

Written Direct Testimony of Ronald Fujiyoshi

I am Ronald Susumu Fujiyoshi, trained in theology, a pastor of a Hawaiian church, who served as a missionary in Asia for twenty years and thought about and acted on issues related to this contested case hearing for a long time.

I can trace my paternal grandparents living in Hawai'i to 1900, where they are listed in the 1900 census living in Lahaina, Maui. My father was born on October 28, 1902 in Lahaina. I am a third-generation Christian whose father was ordained as a Christian minister by the predecessor to the United Church of Christ when he was a pastor in Kohala, Hawai'i in 1937. I came to live on Hawai'i Island in 1956 when my father became the pastor of the Church of the Holy Cross in Hilo, Hawai'i. After graduating from the University of Hawaii with a Bachelor's of Art degree, I married a Hilo girl, and then attended the Chicago Theological Seminary graduating with a degree in theology specializing in Christian ethics in 1968. I was awarded a fellowship by the World Council of Churches, the ecumenical Christian organization that comprises most of the Christian denominations in the world which allowed me to study Buddhism while living in Singapore for a year. I became a missionary of the United Church of Christ beginning in 1969 and lived in Asia for twenty years (Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Japan). While as a missionary I worked as a community organizer in these countries where Christians are a minority of the population. Thus, I worked with people of many different faith traditions (religions) including Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Shintoist. I returned to Hawai'i in 1988 and have lived in Hilo ever since.

I became the pastor of the Ola'a First Hawaiian Church located in Kurtistown, Hawai'i in 1992 through 1999 and again from 2013 to the present. My standing as a licensed minister of the United Church of Christ is with the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches or the Hawaii Conference United Church of Christ that I have held since 1992. I was elected as the *Luna Ho'omalu* (president) of the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches and served in this position for two years from 2008-2010.

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The Ola'a First Hawaiian Church received its name from an *ahupua'a* that was reserved for the catching of birds whose feathers were used to make the capes and helmets for the Hawaiian royalty. One of our goals is to teach our people what it means to be Hawaiian and Christian at the same time. Although we are a Hawaiian church, our members are of a variety of ethnicities and everyone is welcomed to attend our worship and activities.

What is the meaning of "sacred"?

The Hawai'i Supreme Court made a ruling that led to this contested case hearing. In that same ruling the Supreme Court recognized that Mauna Kea "is of profound importance in Hawaiian culture. The summit region is sacred to Native Hawaiians. And because of its spiritual qualities, traditional and customary cultural practices are exercised throughout the summit area." *Mauna Kea Anaina Hou v. Board of Land & Natural Resources*, 136 Hawai'i 376, 399, 363 P.3d 224, 247 (2015). (Underline is mine.)

What is the meaning of "sacred"? For help in defining what is the meaning of "sacred", I am using Dr. Mircea Eliade, a historian of religion who was Professor and Chair of the History of Religions in the University of Chicago Divinity School from 1958 until 1986. Among the many books Dr. Eliade wrote was *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (1957). For Dr. Eliade, "sacred" is taken from the Latin *sacer*, meaning set apart, dedicated, distinguished, as in set apart from the public or mundane world. "Sacred" is to be distinguished from profane. For Dr. Eliade "sacred" is used to describe that which is shared in common among all religions and that which manifests itself in varied forms throughout the symbols of the world's religions: the experience of the Sacred.

Historically many mountains have been called sacred by members of certain religions. Christians have a common history with the Jews and the Muslims that believe Mount Sinai to be sacred. The Old Testament is considered sacred text by Christians, Jews and Muslims. Mount Sinai or Mount Horeb as it is also called in the Holy Bible is located in present day Saudi Arabia. It is considered a sacred mountain because there Moses experienced the presence of God. In the Holy Bible, Book of Exodus chapter three, verses one through five are found these words: "Now

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Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up." When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

Other mountains are considered sacred by other religious groups. The Shinto, Buddhist and other religions in Japan consider Mount Fuji sacred. The Tibetans who follow the Dalai Llama consider Mount Everest sacred.

Mauna Kea is a sacred mountain. This claim is being made by the protectors who have gathered in the hundreds to protect their sacred mountain from being desecrated.

