

Culture

DATE: Nov. 22, , 1999

TO:
Assistant Secretary M. John Berry,
c/o Document Management Unit
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W., Mailstop 7229
Washington, D.C. 20240 (Fax: 202-208-3230)

RE: RECONCILIATION WITH NATIVE HAWAIIANS

PARTICIPANT DATA:

1. Name Kealoha Piscioffa
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Daytime telephone (808) 934-7668
Fax number _____
E-mail address _____

2. Will you be representing a Native Hawaiian organization
X yes _____ no

a. Please provide the name and mission of your organization:

**Please see below.*

b. How large is your organization's membership? ~55

c. Please provide your organization's address: As above

3. Which topic(s) would you like to address?

December 10, 1999

December 11, 1999

- Native Hawaiian Housing
- Reconciliation Process
- Native Hawaiian Health
- Political Relationship and Education
- Native Hawaiian Culture and Economic Development
- Hawaiian Land and Natural Resources

** Māuna Kea Anaina Hou - is a Native Hawaiian Organization comprised of mostly Native Hawaiians + Native Hawaiian Organizations who have direct geneological ties and a history of traditional worship and practice relating to Māuna Kea, Hawaii Nui. The Māuna Kea Anaina Hou exist. to protect, preserve and perpetuate its religious and spiritual relationship between Akae, the people and the 'Aina (Māuna Kea)*

Federal Reconciliation Hearings

Date: December 10, 1999
Place: Honolulu, Hawai'i
Testimony of: Kealoha Pisciotta
230 Lyman Ave.
Hilo, Hawai'i 96720
808-934-7668
Number of pages: 3.0

Aloha Honorable Representatives of the United States of America,

Welcome to Hawai'i Nei. Mahalo for coming here and for your willingness to provide the Hawaiian people this opportunity to share our thoughts, feelings and positions with you.

In light of the poor history of relations with America; this moment in our history is without a doubt auspicious and has been a long time coming.

It is doubtful however, that we could collectively even begin to address the historical breaches of trust in this hearing alone nor could our history be fully retold in the three minutes allocated.

We hope that this first meeting will not be the last and will begin a true process of ho'oponopono—a healing of our trust with each other.

I wish to speak to two different forms of oppression:

The political and cultural oppression confronting the Hawaiian people today. Many will speak to the political issues tomorrow so I will only touch on them briefly.

Political Oppression

The political oppression of the Hawaiian people has been well documented over the last 107 years of occupation of our homelands. Documents which include the Federal Task force document titled "Broken Trust", which records over 100 years of both civil and human rights violations, the Seth P. Waxman brief filed in the Rice v.s. Cayetano Case, as well as the Apology Law itself.

The Apology Law speaks to two distinct problems that arise directly as a result of the Overthrow, Annexation and Statehood. That I believe must be included in these reconciliation discussions.

The apology Law states: "...the indigenous Hawaiian people never directly relinquished their claims to their inherent sovereignty as a people or their national lands to the United States..."

And further "...apologizes to Native Hawaiians on behalf to the people of the United States for the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii ... and the deprivation of the rights of Native Hawaiians to Self-Determination."

These statements show that not only was our political status changed but also our social, cultural and economic status changed without our consent.

The overthrow of the lawful government without our consent denied us our Political Status or Rights to Self-Determination were denied and the stealing our our lands and resources denied us our social, economic and cultural status.

The International covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) states that "All peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they may freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."

It also states that "...all peoples may, for their own ends, freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources..." and "...in no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence."

When we travel to the United Nations we intervene there regarding the restoration of our rights to Self-Determination as defined by international law. ; Because these rights were denied us by the U.S. through the Overthrow, Annexation and Statehood.

Therefore our discussions with the United States surrounding our civil and political rights and Self-determination should not only be confined to the U.S. domestic policy or to the limited forms sovereignty previously granted the indigenous peoples of the U.S. mainland but should also include Self-Determination as is defined by international law.

To accept less would be to let ourselves down, and even the U.S. because if it is the United States intentions to reconcile with us we must speak to all aspects of this process; but furthermore we would be letting down our indigenous brothers and sisters on the Mainland and globally defined by international law.

CULTURAL OPPRESSION

I would like to speak to another aspect of our oppression. The Cultural Oppression of our people.

You see I work atop the mountain known as Mauna Kea. It is one of my peoples most renowned and sacred places. Spiritually its summit resides in what is known as Wao-Akua, the realm of the Creator. Mauna Kea is the Temple of Akua-Creator.

Those that ventured there in the days old did so with care and reverence. They went there to harvest the tools that made our ocean voyaging canoes, for navigation-to observe the heavens but also because it is the burial ground of our highest born and most sacred ancestors.

Mauna Kea's sacred nature is recognized in the oral histories throughout all of Polynesia which pre-date modern science by thousands of years! Here then is where the controversy lies. I work for a modern telescope-actually the worlds largest of it's kind. Because of the rarified atmosphere surrounding the Mauna Kea, which makes for excellent seeing conditions it is considered one of the world's best places to observe the heavens.

Modern astronomy and its place atop Mauna Kea at this juncture is not the controversy, but rather the expansionist or colonial mind-set of the empire-builders within the astronomical community at large. The obvious fear is that the expansion of telescopes and observatories is unbounded, without controls to protect the sacred nature, cultural, historical and natural resources.

The colonization and occupation of our most sacred burial grounds has now reached its zenith; violating both Hawaiian and Western laws. There have been TWO TIMES the number of telescopes built on Mauna Kea then was permitted by law; and plans to build many more larger telescopes into the millinium. There is rampant looting of our sacred sites, and a visitor industry in excess of 104,000 tourists per year, with unencumbered access to all of our sacred sites, and no management and enforcement mechanism in place to control and protect our sacred sites.

The Institute for Astronomy (IfA) the overseer of this mountain has managed to spend \$100's of millions of Federal dollars and completed all of this construction without ever complying with either State or Federal statutes which afford protections for the cultural, historical, and natural resources and environmental protections.

The summit of Mauna Kea, the realm of the creator and the sacred burial ground of our ancestors has now become one of the highest and most unsightly construction sites in the world. Drawing adamant public outcry against further development and against the University and the Institute for Astronomy for their abuse of our sacred places and Ceded Lands.

From a cultural point of view what can be said of the desecration of Mauna Kea, but that we have reached a new height in the art of desecration, and the affront to Creation will be felt on levels of existence. The taking, destroying and desecration of things within the realm of Akua sets the process of creation out of balance and unraveling.

In the year 2033 the lease for the telescopes will be up, but in the year 2040 just 6 years later the Hawaiian people according to the World Health Organization will have expired. No more pure Hawaiian People will be left.

In conclusion, while within our world view the unraveling of Creation continues and the expiration of our peoples passes before our eyes. We pray that this reconciliation process will not simply continue the long litany of political and cultural oppression and eventual end of the Hawaiian people, but in fact will be a true process for true Self-Determination and freedom for the Hawaiian people.

Aloha and May Akua abide with you in your hearts.