

Presentation to the Faculty Congress 10-19-05

My name is Pete Britos.

I teach in the Department of English.

Before returning to my alma mater two years ago, I spent the previous 12 years at the University of Southern California as a graduate student, postdoctoral fellow and faculty member.

While at USC I had the opportunity to experience first hand the controversy over establishing a UARC. It was presented as a done deal—USC being a private institution.

But eventually after tremendous opposition from faculty and students, the UARC was moved miles away from the main campus to accommodate faculty and student concerns about our educational environment and mission.

I worked at the USC-UARC, the Institute for Creative Technologies, in 2002 and 2003.

I want to be clear that I think establishing a UARC at the University of Hawai'i would be a travesty. In the mid-to-late 80s when I was a student here, the standing pedestrian wisdom was that UH was the last great bastion of occidental colonialism in Hawai'i. We laughed about that then. But one can laugh no more.

U.S. Military presence has assured that the physical space of Hawai'i, it's political processes, and now it's intellectual autonomy would be co-opted. This is a legacy made up of institutional processes like the one we are witnessing unfold at our university.

Patriotism, of course, is an inappropriate criterion for establishing a UARC at UH, though some have argued for it on these nationalist terms.

To so totally make our university complicit with the kind of overarching agenda that goes on in a UARC is criminal. It would be a historical black mark on everyone who has the power to effect a decision. A university needs its intellectual autonomy. Like its professors and students, the institution needs to be able to take the right path, not the path of least resistance, not the path greased by cold hard cash and calculated militarism.

I worked at the institute for Creative Technologies in Marina del Rey as a writer, consultant and project coordinator, so I know something about how an organization like this works. I handled task orders and think tank sessions with the military and its agents. I wrote the Executive Summary and Final Report of the ICT-DMSO, Defense Modeling and Simulation Organization conference from 2003, which sketched out the future for UARC and industry involvement with war and military pedagogic simulation.

Let me tell you that once you are in the system, there are few rules about pursuing projects. It's open competition for whatever contracts or side deals come up. All the

guarantees about safety, or non-weapons systems research are irrelevant once the iron curtain is established. You must work in tandem with the point of the spear, so to speak.

This is a dangerous environment for students. Students will do what they think is cool, without necessarily understanding the ramifications of and overall objectives of the project.

Consider the Chancellor and President's suggestion that they are agnostic. I think the description is apropos, in that a UARC would require a religious, faith-based adherence to military doctrine. I ask, what kind of indoctrination will be required in order for our students, faculty and civilians to work in the UARC? What kind of oath, what kind of faith in the military solution is required?

As you know, should we make our state university a military enclave, we will be asking our students and faculty to compromise themselves in order to work. Many of my colleagues at ICT, world class scientists, linguists, critical studies analysts, etc., felt terribly compromised by the kinds of projects they were forced to interact with and abide by. Some refused to have their names associated with certain projects.

The military mind you is about building the most effective killing machines possible. And at the point of the spear is an individual; and on the other side of the spear are families and individuals. From where the UARC sits, involvement with being part of the military industrial complex can appear to be an antiseptic experience. It may seem innocent, even aesthetically beautiful, as in the bomb. Almost like a video game where there are no real casualties or collateral damage. But opting for the military solution as THE solution is no game.

There is an alternative future for Hawai'i available besides the militaristic one proposed by UH administration. Let me diverge for a moment here. Look at who is pushing the UARC. I don't mean to insult anyone, but let me just say that from a kanaka maoli perspective the University of Hawai'i is made up largely of a culture of outside experts. Most of these people/experts are good people. I know: I've had many of you as teachers and as colleagues. But there's an interesting predatory dynamic going on with outside experts wanting to turn UH into a military appendage.

A university ideally should be about the search for truth, knowledge, peace and the wellbeing of our environment, our families and our neighbors around the world.

I encourage you to do the right thing for our territory and our ohana. Look beyond the short-term cash incentives. Vote No on the UARC.