



# Forgiveness Stories

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**Ho'okahi no lā'au lapa'au, o ka mihi.**

"The first remedy is forgiveness."

Hawaiian prayer

## Introduction

We are in the center of the world ocean. Half the planet is spanned by the Pacific, and Hawaii is in the center. Almost all the rest of human civilization lives on the other half of the earth. It is a stunning vision, seen from space.



Through an immense effort of will and skill, the original Hawaiians came here across vast waters. They needed to reconcile old ways with this new place, so they developed a practice of family, self and social healing, and called it **ho'oponopono** (literally “to make things straight again”).

We respect that tradition, and offer this small book as a living re-connection of all the peoples of modern Hawai'i and the first Hawaiians. We respect their original wisdom, and share it with the world.

In this time of transformation – of destruction and rebirth, for America and for the world – forgiveness is a practical connection to traditional Hawaiian ideals, and a key to the future.

Michael North, Editor

# Law of the Splintered Paddle

## King Kamehameha's Story: Hawai'i



**King Kamehameha I, the first ruler of all the Hawaiian Islands, lived before European influence became strong in the central Pacific, from 1758 to 1819.**

**He had a reputation for independence, strength, justice and compassion -- combined with a fierce determination to unite the people of Hawai'i.**

Kamehameha's proclamation of Mamalahoe -- the "Law of the Splintered Paddle," came about in a unique way. His story of compassion and forgiveness has been passed down through nearly two centuries, from Kingdom to Republic to Territory to State, and is included today in the Constitution of the State of Hawai'i.

**The story goes like this:**

The young royal warrior Kamehameha, headstrong with youth, was paddling a war canoe with his men near the shoreline of Ke'eau, in Puna, Maui. Seeking a place to rest, they came upon some commoners fishing on a beach, and attacked them. All escaped, except for two men who stayed behind to defend a man carrying a child on his back.

During the struggle, the young chief's foot caught in some lava rocks, and he was trapped there. One of the fishermen struck Kamehameha on the head with a paddle, and the paddle splintered. It was a blow that could have killed the young future King.

The man who hit him, in defending the child, allowed Kamehameha to survive. The young chief never forgot this act of forgiveness. This commoner taught Kamehameha that all human life is precious and deserves respect, that the strong must not mistreat the weak.

Kamehameha could have taken revenge on the fisherman, but he learned from the experience instead, and made forgiveness part of Hawai'i's heritage, and its future.

Years later, King Kamehameha I proclaimed Mamalahoe, the Law of the Splintered Paddle. It provides that any old person, woman or child may "lie by the roadside in safety." This means that anyone who is weak is entitled to protection and assistance, and to respect, even from the King.

story suggested by Ramsay Taum, researched and written by the Hawai'i Forgiveness Project, from online sources at Kamehameha Schools, the University of Hawai'i Law School, and the State Constitution. For more, see <http://www.hawaiiforgivenessproject.org/stories.htm#sources>

## **What would Muhammad Do?**

**Edited from an original essay by Ibrahim Hooper**

During the protests over publication of the Danish cartoons designed to insult the Prophet Muhammad, I wrote a commentary called "What Would Muhammad Do?" Perhaps it is time to remind us all how the Prophet himself reacted to insults, both real and perceived.

Islamic traditions include a number of instances in which the Prophet had the opportunity to retaliate against those who abused him, but refrained from doing so.

"You do not do evil to those who do evil to you, but you deal with them with forgiveness and kindness." (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

Muslims are taught the tradition of the woman who would regularly throw trash on the prophet as he walked down a particular path. The prophet never responded in kind to the woman's abuse. Instead, when she one day failed to attack him, he went to her home to inquire about her condition.

In another tradition, the prophet was offered the opportunity to have God punish the people of a town near Mecca who refused the message of Islam and attacked him with stones. Again, the prophet did not choose to respond in kind to the abuse.

A companion of the prophet noted his forgiving disposition. He said: "I served the prophet for ten years, and he never said 'uf' (a word indicating impatience) to me and never blamed me by saying, 'Why did you do so or why didn't you do so?'" (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

Even when the prophet was in a position of power, he chose the path of kindness and reconciliation.

When he returned to Mecca after years of exile and personal attacks, he did not take revenge on the people of the city, but instead offered a general amnesty.

In the Quran, Islam's revealed text, God states: "When (the righteous) hear vain talk, they withdraw from it saying: 'Our deeds are for us and yours for you; peace be on to you. We do not desire the way of the ignorant'. . .O Prophet (Muhammad), you cannot give guidance to whom you wish, it is God Who gives guidance to whom He pleases, and He is quite aware of those who are guided." (28:55-56)

Another verse tells the prophet to "show forgiveness, speak for justice and avoid the ignorant."

