Hello Kākou,

My name is Halena Kapuni-Reynolds. I graduated from the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo with my Bachelor's of Arts in Hawaiian Studies and Anthropology in 2013. I am currently a graduate student at the University of Denver studying Museum and Heritage Studies. As an alumnus of UH Hilo and as a Native Hawaiian born and raised on the Island of Hawai‘i, I humbly ask that you reconsider your position regarding the construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope.

You all are well aware of the opposition facing this endeavor, as evident through the flooding of social media channels with photographs taken from around the world as well as the sharing of resources regarding TMT for individuals to take a stance on this controversial project. A question that is worth asking is this: If the TMT engaged in meaningful consultation for seven years with various Hawaiian communities and individuals, why is it that the project continues to face overwhelming opposition from Native Hawaiians across the Hawaiian Islands as well as abroad?

Further, I urge you to not assume that those communicating through a digital platform are simply being brainwashed into supporting the opposition. For many of us, myself included, we are Kanaka far from our ancestral homeland furthering our education. We also represent the diaspora of Native Hawaiians who emigrated to the Continental U.S. and other countries for various reasons. Although we are not able to physically stand with our ʻohana at the summit to protect our ʻāina, social media and other means of communication have provided us with the opportunity to express our views and to participate in this worldwide protest. We have scholars and individuals with Ph.Ds who are a part of network, constantly providing the broader digital community with credible resources on the illegalities of TMT. The argument that TMT proponents are placing forward regarding the spread of false information regarding the project is pretentious and suggests that they have no regard for sound scholarship that does not fit their agenda.

Lastly, with regards to TMT's claims of extensive consultation with the community, I'd like to provide my perspective as a Hawaiian scholar interested in the study of museums. CONSULTATION SHOULD NOT BE INTERMINGLED OR CONFUSED WITH COLLABORATION. From my own research and interests, the notion of consultation is ingrained within museological discourse regarding the interaction of museums with native communities. As some of you may know, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation (NAGPRA) facilitates the return of native remains to their source communities and has encouraged the integration of indigenous care methods in the preservation and curation of indigenous collections within Western museums. Consultations with Native groups in the United States regarding the repatriation of human remains, sacred objects, objects of cultural patrimony, etc. are mandated under NAGPRA legislation.

NAGPRA has also facilitated the stride within museums to consult with native groups in the process of developing exhibits on native culture. NAGPRA, as well as other collaborative endeavors within museums have altered the playing field, leading towards more critical representations of Native peoples within museums.

HOWEVER, working solely on a consultation-model has not effectively challenged the power structures of museums. Rather, they have reinforced paternalistic mindsets within museums and are not reflective of a true COLLABORATIVE model for museums. Consultation is a selective process that can disenfranchise certain communities in favor of consulting certain individuals and communities. Furthermore, consultation operates on the notion that museums have the ultimately authority over representations and collections—with native peoples being "invited" into museums to consult on pre-established schemes and projects.

In relating this to the TMT, I feel that the TMT's consultation with Native Hawaiians reflect an underlying paternalistic mindset towards native communities. Were we, as the aboriginal peoples of these lands, not regarded as equal partners from the beginning of this endeavor? Or were we simply an after-thought in the eyes...
of planners that would be appeased through mere "consultation." Rather than consultation, I see the past seven years as an affront to our culture that demonstrates negligence on part of the TMT for not pursuing an equal partnership with the Native Hawaiian community.

On theorizing collaborative models in museums, scholars have argued that collaboration can only truly occur when museums regard native communities as partners with equal power and ownership over museum collections and representation of native people. EQUALITY in this context means that museums, and the people within them, need to be willing to give away their authoritative power over collections, and the collections themselves, in order to effectively develop meaningful and critical relationships with native communities.

I do not believe that the TMT has regarded the Native Hawaiian community as an equal partner throughout this entire endeavor. In fact, in the past few weeks, it seems that the TMT has opted to disregard the opposition that is currently being faced by stating that they have gone through the consultative process over a seven-year period. If you are facing opposition now, do not reject or discredit the arguments being placed before you as merely speculative or by waging a social media war. We are fighting for what is best for our mauna and for our people—both Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian alike.

I urge that the Board of Regents reconsider their position. As you've witnessed, this issue is not going away anytime soon.

ʻO wau me ka haʻahaʻa
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