

AKAMU

LEGEND OF A SEA TURTLE

In the time when oceans ruled the world, and a heavy mist settled over land, a most amazing miracle happened. A sea turtle named Akamu was shaped into being by Sky God, who used Earth itself as Akamu's formation clay. Akamu experienced a mysterious birth. Her egg shell was made of hibiscus petals, which she shed at birth and then consumed as her first meal. This gave her unusual strength and beauty, and a sweet fragrance that announced her presence everywhere she went.

At birth, Akamu, like all hatchlings, made her way for the safety and home of ocean. When she first tasted sea water, a great wave rose up over her, and crashed down, scattering her and her sibling hatchlings. Akamu was tossed in the frothing tide. She became disoriented. When she gained her senses, her siblings were nowhere to be found. Akamu had lost her 'ohana, her family.

Akamu spent her childhood feeling lost in a world where no one looked like her, swam like her, or acted like her. She felt abandoned. Forgotten. Alone. As Akamu first began to mature into adulthood, her shell took on the splendor of hibiscus colors. Now and then, she would encounter *Honu*, other sea turtles. Their shells were sea green or sandy brown. Hers was a liquid swirl of bright yellows, pinks, reds, and oranges. She stood out visually. Other Honu noticed that Akamu did not travel with her own 'ohana. Akamu knew they noticed. She burrowed her head deep in her shell in shame. She longed for her siblings, for her parents, for her own Honu tribe. But she pained even more that other sea people didn't understand her. Couldn't relate to her ocean journey.

One fateful day, Akamu swam out beyond the far coral reef of a lush island. She dived down into a sea valley forested with kelp. She followed the valley deeper, until very little sunlight reached the valley floor. She met a wise octopus who shared with her stories about the mystic purpose of 'ohana, solitude, belonging, and knowing your true self. The octopus introduced Akamu to a squid, a blue whale, a porpoise, and a clan of sea horses grazing the kelp. Each of these sea people shared with Akamu what they had learned about Loving yourself. It was in these moments that Akamu for the first time realized that her journey apart from her 'ohana was a gift from Sky God, an intentional path given to her so that she could learn parts of her soul she would otherwise never reach.

Akamu realized that the things that made her different were sacred medicine she was meant to share, with herself first, joyfully. And with the ocean world. Akamu realized this, and as she did, something like the sun rose in her heart. A tremendous light began to glow from inside her, illuminating the deep valley. Akamu's shell glowed, its colors a hypnotic dance of vibrancy. Akamu rose from the deep valley to the ocean surface. She swam for shore, where she burrowed in the warm sand. Legend has it that Akamu somehow miraculously birthed a whole new 'ohana of Honu. A very special Honu who can only be seen when one's heart and soul are full of Aloha, full of Love. It is also said that Akamu's spirit lives in the white clouds and blue skies, comforting all souls who feel alone. And when rain blesses the day, Akamu's glowing shell can be seen. Some call it a rainbow.

Dr. Jaiya John was born into foster care in New Mexico, and has served organizations, agencies, schools, and initiatives globally for many years. He is an internationally recognized speaker, author, poet, spoken word artist, and youth mentor. Jaiya is the founder of Soul Water Rising, a global human mission that has donated thousands of Jaiya's books in support of social healing, and offers scholarships to displaced and vulnerable youth. He is a former professor of social psychology at Howard University, has authored numerous books, and has addressed over half a million professionals, parents, and youth worldwide. Jaiya is a National Science Foundation fellow, and holds doctorate and master's degrees in social psychology from the University of California, Santa Cruz, with a focus on intergroup relations and identity development. As an undergraduate, he attended Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon, and lived in Kathmandu, Nepal, where he studied Tibetan Holistic Medicine through independent research with Tibetan doctors.