

March 10, 2014

Anthony Castanha, Ph.D.
Department of Ethnic Studies
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Re: SB 317, SD 1 - Testimony to Support Legislation that Redesignates "Discoverers' Day" in Hawai'i to "Indigenous Peoples' Day." Presented to House VMI Committee.

Aloha kakou and guatiao,

I would like to thank the committee very much, and especially Representative Takai, for taking up and allowing this legislation to be heard. My name is Tony Castanha. I am a lecturer of Indigenous and American Indian Studies in the Department of Ethnic Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and a lead advocate for the passage of this bill. I am also the coordinator of the annual Indigenous Peoples' Day gathering that began here in Hawai'i in 1997 and meets on or around October 12. This educational event builds awareness of indigenous rights issues taking place in Hawai'i and abroad and how the fifteenth century concept of discovery still influences society today.

I realize the good intentions displayed when the name "Columbus Day" was changed to "Discoverers' Day" back in 1988. The Hawaiians or Polynesians were great voyagers and perhaps the greatest ever. Their accomplishments are not disputed and marveled at by many. They should be honored in many ways. However one dilemma with the name "Discoverers' Day" is the public perception that the day is a celebration or recognition of European accomplishments. It is also observed on the same day "Columbus Day" is federally recognized in the United States. October 12 is the day Christopher Columbus was thought to have "discovered" America. Captain Cook is likewise still believed by many to have "discovered" the Hawaiian Islands. These myths of Euro-American history are unfortunately still advanced in our schools and taught to our children.

Another perhaps more important problem with the term and concept of discovery is that historically it came to form the basis of European treaties and laws that legally sanctioned the subjugation of non-Christian peoples and allowed for the seizure of their lands. As it turned out, indigenous peoples throughout the Americas, Africa, the Pacific, and in parts of Asia and Europe, bore the brunt European imperialism. Tens of millions of people perished in the process. The discovery principal is also not a thing of the past as it became encoded into international and national laws and policies and is still institutionally detrimental to indigenous populations. This is clearly evident in the landmark 1823 Johnson v. McIntosh case, which along with similar Supreme Court decisions forms the basis of U.S. federal Indian law today. This law is grounded in the sixteenth century "doctrine of discovery." The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has in recent years closely examined the contemporary effects of the discovery doctrine in relation to many problems indigenous peoples continue to face. A preliminary study by the Forum in 2010 found:

This preliminary study establishes that the Doctrine of Discovery has been institutionalized in law and policy, on national and international levels, and lies at the root of the violations of indigenous peoples' human rights, both individual and collective. This has resulted in state claims to and the mass appropriation of the lands, territories, and resources of indigenous peoples. Both the Doctrine of Discovery and a holistic structure that we term the Framework of Dominance have resulted in centuries of virtually unlimited resource extraction from the traditional territories of indigenous peoples. This, in turn, has resulted in the dispossession and impoverishment of indigenous peoples, and the host of problems that they face today on a daily basis.¹

Today, an increasing number of American states, cities, tribal governments, school districts, and institutions have renamed or do not recognize "Columbus Day." In 1989, South Dakota changed the name "Columbus Day" to "Native American Day." Virginia calls the day "Yorktown Victory Day" in addition to "Columbus Day." Nevada does not recognize the day as an official holiday but must proclaim it. The Californian cities of Berkeley, Sebastopol and Santa Cruz have named the day "Indigenous Peoples' Day." And again here in Hawai'i, we changed "Columbus Day" to "Discoverers' Day." All we are asking to do is the same thing we did back in 1988. The day would remain a federal holiday. Assigning the day to another date would defeat the primary purpose of the bill.

In closing, the process of naming is substantive and the names we assign in the public sphere are important because they carry meaning and symbolize the values we place on our society. As outlined above, the name "Columbus Day" is synonymous with the name "Discoverers' Day" and is offensive to many people, most importantly to Native Hawaiians who have strongly supported this legislation. Changing the name to Indigenous Peoples' Day would demonstrate an important solidarity between the Hawaiian/Polynesian first peoples of these islands and indigenous peoples around the world. I would finally like to suggest one change under the recognition part of the bill.

