

## NANA I NA LOEA HULA

Kumu Hula: Namahana Kalama-Panui

Interviewer: Lovina Le Pendu

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(WHAT IS YOUR FULL GIVEN NAME?) Joyce Namahana-i-kaleleonalani Kalama Panui.

(FOR THE BOOK?) Namahana Kalama-Panui. (DO YOU TEACH PRESENTLY?) As a kumu hula in

Hana, Maui. (AVERAGE AGE?) The average is from keiki age 5 to kupuna age 70, and some

older. The majority of students are children. (NAME OF THE HALAU?) Na Mamoali'i O Ka'uiki.

(CAN YOU TELL ABOUT THE BACKGROUND OF THE NAME?) I think it was my 19th birthday.

Instead of celebrating, I was at home. I was at O'ahu at the time. I hadn't moved to Hana yet, but

I had gone there before. And that night I had a dream. And that night I composed. I got up and

composed a mele called, "Na Mamo Ali'i", and it talked about my ancestors. And I wished to

return to their homeland. Years later, when I had an opportunity and a job opened up at the

school, because I am also a school teacher, I moved to Hana. And when I started to teach my first

class, I added up the rest of the name, "O Ka'uiki", the school. Ka'uiki is the birthplace of

Ka'ahumanu, that is ohana. I don't like to tell people that, but that's where the school was and is

still along the slopes of Ka'uiki. That is where the school is located. And even if it will move to

another location, the memory of Ka'uiki will be with us forever, the children are of Ka'uiki.

Those of us who knows Hawaiian folklore or tradition, genealogy will understand why the name

"Na Mamoali'i O Ka'uiki" just tells you who where. (DO YOU TEACH BOTH KAHIKO AND AUANA?)

I teach both - kahiko, auana. (OLI?) I teach oli. . .both. . . (TO ALL CLASSES?) The

fundamentals, the basics, yes. I don't believe that you can hula if you don't have those elements

that are the foundation of hula. Oli if the foundation of hula. Language is a foundation of hula.

Kahiko is a foundation of hula. Auana came later. Even mele too, and himeni. We do all. How

much is done in every class depends on the abilities and the stages of development of the classes.

So some classes will have less and others will have more, but that also depends on the sincerity and the inner growth of the students and their devotion or dedication to learning and respect for this heritage. (HOW DO YOU SEPARATE YOUR CLASS? BY AGE?) A combination of many aspects. For working with children, it is always good to have by ages, because learning development is similar. I don't do all 5 years all together or 7 year olds all together. Number is small. There is not that many 5 year olds or 7 year olds, so I combine age levels. Besides, I don't like to limit because sometimes a 5 year old may have the learning development of a 7 year old, so he can be in the same class, and vice versa. You will find an 8 year old who has a development of a 5 year old. So partly by age, partly by ability, partly about the old ways when the child shows maturity or certain stages of development. That's how you put them in the class. The adult classes are together. We do have, I like to call them beginner, intermediate, advanced. I don't believe there is such thing in Hawaiian tradition. It is just like the coconut. It has certain stages in maturity, you know, the meat. In the same way, the growth of the plant, the growth of a child, or the growth of a person is similar. So we put them in that stage. (HOW MANY STUDENTS DO YOU HAVE?) It ranges. We have students. . it is hard for me to tell you the exact number because we have students who. . .after a certain age in Hana it is very difficult. Many of them go away to intermediate and high school. It is a small community and to get educational advancement they tend to have to go away. Most of our students in the school do that. So they may become part time students. So they come during vacation. They come during summer time. The students live in other parts of the world. And so when they come to visit Hana or return to Hana for months at a time, they are like me - they live one place, then they live another place. And they go back and forth at different times. So anywhere between 25 and 50 at any given time. I don't like the question, actually, because I don't go by the number.

(WHEN DID YOU FIRST START HULA?) I was one of those babies who, when there was

music, you know, when families used to gather together and they will be playing music or singing, I will be one of those babies who will stand up and start dancing. I was a very shy person, but when the music started, I would always stand up and start dancing. I think my parents saw the potential, or if you want to say a "direction". I also lived in Guam in the early years of my childhood. My parents worked there. There were many Hawaiians or people from Hawai'i, and we had a nice community of people from Hawai'i. There was a person that taught hula. Her name was Constance Kane, in which I learned basic hula, and I don not consider her my first kumu hula. It was like a hui because people. .like ohana style. People miss home, miss Hawai'i, and they try to keep as much of Hawai'i within what they had, where they lived. So they had music. We had choral groups. We had instrumental groups. We had hula groups. And we used to gather together at lu'aus every year, and she was part of the entertainment, so she taught us basic hula.

