriad of other plants to meet our health and welfare needs. The forests also provided the rain which refreshed the forest, watered our crops and flowed to the ocean fostering the growth of the corals, fish and algae which were eaten by both the creatures of the ocean and the Kanaka Maoli. Since the arrival of Captain Cook, the native forests have been denuded at an ever-accelerating rate. Water is hoarded and is a commodity used to rule rather than to refresh the thirsty earth. Water no longer flows to the oceans in the required quantities for the algae and the creatures of the sea.

Because of our reliance on the fruits of the land and the ocean and the absence of a written language, our educational system was based upon observation and performance - touch and feel - not theory. Our teaching methodology relied upon chants and the memorizing these chants. Within these chants were the formulae for selecting the various woods to build our canoes and navigating across the ocean. Within these chants were the formulae for living well versus the Caucasian concept of living wealthy. This concept of chants being the repository of knowledge instilled a special spiritual relationship of the Kanaka Maoli with their land and its resources, their gods, their traditions, their culture and their education.

Today, the Kanaka Maoli, like their native forests, face great adversity because of the effects of foreign ideas and foreign desires. Just as alien species have been trying to strangle our forests, people from foreign lands have been trying to strangle our people by forcing them into an alien life style. This has been going on since the arrival of Captain Cook. However, we are a tenacious people and we are still here to remind this country of the betrayal of our generosity and good faith.

You speak of reconciliation. We speak of remedies and restitution. Reconciliation implies that two or more parties caused injury to each other and now the conflict needs to be reconciled. In the case of the Kanaka Maoli, we caused no injury - we are the injured party. It was our kingdom that was overthrown by self-serving Caucasian business men and sanctioned/approved by the United States government. Therefore we need to talk about remedies and restitution - not reconciliation.

I am not so naive as to think we can go back to the monarchy (which I would not choose) nor do I purport to know all the answers. However, I do have some suggestions.

a. At the national level, we should change the name and function of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to the Bureau of Indigenous people. When the Bureau of Indian Affairs was created, "Indians" were the only indigenous people in the United States. Even the term Indian is a misnomer, because these "Indians" consider themselves as Cherokee, Apache, Ogallala Sioux and a myriad of other indigenous people. The Aleuts, Eskimos, Klingkit Haida and Tsimshians in Alaska do not consider themselves Indians, but they do consider themselves the indigenous people of Alaska. Given this background it is time to get rid of this outmoded divisive bureau and make it what it should be--a bureau for the indigenous people within the confines of the United States.

b. We need to restore the ceded lands (these lands were never ceded - they were stolen) and the those lands held in trust by the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act to the Kanaka Maoli to serve as a base in their journey towards reestablishing their sovereignty.

c. We need the United States government to assist us in the sovereignty movement not as ruler and servant, but as equal partners with the mutual respect that partners have for each other. We do not want your money, although it would be nice. We want your support in re-establishing our sovereignty.

d. We need to establish a school system which will allow for experiential learning, instead of the current system which advocates theoretical learning with little or no

opportunity for empirical learning. There seems to be an attitude in academic circles that every person must go to college in order to be considered successful. Any person who works with his hands is something less than successful. This is a myth that has been foisted upon us by academicians. The carpenter, plumber, mason, mechanic, and other craftsmen all work with their hands and, if you have ever paid their fees, they cannot be considered unsuccessful.

e. We need to ensure that our native forest and native species of plants are allowed to flourish and alien species are prevented from destroying these flora. This includes allowing access to these plants by the Kanaka Maoli as part of their native gathering rights.

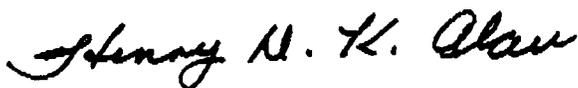
f. We need to ensure that our native farmers are not destroyed by the greed of "gentlemen farmers" and agribusiness by the greedy use of water. Our farmers need to have the same access to water for their taro, sweet potato, and other farm products. Water is not a commodity to be enjoyed solely by the privileged and miserly doled out to the disenfranchised Kanaka Maoli.

g. We need to ensure that sufficient fresh water flows into the ocean carrying the nutrients from the land, not the pollutants from man, for the algae and the creatures of the ocean.

Items e., f., and g are not uniquely Kanaka Maoli issues. These are good environmental issues and constitute good stewardship of our resources.

As a final thought, I would think that a nation, which can spend billions and fight so tenaciously to preserve the human rights of foreign people, could expend at least a fraction of the same level of effort for the indigenous people from whom they stole a kingdom. I thank you for the opportunity to provide you my thoughts and recommendations on what I hope will be the first of many dialogues as we seek remedies for the Kanaka Maoli.

Very Respectfully,



Henry D. K. Alau