

The World Needs Your Cargo: Kozo Hattori & Sue Cochrane by Kozo Hattori, Sue Cochrane

Kozo Hattori on the meaning of Aloha...

Probably the most important concept or word in Hawaii is Aloha. Aloha has been commercialized so much that the original meanings were lost. So what I've been feeling into is the deepest aspects of Aloha. And what it comes down to for me is what they call Kapu Aloha. Kapu means 'sacred'. It's actually the same word that the word taboo came from. Taboo is actually Polynesian word. The Hawaiian K was originally a T. Kapu Aloha is sacred Aloha, which is "I'm going to love no matter what." If you come and steal my land, I'm going to love you. You come and beat me, I'm going to love you. You come and string me up on a cross, and I'm going to love you. I'm using those examples because it crosses traditions. It is the same ahimsa that Gandhi talked about. It is the same love that Christ talked about. It is the same unconditional love that the Dalai Lama talks about. That's Kapu Aloha. To remain in Kapu Aloha no matter what.

I think the heart of who we are, not just Hawaiian-- but everyone-- the core lineage is love, is Aloha. And if you can tap into that then everybody is your brother and your sister, and not just humans, but the planet, the Aina (the land), the animals, the spirit animals.

In my experience it is all grace. The universe is showering us with Aloha, with healing, with awakening, with love-- constantly. It is all grace.

In July of 2020, beloved ServiceSpace friends Kozo Hattori, and Sue Cochrane, came together for a virtual conversation in the presence of community. Both were navigating stark realities with cancer. Their luminous exchange was threaded with laughter, insight, tender truths, poignant moments and profound life-wisdom. Kozo peacefully "changed address," on March 1st, 2021. His transition came just weeks after Sue's own passing. What follows is an edited selection of excerpts from the conversation between these two extraordinary beings. Though they never met in person, they were kindred spirits. Each left behind an incandescent legacy of courage and love.

DailyGood · Kozo Chants a Hawaiian Ascension Prayer

Kozo Hattori: Rise up from the deep, deep ocean to the highest heavens. I learned this Hawaiian prayer the morning that my friend's mother died. I was one of her caregivers and she passed about three hours after I left. I was sad and then I realized that this prayer was telling her soul to rise up from the deepest ocean. It was a very appropriate prayer. I did it at her memorial service and now in this moment I feel like the prayer is telling me to Rise Up —to the occasion, rise up and let your soul confront what it's meant to. I thought it was an appropriate prayer for today.

We've been on quite a journey since our last conversation.

Sue Cochrane: A lot has happened since I last saw you and I think this topic is perfect. My scans showed cancer progression in the brain. Last time there was 14 tumors and the radiation department zapped all of them. This time there were 11, and 7 of them were very tiny, like little pinpoint spots and then 4 were larger. We radiated the 4. They recommended whole brain radiation and that's when my attachment to my brain came up.

I love my brain. I've used it to live and I've used it in service. I felt this resistance. Everyone was worried. And there were also two new liver tumors-- the immunosuppressive therapy was no longer working. I'm learning to use this experience as compost. My therapist once told me, "You've called me, and you've told me all these things -- and something stinks -- could you move that pile into the garden instead of holding it in front of your face?" (laughs) And I am thinking of that now. How can I compost these feelings in the garden?

I am in a better place now than I have been in this whole time. I wrote a post on Caringbridge, titled 'No Mud No Lotus'; I mucked around. I had sadness, I had fear. But that evolved into, "I feel ready to be living my fullest life right now." Thank you Kozo for asking.

How are you?

Kozo: I had a test and one of the things in my gut was the same size it hadn't grown. And the other grew .9 cm and it grew by 20%. It was kind of a mixed result because one grew and the other didn't. They suggested chemo - not curative chemo it's called palliative chemo, and it's chemo to make the end of my life easier and once you start it you continue to the end. So that was kind of a mysterious test result. But I have the blessing of having some amazing healers in my corner -- one of them is on the call today, this amazing intuitive functional medicine MD named Cynthia Li, and they all asked similar questions: "How are you feeling? How is your energy?" I was good! I was sleeping well, I was eating. I was playing with my kids. The oncologist asked me, "Have you been able to get outside?" And I said, "Yeah, I walk the dogs every day."

Sue: That's wonderful! I feel almost guilty that I feel so good. It's a lot of spiritual and mental medicine. My qi gong teacher says there is no bad energy-- there is only good, better, and best. And it sometimes is stuck in the wrong place so we need to move it.

Kozo: I'm reading this book that Anne Veh gifted me, it's called 'Angels in Her Hair' by Lorna Byrne -- when she was young everyone thought she was slow but she was actually talking to angels the whole time. She never told anybody. We have all these angels around us. In physical form -- friends, family - but also spiritual angels-- I have my Hawaiian ancestors, and also the archangels -- I was telling Pavi, "I'm living life with all these angels around me helping me learn the lessons that are here and if I do pass, I am going to pass in the arms of angels." It's a win-win situation. I live with angels now and if I pass I am in the arms of angels.

I was reading that book this morning and in it the angels came to Lorna and said, "Your dad's going to pass" and she asks, "Why are you telling me this?" And they say, "Because you need to help him." He passed at 56 on St Patrick's Day. I had this intuitive sense --(could be wrong) -- that that was me...I am 55 now. I feel like I've given them [my sons]

what they need to continue. I just had that come up, and I am at ease with all the possibilities and the mystery.

Sue: I have focused on the question -- have my boys learned from me what I wanted to pass on? Also there's a quote that has freed me from worrying about them as much as I used to. Before I share it I want to share something that some of you may have heard before, I heard it from my meditation teacher who said, "Imagine the world is covered by water and there is one hoop on it being blown around on from north to south and east to west, and once every hundred years a turtle shows up — what are the odds of the turtle popping up exactly through the hoop? Those are the same odds of being born as a human." The message of the story was: Don't waste this precious opportunity.

Here is the quote that really helped me: "Neither mother nor father nor any relative can do as much good as your own well directed mind." One of my sons says I've taught this to him, and one of my other sons says whenever he's in a challenging situation he asks, "What would Mom do?"

Kozo: I think of Kahlil Gibran: Your children are not your children. They are the arrows that spring forth from our bows. As parents we need to stay firm so that the arrow will fly straight. I feel like all the work — actually sadhana is the right word — all the practices that we're doing, our chanting, qi gong, our diets, our meditation and prayers, are causing us to be a stronger bow for our boys to launch. My boys are ready to launch.

Sue: I've seen you and your boys in that skate park video!

Kozo: [laughing] I'm just an old man out there. But to be outdoors for four hours with your children is such a blessing. It's funny, I don't know if you get this feeling but it's almost like I am returning to my 12-year-old self. "The more childish you become, the more powerful you become," is what one of my healers told me. I've been returning to that 12-year-old self in so many ways through skateboarding. For Father's Day my sons and ex-wife gave me this t-shirt that said "Yoda Best Dad Ever!" I was a Star Wars nut — I'd go to the theater for matinees in Hawaii and I'd watch all the way till 5 o'clock. It was \$1 for each show, I still remember. I saw the first one 45-46 times! It's been beautiful-- my whole life I've been looking for an Obi Wan Kanobi or a Yoda-- a master to guide me in the ways of the force, and now at 55 years old I've found them but it's not one person."

And I think of that scene from Star Wars where Luke Skywalker says, "I can't believe you just did that!" And Yoda responds, "That is why you fail." So now I am starting to believe and I am really living into my Star Wars dream. Qi Gong is about learning to use the force. I used to dream of having a pencil come to me -- like a light saber. Now rather than having objects fly to me I am learning to move energies in my body and dissipate energies in my stomach. These things are blossoming in my life right when I need them. It's like you are walking towards a locked door and you don't have a key, you don't have a key, you don't have a key -- and then right when you come to the door latch there's a key in your hand — appearing out of nowhere.

Sue: And there's more than one door-- it seems like it's door after door. I wrote a memoir that's out a little bit and it brought back all my music and art and puppetry — creative expression is what saved my life. What would I have been without that? I didn't just start healing yesterday — at 27 I found out I was a full-blown alcoholic. It was the last place I wanted to be. My father was an alcoholic and destroyed our family. I had just gotten sworn in [as a family court judge] a month ago.

You know Gandhi was really shy as well - his first case he walked in and couldn't say a word. He ran out the door, and I held that story as my sign of hope. You can do it. The 12-step program taught me surrender. I didn't want to surrender to God — so they said, "Okay use a tree, a mentor, use a higher power." Then I went into public service, and then I found Commonweal, and Common Ground meditation center. So I kept looking, but not desperately — things would just organically appear. Like I was listening to a Dharma Talk the other day, and fell asleep and I woke up to Joseph Goldstein saying. "Do you know the cause of all death — it's birth." Anybody could get hit by a bus is the cliché, and I have a friend who says, "Yes but the driver is gunning for me!" It's true, we are on the edge of this experience.