(7:199)

These are the examples that Muslims should follow as they express concern at the publication of insulting cartoons or at misperceived actions of a well-meaning teacher. As the Quran states: "It may well be that God will bring about love (and friendship) between you and those with whom you are now at odds." (60:7)

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## Linda Apo

**"Prison became a place of transformation for me."**



*Linda Apo served two prison sentences for theft crimes in a woman's correctional gaol on the island of O'ahu, Hawaii. As a result she became alienated from her family, especially her sister Marilyn Vierra who had supported Linda through many years of drug addiction.*

*Following a recovery program in the prison, Linda took part in a Restorative Circle and reconciled with her sister. A Restorative Circle is a group process for individual prisoners and their loved ones to assist with healing for families. It was developed by an active member of the Hawai'i Forgiveness Project.*

My past is full of pain – abuse, violent relationships, drug addiction and theft. I never had a childhood. As the eldest I cared for my brothers and sisters until we were taken from our mom and sent to the mainland to live with our father. Here I encountered prejudice for the first time

and built up a lot of anger and resentment. I felt like a victim and learnt to shut down my feelings until I was numb inside.

I married four times – always looking for love outside of myself. I have five children and all of them have been affected by my lifestyle. Two of my children are in prison, and the other three were adopted. My children were my victims too, but I never intentionally wanted to hurt anyone.

Things just snowballed until eventually I was convicted of credit card fraud. When I first did time, I didn't want to change but during my second sentence the prison chaplain introduced me to the Total Life Recovery program which was the start of my healing. Prison became a place of transformation for me. On the program I made a promise to myself and to God that I would change. It was the hardest thing I've ever had to do but also the most important decision I've ever made in my life.

Having worked on myself I needed to heal the broken relationships in my family. My sister Marilyn, in particular, who had always supported me had finally been unable to take anymore and shut me out. It was suggested in prison that I should take part in a Restorative Circle -- a process intended to bring families back together. At first I didn't want to do it; I didn't want to feel the pain and I was scared of rejection again.

I was so happy when Marilyn agreed to attend. The Circle lasted an hour and so much happened in that time. It was like an assessment of my entire life, and how I needed to change. It was also an opportunity for me to apologise to my family and for them to tell me how my actions had hurt them. It was very tough but I was happy in the end because Marilyn was so positive. It was the beginning of growth for me and helped me put everything back together

Forgiving myself is the hardest part. I never had the heart to hate anybody and yet before I didn't know how to behave in a real or loving way. For me love meant sex. Now I'm learning to love from inside and getting to know myself. The Restorative Circle helped me go places I've never been before, take steps I've never taken. Healing is a slow process but I'm getting there. I see miracles in my life every day and I am determined to be an example to my children.

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## Hawaii death unites Pacific Island groups

By Lee Cataluna Honolulu Advertiser Staff Writer; January 13, 2008



Members of the Kalihi Micronesian community stood outside the funeral of an 18-year-old Samoan yesterday and begged forgiveness from the teen's family.

In Samoan tradition, the ritual apology is called ifoga, but this was the Micronesian community following Samoan customs in an earnest effort of reconciliation following a crime that has broken hearts and strained community relations.

"We want to show you that we are with you," Pastor Sekap Esah said to the grieving relatives and

friends. He stood in the parking lot of Moanalua Mortuary with members of his parish behind him. "Words are not enough just to stand here and say that we are so sorry."

Just after midnight on Dec. 26, 18-year-old Fusitogamala Iosefa Savea was stabbed in the heart outside Sunny's Market near Kuhio Park Terrace housing complex. A week later, 23-year-old RJ Ham was arrested and charged with the murder. Ham, who is Chuukese, is being held in lieu of \$1 million bail.

Savea's death has all the marks of a tragedy, a young life suddenly, senselessly snuffed out.

He had just come to Hawai'i a few months ago, a young man starting his adult life. The stabbing happened on Christmas, midnight on Dec. 26, after Savea had celebrated the holiday with his cousins. It didn't happen in a fight. By witness accounts, it was an unprovoked attack. It is the kind of thing that can make a close-knit community boil and turn the anguish of grief into thoughts of revenge.



Pastor To'o Paogofie of the Samoan Council of the United Church of Christ called a meeting of his friends and fellow pastors in the Samoan and Micronesian communities. He said it was time to be more than spiritual leaders, they had to be civic leaders. The ifoga ritual was agreed upon and worked out last week and presented yesterday at Savea's funeral.

"What happened happened," Paogofie said. "This is for reconciliation and closure."

In the Samoan tradition, an ifoga is a ritualized formal apology where those seeking forgiveness humble themselves before the person or family that was hurt. An ifoga can take days. Those seeking forgiveness may have to wait in the hot sun or through the rainy night and there is no guarantee that the apology will be accepted. There is no guarantee there won't be retaliation on the spot.

If the matter is very serious, the high chief from the village of the accused would perform the ifoga. It is a very humbling gesture on the part of those asking for mercy.

