

A Haole in a Hālau: Situating Identity, Practicing Learning

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In this paper I look at a set of teaching techniques and practices that I experienced as a student of traditional hula over the past twenty years. I explain the practices of *hō'ike* (testing by showing what one knows), *'aiha'a* (getting grounded), *pa'a ka waha/ ho'olohe* (hold the mouth/ listen), and learning without *palapala* (paper) as I have experienced them in *hālau hula* (hula school). I discuss how these practices have challenged my assumptions about teaching and impacted my understanding of the learning process and my identity as a learner. I then isolate key values that I find interwoven throughout these practices, but which I find largely absent in our contemporary, Western educational institutions. I conclude with a discussion of what I call a pedagogy of respect. This concept, which I have drawn from my experience as a *haumana hula* (hula student), has helped me to clarify my identity both as an educator and a learner, and has increasingly informed my own teaching practice.

Imagine hula. What comes to mind? A dark skinned Polynesian woman with long black hair? The sensuality of swaying hips, moonlit nights on Waikīkī's white sand beaches, perhaps a *Mai Tai*? The image of hula is painted in scenes of entertainment and allurements. It's mostly about sex. This is how we identify hula. It is how hula is sold and often why it is bought. It is romance at best, exotic titillation at its most base. Given this stereotypic image of hula—what would draw a white (*haole*) intellectual, a philosopher and classically trained dancer to the practice of hula? Why would she stay for twenty years, and more importantly, what would she learn there?

Hula Lessons

"Think Hawaiian," I remember my *kumu* (teacher) demanding. Initially, I heard this as an impossible imperative. How could I "think" a cultural identity that was not my own? In the back of my mind, I heard my dismissive Western academic self, asking: How is "thinking Hawaiian" even necessary for learning to dance hula? Yet, I had come to this teacher because I wanted to learn traditional hula. I was not interested in Waikīkī hula. I did not want to dance for parties. I wanted to know something of Hawaiian culture and

its values, and I believed I could learn it through its traditional dance. I wanted to learn something authentic, and yet somehow a lifetime in Western educational institutions had led me to expect that I could achieve this without considering the cultural context from which the very knowledge I wanted to access had evolved and been transmitted.

In this paper I want to explore a different kind of learning experience through a set of specific practices in our *hālau hula* (hula school), and discuss how they have impacted not just my learning of hula, but my understanding of the effort and practice of learning. I then want to draw some general conclusions about what I have found essential to my *hālau* practice but lacking in my experience as a student and educator in Western educational institutions.

But first a disclaimer: I was, and still am, a *hula haumana*, a student of hula. I studied for nearly twenty years with two *kumu* who taught from the same tradition. I intend only to represent my experiences and observations from my perspective as a hula student and a professional educator. I do not speak for any hula tradition or practice. I have chosen specific practices that I have learned about in and out of *hālau*, practices that have helped me to become a better

student and a better teacher. They have given me a keener understanding of the learning process, encouraged me to experiment with my teaching practice, and broadened my attitudes and thus my facility and confidence in the classroom. Given this perspective, I will discuss four practices: *hō'ike* (showing knowledge), *'aiha'a* (bending one's knees), *pa'a ka waha/ ho'olohe* (keeping quiet and listening), and learning without *palapala* (paper). I will then offer some general observations about how my *hālau* experience has impacted my view of contemporary education.

Hō'ike

Most simply, *hō'ike* is a matter of showing what one knows. In *Classical Hawaiian Education: Generations of Hawaiian Culture*, John Charlot states that in traditional Hawaiian pedagogical practice, knowledge was constantly tested (12). This was true of my *hālau* experience. Testing in *hālau* was always a matter of *hō'ike*. At any time we could be asked to demonstrate what we knew, or, more likely, did not know. More formal *hō'ike* were performed before an audience. They were akin to recitals, public performances that culminate a course of study. These performances required extended preparation and involved substantial rehearsal and review of the material we were expected to have learned. In addition to the performance of dances, they often entailed research and written work and the production of costumes and adornments. Within the audience were *kumu* who were specifically asked to observe and offer their judgments of our progress in learning.

As a learner, however, the more significant *hō'ike* were informal, those times when we were required to demonstrate on command what we had been taught. At the whim of *kumu*, in the presence of invited guests or just among ourselves, informal tests could come in the form of a simple, innocuous question that we were expected to answer readily, a request to explain something to another *hālau* member, or an observance and correction to something within our personal practice. Or, we could be called to perform a dance or chant a *mele solo*, or in pairs or small groups. Sometimes we would be given advance notice; often we were not.

