Special Board Meeting regarding The Management of Mauna Kea and the Mauna Kea Science Reserve

Many have seized the opportunity to belittle and trivialize the protectors who’ve taken to Mauna Kea, the streets, social media, petitions and government offices – calling them radicals, zealots and activists and accusing them of being anti-science. While I am not presently on the mountain, I am one of them. A strong, educated Hawaiian wāhine who humbly asks that you not diminish our connection to our sacred places, disregard our respect for the past and our ability to embrace the future and trivialize the impact your monstrosity will have on Mauna Kea’s already fragile ecosystem, landscape and aquifer. I simply ask, must desecration be the byproduct of “progress?” When will you and our state’s leaders regard fragile ecosystems, limited natural resources and culturally and historical sites with respect? When do we get to say, “that’s enough?”

Like many, I believe in science. Without it, I wouldn’t have the medication needed to control my blood pressure and glasses to correct my eyesight, in-fact, in a recent visit to Kennedy Space Center, I was in awe of space exploration and what it means for our civilization and those who will follow. But do I feel the investigation of our stars should trump what I know in my na`au to be wrong? No. Do I feel this entire process was done in a way that undermines not only native Hawaiians, but the people of Hawai`i island and our state? Yes.

The TMT is in clear violation of laws set forth by our very own government. Both the UH/TMT Corp. and BLNR admit that the “TMT project will cause adverse, significant and substantial impact to the cultural and natural resources of Mauna Kea.” Why is this being treated like an afterthought, a footnote? Stated in the HAR 13-5-30, “the proposed land use will not cause substantial adverse impact to existing natural resources within the surrounding area, community or region.” How do blatant violations like this go ignored and unaddressed? There is an admission of guilt here.

This argument isn’t new. For those who ask “where were you when the other telescopes were being built?” To be honest, many of us were either in college or high school and some were just toddlers. Our parents? They were holding steadfast in places and on issues like Kaho`olawe, Pōhakuloa, Moloka`i, Mākua and the list goes on.

Do not mistake my passion for petulance. My plea comes from sadness, not anger. It’s sad to see that the struggle to be taken seriously in our own homeland continues, it’s sad to know that our state would undermine its own people for a dollar, it’s sad that a process and its governance, or lack thereof isn’t worth the paper it’s written on and it’s sad that Mauna a Wākea, where my kūpuna once stood has been reduced to a t-shirt, a mug and a commodity to the highest bidder. To each one of you, I challenge you to do the right thing. Stop the TMT from ever seeing the light of day, or dark of night. Be pono in your decision and let’s work together to find a solution viable for all.
Aloha nui,
Elizabeth Kailaʻa Ahana

To whom this may concern: