

*Original*

NANA I NA LOEA HULA  
Kumu Hula: Nalani Zane Kanaka'ole  
Interviewer: Lovina LePendu  
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(FULL GIVEN NAME?) Full given name is Faith Nalani Kanaka'ole. (DO YOU TEACH PRESENTLY? CAN YOU TELL ME WHERE YOU TEACH?) We have a halau at 29 Shipman. (AGES OF STUDENTS?) Let's see. We take them at four years old until... I guess the oldest one is 47. (HOW ARRANGED IN CLASSES?) By ages. We have a keiki beginners class and an adults beginners class. (HALAU NAME?) Halau O Kekuhi. Kekuhi is part of my mother's given name. And also that's one of the reasons <sup>waka</sup> we chose the name, but the main reason was that Kekuhi means, "to point in the direction" or "to point out the direction." We chose it amongst the three of us. Prior to that it was Nalani's Hula Studio and prior to that it went... (DO YOU TEACH WITH PUALANI OR ON OWN?) We teach together. But now, with her schedule, I usually do the day to day operations and she usually does the decisions on a group level - overall group level.

(DO YOU TEACH KAHIKO OR AUANA?) We teach kahiko and auana. (AND ALSO OLI?) Chanting. And we run through the arts of hula like weaving, dyeing, making hula implements. So we teach the whole realm of hula arts. (HOW MANY YEARS TEACHING?) 30. (CAN YOU TELL ME WHEN YOU

LEARNED?) Learned hula? . I was about three years old. My grandmother was teaching at the time. (NAME?) Mary Kekuewa Kamaile Fujii. I always took from her and then after her the oldest female grandchild took over the hula which was my first cousin. Her name was Mary Keahi Lihau. And then, after that, my mother took the studio over. After my grandmother it was the oldest grandchild - female grandchild - and then after that, it went to my mother because she wasn't from the oldest. It's usually that way. The oldest female child get the rank. Usually you'll have to wait until the older one moves on into other things, so my mother was given the studio because my <sup>cousin</sup> ~~mother~~ had moved away from here. We just went according to rank. (DO YOU REMEMBER BEFORE YOUR GRANDMOTHER?) I guess during that time when I was born she was also associated with Akoni Mika. She was his. . . like his alaka'i, but she was not <sup>the one</sup> that she originally took hula from (~~she~~). She was a student of hula kapu from a man called Hulu, and he was originally from Kaua'i. He had moved to Kona and he had come here, finally ended up here in Hilo. And he had taken not only my grandmother, but two of her <sup>other</sup> first cousins. And they were taken at birth. And then at three years old, ~~they~~ they were taught hula until they were about eight, and they only lived with him. She didn't know her parents until she got a little bit older. So she was fully immersed in the art. (DID SHE

GET EVERYTHING FROM HIM?) I guess she learned also from Akoni Mika, but her kapu was from that man.

(HOW WAS YOUR TRAINING?) My grandmother was real strict. She was... I guess it was basically like ballet school. If you didn't do something that was perfect you would go out in the corner and do it about 80 times until it was perfect. And then you could come back into the line again, but not until it was. She often took the pu'ili to our knees, hands, feet, whatever, or the closest thing that was near her at the time to hit us. She taught out of fear, and that was a pretty good tool to learn from. We spoke Hawaiian until I was probably about nine years old. That's when she died. (DID YOU LEARN ONLY THE HULA THAT YOUNG?) At that time we only learned hula and we were expected to learn the chants that were involved in the hula just by learning the hula at that time. There wasn't any kind of... like today, ho'opa'a class. You didn't do that. You learned everything at the time that you learned to dance. It was a matter of privilege - The background of the hula. You were taught the hula first because you were the body of the kumu and after a while then you learned the background of the chant. But it wasn't until after you had... you were shown or been given a ho'ike. Then you're able to learn the research or the background of the chants that you had learned. You learned... let's see,