My experience of these *hō'ike* went through three stages. At first I was oblivious to the fact that these simple moments were tests. Because I did not recognize them for what they were, I experienced them neither as stressful nor as opportunities. In the second stage, I experienced them as unfair and an annoyance. My expectations of a test included at least a fair warning and a chance to prepare, so that I could show my knowledge in the most positive light. But once their purpose was clear to me, these moments became not only simple and orienting learning experiences, they clarified what it meant to know, and in this context they took on epistemological significance. Knowing meant precisely being able to produce on request. It was direct and empirical. If I could not produce it, I did not know it. There was no ambiguity. These informal *hō'ike* clearly demonstrated, both to *kumu* and myself, whether or not I had embodied what I had been taught. Often no explicit critique was given, nor was it necessary. My inability to show was all the critique that was needed. The expectation was clear: As a *hālau*, we were expected to know our *hula pa'a pono* (firmly, solidly) and recall them on request—even after several years.

Only after I was able to move from experiencing these events as unfair, because they were unannounced or implicit, was I able to take responsibility for my learning. I also came to see that these *hō'ike* were as much for the *kumu* as they were for the dancers. They allowed our *kumu* to temper the pace of our lessons, to go back to basics or to move the lessons further, as our responses indicated. For myself, I learned that I needed to be prepared for each class session. This entailed not only being focused enough to have the knowledge at hand, but to have the confidence and concentration to perform it. I learned that we were always being tested in this way, and that with each successful demonstration more would be expected. The bar was always being raised. Accepting this responsibility gave way to a deeper understanding of *'aiha'a*.

'Aiha'a: Getting Grounded

The basic stance in *hula* is *'aiha'a*. It is a bent kneed posture with feet, knees, hips, and torso placed

squarely forward. Standing in 'aiha'a brings us closer to the earth. It requires us to relax our feet, stretch our calves, and strengthen our thighs. It frees our hips to move side to side (kao) and in a circular path for the essential movements of 'ami and 'ōniu. In hula, in this position, one becomes connected to what is most essential.

'Aiha'a can be compared to the fundamental stance in Western classical dance technique—the plié. Like 'aiha'a, plié involves bending the knees, keeping the pelvis and torso aligned, and balancing over one's feet. In both traditions, the more comfortable a dancer can become in a bent-kneed stance, the more balanced and centered she becomes, and the more easily she can execute the step vocabulary of each respective dance form. Yet the function of the plié differs almost metaphorically from 'aiha'a, and I find this concept of bending at the knee distinguishes two culturally different ways of viewing and relating to the world. As the preparation and ending for almost any movement within the repertoire of ballet's step vocabulary, the mastery of the plié supports safe practice and gives quality and assurance to one's dancing. But it is most powerfully used as a means to thrust dancers off the ground and to catch their weight safely as they descend. The goal is to get off the earth and into the air. One can never get too high. In ballet the plié is a way to use the ground more effectively. It is a means to an end. In hula 'aiha'a it is an end in itself—a way of becoming connected and stable. This is what the two dance forms have in common. But for hula, 'aiha'a allows the dancer to receive the rhythms of the earth, to be affected by the earth and to affect it in turn.

This connection to the earth links 'aiha'a to a proper way of being, and relates it to the virtue, ha'aha'a (humility). In the language of Aristotle or Dewey, ha'aha'a is a disposition. As with a plié, getting to the physical 'aiha'a involves practice and effort. One must repeatedly push the body while asking the muscles to release in order to bend deeper. With training, dancers acquire discipline and consistency in movement. By pushing the body they overcome limitations and find new possibilities for movement. The physical stance is the beginning point. It is from the base of 'aiha'a that the learning of hula proceeds. As a disposition,

ha'aha'a is a starting point for learning as well, comparable to a Socratic recognition of a lack of knowledge. All future learning is predicated on this premise.

