

As soon as the warm summer breeze embraces my body, I crave the sweet feeling of the sand between my toes as the salty aroma of the waves consumes my airways. I exhale, and relinquish control to the waves. The ocean is what I long for. There is no comparable feeling to floating in the ocean with nothing but the singing of the soft ocean breeze filling your ears. *This* is home. *This* is where I feel at peace.

My trip to Hawaii is where I truly fell in love with the ocean. Hawaii has everything that I have loved about the ocean, *amplified*. Our first day there, we went to a beach nearby. I rushed to the water and floated there in the ocean as a temporary sun shower slowly danced around me. Everyone else rushed out of the ocean, but I stayed. I let the waves control my body, heal me, and transport me to a place of peace and serenity. I left the beach that day feeling interconnected to everything around me.

The native Hawaiians made me fall deeper in love with the ocean because of their outward expression of love for nature. In Hawaiian culture the word for this is *Aina* which translates to love of the land. It represents the Hawaiian view of the interconnected relationship between people and all living things.

Like Hawaiians, I believe everyone has a connection with the earth whether it be the electrifying feeling of running barefoot in the grass or like me: an undying love for the ocean. *We all have that connection*. We just have to take the time and look around to truly appreciate the wondrous connection we have to every living entity on this earth. From the tiniest of creatures like an ant, to the biggest creature like an elephant; every living thing has a purpose.

It's a fascinating thing. It makes you wonder "*what is my purpose*" and "*what will I contribute to this world?*" I have come to the conclusion that my purpose lies in my creativity. For as long as I can remember, I have been captivated by the arts, - literature in particular. One of my earliest memories is reading my *Fancy Nancy* books before bedtime. Growing up as a shy kid, I would sit alone at recess reading my books or creating my own graphic novels. Throughout high school, English has always been my favorite subject because it forces me to think deeper about myself and society.

Like the ocean, literature has always had the ability to transport me to another world when the real one is too much to handle. I want my writing to be that for someone else.

Lions have their roar.  
Sharks have their bite.  
Bears have their claws.  
My weapon of power is my words.

With every story I write, I aim to create ripples of change in the areas of social and environmental justice by reporting on the stories of those who are underrepresented. This is only the start of my journey, but with my love for creativity and my deep attachment to the world around me, I know I can fulfill my purpose and leave a lasting impact. Like the air, the earth, the tide, words give us life.