"We want to show you that we are with you," Esah said to Savea's family on behalf of the Micronesian community. "Life is so precious. Words cannot express how much we feel about what happened. We are very, very, very, very sorry. And we will keep praying for you."

## CONNECTING IN RITUAL

An envelope of money collected from among the community was offered as part of the ifoga, as well as an 'ie toga, a fine mat, considered the most significant and sincere part of the ifoga ritual.

Savea's great-uncle Matuaiala Malivao, a chief from Samoa, accepted the apology on behalf of Savea's family. Savea's relatives had called for peace and forgiveness after his death. Today, his body is being taken home to his parents for burial in American Samoa.

Family members of the accused did not attend the ifoga, which is considered separate and unrelated to any judicial proceedings or legal statements of guilt.

In the middle of the ceremony, a young man, a friend of the teen who was killed, roared up to the crowd in his pickup truck and stopped cold in the middle of the parking lot, blocking any entrance or exit.

There was a moment of tension among the crowd as he jumped out of the truck with an air of aggression, but he took his place among the mourners and was comforted by a young woman who wiped at his tears as well as her own.

## FOR SAVEA

In the small chapel room inside Moanalua Mortuary, cousins stood around the white coffin holding Savea's body. They wore shirts with his handsome face airbrushed on the front and his name, birth date and the date of his death printed on the back. Cousin Ceenah Malivao softly stroked his hair and sobbed into the lace veil draped over the coffin lid. A grandmother lifted a small boy to place a pink rose on Savea's hands.

It is the kind of heartbreaking scene that could lead to more violence, but the UCC pastors believe that the earnest expression of regret and the grace of forgiveness will do much to bring healing and peace.



complete original story, with links and photographs, at  
<http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/article/2008/Jan/13/ln/hawaii801130365.html>

## The Dark Side of Dad

'I wished he would die. And then he did'

*Calvin Sandborn, Weekend Post Published: Saturday, June 14, 2008*

VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA -Tomorrow I'll think fondly of Dad. Which is odd, because I hated him when he was alive.

Dad was an angry, hard-swearing, tattooed man's man. He'd been an Alaska bush pilot, but by the time I came along, he was a California traveling salesman, drinking himself to death. When I was two he got drunk and threw my empty crib across the bedroom. When I was 12, he challenged my brother to a fist fight. He routinely shouted at us in front of our friends. By the time I was 13, I wished he would die.

And then he did. I thought that my wish had killed him, and for the longest time I couldn't forgive myself. I was scared to death I would damage someone else.

But four decades on, I've forgiven myself for hating him. More difficult, I've somehow forgiven myself for the Dad-like fury I inflicted on my own family.

To my surprise, as I became kinder to myself, I formed a more rounded picture of Dad. His anger had its reasons. His father died young, leaving him with a stepfather who favoured his own kids. When Dad was 14, his preacher grandfather hauled him in front of the congregation and viciously denounced him for teaching other kids the Charleston.

Humiliated, Dad ran away from home and joined the carnival, growing up on the road with hardened carnies. In middle age, his sales job was crushing. He was a brilliant man with a Grade 8 education, reduced to knocking on doors and imploring merchants to buy advertising promotions like imprinted pens and squeeze coin purses.

But Dad's biggest problem was that he never got in touch with his own pain, never learned how to process his feelings. Like many men, he believed the lie that "Big boys don't cry," so he refused to seek out friends and instead turned his pain into anger.

The anger kept shameful sorrow at bay. Swigging vodka straight from the bottle, he forced us to cry his tears.

This was the Dad I hated. But a funny thing happened after I forgave him. A different Dad returned from the shadows, borne by a flood of memory. I found myself recalling the times when he didn't drink:



It was evening at the river. I was five, and Dad was still young and strong. We were camping in the California Coast Range. Although I couldn't swim, I had wandered down to the river after dinner and paddled an inner tube out to the middle of the big dark pool. I lay back in the inner tube, gazing at the cliff that loomed above on the other side of the water.

Suddenly I slipped through the middle of the tube, and I was in the water, struggling. I sank into the cold dark water. As I resurfaced, I could see Dad running down the beach, tearing off his shoes and plunging powerfully into the river. Then I was under again, swallowing cold water, sinking into blackness ...

Then I felt myself being pushed powerfully to the surface, as Dad rose like a sea lion below me. I gasped the air, and was saved.

But he had swallowed water, too, and began to cough and struggle himself. "Dad!" I cried in a panic. He sank below me, and I again fell back into the black waters, gulping and sputtering, stepping on his head. As we sank, the murky yellow light of the world receded into darkness, with no sound but my thundering heartbeat.

I felt his hands grip my calves and place my feet firmly on his shoulders. Then, as in the game we'd often played, he drifted down and bounced back up from the river bottom, thrusting me

to the surface. And then his tattooed arm was around my chest, towing me to safety. Keeping my face above the water, he coughed, then murmured, "It's OK, Cal. It's OK."

