

Kawai Aona

When I first went to the University of Hawaii I was this tita from Nanakuli. I was dorming on campus and one day these two Japanese exchange students came up to me and asked if I was Hawaiian and I replied yes. They asked if I could speak the language or dance the hula and I replied no. They looked at me a little funny and then they ended the conversation by saying, "You're not Hawaiian." At first I was really angry at them and my first impulse was to argue with them. Instead I went up to my room and ended up spending the night thinking about what they said. I came to the conclusion that they were right. I did have the blood and I did have a little bit of the knowledge from my grandmother. But I only knew the Hawaiian culture from the surface. You can have the blood but that doesn't make you Hawaiian. You have to have a respect and a feeling for the culture in a deeper sense. The Hawaiians were not surface people. There was a kauna to all their mele. On the surface you can call yourself whatever you want but the surface is not what counts.

I made it a point to learn more of the language and more of the hula. I was introduced by some friends to Auntie Maiki Aiu Lake who were taking classes under her. I had learned a few auwana mele from my grandmother, Mary Aole, while I was growing up in Nanakuli but Auntie Maiki was my first formal teacher. I started off in auwana under Auntie Maiki and then she chose a few of us to enter her hula pahu class. When I was a student I felt like there was so much Auntie Maiki was trying to get across that I couldn't soak it up fast enough. The problem was not only soaking up the knowledge but being able to project it out.

I stayed with Auntie Maiki for two and a half years and her influence on me was she showed me the importance of research. If you're going to do any mele, you have to know what you're doing. You can't just perform a mele just because it's popular. If you're going to do mele about certain alii you have to do research on that alii with respect and to the best of your knowledge.

I took a year and a half under Edith Mckinzie to develop my oli and I studied in hula workshops under Auntie Kauai Zuttermeister but Auntie Maiki has been my main kumu. I began to teach in 1977 as a kupu kumu hula and I learned that if you as a kumu are not ready to assume the responsibilities of a kumu hula than you are going to hurt your students. A kumu hula is not only going to teach the technical knowledge of the hula but a kumu has to be a model for the students. The students are not only learning the mele, they are watching the kumu. If you set guidelines for them and you break your own rules they have no reason to follow you. A kumu has to ask him or herself, "Am I instilling in our young people the values that are Hawaiian?" It's not just a mele, it's a whole system of values and responsibilities. The number one lesson is a basic respect for other people. Today the feeling of aloha is so commercialized but the true meaning is not felt.

I went to the University to study Fine Arts and that was ^{my} intial goal. I did just about everything: sculpture, painting, sketching, and poetry. So I looked upon the hula as another opportunity to express my feelings. I began to teach because depending on how the hula is taught it can be a vehicle for a young Hawaiian to find more purpose to his or her life. Because now they are lost. They don't know if they want to rebel, they don't know if they want to go on Welfare. They don't have confidence in themselves as people to go out and conquer the world so to speak. They don't believe in themselves as people to set the highest goals for themselves. They have to start by finding that little bit of self-esteem, that little bit of something inside of them that they can be proud of. They can say I learned the hula and not only can I dance it but I know the background and the different meanings within it. I'm expressing the feelings of my ancestors, of my kupuna. And if they've learned that, if they've learned to respect their kupuna, their classmates, and themselves then the next step will be that much easier. If you can get that little bit of self-esteem you can begin to step out and you can apply so much of your experience as a haumana to any situation in life. The Hawaiian concepts and values are still alive in this modern world.

p.s. please indicate how you wish your name to appear in the publication. if you prefer your full name or any variation from the above please call our office before July 28, 1983 and supply us with the necessary information.

of W.S.

