

**TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENTS OF INTERIOR AND JUSTICE  
REGARDING RECONCILIATION BETWEEN NATIVE HAWAIIANS AND THE  
GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**BY  
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**PULE KALAI WA`A**  
Canoe Maker's Prayer

- Ka hakuko`i mai ka nahele***  
(There is excitement in the forest.)
- Ka pu-nana ko`i i ka lua***  
(The nest of the adze is the hollow.)
- I ka`ia i ke ko`i o Humu`ula***  
(The adze of Humu`ula [stone] is hewn.)
- Auwe ka leo a ke ko`i***  
(A crying sound has the adze.)
- Pani`oni`o i ka nahele***  
(The woods are colorful.)
- He alahe`e ke ko`i mauka,***  
(The alahe`e wood is the adze [handle] inland.)
- He`ole ke ko`i makai***  
(A trumpet shell is the adze below.)
- O ke ko`i kapu o ke kahuna***  
(The sacred adze is [that] of the kahuna.)
- Ka ka haku ana i mua,***  
***I ka ahu kapu a Kanaloa.***  
(The blemishes before him are removed,  
The sacred heap of Kanaloa.)
- Kua i kana wa`a a hina i lalo,***  
***Kupa lauhulu ho`owaha,***  
***O ka wa`a a ke kahuna.***  
(The canoe is hewn, chips fall,  
The unwanted roughness is removed  
From the canoe of the kahuna.)
- Nana i kua, nana i kalai i ke ui,***  
(He hews, he carves to perfection,)
- Ua holo papa na ko`i o na kua ihu.***  
(The adze smoothes the prow.)
- O kupa ko`i o na kua hope.***  
(Chips are removed at the stern.)
- Kupa Ku-pulupulu i kana wa`a.***  
(Ku-pulupulu hews on his canoe.)
- Ho`oki o Ku-`alana-wao i kana wa`a.***  
(Ku-`alana-wao ceases working on his canoe.)
- E noho mai ana o lea i ka uka.***  
(Lea dwells high in the upland.)
- A o Moku-hali`i ke po`o a ka wa`a***  
(Moku-hali`i heads the canoe making.)

Aloha.

My name is Harriet Makia Awana O'Sullivan. On behalf of my ancestors, my granddaughter, Kehaulani Lum, my five children, my twenty-two grandchildren, my sixteen great-grandchildren, and my descendants yet to come, I rise in support of your "efforts of reconciliation" between the Federal Government and Native Hawaiians.

I am a native Hawaiian from Kailua, O'ahu, who was born in the sunrise of territorialism, who raised a family in the dawn of statehood, and, who today, at age 82, stands on the cusp of a grand new millennium. Barely a decade ago, scarcely a single Hawaiian person would dare utter such words as *apology*, *sovereignty*, *kingdom*, or *reconciliation* without fear of condemnation or rebuke. But, in this period of renewal and renaissance, as you have learned during your travels through the islands, the vocabulary of the Hawaiian people is growing rich with promise, possibility, and renewed hope. We are a passionate people painfully struggling in our own homeland for a sense of identity and place. We hold tightly to the faith of our beloved Queen that justice will one day prevail. America's apology, and your appearance, are important steps forward.

### The Hawaiian Canoe as Metaphor

On the wall of my home hang several images which I hold dear – a photo of my daughter, the youngest member of the U.S. Olympic Diving team, receiving a bronze medal for her performance in the 1968 Games; a piece of rare *kapa* from the islands of Samoa; and, a handmade quilt presented to me as a gift from the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. Alongside these treasures hangs a black and white framed photograph of Hokule'a, the famous sixty-foot, double-hulled canoe built in 1975 by the Polynesian Voyaging Society, sailing through calm seas. Perhaps the single most important metaphor in Hawaiian contemporary culture, Hokule'a reveals the genius of a Polynesian people who made their home in these islands several centuries ago. "The voyaging canoe," wrote Tommy Holmes, "embodied the essence of a people and culture whose origin and survival were tied to a delicate balance between a capricious ocean and the finite resources of an island sanctuary."

Through Hokule`a's achievements, Hawaiians have rediscovered their past. More importantly, they have constructed a bridge to the future. Built with the cooperation of people from all sectors of society, Hokule`a is an omnipresent reminder of our ability to lift the veil which divides us as a community – Hawaiian vs. non-Hawaiian, American vs. Indigenous, marginalized vs. mainstreamed – to allow us to reach beyond our differences in order to achieve something great.

As we continue our journey of healing and reconciliation, let us keep the image of Hokule`a in mind. For in a sense, the process upon which we are embarking resembles closely the arduous task of canoe building. Like our ancestors, who understood that "...so agonizingly many things could go so horrendously wrong from the time a canoe builder first set foot in the forests till the finished canoe entered the water," we must be clear and prepared. If we succeed, then together we can build a new "canoe."

By accepting the image of Hokule`a and canoe building, we embrace the metaphoric steps involved:

- (1) We must search for a favorable log;
- (2) It must be felled and rough-hewn;
- (3) We must haul it to the sea side;
- (4) We must finish the canoe; and,
- (5) It must be consecrated and launched.

