SOFTWARE & TECH

Somewhere Over The Rainbow Lyrics Israel Kamakawiwo Meaning

PUBLISHED
November 25, 2026

REFERENCE
#1795580749408843

The Story Behind a Voice That Touched the World

There are songs that entertain us, and then there are songs that transform us. Few recordings in modern history have achieved the latter with such gentle, unassuming grace as Israel Kamakawiwo'ole's rendition of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." When you search for "Somewhere Over The Rainbow Lyrics Israel Kamakawiwo Meaning," you are not merely looking for a set of words—you are seeking the soul of a moment captured in time. This medley, which blends "Over the Rainbow" with "What a Wonderful World," has become a global anthem of hope, loss, healing, and the quiet beauty of staying soft in a harsh world. But what is the deeper meaning behind the lyrics? Why does this particular version resonate so profoundly across generations and cultures? Let us explore the story, the lyrics, and the enduring legacy of the man who sang with the weight of his island and the lightness of a bird.

Who Was Israel Kamakawiwo'ole?

To understand the meaning behind the lyrics, you must first understand the man. Israel Kamakawiwo'ole, affectionately known as "Iz" or "Bruddah Iz," was a Native Hawaiian musician, singer, and activist. Born on May 20, 1959, in Honolulu, Hawaii, Iz grew up immersed in the rich traditions of Hawaiian music. His voice was enormous—not just in volume, but in warmth, texture, and emotional depth. Standing over six feet tall and weighing more than 500 pounds at his peak, Iz was a gentle giant whose physical presence contrasted sharply with the delicate, almost fragile quality of his falsetto.

Iz was deeply connected to the Hawaiian sovereignty movement. He believed in the preservation of Hawaiian culture, language, and land. His music was not just entertainment; it was a form of resistance, a declaration of identity, and a love letter to his homeland. When he sang, he carried the voice of a people who had been marginalized and overlooked. This context is essential when interpreting the meaning of "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" as sung by Iz. The lyrics are not just a child's fantasy from "The Wizard of Oz"; they become a yearning for a homeland, for peace, for a place where the Hawaiian spirit can fly free.

The Accidental Recording That Became Legendary

The story of how Iz recorded this iconic song is almost as magical as the song itself. In 1988, Iz arrived at a recording studio in Honolulu late at night. He was tired, and the engineer, Milan Bertosa, was about to close up for the evening. Iz asked if he could record something spontaneously. Bertosa set up the equipment, and Iz said, "Just one take." He picked up his ukulele and began to sing. The recording you hear today is that single, unedited take. There were no overdubs, no auto-tune, no second chances. It was pure, raw, and perfect.

The recording sat on a shelf for years before being released on his 1993 album "Facing Future." It was not

initially a hit, but over time, it found its way into films, television shows, commercials, and funerals. It became a soundtrack for moments of profound emotion. The fact that it was recorded in one take adds a layer of vulnerability to the meaning of the lyrics. This was not a polished, manufactured pop song. It was a man sitting alone in a studio, singing his heart out to a song that reminded him of hope.

Analyzing the Lyrics: A Deeper Meaning of "Somewhere Over The Rainbow"

When we examine the "Somewhere Over The Rainbow Lyrics Israel Kamakawiwo Meaning," we notice something immediately: the lyrics are slightly altered from the original 1939 version by Harold Arlen and E.Y. Harburg. Iz simplifies the song, stripping away some of the more complex verses and repeating the core message. The song begins with the famous line:

"Somewhere over the rainbow, way up high / There's a land that I heard of once in a lullaby."

In the original, this is a child's dream of a better place. But in Iz's voice, it becomes something more wistful. It is the longing of someone who has seen the harshness of the world but refuses to let go of innocence. Iz was no stranger to pain. He lived with obesity, health complications, and the grief of losing his brother Skippy, who also died due to obesity-related issues. The "land that I heard of once in a lullaby" could be read as a place of reunion, a place without suffering, or a place where the Hawaiian people are free.

The next lines carry the greatest emotional weight:

"Someday I'll wish upon a star / And wake up where the clouds are far behind me / Where troubles melt like lemon drops / Away above the chimney tops / That's where you'll find me."

The imagery of "troubles melting like lemon drops" is deceptively simple. Lemon drops are small, sweet, and fleeting. The comparison suggests that troubles are temporary, that sweetness can dissolve bitterness. For Iz, who struggled with his health and the political struggles of his people, this was not naive optimism. It was a radical act of hope. He chose to sing about melting troubles, not because they did not exist, but because he believed they could be transformed.

The song transitions into "What a Wonderful World," originally made famous by Louis Armstrong. Iz sings:

"I see trees of green, red roses too / I see them bloom for me and you / And I think to myself, what a wonderful world."

This transition is key to understanding the full meaning. In Iz's medley, the rainbow is not an escape to a distant fantasy. It is a bridge to appreciating the beauty of the world as it is. He is saying: yes, I dream of a better place, but I also see the roses blooming right now. There is a bittersweet tension between longing for what is not here and celebrating what is.

The Ukulele: An Instrument of Innocence and Grief

You cannot discuss the meaning of this song without acknowledging the instrument. Iz chose to accompany himself on the ukulele, an instrument often associated with lightheartedness, tropical vacations, and innocence. But in Iz's hands, the ukulele becomes an instrument of profound melancholy. The high, bright notes contrast with the depth of his voice. This tension creates a feeling of "happy sadness"—a term psychologists sometimes use to describe the emotion of bittersweet nostalgia. The ukulele's cheerful timbre makes the sadness bearable, and the sadness makes the cheerfulness meaningful.

