

## Aloha

Aloha: love, affection, compassion, mercy, sympathy, pity, kindness, sentiment, grace, charity; greeting, salutation, regards; sweetheart, lover, loved one; beloved, loving, kind, compassionate, charitable, lovable; to love, be fond of; to show kindness, mercy, pity, charity, affection; to venerate; to remember with affection; to greet, hail. Greetings! Hello! Goodbye! Farewell! Alas! The common greetings follow: Aloha 'oe, may you be loved or greeted, greetings (to one person). Aloha kāua, may there be friendship or love between us, greetings (directed to the speaker and one person); dear Sir. Aloha kākou, same as above but directed to 3 or more people. The following greetings were introduced after European times; Aloha ahiahi, good evening. Aloha kakahiaka, good morning. Aloha pumehana, warm affection. Mea aloha, loved one, beloved.

Source: *Hawaiian Dictionary*; revised and enlarged edition Mary Kawena Puku'i/Samuel H. Elbert

Aloha is probably the most recognized Hawaiian word throughout the world, more commonly used as a greeting of affection or a farewell. However, I would like to share my personal point of view of this powerful, multi-layered word.

The Hawaiian language reflects our Kupuna's (Ancestor's) profound reverence of their ancient natural world that surrounded them. They recognized the power contained within words, therefore, words and phrases were selected with deliberate care, and expressed with great emotion and repetition, as each word is believed capable of acquiring more power called mana (a spiritual power or life force, akin to chi or ki in Asian cultures or prana in India). The language articulates and reveals the ancient Hawaiian's interrelationship between the sky, earth, ocean, land, man and gods. All things existed as an everlasting continuum.

Due to this innate belief, I experience the word Aloha as a union of two words, Alo and Hä. Alo, according to Pukui/Emerson, can mean front, face, or presence. Hä (using this word with the kahakö, or macron, over the letter a) means to breathe, exhale; to breathe upon (as within a kava ceremony after praying and before prognostication), breath or life. It is the Universal Breath of Life for me.

Our ancestors, upon greeting each other, would stand "he alo ä he alo", face-to-face, and press noses together while breathing in through the nose, each other's hä, essence, Universal Breath. This intimate exchange was a sharing of great intention to connect on a deeper, more spiritual level.

Therefore, personally, the word Aloha means that I exchange my spiritual essence with yours, as we share, if even for a brief moment, the company of each other's presence, and the acknowledgement of the radiant inner light that exists within us.