

VIVIAN.

“aloha.” what does that mean again?

DEREK.

you know, i don't know, i'm not sure. i think it means welcome. i think it means welcome home.

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Aloha is a word that is difficult to define. It's a concept that this entire play revolves around, and we receive simple definitions from the characters— “aloha means goodbye,” or, “i think it means welcome home.” However, these definitions only scratch the surface of what Aloha truly is.

Aloha, commonly used as a simple greeting by visitors to Hawaii, is a word that means love, affection, peace, compassion, and mercy. To native Hawaiians, it's more than a greeting, the term is used to define a force that holds together existence. “Aloha” exists in all Polynesian languages, but holds a particularly solemn connotation in Hawaiian, as opposed to Tahitian and Samoan. The word Aloha is hard to translate into any other language due to its complex meaning.

Some scholars have endeavored to express the sentiment in English: anthropologist Francis Newton, for example, once said, “Aloha is a complex and profound sentiment. Such emotions defy definition.”

Hawaii even has the Aloha Spirit Law, which mandates that state officials and judges treat the public with Aloha. The practical usage of that essentially breaks down into an acronym of the word, presented by the statute of the Spirit of Aloha: “Akahai,” kindness; “Lokahi,” unity; “Oluolu,” agreeable; “Haahaa,” humility; and “Ahonui,” patience. Additionally, the Aloha Spirit Law's description of Aloha says that it is the coordination of mind and heart within each person.

Aloha's usage as a greeting comes back to another popular interpretation of the concept, viewing it as the giving and receiving of positive energy. This use could also stem from its literal meaning from its proto-Polynesian roots: “alo” means presence and “ha” means breath, making its closest literal meaning “the presence of breath.” This original meaning could explain its use as a salutation: when we greet and leave people, we are experiencing the sharing of breath in one another's presence.

Aloha, at its core, is about connecting with the world. It represents complex ways of being and of interacting with and loving all of creation. This is why it's at the thematic center of *Aloha, Say the Pretty Girls*. These characters need to find their own Aloha, as we all should learn to do. They are all at a point in their lives where they are re-learning how to interact with the world, themselves, and how to enjoy life again. They're saying “goodbye” to their past lives and “hello” to their new ones.

We hope you enjoy the show, and that you are able to find your own Aloha.