

Ohana Means Family

Kindness. One word with a powerful meaning behind it. Kindness is described as someone being considerate, loving, and friendly towards others. Kindness isn't only determined by what you say but also how you act. Just simply, picking up your trash or holding the door for someone else can make a huge difference. Actions and words are powerful tools that sometimes we take for granted. A common misconception that we, as humans, make is that we judge people based on what we see on the outside rather than getting to know them personally. Especially teens, we look at people and if they act differently or dress differently than us, we don't want to associate with them and that's where bullying comes in.

Hawaii is called the "Aloha State". We are known for our hospitality and we are known to greet our guests with open arms. Recently, this may not have been the case. Over the course of the pandemic, the amount of social interactions we experienced started to decline. Because of the lockdown, social media and technology became even more implemented into our lives. It had a major, negative influence on us which then contributed to the rapid increase of anxiety, depression, peer pressure, etc. Many became more judgemental and it felt like it was almost like they forgot how to treat others respectfully. The sense of aloha for others felt nonexistent as time went on.

Selfishness, bullying, rude, inconsiderate are words that are unacceptable by my dad. I was taught at a very young age to "treat others the way that I want to be treated." He is one of my biggest role models! He was known as the "bully" when he was in high school. He would make comments to the "weirdos", laugh at the outcasts, and if someone were to even stare at him, he would try to instigate them into fighting. As he grew up, he matured and realized that this is not how you treat others. From his actions, he taught us the opposite of what he believed

in growing up. I learned the words inclusion, kindness and uniqueness from my dad. I learned to always make others feel included, to “never judge a book by its cover”, and to accept everyone’s imperfections and flaws. Whenever I can, I try to give back to my community by donating to the homeless. A very recent moment changed my viewpoint on how I spread kindness to others around me.

On a beautiful Sunday morning, I indulged in a conversation with my friends as we casually strolled heading to the 7-11 down the street from my friend’s house. As we continued to walk, we came across a homeless man with his daughter sitting on the curb across the street next to their shopping cart piled up high with dirty blankets, trash bags stuffed to the brim, and poles that held up their articles of clothing. They looked miserable, cold, and overall, they looked like they were suffering. I turned to my friends and informed them about the man and the little girl just across the street from us. They took one glance at them and I could see the disgusted look on their faces. They kept on walking, telling me that, “I should stay out of it because there’s homeless people everywhere so what’s the difference with this man and little girl?” I was in utter disbelief. I looked at the man and the little girl and knew that if I didn’t do something then no one would. I had just enough to buy them water, 2 bentos and 2 spam musubis with the \$15 I had in my wallet. I left the store, told my friends I had some business to take care of, and approached the man and the little girl. “Hi! I bought you guys some food and water. I hope you enjoy it!” The man and the little girl looked at each other in shock. They smiled at me and they thanked me for my generosity and willingness to help them out. I told them that it was no problem and I’m glad that I had the chance to give back to my community! I turned to my right and I noticed my friends were walking towards us with blankets, jackets, and a toy for the little girl. They handed the man and the girl the items they brought for them. The little girl was so excited to have a toy

and gave all of us one, big giant hug! The man thanked us for our thoughtfulness and kindness as we waved goodbye with wide smiles across our faces, happy that we could help someone in need!

Being your own self and sticking true to what you believe in is so important when being kind to others. In this scenario, I was being peer pressured to leave the man and the little girl alone since “they were just homeless people”. By sticking true to what I believed in, I convinced my friends to also be a better person, spread kindness and help out people who need it most. I never want to judge people by what I see on the outside because you may never know what they are going through. By carrying out good deeds and informing others to do better, you can start to instigate change which will encourage others to always look out for the people who might be looking for a support system.

The title of my essay, “Ohana means family!”, showcases that you should treat others like they’re your family. In the Hawaiian language, Ohana means family and that no one is left behind. Even if they aren’t related to you by blood, it’s always good to spread kindness to others and to just let them know that they aren’t alone. Just from one simple, “Thank you!” or “Hello!”, may make someone’s day extra special!