# AN ORAL HISTORY

# OF THREE GENERATIONS OF KAPA PRACTITIONERS

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## mahalo piha

When the final words of this text emerged, I was spent. It was 7:00 p.m. and the evening was settling in outside. I leaned back in my chair, staring, in the growing darkness, at my computer screen.

The gratitude and responsibility that mark the ways I see this world come from knowing the shoulders I stand on are broad, and deep, and wide.

At some point, the journey of this dissertation became more than a process to a degree, even more than the stories of my kumu kapa. Somewhere along the way, this journey became about the stories of all the kumu who have intersected and intertwined with my own. There have been countless other times up until now, where I have sat at tables across kumu, and listened to their stories as they shared of themselves. Two words cannot seem to convey the gratitude that finds its way from someplace deep.

But I will nonetheless try.

To the professors, my advisory committee, the mentors, even my cohort-mates in the EdD program, and my dear friends and colleagues near and far, who in some way sat patiently and let me rage, and cry, and laugh, and wonder, who gave hugs, a shoulder, an ear, even a look, so I could finally find my way through this project, mahalo piha.

To the two coaches who taught me basketball and became my life mentors, who showed me what it means to be a teacher of life, who stoked my passion and fed my thirst, who allowed me to be me, and most of all, just stayed in my life to see me get to here, mahalo piha.

To my parents, and my brother, who fed me with laughter and food and conversation, who encouraged me to keep going and allowed the demands of this program to take priority, who read my drafts without complaint, who followed me to Washington DC, and England, and

Scotland, and Boston, and back, just so I could touch and see kapa, and who remind me everyday of the kind of person I want to be, mahalo piha.

To my nieces and great-grandnephew, to the young people I am so lucky to coach and teach, who keep me humble, who teach me all the time to see the world in new and different ways, and who remind me everyday why I do what I do, mahalo piha.

To my kumu kapa, and the kumu they introduced me to, who sat with me at their tables, who gave me their time and their manaʻo and their stories to hold, who saw my curiosity and nurtured it, who watched me grow, who have become so important in my life, mahalo piha.

This dissertation is a celebration of a story of stories, and so it is a celebration of each of you and the gifts you have so freely and generously given me. For all those times we sat across from each other, for all the ways you continue to teach, mahalo, mahalo, mahalo.

## abstract

The first story about kapa I ever learned as a haumāna is two words: “just beat.” These words were offered to me from my kumu kapa Aunty Verna Takashima, who heard them from her kumu kapa, Kaʻiulani de Silva. Over time, these words became a metaphor, a pedagogy, a language. Until they became stories built upon stories, the threads of the tapestry that both carry the ʻike of a practice and weave us together. Even now, five years later, as my practitioner lens embraces researcher and educator lenses, the ideas and stories in this text are summed in these two words. So, this dissertation is a story of these stories.

This inquiry does not ask what kapa is, but how it is experienced through story. Using the ʻohe kāpala design of the pewa as a visual metaphor, the moʻolelo of three generations of kapa practitioners are genealogically presented in the “positive spaces”: Kaʻiulani de Silva (part I), Aunty Verna Takashima (part II), and me (part III). These moʻolelo are contextually situated within practitioner, researcher, and educator “layers” that also represent the multiple lenses I wear. Negotiating my relational responsibilities among these shifting contexts and narratives fill the “negative spaces” of this text. Together, these positive and negative spaces—the moʻolelo and underlying narrative of my positionality—are the stories that comprise this dissertation.

Qualitative research is increasingly reshaped by inquiry that prioritizes narrative and relational ethics in exploring the phenomena of human experience (Clandinin & Caine, 2008), and this dissertation reflects this methodological commitment. Creating a space for these moʻolelo creates a space to peer closely beneath the layers where philosophical spaces lie: about shaping identity, about our understandings of educational practice, about how we come to know. And in so doing, presents an opportunity for the reader to engage with these stories, to reflect, and discover the lessons that lie in the folds of moʻolelo built from those two words, “just beat,” the way I did.

