

Written Direct Testimony of Hāwane Rios

I, Hāwane Rios, member of the Flores-Case 'Ohana, native of Waimea, Kohala Waho, Mokupuni o Hawai'i. I am a Kanaka Maoli cultural practitioner with connections to Mauna a Wākea. I am also a recent graduate of the University of Hawai'i at Hilo with a B.A. Degree in Hawaiian Students from Ka Haka 'Ula o Ke'elikelani - College of Hawaiian Language.

CULTURAL CONNECTIONS TO MAUNA KEA

Being that I made a conscious decision to learn the language and history of this land as my main course of study, I acknowledge the responsibility to address the cultural and spiritual importance of this mountain. The following statements are personal accounts of what I have seen and experienced. I grew up in the pasturelands of Waimea town with what I would argue is the most beautiful view facing Mauna Kea. Unfortunately, everyday I would also see white structures secured unnaturally upon the summit causing an unsettling feeling in my being even at a very young age. As I grew older and strengthened my cultural and spiritual connection with Mauna Kea as a native Hawaiian woman of this land, this unsettling feeling turned into exasperation, which later turned into resentment. However I am not here to throw my anger around because as I have witnessed in the past, that energy does not help the situation, instead it does the opposite. Moreover I am simply here to shed some native light on those who are willing to listen.

When I was in my junior year at UH Hilo I learned the story of Kūkahau'ula and Poliahu. In short, Kūkahau'ula a handsome and strong man, started to dream of the divine Snow Goddess of Mauna Kea bathing in her sacred Lake Waiau. Since she was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, he decided to travel down on the sun's rays to meet with her. Before he could reach the summit, he was taken aback by the spiritual beings of the mist, Lilinoe and Lihau. They brought a warning to Kūkahau'ula that Poliahu was *kapu* or sacred and could not be seen by any man. Kūkahau'ula left discouraged, but that feeling didn't last for long, he was sure that Poliahu was to be his wife. Therefore, he tried again and the strong winds, rain and mist came once more and Kūkahau'ula was sent away. Unbeknownst to him, Mo'oinanea, the guardian of Lake Waiau was watching him closely and came to the conclusion that Kūkahau'ula was sincere. So she counseled with Kāne, father and keeper of Poliahu, expressing the genuine actions of Kūkahau'ula. After some debate, Kāne finally changed his mind. He proclaimed that Kūkahau'ula could love Poliahu twice a day forever, once at sunrise and once at sunset. And so they have lived until this day.

CONNECTIONS TO ANCESTRAL AKUA & KUPUA

I felt a deep connection to Mauna Kea when I heard this story because it not only showcased the brilliance of native story telling, it also gave me a glimpse into how the native mind works. Simply, this story could be telling of why the mountain turns the shades of pink, orange, yellow and purple at sunrise and sunset. However, my ancestors knew and had an unwavering connection with the ancestral *akua* that are Poliahu, Kūkahau'ula, Lilinoe, Mo'oinanea, and Kāne. To them, the essence of the mountain truly resided in these spiritual beings. Like my ancestors, I too believe in the divine *mana* or power that these *akua* possess which is the same

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mana that Mauna Kea houses. Upon hearing and witnessing this story for myself, Mauna a Wākea became the main muse for my musical compositions. I have chosen to write songs about these stories and about the sacredness of the mountain so that my people will not forget. For so long, society has lead the native people away from the *mauli*, the true spirit, of this land. However change is inevitable, things don't last forever, and I see that who we once were is now rising again. I am hereby writing this testimony in protest of the building and construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope on our sacred Mauna Kea.

Mahalo nui.