

Written Direct Testimony of Hāwane Rios

‘O wau ‘o Hāwane. ‘O Mauna a Wākea ku‘u mauna, ‘o Kohākohau ku‘u kahawai, a ‘o Pu‘ukapu, Waimea ku‘u ‘āina kūlāiwi.

My name is Hāwane Rios, my mountain is Mauna Kea, my river is Kohākohau, and the land that raised me is Pu‘ukapu, Waimea on the island of Hawai‘i. I am a descendant of Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians) who inhabited the Hawaiian Islands prior to 1778 as established through my genealogical lines of ‘Umihulumakaokalanikia‘imauna‘o‘Āwini and Ka‘ā‘īkaulakaleikauilahāmakanoē Naweluokekikipa‘a. My ancestors come from the ‘Āwini Valley of the Kohala Mountains connecting me and my bloodline to a lineage of indigenous peoples rooted in honoring the land, waterways, and all living beings. The practice of aloha ‘āina – to love and care for the land - was passed down by these same ancestors through the generations to my mother and then to me. It is a practice of our people to know where we come from, remember the creation story of our land and people, and understand how our family genealogies connect to it. I offer this part of our genealogical creation story here to create a space of better understanding as to why I stand to protect Mauna a Wākea from further destruction and desecration that would be inflicted by the proposed Thirty Meter Telescope.

Born to Wākea, the infinite incredible expanse of the universe and Papawalinu‘u, the deep womb of the earth, is Mauna a Wākea. Born to Wākea and Papahānaumoku, the mother of our islands, is Ho‘ohōkūkalani, the Goddess of the star realm. Born to Wākea and Ho‘ohōkūkalani is Hāloanakalaukapalili, a still born being buried at the east end of the house. From that burial grew the first food of the Kanaka Maoli people of Hawai‘i, the kalo. Born to Wākea and Ho‘ohōkūkalani is a second child named Hāloa, the first kanaka (Hawaiian). From Hāloa comes the Kanaka Maoli (Hawaiian) people. The transcendental interconnectedness that dances between the creation of Mauna a Wākea and the movement to protect Mauna a Wākea exists in the beat of my very heart. When I say, “We Are Mauna Kea”, I am bringing forth an ancient knowledge that teaches that we, as Kanaka Maoli, are made of the same force that created this mountain and that we, as Kanaka Maoli, are descendants of this mountain. I was raised to honor and respect those who came before me and that is precisely what I am doing as I stand to protect my ancestor, Mauna a Wākea.

This genealogy was taught to me by my elders with the intention to always remember my birthright and responsibility to uphold the tradition of caring for the earth in a good way. My upbringing is rooted in the traditional dances, chants, and ceremony of my ancestors. I am a Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) cultural practitioner who continues to exercise my traditional and customary practices on Mauna a Wākea. These traditional and customary Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) practices, including pilgrimages to the top of Mauna a Wākea, pre-date 1892 as evidenced through ‘ike kupuna, cultural sites, oral traditions, indigenous knowledge, and several reports. I am only including this information in my testimony because I have to. I am deeply offended that according to this court system, I have to prove the legitimacy of my bloodline and my cultural

practices on my ancestral mountain in my own homelands. The Kanaka Maoli people are a living a people. We survived the illegal annexation of our Kingdom, the Great Mahele, the ban of our language and dance and many more painful atrocities that continue to oppress us today. Despite all of that, we are still here and our culture, beliefs, traditions and ceremonies remain intrinsic to the very fabric of who we are as Indigenous people of Hawai'i.

My connection to Mauna a Wākea is grounded in ceremony. My family and I have spent many years making our way to the mountain to lay our prayers and offerings down and to ask for guidance through messages from the higher spirit beings. These ceremonies have deepened my relationship with the spirit realm and has strengthened my gift of sight as a medium, a gift that many in my family line have carried with them for generations. Here I will share some of the messages I have received in ceremony at the proposed Thirty Meter Telescope Site. While in prayerful mediumship I was told by a powerful ancestral being of the mountain that the lands of the northern plateau are portals to very ancient celestial knowledge. I was shown how the shrines and upright stones found on the northern plateau are connected energetically to one another and line up with certain constellations and ocean currents during particular times of the year. The ancestral guardian shared that this place is an ancestral school of navigation and training of the highest level taught by ancient celestial beings. This portal still exists however I was told that if the Thirty Meter Telescope was built then the connection and access to this ancient school of celestial knowledge would be severed permanently. I hold these messages sacred with profound respect and reverence for this spirit realm.

