

ALOHA from Hawaii

Love is the answer. Now, what was the question?



I returned home from Hawaii just before Christmas. The 2 words no tourist leaves Hawaii without learning are aloha and mahalo. Aloha is commonly used as the meeting and parting greeting and mahalo is used as “thank you.” I heard them said innumerable times, but sadly mostly without reference to their deeper meanings. On the few memorable occasions they were said to me with true meaning, I felt their power as they touched my heart and soul.

Mahalo is a spiritual and Divine blessing, it is given as a gift. According to the Kupunas, (Hawaiian elders) it should only be used when genuinely and truthfully felt. Native Hawaiians consider words to have mana, or energy. Aloha and mahalo are 2 of the most sacred and powerful words and can even be repeated as mantras to transform and empower. Aloha is an invocation of the Divine, it means love, but also embraces the spirit of friendship, acceptance, peace, compassion and charity. Its meaning can be described as, "the joyful sharing of loving energy in the present moment." In sharing this energy you become attuned to the Universal Power that Hawaiians call Mana. The Aloha Spirit is the attunement of mind and heart within each person. It brings us to the Self.

In the traditional aloha greeting there is a sharing of breath. In breathing the same air, we celebrate the recognition of being at one with each other and with the land. Both breath and the land are very important to the Kanaka Maoli, the native people of Hawaii, who number less than 16% of the total population. Hawaiian culture is based on oneness with the land and with nature. Love of the land is at the heart of Hawaiian language and customs including hula, chants, mele (songs), popular music, art, shamanic traditions, religion and politics.

As the Hawaiian storyteller, "Uncle Charlie" Maxwell, says, "The land which is the basis of the culture, with its streams, mountains, beaches and oceans, must be held in reverence and protected as it was in ancient times.

Author and psychologist Paul Pearsall quotes a native Hawaiian as saying, "We are at home. So many people who come here seem lost and emotionally or spiritually homeless. They keep moving, but they never really live anywhere. We love being in our place by the sea. We will never leave because we *are* this place"



This fits with what I found. I spent some time on the West coast of Oahu because of the dolphins there. Actually it is not recommended to tourists as

there is a large homeless population there, with many people living in tents on the beaches. There is a higher population of native Hawaiians there than in most other areas and a palpable nationalist spirit. Although there is a move to get the homeless off the beaches – (sadly, especially the best beaches that would be of value to the tourist industry,) many people refuse to move. They say, “We are not homeless. The land is our home. We are only houseless.” A beautiful distinction.

There is a strong but as yet not unified Hawaiian Nationalist movement. Hawaii was a kingdom from 1810 until 1893 when the monarchy was overthrown by resident American (and some European) businessmen. It was then an independent republic until 1898, when it was annexed by the United States as a territory, becoming a state in 1959. Not everyone felt like celebrating the 50 year anniversary of becoming America’s 50th state! I find it as incongruous to call Hawaii America as I do to call Tibet China!

There are only 225,000 native Hawaiians amongst a total population of nearly 1.3 million. Of these, less than 8,000 are full blood Hawaiians, (which is defined as at least 50% pure Hawaiian.) When you add in visitors to the mix - in 2003 there were 6.3 million tourists - you can see how the original culture and way of life is almost impossible to practice and maintain. Despite this, the spirit of Aloha manages to survive. Perhaps there are commonalities with Tibet in that occupation and suppression result in a world wide upsurge in the principles that may ultimately benefit mankind and the world. Like pulling up ground elder results in a stronger root base and the spreading of new growth in a much wider area - due to the suppression in Tibet, Tibetan Buddhism has blossomed all over the world.

Although there is inevitable anger at what has been done to and in their country, one beautiful Hawaiian soul I met explained, “Aloha is our nature, it is our way. We have to reclaim and protect our country, our culture, our language and our way of life. We cannot hang onto anger and resentment, that is against our law of Aloha - if we do that we have already lost.” Perhaps instead of being uprooted, the spirit of Aloha will blossom and spread till it touches all of the 1.3 million inhabitants of Hawaii, till it touches all of the 6.3 million tourists, and spreads from them around the planet like the golden light of the rising sun.



The Aloha Law suggests that each person must think and emote good feelings to others. It advocates kindness to be expressed with tenderness; unity to be expressed with harmony; agreeableness to be expressed with pleasantness; humility to be expressed with modesty and patience to be expressed with perseverance. All qualities necessary to take us to 2012 and beyond!

♥ Aloha and Mahalo ♥

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