



HEALTH & WELLNESS / LIFESTYLE

## Paradise Lost: AWB Relief in Hawaii

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In November, 2014, Acupuncturists Without Borders (AWB) was hosting a training seminar on Oahu. A couple of us from the big island (aka "Hawaii" County) contacted AWB because the big island was in the middle of a crisis. The Pu'u'o'o crater (of the Kilauea Volcano) was flowing and threatening the little town of Pahoa.

AWB was kind enough to come to the big island and set up another seminar so we could be of service to our community. The east side of the big island had also just experienced its first hurricane three months earlier. Some communities in Pahoa went without power for weeks. The 2014 Pahoa lava flow lasted for months and we kept the AWB clinic operating for five months with just three people. People came regularly for treatments and were very grateful for the relief.

### The 2018 Eruption

Four years later in 2018, we experienced a far worse volcanic eruption with an emotional and physical toll that has been unrelenting. The east rift of Kilauea erupted, and approximately 2,000 people were evacuated along with thousands of animals. Hundreds of homes were destroyed and the lava took out a couple communities.

Fissure 8 (soon to be given a proper name) is a lava fountain that was shooting magma up to 500 feet in the air. I live in Hilo and was unaffected, except for when the winds changed and the "vog" hovered, with helicopters and planes flying overhead all day long. Can't forget the earthquakes! Hundreds of earthquakes a day, the biggest being 6.9. We started making calls, sending emails and texts, and making Facebook posts—it was time to get the ball rolling to organize some clinics.



The first weekend we wanted to set up shop (Halemaumau Crater located at the summit of Kilauea), was expected to erupt ash and steam as the lava level was dropping down towards the water table. We figured it was best to stay at home, out of the way. The first explosion sent ash 30,000 feet into the air, sending vog to the west side of the island and up the island chain. There was also a geothermal plant that the authorities were watching 24-hours a day. If lava reached one of the wells, deadly gasses would be released.

Winds changed at a moment's notice and people had to leave immediately, only taking what they could carry. Lava flows and gases changed course, there were mandatory evacuations, and dozens of civil defense notifications. People were very stressed and hypersensitive. Some went as far as shooting guns at their neighbors.

### Relieving the Stress

Ear acupuncture treatments for stress really help! The biggest challenge when organizing disaster relief clinics is finding a location. The second challenge is finding licensed acupuncturists to participate. We were able to set up a tent in a parking lot in Pahoa (thanks to Dr. Sally Boyd Daughtery, ND) and I posted on many Facebook pages that AWB was coming to provide treatments. We also stood on the side of the road waving and smiling at cars passing by, which was therapeutic for them and me!

How often do you get to have so many people smiling and waving back at you?! Several Kanaka (native Hawaiians) stopped by to see what was happening. Many Kanaka honor Pele, goddess of fire, lightning, dance, wind and volcanoes. When I asked if they wanted treatment they said they weren't stressed, this is just a normal part of life! Pele is cleaning house!

Many people were busy evacuating, but we were able to help many during several weekend clinics. It's really amazing to see someone who is suffering find relief. Their complexion lightens up, their

bodies soften, many let tears flow, sometimes in sobs. Then at the end, comes their big sigh of relief and a smile. They report they feel relaxed, like a new person and can now go back and deal with their lives again. They also tell us they will tell everyone they know. Our first client received treatment in the 2014 clinics!

In late August, a Category 3 storm bore down on the big island, dampening the impact of the Kilauea lava flow. Meanwhile, local acupuncturists prepared for yet another potential disaster, which while averted this time, foreshadowed potential devastating storms as the hurricane season begins.

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