

Looking in the Hole with my Three-Prong Cocked

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If I like know about my family
My people
And myself
Then naturally I would go to a foreigner
or a stranger for the answers?
I've read things, I've met people, I've been to places
I have been influenced tremendously
By everything and everyone I have had contact with
Everything here, is from everything around me,
Guided by my Kupuna
.always.

Kimo Cashman

Howzit?

I am in flight. I am on a journey and I find myself in a beautiful place. I am here. Where else can I be? I am home. Where else should I be? I know the journey is important. But still, I remind myself that it is. It is life itself. I am not sure where the winds will take me but I know that I am in flight. And I know why I am in flight. I know why I am on this journey. And I know who guides me on this journey. And You?

Who am I?

The other day I was in the park with my daughter. While she played, I sat like an old man on the bench waiting for her to finish. I saw, written onto the park bench, some graffiti. A couple of simple words that remain stuck in my head. Suppa stuck. It's more of a statement and one that I actually see written all over, not only on park benches. I've seen it on bathroom walls, on the sides of buildings, on the interiors of city buses, and on manapua trucks. I even caught a student of mine writing it on her desk one day in class. They are simple words that usually look as though they were quickly but carefully written. Maybe these words are a way for people to claim their place in this world? Maybe this is a way for them to say that they exist, that they matter, that they are impor-

tant too? Maybe it's an act of rebellion? Maybe it's a type of resistance? Resistance to what? It's also interesting to see that you can find these words, this statement, in many places in Hawai'i. Aside from the inclusion of the author's own name, the words are spelled the same way. And it's also a trip that I have been seeing this statement around since I was a small kid. The same words are being used but I wonder if for the same reasons? Imagine way back in the day, someone wrote a statement on the wall, for whatever reason, and someone else came along, and being so taken by it, decided to copy and adapt it to him/herself. Then another and another and another came along and did the same. It's such a simple but profound statement that has found its way. It has taken flight.

Kimo wuz hea!

James wuz hea!

Keem wuz hea!

Cash wuz hea!

I think of them writing in the past tense. As if they were already forecasting their departure. As if they were only temporarily here. As if they were constantly leaving. Never settling down. As if they were never "hea," but always "wuz hea." Where are they now? Where are the "wuz hea" people?

We are hea! We are still hea!
 Through EVERYTHING and ANYTHING
 Kimo IZ hea!
 Kimo IZ HEA!
 KIMO IZ HEA!
 Hea I am because hea I wuz and hea I will stay.
 And you?
 What about you?
 KIMO IZ HEA!
 But who am I?

Who am I?

I remember seeing my grandpa with his “throw net” uniform on. He always wore an army green shirt, blue jeans, construction shoes (because of all the rocks), a black baseball cap, and his fisherman glasses. He would wrap the ‘upena around him and us kids thought he looked pretty tough.

We would follow Grandpa out to Hoku‘ula, and we would hide in the bushes out of sight, while Grandpa climbed his favorite tree to get a better look at where the pile of fish was. The hours spent waiting for Grandpa to throw his ‘upena were grueling.

Grandpa had all kind techniques to stalk the fish. Sometimes he would hide in the bushes with us till the fish came close to shore, then he would slowly make his way down to the water’s edge as the white-wash from the waves concealed his presence. He would hurl his net, which would always open, and we waited anxiously to see what he caught. Grandpa would jump in the water and we would watch a powerful man wrestle with the ocean. As he tried to get his footing, the waves would throw him back and forth. We would watch him do battle. It’s trippy to see your grandfather in such a situation because to us he was invincible. If you can imagine how us kids felt seeing him in the water—our emotions went crazy. We weren’t sure if we should cheer or scream. There were times when he would disappear under the water. We were kids. If he was in trouble, there was nothing we could have done. Grandpa would always emerge, though, with his net rolled in a ball and some fish that had no choice but to surrender.

Who am I?

I can tell when I’ve been working too hard. I can tell when I starting to lose touch with reality, when I concentrat-

ing too much on one thing, when I concentrating too much on the wrong thing. I start to turn WHITE. I do one quick test to check if I turning WHITE. I stand in front of the mirror with my shirt off and I take a few moments to admire the specimen in front of me. Awesome! Then I stand at attention with my arms hanging straight down on each side. If my body looks like an Oreo cookie with my arms as the chocolate cookie part and my ‘opu as the creamy WHITE filling, it’s a sign that something is wrong. It’s a sign that I need to get out and live. I need to re-group, darken up, and get real. It’s a sign that I’m getting too WHITE.

Who am I?

Daddy: E pule kākou.

Hi‘ilei (My daughter): I wanna say it Daddy.

Daddy: (pause)

Hi‘ilei: God is great, God is good, let us thank him for our food....and thank you Kupuna for making God.

Daddy: (with a smile).....Amen.

Who am I?

