

Nana I Na Loea Hula
Kumu Hula: Rachel Kamakana
Interviewer: Lovina Le Pendu
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My full given name at birth was Rachel Jacqueline Akau and then when I married, my married name became Kamakana, In the book as I sign it Rachel Akau Kamakana. (DO YOU TEACH PRESENTLY?) I teach presently in Ho'olehua Moloka'i, it is in a recreational center that is owned by the department of Hawaiian Homelands. Age of the students vary at this point let's see, 17 is the youngest and 41 is the oldest. (BOYS AND GIRLS?) No...all women... (NAME OF THE HALAU?) Hula Halau o Moloka'i. (STORY BEHIND THE NAME?) The name was really given to me by Aunt Harriett Nei when I uniki from her she told me that when I will open my own school she would give me that name to open my own school and that's what I did. (SPECIAL MEANING?) I don't think there was something special other than that on Moloka'i there really weren't at the time that I took from her any halaus or any hula schools that were taught Kahiko and this would be I guess the first for Moloka'i. It is like here we are in the Island of Moloka'i and establishing a hula school. (DO YOU TEACH OLI?) and it just with the halau with hula. (HOW MANY YEARS YOU HAVE BEEN TEACHING?) I try to really remember all these dates, I try to really put them in order what really pushed it out for me to teach is after I uniki from Aunt Harriett it was prior to the State Foundation with Aunt Hoakalei Kama'u came out with that teaching the kumu in the community try to develop kumu hula that was the purpose I think at that point in community so they will begin to teach the traditional chants and those kinds of hulas...I had uniki from Aunt Harriett and there was a period of time here I did not do any teaching and then when the State Foundation Culture and the Arts started the program, they contacted Aunt Harriett of course because she was known as the historian for Moloka'i and was told about the project and that's how I found out about it she called me and said I want you to go to

this. State Foundation is providing this training for kumu hula in the community and I want you to go to that. she said it would help you in your hula and that's one something I have to say about her. She was always encouraging. I say she was always pushing..pushing.. pushing you need to go out and do that...I mean she is always doing that when I got involved with that class that was sponsored by State Foundation and Auntie Hoakalei one of the conditions getting the training or the lessons was that we will teach for one year free in the community, that was one of the conditions, so I said ok. I can do that, so after the training or the classes that we had..I did to fulfill my commitment to that because we got it all free.. I taught on Moloka'i one year for free in the community after that plus there were a spot to have classes in it so that was I talked with Auntie Harriet about opening a school; she was right there she said great it is a wonderful idea and she was really happy that I finally was going to do that...(WHAT AGE DID YOU FIRST LEARN HULA?) Fifteen. (FIRST TEACHER?) Tom Hiona he taught in a studio he used to live down Maunakea street him and my uncle were really good buddies and at that time growing up, I was really interested in hula per say.. I was more interested in playing baseball..real tom boy...I used to be a real tomboy, I used to always be out there playing baseball, basket ball playing with boys.. instead of doing girl's things which my mother... she used to be very upset she said you are going to be a boy rather than a girl..so I was hauled when I was 15 to Tom Hiona and he was supposed to make me feminine you know be like a little lady, learn how to dance the hula learn how to do these things, ya but they dragged me to him which wasn't a very happy experience for me at that time but what Tom did he only taught the beginners or he only taught me kahiko and when I saw the auana I said Oh. Maybe I should learn how to do that he said no he was going to determine when I was going to learn oh helo...ok... He was very strict during these sessions because I couldn't or wouldn't except that teaching willingly. I didn't want to be there. He made me cry every time I went to class because I wasn't doing it right and I needed to do this...but

