

"Nana I Na Loea Hula"
1st draft

KEITH KALANI AKANA

A teacher for the Hawaiian Immersion Program at Waiiau Elementary School, Keith Kalani Akana is kumu hula of Ka Pā Hula Ho'oheno Hawai'i established in 1987.

When I was a sophomore at Kamehameha Schools, I was originally hired as an aid for Hawaiian language but I helped Ho'oulu Cambra Richards teach hula to the students in the Explorations Program. I was really shy but Ho'oulu made me teach. She ingrained in me poise and confidence. Watching the effect she had on the students sparked my interest in hula as a teaching tool to reach children.

Shortly after, Palani Kahala, a fellow Hawaiian language student who turned out to be my relative, talked me into learning hula from him. One afternoon in Auntie Nona Beamer's room, he started teaching me the rudiments of hula. Auntie Nona was very supportive of us and gave us access to her files and consultations. She even entered us in a hula competition at St. Andrews Priory in 1974. That's where I first saw Kaha'i's men perform.

After graduating in 1975, I saw a newspaper ad for hula classes from Ka Pā Hula Hawai'i. I signed up and traveled all the way to Waiahole Poi Factory where the classes were held. Kaha'i Topolinsky has been my kumu ever since.

Kaha'i ^{engrained} in me the love for the traditions of hula; ^{particularly} how it's passed down from kumu to kumu and family. I was especially touched by his treatment of his family chants, ~~because~~ I could see the direct tie between kumu, family and the past. ^{because as} He is also a history buff ~~and~~ he brings it to each of his hula. ^{He} Touching ^{ad} not only the emotional but the intellectual cord within me. ~~that hula embodies also our history.~~

I had what they call a huelepo ceremony. It was a private and small ceremony held at noon. It was attended by Kaha'i, the family and myself. We had

those special 'ailolo foods, chanting and pule. I observed a kapu period prior to ~~the~~
small pa'ina ~~and~~ a performance test. ^{add a small pa'ina,}

Kaha'i was very gracious. ^{He} ~~to~~ ^{ad} allow me to take workshops from other people. I
attended Auntie Edith Kanaka'ole's workshops, and at the same time, I started
taking chanting lessons from Kalena Silva. ~~Later on~~ ^{also} I learned from Auntie Edith
McKinzie when ^{over} she conducted workshops for the State Council on Hawaiian
Heritage.

A memorable hula highlight for me was going to the South Pacific Festival of
Arts. We were able to learn from different kumu hula like ^{such as} Auntie Pat Bacon ^{and} Auntie
Maiki Aiu Lake, ^{I could} ~~and~~ see the different styles handed down to them by Joseph Ilalaole,
Keahi Luahine and Lokalia Montgomery. (I think that every hula person should
have this opportunity) ~~to know that there are distinct styles.~~ One day, I would like to
learn the Pua Ha'aheo style from Noenoe Zuttermeister.

As a child, I was fascinated ^{by the chanting of} listening to Mahi Beamer, 'Iolani Luahine and
Hoakalei Kamau'u ~~chant~~. In school, I didn't consider myself a good hula dancer
and I didn't think I had a strong voice since I flunked concert glee. But I listened to
the chanting of Ho'oulu, Auntie Nona and Kalena and they became my models. It
wasn't talent but hard work and dedication ^{that} ~~to~~ ^{ad} develop my voice.

I was fortunate to receive a scholarship in Hawaiian language from the
University. I saw hula and chant as a vehicle to reach the Hawaiian youth ~~and~~ ^{but}
language is what ~~made that all tie in~~ ^{it all} together. (Hula gave me ^{an} that arena to
internalize and ruminate on the meaning, kaona and language of hula. All I have
to do is use my knowledge and abilities in language to explain to the students the
stories brought alive through hula. ^{the}

I recently opened an 'olapa class and scared a lot of students off because I
conduct class only in Hawaiian. ^{I hope to see} But one day, every kumu hula will be able to do
that ~~because they should be able to speak Hawaiian.~~

^{To him}
I'm not a part of Ka Pa Hula Hawai'i, but I'm like their big brother. Kaha'i asks me to help his students with chant and language. You can never repay your kumu, so even though I have a busy schedule, I continue to help his hālau.

That my kumu is satisfied and approves of what I do is an accomplishment. Graduation is one way that the kumu acknowledges the student. Anyone can graduate if they put on a good show, but the proof is if you can continue to please your kumu. If I didn't do that, then there's really no sense of me even continuing.

Language is the key for ^{an} aspiring kumu hula. ~~The~~ young people have an advantage because they can decide ~~very~~ early-on to learn the language. Secondly, whether they 'uniki or not, they need a kumu or a mentor to ^{turn to} ~~fall back on~~. That's why we have the word kumu, meaning the source. If a person doesn't have a kumu or a mentor, they're going to flounder. ^{Thirdly, A} the young kumu have to develop ^a their ~~own~~ style. ^{and} In the area of creativity, they have to develop ^{creatively} something unique ~~to them~~ that ^{makes him/her} marks them a little ~~bit~~ different. And ^{kindly} fourthly, every kumu has to have and preserve the traditions of their hālau. If I teach a dance from my hālau, it's my obligation to teach ~~it~~ ^{I learned the dance} in the exact way.

I don't like the term hula kahiko. We always used the word hula 'olapa in our hālau. Hula kahiko technically means ^{" "} old hula and I don't like stereotyping hula [&] being something old. The Hawaiians had a name for every hula by its type and style. Hula noho, hula 'ulī'ulī, hula pahu, hula 'a'alapapa, and so on. A hula person has to know all these kinds of hula. So hula kahiko is a broad term that is not linguistically correct and I think it's too stifling because it doesn't account for the traditional kinds of hula and ~~it doesn't account~~ for hula that we need to branch off into.

I have my masters degree and soon I would like to start on my doctorate. ^{in?} But I can truthfully say, of all the formal Western style education that I've had, there's ^{greater} more satisfaction in the formal traditional graduation and training ^{of} hula. There's

a lot more pride, a lot more satisfaction ~~and~~ ^{and} you receive ^{much} a lot more ^{than} that you can ^{win} give. I've come to the realization that ~~nobody cares what I got my masters in.~~ It only means that I make \$2,000 more a year. We tout higher education ~~but~~ you cannot compare ^{adequ} it with what you ^{really} get from hula: the pride of knowing that you are continuing a tradition.