Ke aloha o ka ‘āina iā ‘oukou a pau

First off I would like to thank the Board of Regents for holding this meeting and the opportunity to hear the Native Hawaiian’s opinion and concerns on the Thirty Meter Telescope and Mauna Kea.

My name is Brandy-Alia Imeakaumakakūlō‘ihinokalani Serikaku. I am a 2007 graduate of Ka Haka ‘Ula O Keʻelikōlani at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo. I earned my Bachelor’s degree in Hawaiian Studies with an emphasis on continuing the language and culture and am currently pursuing my Master’s degree in Hawaiian Language and Literature.

I am representing my kūpuna, Howard Bode, Mae Akeka Saunders, James Saunders, Kekahaohookalani Akeka, and Kaʻilimahunaika‘awaokamehameha, all of Native Hawaiian descent who are no longer here physically, but spiritually stand by my side every day. I am here to represent my keiki, Kaya Kahia‘aikaumakapoli Ahuna and Nova Kealalamalama Ahuna, ages 8 and 2 respectively, both being raised in a Hawaiian language immersion school setting since their enrollment at the Hi‘ipēpē infant/toddler program under the ‘Aha Pūnana Leo pre-school system.

Although I am quite capable to speak in the mother language of this land, my kūpuna, and my daughters, I will address my letter to the Board of Regents in English, so that my stand on this issue can be clearly understood.

It has come to my attention the lack of consistency between the University of Hawai‘i, the State of Hawai‘i, the Board of Land and Natural Resources, and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs with their responsibility on protecting Maunakea and listening to the voices of the Native Hawaiian community.

It is outrageous that the University continues to support desecration of Maunakea in light of peaceful protests from the Native Hawaiian community, University of Hawai‘i faculty and students and graduates.

Maunakea represents our piko. Piko can be defined as the center from which an umbilical cord connects us to our mother, it is also a spiritual center on the top of our fontanel connecting us to our kūpuna and those generations above us, it is also the reproductive center where life is created and continues into the next generation. Piko is also the highest point, the summit of a mountain. It is no coincidence that Maunakea is the tallest volcano in the world, located in the center of the Pacific ocean, and home to Wākea our ancestral father, where all Hawaiian life derives from. My ancestors recognized it’s significance and it’s value is embedded in our language, our chants, our stories, and our genealogy.
It is still important to me today, I still consider it a sacred place, I still offer prayers when I ascend to the piko, because I am that much closer to my kūpuna.

In Hawaiian culture there is a saying “ʻoki i ka piko”, this can be translated to “the umbilical cord has been cut”. It can have a positive meaning in the context of dedicating a new house, but like all words in the Hawaiian language there is a duality that must be acknowledged. What the University of Hawai‘i is doing by supporting the Thirty Meter Telescope is “ʻoki i ka piko”, you are cutting our umbilical cord, cutting into our summit, severing our ties with our land, with our father.

I ask that each of you look inside yourselves and see what connection, what responsibility you have to Maunakea. How can you protect Maunakea? How can you preserve it for my daughters and grandchildren? How can this institution that gives me certificate in Hawaiian studies, which is valued around the world, go against everything they’ve taught and empowered me with?

Please stop your support of TMT and start protecting Maunakea. Please acknowledge the living Hawaiian culture and the Native Hawaiian community’s concerns, and respectfully take your stand with us.

Sincerely with all of my aloha,
Brandy-Alia Serikaku

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