



What is Aloha?

By Pono Shim & Ramsay Taum

What is Aloha? What is this special “spirit” that is universally spoken of? For some of us it is more than a greeting, but rather a life force that defines who we are and why we are here.

Auntie Pilahi Paki, who was a “keeper of the secrets of Hawai‘i” tasked several of her students to be prepared for the future when the world would be in collapse. She spoke of the time when Hawai‘i would have the remedy to save the world and the remedy was “Aloha”. In 1970, at a Governor’s conference she introduced modern Hawai‘i to a deeper understanding of “Aloha”

A Akahai – meaning kindness (grace), to be expressed with tenderness;

L Lokahi – meaning unity (unbroken), to be expressed with harmony;

O ‘Olu‘olu – meaning agreeable (gentle), to be expressed with pleasantness;

H Ha‘aha‘a – meaning humility (empty), to be expressed with modesty;

A Ahonui – meaning patience (waiting for the moment), to be expressed with perseverance.

A secret of “Aloha” is that a person cannot do one of the principles without truly doing all and if you are not doing one you are not doing any. So, to be “Living Aloha” is to live all of the principles. An even deeper meaning of “Aloha” that Auntie Pilahi Paki shared with us can be found in a quote from our Queen.

The Queen’s quote found on epilogue page of the book “The Betrayal of Lili‘uokalani” – By Helena G. Allen

In 1917, after Queen Lili‘uokalani had seen the end of the Hawaiian monarchy, she said to her hanai daughter, Lydia K. Aholo, “To gain the kingdom of heaven is to hear what is not said, to see what cannot be seen, and to know the unknowable – that is Aloha. All things in this world are two: in heaven there is but One.”

– Queen Lili‘uokalani (1917)

Aloha is an overarching principle. Like most Hawaiian words, it has many meanings. It can be a noun, verb, adjective and adverb. It is prescriptive, descriptive and subscript.

Aloha is more than a greeting or salutation. It is a condition, a way of life, a mind set and an attitude.

Aloha is an action, not a reaction. It is a natural response of respect, love and reciprocity, and not a contrived series of motions or expressions that have been rehearsed and perfected for a commercial expectation.

Aloha is to be in the presence of life, to share the essence of one’s being with openness, honesty and humility. It is a way of being, a way of behaving, a way of life. It is a commitment to being real. It is a commitment to accepting others and giving dignity to who they are and what they have to offer.

Aloha is not a slogan, pitch line or monogram. It is a spiritual principle that conveys the deepest expression of one’s relationship with oneself, the creative and life-giving forces, one’s family and community, and with one’s friends and strangers.

Aloha!