According to the following laws, native Hawaiians have a right to practice their own religion. In the definition of their religion, they have considered Mauna Kea to be sacred.

1. Amendment 1, U.S. Constitution. Freedom of Religion, Press, [Expression](#)
Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a [redress](#) of grievances.

2. Article XII, Section 7. THE CONSTITUTION OF THE STATE OF HAWAII
TRADITIONAL AND CUSTOMARY RIGHTS

The State reaffirms and shall protect all rights, customarily and traditionally exercised for subsistence, cultural and religious purposes and possessed by ahupua'a tenants who are descendants of native Hawaiians who inhabited the Hawaiian Islands prior to 1778, subject to the right of the State to regulate such rights.

3. The American Indian Religious Freedom Act 1978

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It shall be the policy of the United States to protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise the traditional religions of the American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, and Native Hawaiians, including but not limited to access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonials and traditional rites.

The building of a huge, tall observatory on the top of a mountain considered sacred by the Hawaiian people and others is not only a desecration of their religion but interferes clearly in the practice of their religious beliefs.

I was invited by native Hawaiians to join them on Mauna Kea to protect the desecration of their sacred mountain. I participated in a religious event on April 2, 2015 when the Hilo County police arrested me on a charge of obstruction. The religious event had a direct relationship to the belief in the sacredness of Mauna Kea. There were at least a hundred other participants in the religious event. As a person trained in religion and theology, I can attest to the ingredients that cause me to call the event a religious event. There were chants, singing, prayers, blowing of the *pu*, greeting of others by *honi*, and an agreement by all to act in *kapu Aloha*, explanations from leaders of the sacredness of Mauna Kea even to the police personnel who were present. Some were dressed in religious attire. Others wore leis and presented leis to others including the police. Some carried religious objects and hula was performed. Numerous videos taken by media, the State of Hawaii personnel, and individuals can attest to what I have stated—one can easily see that the event had religious attire, implements and chants, prayers and dances of a religious nature. This was uniquely different from political demonstrations usually held. Again on June 24, 2015 I along with my wife participated in a religious event on Mauna Kea with hundreds of others and again arrests were made.

I believed at the time that the police were acting wrongly. Instead of arresting people for obstruction and trespassing, they should have been protecting the rights of the people to practice their own religion. As a result the police became people who harassed the participants and interfered with their right to practice their religion. The judge must have agreed with this thinking; after the Hawai'i Supreme Court decision in *Mauna Kea Anaina Hou v. Board of Land*

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& Natural Resources was made, the judge began finding those arrestees innocent and the prosecutors dropped the charges on the other cases.

As one trained in the study of theology, who served as a missionary for over twenty years and as a pastor of a Hawaiian church, I can say that religion is not only a set of beliefs that one holds to be true. Religion can only be an active religion by the practice of that religion. The opponents to the TMT telescope were practicing their religion. If one alters the practice of that religion, one is altering that religion. To make rules that alter a religion, or to build a large structure that interferes with the practice of a religion is an interference with that religion. The lease to build the TMT on top of a sacred mountain, Mauna Kea, will so alter the practice of religion that it will interfere with that religion.

Part of the practice of a religion has to do with building of altars, placing offerings on the altars and ceremonies related to death—called funerals in our Christian tradition. In the past altars were built at sacred sites. For example, in our Holy Bible is found the following scriptures of Jacob building an altar. In the book of Genesis 35:1 is written, ‘Then God said to Jacob, “Go up to Bethel and settle there, and build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother.” And in Genesis 35:7 is found, “There he built an altar, and he called the place El Bethel, because it was there that God revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother.” In the present altars are usually built inside a church building at the front of the sanctuary right below the cross, the most important symbol of the Christian church symbolizing the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. Offerings that are collected during the worship service are placed upon the altar.

My first experience visiting the summit of Mauna Kea and participating in a religious ceremony with offerings on the altar at the top began on the night of December 20, 2000. I accompanied members of the Royal Order of Kamehameha including some contestants in this hearing to the summit of Mauna Kea for the Winter Solstice. On the morning of December 21, 2000 standing close to the summit we chanted “E Ala E” and experienced the sunrise. Due to this experience, I believe that Mauna Kea is sacred. I went up to the altar at the summit of Mauna

Kea one other time carrying the ashes of a native Hawaiian who passed away and whose family asked me to officiate at his memorial service.

