

Devotion, Week of January 14, 2024

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

We were in Honolulu, on the island of Oahu January 10 and 11, and in addition to visiting Pearl Harbor, we went to the Nu'uana Pali Lookout on the northern coast. This is where a famous battle was fought in 1795 to consolidate the rule of all of the 8 Hawaiian islands under King Kamehameha I. This fierce battle claimed hundreds of soldiers' lives, many of which were forced off of the Pali's sheer cliffs. While I was there taking pictures, I noticed a new plaque off to the side. There was a flat raised platform of stones surrounded by a stone wall, with a small, square monument to the left surrounded by a lei of flowers, completed in February, 2023. The plaque said this:

"In honor of the bravery, skill and commitment of Hawaiian warrior women who fought and died in the Battle of Nu'uana in 1795, whose bones were then looted by RCL Perkins in 1894 and illegally removed and taken to Cambridge University in England and thereafter repatriated and reburied more than a century later. We shall never forget your sacrifice and will forever honor your courage with this reburial platform fondly known as Halealoha Haleaman. As we illuminate our past, let the light of aloha shine through to guide our future. The bones live."

"Hale" means house and "aloha" is similar to "shalom" in Hebrew, meaning peace and wholeness. There is a sign in front of this memorial that says this is a sacred place. What struck me was the words "The bones live." The bones interred here are symbolic to me of honor. The Hawaiians worked hard to repatriate the bones of these women warriors back to where they fought and died. We at times do that with our soldiers who die overseas. The bones "come home" to show others that these dead are honored by their descendants. They live on in the people who come after them and remember their sacrifice. I thought of that when we visited Pearl Harbor and the National Cemetery of the Pacific as well. We honor the dead because they died for us. Their bones are sacred, and they live in our memories. We live on, in freedom, because of the sacrifice of these brave warriors.

Aloha,

Jeanne