

Kaleikoa Ka‘eo’s Testimony about Mauna Kea

The Hawaiian people have faced many struggles and obstacles while trying to protect Mauna Kea from the construction of the Thirty-Meter-Telescope (TMT), which would be the fourteenth telescope on the mountain. They have made tremendous progress with the amount of support that they had both on and off the mauna. However, with the increase in protests and protection of the mountain came an increase in political powers and forces against them.

Rhetoric has played an important role in the entire controversy surrounding the TMT because of the constant back-and-forth arguments between the Hawaiian people and other allies against the TMT versus the TMT supporters. In the speech posted by Big Island Video News on September 19, 2019, Kaleikoa Ka‘eo spoke in front of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) trustees in an effort to gain more support for the “‘A‘ole TMT” (No TMT) cause. Kaleikoa Ka‘eo speaks as a representing voice of the Hawaiian people, utilizing multiple references to Hawaiian history and the Hawaiian culture along with metaphoric language to enhance the persuasion of his argument. In the following analysis, I will focus on the various ways that Ka‘eo used Hawaiian-based references in his testimony to persuade the audience physically in front of him and those who watched through the screen that the Hawaiian culture and the preservation of a sacred landmark is more important than scientific advancements. Prior to looking at Ka‘eo’s persuasion tactics, I will explain the importance of Mauna Kea to the Hawaiian race and why both parties advocate for their respective sides.

The significance of Mauna Kea is important to understand because it serves as the foundation for why the Hawaiians are fighting to protect it. Mauna Kea is known as the *piko* of Hawai‘i Island, or “The Big Island.” “Piko” has multiple meanings, including the literal definition of “a summit,” but it is most commonly used in reference to one’s navel, which is the

center of a being's body, similar to how the mountain is the center of this island to its people. The navel is the symbolic connection between a mother and her child, similar to Mauna Kea being the connection between the Hawaiian ancestors and their descendants. Hawaiians believed Mauna Kea to be the *wao akua* (realm of the gods) and specifically the home to Poli'ahu, the goddess of snow. The full name of this mountain is *Mauna a Wākea*, which translates to "the mountain of Wākea." Wākea is the father of the sky in the Hawaiian religion. The Hawaiian people want to protect their sacred *mauna* because of its cultural meaning to them, therefore, they began these protests.

The resistance by the Hawaiians and allies have all been through *kapu aloha*, meaning there is no violence on their side of the fight. The Hawaiians see themselves as *protectors* rather than protestors. Beginning in 2014, protests against the TMT started locally in Hawai'i, which spread worldwide leading to an abundant increase in protests by July 2019 when construction was set to begin. The TMT timeline noted that although the construction was supposed to start during the week of July 15, 2019, "construction [was] stalled due to protestors blocking the Mauna Kea Access Road" ("The Process"). These "protestors" have gained recognition as *kia 'i*, the protectors of Mauna Kea, created a blockage at the base of the mountain to prevent the TMT officials from going up and beginning construction. During this exponential growth of support for the Hawaiian race back in 2019, there were various ceremonies, protocols, and cultures who visited the mauna to show their support.

On the other hand, TMT scientists chose Mauna Kea as the site to build the telescope because they decided that this mountain had the best atmospheric features for "capturing the sharpest images and producing the best science" ("The Facts about TMT on Maunakea"). According to the "Selecting Maunakea" of the TMT website, Mauna Kea has the perfect climate

and its atmosphere provides “exceptional conditions for astronomical measurements with adaptive optics (“The Process”).

Kaleikoa Ka‘eo, a Hawaiian Studies professor at the University of Hawai‘i Maui College, testified in front of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs Board of Trustees in an attempt to convince OHA to increase their support and involvement with the Hawaiian people in protecting Mauna Kea. More broadly, the purpose of his speech was to explain the importance of Mauna Kea through the perspective of a Hawaiian to show why the sacred culturally-infused mountain should be protected and override the opposing view that astronomical achievements are more important.

Ka‘eo utilized the Hawaiian language to support his argument beginning with an opening chant in the Hawaiian language, which is a Hawaiian tradition where one chants as a way to respectfully acknowledge his presence. This chant set the stage for Ka‘eo, focused everyone’s attention on him and immediately exemplified how rooted he is in his Hawaiian culture, which adds to the ethos appeal. Ka‘eo’s credibility as a Hawaiian is important because the information he uses to support his claim is heavily based on the Hawaiian culture and history - the logos appeal. Aside from speaking fluently in Hawaiian, Ka‘eo also intertwines the Hawaiian language with English, such as when he says that the mountain should be protected “for the *‘āina*, the *mo‘opuna*, [and] the *keiki*” (Ka‘eo, 2:02-2:04). These words translate to the “land,” the “grandchildren,” and the “children.” Ka‘eo only said these three nouns in Hawaiian emphasizing the importance of the land and the future Hawaiian generations and showing that all of these factors will be negatively affected by the TMT.