after one year of that I just.. I told my uncle I am not going back that's it pau...Of course he was very disappointed ya. I look back now and I say gee. Mina mina.. you only learned kahiko then ya. That's all I can remember it was Halehale he oha known as Keawe O'opa...there were several others but Keawe O'opa comes to me Au aia, A Ko'olau you know the basics...standards chants that we all had to learn at same point but just beginning hula, traditional hula especially A Ko'olau, Aia la oleli all of these basic chants I guess it came from lolani those are like her basic chants she taught too ya. (DO YOU REMEMBER THE STYLE? METHOD?) I can still see him... and he is with his ipu he is in his ho'opa'a position and he pa'i that ipu that means you have to get ready you get ready and when he starts you just start you start with him as he calls it. His stature was always; very straight, very tall, very erect he just held himself very... I don't know what this is regal I guess. I mean his presence was just he is ready, he is all together. He is ready to begin, I don't remember the chanting part but the dancing part, he will just say get in you line..and as he called he will show you the step one time and then he would expect you to do it the corrections regularly he will do those corrections.. he wanted it a certain way...he wanted you to hold you head a certain way...your position sort of speak you hula position was a certain way..(DID HE EVER TALK ABOUT HIS BACKGROUND?) No... (DID YOU LEARN OTHER THAN HULA?) No, just specific hula. (DO RESEARCH?) No. (DID HE TEACH IN HAWAIIAN ..ENGLISH?) He spoke in english ..and when ever I went he had another class..in that class..older women..these are women that probably were with him for a while and whenever he will do shows he will take them with him so their were ocassions that I would watch them practice..one of the ladies I remember was Mahoe, I think I am not sure, I think Kealoha Kalama was a student. (IN YOUR CLASS?) I you know there was another girl that was a little older actually most of them were older than me and had been there before I arrived I guess he was doing my uncle a really big favor by taking me so I went in the class and just watched and followed and went...

(NEVER HAD AN EXPERIENCE BEFORE?) NO...after Tom Hiona was when I went to Aunt Harriett because I moved then from we just had moved back from California and we had moved back to Moloka'i because my husband is from here to take care of his father because his mother has passed away so when we moved here, Aunt Harriet had classes and that's when I joined it's got to be 62-63 maybe because it was after my last child. (DID YOU LEARN BOTH KAHIKO AND AUANU?) Yes... (CAN YOU COMPARE WITH TOM HIONA?) The methods and styles were really sharp differences like with Aunt Harriett, she had like lessons planed, a song she will have the music done she will have the chant done not the music the mele done on papers so at least you can see the words and then she would talk about the song itself or the chant itself and would give us just what she knew and she did not require us to research but she did encourage us to talk to tutus...aunties, ect...but she would just give us what ever she had and then she would set up the teaching and the teaching about the song itself then she would go into the choreography of it; she did have her own basic steps set up like kaholo..uwehe..anii all the basic fundamental movements she would go through all of these steps...she would put notes on the side for you to write how did you do it she would put directions for you and after that you were responsible for your own directions if you lost it you had to recall it from memory. (HOW LONG WERE YOU WITH HER?) About 3 years, my first class with her was just to learn...and then she did a uniki for that, a completion for those lessons or the time spent with her, no paper though, no certificate, what she did she said it was the old ways where she will bring witnesses and they will witness that you had completed a certain part of the training and the two witnesses they are not here anymore. (WHEN WAS THAT UNIKI HOW LONG DID YOU TOOK HULA THEN?) It was about a year maybe a little longer only she never sit it always that she will move tell me time was right it the time wasn't in a par or whatever is whatever is the time that is the time. (HOW MANY WERE YOU?) We did that as a dancer as a student I remember there was 4 of us I think, there

were more no much more than that but not everybody completed and then out the one that did completed there 4 of us that she asked us that she wanted us to continue to be kumu hula because we had demonstrated , we had learned and she was pleased with what we had learned then she moved to prepare us to be kumu hula, then only 4 of us actually there was 3 from my class and there was one that she had uniki prior to the 3 of us and today out of the 4 of us, one passed away and the other 2 are not actively teaching I am the only one that had survived that. (WHAT KIND OF REQUIREMENT SHE GAVE YOU TO BECOME A TEACHER?) She required that we be able, at that point we had to research she gave us certain chants and mele to research we were to do the research and give it back to her and then in addition to that we had to identify a student someone who never had hula and we will have to teach them the basic fundamentals steps and one hula number. (THAT THE PERIOD OF THE KUMU HULA TRAINING?) Ya, she would also require us at a moments notice she will call us and say I have to do a lecture and I have to do a demonstration so I need for you to come bring this, bring that so she will do her lecture and we will do the dance. (DID YOU ENTERTAIN WITH HER?) Ya, at several places basically here she had a whole lot of lectures, people will come here and she will provide lectures for them, we would be part of that the demonstration the practical part ya...she was in charge of the annual may day program, aloha week program all those Hawaiian cultural activities she was always in charge and so we would have to do that... (WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO BE A TEACHER?) Tell the truth, I never wanted to be a teacher...I wanted to dance my life away...in fact I never see myself as been a kumu hula or a teacher it self of hula ya...I just saw myself as going from teacher to teacher as having a wonderful time and all that I learn I felt good about what I did but once I started doing that I was just besieged by people that really wanted to learn. (IS STATE AFTER THE STATE FOUNDATION?) Ya, even before that ...but I never did it, of. I did have time I was working babies..children..family..an occasional somebody wanted to learn something on occasional I will