My first and only kumu hula is Alicia Keolahou Smith. When my parents, or at least my mother, moved here to O'ahu. .we lived up at Papakolea with my grandfather for a little while. And she took me to the YWCA on Richards Street where Alicia was at the time. I was 8 years old, and my first reaction after the class, for the first hula class with her, my mother and I said, "Wow! That's a real Hawaiian, yeah?" And mother just smiled and I have been with Alicia ever since. That is not to say that I have not been inspired by others or touched by others. She is my kumu. (HOW DO YOU SEE HER STYLE?) I think she will be the best judge of her own style, and the best person to ask to describe the style. I always like the subtlety of her style and the drama and the "in-touch" with the oneness between fellow hula students, oneness between kumu and student, the oneness between the language, the music, the choreography, the earth, God. It is a refined style, very controlled. It's made to look very simple like it's <sup>flawless</sup> ~~flowerless~~ and it does not exhort energy, but yet you are exorting a lot of energy. It requires great discipline and control



because you're exhorting so much energy to look <sup>flawless</sup> ~~flowerless~~ and simple and yet it isn't. (YOU LEARNED OLI, KAHIKO, AUANA?) Yes. Fundamentals. Oli for me has come in different ways. Some kumu teach like oli kepakepa or ho'ae'ae, <sup>o'wewe</sup> ~~none~~. Mrs. Smith teaches oli the way you do it for mele hula, but I learned that whoever is your first kumu built the foundation of the oli anyway, and then from there if you have others, you learn others. For me, oli has developed over the years. She provided the foundation. The other things had come later. I don't know if I have been clear on that. (WAS SHE THE ONLY KUMU YOU WERE WITH?) There was a time that Mae Loebenstein worked along side with Alicia, and so I was involved with her styling. (HOW LONG?) I don't remember how long she was in the halau. I got older and I moved away to Hana, so she continued later. So I am not exactly sure.

(HOW DID YOU BECOME A KUMU HULA?) You know, people have different traditions, and we have books that say how one becomes kumu hula or written resources as to how one becomes kumu hula. But you know, there is always exceptions to the rule, and what books may say may reflect only certain traditions, not another. I guess the best way to answer this is. . .because it is very private and very personal, and if you look at the work that has been accomplished by myself and my students, when the question may be to ask me is am I a kumu hula and I will say, "Yes." Look at the work. Look at the students. Look at what we have done. Look what we have yet to do. And in that respect, I think for me you earn the right to be kumu hula. Just because you uniki, it only means you uniki. That does not mean you have earned the status or the right to be kumu hula. I have been teaching a long time before. Even though I let people call me kumu hula, I never call myself that and I have been teaching a long time. Before I call myself kumu hula and before I call the students hula students and before I call the halau a "Halau". . .we always called it "Na Mamoali'i O Ka'uiki" because it was established to become a Hawaiian school, total Hawaiian school, and we are still working towards that end. Hula has only

been the foundation because that's my foundation. That's the foundation I start with. That is not the only direction we are going to and we have worked hard to continually add on under important aspects of culture, language, tradition, history. It was always meant to be a total Hawaiian school. Yes. The other answer to the question is you become kumu hula when your kumu recognizes you as kumu hula. Uniki is only the ceremony to say, "Yes, you have passed as a student and now you can go on to this next stage which is to teach." But even if you uniki, if your work doesn't show that you are kumu hula, if your teacher cannot look at you in your face and tell you, "You are a kumu hula," if you cannot look at your students or yourself and your teacher and look at yourself and say, "Yes. I am a kumu hula," then you are not a kumu hula. But that's for me. That's our tradition. We study long. We trained long. It is not a three year thing hula. .5 year thing. Hula class, even if it is intense and then uniki and then you are kumu. It is a life time. (WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO BE A TEACHER?) I had decided already in the fourth grade. I don't know if I was in 3rd or 2nd grade. . .what is eight? Third grade. I had met Mrs. Smith. I was 8. That was the 3rd grade. After almost a year, not quite a year, she asked me to dance different places. And so in the 4th grade I had decided this is my life, hula is my life. And I want to be like her, not want to be her, not want to be my kumu, but be like her, which meant to teach was always a goal from that time. (DID YOU HAVE TO HAVE REQUIREMENTS TO BECOME KUMU HULA FROM MRS. SMITH?) There is not a written guide line and at least there was not for me because I am the first branch of the school of her generation or the next generation. I am the first teacher or kumu. I am the first branch. To me, she is still the kumu, our master, and she is the mother school. Any kumu that comes from that are only branches of that original source. I am the first branch. All I did was pave the pathway for others to come. There may be specific guidelines for all of them, but for me it wasn't done that way. It was done in a very private and personal ways I would say old way. . .and for that I am fortunate. I had to do a lot

