

Aloha kakou. I am Violet Lui, Kanaka Maoli, living in Tucson, Arizona. I write this because of Mauna Kea, my people and my 'aina (land). My heart aches at the pain of my people, my 'ohana. I appreciate the words of support from Kanaka Maoli and native people throughout the world for the work of my people at Mauna Kea and in Hawaii to protect our 'aina, our ways, and to address the deep sorrow and ma'i that we carry, even though many of us appear successful and comfortable in many ways. We know where we come from and that many of our people still struggle to maintain a Hawaiian way of life, with dignity and self-respect. I ask that you allow my words to reach the people, Kanaka Maoli and others, so there can be consideration and respect for and from all involved.

I recently retired from the courts of the Tohono O'odham Nation in Arizona. Most of my career has been spent working with and for Indian Tribal Nations as an attorney and Tribal Judge in Arizona. Like many other Hawaiians or Kanaka Maoli, I have thought long about the relationship of Hawaiians and the State of Hawaii and the U.S. government.

Here are my thoughts, offered with aloha to my 'ohana, na Kanaka Maoli, and my 'ohana nui, all other peoples of Hawaii. Hawaiian culture is the base culture of the State of Hawaii, na moku Hawai'i. It permeates everything and enables all people to live in our 'aina. Japanese, Chinese, Okinawan, Filipino, Korean, Samoan, Tongan, European haole, American haole, Vietnamese, and many other people and their cultures have contributed to what we call the local culture. Especially the ono (delicious) food that they all bring.

Kanaka Maoli have a special relationship to ka 'aina. Kanaka Maoli are the first people of Hawaii. This 'aina and ka moana (ocean) are related physical and spiritual presences for us. The stories of Pele and her travels verify that we belong to this place. We are the land, the sea; the land and sea are us. The plants and nonhuman creatures are part of us, in the land and sea. We have a duty to speak up for ourselves, the land and the ocean.

Na Kanaka Maoli at Mauna Kea, throughout Hawaii nei and the world, are right to speak up and protect the mountain, bringing a focus to Hawaiians and the land in the State of Hawaii. As people are expressing daily at Mauna Kea, the mountain is sacred.

A Lakota Elder expressed this belief and idea of sacred land in a moving way in the book, *Neither Wolf Nor Dog*, written by Kent Nerburn at the request of the Elder. Kanaka Maoli are not Indians, of course, but there are some important similarities in our experiences and history of contacts with the western world, specifically the European and American haole. I acknowledge there are significant differences, too. The Elder described what his people felt as the white folks kept coming through their lands, coming in droves, with concepts of property ownership. He said:

...your religion didn't come from the land. It could be carried around with you. You couldn't understand what it meant to us to have our religion in the land. Your religion was in a cup and a piece of bread, and that could be carried in a box. Your priests could make it sacred anywhere. You couldn't understand that what was sacred for us was where we were, because that is where the sacred things had happened and where the spirits talked to us. Your people did not know about the land being sacred. We did not know about the land being property. We could not

talk to each other because we did not understand each other. (Kindle edition, pp. 48-49.)

Considering Mauna Kea as property to be developed according to western concepts of highest and best use, with the lure of jobs for a while, ignores significant facts: the observatory would be a desecration of a sacred Native Hawaiian site; the interests of science can be served just as well at a site where the observatory is already welcomed and planned for; and the best interests of Native Hawaiians, the Kanaka Maoli, are best determined by Native Hawaiians. I believe Native Hawaiians are saying clearly that the telescope and its observatory on Mauna Kea are not in our best interests.

What has been happening at Mauna Kea is more than the mountain, as many have already said. It is the same cry for justice, pono, that our ancestors cried, when our hearts broke again, and again, after we embraced the strange religion, the strange ways, but families still revered the old ways, oftentimes secretly on pain of physical harm and loss of liberty, and maintained their duties to the sacred places. Listen to us, now, about land and what is sacred, respect our ways, try to understand why we say what we say. We have been working very hard to understand and stay alive, intact in our identity and, importantly, in our self-respect. I feel we Kanaka Maoli have been hardest on ourselves in our anguish about why things have played out the way they have, and why we let our country be taken from our control. Kaumaha (great sadness, depressed) accurately describes what many of us feel in our own land.

I call upon Governor Ige, State of Hawaii legislators, County leaders, University officials and scientists to step away from the hollow concept of paper authority to deal with Mauna Kea as mere property and not sacred Hawaiian land. That paper authority finds its legitimacy in expediency according to western legal thought, in which native people, their governments, cultural ways, and land rights are rendered inferior to western and American ways. Remember, Ke Ali'i Lili'uokalani stepped aside under protest. Kanaka Maoli are continuing Lili'uokalani's quest for justice in very important ways today.

It is historical fact that native interests are nudged and finally pushed aside under American law again and again. The spirit of the law was never meant to push aside basic human rights, and let people, whose rights are brushed aside, experience becoming seen as less than others, inferior in the eyes of the larger society and their own eyes. The tragic compromise of slavery in our revered United States Constitution continues its shameful influence to this day. Protecting the sacred site that is Mauna Kea would show that law in Hawaii today does not disparage the ways of Kanaka Maoli, and the culture that defines Hawaii today.

I cautiously applaud the two month stop in any movement in construction on Mauna Kea. I hope there will be serious effort by the State of Hawaii, the County and the Universities involved in the project to consider the import of moving ahead on Mauna Kea, when there is another site that is suitable and no one opposes building the observatory and telescope there. That would be pono.

Pono also describes what the Mauna Kea protectors are doing, and the manner in which they are speaking for all of us Kanaka Maoli, and addressing the State, the County, University officials, and Police, with aloha.

The Nerburn book I mentioned above, is one I highly recommend for anyone to get a glimpse on the lasting effects of displacement and disrespect of a people in their own land. The Lakota Elder in the book also said:

There is no more time for fighting. Our anger must be buried...

Your people must learn to give up their arrogance. They are not the only ones placed on this earth. Theirs is not the only way. People have worshiped the Creator and loved their families in many ways in all places. Your people must learn to honor this. (Kindle edition, p. 316.)

What happens next is existential for Kanaka Maoli, and for local Hawaii culture. I am not referring to violence. I refer to aloha, living pono, concepts which allow growth, evolution, expansion, all grounded in respect for Kanaka Maoli and the ways of Kanaka Maoli. These ways have been and continue to be the spirit that joins with the goodness of all the people of Hawaii in the unique local ways of Hawaii nei today.

These are my words; my makana (offering) to my 'ohana, and to all the people of Hawaii, my "ohana nui. Aloha kakou.

Violet Pohakuku'i'ai Lui