

HAWAIIAN SOVEREIGNTY

Keaukaha crowd tes

BY NANCY COOK LAUER
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In the heart of Keaukaha, one of the most Hawaiian communities on one of the most Hawaiian of the islands, speakers were

polite but firm: They will create their own government, thank you very much.

More than 130 people signed up to testify Wednesday evening to a panel of Department of the Interior, Office of the U.S. Attorney General and other

Obama administration officials. Hundreds more crowded into the Keaukaha Elementary School gymnasium to listen.

It was the 10th public hearing in Hawaii for the federal panel, which is gauging community reaction to a proposed

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re-establishment of a government-to-government relationship with the Native Hawaiian community. Meetings continue today from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Waimea Community Center and 6 to 9 p.m. at Kealakehe High School.

As at meetings held elsewhere in the state, many speakers want a return to a Hawaiian Kingdom, and nothing else will do. Others point to an ongoing process of registration, election of delegates and a convention created by state

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By Dan Na
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ANGER SURGES AT BIG ISLE MEETING

Federal officials get an earful as they seek input on a possible Native Hawaiian government

By Dan Nakaso
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KAILUA-KONA >> Hawaiians on Hawaii island sent federal officials off to Maui with the same message they've heard for the last 10 days: Let Native Hawaiians determine their own fate.

"Our queen said no to your annexation," Robert Freitas Jr. told the panel Thursday night at Kealahou High School. "Our kupuna have said no and we are saying no. So what part of 'no' do you not understand? ... Are you deaf? Don't you understand English? ... After 120 years of illegal occupation, it's time for you, the United States of America, to de-occupy our islands. ... Go back to the rock you crawled out from."

U.S. officials spent the last two days in Hilo, Waimea and Kailua-Kona listening to more than 400 speakers denounce a proposal to have the Department of the Interior begin a process that could lead to a government-to-government relationship with a future Native Hawaiian government.

Rather than discuss the details of such an idea, Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian speakers at the three sessions used the opportunity instead to exco-riate the federal government's ongoing presence in the islands following the 1893 overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy and to chronicle the subsequent 121 years of injustices and indignities in the islands for Hawaiians.

The tone for Thursday night's session was set when the first speaker, 77-

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Our kupuna have said no and we are saying no. So what part of 'no' do you not understand?"

Robert Freitas Jr.
Testifying to a panel from the U.S. Department of the Interior

year-old Hannah Wahinemaikai o Kaahumanukeliulawioleokalama Reeves, told the panel of representatives from the U.S. departments of Justice and the Interior that she will be watching their actions.

"I want our people to be free," she said. "I want America to respect us. I want America to let us be free like human beings. ... We are fighting for our people, for thousands of people."

Thursday was a long day for the federal officials. In the morning, facilitator Dawn Chang told the overflow crowd at the Waimea Community Center that the series of three-hour sessions have left her "filled with an extreme heavy heart," adding, "I feel your pain. It affects all of us. We know we cannot take it away from you."

Rhea Suh, assistant secretary of the interior for policy, management and budget, has presided over similar hearings on the mainland involving

American Indians.

But she called the Hawaii sessions "some of the most professionally intense meetings that we've ever been a part of," adding, "Many of you may not want to see us here, and I respect that."

Still, she reminded the speakers, "Your voices are being heard."

Ski Kwiatkowski of Kohala was among the many who was offended that federal officials plan to discuss the Hawaii proposal with Indian tribes from Connecticut to Washington between July 29 and Aug. 7.

"We are Hawaiians, not a tribe," Kwiatkowski yelled at the panel in Waimea. "We are a people."

Kwiatkowski, who served two tours in Vietnam, where he was awarded two Purple Hearts, told the panel, "I bled for this country but I'm Hawaiian first. ... It's about our lands, our sovereignty."

Laura Lahilahi DeSoto McCollough of Waimea wept as she remembered the discrimination she faced growing up on the Leeward coast of Oahu.

As a student at Makaha Elementary School, DeSoto McCollough told the panel that she was "paddled by the teacher for speaking Hawaiian."

"We're losing our lands now. We hardly got any," she said. "Give us back what belongs to us — and that's Hawaii. You guys gotta give us back our lives."

Two weeks and 15 islandwide hearings that began at the state Capitol on June 23 resume Saturday at Hana High and Elementary School.

KEAUKAHA: Officials said this round of meetings is first of

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statute and coordinated through the state Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

Few want the feds to get involved.

In fact, said several speakers, the only federal official they are interested in talking to is Secretary of State John Kerry, wanting him to answer the questions posed in a letter by OHA CEO Kamanao Pono Crabb. Crabb asked Kerry to address the legal status of Hawaii under international law decades after the 1893 illegal overthrow of the kingdom with the help of U.S. troops.

"Take it back to John Kerry and get John Kerry

here," said Kale Gumpac. "It's not your kuleana. Get the people whose kuleana it is to come here."