‘Ewa is home to me. ‘Ewa has a special place in my heart. One‘ula in particular is a very special place to me. It is one place in ‘Ewa that has been pretty much FOR the locals. It is a place where you could just hang out and cruise. It is a place to meet friends at night and enjoy life undisturbed. It’s a place where as kids, we would go exploring. As we got older, this was a place where we would go four-wheeling with my father’s two-wheel drive truck. My friend had one truck too, and we use to geev-um through the back-roads of One‘ula. This was a place where you could just get away and no one would bother you.

It was a good place to get parts for our trucks, too. Every so often, Santa Claus would leave a truck just like ours in One‘ula. And anything in One‘ula was fair game. So we use to go shopping.

We also used to surf here. And surf often. We always knew that this place was known for sharks and would hear stories of giant Tigers lurking in the murky waters. Whenever we went out, we had this in the back of our minds. I guess the Tiger’s knew we were from ‘Ewa and they never showed themselves. Only once did I actually see a shark while I was surfing. But it was only a reef shark. I guess the reason why I only saw one shark, is because I tried not to look for a shark.

When I think about One'ula, I think about the moving shore-line. The sands of One'ula move back and forth. Depending on the time of year, certain areas will be either sandy or rocky. The sands will move from area to area either covering the rugged coral shore or moving to expose it. The people, as well, move where the sands go. In a sense it's like One'ula is refreshing herself and telling us where she will allow us to be.

Right now, the surfing area known as John's is off limits. And the area we call Chicken Creeks is the best place for the kids to play. It's good to see my friends there with their kids playing and swimming. It's not the cleanest, or the nicest, or the sweetest smelling place, but that's good.

Soon, the construction of a Marina will begin that will meet the ocean at One'ula. The reef will be compromised and sea-walls will be built. But regardless, the sands of One'ula will continue to move.

Who am I?

"Once upon a today there is a good man. He is about 76 years old but works and "celebrates" like a man half his age. He was born and raised in this area and has much to share about this place and his life. His mind is as sharp as his wit and he is able to remember well, his childhood years. He is humble in his ways, generous with what he has, and mostly critical of himself.

The stories he shares are incredible. He speaks about his life growing up on a plantation, the things they used to eat, what games they use to play, their schooling and life in general. He shares his memories about the place itself, recalling with detail how places have transformed over the years: places like the site of the old Laundromat, the old School, and the old Hospital. The interesting thing about him sharing his stories is the fact that he is actually a very quiet man. He's not one to just sit down with somebody and start talking. The setting has to be just right. And it doesn't hurt if he has a certain beverage in hand.

He is a man who believes in working hard physically. He always says, "use it or lose it" in reference to his muscle and his work ethic. His ability to work all day in the garden is evidence that his motto has merit. He suggests that if you don't use what you have been given, the good lord will take it away. He also makes reference to knowledge in the same way. He feels knowledge is something that we need to use, or lose.

On any given day, he can be found in his garden. It's often difficult to see just where he is in his garden. The garden is lush and he seems to blend right into the foliage. He shares most of his experiences when he is in his garden. It's an environment where he seems to feel comfortable talking. It seems as though certain things in his garden remind him of different things in his life and he uses these things to take him from story to story, from year to year, from life experience to life experience. He is able to tell a story from anything in his garden.

From the Kalo

He doesn't seem to be concerned with knowing the different names of the varieties of Kalo that he has—he refers to them as the Chinese one, the purple one, the giant one, the poi one. But he does share how he got each one and how, as a child, he and his family use to raise Kalo among other things in their garden. He also shares how the plantation allowed his family to use the plot of land to garden. He emphasized that they were only allowed to use the land.

This would lead to stories about the camp he grew up in. He would talk about the types of houses they had in the camp and how they would hang a bucket for slop outside the kitchen window. He would talk about some of the people who helped to define the camp's personality and how he rode the truck to school, which was located on the military base. From the Kalo.

From the Flowers

He shared the name of the flower but I can't recall it. It is some kind of lily flower. It is white and it doesn't bloom too often. It is obvious though that these flowers receive special attention as there are no weeds in the area, and while some of the other plants in the garden (lettuce, eggplant, carrots) are alternated from time to time, these flowers remain. He shared how these flowers were his father's favorites and when they bloom, he takes them to his grave not far from his home. In addition to stories about his father, conversations about death and dying have resulted. He talks not as a man who feels as if he is near death, but as a man who is very far from it. He does, however, share what he would prefer his last years, way off in the future, to be like. From the Flowers.

From the Mulch

He aspires to acquire as much mulch as humanly possible. I often help him to haul the mulch to his garden. This is a story in itself. Although he is nearing 80 years old, he continues to haul mulch, plant fruit trees, and dream. He is always preparing for tomorrow. He is always glorifying yesterday. From the Mulch.

Who am I?

The other day my father and I walked into a store. It was a real fancy store with expensive stuff for sale. As we walked in, everyone stared at us. They continued to watch us as we made our way around the store. They would quickly turn away when our eyes caught theirs, but other than that, the eyes never left us. We stayed in there for a while, as we were quite fond of the attention we were getting. As we walked out, my father turned to me and said, "It's hard being this good looking."

Who am I?