Lōʻi mainanō i oshuamānānā i hsm
Kawai Aona

When I first went to the University of Hawaii I was this tita from Nanakuli. I was dorming on campus and one day these two Japanese exchange students came up to me and asked ~~me~~ if I was Hawaiian and I replied yes. ~~Then~~ They asked ~~me~~ if I could speak the language and I said no. ~~So~~ ^{then} they asked ~~me~~ if I could dance the hula and I replied no. They looked at me a little funny and then they ended the conversation by saying, "You're not Hawaiian." At first I was really angry at them and my first impulse was to argue with them. Instead I went up to my room and ended up spending the night thinking about what they had said. I came to the conclusion that they ~~were~~ were right. I did have the blood, and I did have a little bit of the knowledge from my grandmother. But I only knew the Hawaiian culture from the surface. You can have the blood but that ~~doesn't~~ doesn't make you Hawaiian. You have to have a respect ^{and} a feeling, ~~a~~ ~~haha~~ for the culture in a deeper sense. The Hawaiians were not surface people. There was ~~akauna~~ akauna to all their mele. On the surface you can call yourself whatever you want but the surface is not what counts. ~~and some of those Japanese students when we were in high school I decided that nobody was going to say I was not a Hawaiian again.~~

I made it a point to learn ~~the language more and then the hula more~~ more of the language and more of the hula. I was introduced by some friends to Auntie Maiki Aiu Lake who were taking classes under her. I had learned a few auwana mele from my grandmother Mary Aole while I was growing up in Nanakuli but Auntie Maiki was my first formal teacher. I started off in auwana under Auntie Maiki and then she chose a few of us to enter her hula pahu class. When I was a student I felt like there was so much Auntie Maiki was trying to get across that I couldn't soak it up fast enough. The problem was not only ~~soaking up~~ soaking up the knowledge but being able to project it out.

I stayed with Auntie Maiki for 2 1/2 years and her influence on me was she showed me the importance of research. If you're going to do any mele, you have to know what you're doing. You can't just perform a mele just because it's popular. If you're going to do mele about certain alii you have to do research on that alii with respect and to the best of your knowledge.

I took a year and a half under Edith Mckinzie to develop my oli and I ~~studied~~ studied in hula workshops under Auntie Kauai Zuttermeister but Auntie Maiki has been my main kumu. I began to teach in 1977 as a kupu kumu hula ~~with Mililani Allen~~ and I learned that if you as a kumu are not ready to assume the responsibilities of a kumu hula than you are going to hurt your students. A kumu hula is not only going to teach the technical knowledge of the hula but a kumu has to be a model for the students. The students are not only learning the mele ~~but~~ they are watching the kumu. If you set guidelines for them and you break your own rules they have no reason to follow you. A kumu has to ask him or herself, "Am I instilling in our young people the values ~~and responsibilities that are Hawaiian?~~ that are Hawaiian?" It's not just a mele, it's a whole system of values and responsibilities. The number one lesson is a basic respect for other people. Today the feeling of aloha is so commercialized but the true meaning is not felt.

I went to the University to study Fine Arts and that was my initial goal. I did ~~just~~ just about everything: sculpture, painting, sketching, and poetry. So I looked upon the hula as just another opportunity to express my feelings. I began to teach because depending ^{on} how the hula is taught ~~to the younger people~~ it can be a vehicle for a young Hawaiian to find more purpose to his or her life. Because now they are lost. They don't know if they want to ~~rebel~~ rebel, they ^{as} don't know if they want to go on welfare. They don't have confidence in themselves ^{as} people to go out and conquer the world so to speak. They don't believe in themselves as people to set the highest goals for themselves. They have to start by finding that little bit of self-esteem, that little bit of something inside of them that they can be proud of. They can say I learned the hula and not only can I dance it but I know the background and the different meanings within it. I'm expressing the feelings of my ancestors, of my kupuna. And if they've learned that, if they've learned to respect their kupunas, their classmates, and themselves then the next step will be that much easier. If you can get that little bit of self-esteem you can begin to step out and you can apply so much of your experience as a haumana to any situation in life. The Hawaiian concepts are still alive.