when I took about three we had several ho'ikes, but you learned the basic background about the chant. After, you did it for the public. (SPECIFIC STYLE?) It was always in our family. I remember at the beginning she would have women that were dancing with her, I guess at the time, they would come in and they would lomi your body - especially to make it soft enough - they would come, you know, well lomi is an easy word. They would come and they would step on your uhas until a certain part of your uha would reach the floor. And they could mold your feet so that your feet would lay flat on the floor; you know, when you're in the sitting position or a noho position on the floor. They would step up and down over it for a long period of time. Usually we would warm up and it would take an hour to warm up, and that part of it was in the warm ups where they would come and step on your feet. So it wasn't a nice image for a little girl at that time. Most of the time we were forced to go and learn things. It was alright.

I took for a brief time from George Na'ope just to learn another style, but I always stayed in the halau. I learned his kahiko. (AND APPROVAL TO BECAME TEACHER?) First I was the body for my mother. My mother would chant and I would get up and I would do the motions so that I could teach. Then after a few years I just took over the two positions. A

couple years. I always knew that I was going to teach. (SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS?) No. (WHY DID YOU WANT TO BE A TEACHER?) We also chose that way and even now we revert back to that; I mean, save for my older sisters. They haven't taught hula for a long time and I guess my sister Ulu just started. I have an older one, the oldest. She lives in Utah. There's four girls. (THE OLDER SISTER STARTED A HALAU, TOO?) Yea. (JUST RECENTLY?) Just recently.

(ANY GREAT INFLUENCE IN YOUR TEACHING?) I guess I like certain types of how to put together choreography, but I learned that from the family style. Actually, doing literal types of choreography. (DO YOU CHANGE? <sup>A DANCE LEARNED FROM YOUR MOTHER?</sup>) No. It's a code. You never change the motions.

(DO YOU COMPOSE?) I compose chants. I did a couple dance chants. Nothing that I can be really proud of, but I like to do chants because I like to write poetry. And it just so happened that, you know. . .

(REGARDING KANAKA'OLE FAMILY CHANT) That's on the Kanaka'ole side. It did (come from the family). We choreographed that dance about 20 years ago, but it just never came up until now. We haven't done it until now. I was into doing a lot of chants in the early 70's. (SO THOSE CHANTS MAYBE SOMEDAY?) Maybe someday.

(ANY DIFFICULTIES?) Burn out. (LOSING PEOPLE?) Well, losing

people is always there, and especially us - there's a big turnover. Big because our... (HOW LONG YOU BEEN IN HILO?) We all come from here. For the past... early 1900's. Since my grandmother's been dancing. (HOW STUDENTS COME TO YOU?) They usually choose us and from there we weed out. It's just a matter of how they can take our, uh... (TRAINING?) ... training, because it's real hard. We stick with our regular kahiko. I guess our training is hard. If they're determined, because I'll ask for a commitment of five years after a year. And after a year I'll end up with about ten students from a beginning class of probably 60. And from those ten students in three years I'll probably end up with about six. The first year is strictly kahiko. The body has to be conditioned to dance 40 minutes without rest. That's what we do for the first six months. (THIS IS EITHER FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS?) Children and adults.

(JOY IN TEACHING?) I like to teach hula a lot. I enjoy it but they're not making kids like they used to. Before kids was... they were so teachable. Now they're so <sup>bone</sup>boar-headed(?). They lose... they lost their innocence after four years old. It's hard to teach four year olds now. You have to give a lot of yourself before they can respond to you. (DO YOU SEE POTENTIAL OR DO YOU JUST TRAIN THEM?) It doesn't matter to me. I'll just wait until a year, 'cause usually when children come to you it's hardly