Finally we staggered on to the sandy beach. As I stood gasping, shivering and crying, he hugged me to his heaving chest. Then he went to the trailer to get a towel and wrapped it around me.

Later, as he heated hot chocolate on the Coleman stove he did the unusual -- he sat me on his lap. After a while, he turned the Giants game on the radio, and we sipped hot chocolate while the sun sank behind the cliff.

At the end of his life, I think Dad, like me, had forgotten that day. He forgot his goodness. I wish that, when he ruminated on his failures, he had been able to remember the good things. I wish that, when he thought of his years of unemployment, his bankruptcy, the jalopies he drove, his failed marriages, his destructive anger, that he had been able to recall that day on the river. Most of all, I wish he'd had a kind father to remind him of the good things about himself -- his sense of humour, his charm, his ability to spin a story for a crowd, his compassion for the unfortunate, his intelligence, his ability to make a day's outing with a young boy into an exciting adventure.

I wish someone had told him that he did not have to be a Man of Steel, that it was OK to be sad. I wish he had understood that he was no different from any of us, a mixture of good and bad. I wish he had realized that he could be forgiven, and that he could forgive.

The fact was, he didn't have to die alone in the Country of Resentment. There was room for him in the Country of Love.

*Calvin Sandborn is a professor of environmental law and the legal director of the University of Victoria Environmental Law Clinic. He is the author of *Becoming the Kind Father: A Son's Journey* (New Society, 2007).*

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## **National Apology To the Stolen Generations**

**made to the Indigenous People of Australia  
Speech by the Prime Minister, February 13, 2008(excerpts)**

Mr RUDD (Griffith—Prime Minister) (9.00 a.m.)—

I move: That today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history. We reflect on their past mistreatment.

We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations—this blemished chapter in our nation’s history. The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia’s history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.

We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry. To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry. And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.

We the Parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation.

For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written.

We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians. A future where this Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again. A future where we harness the determination of all

Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity. A future where we embrace the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed.



A future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility. A future where all Australians, whatever their origins, are truly equal partners, with equal opportunities and with an equal stake in shaping the next chapter in the history of this great country, Australia.

Some have asked, ‘Why apologise?’ Let me begin to answer by telling the parliament just a little of one person’s story—an elegant, eloquent and wonderful woman in her 80s, full of life, full of funny stories, despite what has happened in her life’s journey, a woman who has travelled a long way to be with us today, a member of the stolen generation who shared some of her story with me when I called around to see her just a few days ago. Nanna Nungala Fejo, as she prefers to be called, was born in the late 1920s. She remembers her earliest childhood days living with her family and her community in a bush camp just outside Tennant Creek. She remembers the love and the warmth and the kinship of those days long ago, including traditional dancing around the camp fire at night. She loved the dancing. She remembers once getting into strife when, as a four-year-old girl, she insisted on dancing with the male tribal elders rather than just sitting and watching the men, as the girls were supposed to do.

But then, sometime around 1932, when she was about four, she remembers the coming of the welfare men. Her family had feared that day and had dug holes in the creek bank where the children could run and hide. What they had not expected was that the white welfare men did not come alone. They brought a truck, two white men and an Aboriginal stockman on horseback cracking his stockwhip. The kids were found; they ran for their mothers, screaming, but they could not get away. They were herded and piled onto the back of the truck. Tears flowing, her mum tried clinging to the sides of the truck as her children were taken away to the Bungalow in Alice, all in the name of protection.

A few years later, government policy changed. Now the children would be handed over to the missions to be cared for by the churches. But which church would care for them? The kids were simply told to line up in three lines. Nanna Fejo and her sisters stood in the middle line, her older brother and cousin on her left. Those on the left were told that they had become Catholics, those in the middle Methodists and those on the right Church of England. That is how the complex questions of post-reformation theology were resolved in the Australian outback in the 1930s. It was as crude as that. She and her sister were sent to a Methodist

mission on Goulburn Island and then Croker Island. Her Catholic brother was sent to work at a cattle station and her cousin to a Catholic mission.

Nanna Fejo's family had been broken up for a second time. She stayed at the mission until after the war, when she was allowed to leave for a prearranged job as a domestic in Darwin. She was 16. Nanna Fejo never saw her mum again. After she left the mission, her brother let her know that her mum had died years before, a broken woman fretting for the children that had literally been ripped away from her.



I asked Nanna Fejo what she would have me say today about her story. She thought for a few moments then said that what I should say today was that all mothers are important. And she added: 'Families—keeping them together is very important. It's a good thing that you are surrounded by love and that love is passed down the generations. That's what gives you happiness.' As I left, later on, Nanna Fejo took one of my staff aside, wanting to make sure that I was not too hard on the Aboriginal stockman who had hunted those kids down all those years ago. The stockman had found her again decades later, this time himself to say, 'Sorry.' And remarkably, extraordinarily, she had forgiven him.