Kawai Aona

When I was a little girl my grandmother taught hula auwana in Nanakuli. She would always tell me that I was going to be her little hula dancer. I never thought anything about it and she died when I was in the sixth grade. I completely forgot about it and in time I was attending school at the University. While there I was introduced to Aunt Maiki Aiu Lake by some friends who were taking classes under her. I decided to sit in on the classes and I became interested. My grandmother's name was Mary Aole. I was named by my grandmother but I did not study under her. She taught me a couple mele but no ancient hula.

I started off in auwana with Aunt Maiki and then for some reason she chose me and a couple of other students to join her hula pahu class. When I first went to college I was this tita from Nanakuli. I was dorming on campus and one day I was sitting in the lobby and these two Japanese exchange students came up to me. They asked me if I was Hawaiian and I replied yes. Then they asked me if I could speak the language and I said no. So they asked me if I did the hula and I replied no. They looked at me a little funny and ended the conversation by saying, "You're not Hawaiian."

At first I was really angry at them and my first impulse was to tell them off. I went up to my room instead and ended up spending the night thinking about what they said. And I came to the conclusion they were right. I did have the blood I did have ~~some~~ a little bit of the knowledge from my grandmother but I only knew the Hawaiian culture from the surface. You can have the blood but that doesn't make you Hawaiian. You have to have a respect a feeling a nauau for the culture in a deeper sense. The Hawaiians were not surface people. There was a kauna to all these mele. On the surface you can call yourself whatever you want but the surface is not what counts and so those Japanese students were right. I decided that nobody was going to say I was not a Hawaiian again.

I made it a point to learn the language more, to learn the hula more. When I was a student I felt very inadequate trying to learn kahiko I felt like there was so much Aunt Maiki was trying to get across that I couldn't soak it up fast enough. The problem was not only soaking up the knowledge but being able to project it out. At the beginning I had entered the class for the sake of learning kahiko to a degree that nobody could say I didn't know. And then as the class progressed I found out there was a test at the end. There was a panel of Aunt Maiki's peers sitting against the wall with Lauae fern in front of them so you couldn't see their faces. All of us one by one would have to pick a mele out of a bowl and we would have to oli and pai the mele we drew. Afterwards I was so haalulu because I didn't perform up to my expectations. So after a few weeks we were tested again and this time I was determined to do well so I said a short pule and began to oli the mele I drew.

I closed my eyes and it was like a different voice came out of me. It was from that time that my oli began to get better. I found out later that the class was for the purpose of graduating and training kumu hulas. I stayed with Aunt Maiki for 2½ years and I did not go on to another teacher for many years. The big influence she had on me was research. If you're going to do any mele, you have to know what you're doing. Don't just pick a mele just because somebody else did it. If you're going to do mele about a certain alii you have to do research on that alii. When you do it you do it right to the best of your knowledge and with respect to that alii. That discipline to research the subject along with her aloha has been her great influence on me.

This is becoming more difficult because there aren't that many old resources left to rely on. After Aunt Maiki I took a year and a half with Aunt Edith McKinzie to develop my oli. She exposed me to the different styles of oli. I also took hula workshops here and there and studied with Aunt Kaupī Zuttermeister for a brief time but Aunt Maiki has been my main kumu.

I began to teach about six years ago. I had been a kupu kumu for Mililani Allen. Mililani needed help so Aunt Maiki told her I was in the area and to look me up. I was a waitress at that time. I was thinking of going into the service and I wasn't thinking of teaching at all. I didn't have any confidence. But Mililani came and talked me into going in with her. I had gone to UH to study art and that was my initial goal. I did just about everything and painting sculpture sketching poetry. So I look upon it as just another opportunity to express feelings. Depending on how it's taught to the younger people in respect to the art and the culture hula can be a vehicle for a young Hawaiian to find more purpose to their lives.