that they may not have to do because I was the first. And then in other respect, I didn't have to have these rigid guidelines because I was the first. I don't know how to explain it. The situation changed from time to time and what was asked change from time to time. And what was done change form time to time. And it was by the work. When the work was shown, she saw the work. This is. . .I had left already, and teaching on my own and she saw my work and one day she saw the work. She told me, "You are a kumu." (CAN YOU EXPLAIN WHAT INFLUENCE SHE HAD ON YOU?) You got 10 hours? A tremendous amount of influence, love, devotion, respect, spirituality, foundation, gut, soul, spirit, hard work, joy, oneness, happiness, pain, sore body. How do I say that in a sentence? See, I grew up with this person. It's important to remember that besides being a kumu, she is like another mother. There are times when she is kumu, there are times when she's my mother, and now that I am older and also a kumu, there are times when she is a friend. But she always reminds me I will always be her student and she will always be my teacher, which I acknowledge. I have been with her for 30 years. I cannot find one instance in which she had influenced me because she had been in my life for 30 years. There has been so many ways that she had influenced me. I am totally devoted to her. I love tremendously and I have great respect for all the traditions and the teachings that she had shared and taught. (DO YOU HAVE YOUR OWN STYLE?) I kept her style. If you go with a kumu for 30 years, it's pretty hard not to do her same style. It is the first style that will pop into my brain, into my body, even though the style has developed over years, because styles do. . .people change. Style is only the reflection of the changes in the people's life. But there is other things to remember when you talk about style. Your own personality, you own spirit, goes into that style. So the style is the same, yes. I never wavered from the style. I never wanted to. I never will. But I am not my teacher. I am not the same person she is. So the style reflects my personality and my experiences of life too. Also remember that my students that I teach come from Hana and their



personal experiences and then life style is different from O'ahu, very different. So even though the style is the same foundation, there are some differences in those children. I always talk about children because I deal with them the most. They are a little rougher on the edges. They are a little more hearty. They may not be as refined as if I was to do it with my kumu, but they come from Hana and they are going to be that way. And we joke about it because you can put two students together from two different schools. They don't quite dance the same. But we teach the same and the style is the same. So the style reflects my personal experiences of life and my personality myself and as well as the students and where they come from. If I was to do the same style on have another school or have a different school here on O'ahu, I would bet that it would be more like the original. But because it is in Hana and Hana is very rural and the lifestyle is very, very different. Besides, I don't want them to be a carbon copy. I want them to be a branch, and extension, of. . .just like I would assume my kumu would not want me to be a carbon copy of her. Anybody can do that. It is what you add to it.

I believe that hula is life. It is a study of life through<sup>a</sup> Hawaiian perspective and that perspective happens to be in this vehicle, hula. So anything that you do that is a reflection of life is going to have difficulties. Struggle is an important part in a development of any human being. When you recognize your own struggles, when you recognize the struggles of others and you learn from their struggles of the past generations, and you learn from their struggles, then you are better equipped to make wiser decisions when the struggle comes to you. I had many difficulties. I am not going to tell you any of them, but I had many. But things that I always remind myself that I have strong faith in God and I pray a lot, and I ask for help and guidance and what always comes to me, the answer that always came to me was, "do you love what you are doing?" "Yes." "Then is it worth it?" "Yes." Then the struggle or the conflict will go away.

