

The Spirit of Aloha

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In the beginning A (pronounced "ahh"), the eternal light giver, created Namaka O Ka Hai (the great power of the sea). But A saw the seas were alone, so he freed the force Pele. Pele created the lands. To keep them above her jealous sister, she constantly renewed them. The people who found these lands named it Hawai`I hailing it as a place of blessed "alo" or "aloha" meaning "in the presence of A." Life in old Hawai`I was a spiritual experience. There was aloha everywhere; in the people, plants, animals, rocks and reefs.

Even in the canoes and paddles and the tools used to make them. But aloha is more than a word, it's a way of life. If there is life, there is mana, goodness, and wisdom. If there is goodness and wisdom in a person, there is a god-quality. One must recognize the "god of life" in another before saying, "Aloha." It means mutual regard and affection and extends warmth in caring with no obligation in return. It's the essence of relationships in which each person is important to every other person for collective existence. It's to hear what is not said, to see what cannot be seen and to know the unknowable.

To say, "Aloha," to another with indifference is blasphemous, just as saying, "Mahalo," ungraciously is profane. Therefore, when one says, "Aloha," to another, one must mean it sincerely. If you are angry with someone, you must cleanse away all ill feeling before saying, "Aloha." It is said, and given, freely and without condition or expectation and with the realization that it may not be returned but it is given without regrets nonetheless. It is this concept more than any other that distinguishes the Hawaiian culture. It also allows an outrigger club and its members to grow and thrive.

A club's leaders, more than any other, should understand, and be possessed of, this concept. It is not enough to be in charge; one must lead by example. Aunty Pilahi Paki described it in this unuhi laula loa:

Akahi: kindness, expressed with a feeling of tenderness,
Lokahi: unity, expressed with a feeling of harmony,
`Olu`olu: agreeable, expressed with a feeling pleasantness,
Ha`aha`a: humility, expressed with a feeling of modesty,
Ahonui: patience, expressed with a feeling of perseverance.

These are the traits that express the charm, the warmth, the sincerity, the generosity, and the love of an intangible substance or spirit known to many in Hawai I nei as "ALOHA."

Aloha is appropriate when it comes to your *hoa wa'a* (canoe mates) and as your competitors. Every race is an occasion for the celebration of team spirit, meeting the challenge of competition, the test of determination, and the solidarity of club pride. So how do these traits apply?

Akahi: Kindness. Help others where you can; let others help where possible. Remember to give credit where credit is due and do not take credit at another's expense.

Lokahi: Unity. Unity is to a club, what water is to a farmer. Take away a club's unity, and the club becomes a lifeless desert. By maintaining club unity you maintain a common goal and individuals are possessed with a common motive.

`Olu`olu: Agreeable. Commend in public; condemn in private. Remember a good judge of character corrects what he hears by what he sees, a bad judge of character corrupts what he sees by what he hears.

Ha`aha`a: Humility. Pride brings destruction; humility brings honor. If you are humble, you consider yourself the servant of others. You do not act or feel superior to others. Remember that a leader who excels in employing others, humbles himself before them.

Ahonui: Patience. Never remember small fault; never forget small favors. The development of patience challenges the strongest by the minute to break away and take the easy road. It is something to admire and respect in someone, but often over looked because patience is hidden in all of us.