I feel like I have found an opening to face the hardest things in my life and that makes me feel happy. We all need this. Never did I think I could be in such a good place right now. But if I could share one thing — I finally met Rachel Remen at the New School and after her talk I asked her if I could tell her something. And I told her my story — and she told me, "I prefer the word mystery to miracle, because miracle feels exclusive." So since then I've looked into mystery more. And as a doctor she said they were trained to favor Mastery over Mystery and it was only after being a cancer healer she began to enter mystery.

It takes me back to when I got published in second grade in Highlights magazine. Years later, the minute I got diagnosed, I wanted to write, and I just started to write little stories. And then I put them together and thanks to my brother it's now been professionally edited and is with an agent. You wrote a book too didn't you Kozo? I loved it - what was the title?

Kozo: The Healing Grace of Cancer — that was before the return. I learned a lot obviously, but I've learned way more with the recurrence. I used to read Highlights magazine when I was a kid. So maybe I read your piece!

Sue: Someone saw that I had a little potential. I didn't talk when I was younger. I was a mute in school, but somebody saw something and elevated that. Look at that -- we're really bringing our whole self here!

Kozo: I remember one day I showed up to school and all my friends are handing in poems for a poetry competition. And I was like, "Give me a piece of paper and I just put this haiku down and turned it in and the next thing you know I was announced as one of the winners and got published in a magazine.

Sue: Do you remember it?

Kozo: Yes.

Running through the fields

I see a green grasshopper, dead

Underneath my feet.

It's funny --it had all the themes in it. It has the joy of running through the fields, the beauty of the green grasshopper, and then death is in there too-- that I was responsible for.

To me it comes down to taking responsibility —whether it's cancer or anything — everybody needs to take responsibility for their own life. Am thinking of Steven Jenkinsons who wrote this book called "Die Well." And in so many other cultures, death is a part of life. For example they have the Day of the Dead in Mexico but in the West we don't speak about death or show it and even when people are dying we don't talk about it, and people try and fight it and they fight and fight until boom they die.

I've been offered an on-ramp to death, to accept and embrace it in a slow way. Even if the intuition about March is right — I'm on-ramping, and I don't know how long it might be, but to be aware of it, and to walk it, and to not turn away from it is important.

Sue: Pema Chodron says when things fall apart we are just practicing with these things—we are practicing for our own death. This is a great opportunity to learn how to live. I shared a poster with you Kozo about all the things that cancer cannot do -- it said things like, "What cancer cannot do -- it cannot crush your soul, It cannot take your mind," things like that, and then Kozo you wrote back and said, what you'd add is some of the things cancer CAN do: "Cancer can guide you towards your highest purpose; Cancer can double your friends; Cancer can lead you to a healing beyond the body. Cancer can strengthen your faith"

Kozo: Reminds me of talking to Jolanda van den Berg, she had an awakening some years ago. I was in a lot of pain when I interviewed her and after the interview, she stayed on with us for another hour, just talking to us. I asked her about pain. She said, "If pain is arising then, you can see the pain as life arising in you. And when you realize that, you are grateful for it. And if you can dig down through pain you can find it is actually love." And in her world everything is love. Whatever arises in her life, that's what she loves the most. It really shifted things for me. I could see pain as an honor, almost as a testament that I am alive. It's deeper than the half glass full metaphor. It's like the glass is always overflowing, but you just don't see it. We see the emptiness as a negative — the pain as a negative that we have to get rid of it. But it's part of the overflowing of life that is arising in us, and that brought me great peace. Jolanda was another angel who just popped up! She's turned out to be this amazing Yoda in my life. So I totally feel that this is who we are, and this what we are meant to manifest, and everything that arises in our lives is meant to awaken us.

Sue: It takes a lot of courage to sit with what comes up. And I am not perfect — there are times I will say, "Oh pain — I welcome in the pain." But there is also the thought that I don't want this pain, I am sick of this pain — and then they taught me that I can notice anger or aversion. Pema has a thing called, "Stay There." That's the invitation — to raise our awareness and to not become the emotion or the experience. "She who is aware of the anger is not the anger." One of the hardest things for me — anytime the phone rings and it's one of my kids, I have this visceral response. [They've had a lot of intensity and challenge in their lives.] I get a little PTSD with those calls, but now I am practicing with opening my mind, and putting my feet on the floor. "Anything can happen anytime," so to be prepared for that.

I tried to do the same sort of thing when I was a judge -- I tried to do it outside the courtroom in a personal way. I'd walk in to meet clients and I didn't know what was going to happen, and I'd try to open, open, open, and I didn't know what I was going to say or do. I didn't have the key to the door until the last moment, and what they needed was a

witness not a judge. Nobody needs a judge. I was their witness. They ran the show. They told me what they needed. It was very holistic. That was my message.