I am learning ha'aha'a slowly and with difficulty. Perhaps it will take a lifetime of learning. I came to hula as a trained dancer, believing I was a quick study and a ready performer, able to learn material easily. But, for my first formal hō'ike my kumu paired me with a woman in whom I saw no ability. She moved awkwardly and haltingly and had difficulty remembering the simple hula noho (sitting hula) we were to perform. While I did not understand it initially, I came to believe this pairing was deliberate. It was kumu's way of teaching me ha'aha'a. It forced me to focus my own effort and to open up my perspective so that I could adapt and dance with my partner. I learned that being in 'aiha'a/ha'aha'a meant acknowledging limitations—my own and those of others. It required shedding ego and relying on others for success. This in turn opened me to learning from others. Without such openness, the possibilities for further learning were limited by the perceptions I had of my own abilities, as well as the abilities of others, perceptions that if wrong, became barriers to the learning I sought.

Pa'a ka waha

'Aiha'a/ ha'aha'a closely relates to another facet of my hālau education which is summarized in the 'ōlelo no'eau (proverb), Nānā ka maka; ho'olohe ka pepeiao; pa'a ka waha. This translates as, "Observe with the eyes; listen with the ears; shut the mouth" (Pukui, 248). In any dance form, imitation is the primary mode of instruction, and imitation requires watching closely. Any good dancer is trained in watching and imitating. In hālau, listening (ho'olohe) was equally important, not only for hearing corrections and directions, for keeping time and hearing the words of mele (story/songs) that were being danced, but for hearing the contextual subtleties that gave meaning to a particular interpretation of the dance. These subtleties could be communicated at any time and if one were not attentive, opportunities were missed to synchronize the dancing and the words.

Perhaps the most effective technique my kumu would use to teach us better how to use our ears,

was speaking so softly as to be almost inaudible. When I first experienced this, I was not quite sure what was happening. When I realized it was deliberate, I thought it was incompatible with any sound pedagogy. I perceived it as both an insult and bad teaching technique. But I continued to come back to hālau. I leaned in closer. I focused my attention and watched facial expressions, lips, and body language more attentively. I learned to use my ears differently, to block out distractions and tune in selectively in order to learn. The technique was teaching me to focus on what was important at the same time that it was literally drawing me in.

This emphasis on listening was reinforced by the directive, *pa'a ka waha*. Closely related to this instruction is a prohibition on asking questions (*nīnau*) until one is given permission. Hawaiian scholar Mary Pukui connects this proscription to traditional practice:

The elders well knew that, “I ka nānā no a ike, by observing, one learns. I ka ho'olohe no a ho'omaopopo, by listening, one commits to memory. I ka hana no a 'ike, by practice one masters the skill. To this, a final directive was added: Never interrupt. Wait until the lesson is over and the elder gives you permission. Then—and not until then—*nīnau*. Ask questions. (quoted in Chun, 3).

Charlot elaborates on the prohibition on asking questions:

[Q]uestioning seems to be considered a distraction from observation, which requires more effort, engages more of the senses, imprints the information more firmly in the memory, and exercises the individual's own thinking capacity. . . . Observing and listening are therefore basic and lifelong learning skills and the means of acquiring the first knowledge necessary for all human activity (178).

Asking questions during a lesson was strongly frowned upon in hālau, and perhaps no other aspect of my hālau education was as foreign for me as was this attitude toward inquiry. In virtually all my other educational experiences, asking questions had been encouraged. As a student, I was accustomed to

being praised for asking questions. It was a sign of interest and indicative of my desire to learn more. I understood it as sincerity to grasp, clearly and correctly, what was being taught. As a teacher I encourage students to question, not just to clarify their understanding, but to challenge the material and my knowledge as well. The point here is that knowledge grows and clarifies with thinking through and correcting inevitable error. As a hallmark of Western pedagogy, questioning implies an acknowledgement of the limited authority of individual knowledge. In hālau, however, it was perceived as rudeness, if not arrogance. Far from signaling eagerness, attentiveness, and worthiness to be taught more, the quick question was interpreted as impatience and an expectation that knowledge would be easily handed to me. It pre-empted the kumu's position to know when a student was ready to receive the next level of knowledge. It questioned the authority of kumu, who are both a link to the past and a creative resource for future directions of knowledge.

The time for questions was always at the discretion of the kumu, usually at the end of a class and with explicit permission. Hawaiian educator Malcolm Chun offers his insight on the value of this approach. “Questioning, or *nīnau*, . . . is thought of as something a person would consider almost as the last expression of learning. Having experienced seeing, listening, reflection, and doing, a student may have answered many of the trivial questions, leaving only the most important to be asked of one's teacher or mentor” (Chun, 5).

