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Hawaii-born Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Barack Obama spoke yesterday at a rally held at Keehi Lagoon Park. After he spoke he shook the hands of supporters, above. His wife, Michelle, at far right in a white dress, was ahead of him.

Obama comes home

About 3,000 attend a rally where the presidential hopeful lauds the aloha spirit as a model for America



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The Obama family, including daughters Malia, 10, right, and Sasha, 7, stepped off the plane yesterday after arriving in Honolulu.

By Richard Borreca
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With stiff tradewinds easing the heat at Keehi Lagoon Beach Park, Sen. Barack Obama proclaimed himself back home and ready for a vacation.

"I try to explain to them the aloha spirit. I try to explain this basic idea that we all have obligations to each other, that we are not alone, that if we

Many in the crowd of 3,000 held cameras and cell phones aloft during his 17-minute speech yesterday afternoon, snapping photos as he told them about Hawaii's effect on him and how it shaped his values.

see someone in need, we should help."

Sen. Barack Obama, D-III.

Presumptive Democratic nominee for president

The speech broke no new ground, but cemented his relationship with the Hawaii Democratic Party, which had awarded him a 75 percent vote win in the February caucuses.

"We are not here to politick. We are here to say, 'Thank you,'" Obama told a cheering crowd that had been waiting for several hours on the unshaded field.

• Thousands Gather For Obama



Thousands of Obama supporters gathered at Keahi Lagoon in hopes to have a glimpse of the Presidential Candidate.

[[Watch](#)]



Obama, who started the speech by introducing his wife, Michelle, said he is often asked what he learned from being born and raised in Hawaii.

"I try to explain to them the aloha spirit," Obama said. "I try to explain this basic idea that we all have obligations to each other, that we are not alone, that if we see someone in need, we should help.

"When you come from Hawaii, you start understanding that what is on the surface, what people look like - that doesn't determine who they are," Obama said.

He told the crowd he had come to Hawaii to visit his tutu and relax, adding that he plans to get a plate lunch. "I might go to Zippy's. I might go to Rainbow Drive-in. I haven't decided yet."

He said he plans to spend a lot of time watching his daughters play on the beach.

Security at the rally was tight, with each member of the audience hand-screened for metal objects. More than 100 law enforcement officers turned out, including the Honolulu Police Department's specialized services division. A Coast Guard boat armed with machine guns patrolled the water next to the lagoon.

A couple of armed Secret Service agents situated themselves atop a commercial building a distance away from the stage. The National Guard's HazMat team also canvassed the area for weapons of mass destruction.



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Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., spoke yesterday at a welcome-to-Hawaii rally at Keehi Lagoon Beach Park. Obama is in Hawaii for a vacation.

In an unusual note for a visitor to Hawaii, neither Obama nor his wife wore a lei, although a national campaign spokesman said they had received them at the airport and were grateful for them.

Obama talked about spending billions of dollars in Iraq, and cheers broke out when he added, "If we're spending that kind of money in Iraq, we can spend some of that money in here in Hawaii" and the rest of the country.

He commended the military, noting that Hawaii is home to several bases, and its troops serve with "distinction and bravery."

"They also deserve a civilian leadership that understands the most important thing we can do to make ourselves safe is to fight the right wars," he said.

Obama also drew applause when he talked about a new energy policy that would focus on wind, solar and other alternatives to foreign oil.

"I know that the folks here in Hawaii are especially hard hit because everything has to come into Hawaii and gas prices have gone up the roof, fuel prices have gone through the roof, and it's time that you got some real relief, and that means actually starting to have an energy policy in this country that makes sense," Obama said.

Obama supporters liked what they heard.

"It was awesome," said Marlena Salmu. "I think he has been working really hard and he needs a break."

Even Republicans agreed that Obama should relax while in the islands.

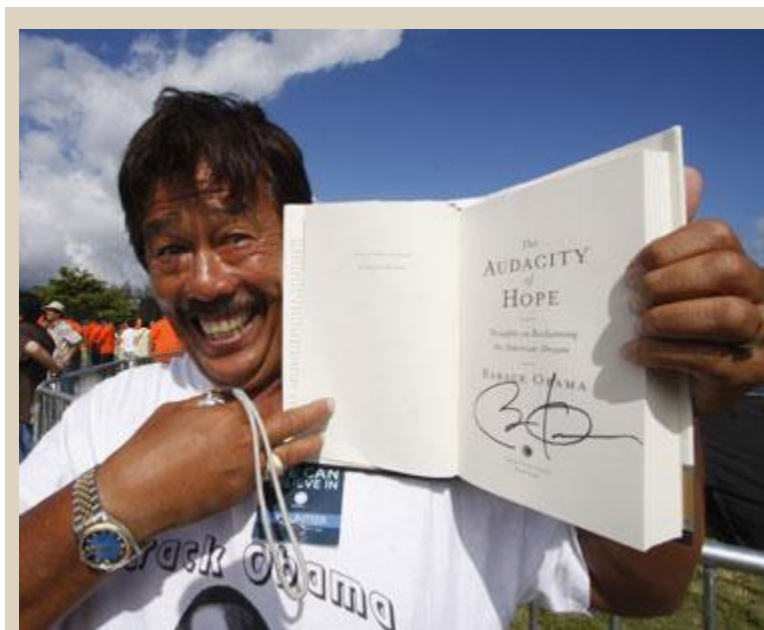
State Rep. Gene Ward, co-chairman of the local McCain for President campaign, said he hoped that Obama would visit the Zippy's restaurant in Hawaii Kai like former President Bill Clinton did and then spend some downtime.

"I was encouraged he had the free rally, and we wish him well," Ward said.

Lamont Thomas, a Hickam Air Force Base analyst, carried his son to listen to Obama and was happy with the speech.

"He talked about everyone becoming one, and for Hawaii I'm glad he talked about energy, because we can do a lot with wind and wave energy," Thomas said. "I thought it was a great speech."

Obama, who started his speech with an enthusiastic "aloha" and "howzit," ended it with a little reminder of his plans for the week: "I'll see you on the beach!"



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Tony Agao proudly showed his book that Obama autographed. He was in the front row and asked one of Obama's "handlers" if he would autograph it. The handler came back after Obama left and gave him the autographed book.