

Council Member Gary Okino's Closing Speech

*Minasan, konbanwa* and aloha!

I've participated in all these great events these past three days and I haven't been asked to say anything, but I really wanted to say something because my ancestry is from Hiroshima. My grandparents came from Hiroshima and I just feel a special bond with this place.

I can make a toast to the usual purposes of culture and economics for our sister city relationship, but as Mayor Hannemann says, this relationship is special, it's extra special. And it goes beyond just the usual sister city relationships. As Mayor Hannemann talked about the Peace Memorial. I was here 25 years ago, it was the only and last time I was here, and I remember visiting the Peace Memorial and I was really moved, deeply moved by that. You know, time and distance makes those emotions fade away, but when I was there the other day, it just awakened all of those emotions. It's hard to imagine that human beings perpetrate on each other such horrible acts of violence that cause so much pain and suffering to people who have nothing to do with the war. So, from a personal perspective, as an American, I want to apologize to the people of Hiroshima and the people of Japan for what happened on that terrible day in 1945.

*Yurushite kudasai.*

So I think our mission in this world is greater than just economics or culture. We have so special a relationship. Because Japan suffered such a horrible thing and because of your character, Japan, of humility, you are the perfect people to take this message to the world. Because of your humility, you can have that spirit of generosity and kindness and you can do it without any resentment or bitterness. If you give the message of love and compassion, people will listen to you because you have gone through the worst of the worst.

And I think that's where Hawaii has a special bond with Hiroshima because we pride ourselves in being humble people too. And I think that part of it is because a lot of people have come from Japan, like myself, from your prefecture. And if you know the Hawaiian people, by their nature, they are very humble people. That's why they talk about the spirit of aloha.

So I think that together, more you probably because of your suffering, but together we can use this sister city relationship to take this message of peace to the rest of the world. So tonight I want to propose a toast, at toast to peace on earth and goodwill to all men on earth, all people on earth.

*Kanpai!*