



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

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HCR 140/HR 80 – PROCLAIMING 2010 AS THE YEAR OF ETHNIC STUDIES IN HAWAII

Chair Chang, Vice Chair Nakashima, and members of the House Committee on Higher Education, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of HCR 140/HR 80 proclaiming 2010 as the year of ethnic studies in Hawai'i.

The history of Ethnic Studies is the history of Hawai'i's people. Ethnic Studies has linked the highest institution of learning in our state with low- and middle-income communities that had often been marginalized. In its forty years of presence on the University of Hawai'i-Mānoa campus, Ethnic Studies has conducted research and offered an integrated curriculum about inter-ethnic and race relations in Hawai'i, the Pacific Basin, the continental U.S. and other areas around the world. In a globalizing, multi-ethnic, multi-racial, and diverse world, it is important to learn through research and study about the dynamics of the social dimensions extant and how to improve the quality of life for all peoples and work for peaceful resolutions to conflict among all peoples. The ethnic and racial dimensions cannot be ignored in the process of the discovery of knowledge.

Ethnic Studies has been a pioneer in linking the discovery of knowledge in the classroom with hands-on experiences in the community. The institutionalization of this method of learning in the academy in what came to be known as Service Learning is but one example of the positive contribution of Ethnic Studies to the academy, our students, and community.

The Ethnic Studies motto, "Our History, Our Way," has been the guiding principle in conducting research for the benefit of the community and imparting that knowledge to our students. Ethnic Studies has been at the forefront of departments and programs nationwide that specialize in Ethnic Studies and Asian American Studies.

In 2009 San Francisco State University has celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the

College of Ethnic Studies. Our Department was there for the celebration and participated in the conference commemorating that occasion. This year the University of California, Berkeley and our Department are both celebrating their fortieth anniversary. Our celebration has started last week by the holding of the Ethnic Studies Undergraduate Students' Colloquium, where selected undergraduates present their research about ethnic and race relations. Several more events are being planned to commemorate the occasion.

The late Ah Quon McElrath had called the establishment of Ethnic Studies at the University of Hawai'i-Mānoa a significant event in Hawai'i's contemporary history. It is for this reason that she was happy to establish at Ethnic Studies the *Ah Quon Fund for Social Change*.

Ethnic Studies was established as a consequence of significant social struggles in Hawai'i, It has been contributing to the academy and community in multiple ways. Your passing of the Resolution, proclaiming 2010 the year of Ethnic Studies, would be a recognition of the need to continue serving Hawai'i's people in the way that Ethnic Studies has been serving them for the past 40 years.

Mahalo Nui Loa.