

# HERE THERE BE TIGERS

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Here There Be Tigers. Specifically Siberian and Bengal and exotic white tigers. Malayan and Indochinese too. Even the long-extinct Bali and Caspian tigers. Hawai'i has them all, I used to tell people.

But only if they asked. And not if they asked about the latest on our construction of a rail transit system or need for rethinking our watersheds or affordable housing initiatives or sustainable energy. Because then I'd tell them facts and studies and news reports and boring things.

But if people asked whether we all surfed to work or if we could do the hula or had running water and electricity or if some of us still lived in grass shacks, then I'd really let them have it. Come in close, I'd say. Let me tell you all the secrets of Hawai'i.

Like the tigers. And the free roaming giraffes and zebras and flamingos and peacocks that fill our streets, in big groups like you wouldn't believe. That's why we have such bad traffic, I say. Did you know they once found a gigantic 50-foot gorilla here? It was near the dinosaur remains they've been finding up on the North Shore, by Kualoa Ranch. I hear they're building an amusement park there, super secret science stuff.

Yep, it's a veritable zoo here on the Island of Hawai'i. It's all just one island, did you know that? On a clear blue Hawaiian day, you can take a car and drive all the way around and hit all the cities: Honolulu, Aulani, Lāhāina, Kona (where they

make the coffee), Kaua'i (where they film the movies). Most of us live here in the city of Waikīkī, named for the beach made famous by Elvis movies.

There's a big military base, too—you remember it from the war—called Pearl Harbor. It's where over a thousand ships are currently docked, all eyes watching the skies for another possible attack by foreign invaders. They've been preparing for 70 years and won't ever be caught off-guard. Never again.

Sometimes people ask if there's a palace because they heard Hawai'i used to have kings and queens. I tell them that is just a myth.

There was Kamehameha though, but he wasn't a king. He was a wave of energy. Ever see *Dragon Ball*? When they summon the power to cast a ball of light, where do you think they got it from?

I tell them that Kamehameha was a Great man. And by great, I mean wide. He was very large. And he sang songs on the ukulele, like *Somewhere Over The Rainbow*. And then he became a sumo wrestler in Japan and they had a name for him: Akebono. That means Kamehameha in Japanese.

I think I've heard of this man! They would say, but they did not know he did all these things. I say, there's a lot you don't know about Hawai'i.

Like how all our police officers are actually Five-o units. See, *Hawaii Five-o* isn't just a TV show. It's a real life documentary. Ever heard of the show, *Cops*? Same thing. Our state food is Spam. Our state bird is Hawaiian Pidgin.

Some would say that maybe not all this information is accurate. That I'm actually helping perpetuate lies and stereotypes. On the contrary, I know the truth: it doesn't matter what you tell people about Hawai'i if they're not really listening. All that matters is what people want to hear.

So come to Hawai'i and ride the unicorns. They're not extinct! From the right hotel room on the beach at Waikīkī, if you go out onto the balcony at sunset and stare towards Diamond Head, if you're wearing a Hawaiian shirt and holding a Mai Tai, and if you look with the right kind of eyes, you'll see 'em. I swear.