do but I never really took on the role as kumu hula or teacher until State Foundation came and that was one of the requirements myself I had to accept the fact if I did this, if I teach for at least a year and I said, ok. I can do that and if I didn't want to teach after that, I wouldn't teach..it would be my own choice my own time and etc.... (HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE YOUR DANCING STYLE?) I don't know if I have a style...some of the teachers that I had learned from some were very explicit about...like if you teach this number that I taught you I want it to be like this and then i had been teachers that said hey you know if the mood moves you to change it feel free to do that. so ya. I have been both sides of the coin per say...and I will respect that...in fact I was struggling we were trying. Remember what was taught by Ku'u lei aloha Terry, she came one time she was invited to come here. Her daughter and her she was invited to do a program, when she was coming it was a request to do a program, when she was coming it was request to teach it was a workshop we said ok. We went to the workshop and it was at that time she had given this chant it was about the heavens the horizon, it was a really nice, nice chant and she said to us if you teach this, teach it exactly like I have so all this year are gone by when I came across oh that might fit in with the story that I was looking for so when I reviewed my notes I could not figure it out, there was something different about this chant, and I could not figure it out so I thought maybe I should try to call her for what ever reason I have tried either she is not there or she was on a trip somewhere and I talked to Piilani and she said yes, mama just call her but I just never made the connection yet...so ok, if I can't remember maybe I should not do that so I haven't done it so for me is what are the instructions are I will respect it for whatever that is. (WHICH KUMU HULA HAD THE GREATEST INFLUENCE ON YOU?) You know they made an impact on me in many different ways but I think it is the accumulation. It is the building of all of this, it is not necessarily the chant that they taught or had shared with you, it's really the feeling that comes to take care and when you do a job do a good job don't make half-half like it is just that to me it

is what I get of all of them cumulatively because it was consistent with all of them. As long you take care of what to do...and try to be simple you don't have to be flashy light...the simplicity of it...In one of the teachers, spending time with teachers I think that made an impact on me it is really Kalena Silva, he is very organized he was very the ???? and if I go back to him at some point he will probably being doing this the very same way. I mean his method I guess to me that's a method the concept, delivery of the message I find myself thinking a lot of that and also sometime if I am trying to figure out something...I remember, and I hear certain things that goes back to certain teacher oh. That's what she did... (DO YOU HAVE A STRUCTURE IN THE HALAU?) Yes, we start with the basic fundamentals and they need to know...I would say that 90% of my time in teaching is really in Kahiko that's where my preference is...I will do an occasional auana and if the student needs it as a break, and I find it if you break it now and then, I don't have a lot of students that kahiko is number one and that's all they want to do... They want to do auana too...for me the basics comes from kahiko so they learn those basic steps I start with basic fundamentals also a entrance chant, that's part of the protocol so you get them into a mood or into an environment many of the women people who come to me...the traditional grounding...they've never had...so you almost have to build it for them. (HOW MANY STUDENTS DO YOU HAVE?) At this point we all are on vacation, but right now I have like 15... (DO YOU ENCOUNTER ANY DIFFICULTIES DURING YOUR HULA?) With myself, no, Some difficulties in halau have been in the women that come or the students that comes many times they have many problems and so it is very apparent when they come. you now the concentration isn't there, the understanding isn't there and in trying to teach traditional hula you almost have...it is like being a social worker. It is like being some place they can come to get away and that's what I found most of the students did it was a place to come to get away because their lives are so you know upside down or too busy and not as organized, not structured and for me I believe that in hula

