



CALIFORNIA STATE CONFERENCE OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

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February 4, 2014

Honorable Glen Wakai, Chair
Clarence K. Nishihana, Vice Chair
Committee on Technology And The Arts

**Re: NAACP Support for SB 2598 SB2598 (Commission on African
American History and Culture)**

Dear Assemblymember Senators Wakai and Nishihana and Members of the
Senate Committee on Technology And The Arts:

On behalf of the California Hawaii State Conference of the NAACP and its 62
branches, I write to express our strong support for **SB2598 (Commission on
African American History and Culture)** that establishes the commission on
African American history and culture to recognize the contributions of African
Americans in Hawaii.

African Americans have contributed significantly to all phases of Hawaii's
development and given the United States and the American People their first
African American President. SB 2598 allows the rich culture and proud heritage
of the African American people to be recognized and to continue being a positive
influence upon life in Hawaii. The SB 2598 Commission would establish an
appropriate process to research, chronicle and share the contributions of the
African American people and their culture to Hawaii's diverse and multicultural
society.

SB 2598 is good and smart public policy and would appropriately establish a
broad bi-partisan commission on African American history and culture which will
assist Hawaii in recognizing the contributions of the African American people in
Hawaii and assist in educating Hawaii's citizens. It is important to make African
American history part of Hawaiian history truly reflecting the contributions of all
Hawaiians.

Sincerely,

President
California Hawaii NAACP

wakai3 - Kristen

From: Faye Kennedy <fkennedy@hawaii.rr.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 04, 2014 12:36 PM
To: TECTestimony
Subject: SB 2598

LATE

TO: Senator Glenn Wakai and Members
Cmte on Technology and the Arts
FROM: Faye Kennedy, Co-chair, Hawaii Friends of Civil Rights
RE: SB 2598 Commission on African American History and Cultur

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony re establishment of the above named commission, and my apologies for not receiving sufficient advance notice to submit it sooner.

I strongly support this bill as current co-chair of the Hawaii Friends of Civil Rights, former founding member of the state's Dr. MLK, Jr. Holiday Commission, the Hawaii Civil Rights Commission, the Hawaii Advisory Cmte to the U.S Civil Rights Commission , the Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women and other commissions/organizations promoting justice for marginalized groups.

I believe this commission would help ensure a greater understanding of the history and aspirations of African Americans and promote the diversity and positive interactions with other groups that our Aloha Sate aspires to. As one who is committed to multiethnic, multi-cultural collaborations, I consider this a wonderful venue for those equally committed to this goal.

Please feel free to contact me at 732-4987 if I may be of any further assistance.
Much aloha, Faye Kennedy

LATE

Sharon Sakaguchi

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2598 by ~~Kathryn Waddell Takara, PhD~~

The urgency to recover the history of blacks in Hawai'i is becoming more apparent with each passing day. Since the election of Barack Obama, the first admitted African American President of the United States, more local and national attention is being focused on Hawai'i black history and the experiences and identity issues of blacks in Hawai'i where Obama passed a formative time of his youth. The ideas and personal philosophy of Barack Obama were undoubtedly influenced by his socialization and education in the Hawaiian Islands. Certainly his democratic approach to politics and his beliefs in diversity, unity, and community (*ohana*) were in part formulated by his multi-racial family and his life in a diverse and sometimes challenging community with few black role models.

Kathryn Waddell Takara, PhD is a scholar/writer who understands the new historicism and the necessity of teaching and publishing African American history in Hawai'i. A long time resident of Hawai'i herself since 1968 who has worked closely with the local community, she continues to explore some of the dilemmas of identity and conflict in a place where Blacks are only 3.5% of the population, as well as to write about the unknown successes and triumphs of some outstanding black residents.

Unfortunately, for too long, the media and education system have ignored, controlled and/or marginalized blacks in local history, and thus images and perceptions of blacks have been controlled or omitted in the name of preserving the dominant American status, culture, and attitudes. Historically, identity and status in America, Hawai'i, and the world have been based on the privilege of skin color and wealth since the 1600's.

Fortunately, at the beginning of the 21st Century, we have reached a new plateau. Now we have an emerging New People of mixed races and cultures, a growing population of young people, immigrants, full of hopeful optimism, a belief in unity, equality, environmental and social justice, health care reform, and a better understanding and acceptance of otherness. No longer is the world bent on sailing toward whiteness as the only model of success and possibility.

It is past time to interrogate Hawai'i's African Americans' issues of identity, pain, and the historical derogatory images of blacks in western art, literature, and the media that have permeated the national and local psyche. Censored the public record, the responsible student of black history in Hawai'i is left with fresh new images of and respect for their leadership roles, their successes and contributions in the whaling industry, business, education, science, civil service, the arts, social work, the military, and politics, from the beginning of black settlement. Indeed, some blacks past and present live large and often very successful lives in the lushness and verdant beauty of the Hawaiian Islands. For over 200 years, history reveals significant cultural and community organizations and events, demonstrating African American people working together with Hawaiians and the local residents.

