Aloha mai kakou,
My name is Lori Kanoelani Walker. I was born and raised in Hilo, in the ahupuaa of Ponahawai, on the very slopes of Mauna Kea. I graduated from the University of Hawaii at Manoa with a Bachelor's in Olelo Hawaii and a Doctorate in Architecture. Mahalo for hearing my testimony.
I am currently living on Oahu, working in and learning from the construction industry. Every day, I witness firsthand the waste of construction and disregard for the place upon which these enormous structures are being imposed. As I've watched giant machines drill 100 feet into the earth, my heart breaks at the thought of such activity, to any degree, occurring on our mountain. To lobby for, promote, and/or allow such DEstruction to occur on Mauna Kea, for the 14th time, is reprehensible.
Growing up in a Hawaiian environment, I have learned the value of hard work, humility, and respect for our host culture. I have also witnessed as this culture has been taken advantage of; exploited when profitable and ignored when inconvenient. The time has come and an opportunity has presented itself for all of us, Native Hawaiian or otherwise, to stand up for what is just and to recognize and protect the finite cultural and environmental resources of this place.
The Thirty Meter Telescope represents the painful perpetuation of the exploitation and colonization that has displaced many Native Hawaiians and indigenous people all over the world.
This is not just about one telescope. This is not even just about all 14 telescopes. This is not just about the 100 years plus of disrespect and disregard for the aboriginal people of this place. Moreover, this has never been a protest against science or progress and it is an insult to Hawaiians and all indigenous peoples to assume so. Indigenous people have long understood the harmony of scientific discovery and spiritual wisdom.
This movement for protecting Mauna Kea is about protecting what is sacred. That is the land. That is the mountain. That is our native people. That is their culture and language; their traditions and gods. They were all here before any of us. Who are we to arrive at someone's home, claim it as our own, and determine how it can and should benefit us? This conflict is a clash of beliefs between those who are only motivated by that which is tangible and those who are so deeply connected to that which is not. We cannot ignore the latter simply because they are now a minority.
To the UH Board of Regents, I know that a couple of you are from Hilo and must have experienced the intangible beauty and sacredness of Mauna Kea. A few of you are formerly and presently lawyers and I'm sure you understand the legality, or illegality, of what has occurred as recently as today, seven years ago, and all the way back to over 100 years ago. Some of you are educators and seek only to enlighten our future. I implore such esteemed and educated people in your positions at the University of HAWAII, to humble yourselves and learn from THIS place, and preserve it for future generations to do so.
In closing let me remind you, the "Shared values of the UH system include aloha, collaboration, respect, intellectual rigor, integrity, service, access, affordability, diversity, fairness, leveraged technology, innovation, accountability and sustainability." Do not forget whose language, whose culture, your first value comes from. At least allow them to educate you on what it actually means and let that guide you to accomplish the rest.

Me ka haahaa, me ka oiaio, me ke aloha no,
Lori K. Walker