you can...it is not only dancing it is a way of life...You can learn these basics skills that will help you in you own life it is not like turn off over here because I am going over herethat's the same thing that's go through out...responsibility...learn to be able to focus and to apply, learn to organize you know develop your knowledge base those are the kinds of things like for one that halau does it provides them an arena where they can learn and they can learn and apply in their own life and in their professional life...All those different like arts tradition that you learn like they do a workshop on that a this when you go to those workshops you have to do the same things you have to be able to organize to have to be able to understand what that still is and you will have a chance to develop the skill that may not be the skills for you but you learning as you go along and some day you might use that . (WHAT KIND OF JOY DO YOU GET IN TEACHING?) When they have accomplished what I taught them, when they understand what I taught them and they themselves can feel good about what they had learned and when they see themselves or when they can feel that sense of accomplishment like in a performance great. (WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT?) Teaching this many years...sometimes it is like.. I don't want to do this anymore.. you keep on going...I think the greatest accomplishment for me as a hula teacher is the experience of teaching because I had to do the research I had bad to go learn how to do that , all these different aspects of it, so I am going to be able to transmit this information the other thing that's been really good I had a lot of help from a lot of different people. Just kumu hula friends or just friends that I had a lot of information about hula who made not be kumu hula but a lot of people who had a lot of knowledge just like Aunty Edith McKinzie, every time you meet this lady she is doing something different but in many ways it all pertains back, it all ties back....the one other hula teacher that really stands out for me as far as model was Aunty Edith Kanaka'ole and even now, I have good relationship with the two daughters and has not only been in hula it has been in other community appearances, Hawaiian activities...

and working with Pua on the kapa Heiau on Moloka'i that was a fantastic experience in the preparation of that. going through and learning even in a short time tapa making. I love that that is very theraputic...recently going through the workshop with Calvin Ho; these little pieces, I never really got into the ipu making or gourd making stuff now to complete that portion of it although there's a lot more just that itself...gives me...really draws the picture of what life was like back then and if there wasn't a dependency on like you know how we like to day store...there wasn't you really had to be independent, you had to figure out a lot of stuff today no need to figure it out if your ice box breaks you go buy another one... (DO YOU THINK BEEN ON MOLOKA'I YOUR HALAU IS DIFFERENT?) Yes, actually a lot of people tell me that is that what they see you know when we perform we are very different from anybody else and I don't know what that is because no one has been able to tell me what that is or describe to me what that is. (HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE YOUR DANCING STYLE?) Like I said, I am not too that I have a dancing style. (DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE THE MOLOKAI STYLE?) I don't know what people think Moloka'i style is. I think like for us and for me and halau that are here on Moloka'i we are away from a lot of bigger halau and more formal halaus like a real school-school we don't have the same kind of influences I think and when I look at that I like it because it is from here then we go to the next point but the concepts and I don't know maybe that's how it is from here then we go to the next point but the concepts and I don't know maybe that's how it is, but I really never been able to articulate that myself too and when I ask people to describe that for me what is that difference what do you see that's really different..I don't know... This one said first of all the dance is very simple...and then they don't do all the fancy things...is that it...oh no, that's not it...You are different. (IS IT THE PEOPLE?) I think that's have a lot to do with it because they don't have all that fancy influences to that degree yes my halau is really influenced by me for my own influence it is been with people like Aunty Edith Kanaka'ole been with Kalena Silva, it been what little I can

remember maybe not necessarily the dance movements from Tom Hiona but just the presence I have a preference for simplicity. I don't do fancy dancing things I look at what the mele is and I go from there. (DO YOU UNIKI YOUR STUDENTS?) I just did, as dancers yes. In 1992. (A WHOLE CLASS?) Not everybody made it, but I would say yes a class. (DO YOU HAVE SOMEBODY IN MIND?) Ya, I have but it would be a preference the students themselves I feel have to really comfortable in doing it and they are not at that point. (WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FROM THEM?) Most of the students that I graduated have been with me for a long time and the shortest time with has been like 5 years and the longest has been oh maybe 12 or 13 years, so this class was a mix bag and maybe I had a very shinnig moment that I felt really good about is that the youngest students that I have now that I uniki as a dancer came to me when she was 12 years old she had 2 left feet, she didn't have a sense, she was very intraverted hardly spoke..beautiful child..really hawaiian child..but I had this child for almost 2 years and I said oh. this one will never do it and then one summer she just went turn the light turned on and this just started to go I said gee. I can't believe it and she stayed from 12 years old and she is 17 now and we can do any chant that she learned, some chants she will jump to it, some chants she kind of think it through and then she gets it and then she dos it, not like before we had to repeat line for line but when I saw her there at the uniki site all her older hula sister per say and you know they knid of mother her too...it was such a great feeling for me that here is this girl she never gave up... she would come to class even though she never got it or she had hard time getting it she would faithfully come to class... (WHAT KIND OF ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NEW KUMU?) First of all it depends of that individual is, if I knew that individual that I would give that custom like advice but basic information will be this is know all your materials understand as best you can the mele becasue I truly believe that the mele helps you just just have to time in it is not that the mele tune in to you...you tune into the mele...but know your material, get as much

