

Aloha, Dalai Lama

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Why did the Dalai Lama visit Kailua High School last week? To recognize the remarkable Philosophy for Children program that is helping the campus achieve the goal of being violence-free and compassionate

After spending four days covering the 14th Dalai Lama's visit to Oahu, I've been asked by friends and colleagues which of the eight opportunities to observe, hear and interact with the Nobel Peace Laureate was my favorite.

From a strictly personal perspective, it was getting to shake his hand — twice! — and to ask the last question he answered from media in his final event here. (See accompanying column.)

But from a global perspective, which is how His Holiness tends to look at things, it was his visit to Kailua High School last Monday. Hard to say who was more uplifting, the Dalai Lama or the Kailua student body, and the Philosophy for Children program that is the bedrock of the KHS curriculum.

Let me put it to you like this: Name all the public high schools in America where the principal can begin an all-school assembly by saying with a straight face, as Francine Honda did, speaking to students:

"Thank you for your compassion, for your ability to think 'outside' with yourself and with others, and for your willingness to practice peace and understanding."

She went on to praise KHS students for learning to "listen with empathy," which is one of the "Habits of the Mind" that is also a basic part of the school's core.

And how many high schools are there where the superintendent of schools can ask for a show of appreciation for faculty and staff, as Kathryn Matayoshi did, and students cheer loud and long?

What the John Locke is going on here?

Turns out that the home of the Surfriders is also the home of a peace-on-campus



The Dalai Lama's translator Tenzin Dorjee, Dalai Lama and Kailua High School student Jeremiah Taleni.

pilot program that after five years is resulting in higher grades and fewer disciplinary problems, and higher self-esteem that is genuinely achieved.

It also turns out that what Kailua students are learning jibes very well with the Dalai Lama's teaching of "secular ethics and morals." As he emphasized at both his public talks at Stan Sheriff Center and again at KHS: "It is not necessary to be a religious person to practice compassion and understanding. No."

Thus his visit to the scenic Windward campus at the foot of Mount Olomana that aspires to be "compassionate and violence-free."

In my thinking, human beings are like flowers. And to make a beautiful

RIGHT:p4c scholars Back Row, left to right: Garrett Arakawa, Amber Strong Makaiau, Ben Lukey, Thomas Jackson, Christian Kama, Chad Miller, Jeremiah Kaahaani-Frankovic. Front row, left to right (beginning with student who has a bandage on his hand): Romnick Valmoja, Lei Lastimoso, Caitlin Hooker, Marie Garcia, Victoria Gentry, Marcus Malepeai

garden, you need many kinds of flowers. —Dalai Lama, Bishop Museum, April 14

Three days before the Dalai Lama began his visit on April 13 — perhaps the luckiest Friday the 13th ever in Honolulu — I visited the University of Hawaii at Manoa's Department of Philosophy to learn about Philosophy for Children (p4c).

I left in awe and wonder, and that's speaking as a guy whose undergrad degree is in education and who spent some time in the classroom before fleeing to a career in journalism. What they're doing in Kailua is radical, revolutionary, and it's showing tangible results.

In addition to Kailua High, p4c also is being implemented at Waikiki Elementary, where kindergartners recently sat at a round table with their teacher enquiring on the topic of "assumptions."

"This is philosophy with a lower-case 'p,'" says Benjamin Lukey, Ph.D., associate director of the UH Department of Philosophy. "There is an overlap of ideas with the Dalai Lama's teaching ... it's especially strong in the active practice."

"This is philosophy as an activity, something you do," says Chad Miller, who is attached to the university and was recently named Hawaii state teacher of the year for 2012 (which landed him in a photo in *MidWeek's* recent auto show cover story with the electric car he gets to use), and who on Friday flew to Washington, D.C., to meet with President Obama.

In the classroom, it begins with a wonderfully liberating concept, "intellectual security." Meaning, Miller says, any idea is welcomed at the roundtable of enquiry. And students are given a "Good Thinker's Toolkit" as a guide to pose a philosophical question — WRAITEC for short: W for what, R for reasons, A for assumptions, I for infer, T for truth, E for examples, and C for counter examples.

"Kids," says Miller, "can be themselves

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