Nanna Fejo's is just one story. There are thousands, tens of thousands, of them: stories of forced separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their mums and dads over the better part of a century. Some of these stories are graphically told in *Bringing them home*, the report commissioned in 1995 by Prime Minister Keating and received in 1997 by Prime Minister Howard. There is something terribly primal about these firsthand accounts. The pain is searing; it screams from the pages. The hurt, the humiliation, the degradation and the sheer brutality of the act of physically separating a mother from her children is a deep assault on our senses and on our most elemental humanity.

These stories cry out to be heard; they cry out for an apology. Instead, from the nation's parliament there has been a stony and stubborn and deafening silence for more than a decade; a view that somehow we, the parliament, should suspend our most basic instincts of what is right and what is wrong; a view that, instead, we should look for any pretext to push this great wrong to one side, to leave it languishing with the historians, the academics and the cultural warriors, as if the stolen generations are little more than an interesting sociological phenomenon. But the stolen generations are not intellectual curiosities. They are human beings; human beings who have been damaged deeply by the decisions of parliaments and governments. But, as of today,



the time for denial, the time for delay, has at last come to an end.

The nation is demanding of its political leadership to take us forward. Decency, human decency, universal human decency, demands that the nation now step forward to right a historical wrong. That is what we are doing in this place today. But should there still be doubts as to why we must now act, let the parliament reflect for a moment on the following facts: that, between 1910 and 1970, between 10 and 30 per cent of Indigenous children were forcibly taken from their mothers and fathers; that, as a result, up to 50,000 children were forcibly taken from their families; that this was the product of the deliberate, calculated policies of the state as reflected in the explicit powers given to them under statute; that this policy was taken to such extremes by some in administrative authority that the forced extractions of children of so-called 'mixed lineage' were seen as part of a broader policy of dealing with 'the problem of the Aboriginal population'.



One of the most notorious examples of this approach was from the Northern Territory Protector of Natives, who stated:

Generally by the fifth and invariably by the sixth generation, all native characteristics of the Australian aborigine are eradicated. The problem of our half-castes—to quote the Protector—“will quickly be eliminated by the complete disappearance of the black race, and

the swift submergence of their progeny in the white ...”

These are uncomfortable things to be brought out into the light. They are not pleasant. They are profoundly disturbing. But we must acknowledge these facts if we are to deal once and for all with the argument that the policy of generic forced separation was somehow well motivated, justified by its historical context and, as a result, unworthy of any apology today.

Then we come to the argument of intergenerational responsibility, also used by some to argue against giving an apology today. But let us remember the fact that the forced removal of Aboriginal children was happening as late as the early 1970s. The 1970s is not exactly a point in remote antiquity. There are still serving members of this parliament who were first elected to this place in the early 1970s. It is well within the adult memory span of many of us. The uncomfortable truth for us all is that the parliaments of the nation, individually and collectively, enacted statutes and delegated authority under those statutes that made the forced

removal of children on racial grounds fully lawful.

There is a further reason for an apology as well: it is that reconciliation is in fact an expression of a core value of our nation—and that value is a fair go for all. There is a deep and abiding belief in the Australian community that, for the stolen generations, there was no fair go at all. There is a pretty basic Aussie belief that says it is time to put right this most outrageous of wrongs. It is for these reasons, quite apart from concerns of fundamental human decency, that the governments and parliaments of this nation must make this apology—because, put simply, the laws that our parliaments enacted made the stolen generations possible. We, the parliaments of the nation, are ultimately responsible, not those who gave effect to our laws. The problem lay with the laws themselves. As has been said of settler societies elsewhere, we are the bearers of many blessings from our ancestors and therefore we must also be the bearer of their burdens as well.

Therefore, for our nation, the course of action is clear, and therefore, for our people, the course of action is clear: that is, to deal now with what has become one of the darkest chapters in Australia's history. In doing so, we are doing more than contending with the facts, the evidence and the often rancorous public debate. In doing so, we are also wrestling with our own soul. This is not, as some would argue, a black-armband view of history; it is just the truth: the cold, confronting, uncomfortable truth—facing it, dealing with it, moving on from it. Until we fully confront that truth, there will always be a shadow hanging over us and our future as a fully united and fully reconciled people. It is time to reconcile. It is time to recognise the injustices of the past. It is time to say sorry. It is time to move forward together.

To the stolen generations, I say the following: as Prime Minister of Australia, I am sorry. On behalf of the government of Australia, I am sorry. On behalf of the parliament of Australia, I am sorry. I offer you this apology without qualification. We apologise for the hurt, the pain and suffering that we, the parliament, have caused you by the laws that previous parliaments have enacted. We apologise for the indignity, the degradation and the humiliation these laws embodied. We offer this apology to the mothers, the fathers, the brothers, the sisters, the families and the communities whose lives were ripped apart by the actions of successive governments under successive parliaments. In making this apology, I would also like to speak personally to the members of the stolen generations and their families: to those here today, so many of you; to those listening across the nation—from Yuendumu, in the central west of the Northern Territory, to Yabara, in North Queensland, and to Pitjantjatjara in South Australia.