information from where ever you can and just no information is not useful every piece of information is useful. (DO YOU CLASSIFY YOUR HALAU TRADITIONAL?) Ya. I guess it is because my own concept, my own philosophy of it of that time in that time and that era, ya. Because most of the things that I have taught them had been from a different era and different time and that's way.... (DO YOU THINK HULA HAS CHANGED?) YA. (WHAT DO YOU THINK OF HULA KAHIKO OF TODAY?) Well, you know like any thing else as time goes on there are changes most time changes are really subtle, ya...and you don't realize that you are changing but you are and it is a different time and frame work. It is a different set of values, values had changed I mean you look at the society today, it is very reflective of that...When I was growing up it was important. Well, certain things was important family was important, God was important and what you do with yourself was important so these are these are the guiding values foundation that you build as you go but you look at today, the values are not strong like it used to be, they don't see any strong emphasis on god, religion, spirituality. I don't see any strong emphasis on God, religion, spirituality, I don't see that much respect for elders, I used to talk back and you get wacked now to day you cannot hit your child a child can turn you in and say child abuse. You know society kind of disarm themselves with some of those safeguards that helped kids and people to develop into what I call truly responsible people, and the values are very different. (WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF HULA KAHIKO?) To me hula kahiko is really a time period...and I think for me in the hula kahiko it is a dance that is very simplistic in its delivery...for me that's what it is. I look back to a time... (DO YOU COMPOSE?) No! Well, I did small little things, here and there, but I haven't really worked with it. There were couple occasions when I just felt to do that. (DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE CHANT?) I think one of the chant that does for that will be Kaulilua I like that chant it has a very it just a really beautiful, beautiful chant...we learned that from Autry Harriett. (DO YOU PREFER KAHIKO OR AUANA?) Kahiko, I guess it is

because it is special to me, auana is more light anybody can do that but in kahiko you need a little more then here is a chant figure out what you have to do and do it. It just need more than that. (DO YOU THINK HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE IS IMPORTANT?) Yes, because within the language itself, are the keys the keys to understanding keys that can better define a feeling a sense a thought it is just better the language itself has the keys. (DO YOU TEACH YOUR HULA IN THE LANGUAGE?) No, I don't teach in Hawaiian...the material is in hawaiian and we go from that. (DO YOU HAVE STUDENTS THAT SPEAK THE LANGUAGE?) I have students who are learning to do that..I encourage that... (WHO YOU CONSIDER AS HULA MASTER?) A hula master what is a hula master, oh. I never thought about that someone that's very knowledgable, someone who can convey the culture of the people here especially hawaiians people who can also I guess teach it..not only the language but that whole aspect of it.. (CAN YOU GIVE ME NAME WHO YOU LOOK UP TO AS A HULA MASTER?) I would say somebody like Kalena Silva, Auntie Edith McKenzie, Pua Kanakaole, I mean those to be anybody...Frank Huett, John Kanuikama, he is talented. You all hula don't come from the same school you got to accept unless it is really off the wall it has to be really extreme, but they don't....they don't except just because they came from other schools they don't except it, so anybody that's different from that is incredible..I think it is all the human part about power...hula has a lot of politics... (BESIDES HULA WHAT DO YOU DO IN CULTURE?) I try to learn many different things about the culture. there is one part thing that I don but I don't want for you to write it 4 years ago. I became involved with "Hui Malama i na Kupuna" that a way and term of taking care of the "iwi" and that has been a very fulfilling task for me in fact we just did one the other night and in each one each instance that we had recruiter is like more understanding it like lights go on and it also says to me I learned some lessons for myself as I go along with that...those are the kind of things I like to get involvements in those cultural aspects as I believe are very important you know caring for the ancestors is very

important, give you different kind of appreciation but everything is not in the kind of frame like I go to go to work at 8 to 4 it is different it goes beyond the skills that you learned. that it is all consuming it is a circle and when it is the time to be it will be..it's like today each of us have other commitments to other things but we also have commitment of taking care of the iwi so in our daily life you cannot do you useful skills that you learned to organize so you can meet that for me after doing it this other time what ever you do when you reinter it, they are going to guide it, they are going tell when, how...and that's it, no questions!...I work for Alu Like, I am the island representative for Alu Like on Moloka'i, we have a small little flower farm, we do that... (HOW LONG YOU HAVE BEEN LIVING ON MOLOKA'I?) 34 years...moved back in 1960. (DID YOU SERVE AS JUDGE?) I did 2 high school competitions, 1 keiki hula, would hula....