

## LATE TESTIMONY

May 2, 2024

Public Comments to the University of Hawai'i Board of Regent's Committee on Governance

Aloha Kakahiaka Chair Loo and Member of this Committee,

My name is Jill Nunokawa and I am commenting on Agenda Item IV. A. Board Review and Discussion on Strategic Plan Imperative – Fulfill kuleana to Native Hawaiians and Hawai'i.

The shirt I wear today is 26 years old, it's from 1998. It is important to have a broader context and framework for today's committee meetings so this is my attempt to offer a short list of a long history in order to determine, design, collaborate, implement, integrate and inspire how, when, where, and who will be fulfilling the kuleana to Native Hawaiians and Hawai'i that is an imperative and integral part of our University of Hawai'i's strategic plan from 2023-2029.

1998 was 20 years after Braddah Iz's ironic song, "Hawai'i '78", 5 years after the epic 1993 March to I'olani Palace to commemorate the illegal overthrow of the sovereign Nation of Hawai'i where Dr. Haunani-Kay Trask boldly proclaimed, "We are not Americans. We will die as Hawaiians. We will never be Americans...They took our land. They imprisoned our Queen. They banned our language. They forcibly made us a colony of the United States." It was the same year our State had a Native Hawaiian Governor who made 1993 the "Year of the Hawaiian" and the same year President Clinton signed into law the Apology Bill, 1 year after the dedication of the Center for Hawaiian Studies where its Director Dr. Haunani-Kay Trask proclaimed at its opening, "this school is both a symbolic and an actual victory in the more than a century-long struggle of Hawaiians to reclaim the education of our people in our own culture."

In 1998, Dr. Trask inspired and supported hundreds of UH students to demand hearings on Native Hawaiian Tuition Waivers at the State Legislature, one of these students was the first student regent named to the Board of Regents Wayne Kaho'onei Panoke, she also inspired and supported Native Hawaiian haumana to run slates for ASUH and GSO elections and once elected these haumana were the force behind reclaiming and renaming buildings at UH to accurately reflect and honor the true leaders of Hawai'i.

In 1998, the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals decided and affirmed the lower court's finding that based on the illegal overthrow of the sovereign Nation of Hawai'i, Native Hawaiians had a unique political status that did not violate the U.S. Constitution based on the history of Hawai'i.

In 2017, a mere 9 years later, the United Nations adopted an international instrument to enshrine the rights that "constitute the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world." It is called the United Nations Declaration on

**Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and Mililani Trask was instrumental in its drafting, deliberation and adoption for decades.**

**In 1998, the University of Hawai'i was a thriving Native Hawaiian place of learning through direct actions, experiential learning, political astuteness and inspired leadership.**

**In 2001, the Center for Hawaiian Studies was renamed to the Kamakakuokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies to honor the living legacy of Aunty Gladys Ainoa Brandt, who held a six-year tenure on the BOR, 4 of them as the Board's chair. At the dedication, Aunty Gladys gracious shared with the audience, "In education, not anger, resides our future. In education, not ignorance, resides our hope. In education, not fear, resides justice." Dr. Trask said she was "the embodiment of aloha 'aina. She chose not to seek elected office. Yet she accomplished so much by leading and nurturing."**

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**Public comment on the BOR's Committee on Kuleana**