

## Exhibit

<http://www.civilbeat.org/connections/why-i-declined-the-tmt-think-scholarship/>

# Why I Declined the TMT THINK Scholarship

MAY 17, 2015 · By Narrissa P. Spies

A native Hawaiian scientist would have rather seen the Thirty Meter Telescope project commit to mitigating future cultural harm than fund a STEM scholarship.

## Narrissa P. Spies

*Narrissa Spies is originally from Hawaii Island and is currently a Ph.D. student in the biology department at UH Manoa.*

As a Native Hawaiian scientist, I struggled with my decision on whether to support the Thirty Meter Telescope project.

On one hand, the scientist in me knew that this instrument would make discoveries that would advance knowledge for all mankind, but the Native Hawaiian in me knew that this was a culturally sensitive issue that was hurting an entire group of people.

I struggled with my position on this sensitive topic, and I turned to what I know best as a scientist, which was to gather all the facts and make an informed decision for myself.

I read the both volumes of the Environmental Impact Study, and many other documents, and I heard arguments from both sides on why they were supporting their cause. When I came to my decision to oppose construction of the TMT, a large portion of it hung on the ethical concern that I had with what I read in the EIS about how our cultural resources had been substantially and adversely affected, and how that would continue to be the case with construction of TMT. Rather than offering realistic ways of mitigating future degradation, and repairing past damage to resources, TMT offered to start a STEM scholarship fund to support science education.

To me it felt that this was a payoff, a way to buy the cultural resources that are sacred to so many. You cannot purchase a culture, because it is something that is invaluable. As a Native Hawaiian scientist, I felt that this drove a wedge between the Native Hawaiian community and science, when the two can work together quite well.

It put me in a particularly tough place where I was forced to pick a side, and I have taken quite a lot of criticism for my decision to oppose the TMT. I also felt that the TMT project was dismissive of concerns raised by environmental and Native Hawaiian groups, and I have serious concerns about the ethics involved in the planning process of this project.

**To me it felt like a payoff, a way to buy the cultural resources that are sacred to so many. You can't purchase a culture, because it is something that is invaluable.**

I was born and raised on Hawaii Island, but moved to Oahu three years ago to attend graduate school. I am currently a Ph.D. student at UH Manoa, and struggling like my fellow students to earn a living and stay afloat. Like many of us I apply for every fellowship, scholarship, and side job that I can to earn money. I am determined to finish my degree, and will do everything that I can to achieve my goals.

I was excited a few days ago when I checked my email and saw that I had been awarded a \$7,500 scholarship through the Hawaii Community Foundation, but my heart dropped when I saw that it was the THINK scholarship from TMT. I was immediately conflicted. As a graduate student at Manoa I have taken pay cuts every year that I have been a student, and have seen my financial aid awards shrink each year.

I needed this money, and I felt that I had earned it through all the hard work I had put in while earning bachelor's and master's degrees. On the other hand it felt like I was being bought. Could I really take that money, knowing that it was part of a payout that had brought pain to so many? How would I judge myself in five years time?

I decided that even though this money would mean that I wouldn't have to struggle to pay my rent this semester, I had to go with my na'au and decline the award. I respectfully decline the award, and appreciate the selection committee deciding that I was a worthy recipient. This money was meant to get students

interested in STEM, but I am working on my third STEM degree, and I will finish it without support from TMT, the same way I started.

For the other THINK scholarship recipients, I understand that there may be those who are feeling conflicted. I know that for some of you, this might make or break your decision to finish your degree. It will be your choice whether to accept this money, and I will be supportive of each of your decisions no matter what you choose, but I have made my choice.

Someone once told me that by taking the low-hanging fruit, I might miss out on the sweetest fruit at the top of the tree, even though it might be more work to reach. I will not stop reaching for the top of that tree, even though the climb may be difficult.

I am not afraid to work hard to achieve my goal, so if anyone is hiring a freelance molecular biologist, please let me know.