Later in his speech, Ka‘eo addresses the science aspect of this project, which is part of the opposing parties argument. In order to support the claim that “[Hawaiians] have always been

scientists,” Ka‘eo chants the beginning of the *Kumulipo*, which is the Hawaiian creation story, to disprove the notion that Hawaiians are against the TMT because they are against science (Ka‘eo, 5:50-6:24). Shortly following this, Ka‘eo mentions *kapu aloha*, which has been a part of the overarching goal in protecting Mauna Kea and protesting against the TMT without violence. He explained that *kapu aloha* has been the key to keeping the people together in these protests. This was directly followed by his transition back to speaking in fluent Hawaiian in continuing to talk about *kapu aloha* where he said, “*Mau ka nui o ke aloha e pono ai...* by all the love that is necessary. That’s how we will be victorious” which reinforced to the audience that the Hawaiians will not use force to get their way (Ka‘eo, 7:15-7:24). Ka‘eo, again, used the native tongue to emphasize points in his speech, in this case to convey that the Hawaiians’ actions will not reciprocate those actions taken against them, such as the forced removal of Hawaiians off of the *mauna* and the use of the National Guard to clear the access road.

Ka‘eo ended his speech the same way he began, using the Hawaiian language to say “*E holo kākou. Mahalo*” (Ka‘eo, 14:55-15:00). The literal translation “Let’s go. Thank you” is so simple but effective in concluding Ka‘eo’s message because he portrays the confidence that he has in his speech while also utilizing a previously mentioned metaphor regarding a canoe to directly encourage OHA to support the Hawaiian people while also indirectly relating to the audience that they should get on board with their side of the fight.

Ka‘eo’s Hawaiian references did not stop at his use of the language; he also incorporated the Hawaiian history and referred to cultural traditions to counter opposing perspectives on the construction of the TMT. Near the beginning of his speech, Ka‘eo refers to the ancient Hawaiians who traveled by canoe, saying “just like when the first canoes left and they made that choice. Some stayed behind and some got on that canoe” (Ka‘eo, 2:55-3:15). He used this

reference as an introductory metaphor to his following rhetorical question “will you join the people?” to convey the message to his audience that the Hawaiian people need their support and that they should “get on the canoe” with them. As previously mentioned, Ka‘eo also uses the *Kumulipo* to prove that this controversy is not based on Hawaiians being against science. He refers to the creation chant as evidence to say that “we have always been scientists,” which shows the audience that the main goal is not to delay astronomical advancements but to protect and strengthen the dwindling Hawaiian culture. The effect this had on the present audience could be heard through a round of applause after Ka‘eo’s clarification on what this fight is about; in Ka‘eo’s words, “this is about our people defining for ourselves what is best” (Ka‘eo, 6:44-6:48). Ka‘eo’s persuasion was also effectively shown through his use of figurative language, similar to his historical reference to the ancient Hawaiians on canoes.

Ka‘eo used metaphors so that the audience is provided with a different way of understanding the controversy from a Hawaiian, non-supporter-of-the-TMT point of view. Within the first couple of minutes of his speech, Ka‘eo explains Governor Ige’s false portrayal of the Hawaiian people, saying that he does so to “dehumanize *kānaka* [the Hawaiian people] as if we [are] animals who need to be put into cages and drug off that *mauna*” (Ka‘eo, 1:31-2:00). This was an effective way to portray the wrongdoings that the government commits against the Hawaiians because the audience is able to see how arresting native Hawaiians for protecting their land is in no way similar to abused animals, however, that is how the government is treating them regardless. There is also the ongoing canoe metaphor, which Ka‘eo first introduced when he talked about TMT being “a foreign corporation” (Ka‘eo, 2:21-2:24). He first mentions the canoe in the historical reference mentioned in the previous paragraph and tied the conclusion of his speech back to this metaphor when he said, “Get on this canoe as this canoe is ready to sail”

(Ka‘eo, 14:54-14:58). This adds to the persuasion of his argument because he introduced the metaphor at the beginning and referred back to it at the end in order to bring the audience’s attention back to the main point of his testimony - to gather support in protesting against the building of the Thirty-Meter-Telescope.

In his speech, Ka‘eo utilized all three artistic appeals to prove his point. He used pathos to explain how the Hawaiian people are seen as inferior, backed by the metaphor of Governor Ige’s view on Hawaiians in this context. He also used pathos to explain how the protestors remain in *kapu aloha* and continue to peacefully protest, despite all the challenges and backlash they face. He used logos to make connections between ancient Hawaiian history and what is happening in the present day. He also used this appeal to explain how it is not right that the people who lack the knowledge about the cultural importance of Mauna Kea and have no ethnic connection with the mountain are able to seize control of this land anyways. As exemplified, Ka‘eo spoke in his native tongue using a mix of Hawaiian pidgin and Hawaiian language. This adds to his credibility to be the one in front of OHA convincing them of supporting the Hawaiians because he is one of the *kānaka Hawai‘i* (Hawaiian people). He understands the importance and sacredness of Mauna Kea, he has a major background in Hawaiian studies, and he has been a consistent figure on top of the mountain during this protest.

In conclusion, Ka‘eo’s persuasive tactics were largely enforced by his use of references to the Hawaiian culture, language, and history. This speech was meant to not only affect OHA, the present audience, but also the overlooking audience - the Hawaiian people and allies, and the TMT corporation and its supporters. Ka‘eo attempted to persuade OHA to increase the support for the Hawaiian people and to encourage them to address the Hawai‘i government and TMT corporation about the Hawaiians’ stance on the TMT and their reasons behind it. In addition to

this, TMT supporters will gain a better understanding of why people are against the building of this telescope. They will be able to gain first hand from a Hawaiian himself the reasons behind not wanting the telescope and how building the TMT will affect the Hawaiian people and their future generations. As for the Hawaiian people and their allies, this speech will give them more hope about the trajectory of this project. They'll be able to see the actions that fellow k̄naka are taking to better the l̄hui (the Hawaiian community), uphold their culture, and follow in the steps of their ancestors.

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