

**STATEMENT OF THE KOANI FOUNDATION  
TO THE  
SECOND PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES**



Item 4 (a) Economic & Social Development

Aloha kakou apau, greetings to you Mr. Chairman, and to all from The Koani Foundation.

We are honored to participate, for the second time, in the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

The Koani Foundation was created by Native Hawaiian activist John Butch Kekahu III. Butch died on December 27, 2001 at the age of 57, having suffered from advanced diabetes, a disease that has decimated so many of our people.

The Mission of The Koani Foundation is "To Achieve Independence for Native Hawaiians Through Education and Unification of Our Peoples."

Over a century ago, our sovereign government was overthrown by an illegal act of war. Supported by military forces of the United States of America, descendants of Christian Missionaries and foreign businessmen stole our lands, suppressed our culture and committed genocide against our native population.

Today, Native Hawaiians demonstrate the worst social, educational and economic indicators of any ethnic group in the USA. Native Hawaiians currently make up the largest percentage of homeless in Hawai'i. Our child mortality rate is shockingly high. And sadly, more Native Hawaiians are incarcerated in prison than are enrolled in college.

As with all of you, our children are our future. We are alarmed at what we see as the future for our Native Hawaiian children. Because a few individuals and corporations now control an amount of land in Hawai'i that exceeds *all* lands leased to *all* Native Hawaiians, the options for our future generations are decreasing geometrically.

Nevertheless, as are all of you, we are a strong and resilient people. Our culture and Nation survive despite more than a century of colonization, forced assimilation, and social and economic oppression. We have survived despite the illegal occupation of our lands. However, we are outcasts in our own homeland.

The Koani Foundation  
PO Box 304 Anahola, Kaua'i 96734 – (808) 822-7643 – [freehawaii@earthlink.net](mailto:freehawaii@earthlink.net)

Currently there is a move in the Congress of the USA to make us wards of the government, similar to Native American Indian Tribes, via "federal recognition." Similarly, our welfare and resources would be placed under the Department of the Interior. This proposal is outrageous given recent proof of Interior's gross mismanagement of tribal lands and tens of billions of Native American dollars.

We strongly oppose this proposed "federal recognition." Not only would it institutionalize the historic oppression we have suffered far too long, but, more importantly, it could lead to the extinguishment of our aboriginal rights.

We support our brothers and sisters gathered here at this Second Annual Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues, and we recognize that your struggle is ours. We do share the same history. Unity is the key to our cause, as we all move forward, walking in the footsteps of our ancestors.

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