Kozo: It's a testament to who you are that when your kids go through tough times you're the phone call they make. That's a dream for me. That when my boys go off in the world-- if they are going through tough times that they will call me.

Sue: You have a special bond with them from what I've heard.

Kozo: That feeling of, "I don't want this" that shifts to, "let it in," — it reminds me of Gethsemane where Jesus says, "Father pass this cup from me," Jesus said, "All the things I will do you too will do and more." And I'm like, "No way! How am I going to rise from the Cross?" But if you think about preparing your whole life through all these different things for the Cross — "Father why hast thou forsaken me?" And cancer patients can really go through that— but that shifts to, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." Out of that shift from victim to empowered actor of forgiveness you rise to a new life in a different form.

Father Richard Rohr calls it the Second Half of Life. The first half is building your healthy ego and the second half is shifting into service and healing. I'm not talking about time — you can have your second half at 98, right before passing.

Sue: I am glad you went to that story because for me it made Jesus more human. There's that line...They who give up their lives receive eternal life, they who don't-- die. The message was basically, that it all worked out extremely well. He was both divine and human. I love that- it gives hope that as humans we can get somewhere.

If it's alright I'd like to read this poem by Raymond Carver, one of my favorite poets. I wrote a blog post about it that gives more of the background context. He was an alcoholic, and a working-class guy. He sobered up, and in the last ten years of his life he met the love of his life, and was diagnosed with lung cancer. He died at age 50.

What the Doctor Said

He said it doesn't look good
he said it looks bad in fact real bad
he said I counted thirty-two of them on one lung before
I quit counting them
I said I'm glad I wouldn't want to know
about any more being there than that
he said are you a religious man do you kneel down
in forest groves and let yourself ask for help
when you come to a waterfall
mist blowing against your face and arms
do you stop and ask for understanding at those moments
I said not yet but I intend to start today
he said I'm real sorry he said
I wish I had some other kind of news to give you
I said Amen and he said something else
I didn't catch and not knowing what else to do
and not wanting him to have to repeat it
and me to have to fully digest it

I just looked at him
for a minute and he looked back it was then
I jumped up and shook hands with this man who'd just given me
something no one else on earth had ever given me
I may have even thanked him habit being so strong

He called the 10 years he lived after that, "Gravy"

So that's what the doctor said, but we can do what we want with it right?

Kozo: Beautiful. Yes, and I want to get to the point where rather than pain or bliss or cancer all I say [in the final diagnosis] is-- Love -- Chronic Love!

Last night I had a dream and I was back at UC Santa Barbara and going to take my girlfriend surfing - in the dream, this woman was an amalgamation of all the women I've loved in my life. The surf was big so we were going to go to Campus Point, my favorite surf spot. There were all these obstacles and when we got there I was like, "Oh my God! I don't have a surfboard and I don't have a wet suit!" And oh the person that I was with in the dream, we weren't a couple. When I reached over, the person was like, "No, we're just friends." And what I realized was, that this dream was showing me the truth of my life. I had desires-- to go surfing, to be intimate with someone, and the universe was saying, "No." Then I came a point where I was like, "I'm really okay with that. It's nice just to be standing on this cliff looking at the surf, I don't need to go in the water. And it's nice just to be standing next to someone I love. I don't need more. I'm happy." And it struck me this was kind of like the Four Noble Truths in Buddhism. There is suffering in life, suffering is caused by desire, get rid of desire you get rid of suffering. It was a beautiful dream on a beautiful night.

It's funny, thinking about this call in the morning, I thought, "I am going on this call to talk about a test result that's not positive, but even with that and whatever the prognosis is, I'm okay. I'm happy, and excited just to be here with everyone."

Sue: That's beautiful. I've read this little story— you know how we say the sun rises in the morning and sets at night—but that's not really true is it? it doesn't go anywhere. It sits there, and we spin. Right? We see our lives--like we are born (that's the sunrise) and then we die (sunset). But what if we are really this huge eternal light, and we can't see it because it's just blocked right now by our mind, what if we are that light just sitting there? So I am thinking our life is much more than we see — it's through the glass darkly, we can't see it now, but someday...And on some days we get a glimpse. Like, you're in the light right now Kozo— you're shining!

Kozo: That's what skateboarding does to you.

Sue: Does it?

Kozo: No I'm joking. (laughs) ...

We're all walking each other home right? I'm with you, and you're with me.

Aloha kakou dear friends.