

November 6, 2009
Hiroshima-Honolulu Sister City Relationship 50th Anniversary Celebration
Reception

Mayor Hannemann's Greeting

Konbanwa and aloha!

That song could have easily been written about Hiroshima, and the feeling and love that Gail and I feel for this beautiful city. I'm a very grateful mayor of Honolulu tonight.

I want to first of all acknowledge all the people of my city that worked very, very hard to put together a wonderful trip with Mayor Akiba and your staff.

Will all the members of the 50th Anniversary Sister City Committee from Honolulu led by Chair Wayne Miyao, will you please rise so we can publicly acknowledge you.

I also want to thank the Honolulu Japanese Chamber of Commerce, not only for their part in this trip but for what they done through the years with that sister chamber relationship with the Hiroshima Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Would they please rise to be acknowledged. Everyone who is a member of the Hiroshima Chamber of Commerce.

Last but not least, I also want to acknowledge those who belong to the Hiroshima Kenjin Kai in Hawaii. They continue to work very closely with us so that we never forget the important contributions people of Hiroshima have made to Hawaii.

Last but not least, I want to acknowledge two of the hardest working elected officials in the City and County of Honolulu. They make my job easier, most of the time, and I'm very, very happy that they have joined me because they are of Japanese ancestry. Council Chair Todd Apo and Council Member Gary Okino.

I forgot one more introduction – the woman who gave me permission to come on this trip. She joined me yesterday. I'm very grateful for my lovely wife Gail Akiko Mukaihata.

Mayor Akiba, when we met in Providence in June, you were correct. Yours is a city of peace, yours is a city of beauty, yours is a great city.

I want you to know that your Mayor of Hiroshima made a great impact on the U.S. Conference of Mayors Meeting. You see, he brought his message of world peace and he challenged the U.S. Conference of Mayors to follow the lead of our President of the United States of America, Barack Obama. It takes vision, it takes foresight, and it takes courage to stand up for a world devoid of nuclear arms and weapons.

No one understands the horrors of war more so than Hiroshima, and I want you to know that we in Honolulu also appreciate what you have gone through because the war started in our city. But that's what makes this sister city relationship so special. Two cities who are remembering the mistakes of the past and are committed now to a world, a future where we can live together in peace, harmony, and prosperity.

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I regret that this trip has to come to an end. Tonight I saw another example of why our two cities are linked together. Your Dreamination ceremony, where you lit up the city of Hiroshima, parallels what we do in Honolulu with Honolulu City Lights.

I'm so grateful to the original Japanese immigrants from Hiroshima that came to Hawaii in 1885. Personally, as a son of immigrants, you have certainly set a great example, your ancestors did, of what hard work, dedication, sacrifice is all about. I suppose the best gift that we can give to our ancestors is to make sure that we never forget those values that they stood for.

I'm impressed that the Kawakami family has never forgotten their roots. I'm grateful that Edith Kawakami has come back to Hiroshima and brought her son and her grandsons to entertain you tonight. My only regret is that my dear friend Keiji, her husband, is not with us here on earth. Keiji and all others who have passed on are watching us. They want to know if we're up to the challenge of making sure that the next fifty years between Hiroshima and Honolulu continues to be a model of all sister city relationships. Let us dedicate ourselves therefore to what we should be doing: promote world peace, live by the spirit of aloha, and never forget our obligation to help our fellow man.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank you again for this experience of a lifetime during these past couple days in Hiroshima. You can rest assured that when we go back, we are going to tell all the people of Honolulu that when they come to Japan, you need to come to Hiroshima.

Domo arigato gozaimashita.