Indigenous Peoples' Day. The second Monday in October shall be known as Indigenous Peoples' Day, in recognition of the:

(3) Countless indigenous peoples who perished worldwide as a result of confrontations between indigenous peoples and Europeans, along with the survival of their descendants [and many of their cultural traditions].

Sincerely,

Anthony Castanha

¹Tonya Gonnella Frichner, "Impact on Indigenous Peoples of the International Legal construct known as the Doctrine of Discovery, which has served as the Foundation of the Violation of their Human Rights," 1-2 United Nations Economic and Social Council, Presented at Ninth Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, April 19-30, 2010.

Roxanne Kamalu

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Friday, March 07, 2014 8:05 PM
To: vmitestimony
Cc: mkhan@hawaiiantel.net
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB317 on Mar 12, 2014 08:30AM

SB317

Submitted on: 3/7/2014

Testimony for VMI on Mar 12, 2014 08:30AM in Conference Room 312

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Leimomi Khan	Individual	Support	No

Comments: I continue to support SB317, Relating to Indigenous People’s Day, which re-designates the second Monday of October from “Discoverers’ Day” to “Indigenous Peoples’ Day.” The designation of such a day and with the support of the Dept of Education would help to bring attention to the correct, true history of Hawaii, its indigenous people, and its culture.

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Roxanne Kamalu

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, March 10, 2014 3:14 AM
To: vmitestimony
Cc: daniel.paul@ns.sympatico.ca
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB317 on Mar 12, 2014 08:30AM

SB317

Submitted on: 3/10/2014

Testimony for VMI on Mar 12, 2014 08:30AM in Conference Room 312

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Daniel Paul	Individual	Comments Only	No

Comments: White Supremacy The idea that Columbus discovered the Americas and that other Caucasians discovered such places as Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii and so on, places that were already discovered and settled by people of colour, is the product of white supremacist thinking at it most racist. To accept such nonsense as fact is to label the people of colour that were already in residence in these places and their descendants "sub-humans", not worthy of human considerations. To make the before mentioned even more reprehensible, many people of colour today, not knowing anything about history but the Eurocentric versions contained in most school curriculums, actually support the continuation of such white supremacist racist inventions. If such racist white supremacist crap is to continue to prevail in supposedly modern equality based societies then such so-called enlightened societies are not any different from the white supremacist societies of the past. This scenario would be interesting and laughable: Perhaps the white supremacists should give some thought to finding a way to try to compel China and Japan and other non-Caucasian societies to set aside a day as "Discoverer's Day" to mark the occasion when the first European landed on their shores! I fully support Changing Discoverers Day to Indigenous Peoples Day.

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Roxanne Kamalu

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Sunday, March 09, 2014 9:31 AM
To: vmitestimony
Cc: rittew@hotmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB317 on Mar 12, 2014 08:30AM

SB317

Submitted on: 3/9/2014

Testimony for VMI on Mar 12, 2014 08:30AM in Conference Room 312

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Walter Ritte	Individual	Support	No

Comments: My name is Walter Ritte from the Island of Molokai and I am in support of SB 317. It is important for people to remember they are in Hawaii under the dubious rule of America.

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Roxanne Kamalu

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Sunday, March 09, 2014 9:18 PM
To: vmitestimony
Cc: niga80@hotmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB317 on Mar 12, 2014 08:30AM

