Visions of Peace: Joining Tibet and Hawai'i in Social Exchange

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"E waikahi ka pono i manalo."
("It is well to be united in thought that all may have peace.")
–'Olelo No'eau

Waldorf education is based on the principle that education should make possible healthy changes in society, often referred to as "social renewal." What does social renewal look like today? Surely it is different than it was at the time of the founding of the first Waldorf school in 1919. As well, it may differ depending on our location on the planet, influenced by our cultural surroundings. I continue to discover that the specific needs for social renewal change and evolve, based as they are on our sense of culture and place. In Hawai'i, where I live, the needs for social change are evident because a reviving indigenous people and culture are surrounded by a wave of modern technological advancements.

Recently I developed a statewide educational partnership called "Visions of Peace" to work for healthy social change in Hawai'i. The faculty and staff at Haleakala Waldorf School embarked on the project with more than 50 schools and 5,000 students from public and private schools throughout the state. The project centered on the 14th Dalai Lama's visit to Maui last April. This humanitarian and goodwill ambassador, Tenzin Gyatso, is both the head of state and the spiritual leader of Tibet. In 1989 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his non-violent struggle for the liberation of Tibet. He has consistently advocated policies of non-violence, even in the face of extreme aggression. He also became the first Nobel Laureate to be recognized for his concern for global environmental problems.

To welcome the Dalai Lama, the keiki (children) of Hawai'i created artistic projects to present to him during a public gathering. I developed the Visions of Peace project around a unifying theme: by developing a sense of place and cultural heritage we create harmony, kindness, and compassion. The project provided artistic explorations for students to foster a sense of place and cultural heritage. The project culminated with the Dalai Lama's welcome and public gathering at the Maui Arts and Cultural Center. One thousand students from the state's islands attended the public gathering.

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The project consisted of four artistic expressions. For the Hawai'i Youth Peace Award participants were encouraged to articulate innovative and practical solutions to pressing issues facing the world. The Poetry project resulted in original peace poems that were published in a book of poetry, *Sparks of Compassion*, which was presented to His Holiness at the public gathering. The Aloha Peace Wall project was constructed from thousands of personalized messages about "sharing aloha." Finally, in the Flag Project—flags have long been a part of Tibetan culture—the children used block prints to create personalized prayer flags. Roland Lewis Zaleski, the winner of the first annual Hawai'i Youth Peace Award, read his peace essay, "Laughing Together," to His Holiness in front of an audience of 10,000 people. The venue for the gathering was decorated with more than 2,000 student prayer flags and 12 sections of the Aloha Peace Wall, reflecting Hawai`i's common vision for cultural revitalization through the arts.

The Visions of Peace project revealed a modern expression of a central mission of Waldorf education: Through the arts we can provide the imagination for a better world. The Visions of Peace project used art to explore the central message behind the life of His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama. The entirety of the project reflected a powerful voice of Hawai'i, the voice of the children. It is an expression of unity for social renewal.

Hawaiian and Tibetan culture and history have much in common. Both cultures are currently asking, "How do we move forward in the face of the political and economic transgressions in our modern world?" The answer lies, in part, in the voices of the children. When we listen to the wisdom of the children we can hear the answers to these questions. Also, it is valuable for our children to experience individuals who are living examples of their highest ideals. His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama is one such person. He provides an image for change, for a better world, for peace, for the possibility to forgive; he is an example of compassion and aloha.

His Holiness' visit to Maui was an opportunity for our students to change the way they engage with their history in Hawai'i. The Dalai Lama's visit helped to provide a new way of working with the pain and loss of culture, for this life experience echoes Hawaiian history. By using art and creativity as a way to explore kindness, compassion, and peace, the children of Hawai'i continue to establish a sense of self, place, and culture. The offerings from the Waldorf school, and the children of Hawai'i, to His Holiness the Dalai Lama are an example of an active social renewal movement in our modern setting.

The day following the public gathering with the students I had an opportunity to meet with His Holiness in a small private gathering, which included some prominent Hawaiian cultural elders. The purpose of the gathering was to share the common historical and cultural underpinnings of the Hawaiian and Tibetan peoples in order to work together to forge a modern movement of cultural revitalization.

The Visions of Peace Project and the meeting between the Hawaiian elders and His Holiness revealed love and compassion as true healers. We were all touched and transformed by this historic gathering. It seems fitting that the Waldorf school movement was at the center of this effort at social change.

Formation of Ethical and Moral Values through Music

Music leads to harmony of the soul and to an even temper; it fosters cognitive development, joy of movement, and vitality. It strengthens self-assurance in life and stabilizes the personality. Musical-rhythmic activity is an ideal path for stimulating the creative imagination of children and their powers of initiative. But music is not only a guide inward to one's own self; it also leads us outward into the world. By experiencing the quality of sounds, tones, melodies, and rhythms, children gain insight into the essence of things; they can touch the sphere of genuineness and truthfulness. Likewise social relationships are strengthened because listening, becoming attuned to each other, and creating harmonious sounds are activities that give rise to an integrative group life in which every participant makes an indispensable contribution through the power of his or her individuality. Scientific research has shown that making music together not only fosters musical ability but also increases social competency.

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