I know that, in offering this apology on behalf of the government and the parliament, there is nothing I can say today that can take away the pain you have suffered personally. Whatever words I speak today, I cannot undo that. Words alone are not that powerful; grief is a very personal thing. I ask those non-Indigenous Australians listening today who may not fully understand why what we are doing is so important to imagine for a moment that this had

happened to you. I say to honourable members here present: imagine if this had happened to us. Imagine the crippling effect. Imagine how hard it would be to forgive. My proposal is this: if the apology we extend today is accepted in the spirit of reconciliation in which it is offered, we can today resolve together that there be a new beginning for Australia. And it is to such a new beginning that I believe the nation is now calling us.

Let us resolve today to begin with the little children—a fitting place to start on this day of apology for the stolen generations. Let us resolve over the next five years to have every Indigenous four-year-old in a remote Aboriginal community enrolled in and attending a proper early childhood education centre or opportunity and engaged in proper preliteracy and prenumeracy programs. Let us resolve to build new educational opportunities for these little ones, year by year, step by step, following the completion of their crucial preschool year. Let us resolve to use this systematic approach to building future educational opportunities for Indigenous children and providing proper primary and preventive health care for the same children, to beginning the task of rolling back the obscenity that we find today in infant mortality rates in remote Indigenous communities—up to four times higher than in other communities.

None of this will be easy. Most of it will be hard, very hard. But none of it is impossible, and all of it is achievable with clear goals, clear thinking and by placing an absolute premium on respect, cooperation and mutual responsibility as the guiding principles of this new partnership on closing the gap. The mood of the nation is for reconciliation now, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Today the parliament has come together to right a great wrong. We have come together to deal with the past so that we might fully embrace the future. We have had sufficient audacity of faith to advance a pathway to that future, with arms extended rather than with fists still clenched. So let us seize the day. Let it not become a moment of mere sentimental reflection. Let us take it with both hands and allow this day, this day of national reconciliation, to become one of those rare moments in which we might just be able to transform the way in which the nation thinks about itself, whereby the injustice administered to the stolen generations in the name of these our parliaments causes all of us to reappraise, at the deepest level of our beliefs, the real possibility of reconciliation writ large: reconciliation across all Indigenous Australia; reconciliation across the entire history of the often bloody encounter between those who emerged from the Dreamtime a thousand generations ago and those who, like me, came across the seas only yesterday; reconciliation which opens up whole new possibilities for the future.

It is for the nation to bring the first two centuries of our settled history to a close, as we begin a new chapter. We embrace with pride, admiration and awe these great and ancient cultures we are truly blessed to have among us—cultures that provide a unique, uninterrupted human thread linking our Australian continent to the most ancient prehistory of our planet. Growing

from this new respect, we see our Indigenous brothers and sisters with fresh eyes, with new eyes, and we have our minds wide open as to how we might tackle, together, the great practical challenges that Indigenous Australia faces in the future.

Let us turn this page together, Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, government and opposition, Commonwealth and state, and write this new chapter in our nation's story together. First Australians, First Fleeters and those who first took the oath of allegiance just a few weeks ago—let us grasp this opportunity to craft a new future for this great land, Australia. Mr Speaker, I commend the motion to the House.

*Honourable members applauding—*

Full text of this historic document, with all details, is available here:

<http://www.hawaiiforgivenessproject.org/library/Australia-Apology-Hansard.pdf>

Video excerpts may be viewed here: <http://www.hawaiiforgivenessproject.org/video/Australia-Apology.htm>



# Queen Lili'uokalani

## Prayer of Dignity

Charged with treason by a group of businessmen from America and forcibly deposed by a landing of the United States Marines, Queen Lili'uokalani waited, imprisoned in her own home at 'Iolani Palace in Honolulu.

During this time she wrote a simple poem, which has become known as the Queen's Prayer -- and stands today as a witness to the strength and dignity of the Hawaiian people, and the power of forgiveness. Her words long outlive her captors.

Here is part of her story, written in the Queen's own words, from "Hawai'i's Story by Hawai'i's Queen" by Liliuokalani, 1898

### CHAPTER XLIV: IMPRISONMENT – FORCED ABDICATION

FOR the first few days nothing occurred to disturb the quiet of my apartments save the tread of the sentry. On the fourth day I received a visit from Mr. Paul Neumann, who asked me if, in the event that it should be decided that all the principal parties to the revolt must pay for it with their lives, I was prepared to die? I replied to this in the affirmative, telling him I had no anxiety for myself, and felt no dread of death. He then told me that six others besides myself had been selected to be shot for treason, but that he would call again, and let me know further about our fate...

