April 24, 2015

To the Board of Regents:

I support the construction of TMT.

The history of Hawaii, and especially Mauna Kea - is unknown prior to around 400 - 500 A.D, when the first Polynesians arrived.

However, it is fairly safe to state that prior to any human contact - the Hawaiian Islands, and Mauna Kea specifically, did not know about or harbour any gods or goddesses.

These early Polynesians, driven by an exquisite knowledge of navigation by the stars - also brought their culture, religion, and deities.

One thing we do know for certain is that the early navigators were also astronomers, in every sense of the word. They understood the sky and stars, and used that knowledge to cross thousands of miles of ocean.

Now we arrive at today, and the protests surrounding the construction of TMT.

The protesters have had seven (7) years to state their case. There have been countless court cases, impact statements, meetings with protesters, and requested changes made.

The protesters lost in all cases, and all impact statements came back clean (or the project was modified to accommodate needed changes).

Now, after the green light has been given to TMT - by everyone including OHA - the protesters have decided to take the law into their own hands.

Not only are they going after TMT - but they have also stated that once they are successful against TMT, they are targeting the existing telescopes.

These are not the arguments of serious people. These are the remaining hard-core protesters who refuse to give up and have no problem with distorting facts and making false claims to garner support from people with less knowledge of the situation.

They claim to be outraged about the use of the mountain. But where is their outrage against the Mauna Kea 200 race, which races motorcycles around Mauna Kea at the 9000 foot level, ripping up the land and creating huge clouds of dust?

Where is their outrage about the geologists at the National Park - who study and monitor the volcano?

Where is their outrage at the bombings of Mauna Loa by the military, or the geothermal plant drilling into the volcano?

No - this is selective outrage - aimed at the astronomical community.
They claim "build your telescope somewhere else, our mountain is sacred".

However, telescopes only work well in a few special places on our planet - due to light pollution, atmospheric disturbances, and other causes.

Where then should it be built? What mountain is not sacred to some people?

Over the course of recorded human history, humans have created over 5,000 deities (www.godfinder.org).

There are religions that consider the Moon, Mars, and the rest of the planets to be sacred. Mars and Venus, not to mention the other planets, are named for these gods and goddesses (Roman).

Should we have not sent man to the moon? It is a sacred spot after all.

Should we not have rovers on Mars? Likewise, it is sacred too.

At what point does mythology and fantasy win, and science and humanity lose? Does knowledge always take a back seat to mythical beings?

The telescopes are about discovery. What we glean from using them advances humanity and our knowledge of the universe.

We know that eventually Earth is doomed - whether by the very distant death of our own Sun, to much closer situations such as asteroid impact, gamma ray burst, and other types of "death from the skies".

Our knowledge of the universe is critical for our eventual survival as a species - if we are to ever leave this rock.

However, many of the protesters have stated "there is nothing that these telescopes can teach us about the universe, that our ancestors did not already know".

This is seriously short-sighted. The ancient Polynesians did not know that we are in one of billions of galaxies. They did not know about dark energy, dark matter, the accelerated expansion of the universe. They did not know about solar flares, pulsars, supernova, gamma ray bursts, or black holes. They did not know about exoplanets circling distant stars.

These are just some of the things discovered by telescopes, including those currently on-top of Mauna Kea.

Furthermore, the protesters are not being honest. They continue to make claims:

* TMT destroys the water table
* TMT destroys protected native insects
* TMT is built on burial sites

All of these are false - and the protesters know it. But they continue to use these statements to garner support.

Eventually, probably within 100 to 200 years, there will be no telescopes on Mauna Kea. This will either be due to our increasing ability to launch telescopes into space - or the types of protests we are seeing now. Either way, Mauna Kea will eventually be restored.

The protesters claim that this is for their "future generations". However, all they are doing to their future generations is insuring that they have less knowledge, less opportunities, and less future.

I find it ironic that one of the primary protesters stated that "each telescope should pay 40 million to be there"... indicating that there is a price high enough to make the protesters go away. This is hypocrisy.

Finally, what does this say to the outside world? It says that Hawaii rejects progress. Hawaii rejects science. Is that what we want the world to hear?
I urge you to continue with TMT construction. TMT is vital to our understanding of the universe, the advancement of our species, and establishing Hawaii as a good investment for science and knowledge.

Respectfully,

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