

# The Aloha Spirit

*By Vincent Sargenti*

I went to school at Aiea Middle School in the 8th grade. The Samoans pretty much hate Hawaiians and Haulies and everyone else. If you show Aloha to a native Hawaiian, he's practically obligated to befriend you or at least treat you kindly for a while. Both Hawaiians and Samoans are hostile toward white people at first, whom they call Haulies. They are especially hostile in a school-age setting. I had my ass kicked DAILY and I mean hard. These guys were giving me black eyes and bloody noses every single time I walked past them at school.

You want to know how I changed all of that, for good? I saved up some money from my after school job and I bought an entire ounce of some especially killer pakalolo. The marijuana in Hawaii is some of the most stunning shit I have ever smoked in my life. To this day, I can't remember too many other types of weed that were that powerful and hallucinogenic! I rolled the whole ounce into joints in my room that night. I made certain to roll the joints extra fat for effect; I got maybe 40 joints in all out of it.

The next morning before school I walked right up to the toughest kid in my school, Gaylord Kuuamu, who was hanging out on the corner as usual, with all his big, tough Hawaiian bruddahs, all the toughest guys in school. As I approached, they looked at me and said "You come to get your ass kicked again, Haulie boy?" and I addressed Gaylord directly, I said "Aloha, Brah!" as I pulled a fist full of the joints from my pocket, I held out my hand with about 5 huge joints to him, "Would you and your bruddahs like to go and get high with me?"

His eyes went straight to the joints, "Brah!" he exclaimed with amazement.

"I got plenty enough for everyone, brah!" I looked around at his friends now taken aback by what was happening. One said, "What's to stop us from just kicking your ass, Haulie, and taking all those joints, just smoking them ourselves." He laughed with his brahs.

I looked at Gaylord, then back at him, I quietly spoke, "Aloha, brah." Then I looked back at Gaylord. He looked at me and directly took command of his situation. He was the hands-down leader of these renegade, bulldog 8th and 9th graders, because he transferred in from the King Kamehameha School, which is the highly respected "100% Hawaiians only" school system in Hawaii and because he could kick all of their asses at once, if need be. It was a running joke with all of us Haulies that, no wonder he was the toughest kid in school, with a name like Gaylord he HAD to be. His name probably MADE him the toughest kid in school.

"You guys wait a minute," he said to his brood, holding up his hand up to them as if to stop them from kicking my ass. "Let me explain something to you guys." He said to them. "You listen too, brah," he said to me. "You might learn someting."

"This brah is showing us Aloha! Do you understand? I am full-blooded Hawaiian" he said proudly, "When someone comes to a Hawaiian in respectful way, offering the Aloha Spirit like dis, brah, I am obligated as a Hawaiian to respect that person, to show kindness even if he is a Haulie or a Jap or whatever." He gave his crew the full run down on what Aloha meant to him and to his people and what it was all about. It was beautiful! I had chicken skin by the time he finished speaking his heart like that. He was very serious about this Aloha thing.

"Ok, brah." he said to me, "You're Ok!" he paused, then he said with a grin, "For a Haulie."

He continued, "Spark that bad boy up, braddah and le's smoke dat ting, brah!" as he handed me his lighter. I had showed him Aloha by risking getting my ass kick again to get him high and by handing me his lighter, he was offering me Aloha in return, not to mention the gesture of not kicking my ass as he and his friends had done countless times already. I asked if we should all go to the jungle where I had been getting high with my Haulie friends, where no one could see. Gaylord told me that everyone around here knows this is his corner, (right in front of the school) and he could do anything he wanted here.

"We smoke here, brah." he chuckled, "Only Haulies smoke in the jungle. We are too proud for dat here."

So I sparked all five joints in succession, right there on the corner in front of the school and handed the first to Gaylord, then each of the others I sparked and handed to his henchmen, one by one. I smoked with them, hit for hit, until we were all totally blind-ass stoned and all five joints were dust in the wind. While we smoked, our teachers were driving up to the school and they completely ignored the fact that we were there getting high. While I was with them I was untouchable! The teachers feared these kids and looked the other way every time.

The bad boys were falling all over themselves, punching me on the arm in a friendly way and wrestling with me, laughing about how killer my bud was! "I told you!" I laughed, "I told you I would find some way to kick all your asses and now I finally have done it."

"This is the ONLY way a Haulie would ever kick my ass," one laughed. "You're all right, brah!"

By the end of that session I had made friends with all of the toughest braddahs in my school, Samoans, Hawaiians and mixed. Real Hawaiians take Aloha very seriously. It is their family heritage and like a sacred religion to them. It is like a spiritual practice they

are taught from the moment they are born and something they believe very deeply in. If you acknowledge the Aloha Spirit by your actions toward them, many of them will respond, Samoans don't seem to care about it too much, but those people that do respond are very gracious and you can tell they are doing something that connects them at a very deep level to their ancestors, you can tell they are the real Hawaiians. I got that feeling from Gaylord Kuuamu.