The idea of abdicating never originated with me. I knew nothing at all about such a transaction until they sent to me, by the hands of Mr. Wilson, the insulting proposition



'O kou aloha nô	Your loving mercy
Aia i ka lani	Is as high as Heaven
A 'o Kou 'oia 'i' o	And your truth
He hemolelo ho'i	So perfect

Ko'u noho mihi 'ana	I live in sorrow
A pa'ahao 'ia	Imprisoned
'O 'oe ku'u lama	You are my light
Kou nani ko'u ko'o	Your glory, my support

Mai nânâ 'ino'ino	Behold not with malevolence
Nâ hewa o kânaka	The sins of man
Akâ e huikala	But forgive
A ma'ema'e nô	And cleanse

No laila e ka Haku	And so, o Lord
Ma lalo o kou 'êheu	Protect us beneath your wings
Kô mâkou maluhia	And let peace be our portion
A mau loa aku nô	Now and forever more



written in abject terms. For myself, I would have chosen death rather than to have signed it; but it was represented to me that by my signing this paper all the persons who had been arrested, all my people now in trouble by reason of their love and loyalty towards me, would be immediately released. Think of my position – sick, a lone woman in prison, scarcely knowing who was my friend, or who listened to my words only to betray me, without legal advice or friendly counsel, and the stream of blood ready to flow unless it was stayed by my pen.

My persecutors have stated, and at that time compelled me to state, that this paper was signed and acknowledged by me after consultation with my friends whose names appear at the foot of it as witnesses. Not the least opportunity was given to me to confer with any one; but for the purpose of making it appear to the outside world that I was under the guidance of others, friends who had known me well in better days were brought into the place of my imprisonment, and stood around to see a signature affixed by me....

So far from the presence of these persons being evidence of a voluntary act on my part, was it not an assurance to me that they, too, knew that, unless I did the will of my jailers, what Mr. Neumann had threatened would be performed, and six prominent citizens immediately put to death. I so regarded it then, and I still believe that murder was the alternative. Be this as it may, it is certainly happier for me to reflect to-day that there is not a drop of the blood of my subjects, friends or foes, upon my soul...



It is a rule of common law that the acts of any person deprived of civil rights have no force nor weight, either at law or in equity; and that was my situation. Although it was written in the document that it was my free act and deed, circumstances prove that it was not; it had been impressed upon me that only by its execution could the lives of those dear to me, those beloved by the people of Hawaii, be saved, and the shedding of blood be averted. ...

After those in my place of imprisonment had all affixed their signatures, they left, with the single exception of Mr. A. S. Hartwell. As he prepared to go, he came forward, shook me by the hand, and the tears streamed down his cheeks. This was a matter of great surprise to me. After this he left the room. If he had been engaged in a righteous and honorable action, why should he be affected? Was it the consciousness of a mean act which overcame him so?

All of the Queen's words, "**Hawai'i's Story by Hawai'i's Queen**" – a vital witness to Hawaiian history, may be read here for free: <http://snipurl.com/liliuokalani>

Here is a link to purchase the book: <http://snipurl.com/hawaiisqueen>

## Words of Forgiveness



### *The Guest House*

*This being human is like a guesthouse.  
Every morning a new arrival.*

*A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
Some momentary awareness comes  
as an unexpected visitor.*

*Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows who  
violently sweep your house empty of its furniture,  
still treat each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out for some new delight.*

*The dark thought, the shame, the malice,  
meet them at the door laughing, and  
invite them in!*

*Be grateful for whoever comes,  
because each has been sent as a guide  
from beyond.*

*-Rumi*

"The only way to learn forgiveness is to be betrayed.

You might understand the intellectual concept of forgiveness, but you will only learn how to truly forgive when someone has done something that requires you to love them and let it go. Life demands these hurtful experiences for you to learn how forgiveness feels, it could be no other way. If there is anyone in your life that you must forgive, instead of seeing them as someone who has hurt you, try to see them as someone who was sent to teach you forgiveness and thank them for this precious gift – then forgive them, and let it go."

- Mastin Kipp  
from Elizabeth Reveley, quoted in The Daily Love

*The greatest achievement is selflessness.*

*The greatest worth is self-mastery.*

*The greatest quality is seeking to serve others.*

*The greatest precept is continual awareness.*

*The greatest medicine is the emptiness of everything.*

*The greatest action is not conforming with the worlds ways.*

*The greatest magic is transmuting the passions.*

*The greatest generosity is non-attachment.*

*The greatest goodness is a peaceful mind.*

*The greatest patience is humility.*

*The greatest effort is not concerned with results.*

*The greatest meditation is a mind that lets go.*

*The greatest wisdom is seeing through appearances.*

- Atisha; Buddhist Scripture



*every moment is the time to forgive  
every moment can be a timeless moment  
forgiveness is as important as breathing  
when we totally forgive the world we see changes  
and when we are consistent about it the world we used to see  
vanishes into light and love with no form  
those our my beliefs*