(WHAT IS THE MOST JOYFUL TIME FOR YOU?) there has been many. I believe that a

good teacher is one who watches and listens to her or his students because. . . especially children, because I believe children are closer to God than adults are, and <sup>that</sup> ~~then~~ in their own innocence they can teach you great wisdom and teach you great understanding. And in all the times that I had taught, the most memorable instances <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~ when <sup>se</sup> ~~the~~ students had shown me <sup>ve</sup> the face of their <sup>through</sup> countenance of God. I cannot tell you one particular instance because it has been many. (WHAT DO YOU SEE AS ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS A KUMU?) When young children. . . when your students can teach older children who are not your students. That is an accomplishment. And they have done that. When young children can lead other children, that's an accomplishment, and they have done that. When young children can do for themselves without you, that is an accomplishment, and they have done that. They don't do it all the time. They do it in increments or in spurts, because they are children, they are still growing and developing. Trophies mean nothing to me. Awards mean nothing to me. Prizes mean nothing to me. I could tell you I was 1st place, 2nd place, or all that stuff, but it does not mean much. It is a recognition by worldly things, which has very little value to me and very little value in hula. When you see the students emulating and securing the traditions, the beliefs. When you see them applying it to their daily life outside of the hula. You know the confines of the halaus and the kumu. You know you can act one way with me and act another way away from me. That's nothing. But they can emulate and secure and apply to daily life, and you can see instances when they do this. Those are accomplishments. And we have many more accomplishments yet to achieve.

(WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF UNIKI?) It is not that textbook one that's for sure. Not the one that is in pen written literature. It is not the one that so many kids will think. I am not going to define it literally. That is not the kind of person that I am. For me, uniki has been spiritual and has been private and has been personal, and that business is between my husband, myself, my kumu, and my God, and all the ohana or the generations from which these traditions



come from who are still guiding our direction today. It hasn't been the textbook way, but I can quote other kumu who have done the non-textbook way too. I remember a story. There was a workshop where I met Sam Naeole. He was the kumu and I was in his class, and he told his way that wasn't the textbook version. I remember my kumu telling me her story and she told me her way and that wasn't the textbook version either. And there have been many who had told me and none of them have been the textbook way either. I think that's only one tradition, and there are many ways. If you look at the work in the earlier years and look at the work now you've seen growth as a kumu and growth as a halau, then you would know that, yes, uniki. But it is not anybody's business as to how. . .

(HAS HULA CHANGED?) Naturally. Hula is a study of life and my view and life changes. Fundamentals are the same, foundations are the same, some of the changes are good, some are not. But I am not here to judge what I don't except is. . .I love creation. I love to create. I love to recreate. I am inspired by those that recreate or who create. That is a natural process of life of nature of the world of everything that when you create, you create from a source. When you create the source, that's to me rubbish. Too strong.

(DEFINITION OF HULA KAHIKO?) Again, I don't follow the textbook version. What is old today was not old 100 years ago or 1000 years ago. I think what it has to be more is the soul. If the soul is in touch with the generations preceding us, the generation of the past when the soul is changing, when the soul is dancing. It is the choreography, the costuming, those things are all the exterior. I am thinking of the interior is what you see. Can you see that soul and is that soul old a reflection of the old, of the aged, of the ancestors and the generations of the old and of the aged. And then if so, that is hula kahiko. I have seen what people call hula kahiko. Some I do not agree that is hula kahiko. The exterior may look like it but the interior is not. (WHAT CHANT WOULD YOU CALL KAHIKO?) Again, I don't agree with all of that. Like "No Luna, "Aia O Pele".

Those are old standards. Modern compositions can still be hula kahiko if they reflect the soul of the old and the aged. I can do a chant for you and tell you this is a modern composition and tell you it reflects the soul of the aged. Kahiko means aged, old, tradition of old. If it reflects that, not the exterior, because that's not what they were talking about. They are talking about. .na'au. .uhane. .ea. For example, I can tell you in language people can speak Hawaiian language to me and it is not Hawaiian language because it is modern Hawaiian language. It is not that language cannot change, it changes. So you will have new words. But it does not reflect the soul of our ancestors, of the generations before. To me it is not ~~Hawaiian~~ language. Same thing. (SO HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE IS IMPORTANT IN HULA?) Absolutely. The language, Hawaiian language, is the language these people thought in. Without language there is no life. Language is how the people keep their identity. Where there is no identity, there is no life. You cannot do this old change if there is no language. If you do not understand the language then you are only doing the mechanics of hula or the mechanics of oli, and that's nothing because still it is not even kahiko because it reflects nothing of the past. It is a falsehood. Hawaiian language is the language the people thought in, reflected in, chanted in, danced in, talked in, felt in, lived in the breath of their life. (DO YOU TEACH OUR STUDENTS?) I teach them as we go along. You've got to remember, we live in Hana. They cannot go to a Hawaiian language class like over here. There are plenty accessibility. We don't have Hawaiian language class nowhere. So they learn from me. They learn from my husband every time we are together. We teach them ohana style when it comes to language we try to have them at our home or try to be with them as much as we can in which we are conversing and they can grow up with it. One of the hopes for our school is that we can have language classes, that more and more of the teaching in the years to come, to follow, that language will be taught throughout all the lessons. For example, the newest student will have less language. The students that have been with me for a while have more language. It