SB317

Submitted on: 3/9/2014

Testimony for VMI on Mar 12, 2014 08:30AM in Conference Room 312

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Nidia Garcia Alejandro	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Aloha. I support SB 317 in its current form: by replacing the name "Discoverers' Day" with the name Indigenous Peoples' Day. This was the same procedure done in Hawai'i in 1988, when "Columbus Day" was renamed "Discoverers' Day." The use of names carries important meaning and symbolizes the values we place on our society. Like "Columbus Day," the name "Discoverers' Day" reflects and condones a history based on deception and is offensive to many people. Columbus' voyages and the fifteenth century Western concept of discovery established and legalized Christian domination over non-Christians that allowed for their subjugation and the taking of their lands. Countless numbers of indigenous peoples perished worldwide as a result of the European "discovery" and colonization process. As a similar fate was bestowed upon the Hawaiian Islands and Captain Cook is still thought of by many as the "discoverer" of Hawai'i, who are we really honoring on this day? Today, an increasing number of American states, cities, local governments, districts, and institutions have renamed or do not recognize "Columbus Day." The name "Columbus Day" is also synonymous with the recognition of "Discoverers' Day" in Hawai'i because it is recognized on the same day. Therefore, it is requested that the name of this day in Hawai'i be changed to Indigenous Peoples' Day to recognize, support and stand in solidarity with the Native Hawaiian people of Hawai'i and indigenous peoples around the world. Thank you.

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Roxanne Kamalu

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, March 10, 2014 10:31 AM
To: vmitestimony
Cc: Shanelee@hawaii.edu
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB317 on Mar 12, 2014 08:30AM

SB317

Submitted on: 3/10/2014

Testimony for VMI on Mar 12, 2014 08:30AM in Conference Room 312

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Shane	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Aloha. I support SB 317 in its current form: by simply replacing the name “Discoverers’ Day” with the name Indigenous Peoples’ Day. This was the same procedure done in Hawai’i in 1988, when “Columbus Day” was renamed “Discoverers’ Day.” The use of names carries important meaning and symbolizes the values we place on our society. Like “Columbus Day,” the name “Discoverers’ Day” reflects and condones a history based on deception and is offensive to many people. Columbus’ voyages and the fifteenth century Western concept of discovery established and legalized Christian domination over non-Christians that allowed for their subjugation and the taking of their lands. Countless numbers of indigenous peoples perished worldwide as a result of the European “discovery” and colonization process. As a similar fate was bestowed upon the Hawaiian Islands and Captain Cook is still thought of by many as the “discoverer” of Hawai’i, who are we really honoring on this day? Today, an increasing number of American states, cities, local governments, districts, and institutions have renamed or do not recognize “Columbus Day.” The name “Columbus Day” is also synonymous with the recognition of “Discoverers’ Day” in Hawai’i because it is recognized on the same day. Therefore, it is requested that the name of this day in Hawai’i be changed to Indigenous Peoples’ Day to recognize, support and stand in solidarity with the Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) people of Hawai’i and indigenous peoples around the world. Thank you.

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Roxanne Kamalu

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, March 10, 2014 12:22 PM
To: vmitestimony
Cc: yoselyn7034@yahoo.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB317 on Mar 12, 2014 08:30AM

SB317

Submitted on: 3/10/2014

Testimony for VMI on Mar 12, 2014 08:30AM in Conference Room 312

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Ramona Ferreyra	Individual	Support	No

Comments: Aloha. I support SB 317 in its current form: by simply replacing the name “Discoverers’ Day” with the name Indigenous Peoples’ Day. This was the same procedure done in Hawai’i in 1988, when “Columbus Day” was renamed “Discoverers’ Day.” The use of names carries important meaning and symbolizes the values we place on our society. Like “Columbus Day,” the name “Discoverers’ Day” reflects and condones a history based on deception and is offensive to many people. Columbus’ voyages and the fifteenth century Western concept of discovery established and legalized Christian domination over non-Christians that allowed for their subjugation and the taking of their lands. Countless numbers of indigenous peoples perished worldwide as a result of the European “discovery” and colonization process. As a similar fate was bestowed upon the Hawaiian Islands and Captain Cook is still thought of by many as the “discoverer” of Hawai’i, who are we really honoring on this day? Today, an increasing number of American states, cities, local governments, districts, and institutions have renamed or do not recognize “Columbus Day.” The name “Columbus Day” is also synonymous with the recognition of “Discoverers’ Day” in Hawai’i because it is recognized on the same day. Therefore, it is requested that the name of this day in Hawai’i be changed to Indigenous Peoples’ Day to recognize, support and stand in solidarity with the Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) people of Hawai’i and indigenous peoples around the world. Thank you.