they who make the decision. It's usually the mother who makes the decision. (HOW ABOUT FOR THE ADULT? SHE STILL MAKES THE DECISION?) She still makes the decision whether she likes it or not. I believe that every person has a potential to be a good dancer. (DO YOU UNIKI?) After 10 years. (THEY HAVE TO FILL OUT THOSE THEN YEARS?) They have to fill out those ten years. After ten years. (ANY PERSON UNIKI FROM YOUR HALAU?) One person. (WHAT'S EXPECTED?) They would have had to learn all their required chants and dances. There are three levels:- Olapa levels and our advanced class, ~~and~~ they would have had to have reached all three. They would have had to have done all of their implements and their pahu before we'd considered them to be a candidate for uniki. They have to know three styles of chanting. They usually chose to stay within the realm of the halau and not go out and teach on their own. (DO YOU BELIEVE IN LETTING THEM TEACH?) I guess we'll give them the option, but it has never turned out that way. (DO YOU LET THEM KNOW YOUR BACKGROUND AND TRAINING?) No. It's just a matter of privilege. I guess after three or four years I will.

(ADVICE FOR YOUNG TEACHERS?) It takes a lot to be a source. I guess teachers today are more readily to settle for modern adaptations of chants instead of think at the time of when the chant was written. ↓

like/unlike younger teachers today who have embellished other forms of dancing into their hula. I'm not saying that I don't like that. I'm saying that is where their hula is going now. But I feel that if they hold to tradition they would, in the end, come out more creative than look to other forms of dancing. It's... I see a couple of modern teachers now who tend to cling to the older forms and it looks good, the form looks good. But my advice to younger teachers is they have to know the poetic language - not the everyday language - the poetic language. Their understanding of the poetic language. There are a lot of dances that are coming out now that are from the language that we use everyday. The poetry inside brings out more than that form. (HOW FEEL ABOUT THE KAHIKO TODAY?) Sometimes it's frightening. (WHERE WE GOING NOW?) I think... I like to be positive and say that hula has had so much debasement and it has always transcended from that kind of debase. It probably will transcend from that kind of debasement it's going through now because it has that kind of power beyond far.

(DEFINITION OF HULA KAHIKO?) Whether the chant was written in the modern day or whether it was written three hundred years ago, as long as they stick to the basic hula steps and that there is nothing new introduced into the hula. (CHANT CAN VARY EXCEPT THE BASIC STEPS.)



You know, ~~because~~ it's like the tale of Pele, you know, we still have eruptions today, so chants may be written for that today, but as long as the basic hula steps are used and nothing new is put into it.

(FAVORITE CHANT?) Favorite? I think I like "Ke Welina." (~~WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FROM A BASIC HULA?~~ <sup>IS THE</sup>) I guess it gets down to the steps - to the foot movements - in our style, because our style is more literal. It's not as stylistic as the northern forms. ~~You know, the northern forms is~~ O'ahu and Kaua'i. Ours are a little more literal in movements. (AN AREA THING?) Uh huh. At the time, you know, the northern forms they stem from pahas and how stylistic the pahas are. ~~'Cause are you familiar with~~ ku'oi? Kauahi o hele nei? And are you familiar with Kualalooa? They are 300 years old, both of those dances. And the northern form is a little bit more stylistic than Kualalooa which is a southern <sup>quality</sup> ~~condy(?)~~. It comes from a different focus. (PREFER KAHIKO OR AUANA?) I like both. I prefer kahiko in a sense of doing it, and I prefer auana in a sense of choreography, 'cause our style is way out there.

(WHAT ELSE YOU LIKE BESIDES HULA?) I don't think I have anything else, any other time. (~~TIME TEACH A WEEK?~~ <sup>DAYS YOU</sup>) Usually four. (HOURS PER CLASS?) You know, I start from 5 to 9. That's two classes. Or three. .yeah.

(WORKSHOPS?) I like what Kalihi-Palama puts out. I liked the hula workshops that the state put out in the early 60's. They were excellent.