From a student's perspective I came to learn that eager desire did not necessarily signal readiness to learn. Rather listening and staying quiet signaled both readiness and respect for the kumu. It was through the many informal *hō'ike* that we demonstrated whether we had listened and what we had actually learned. Having listened and having shown that we knew what had been taught us, was sufficient demonstration of our readiness to learn more. Our personal desire was never as relevant as was kumu's perception (sometimes solidified through consultation with others who were knowledgeable) that the time was right to further instruction.

Learning without palapala

Learning without palapala (paper) was a practice that both our kumu struggled to continue, in spite of what appeared to me to be their desire to do so. While recognizing a need to accommodate students who had neither grown up with hula nor had a working knowledge of Hawaiian language, they seemed to value this traditional approach. My experience was that I embodied the dances taught in this way more firmly than I did those for which we were given paper that contained the words and choreography.

Typically, we learned a new hula by being shown choreography, beginning with the footwork and then adding on the arms. Often we would be given the words of the mele, and sometimes the choreography on paper. If not we would be given time in class to write notes. We would practice these dances over a period of weeks, and then they were considered part of our repertory. Often, we did not return to the dance for several months or even years, yet it was expected that we would practice on our own, so as not to lose touch with the dances. Learning without paper, however, always began with the words of the mele. We would sit together and repeat short phrases until kumu felt we were able to move on. After we had learned the mele to the kumu's satisfaction, we were given the pa'i or rhythmic accompaniment, which clued us to the foot movement. Layered onto this would be the choreography. Learning choreography always began with the step vocabulary, and the dance was completed with arm gestures and facial expression. The learning process was layered from the inside out and from the ground up. Knowledge of the dance began with what the dance spoke to, the story it was intended to convey, which is expressed in the chanting of the mele. The knowledge of the rhythm reinforced the knowledge of the footwork and the gestures reinforced and spoke the story. Everything was set in context. Nothing was disconnected.

From a pedagogical perspective, several things were operating in this process. What we now call scaffolding is clearly at work. In our hālau, learning a hula begins with footwork and the basic vocabulary of arm gestures. These basics are the kinesthetic foundation of all future dances. After some time

it was expected that we had acquired a minimal understanding of Hawaiian language to allow us to understand the basic story we were dancing. Rote memorization—much maligned in contemporary Western pedagogy—was a necessary component, yet never encouraged without a fundamental grasp of what was to be memorized. Because words ground movement, knowing what is meant gives context to the storytelling that is the heart of hula. Aural learning was used in the recitation of the mele, kinetic and visual learning in the learning of movement. The entire process was multisensorial. Imitating kumu in the phrasing of mele and the rhythm of the pa'i gradually brought us to independent performance. Being asked to show what we have learned brings concentration and confidence. The need to focus my mental faculties to hear, repeat, and remember required active attention and individual engagement. In teaching without paper, I found that even after years, the dances came back more readily. The body memory was stronger and the context that built from the mele provided more latching points for recall.

This mode of learning also made me aware of the value of a kind of collective knowledge. And here, perhaps, is a parallel to the idea in Western pedagogy that questioning can correct inevitable error. Both traditions have a means for self-correcting. In hālau, what one individual may have forgotten, others remember. While no one individual remembered the dance flawlessly, the entire group could collaboratively recover the complete dance. The knowledge of the hālau's repertoire was held intact among its members, not by individuals. This notion of group knowing is not widely recognized or promoted in Western educational models where individual knowledge is more highly regarded; but I have come to appreciate the idea of the extended mind of the hālau and to respect the advantages of not having all knowledge reside in one dancer. It encourages respect for other knowers, cooperation among learners, and an appreciation that one individual cannot be responsible for knowing everything. This links to a fundamental 'ōlelo no'eau that every hula dancer learns: 'A'ohe pau ka 'ike i ka hālau ho'okāhi (Not all knowledge resides in a single school) (Pukui, 24). Everyone is

responsible and our mutual reliance is a strength within and among hālau that encourages individual responsibility and engenders community.