Because now they are lost. They don't know if they want to be a rebel they don't know if they want to go on welfare. They don't have confidence in themselves as people to go out and conquer the world so to speak. Do whatever they want to. They don't believe in themselves as people to set the highest goals for themselves.

They have to start by finding that little bit of self-esteem that little bit of something inside of themselves that they can be proud of. That little bit that they can say I learned this. I learned the hula and not only can I dance it but I know the background and the different meanings within it. I'm expressing the feelings of my ancestors of my kupuna. And if they've learned that from the hula if they've learned to respect their kupunas, classmates, themselves then the next step will be that much easier. If you can get that little bit of self-esteem you can begin to step out and you can apply so much of your experience as a haumana to any work place. The Hawaiian concepts are still alive.

Ji; a laj o l p t p d a u a r e t j e , e ; e s t j a t j a v e b e e m ¹/₂ a p a s s e d d o w n f r o m g e n e r a t i o n t o g e n e r a t i o n

Hula kahiko today are the mele that have been passed down from generation to generation. In my training it was the traditional mele passed down from tutu Lokalia Momtgomery to Auntie Maiki and then down to us. Auntie Lokalia had taken from tutu Luahine, Iolani's grandmother and tutuluahine had taken from Joe Ilalaole. That's kahiko. That to me is kahiko. I try as much as possible to keep the mele as true as when they were taught to me by Auntie Maiki. If I change it around too much it no longer belongs to the line. It no longer belongs. It would be of my own ideas. To me that is kahiko and there is a time and place for that. And yet I'm still a person I'm still a kumu hula and I have my own ideas my own feelings my own dreams.

Being an artist I have a need to create whether it's a new mele or whatever, I will haku my own. I do my research and I haku my own. If I want to make my own steps I put my own steps because the mele is mine. In this way I am not showing disrespect to my line of kumus. I can still keep my own individuality by haku my own mele. The Hawaiians were never stagnant they were creative people and you can tell this by the craftsmanship of their kapa. The five details they put into a lot of things they did shows they were not a stagnant people. The Hawaiians were dreamers and they were artists. My favorite kahiko mele is Kaulilua Waiaele because it talks about a woman and her of different temperaments. It likens a woman's qualities to Waiaele. Sometimes she's open and she's beautiful and sometimes she's angry with her rivers overflowing and cold.

If you as a kumu are not ready to assume the responsibilities of a kumu hula then you are going to hurt your students. A kumu hula is not only going to teach the technical knowledge of the hula but a kumu has to be a model for the students. Because they are not only learning the mele they are watching the kumu. If you set guidelines for them and you break your own rules they have no reason to follow you. A kumu has to ask him or herself Are you instilling in our young people the values that are Hawaiian? It's not just a mele, it's a whole system of values and responsibilities, the hula is not just dancing. The number one thing is respect for other people. Today the feeling of aloha is so commercialized but the true meaning is not felt. You have to kokua each other. If someone is having trouble with their leis, you should kokua. If the group is not of one mind, the hands and feet will not be of one mind. Grooming was emphasized by Auntie Maiki. Your costume and your appearance was taken care of so when you go into the public you do yourself and your kumu honor.

This is what I'm trying to teach at the Lilioukalani Trust with the children out here in the country. I work with kids who are like the bulls of the school but they don't show me that in the halau. I hear from other people about their behavior in school. It is fantastic that the hula has come out into the open more. It is fantastic that more young people want to do it. But it's getting to be so commercialized almost to the point of cheapness. I'm talking only of certain kumu and how they treat the hula. I feel like it's been cheapened.

Some performances that I've seen, the meaning of the mele and the motions are lost. And the meanings are what you do hula kahiko for. We have awana to do all the flash and jazz. But kahiko is beginning to get glitter on it. It's more for show than anything else. The Hawaiians loved to show their talents but not to the point where you're selling yourself. There's a lot of people who call themselves kumu that have bounced around taking from kumu after kumu for one or two months. A kumu has to be trained in a much more responsible and stricter way.