(DID YOU SERVE AS A JUDGE?) Yeah. (HOW DO YOU LIKE IT?) It's hard. I try not to put my personal views into judging and judge on the whole, the ability of all of the dancers. I try to understand what they're trying to put across. (DO YOU TEACH LANGUAGE?) No. I used to teach culture courses: Ethnobotany, Hawaiian Ohana, Poetry, Literature. (IN THE HALAU?) I mix. After I've had them for three years then we go into the basic chants you have to know. You know, the Pele Kupe'e, Oii Kahea. (DO YOU TRY TO TEACH HOW YOU WERE TAUGHT?) Basically I teach them the way I was taught. I go through the whole route. I try to teach them the way I was taught. I basically do not teach them in the numbers, in the mele, how they were given out to me. I go from easy to hard. And then that way I've changed it, but basically they have to watch me and observe from there. And they're allowed to ask questions. (MALE AND FEMALE?) Yeah. (MIXED?) I mix them. And then after a while we separate. (SEE A DIFFERENCE IN MALE/FEMALE?) It doesn't matter to me.

(GOALS?) Actually my goal is real simple. I'd like a basic all-service halau where I not only have my paipai or alaka'i set up to, basically, teach the beginning classes. I'd like also a implement master to

teach all of the implements involved and the accompanying chants that go with all of the implements. I'd like to - and it's coming true - begin to make our own tapa so we can have the real thing when we dance. Basically we have already chosen who would be taking over when we go. We...I have. I don't know if my sister has, but it would probably be one of her daughters or one of her daughters that would carry it along beside the alaka'is who have that kind of ability. It's her that's devus(?) to make that decision. (KANAKA'OLE SIDE?) We have a lot of chants that come from that family. It wasn't...the Kanaka'ole side was more Christianized than my mother's side. Yea, my mother's side we were in the dark for a while...long time. The only thing that was, I guess, fortunate for us and real privileged was that we were raised in the language because both of our grandparents on both sides refused to speak English and the Kanaka'ole side, they refused to mate out of blood. So they kept that closed and in check all the time. It's only the generation after me that have married out of blood, non-Hawaiian. So the Kanaka'oles, they were into breeding more than into culture. It was on my mother's side they were into culture. My grandmother was chosen at birth to go into hula because she...I guess her mother didn't want her to become a slave in the Kalakaua... (HOW ABOUT KANAKA'OLE CHANTS?) There was a collection of chants. Also we got

some from Kawena. (RELATED?) Yeah. I don't know if it was her mother or her father was a Keli'ikanaka'ole, but we come from the same line. It's my father ancestor was, I guess the eldest brother, two generations before my father and Kawena's was the third eldest. (PA'I FROM FAMILY CHANT.) We wanted to be not only sounding old, but to look old. And in that way, when you chant that you do the ipu. . .the chant being more important. It was done in the style of how they did it in Ka'u, I guess.

(CHOOSE A PA'I WHEN YOU COMPOSE?) I try to choose. (EVERYTHING IS WITHIN THAT. . .) Yeah. (. . .THE STYLE OF THE DANCE?) Uh huh. (OH, I SEE IT'S NOT JUST LIKE EVERYBODY TODAY. SO BASICALLY FOR YOU HULA IS MOSTLY LIKE THE LANGUAGE AND THE BASIC TOGETHER.) Extension. (THE TWO TOGETHER.) Yeah. (AND YOU GO FROM THERE.) Yeah. (AS FAR AS THE HISTORY OF THE CHANT, IT'S IN THE LANGUAGE, RIGHT?) That's true. It'll carry you. Another thing that people miss a lot today is the subliminal effect of hula is so important that they keep the imagery within the realm of being old because of the subliminal effect. It's like watching a movie or looking at a magazine. You're going to remember that thing 50 years from now. It made that kind of impact. And I guess that, too, was important to me because how we talked. . .because my grandmother hardly talked to us. She relied mostly on the language that wasn't spoken