This instrument choice also reflects Iz's Hawaiian identity. The ukulele is deeply rooted in Hawaiian culture. By using it to perform a classic American song, Iz was making a statement. He was saying that Hawaiian culture can hold universal emotions. He was claiming a place for his people in the global musical conversation. The

meaning of the lyrics, then, is also about cultural sovereignty and the power of softness.

Why This Version Resonates at Funerals and Celebrations

It is striking how often this song is played at funerals, memorials, and moments of collective grief. It was used in tributes after 9/11, during the COVID-19 pandemic, and for countless private ceremonies. Why? Because the lyrics of "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" as sung by Iz offer a vision of death not as an end, but as a return. "Where troubles melt like lemon drops" suggests a release from suffering. "That's where you'll find me" suggests continuity beyond physical presence.

For many, the song has become a way to say goodbye without bitterness. It allows mourners to feel the full weight of their loss while also feeling a glimmer of hope. Iz himself died young, at age 38, in 1997. His death was mourned by the entire state of Hawaii. His body lay in state at the State Capitol, and thousands of people came to pay respects. His ashes were scattered into the Pacific Ocean. When you listen to the song now, you hear the voice of a man who knew he would not live long. There is an urgency to his gentleness. He was singing for himself as much as for anyone else.

The Meaning of "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" in Hawaiian Context

To fully grasp the "Somewhere Over The Rainbow Lyrics Israel Kamakawiwo Meaning," we must place the song within the Hawaiian concept of "Aloha." Aloha is not just a greeting. It is a way of being that encompasses love, compassion, mercy, and mutual respect. It is the belief that we are all connected. When Iz sings about a land over the rainbow, he is not talking about a physical location. He is talking about a state of being that aligns with Aloha. It is a world where people treat each other with kindness, where nature is revered, and where the soul is free.

Hawaii has experienced colonization, the overthrow of its monarchy, and the suppression of its language. The "land over the rainbow" can be interpreted as a metaphor for the Hawaiian kingdom before foreign intervention. Iz was an activist who used his music to advocate for Hawaiian rights. When he sings with such tenderness, he is not retreating from politics. He is offering a vision of what the world could look like if we embraced the values of Aloha. The lyrics become a gentle manifesto for peace and justice.

The Legacy of One Take, One Voice, One Ukulele

Since its release, this version of the song has been used in countless films, including "Finding For You," "Meet Joe Black," "50 First Dates," and numerous television shows. It has been covered by artists around the world, but no one has matched the emotional depth of the original. The reason is simple: you cannot replicate authenticity. Iz was not performing. He was being.

In 2020, the Library of Congress added the recording to the National Recording Registry, recognizing it as "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant." This is a formal acknowledgment of what millions already knew: this song is a treasure. The meaning of the lyrics continues to evolve. For a child, it is a lullaby. For an activist, it is a rallying cry. For a mourner, it is a comfort. For a dreamer, it is a permission slip to keep dreaming.

Why We Keep Coming Back to This Song

In an age of digital perfection, where every note can be corrected and every vocal can be tuned, the raw humanity of Iz's recording stands out. You can hear him breathe. You can hear the slight imperfections in his strumming. You can hear him feel each word. This vulnerability is precisely why the meaning of the lyrics lands so deeply. It reminds us that we are not machines. We are creatures of longing and love, capable of holding both grief and joy at the same time.

The song also offers a counterpoint to cynicism. In a world that often rewards hardness and detachment, Iz chose softness. He chose hope. He chose to believe that troubles can melt, that the world is wonderful, and that somewhere over the rainbow, there is a place where we can all be free. This message is timeless, but it feels especially urgent today. We need songs that allow us to feel without judgment. We need permission to be tender.

Conclusion: A Rainbow That Never Fades

The "Somewhere Over The Rainbow Lyrics Israel Kamakawiwo Meaning" is not a fixed thing. It moves and breathes with each listener. For some, it is a childhood memory. For others, it is a funeral song. For many, it is a daily reminder that beauty exists alongside pain. Israel Kamakawiwo'ole gave us a gift when he sat in that studio late at night and sang from his heart. He gave us a song that holds us when we are sad and lifts us when we are weary. The rainbow he sang about is not just a meteorological phenomenon. It is a covenant, a promise, a bridge between what is and what could be. And as long as people listen to this recording, that rainbow will never fade.

Related Articles

- **Are James Blunt And Emily Blunt Related**
  URL: https://signage.openstack.org/are-james-blunt-and-emily-blunt-related.pdf
- **Was Remember Me Based On A True Story**
  URL: https://signage.openstack.org/was-remember-me-based-on-a-true-story.pdf
- **Ess Employee Self Service Costco**
  URL: https://signage.openstack.org/ess-employee-self-service-costco.pdf
- **The Case For Christianity By Cs Lewis**
  URL: https://signage.openstack.org/the-case-for-christianity-by-cs-lewis.pdf

TOPIC INDEX

#somewhere • #over • #rainbow • #lyrics • #israel

DIGITAL EDITION

somewhere-over-the-rainbow-lyrics-israel-kama

DIGITAL EDITION

somewhere-over-the-rainbow-lyrics-israel-kama

DIGITAL EDITION

somewhere-over-the-rainbow-lyrics-israel-kama

DIGITAL EDITION

somewhere-over-the-rainbow-lyrics-israel-kama