Board of Regents <bor@hawaii.edu>

TMT Testimony

CyberShaman - Raymond Mata <ray@mycybershaman.com>  
Mon, Apr 27, 2015 at 12:02 AM

Aloha BOR,

Here’s my written testimony that I, Raymond Mata from KAUAI, presented IN PERSON today, April 26th at approximately 3:45pm. It was a long day, lots of testimonies, some of them emotionally charged but devoid of facts. I hope mine helps in your decision. MAHALO NUI.

“Mahalo Board of Regents and UH Hilo for having us here today. I believe these are the kinds of discussions that will move us forward in a pono way. There are many different layers to this discussion. I speak from personal experience.

In 2002 I worked on the summit of Mauna Kea for the Subaru telescope. At the time it was the largest single piece mirror in the world @8.3 meters. This engineering was a marvel in itself allowing us to look deeper into the cosmos than ever before. I was one of only a few locals allowed to work on the summit. Only entry level positions were available because Japanese nationals wanting to come work for their prestigious telescope could no longer bring their families after 9/11 happened. Wasn’t worth leaving their families behind. At $13/hr, 9am-5pm, five days a week, I could hardly blame them. Barely enough to cover food and gas!

While working on the summit I learned of at least one other telescope that was no longer in use. The United Kingdom Infrared Telescope. Now this was back in 2002. That telescope is still up there. I have firsthand knowledge of what these massive instruments are made of, mostly metal, rubber, plastic and concrete and a whole score of toxic chemicals used for optics maintenance and other normal telescope operations. My main concern is if the telescope is no longer in use, why is it still up there? We all know what happens when these things are left abandoned. They rust and rot into the ground. Considering the delicate environment of the summit, this alone would be disastrous. Building telescopes on this summit, within this pristine conservation area came with very clear and special agreements and responsibilities, one of which is proper and timely decommissioning and removal. How can we trust responsible agencies charged with care of the summit to properly manage the monstrosity that is TMT if older, smaller agreements are not being honored?

On the topic of jobs that this TMT promises to bring our islands. I believe the task of removing telescopes from the summit of Mauna Kea will bring more jobs and economic benefit than the TMT project could ever hope to. As another opponent of TMT construction has already said here, how do 130 new jobs on an island of 300,000 people justify developing on conservation lands?

On a final note, this discussion for me is not about us versus them, acient vs modern, science vs sacred ground. TMT, OHA, BLNR are not the enemies. They are members of our community. Somehow the voices of thousands who oppose building TMT on the summit were not part of the decision to proceed with construction. Their voices tell us that our future will not come with the promises of science alone.
Our future depends on a deeper more sustainable connection with our environment. One that thousands of years of our ancestors honoring this connection used to deliver this precious world to us now. We stand on their shoulders, running a collision course for global catastrophe within a single generation. Our absence in this discussion has cost this TMT project the attention of the world. Today’s problems will only be solved by more balanced discussion and responsibility.

Mauna a Wakea has been hearing my prayers ever since I came to these islands in 2001. My daughter was born here. I stand here today to ensure that our mauna will go on hearing and answering prayers for the generations to come, for my keiki and for yours. Protect from development what has given us so much for so long and you will always have what you need to thrive on this earth. A'oohe hana nui ke alu i'a."