I again participated in the Winter Solstice ceremonies this past winter at the various altars beginning at Puhi Bay and leading up to Mauna Kea. We did not go up to the summit, as the road conditions were hazardous. I offered with others an offering at the altar built on the site of the proposed TMT telescope on the one-year anniversary of my arrest on April 2, 2015. I am sharing some of my experiences participating in religious ceremonies on Māuna Kea to support my statement that I also believe Mauna Kea to be a sacred mountain.

In conclusion, I believe that the rights of native Hawaiians to practice their religion is guaranteed by law and by universal principles of justice. That Mauna Kea is sacred has been accepted by tradition and public opinion. To alter the religion of the native Hawaiian people by the building of a tall and large telescope is not right and justified.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

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Urban Training Center, Chicago 1965-66
Presbyterian Institute for Industrial Relations, McCormick Seminary Summer, 1964

Professional experience:

Island Tenants On the Rise, consultant/trainer for HUD grant	Nov. 2002-2006
Interim pastor:	
Nuuanu Congregational Church	Oct.-Dec. 2003
Kapaa United Church of Christ	Feb.-April 2000
Pulpet supply:	
Olaa First Hawaiian Church	2000-2012
Kauahao Congregational Church	2003-2008
Missionary, United Church Board for World Ministries	1970-1999
Staff, PAAM Leadership Consultation, Berkeley	1998-1999
Pastor, Olaa First Hawaiian Church	June, 1992-1999
Work with Houseless Hawaiians	1991-1998
Hawaii Ecumenical Coalition	1990-1997
Coordinator, Pacific Ecumenical Forum	Jan. 1989-Dec. 1991
Community worker, Koreans in Japan, Osaka	Sept. 1973-Feb. 1988
Trainer, Volunteer Movement for Peoples Organization, Bangkok, Thailand	June 1973-Sept. 1973
Trainer, Committee on Selangor Urban Industrial Mission, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia	June 1972-May 1973
Consultant, Asian Committee for Peoples' Organization	1971-1973
Supervisor of Field Work, University of Singapore, Department of Social Work and Social Ac	
Project Director, Jurong Industrial Mission, Singapore	Jan. 1969-June 1972
Community Organizer, Organization for a Better Austin, Chicago	1966-1968

Positions:

Pastor, Ola'a First Hawaiian Church	2012-present
Luna Hoomalu, Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches	2008-2010
Ohana Ho'opakele, treasurer	1997-present
Reconciliation Committee, HCUCC	2002-2004
Hawaii Island representative, Board of Directors, Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches	

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Education:

Bachelor of Divinity, Chicago Theological Seminary, 1968
Bachelor of Arts, Mathematics, University of Hawaii, Manoa, 1963

Educational experiences:

Charles Bannerman Memorial Fellowship Program: Field study--visitation to South Africa,
Singapore, Thailand Sept. 29-Oct. 29, 1992
World Council of Churches Fellowship, Singapore 1968-69
University of Singapore - one semester, non-degree, history
Trinity Theological College - one semester
Urban Training Center, Chicago 1965-66
Presbyterian Institute for Industrial Relations, McCormick Seminary Summer, 1964

Professional experiences:

Island Tenants On the Rise, consultant/trainer for HUD grant Nov. 2002-2006
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AHEC Church & Ministry Committee	1995-1997
AHEC Endowment Committee Chair	1996-2008
Hawaii-Pacific Islander & Asian American Ministries (PAAM), United Church of Christ.	
Secretary:1998-2000; Treasurer:1994-1996;Moderator:1990-1994. Moderator2013-present	
Board of Directors, Pacific Islander & Asian American Ministries	1992-2004
Council for Racial & Ethnic Ministries Board	1998-2004
Justice and Witness Ministries Board of Directors, UCC	1999-2010
U.S.-Japan Committee for Racial Justice, Hawai'i chapter	1992-2004
Big Island Strategic Plan for Homelessness, Chair, Land Task Force	1993-1998