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Aloha. I support SB 317 in its current form: by simply replacing the name “Discoverers’ Day” with the name Indigenous Peoples’ Day. This was the same procedure done in Hawai‘i in 1988, when “Columbus Day” was renamed “Discoverers’ Day.” I grew up in a Hawai‘i with little to no holidays that reflected my own culture/s and religion. I look back now and see how inappropriate it was for me to stick feathers in my hair, bellow war whoops, and do tomahawk chops as we celebrated Thanksgiving and Discoverers’ Day in my elementary schools classrooms. This is so far from respecting the deep, beautiful, and diverse cultures that survived horrific genocide on the continent. As a Hawaiian person, it took me years to connect that hegemony with the ways in which my public education also omitted any semblance of Hawaiian history and teachings as well.

The use of names carries important meaning and symbolizes the values we place on our society. Like “Columbus Day,” the name “Discoverers’ Day” reflects and condones a history based on deception and is offensive to many people. Columbus’ voyages and the fifteenth century Western concept of discovery established and legalized Christian domination over non-Christians that allowed for their subjugation and the taking of their lands. Not only was Columbus an awful navigator, he and his crew were responsible for the slaughter and extermination of the native tribe they first encountered upon landing. Countless numbers of indigenous peoples perished worldwide as a result of the European “discovery” and colonization process. As a similar fate was bestowed upon the Hawaiian Islands and Captain Cook is still thought of by many as the “discoverer” of Hawai‘i, who are we really honoring on this day?

This is your chance as our leaders to be on the right side of history and justice. The name “Discoverer’s Day” should be left in the past. As a Hawaiian person and a Portuguese person with sailors in my genealogy, I do not want to keep the name “Discoverer’s Day” and simply include those navigators under the same title as those who committed genocide. Naming is truly about power and ideology. For example, rediscovering Hawaiian names for places like Pu‘uloa (Pearl Harbor) has helped me to see the violent history that has poisoned that harbor and erased its native past, to understand the rich diversity of food the area used to produce for O‘ahu, and to envision a future where we can once again eat and live close to those waters safely.

Indigenous Peoples’ Day is an inclusive name because it recognizes the ties that we all have to land, be it Hawai‘i or elsewhere. We are all indigenous to some place or places. I think that having an Indigenous Peoples’ Day is a brave, courageous move that is both forward and backward thinking because we as a society are moving towards more sustainable ways of living by learning about our past and valuing the knowledge of our ancestors. To have an Indigenous Peoples’ Day is to acknowledge the vast historical and cultural trauma that indigenous people all over the world have survived and continue to live with. This is one small step that will add fuel to a larger movement towards healing.

Today, an increasing number of American states, cities, local governments, districts, and institutions have renamed or do not recognize “Columbus Day.” The name “Columbus Day” is also synonymous with the recognition of “Discoverers’ Day” in Hawai‘i because it is recognized on the same day. Therefore, it is requested that the name of this day in

Hawai'i be changed to Indigenous Peoples' Day to recognize, support and stand in solidarity with the Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) people of Hawai'i and indigenous peoples around the world. Thank you.

Roxanne Kamalu

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, March 10, 2014 6:39 PM
To: vmitestimony
Cc: kahiwal@cs.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB317 on Mar 12, 2014 08:30AM

SB317

Submitted on: 3/10/2014

Testimony for VMI on Mar 12, 2014 08:30AM in Conference Room 312

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Clarence Ching	Individual	Support	No

Comments: "Discovery" is an outmoded term that is purely mythical - except for maybe - Antartica. But I believe that every land that has been supposedly "discovered" by Christian/white "discoverers" was already habited by others who were the real "discovers." I don't think that the indigenous discoverers who were not Christian/white are those for whom "Discoverers" Day is presently commemorated by others. So - it is entirely fitting that this proposed bill is adopted into law. Truth is much more a reality than myth!