When I go diving with my cousins, I know I'm not alone. Sometimes it can be real dangerous. We stay in the water for long periods of time and anything can happen out there. When we go diving, we stay together, work together, and return together. And in the water, we NO SHAME. If I'm tired, I tell them I'm tired. If I'm afraid, I tell them I'm afraid. If I can't handle, I NO SHAME, I tell them I can't handle. Even if I'm cold and need to go in, I NO SHAME. And there are no questions asked. I know they will help me. I know. There's an understanding. We NO SHAME. We've been diving together for a while so I kind of know that if I'm feeling a certain way, there's a good chance that they are feeling the same way, too. We are all looking for ways to keep ourselves warm, to keep ourselves strong, and to overcome our fears. This is the journey. If I find a way that might help us all, I not going keep em to myself. This is the journey.

We are all looking for ways to keep ourselves warm, to keep
ourselves strong,
and to overcome our fears. This is the journey.
If I find a way that might help us all,
I not going keep em to myself.
Is this the journey?

GEEVUM!

You KNOW what's happening. There's too much of them. They come here to visit and they just don't leave. And they come with cash. Plenty cash. And they buying all the land. And they think they can tell us what to do and where we can go and when we can fish and how we should live. I don't think so. Uncle has the perfect response... "Hawaiians can go anywhere." They trying to tell us how to live. Who they think them?

When the guy moved in near the loko, he put up his fence, the barbed wire, the signs, the bushes. That's sick. In order to get to the point, what, we gotta walk around and go through the loko? But I no like! So I listen to the advice of Uncle and go anywhere. Night time, day time, anytime, and try my best to ignore the intrusion. It's easier to lay the net at night at the Makāhā. There's much less to see, but we, yes WE, lay em whenever and however we like. We go! We geevum!

'Upena

Kimo: So you going make one 'upena.

Keem: Yah.

Kimo: Shoots. (pause) For real kine?

Keem: Yah. For real kine.

Kimo: You right brah. (pause) You going use your grandfather's patterns?

Keem: I not sure. What you think?

Kimo: Yeah, make em huge. With choke pūmana.

I have learned a couple of different ways to make an 'upena. But I've only experimented with a few of these methods. For the 'upena I am making now, I am using a method taught to me by my grandfather. He was an expert 'upena maker and fisherman from Maui. I learned this 'upena method from him directly and by studying the nets he made throughout his life. I am trying to make this 'upena exactly like the 'upena I have of his that I currently use. The 'upena is twelve feet long with two and one-half inch eye. It is made of fifteen-pound mono-filament fishing line and I am using my grandfather's hi'a and his kā to make this 'upena. This kā is very special because he carved his initials onto it: LKN.

I started the 'upena with forty-six eyes hanging onto the piko of the 'upena. The first pūmana row came in after three full rows were completed. Correct placement of the pūmana is critical. The pūmana is an extra loop or extra eye sewn into the 'upena. These extra loops or eyes allow for the expansion of the 'upena. Without them, the 'upena will not grow in diameter and will not open properly when thrown.

The pūmana in the 'upena, are like children in a family. They represent the next generation. The family and the 'upena grow because of them. There will be nine pūmana rows throughout this 'upena. The final row will therefore consist of four hundred and sixty eyes. Currently, I am completing the third pūmana row. At the forty-ninth row, I will begin the portion of the 'upena called the "bag." The bag of the 'upena is a double layered section where most of the fish will be caught.

I hope to finish this 'upena in about ten months. It is for my cousin.

A setting

It's late at night and the house is quiet as my little princess is already fast asleep. The house is dark except for the one light I have on near the kitchen. This is where I sew the 'upena. I try to sew every night. Some nights, however, I'm just too exhausted and I fall asleep. When I sew, so many thoughts come to mind. This is a time when I can just settle down and relax, and focus on these thoughts. This is a time when I can just reflect on life itself: family, school, work, everything. Everything. It's a time when our Kupuna visit, too. I think about them and it feels like we are talking story sometimes. It's all good. I know they are helping us out. Sometimes, the most unreal ideas and revelations just pop up out of nowhere when I am sewing. These ideas are definitely gifts from them. Mahalo Nui. For me, the making of this 'upena is the most important part of this journey. It's when I feel

closest to my ancestors. It's when we talk. Everything being done is merely a reflection of a conversation that took place while I was making the 'upena. They show me where to look, when to listen, and ways to respond. On this journey, I use stories, pule, poems, situations, conversations, etc. to help me think and work through things. I use whatever feels right. But, my ancestors guide me through the 'upena.

Thoughts flow

And HERE, they come out the way we want them to.

Thoughts flow

And HERE, they come out the way they have to.

HERE, I am the subject. HERE, I am the expert?

HERE, I am the voice. HERE it is.

Hawaiian.

Guided through the 'upena

And HERE, isn't life great?

Home

Mahalo

Logic?

If I like know about my family

My people

And myself

Then naturally I would go to a foreigner
or a stranger for the answers?

I've read things, I've met people, I've been to places

I have been influenced tremendously

By everything and everyone I have had contact with

Everything here, is from everything around me,

Guided by my Kupuna

.always.

at this moment,

through the 'upena