**table of contents**


**mahalo piha** ..... iii

**abstract** ..... v

**list of figures** ..... ix

**to the eyes that read** ..... xii

**story (re)teller's note** ..... xxi
- **organization** ..... xxi
- **the five poems** ..... xxiii
- **footnotes** ..... xxiv
- **formatting and style** ..... xxv

**introduction** ..... 2
- **the pewa** ..... 2
- **the practitioner layer: moʻolelo and the historical narrative of kapa** ..... 6
  - the dominant narrative of kapa ..... 6
  - the counterstory of contemporary kapa practitioners ..... 11
- **the researcher layer: moʻolelo, oral storytelling and narrative inquiry** ..... 12
  - qualitative research and narrative inquiry ..... 14
  - the thorny tension ..... 18
  - negotiating moʻolelo as exchange ..... 19
  - navigating the representation of moʻolelo ..... 27
- **the educator layer: moʻolelo and approaches to teaching and learning** ..... 31
  - he lālā wau no kuʻu kumu ..... 35
  - i ka nānā no a ʻike ..... 36
  - ma ka hana ka ʻike ..... 37
  - lawe i ka maʻalea a kūʻonoʻono ..... 38
  - aʻo aku, aʻo mai ..... 39

**part I the kumu of my kumu is my kumu** ..... 42

**introduction** ..... 44
- **moʻolelo as exchange** ..... 48
- **moʻolelo as representation** ..... 50

**the first day** ..... 52
- **where my name comes from** ..... 52
- **hula** ..... 54
- **e hana mua a paʻa ke kahua** ..... 60
- **the chant guides the hula** ..... 63
- **what kapa teaches** ..... 67
- **camping, digging, hiking, discovering** ..... 72
- **ʻohana, stuffed peacocks, and the tsunami** ..... 74

i le‘a ka hula a ka ho‘opa‘a ........ 78
‘a‘ohe pau ka ‘ike i ka hālau ho‘okāhi ........ 80
lehua moments ........ 86

the second day ........ 89
kapa is relational ........ 89
what’s in your freezer? ........ 95
my grandmother’s quilt ........ 99
really good, make you think thoughts ........ 105
a Hawaiian sense of design ........ 109
the most important tool ........ 113
ho‘ololi: pulelehua and the moon ........ 117
the pedagogy of kapa ........ 121
pedagogy in practice ........ 126

the third day ........ 128
talk story before the talk story ........ 128
ho‘okuano‘o ........ 133
the five things ........ 136
ho‘omākaukau ........ 148
the road ahead ........ 152
pukas in the knowledge ........ 157
na‘au ho‘omaika‘i ........ 159

part II my kumu ........ 162

introduction ........ 164
mo‘olelo as exchange ........ 169
mo‘olelo as representation ........ 171

the first day ........ 174
childhood ........ 174
Mama Kahuna‘aina ........ 177
Merrie Monarch & the big can of silica ........ 180
rediscovering, reconnecting, and reviving as research ........ 187

the second day ........ 199
the second kapa moe ........ 199
black splotches ........ 203
kuleana ........ 209
ho‘okuleana ........ 212

the third day ........ 217
the danger of labels ........ 217
the evolution of a practice ........ 225
on being a “master kapa practitioner” ........ 229

he mo‘okū‘auhau ke kapa .... 231
part III my story as haumāna .... 236
introduction .... 238
haumāna: the practitioner context .... 240
hapa .... 240
hō‘ailona .... 244
the mayonnaise tub .... 247
the mo‘olelo i learned from .... 250
the butterfly .... 254
emerging: the researcher context .... 256
the pedagogy of kapa .... 256
the faces i see .... 258
start from the middle .... 259
kapa is life .... 261
reflections of a practitioner/researcher/educator .... 263
the thorns that first emerge .... 263
talking story, telling stories .... 265
the experience of mo‘olelo .... 267
reflecting on my educator identity .... 268
the keiki breaks through .... 270
concluding thoughts .... 273
implications for the practice of kapa .... 273
implications for educational practice .... 276
ha‘ina ‘ia mai ana ka puana .... 278
appendices .... 283
appendix a: institutional review board approval letter .... 283
appendix b: consent to participate form .... 284
appendix c: interviewee agreement form .... 287
appendix d: followup letter with question topics .... 288
appendix e: interview guide .... 289
appendix f: post interview contact summary form .... 292
appendix g: biographical data sheet .... 293
glossary of terms .... 295
translation of Hawaiian phrases .... 295
translation of Hawaiian words .... 297
translation of other words .... 310
references .... 311

## list of figures

Figure 1. Visual depiction of the pewa metaphor in this dissertation.............................................3

Figure 2. The layered narratives the moʻolelo of my kumu are situated within.............................4

In Hawaiʻi, wauke, *Broussonetia papyrifera,* is a canoe plant,[1] favored by Hawaiians to make kapa. The preferred growing method is not planting by seed but to place the cuttings directly in the ground. Wauke thrives best in loose volcanic soil, well-watered areas with good drainage, lots of sun, and protection from the wind.

