

Papeete, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2006

**TE TUPUNA, TE TURA  
TAHITI**

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To whom it may concern;

We, non-profit organization **TE TUPUNA, TE TURA**, in charge of repatriating iwi maohi of French Polynesia, state in this letter our support to the cause that M. Edward Halealoha Ayau and Hui Malama I Na Kupuna 'o Hawai'i Nei are presently defending in court.

We would like to express here our admiration towards M. Ayau's commitment to protecting and repatriating Hawaiian iwi, his willingness to endure the kuleana (responsibility) this mission requires, and last but not least, his integrity in regards to repatriating and ensuring iwi will remain safe in their final resting place.

We have met M. Ayau for the first time in March 2002. He helped us with the repatriation of iwi from many islands in French Polynesia such as Tahiti, Moorea, Raiatea, Huahine, Maupiti, Bora Bora, Ua Pou, Hiva Oa, Nuku Hiva, Mangareva, and Makatea.

During his visit in Tahiti, M. Edward Halealoha Ayau struck us by his dedication. He is definitely someone who "walks the talk". His compassion to the deceased kupuna being taken away from their resting place reveals M. Ayau's **clear understanding** of the violation this act represents against Polynesian custom. As the protection of our iwi kupuna also means the preservation of our culture.

*"A mau te taura tupuna i natihia i te puna o te tau - Grasp the ancestral cord, weaved from the source of time"* writes the Tahitian poet P. Amaru.

Why would we allow desecration of our kupuna burial places?

But the issue is not here. The issue is about how do we practice the protection of our iwi with Polynesian thinking as well as integrity and respect for our culture when western laws govern our countries? There is a culture clash. **Can the Law decide for a cause that does not belong to its culture?** Can the Law understand the strong connection Polynesian people have with their dead ones? Can the Law hear our pain when we witness lootings of our burial caves and robberies of funerary objects? Can the Law understand the true meaning of moepu? **Moepu is not part of our heritage**, just as the jewels a person is buried with will not belong to his or her children, no matter how valuable they might be. If those jewels happened to be robbed after the person is buried, one can easily imagine the emotional turmoil the family will live. Funerary objects are closely linked to the deceased and to separate them from the deceased is a violation for the memory of the dead as well as for his or her descendants.

M. Ayau has participated in the repatriation of more than 3,500 iwi kupuna to their home land. He has learned through experience what is pono and pa'a and also what is hewa. Through all this years, he has discovered that some things are better left unknown and that some things are not to be showed nor displayed, nor talked about. He is also aware that taking care of the iwi kupuna is not about showing off, nor about serving some egotistical hidden agendas: it is about malama i na kupuna, taking care of the kupuna, serving the kupuna. His practices follow the Hawaiian Tradition, Hawaiian rites and rituals.

TE TUPUNA, TE TURA understands that this matter is complicated. Discussions about what is right or what is wrong when it comes to cultural issues is very delicate. However, we are convinced that the conflict will not be resolved by holding M. Ayau in jail. The most hurt in this affair are, once again, the kupuna. Preservation and protection of iwi and moepu are what is the most important.

For this reasons, the organization TE TUPUNA, TE TURA petitions the release of M. Edward Halealoha Ayau from jail and authorizes Hui Malama i Na Kupuna o Hawaii Nei to use this letter for the purpose of acting towards the liberation of M. Ayau.

For the President, Annie, Reva'e COEROLLI-GREEN,  
the secretary, Moeata, Daniele, Teuruarikipokoateamaineakaperepereiavarua GALENON.