*aloha*

*Jerry Jampolsky*

When we seek for connection, we restore the world to wholeness. Our seemingly separate lives become meaningful as we discover how truly necessary we are to each other.  
...Margaret Wheatley, via Clyde Musgrave

Forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future.  
...Paul Boese; contributed by Evan Tector

## **Reflections on Forgiveness from the young people at T-Shirt Theatre**

after performances at the 2007 Hawaii International Forgiveness Day  
Honolulu, August 2007

Something so simple, yet so hard to do. That thing is to forgive. People often say “Forgive and Forget” but it’s not as easy as it sounds. There are times in my life when the world lay heavy on my shoulders because of something I had done. It’s always hard to say that you were wrong but forgiving people is also just as hard. What I learned from these many times of trouble was to “Forgive and Remember!”

Jeffrey Mariano

I had a friend whose cousin got killed by a drunk driver. When the person got caught, she just totally wanted the person to die. We told her that forgiving the person will take time and courage, but no matter what will happen, it will never bring her cousin back. Eventually after she talked to the person, she found out how truly sorry the person was and forgave the person. Forgiving the person isn't the easiest thing to do. It mostly takes a lot of heart to forgive someone. But everyone should make an effort.

Puressa Queja

Backs will turn on you, stolid faces will pass you by, and no familiar sounds will be there to lift your spirits all because you have shown no forgiveness. Why blow such little insignificant conflicts into fierce battles? Why have one winner, when there can be two?

When the waters are raging, use your wits and walk away till the water steadies. Jumping in will just cause a storm. So forgive and remember, don't forget. Let grudges go, and your friends will stay, laughter will build, and happiness shall grow.

Genevieve Cagaoan

Recently, my boyfriend of one year and I broke up. Things haven't been the same ever since. The reason why we had to break up was because I always picked a fight with him and throughout the year it got worse. I got greedy and wanted more from him even though he gave me all he could. He really loved me, and I took that for granted. Now we're not the same friends as we were before we considered ourselves together. Now he's gone.

I never understood what I did wrong until I really thought about it these past couple of days. I will always continue to change myself for the better in hopes that it'll fix everything and make it how it was before. But I could never forgive myself for what I did to him.

Forgiveness is such a strong word. To forgive someone is a strong action. To forgive yourself, you have to muster up every inch of strength in your body. Your own soul is the hardest soul to forgive.

Catherine Trono

Forgiveness...it is a hard concept to express, to even contemplate about. But the most important thing is that you have to feel it, truly feel. It is a very powerful thing. It has the ability to change lives, even change the world. But so does hate.

When we want to forgive, our anger won't allow us. Our anger clouds our judgment. But it is our duty to calm ourselves down, take a step back and carefully analyze the situation. Is this really worth getting angry about? Worth losing a friend? Worth ruining your life? Be the better person.

Forgiveness is the first step to healing. When we forgive, we ignite a spark, in ourselves and in the person(s) we're arguing with. That spark stays with us. It is a spark that represents confidence, kindness, forgiveness. So the next time we're mad, hopefully that spark overcomes our anger so that we can spread it and others can too. Until it grows like a wildfire and consumes the world. Just one person. That's all it could take.

Michelle Regis



*There was a war, long ago  
To the battle I had to go  
As the battle finally ceased  
I find my wife and son deceased  
Struck with rage and sorrow  
I attack anything, like there's no tomorrow  
When I at last gain composure  
I look for the one who did this to her*

*After 10 long years, I found the one  
That killed my wife and murdered my son  
He cowers with my gun at his head  
He sees in seconds he will be dead  
But suddenly a woman comes from nowhere*

*A boy comes out, he has his dad's hair  
They are his family*

*Then it hits me  
He too was a man of war, that did as he was told  
The accountability of his actions, he did not hold  
I had hated him with all my might  
But now, it isn't right*

*As the sun sets upon this day  
I lower my gun and walk away  
A great burden is lifted from my heart  
I forgive him, and now I have a new start.*

Elvis Grande

## Shu – Forgiveness

The Chinese character Shu, used as a general symbol by the Hawaii Forgiveness Project, is formed from three ancient Mandarin symbols.

At the upper left is Nui, meaning "woman," or "softness."

The upper right is Kou-- a squire or servant; its root is "mouth" or "speak."

At the bottom is Xin, meaning "heart."

The complete meaning: "soft as the speaking heart."

translation and commentary by Xiao Fang Zhou, Beijing and Hawai'i; from the Hawaii Forgiveness Project,  
<http://www.hawaiiforgivenessproject.org>





# Forgiveness Stories

Edited by Michael North

Hawaii Forgiveness Project 2008

**website:** <http://www.hawaiiforgivenessproject.org>  
this book, and condensed versions, may be downloaded at no charge here:  
<http://www.hawaiiforgivenessproject.org/stories/>

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