



# Belonging in the Surf

By [Charles Vogl](#)



One of my most magical memories is from when I was about 29 years old and moonlight surfing on Waikiki Beach with my cousin Kelly Chang and dear friend Hugh Khim.

On one of my visits to my family city of Honolulu, Kelly and Hugh had loaded up their cars with surfboards and had taken me into the Waikiki waves on a full moon night. While Waikiki is famous for the wall-to-wall sunbathing tourists that crowd one of the most beautiful beaches in the world during the day, that night we had just about all the water to ourselves.

I remember sitting on that longboard, smelling the Pacific water, feeling the tropical breeze, and admiring the hotel lights. After many, many, failed attempts, I think I caught one or two waves that night. Truly transcendent moments.

I remember thinking how powerful it was to be invited there with them, for them to share this special experience with me, late into the night.

There are at least two principles that make this such a meaningful memory for me.

The first is that we were within a safe “inner ring.” In this context, an inner ring is a safe place among people who share relationships beyond competition and judgment. This was a time and experience only shared with people who already appreciated and respected one another. While in the future others may be invited, that night we already knew we were safe with one another.

The second is a bit more profound. Through my cousin Kelly, I felt deeply connected to that place. My family has made its home in Honolulu for at least four generations. I was participating in a long line connected to me enjoying that space and appreciating its magnificence. Had we been on any other island in the world, even if we had been surfing, even if there had been tropical breezes, even if there were bright hotel lights glinting on the water, I would not have felt that connection.

Meaningfulness comes when we feel connected to the past and/or the future. That place, that experience in a relationship I had with those hosts were meaningful to me. In fact, I hope I can share the grandeur of Hawaii with the next generation in my family.

When we are helping others belong, connecting experiences to the past can change a fun event to something profound. Then we get to be the generation that connects those who come next with us.

How are you letting others know the way they are connected to a place no matter how unglamorous or changed it has become?

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