Applying Hālau Lessons

As I try to generalize from the lessons I learned in hālau, I recognize a pedagogy of respect, a respect that begins and ends with respect for the knowledge. Not only is the knowledge of the hālau worth knowing, its value is such that it is better to lose it than to pass it over to those who will not exercise care and trust of it. This attitude was reflected in the strong sense of kuleana (responsibility) that our kumu felt. Kumu are respected as keepers of knowledge. Respect for them is, in part, respect for the lineage of their knowledge. Our kumu earned this respect, having demonstrated their knowledge over time, through extensive study, practice, and personal commitment to hula. They have been directed toward teaching by their kumu, credited with the perspective to guide the learning of others. Acknowledging their role as keepers of knowledge, the process of passing that knowledge on is left to their discernment. The kumu decides who will learn what, and when and how they will learn it. This allows the learning to be tailored to the individual student. While everyone learns the basics, anything beyond this reflects the judgment of the kumu.

Clear protocols establish boundaries that separate students and kumu. Within the frame of the class, the knowledge and the judgment of kumu are not questioned. Students are given the knowledge the kumu believes they can be responsible for, and students reflect back the quality of the kumu's judgment through hō'ike. The process is respectful of students by not entrusting them with more responsibility than the kumu believes they can handle. Asking students to show what they have learned, what they have been taught, and, therefore, what they should know, respects students as learners and as individuals. It communicates the kumu's expectation that students acquire the ability to use what they have been given. It offers as well an opportunity for the student as to display that her commitment to the learning is sufficient to make that knowledge her own. William James's observation that "[t]o give

up pretensions is as blessed a relief as to get them gratified," and his characterization of self-esteem as "a ratio of successes divided by pretensions" (54) seem to sum up my kumu's understanding. Students are respected enough to be allowed to fail because failure is so often the occasion for further learning, and because it is the learning, and not an appearance of learning, that is important. Knowledge had priority over the learner because the primary purpose of our hālau was to preserve knowledge. Therefore, it was shared only with those perceived to have the ability and the sense of responsibility to mālama (take care of) it.

Respect is reflected in key values, beginning with ha'aha'a. No student was allowed to believe her knowledge is too great. The bar was always being raised, and at each new level, one sensed directly the familiar feeling of not knowing. Ha'aha'a asks us to acknowledge personal limitations and the need for continued learning. But the values of kuleana and mālama are also important. Kuleana suggests our responsibility as students to learn and remember what we have been taught. Kuleana extends to the kumu as well, who tell us the quality of their teaching is reflected in our performance and our deportment. Mālama is caring for. Whether or not we mālama what we have been taught is clearly shown through hō'ike. If we have taken care of what we have been taught, we will remember it and continue to improve. This respect extended even to our instruments, our attire, and the adornments we wore. These items were considered an extension of our being; they carried not only our personal mana, but that of the tradition we carried forward.

I find these, or any other corresponding values, to be largely absent in our contemporary educational institutions. In general, the students coming into my classes have no sense that they have a responsibility to take care of the knowledge they are presented with. They take for granted their right to access knowledge, which they understand as information, and they have little humility in the face of any lack of knowledge. This is certainly not their fault. Education has been rationalized to them as an endless chain of means to ends—a means to graduation, a job, or a credential

that serves some purpose beyond knowledge. Nor has the Western educational tradition promoted any notion that knowledge is something to be responsible for and cared for in any sense conveyed by the term *mālama*. As far back as the ancient Greek “schools,” challenging prevailing knowledge has been the means by which knowledge in the West has developed. Individual perspective, creativity, and interpretation have been encouraged, while inculcating dispositions of humility, responsibility, and respect as essential to the learning process is rarely fathomed. Generating new knowledge has been more important than preserving what has been accumulated in the past.

I believe our current cultural lack of regard for knowledge has telegraphed into disrespect for teachers. That teachers in our society are not highly valued is amply evidenced by the lack of pay and social status we accord the profession. Epistemological views that argue all knowledge is inherently limited—at best provisional, along with a tradition of questioning, have encouraged us to push the edges of what is and can be known, but they have also undermined the credibility of knowledge and learning itself. The idea of knowledge as information denigrates knowledge and the idea of educators as facilitators takes responsibility from them, displacing teachers from a position of authority that commands respect and students as active participants in their own learning. The commodification of education devalues students’ relationship in the process of learning, encouraging them to think in terms of exchange value, where “knowledge” is available at a price and without any intrinsic worth.