The journey from finding a favorable log to launching a finished canoe will be long, arduous, painful, even potentially fatal. Our ancestors understood this; as we must. In taking the first step towards selecting the correct foundation, it is important that those who would lead our search party understand the essence of who we are, where we come from, and where we want to be. To help you, I offer several gifts of Hawaiian wisdom and practice.

First, *'Olelo No`eau*, a collection of Hawaiian proverbs and poetical sayings passed down in spoken form from generation to generation. The preface of this book reveals that the sayings from an oral tradition of Hawai`i offers a basis for an understanding of traditional Hawaiian values. Second,

**Nana I Ke Kumu**, a two-volume “source book of Hawaiian cultural practices, concepts and beliefs which illustrate the wisdom and dignity contained in the cultural roots of every Hawaiian child.” In the foreward, there is hope that the “cultural knowledge embodied in these works will provide bridges to an understanding of our ancestors viewed from our present complex system of thinking, feeling and doing.” Together, these resources will help illuminate the essence of the people with whom you are attempting to reconcile.

The third volume accompanying my testimony is a contemporary piece that is equally vital in its insight. Written by Professor Eric Yamamoto of the William S. Richardson School of Law, University of Hawai‘i, Manoa, *Interracial Justice, Conflict & Reconciliation in Post-Civil Rights America*, offers important analysis of the dynamics of transformative reconciliation. Professor Yamamoto was a member of the legal team in the *coram nobis* litigation that led to the vacation of Fred Korematsu’s criminal conviction in *Korematsu v. United States*. He serves as a legal advisor to the Native Hawaiian Advisory Council and has provided legal counsel to the Asian American churches of the Hawai‘i Conference of the United Church of Christ (UCC) that proposed an apology and reparations to Native Hawaiians for harm resulting from the UCC’s participation in the overthrow of the Hawaiian Nation in 1893.

“Interracial justice inquiry,” writes Yamamoto, “offers racial groups a critical pragmatic approach to recalling the pain while releasing it, to dealing with collective memory while moving toward a more peaceable, productive future.” Admitting that reconciliation emerges over time, he highlights four praxis “dimensions” of combined inquiry and action that are relevant to our process: Recognition, Responsibility, Reconstruction, and Reparation. “Interracial justice embraces this notion of reconciliation through restorative justice. It entails hard acknowledgment of the historical and contemporary ways in which racial groups harm one another, along with affirmative redress of justice grievances and the rearticulation and restructuring of current relations. The specific dimensions of interracial justice address restoration through interrogation of and action on justice grievances underlying immediate conflicts. This interrogation and action are integral part of a larger ‘complex process of ‘unlocking’ painful bondage, of mutual liberation’ – a mutual liberation that

'frees the future from the haunting legacies of the [distant and recent] past.' It is this larger complex process that links interracial justice to healing, and healing to reconciliation."

Together, these resources offer important perspective. I hope you will find them useful.

### **Recommendations**

Throughout the hearings, you heard numerous calls for independence. You also made it clear that you are restricted to a framework that may not accommodate such status. We understand this. However, we encourage you to respect that call in your deliberations. Indeed, twenty years ago, few people would have thought the return of Kaho`olawe to a future sovereign nation possible, and yet, for internal and external reasons, it is now so. One hundred years ago, sugar was king. Today, it is practically non-existent. Who among us can foresee where Hawai`i, America, and the global economy will be in our own century? Let us remain flexible and free from ethno-centric sensibilities.

At the same time, if we are to remain a brilliant force in the future, we must care for our people in the present. To that end, may I recommend that you do the following:

1. Understand the uniqueness of the Hawaiian culture and at every juncture attempt to implement appropriate practice. In particular, as you choose the path, be sensitive to the ways and needs of our people. Remember that we are building a "canoe";
2. Create an office in the U.S. Department of Interior with sufficient staff, administrative budget, and direct access to the Secretary. Provide a mechanism for intergovernmental participation. Open a staffed office in Hawai`i;
3. Require the office to work with the Hawaiian people and to undertake a specific activity within a determined period of time (perhaps, one year). An example of this would be to create and staff a commission to review and analyze Public Law 103-150, also known as the Apology Bill, hold public hearings on the matter, and make appropriate recommendations to the Congress based on its

findings. This process might resemble that created and followed by the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) and the Kaho`olawe Island Conveyance Commission (KIRC). The scope of the work might involve matters of land, compensation, reparation, legislative change and self-determination. It might also analyze the ceded lands and Hawaiian homelands trusts to determine compliance and cure; and,

4. Carry out the Commission's recommendations.

Throughout, we must be acutely aware of social, economic, educational, employment, health and governmental remedies that will meaningfully transform our people in the near and long terms. We must eliminate systemic barriers that divide us as a people (i.e. the Hawaiian homelands blood quantum requirement) and encourage appropriate activities and structures that will bind us once again (i.e. nation, not a corporation). We must guarantee that our rights to self-determination remain intact. And, we must educate the larger society on the issues involved and encourage mutual participation. This element was sorely lacking during the recent hearings.

Just as the building of Hokule`a involved the cooperation, commitment and vision of all in the community (and, continues to do so), so too must this tremendous effort of building our new Hawaiian canoe envision a benefit for society as a whole.

Mahalo for the opportunity to express my mana`o. I look forward to learning of your progress in the months ahead.