takes time, even I am still learning. Language is something you learn all your life. It is not. . .if you are not fortunate or if you felt falling in the category like so many other Hawaiians where you were not allowed to speak Hawaiian or you were not allowed to learn it, then you are always playing catch-up. You don't have the advantage of learning from childhood. I am finding out that now in later years the younger ones are teaching the language sooner because they pick up. I know students that were not allowed to take a 4 year old and I know that 5 years down the road that 4 year old has a deeper understanding. When you are talking about a chant or a dance and they can pick up words quickly and they have a deeper understanding that much more faster without you having to explain because they have the language background when they were younger. So we're starting to do more and more of that.

(HOW DO YOU SEE HULA IN THE FUTURE?) I think you make your future at least for us and for Na Mamoali'i, and it's future in hula. We already said we want a total Hawaiian school. Hula is the spring board. Hula is the foundation. Hula is where it started because that's my base. You make your future though I want more for these children. I want them to want more. I want them to realize that they have a right to want more and the right to ask for more. As far as for the rest of the world, I think people have to look in themselves first as to what is their foundations in life. What are their beliefs. What do they hold as of value, and then start throwing away what is rubbish and keeping what is good. If they look to their kumu, if they look to their parents, if they look to their grandparents and the generation before them, their family traditions. If they look at nature and the processes of life as seen through nature and they look through their fate and their belief in akua, these are the elements that build foundation. Hula can only get better, just like of anything of life. If you know your foundation and if you divert from your foundation, then go back into all these things, all these sources, that create foundations. And when you go back to all of that, your foundation will be strong. You will know



who or what your sources are, when it is time to move on, when it is time to change, when it is time to create or recreate. Then you're doing it in a old way and found the concrete source or sources.

(DO YOU DO OTHER CULTURAL THINGS?) I am a school teacher in Hawaiian studies, which is very similar to the study of life. But through the mind and the heart and the spirit and the traditions and the beliefs and the emotions and the experiences of all the generations that preceded us. (WHERE?) In the Department of Education, Central District, O'ahu. I Used to work in the school with kindergarten to 6th grade to direct services to children, but now I work with direct services with kupuna and kumu. So I am teaching teachers. We do art, crafts, language, history, folklore, genealogy, chant, dance, music. You name it, we do it.

Hula is my life, and through hula I have learned about life and hula has given me life. Through hula I have learned about people, about the world, about nature, about love, and about God. And God has taught me about hula. Build foundations. Like there is a student who wants to listen to all of this. This is what I will want to say. Build yourself a strong foundation before teaching others through your struggles in life. Look into the eyes and the smile and the warmth of a child to remind you why you are doing this so that their life and their future and the future of Hawai'i and the future of the world will be a good one. (WHAT ABOUT BILL IN YOUR HALAU?) One, he is a supporter of me. Before we got married there was a commitment, before we could, that he had to agree or commit to the halau too and to hula because I could not live without it, even though I love him very much, I could not live without hula, and it is very easy for him to come in, full heartedly, to hula, to the halau. Because my concern, my belief, is where my husband is here but the halau is in Hana. And so what is happening now. . .but it was so very easy. We keep on going and we keep going back and forth and we have my commitment to hula and to the halau. That is his first informal role, which is for me. Secondly, he is a kupuna, the head

kupuna of the halau. That means he is involved in some of the decision making or the guiding, the counseling, and the advisor in all aspects. He is our formal language expert teacher. He is my teacher as far as language, and he is there for all of them in the ways of our ancestors. Through his own life experiences and through his language, our mother tongue, and he wants me to end with this: "O ka mana'o au. O ia ka mole o ka ike" - "Wisdom is the foundation of understanding." After you've built your foundation, it is important to remember who or where is your guidance from. You can get your guidance many ways. For me, God is my guidance.