There is power in words to represent and challenge history. Of course there are many stories about black immigration to the islands, including theories on early black migrations from Africa throughout the Pacific, including the often squelched references to Black royalty in the Pacific. There is substantial documentation of later migrations of blacks to Hawai'i in the 1800s. These

settlers, mostly men left families, slavery, their blues, and communities behind. Their initial acceptance into a generous and welcoming local Hawaiian community, their contributions to the small and evolving cultural and business worlds is too often overlooked. A study of history reveals the subsequent alienation and exclusion of black plantation workers in the growing immigrant community, the current paucity of blacks in the islands compared with other immigrants including Caucasians, Asians, Southeast Asians and Europeans, ironically given their relatively strong representation amongst the foreigners in the early 1800s.

* Black contributions to the military in the Pacific theatre, to island politics, their strong role in education and talents in culture are another part of black history in Hawai'i that is often overlooked, including the Buffalo Soldier's great contribution in building the first road up Mauna Kea in 1919 so that the volcanologists could transport their scientific tools and machines up to the volcano to observe and work.

The struggle of blacks in Hawai'i to navigate between race and culture, ethnicity and history, is energized by their buckets of hope, an enduring spiritual tradition, and gallons of patience. As blacks slowly emerge from a storm of 20th Century resistance and stereotypes, unseen sharks of prejudice still lurk just below the surface of respectability and fair play in the form of glass ceilings, poverty or omissions in the media reveal a form of lingering collectible images and stereotypes that demonize or make blacks look different and inferior.

On a large scale, the role of blacks in world history is almost unknown in the islands, and youth, especially those with dark skins, can be inspired to strive for success with a more balanced teaching of history including ancient dark skinned African gods and goddesses, heroes and (s)heroes like Osiris, Isis, Nefertiti, the Queen of Sheba, the early African architects and astronomers, the black Magi, the ancient African universities and history of medicine and surgery, the mathematicians who envisioned the Pyramids, the black Madonnas and Saints found over Europe and S. America, the countless agriculturalists, environmentalists, musicians, actors, healers, dancers, the genius of the black community. If for no other reason than the future of our country is at risk, the values of continuity and connectedness seem important goals to cleave to.

There is medicine in memory. For the past 40 years, blacks have begun to research and write their own history in Hawai'i, debunking the myths and stereotypes, speaking riddles of opportunities and racial harmonies and the simultaneous lack of inclusion, the absent aloha and over representations of blacks in prison. The marginalized black history, the mixed marriages, and the contemporary perceptions of blacks as a group, ethnic and racial, different yet sharing experiences of discrimination and alienation, humor and humility is now beginning to be recognized and told.

* The power of words, research, scholarship, and a community of strong voices and political organization are essential for the keepers of history and culture to bring dignity and respect to a group and to individuals. The historical voices of local black writers, organizers, activists, and the black national show the power of collective effort, the inspiration in music, the magic of working together for a common aim.

We must not accept the heavy mantle of mind control and social and economic violence against blacks. Instead we must value and understand the psychology of spiritual redemption in the study of black history in Hawai'i as the genius, talent, and history of African Americans in Hawai'i is recognized and celebrated with the same respect and support of the many other ethnic groups in the Islands. Clearly the shackles of fear, mistrust, and color prejudice can be released through the sharing and learning, history, culture, and contributions of Blacks in a more responsible communication through education.

Finally, President Barack Obama is a wonderful testament of the influence on cultural diversity and tolerance in an effort to situate and dignify Black history in Hawai'i in all its glory and challenges.

Blacks in Hawai'i and their significant and often overlooked and forgotten roles in establishing the values basic to democracy. The speeches contain themes of "we not me," freedom, equality and justice under the law, values of citizenship, service, community, family, the sacred environment, spirituality, and compassion. There is the general support of health care reform, the commitment to end poverty and homelessness, and the development of a progressive, practical, and empowering educational system. There is the urgent call to reclaim and understand the history, migrations and representation of blacks in the diversity in the growth and development of the 19th century Hawaiian Islands, especially their role as marginalized citizens from the mid 1800s to after the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893 and into the 21st Century.

In the 21st Century, Hawai'i stands first in line in nationally in intercultural communication, understanding, and respect for other and different cultures and ethnic groups. Blacks as a group have been invisible and must be allowed to join this circle of possibility and light through inclusion in local history and the sharing of our significant contributions to local, national and international history.

Beyond education, love is the bond that heals, and social interaction, intermarriage, blended families, and mixed race children all help to strengthen trust between groups and keep the soul fires burning. Miscegenation has not been an issue in the islands, although housing, and segregated facilities for the military did promote unsavory racial relations in the past.

X Today, people and groups, including the military, navigate between the liquid mirror of race and culture to accept each other, to compromise and find mutual interests, to respect our humanity. We must include Black history in Hawai'i to strengthen understanding and promote and support inclusion.

Kathryn Waddell Takara, PhD.