Open letter on TMT to the UC Santa Cruz Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics. More UC Santa Cruz signatories coming soon.

July 24, 2019

Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics
1156 High Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95064

We write to you today as colleagues at the University of California, Santa Cruz to express concern about recent events on the Mauna Kea summit with regards to the construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT). We urge the astronomy community to recognize the broader historical context of this conflict, and to denounce the criminalization of the kia‘i (protectors) on Mauna Kea. We urge the TMT collaboration and the government of Hawai‘i to desist from further arresting or charging protectors, to remove military and law enforcement personnel from the summit, and permanently halt the TMT project on Mauna Kea.

This past week, the TMT International Observatory (TIO) attempted to resume construction, facing off with kia‘i (protectors) including elders and children. On Wednesday, July 17, thirty-three people were arrested—most of them Hawaiian elders—as they blocked a road that prevented crews from reaching the construction site atop Mauna Kea. Despite opposition from Native Hawaiian community, community organizations, organizations of people of faith, environmental advocates, and grassroots groups both in Hawai‘i and abroad, TIO has pushed forward this massive project. Mauna Kea is considered sacred by Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians), who say the construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope was approved without consulting their communities. Just hours after the arrests were made on Wednesday, Hawai‘i’s Democratic Governor David Ige signed an emergency order granting police even more power to clear the way for construction equipment. In the face of necessary and required legal constraints on development and environmental degradation, TIO has sought every opportunity to evade the spirit and even the law to force completion of this project.

In contrast to proponents of the TMT, opposition to the project does not reflect hostility to science. As UCSC affiliates, we ourselves are passionate about science and recognize that Native Hawaiians are not opposed to science or to discovery. From Oceanic navigators to university researchers, Native Hawaiians embrace the search for knowledge. But we must recognize the historical and political context in which science, and TIO, operate. Hawaii is an occupied and colonized space. Native Hawaiians have been stripped of control over their land by US settler colonialism. They have faced relentless attacks on their homelands, their ways of life, and their sacred sites. These attacks have, like the current TIO attack, sometimes been wrapped in the noble cloak of science and misleading narratives of progress versus the past. To the extent that those attacks have been endorsed by civil and judicial authorities, we must remember that those units represent the same government that has stripped Native Hawaiian people of their sovereign rights as recognized in international law.
TIO is yet another such attack, and a particularly devastating one. By supporting it, the Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics at UCSC commits itself to further complicity in the abuse of power that runs counter to what science should be.

This is not just about a telescope, this is about the rights of Kanaka Maoli to stop the environmental and cultural desecration on a sacred mountain. This must stop. The time is now. And because the University of California, and specifically the UCSC Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics, is a partner with TIO, it has the power and thus the responsibility to act.

We urge you to oppose the notion that mainstream science should be mere domination of those less powerful. We urge you to demand that this project be halted.

We powerfully suggest that you and the TIO partners consider moving the TMT project to the Canary Islands instead of participating in the criminalization of Indigenous people and their lands.

