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March 19, 2000

Editor
Honolulu Star-Bulletin
P.O. Box 3080
Honolulu, Hawai'i
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Dear Editor:

On March 16, 2000 your newspaper printed an article by Cynthia Oi entitled "Shakin' tradition" about Patrick Makuakane and how "Hula looks to the future." Mark Keali'i Hoomalu was quoted in the article as saying, "It's not what them damn traditionalists say is traditional, but as far as theater, it is beautiful." He was, of course, referring to the show put on by Patrick Makuakane but as a "damn traditionalist," I would like to say a few things.

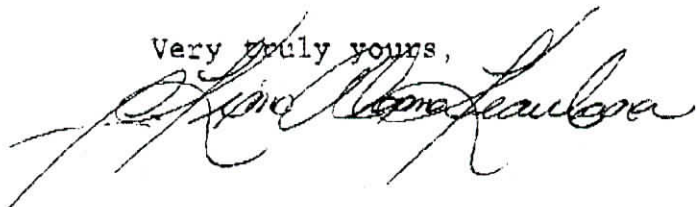
Hoomalu summed his point of view all up when he said, "We live in America. We can go and have a good time." It's arrogant attitudes like these that have no place in the true, Hawaiian hula. This shows me that Mark Hoomalu and others like him (especially in the younger generation) never had the proper, traditional hula training that one really needs to go through in order to have a genuine respect for the tradition that hula is deeply rooted in. With hula that is proper and authentic, one cannot go and do anything you want. There are definite rules as to what you can and cannot do in the hula and there are reasonings behind the rules. Real hula takes on a whole different mind set and set of attitudes that are contrary to American attitudes. A Hawaiian thinks and acts differently from a westerner. The title of *kumu hula* gets thrown around and passed on everywhere upon anyone these days. Most of these "*kumu hula*" do not even speak Hawaiian, do not thoroughly know Hawaiian customs and etiquette, and have very little or nothing in their repertoire of traditional Hawaiian chant and dance material that has been handed down, intact, for generations. In this light, we all should have a lot more scrutiny when we read or see something having to do with the hula.

Hoomalu also says that "hula masters far back were slammed, too, for things they changed along the way." How does he know? He does not come from a traditional background. It has to be remembered that the way that the hula was taught in those far back times was different. Today, the religious aspects of hula are either non-existent, tokenly practiced or grossly altered. When hula was a true religion (and that was even done well into the 20th century), there was an across-the-board code of respect and honor that was adhered to by all hula schools. This is different today where hula is a commercialized business and many hula teachers are training competitors rather than real dancers.

It is a shame to see the hula get lower and lower everyday. I wish that the media would devote their space more to the real, respectable

hula rather than the sensational aspects of hula.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Hina Kono". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed phrase "Very truly yours,".

I may be reached at 988-7353.