There's much more to government than simply a government structure, said Albert Kahiwaikiwaokalani Haa Jr.

"Before you can make a government, you need to know who owns the land," Haa said.

The group expressed their opinions in more than words. Some chanted, some played guitars and sang songs. State Rep. Faye Hanohano, D-Puna, gave her speech entirely in Hawaiian, and then led the room in "Hawaii Pono."

Rhea Suh, an

assistant secretary with the Department of the Interior, urged the crowd to also submit written testimony in case they ran out of time or if they felt more comfortable testifying that way. She said allowing the process to start would give Native Hawaiians more options.

"All other native communities in the United States have this option and many have exercised this option," Suh said. "This option doesn't even exist for you."

Officials said this round of meetings is the first of its kind in more than 10 years.

But some in the crowded gymnasium said the federal exercise is accomplishing little other than further

angering Hawaiians and widening the gap between the various factions.

"We've been talking about sovereignty for so long," said Louis Hao, East Hawaii supervisor for the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands. "If we don't come together it will be more than another 10 years."

The department wants residents to weigh in on whether the Obama administration should facilitate the re-establishment of a government-to-government relationship with the Native Hawaiian community and help the Native Hawaiian community reorganize its government.

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its kind in more than 10 years

Patrick Kahawaiolaa, president of the Keaukaha Community Association, believes federal recognition already exists for Native Hawaiians through the 1920 Hawaiian Homes Commission Act. At statehood in 1959 the compact made between the parties was "... the State and its people will uphold the Hawaiian race ..." and "... as a proviso of becoming a State the State needed to accept the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, 1920," Kahawaiolaa said.

"I will be asking the DOI/DOJ to do their job and enforce the federal law called the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act,

1920 against the State, the DHHL and anyone else who has over the 90-year period of its existence abused, used, leased the lands having the status of Hawaiian Home Lands and any acts of State legislation enacted "without the consent" of the US," Kahawaiolaa said before the meeting.

About 21.3 percent of Hawaii residents reported in the 2010 census that they had some Hawaiian blood, and 5.9 percent said they were pure Hawaiian. Hawaii County, with 29.7 percent of residents with Hawaiian blood and 8.5 percent pure Hawaiian, leads the state in both categories.

West Maui residents out in force

By Nanea Kalani
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LAHAINA >> All but one of the more than 100 people who spoke before a federal panel Monday night rejected the idea of possible federal recognition of a future Native Hawaiian government, arguing the U.S. has no jurisdiction over Hawaii.

U.S. Department of the Interior officials held the 14th of 15 public meetings statewide at Kamehameha III Elementary on Maui. The group is posing questions about whether the department should initiate a rule-making process that could set the framework for re-establishing a government-to-

government relationship with the Native Hawaiian community.

"We recognize that our presence here may be insulting to some of you," said Rhea Suh, interior assistant secretary for policy, management and budget. "We're asking you to consider an option, an option that does not exist for you right now. ... It really boils down to that simple question: Do you want that option?"

As at other meetings around the state, West Maui residents overwhelmingly replied, "No."

"Hawaiians are not an Indian tribe," said Dennis O'Shea. "We're a sovereign kingdom."

He called the process just another attempt to get the Akaka Bill passed.

Keeaumoku Kapu added, "When you go home to Washington, you tell those people up there that we want to be left alone to make our own decisions as kanaka. ... This is our decision, this is our choice. We don't need people coming over here and trying to tell us this is the road we need to choose."

Many said the federal government should leave the organization of a Native Hawaiian government up to Hawaiians. Others expressed frustration that the U.S. has continued to occupy the islands since the 1893 overthrow.

against federal recognition

"What did America do to Hawaii? Kill our people, rape our land, steal our water and lie to the world."

Kalei Kauhane
Maui resident giving testimony to U.S. Department of the Interior

"The past 200 years, what you guys did for us?" asked Kalei Kauhane. "What did America do to Hawaii? Kill our people, rape our land,

steal our water and lie to the world. ... That's all you guys did for us. You guys never do nothing positive for us. Nothing."

Several residents said it's unthinkable that the U.S. is proposing a possible government-to-government relationship with Hawaiians.

"America, it's time to free Hawaii. It's been enough already," said John Kinimaka. "According to international law, the only remedy to crimes of this magnitude is restitution and restoration. Time to pay up."

Several West Maui residents said they were offended that the federal government didn't consult Hawaiians before launching

its listening tour.

"Unless you come to the table and start from the very beginning, that's all you're going to get: No, no, no," Ezekiel Kalua said.

The gathering ended with the crowd joining hands and singing "Hawaii Pono'i" and "Hawaii Aloha."

The panel will conclude its Hawaii meetings Tuesday at Pomaikai Elementary in Kahului. After a two-week break, the meetings will next move to Indian country on the mainland. Comments also can be submitted online at www.regulations.gov.

KOKUA LINE: *June Watanabe is on vacation. Her column returns next week.*