Note: This was adapted from an open letter on TMT written by professors of U of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Kara Hisatake, PhD in Literature, UCSC alum
Aysha Peterson, PhD student in Environmental Studies
Daniel Varela, Sociology, LALS, UCSC Alum
Karli DeRego, PhD student in Anthropology and Native Hawaiian
Marion Cadora, PhD student in Visual Studies
Jon D. Daehnke, Associate Professor, Anthropology Department
Flora Lu, Professor, Environmental Studies
Angie Sijun Lou, PhD student in Literature
Karlton E. Hester, Professor, Department of Music
Radhika Prasad, PhD Student, Literature
Jennifer Kelly, Assistant Professor, Feminist Studies and Critical Race and Ethnic Studies
Kepano (Stephen) Luna Kanawai Richter PhD Student, Literature
Vivica Rojo, Student, Critical Race & Ethnic Studies
Marcia Ochoa, Associate Professor, Feminist Studies
Aitanna Parker, Student, Technology and Information Management & Critical Race & Ethnic Studies
Kailani Polzak, History of Art and Visual Culture, UCSC Alum
Trung PQ Nguyen, PhD Candidate, History of Consciousness
Natalie Vivian Valencia Espitia, Student, Feminist Studies
Kenan Sharpe, PhD Candidate, Literature
Gabby Magee, Student, General Psychology
Anthony O’Brien, Ecology & Evolution, UCSC Alum
Christine Hong, Associate Professor, Literature and Director of Critical Race and Ethnic Studies
Maria Evangelatou, Associate Professor, History of Art and Visual Culture
Bettina Aptheker, Distinguished Professor Emerita, Feminist Studies Department
Stephen Burden, Cognitive Science, UCSC Alum
Alex Hiatt, History of Art & Visual Culture, UCSC Alum
Margaret Bishop, Basic Needs Coordinator of CASFS Farm & Food Systems Working Group, UCSC Sociology Alum
Sofia Kooner, Student, CRES & Sociology
Laurel Mayeda, CRES & Feminist Studies, UCSC Alum
Yuki Obayashi, Ph.D. Candidate, Literature & CRES
Donna Haraway, Distinguished Professor Emerita, History of Consciousness
Ethan Chang, Education and Sociology, UCSC Alum
Christian Alvarado, PhD Student, History of Consciousness
Sheeva Sabati, Ph.D., UCSC Lecturer and UCSC Alum
Kailee Wiser, Student, CRES & Sociology
Katie Lally, Ph.D. Candidate, Literature & Feminist Studies
Ka-eul Yoo, Ph.D. Candidate, Literature
Mikayla Aruta Konefa, Student, Critical Race and Ethnic Studies & Environmental Studies
Lydia de la Riva - Ochoa, Critical Race and Ethnic Studies, UCSC Alum
Kirsten Rudestam, Sociology, UCSC Alum
Gracia Brown, History of Art and Visual Culture, UCSC Alum
Anna Nisi, PhD Candidate, Environmental Studies
Neda Atanasoski, Professor of Feminist Studies and Critical Race and Ethnic Studies
Vega Bugata, Student, Biology
Verona McDermott, Student, Education
Rob Wilson, Professor of Literature
Alexandra Macheski, History of Art and Visual Culture, UCSC, PhD student
Noya Kansky, PhD Student, Feminist Studies
Hilary Asher, Student, Anthropology
Thomas Kan, Student, Psychology
Pam Rittelmeyer, PhD student, Environmental Studies
Taryn Farber, PhD student, Environmental Studies
Azucena Lucatero, PhD Student, Environmental Studies
Joe Alicea, PhD Student, Literature
Nick Mitchell, Associate Professor, Feminist Studies and Critical Race & Ethnic Studies
Robert Parke, undergraduate, Critical Race and Ethnic Studies,
Anna Louie, Critical Race and Ethnic Studies, UCSC Alum
Chris Lang, PhD Student, Environmental Studies
Felicity Amaya Schaeffer, Feminist Studies
Allyson Makuch, MA student, Environmental Studies
Charley Brooks, PhD Student, Education
Jane Komori, PhD student, History of Consciousness
Bethany Sweeney, Literature, UCSC Alum
Raul Meneses Samperio, PhD Student, Education
Clara Qin, PhD Student, Environmental Studies
Axelle Boyer, PhD student, Visual Studies
Michelaina Johnson, PhD student in Environmental Studies
Sneha Jariwala, undergraduate, MCD Biology
Erin Rose Ellison, PhD in Psychology, UCSC Alum
Erik Green, PhD in Education, UCSC Alum
Ana McTaggart, PhD Student in Computer Science
Stacy L. Kamehiro, History of Art and Visual Culture
Eli Shoecraft, Feminist Studies and Community Studies, UCSC Alum
Amy Lonetree, Associate Professor of History
Sarah Chang, PhD Student in History
Sophie Zukoski, Student in Art and Psychology
Kaitlin Tannyhill, UCSC Alum
Indiana Reid-Shaw, PhD student, Environmental Studies
Emily Schweitzer, UCSC undergrad student, CRES & Politics
Pablo Gomez-Echegaray, UCSC Undergraduate in Math Education
Danielle Crawford, PhD Candidate, Literature
Anika Hess, UCSC undergrad student, Film and History of Art and Visual Culture
Josselyne Morales, UCSC Alum, Sociology and Fine Arts
Sintia issa, PhD student, HAVC and Feminist Studies
Whitney Hansen, PhD student, Environmental Studies
Claire Urbanski, PhD candidate, Feminist Studies & CRES
Melody Nixon, PhD Candidate, History of Consciousness
Nitasha Sharma, Associate Prof, African American Studies Northwestern, UCSC ALum
Andrea Vazquez, PhD Student in Education and Critical Race and Ethnic Studies