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Roxanne Kamalu

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2014 2:27 AM
To: vmitestimony
Cc: ghwelker3@comcast.net
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB317 on Mar 12, 2014 08:30AM

SB317

Submitted on: 3/11/2014

Testimony for VMI on Mar 12, 2014 08:30AM in Conference Room 312

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Glenn Welker	Individual	Comments Only	No

Comments: Aloha. I support SB 317 in its current form: by simply replacing the name “Discoverers’ Day” with the name Indigenous Peoples’ Day. This was the same procedure done in Hawai’i in 1988, when “Columbus Day” was renamed “Discoverers’ Day.” The use of names carries important meaning and symbolizes the values we place on our society. Like “Columbus Day,” the name “Discoverers’ Day” reflects and condones a history based on deception and is offensive to many people. Columbus’ voyages and the fifteenth century Western concept of discovery established and legalized Christian domination over non-Christians that allowed for their subjugation and the taking of their lands. Countless numbers of indigenous peoples perished worldwide as a result of the European “discovery” and colonization process. As a similar fate was bestowed upon the Hawaiian Islands and Captain Cook is still thought of by many as the “discoverer” of Hawai’i, who are we really honoring on this day? Today, an increasing number of American states, cities, local governments, districts, and institutions have renamed or do not recognize “Columbus Day.” The name “Columbus Day” is also synonymous with the recognition of “Discoverers’ Day” in Hawai’i because it is recognized on the same day. Therefore, it is requested that the name of this day in Hawai’i be changed to Indigenous Peoples’ Day to recognize, support and stand in solidarity with the Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) people of Hawai’i and indigenous peoples around the world. Thank you.

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Roxanne Kamalu

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2014 5:23 AM
To: vmitestimony
Cc: neswmusic@yahoo.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB317 on Mar 12, 2014 08:30AM

SB317

Submitted on: 3/11/2014

Testimony for VMI on Mar 12, 2014 08:30AM in Conference Room 312

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Rick Morse	Individual	Support	No

Comments: I would like to see true history celebrated, not deception. Thanks for your time.

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Roxanne Kamalu

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Tuesday, March 11, 2014 11:50 PM
To: vmitestimony
Cc: ekandagawa@gmail.com
Subject: Submitted testimony for SB317 on Mar 12, 2014 08:30AM

SB317

Submitted on: 3/11/2014

Testimony for VMI on Mar 12, 2014 08:30AM in Conference Room 312

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Emily Kandagawa	Individual	Support	No

Comments: I support SB 317 in its current form: by simply replacing the name "Discoverers' Day" with the name "Indigenous Peoples' Day." The use of names carries important meaning and symbolizes the values we place on our society. Like "Columbus Day," the name "Discoverers' Day" reflects and condones a history based on deception, genocide, and slavery. It is offensive to millions of people across the world. Columbus' voyages and the fifteenth century Western concept of "discovery" established and legalized Christian domination over non-Christians that allowed for their subjugation and the taking of their lands. The idea of celebrating the European "discovery" of lands that were already inhabited for thousands of years by bigots and sadists lost at sea is profoundly offensive and racist. Millions of indigenous peoples perished worldwide as a result of the European "discovery" and colonization process. As a similar fate was bestowed upon the Hawaiian Islands and Captain Cook is still thought of by many as the "discoverer" of Hawai'i, who are we really honoring on this day? There is no honor in re-writing and white-washing the truth of history. Today, an increasing number of American states, cities, local governments, districts, and institutions have renamed or do not recognize "Columbus Day." The name "Columbus Day" is also synonymous with the recognition of "Discoverers' Day" in Hawai'i because it is recognized on the same day. Therefore, I respectfully request our legislators to do the truly honorable thing and change the name of this day in Hawai'i to "Indigenous Peoples' Day" to recognize, support and stand in solidarity with the Kanaka Oihi and indigenous peoples around the world for the recognition of our histories, our dignity, and our struggle for equality, justice, and unity. Mahalo nui for your careful consideration and this opportunity to testify.

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