The ceremony has guided my advocacy work for the Protect Mauna Kea movement and my life work as a musician. This work has taken me to the far reaches of the world to stand in solidarity with many movements rising up to protect the rights of the earth. Through these travels, I have shared time and space with different indigenous peoples speaking of the devastating realities of Intergenerational Trauma that was passed down by the people in our respective lineages that experienced the immense suffering of war, violence, rape, forced displacement, and colonization. The trauma that I carry in my DNA has come to the surface time and time again since my family and I entered into Thirty Meter Telescope contested case hearing on behalf of the spirit realm in 2011, through the Protect Mauna Kea movement these past few years, and up until now. The constant questioning and belittling of my spiritual connection to Mauna a Wākea, my beliefs, traditions, and cultural practices in the court system, by the Astronomy community and University community has been wearing on my emotional, physical, and spiritual well being. The pain in me recognizes the pain in my own people and the people from around the world that are dedicating and risking their lives to protect what is left of the clean air, land, ocean, and water.

I felt the immensity of that pain on April 2, 2015 when the first 31 arrests of peaceful protectors occurred. I remember running up the Mauna Kea Access Road passing by my fellow protectors standing arm in arm in lines as far up to the summit as they could go. My heart pounded as the police chased us up the mountain to the proposed Thirty Meter Telescope site. When we got to the summit, we took our line and began to chant.

In that moment, I felt a current of strength, pride, and honor while simultaneously feeling this sense of profound sadness, anxiety, and fear as the police made their way toward us. I can still feel the waves of tears that flowed down my face as my family and comrades were arrested and taken down the mountain in State vehicles. It was on that day that the reality set in that we would literally have to lay our bodies down to protect and defend our mountain.

I was reminded of the truth of that reality on September 9, 2015 when I was arrested in prayer in a ceremonial circle of women on Mauna a Wākea. At that time the Hawai‘i State Board of Land and Natural Resources declared Emergency Rules that prohibited people from being in restricted areas on the mountain between 10:00 pm and 4:00 am which included the land across from Hale Pōhaku that had become the gathering grounds of the 24/7 vigil of the movement. On that evening I was notified that DLNR not only planned to do a sweep of the “restricted areas” but also planned to take down the traditional prayer house, Hale Kū Kia‘i Mauna, that holds the wooden figures that represent significant and important deities and ceremonial offerings. As a woman raised in ceremony, I knew I needed to be there to protect this place regardless of these rules that were so blatantly targeting the people of the movement.

When I reached Hale Pōhaku my feet immediately took me to the hill that holds offerings of pōhaku (rocks) from all of the main islands in the Hawaiian Chain. I began to chant a prayer of clearing and cleansing with my eyes closed and for the first time in the duration of the Protect Mauna Kea Movement I felt total peace and compassion flow into my heart. My eyes opened to see hundreds of spirit beings of the mountain coming over the slopes. I could feel the mountain breathing and releasing the energy of heaviness and tension and emitting a breath of healing calmness. I heard a voice come to tell me to trust the wisdom of the mountain and to let that powerful energy guide the peace and compassion I felt so deeply through this prayer.

Upon closing the prayer ceremonies on the hill we decided to go to our vehicles to continue our prayer vigil because the temperature started to drop quickly. After some time passed we met in prayer in front of Hale Kū Kia‘i Mauna. We stood in a circle and began a chant that summoned our Gods and Goddesses to come from above and below and from the uplands and lowlands to grant us guidance and protection. It was in the middle of this very sacred and powerful chant that the DLNR officers forced us apart and began arresting us. This was one of the most offensive and traumatic experiences of my life. Our ceremony and prayer was disrespected and mistreated by these officers and this system that allows and encourages this behavior. Our rights as native people were violated. According to the United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples Article 12,

“Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practice, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs, and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects...”

These “emergency rules” were later determined invalid by Judge Ibarra because they were improperly implemented. Despite this ruling, the depression and heartache I felt thereafter was profoundly painful and damaging to my health and wellbeing. I experienced symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder such as intense anxiety, negativity, and overwhelm. It is still difficult for me to go back to this memory and recall the details of that night without feeling emotional.

The mountain, the ceremony, and the prayer have guided my journey in healing the pain and the trauma that I have experienced. The teachings from the spirit realm and from my elders have helped me to navigate my way in this world that needs reminding that we as human beings are not separate from the earth. I have been taught that whatever we do onto the earth we do onto ourselves and that the health of the land is a direct reflection of the health of the people. I want to see the healing of Mauna a Wākea reflect the healing of my people. I want the generations to come to know that we did everything we could to bring honor and dignity to our sacred mountain. I want to see Mauna a Wākea, our most precious watershed, clean and healthy to sustain us for years to come. That is why I chose to give everything I have down to my last breath to the protection of Mauna a Wākea.

I, Hāwane Rios, am hereby writing this testimony in protest of the building of the Thirty Meter Telescope as it would significantly and adversely impact our sacred Mauna a Wākea, Kanaka Maoli, access to ‘ike kupuna, my well-being and health.

Kū Kia‘i Mauna!