Generation or Preservation

Teaching and learning have different purposes. The purpose of teaching and learning in our *hālau* was to preserve a tradition of practice and knowledge, not to generate new knowledge. This simple distinction—something I don’t think I would have ever thought about were it not for my *hālau* experience—has helped me recognize the extent to which culture drives our expectations of the learning process. My impulse to question and readily offer unsolicited opinions, my assumptions that I could select what of

the *hālau* curriculum I would learn or that I might learn it without considering the full context of its meaning and importance, reflect a cultural way of thinking and have their place in a context that seeks to encourage specialization, independent learning, and the expansion of knowledge. But in *hālau* this context and its assumptions—not only about knowledge, but about my identity as a learner—were inhibiting. *Hālau* clarified that my choice was to learn differently or not learn at all. It did not cause me to dismiss the value of Western ways of knowing and a pedagogy that I deeply admire for encouraging independent reasoning, curiosity, and questioning, and for the way these qualities have opened our vision of the cosmos, extended technological achievements, stimulated creativity, and expanded our vision of humanity. But through my *hālau* experiences, I came to recognize value in another approach, one that has expanded my understanding of how learning happens, how knowledge is kept deep in our being, and how teacher and student exist in a dynamic of mutual determination.

This is not to say that my *hālau* experience played out only in the form of positive insights and valuable pedagogical lessons. Frustrations constantly emerged, and ultimately what ended my *hālau* experience was the core of my *haole* identity. I was always a cultural other — as one inclined to questioning, solid in my sense of autonomy and overtly self-assertive, as one given to critical reflection with the complement of self-doubt that often accompanies inward focusing. Biting my tongue to avoid asking a clarifying question, wanting to protest perceived inconsistencies, I could feel my face and posture pull into tense attention and distance me. It made me stand out as haughty, arrogant, and overly serious. Even without speaking, my judging self was apparent and perceived as disrespectful, although this was never intended. Clearly, I made others uncomfortable, when all I wanted was to test my own understanding. I could never swim easily in the ambiguity and frequent contradiction that moved us along. Nor could I ever comfortably subsume my identity to the collective identity of the *hālau*. While my experiences helped to expand and clarify my sense of self, I was never able to abandon my sense of self.

Hālau made me a better learner by opening up new ways of learning for me. It has helped me consider how others might be learning. As an educator, it taught me that if you cannot show it, then you do not really know it. This is the meaning of the ‘ōlelo no‘eau, “Hō a‘e ka ‘ike he‘enalu i ka hokua o ka ‘ale (Show [your] knowledge of surfing on the back of the wave)” (Pukui, 108). Experience, trial and error, failure, and mistakes are one side of this learning coin. The other side is tenacity and self-discipline, patience, responsibility, and care. From a classically Aristotelian perspective, these virtues can become settled dispositions only through persistent practice. Their currency is evidenced in individual confidence and capability—truer measures of self-esteem. These values have diminished in credibility, if not vanished completely, from our current landscape of learning, effaced by our satisfaction with word counts and multiple-choice tests, with assessments, learning outcomes, and rubrics or simply with making it to the end of a semester and accepting a veneer of knowledge that rarely presses students to demonstrate what they can do with the knowledge they have been given. Somehow knowing enough to pass tomorrow’s test is thought to be more substantive than anything that would pass as knowing in hālau—as if swaying hips told the whole story.

I will never “think Hawaiian.” My identity is too strongly embedded in the ways of knowing of my root culture. My default mode *is* to think like a haole. But what I learned in hālau changed me. It added immensely to the range of what I draw upon as a student, an educator, and a human being. I have a clearer sense of what it means to learn, and I recognize a broader range of dispositions that support learning—dispositions that have strengthened my identity as an educator and helped me to understand better the contexts and purposes of what it is I teach. This in turn has helped me to focus the skills and knowledge I try to convey to my students, and recognize those they bring with them into the classroom.

We live in a culture where information and the ability to access information are easily passed off as knowledge. In hālau, I learned that only when

knowledge is understood as something worth caring for, does it become a foundation for identity, and only when it becomes a foundation for identity, can it vitalize a culture. What I have learned has vitalized my understanding of cultural differences, expanding it further than anything I imagined when I took my first hula lesson. As I continue learning, I draw hālau lessons into my teaching practice almost daily, looking for places where its values and techniques can guide the learning process for my students, and for me. If I were asked to summarize what my hālau experience taught me, I would say this: It has taught me that knowledge is a gift, which, while it can be given widely, is only learned by those ready to receive it, those who care for it and bring it deeply into their being, with a respect that nurtures it at its roots.

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