Aloha e, Chairman Moore, Board of Regents and UH System President Lassner:

My name is RJ Kaleohano Nadal and I would like to provide some comments on the matter of the Thirty Meter Telescope.

Being born and raised on the mainland, I had piecemeal knowledge of my roots as Kanaka Maoli. I knew my Grandmother’s first language was ‘olelo Hawai‘i- which she was forbidden to speak outside the home, and her second and third languages were Pidgin and English- which she was forbidden by her Kuku Lady and Kuku Man to speak at home. I know my grandmother’s oldest daughter also spoke the language- which she eventually lost after spending the majority of her life on the mainland.

My grandmother returned to Hawaii with her husband, my grandfather to retire. She did not return to her home- Honoka‘a, instead she settled in Honolulu, in this two bedroom apartment on Kapahulu Avenue that will forever be etched in my memory from childhood visits. On our last family visit- I knew even as a young child, that I wanted to live in Hawaii- if not for the rest of my life, then at least for a portion of it.

I did have the chance to live in Hawaii‘i. I got to reconnect with my extended ‘ohana, make new lifelong friends, and learn so much of the rich history, culture, language and way of living of my kupuna. I was able to live on two islands- one of which this island. And I was able to get an education on this very island- which has prepared me for a job in government and social services, and prepared me very well.

However, some of the most memorable lessons I learned from the kupuna of this very island. From Hilo to Honaunau- I learned what it is to be Kanaka Maoli- both in antiquity and in this modern world. I learned how the disadvantages our people face make us stronger in our heritage and connection to our culture. I also learned what aloha really is- and I learned quickly that I had to earn my aloha, because of circumstances that kept me from this land.

I am strongly against the development of the Thirty Meter Telescope. I do not believe that it will provide economic benefits as many are alleging. The construction jobs are not sustainable, and I have a very hard time believing that local folks will have the high-paying jobs that the Telescope will create. I don’t believe that the O‘ahu centric systems that govern the State of Hawaii will blink an eye if they need to raid the special fund that the TMT authorities are promising to the children of this island. And even if I am wrong- it will take years for a keiki Kanaka Maoli to have the education, training and skill set to be a high-paid astronomer at the TMT. And by the time that happens- the TMT will be as
obsoleto as this phone I am typing these very comments on.

The mountain is sacred to my people for many reasons. The mountain is sacred to me. And even though I no longer live on the Big Island- I have plans to return and to show my children this land, introduce them to their people, and teach them their culture. And trust me, I can make it happen because I had to drive back and forth on Saddle Road from Hilo to Kona for work while carrying an 18 credit course load.

Mahalo for your time. And I just want to point out that people in Hawaii often say “host culture” when referring to the culture of the Kanaka Maoli. Well, it’s apparent now that many “hosts” are yanking the welcome mat and asking certain “guests” to leave. A’ole TMT

Kaleohano Nadal