

SECOND SESSION OF THE PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES,

MAY 2003

INTERVENTION ON ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

PRESENTED BY KALIKOLIHOU HANNAHS

KAMAKAKUOKALANI CENTER FOR HAWAIIAN STUDIES

Mr. Chair, Members of the Permanent Forum, Distinguished Representatives,

Indigenous brothers and sisters, aloha. Ke lalawe nei wau i nā welina aloha o nā 'aumākua Hawai'i i nā 'aumakua 'ōiwi o neia 'āina kahiko me ko lākou mau pulapula. I bring the warm greetings of my Hawaiian ancestors to the Native ancestors of this ancient land and to their descendants. My name is Kalikolihau Hannahs. I am 21 years old and a student at the Kamakakūokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

The State of Hawai'i's Office of Hawaiian Affairs, (OHA) reported that last year, 19% of Native Hawaiians were in the lowest tenth percentile of the income bracket in Hawai'i, taking in less than \$20,000 per year. The same source reported that unemployment among Native Hawaiians was 1.5 times higher than the statewide unemployment rate. Native Hawaiians make up over one quarter of people within Hawai'i receiving financial assistance, and the rate of Native Hawaiians living below the

poverty level was recently 14%, double the statewide rate of poverty. Native Hawaiian youth are among the many suffering from these severe economic conditions. Forced into lives of poverty, they continue to suffer from the lack of economic development and opportunities for Native youth to sustain themselves.

Article 22 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognizes that “Indigenous Peoples have the right to special measures for the immediate, effective and continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions, including in the areas of employment, vocational training and retraining...” However, Native Hawaiians continue to receive minimal assistance in the vocational training of our youth. Previously implemented programs were unsuccessful due to the lack of proper funding, resources, or dedicated trainers. Our rights are not being fulfilled and the vicious cycle continues.

Pro-sovereignty groups such as Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i have recognized the importance of developing a strong economic base in the pursuit of sovereignty. In order to be successful, a nation must be able to sustain itself, through culturally appropriate economic development.

Native Hawaiian youth are discouraged from integrating their cultural traditions with business. The University of Hawai‘i does not offer a single course that integrates Hawaiian culture with business. Currently pursuing a dual undergraduate degree in both

Business and Hawaiian Studies, I came face to face with adversity when applying for the College of Business. Native students who are successful in pursuing a Business degree at the University often lose touch with their Hawaiian heritage, assimilate and become like any foreign business person.

There have been programs instated by the State and Federal governments to fund economic development, however, many young Hawaiians are hesitant to use them, as doing so would recognize the State as a colonizing entity and take us a step backwards in our pursuit of self determination. Many Hawaiians avoid these programs and opportunities, fearful of financial traps hidden in fancy writing.

Article 23 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People asserts that “Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop all ... other economic and social programs affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programs through their own institutions.”

Considered “Wards of the State”, Native Hawaiians are treated like orphaned children, denied participation in the development and administration of such programs. We must fight for the right to participate in our own economic development, making the

road to self determination all the more difficult. Without an economic base, a nation must struggle even to live.

In closing, I call for the immediate adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and ask that Hawai'i be reinscribed on the UN List of Decolonizing Nations.

Thank you, Mr, Chair and members of the Permanent Forum.