Tatiane Santa Rosa, PhD Candidate Visual Studies, History of Art and Visual Culture
Connie Ngirchemat, BA in Sociology, UCSC Alum
Justin Luong, PhD Student, Environmental Studies
Jesica S. Fernandez, PhD, UCSC Alumni, Assistant Professor at Santa Clara University
Barrie Greeley, BA in Literature, UCSC Alumni
Maya Iverson, PhD Candidate in Sociology
Jasmine Djavahery, Student, Art and Critical Race & Ethnic studies
Michelle Hernandez Romero, BS in Cognitive Science, UCSC Alumni
Zolt Brown-Dunn, UCSC Student in Sustainability Studies and Art
Jess Whatcott, PhD in Politics, UCSC Alum, Assistant Professor at San Diego State University
Caz Salamanca, Director, Asian American/Pacific Islander Resource Center at UC Santa Cruz
Tracy L. García, Program Coordinator, Lionel Cantú Queer Resource Center at UC Santa Cruz
Cameron de León, Office Manager/Program Assistant, Ethnic Resource Centers
Kavya Aswadhati, Undergraduate Student, Critical Race & Ethnic Studies and Bioinformatics
Madison Treeve, PhD Student, Visual Studies
Judith Estrada, Director, Chicanx Latinx Resource Center at UC Santa Cruz
Carlos Gutierrez, Program Coordinator, Chicanx Latinx Resource Center
Kyle Galindez, PhD student, Sociology
Marina Huang, Undergrad, Astrophysics
Logan Barsigian, PhD student, Psychology
Tanie Lopez Cortez, Undergrad, Film & Digital Media
Regina Day Langhout, Professor, Psychology Department
Daniel Rodrigues Ramirez, PhD student, Psychology Department
Jemzi Ortiz-Franks, Undergraduate Student, Human Biology
S. Sylvane Vaccarino-Ruiz, PhD student, Psychology Department
Rebeca Dominguez, Undergraduate Student, CRES and Literature Studies
Alejandra Rubio, Undergraduate Student, Psychology and Art
Jon Detka, PhD student, Environmental Studies
Tony Boardman, PhD student, Literature
Jeannie Pham, Frontline Supervisor, Disability Resource Center at UC Santa Cruz
Hafsa Mohamed, Ph.D. student, History of Consciousness
Travis S. Becker
Adrian Drummond-Cole, Ph.D. Candidate, History of Consciousness
Isaac Blacksin, Ph.D. Candidate, History of Consciousness
Betania Santos, Ph.D Student, Sociology
Tia Rennea Howell, UCSC Alum 2019, Molecular and Cellular Developmental Biology
Gabriel Mindel, PhD Candidate, History of Consciousness
Tashina Vavuris, PhD Student, Environmental Studies Department
Alexandra Vareljian, Undergraduate Student, Computer Science
Melissa Kinley, UCSC Alumni, BA Feminist Studies 2018
Uriel Serrano, Ph.D student, Sociology Department
Kylie Kenner, PhD candidate, Education Department
Maria Trujillo, BA in Psychology, UCSC Alumni
Taylor Wondergem, PhD candidate, Feminist Studies
Dana Ahern, PhD candidate, Feminist Studies
Graduate Student Association Executive Board
UAW2865 — Student Workers’ Union
Jay Gauthier, BA in Feminist Studies, UCSC Alum
Paola Berumen, Student, Politics and Critical Race and Ethnic Studies
Roxana Valentino, Chemistry
Lisa Hofmann, PhD Candidate, Linguistics
Christina Ayson, PhD Student, History of Art and Visual Culture
Leslie McShane Lodwick, PhD Student, History of Art and Visual Culture
Tsim D. Schneider, Assistant Professor, Anthropology Department
Lake Elrod, PhD Student, History of Consciousness
Yesenia Ramos, Politics and Feminist Studies, UCSC Alum
Shauntay Larkins, Asst. Manager, Critical Race & Ethnic Studies and UCSC Alum
Cynthia Lisette Cruz, BA American Studies
Gabriel Evans, PhD Student, Feminist Studies
Maggie Wander, PhD Candidate, Visual Studies
Elisa Aquino, Latin American Latino Studies and Sociology, UCSC Alum
J. Kehaulani Kauanui, Ph.D, UCSC alumna
Laura McShane, Literature Department Undergraduate Adviser, UCSC Alumna
Aaron Jones, Ed.D., African/Black/Caribbean Retention Specialist, former resident of Hawai ‘i
Alexandra Moore, PhD Candidate, Visual Studies
Nancy Kim, UCSC alum and Resource Resource Centers Managing Director
Rebecca Hurdis, UCSC alum and Academic Senate analyst
Paloma Medina, PhD Candidate, Biomolecular Engineering
Perla Miranda, LALS & Politics, UCSC Alum
Jordan Reznick, PhD Candidate, Visual Studies
Edith Maribel Gonzales, Phd Student, Environmental Studies
Camryn Shigaya, UCSC Student, Legal Studies & Community Studies
felix dyer, UCSC Alum, BA Sociology 2019
Michael Mangarelli, Graduate Program Coordinator, Environmental Studies
Noʻel K. Tagab-Cruz, MA Leadership Public Policy & Social Issues, UCSC Alum
Stefan Yong, PhD Student, History of Consciousness
Zoe Weldon-Yochim, PhD Student, History of Art and Visual Culture
Fatima Mohammadi, UCSC student
Cassiopeia Lee, UCSC Alum, Community Studies
Erin Reid, UCSC student
Irene O’Connell, UCSC Alum, LALS
Sherry Zhu, UCSC Student, Critical Race & Ethnic Studies
Randy Villegas, PhD Student Politics, 18-19 Graduate Student Association President.
Sam Hughes, PhD Student in Psychology, UCSC
Anthony Bencomo, PhD Student in Politics, UCSC
Joshua Anh Ta, Undergrad Politics Student, Student Union Assembly Representative for Merrill
Ingy Higazy, PhD Student & Graduate Student Representative (2019-2020) in Politics, UCSC