He was one of very few 100% Hawaiians who were not attending the "Hawaiian only" King Kamahamaha Schools. He had to transfer-in to our school, a public school, because was suspended from King Kamehameha for repeatedly fighting and for having bad grades. Fighting is a big thumbs down in the King Kamehameha School because it goes against the Aloha Spirit, which they teach in the schools, but all the Hawaiians fight all the time anyway, so it was always a contradiction to me, a contradiction which made more sense to me after these events had unfolded.

Each day, I took a few joints with me to school and returned to Gaylord's corner, smack in front of the school, and hung out with him and his friend's, offering them pakalolo and smoking with them, right in front of my teachers who would look the other way. None of these kids had jobs to speak of yet, so that I could even afford pakalolo and even offered it to them made me a "braddah" in their way of thinking. I was just trying to stop from constantly having my ass kicked. After a while, I could point out my other Haulie friends to them and they would leave those people alone too. I was a Haulie hero to my white friends. I was never beat up at school again, by anyone.

One afternoon, many months later, I was walking home from school with my Haulie friend and two older, high school aged kids approached us, and I knew they were not from our school. They accused us both of beating up one of their cousins. We didn't know what they were talking about and we denied any wrongdoing. They got us up against a chain link fence and commenced to beat the living crap out of both of us. We were taking quite a beating, but as soon as it started Gaylord appeared out of nowhere and took them both out with a few punches each. It was awesome and such a welcome surprise. He was amazingly agile and finally I could understand why he was so revered: he was blindingly fast with his hands.

Gaylord towered over them. They cried, "Waz up Gaylord! We got no beef wit you, brah! Why are you defending these Haulies for?"

I still remember Gaylord kicking off his flip-flops, one-by-one and getting his dukes up. "You guys want to fight these Haulies, you got to go through me, mahfakkahs. C'mon. Now whatch you tink, brahs. You not so tough now, eh?"

He planted another firm fist on a guys cheek as he was getting up, knocking him back down. Gaylord asked him if he said it was OK for him to get up and told the guy to stay down until he said it was OK for him to get up.

"I don't get it Gaylord! I got no beef wit you, brah." the guy said, stunned. "Wazz up wit dis, brah."

"You come to my school, brah," he scolded them, "you better ask me first. You want to fight someone, you fight ME first! Now you better run cause I 'mo lick ya' ass right now, brah." and they scrambled immediately, running down the street, full blast, away from us. By this time a big crowd had gathered.

I wanted to thank Gaylord but he simply scolded me too, "Now get out of here Haulies."

My friend grabbed my arm and told me just to leave silently and quickly. He told me that Gaylord was simply defending his turf and though he was my friend, in front of the whole school, he could not acknowledge me. But I turned and said, "Aloha, Gaylord..." but he did not even look at me. He defended me but wanted it to look more like he was not going let anyone do anything on his turf that he did not allow. This 9th grader kicked ass on the high school kids and sent them packing. I was stoked. As I looked back young girls who looked on him with admiration surrounded him. He put his arms around two of them as he drifted back over to his corner, his throne.

The second to last day of school, Gaylord came to me in hallway between classes at school and said, "Brah, don't come to school tomorrow. If you do I cannot help you. In fact, if you come to school tomorrow, I will have to kick your ass, like any other Haulie and I don't want to do that. Don't make me do that, brah. Just don't come here tomorrow."

I nodded that I would not, remained silent and lowered my head out of respect to him. Everyone already knew the last day of school was the official "Kill Haulie Day." Nearly a tradition in Hawaii, Kill Haulie Day was non-discriminatory, ALL Haulies would be severely beaten, without regard for who they were. This is so serious that the teachers hand out the grades a day early and sign you out of school and make it known to you that you don't need to come tomorrow. This way, the official last day of school is more of a party for the island kids than anything else and none of the Haulies or Japs or Philipinos show up unless they are just plain stupid.

I rode the bus that morning and a Haulie friend even came out of his house to stop me, but I had no intention of getting off the bus at the school. We had to ride public transit to school and I was heading to Waikiki at the end of the line. My parents thought I was going to school. I remember the Island girls on the bus thought I was crazy but I assured them I was going to the beach.

I remember seeing Gaylord and his Big Boys on the corner as the bus began to lurch forward after dropping the island kids off at the school stop. I stuck my whole torso out the window as the bus moved forward.

I yelled out, "Hey Gaylord!" Recognizing my voice his head swung around with a look of disbelief on his face. Hanging out of the moving bus I made dukes with my fists and shouted laughing, "Put 'em up, Brah!" They all laughed and gestured for me to come back and just try it. I could see Gaylord laughing, gesturing to me "C'mon Haulie boy! C'mon! You wanna go, eh?"