

Chronological: Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2000-08-23

Senator Daniel K. Inouye Papers
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ASIA-PACIFIC CENTER FOR SECURITY STUDIES

Wednesday, August 23, 2000

History indicates that many of the world's leaders have followed the old adage – "Might makes right." As long as you are strong, economically and militarily, you could dictate to the weaker nations the path that they must follow. I suppose that this has been the theme of mankind.

However, since the end of World War II and in the succession of wars that followed, many of our plenary leaders have begun to realize that might does not necessarily make right. For all too long, this belief has led to our misguided notion of U.S. superiority. We have considered our lifestyle, our language, our "American way" superior. We have insisted, and on occasion even forcibly, that others adopt our ways.

Painfully, we have come to realize that this is not the case, or the way to lead. We have encountered "mice that have roared" by their sheer will and depth of their conviction.

Much as we Christians believe we are superior, we must realize that Muslims feel the same. Buddhists feel the same. All religions have profound concepts of love, fellowship, and compassion. None are superior, and all should be respected.

The way to resolve a problem is first through collaboration, cooperation, and compromise. Less than a hundred years ago, these words conveyed a sense of weakness or failure. Today, they are commonplace in the halls of the powerful as the tools of the day. As a result, we have multi-lateral agreements and international accords.

In order to achieve collaboration and compromise, much work must be done to sincerely understand each other.

My mother was orphaned at a young age, and spent a precious year with a native Hawaiian family on the Island of Maui. It was some of her happiest days. She carried fond memories and a deep affection for the native Hawaiian people throughout her life. As a child, she shared with me three words, and impressed upon me their importance -- aloha, ohana, and ho'oponopono.

Ohana means family, not only the immediate family unit, but one's larger community. In order to have an ohana in this regard, you must be able to achieve aloha. Aloha is not just for tourists, and it does not simply mean "hello" and "goodbye." It also means love, which grows from a mutual respect and a tolerance of the traditions of others.

To achieve aloha, one must be willing to engage in ho'oponopono -- to correct past wrongs and to set the right course for the future. Ho'oponopono means "to make things right." To be successful, one must participate with an open heart in honest deliberations. Once achieved, aloha and ohana are possible. And, our land will be a better place.

Although conceived by those in the war fighting business, it is my sincere hope that the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies will embrace the words of those who inhabited these lands long, long ago. They are a brave and wise people. We can learn some important lessons which I believe can aid in bringing about an appreciation of cultural, religious, and political diversity.

Much as I would like to believe that there is peace in the Asia Pacific region, that is not the case. In fact, many of these nations are poised to destroy each other. Seven of the eight largest armies in the world are in this region. Many of these countries are run by the military. There continues to be tensions between North and South Korea, and a serious impasse still exists between Pakistan and India. All is not well in the Asia Pacific region.

Some have said that it is unrealistic to expect this Center to teach peace through dialogue and collaboration. I say it is unrealistic to only know how to kill.

There must be a place where the military leaders of the region can safely put down their arms and sit around a table to talk and to learn about one another. This can only lead to a better understanding and greater tolerance. This is the essence of aloha.

Who knows, this Center may one day prevent a war, avert a conflict or save lives. That is a worthwhile investment.

My Aloha to all of you.



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