between us. You know, it was like she could read our mind. That's how we were taught. That's how I learned and that's how I teach today - no papers. I learned the whole chant that way. You have to learn it a couple times. She took for granted that you already know the chant. So that's why today I don't understand why people don't learn in that fashion. Because I expect it of my students. When I teach them the dance they not only going to learn only the dance. They have to know the chant right at that moment. And, I don't know, somehow it gets lost. I hardly bring papers to them unless they have to know a prayer chant. Then I make them copy it down. (YOU JUST TEACH THEM THE SONG AND THE CHANT AND DANCE...) They have to pick it up from there. I don't even (spell it or) or make the footsteps. Nothing. But when you teach in that fashion you can go out and learn any kind of dance. See, people don't do that. They don't listen. And that's hard because then the dance comes out looking like cloned. And that's where hula is going. Looking like clones. They have to dance two and a half years before they can go out and dance. (LOSE STUDENTS IN TIME?) Oh, yeah. I guess that's designed for that, to lose that type. (DO YOU THINK THE CHILDREN WILL STAY WITHIN?) Yeah. (CHILDREN TODAY?) I have a lot of... One of my alaka'i is a teacher in the immersion program, so we have a lot of students from the immersion program. And, yeah, it's

less. . . (DO YOU SEE. . .) . . .and it's good that they understand what they're saying. (DO YOU SEE A DIFFERENCE WHEN YOU SEE A CHILD. . .) There is a difference definitely. I think it's so positive. Positive for the future that we have that kind of student. (MASTER CHANTERS?) Two students that I consider as good master chanters. And a few that I consider excellent dancers.

She (grandmother) was taught together with her other cousins and the kapu that she was given at the time wasn't given by her hula teacher, but the hula teacher. Even though he had lived in Kona or went to Kona at times, he would always teach her subliminally. He never taught her physically. . . There was a presence of a kuahu for them. An alter. And the alter was theirs. And they would come and learn the dances that they had dreamt the night before and that's how they learned. He never came to teach them in the daytime. So it was a better. . .not a better form of teaching, but it was a faster form of teaching because then she learned the repertoire in about five years. At eight years old she uniki. Five times (how many times talked with the man) and then she was introduced to Akoni Mika. Because as a young girl she went to Nalani(?) village in Honolulu, or she went along with Akoni Mika in Honolulu to perform. All of the friends would bring their children (referring to when she taught). She

was raised by her uncles. After she uniki she went into the Summer Home of Queen Emma until she got about 10, 11, then she taught on her own, because I think she was married at 14 or 15. She had children, but she never raised them. That was part of her kapu, that she doesn't raise her children, so either her husband or her husband's family raised them. (YOUR MOTHER?) No, she wasn't in the kapu style, but she did have a kuahu. (SHE MADE ONE FOR YOU GIRLS?) No. And... (BUT SHE TAUGHT YOU HOW IT WAS DONE?) How it was done. (COMPOSING CHANTS?) She told me all of the requirements for the chants - what is supposed to be in there and not to use a certain type of language, or certain types of words. (MOTIONS?) They stayed(?) archaic motions that should not change, like La'au. There were some dances that I was not allowed to teach out, and there's some dances that I was not allowed to give out the words. They had to learn the words... (ON THEIR OWN?) ...on their own from the chant at the time I was chanting. But not allowed to give out paper. (SAME TODAY?) It's the same chants that I will teach them the dance, but they still are not to learn...not to teach. (DO YOU KNOW THE PURPOSE?) I didn't know. I just kept it like that. I wasn't told. (EVERYDAY LIFE?) Oh, yeah. I would love to have to that way. We had it in the house or in the yard when I was very young(?). (FATHER?) He was part of it, but I guess at the beginning he

was told what he... (BECAUSE HE WAS CHRISTIAN, YEAH?) Yeah. (HE KNEW WHAT HE WAS. BECAUSE THAT WAS YOUR MOTHER'S LIFE, THE HULA, RIGHT? YOU TOO NATURALLY WENT INTO IT.) Yeah. Yes, my husband was told. And most of the husbands were told the responsibility. And even my children and my sister's daughters, their husbands were told the responsibility. (DO THEY ACCEPT OR WAS IT HARD?) It was hard. They probably feel threatened because that's what they feel secure in. (CHILDREN KNOW TOO?) Yeah. I want my son to take over. He still says no. (HOW OLD?) Seven. (WHY?) I don't know, but maybe if he sees the cousin dancing then he'll go. I'll probably force him at 12.