My kumu taught me that as kapa practitioners, we must grab hold of the earth, get dirt under our fingernails, and dig in. We tend with constant water, pluck the leaf buds that peek above the lobed, hairy leaves to prevent branches, harvest when the sun is high overhead and the long summer days pull the fiber off the trunk, and prepare our moʻomoʻo so we have wauke to beat. And always, we nurture the keiki that sprout from the rhizomatic runners of the makua.

In this timeless cycle of dirt to hand to harvest to beat are the moʻolelo—the stories that connect generations of kapa practitioners connect across dimensionalities of time, and practice, and place, and people.

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[1] Broussonetia papyrifera, the paper mulberry tree, is a canoe plant, brought by Polynesians when they migrated to Hawaiʻi.

[2] Cajete (1994) defines pathway as a structural metaphor for the transformation we undergo in learning: "path" represents a structure, an active context we journey through as we learn; "way" is the process of making meaning. Archibald (2008) uses the phrase story pathway to connote the transformation in learning through story.

[3] There are political implications attached to this label; some might identify this word with "cultural

Tell me a fact and I'll learn.
Tell me a truth and I'll believe.
But tell me a story and it will live
in my heart forever.

Indian Proverb

**to the eyes that read**

*There is a favorite memory I have. The kind where your heart cracks open and smiles whenever you think of it. It is of the kumu of my kumu, Kaʻiulani, and my kumu, Aunty Verna, examining a piece of kapa. The color, size, and type of kapa do not really matter; it is the way they are peering at it. Closely and then far away, turning it this way and that. One tucked over the other's shoulder. Exclaiming in hushed whispers, pointing and analyzing with practiced eyes and careful hands. The way I have come to know my kumu often do.*

*They are looking at something that I, as haumāna, do not yet see.*

*I want to ask what they are looking at, but something silences me. So I try to watch carefully. Observing the way they hold the kapa, how they are turning it, where they are pointing. Finally, Kaʻiulani turns and motions me to come closer.*

*I step into their circle.*

*"Can you see?" she asks, pointing to the piece.*

*"How'd they do that?" I ask, softly. My eyes slowly focus to the end of her fingertip. I realize I am holding my breath. I am at once, as always, captivated.*

*"The fiber," Aunty Verna says. Her voice carries the tenor of excitement and curiosity we are all tuned into. "Look at the fiber."*

*Kaʻiulani holds the kapa so I can step closer. I can hear the smile and wonder in her voice. "The fiber," she repeats. "Isn't that amazing?"*

*"How'd they DO that?" I whisper again, to no one in particular. I feel my face stretch into a smile. My curiosity teased with a secret awaiting discovery.*

*"We don't know," Kaʻiulani says, still marveling at the piece of kapa. "But it makes me want to beat some wauke right now." Aunty Verna and I find both ourselves nodding in agreement. We understand this.*

*"That's right," Aunty Verna says. "We just have to beat. We have to keep beating, keep practicing. Each time we beat, we get closer." (personal journal, n.d.)*

Aloha mai e ka maka heluhelu,

I share this story with you because stories like these are the stories of my kumu I cherish. Everyday experiences, ordinary and extraordinary, physical and spiritual, organized into a story to remember and share (Silko, 1981/2012) that when strung together, speak to a life worth remembering. Sometimes this rememory morphs into vignettes of other memories. Sometimes it stands alone. Sometimes snippets replay themselves into other stories, but the essence is the same. It is their curious and wonder-filled pursuit of the inquiry that breaks my heart open.

You see, this dissertation is first and foremost, a narrative of love. The love I have as a practitioner for the Hawaiian practice of kapa. The love I hold as haumāna for my kumu, Kaʻiulani de Silva and Aunty Verna Takashima, and their stories. For in these stories mark the pivots and flows of our relationships with kapa and with each other. Their stories teach the rhythms of the moon and the tides, to plants and dye colors. Their stories reflect on childhood, the importance of ʻohana and kūpuna, and the living of life. And their stories speak to how we work, in ways big and small, to reclaim the stories that breathe life to the ʻike of the past, as we new beat together new stories of kapa for the future. To me, these moʻolelo are not "just" stories; sometimes about kapa, sometimes not, they contain in them the experiences of belonging, of teaching and learning, of speaking to my soul.

It is true that we are drawn to write about what we need to learn. The simple desire for you, the reader, to love the moʻolelo of my kumu as much as I do became my story pathway (Archibald, 2008)[2] of this dissertation: for in order to share their stories in their voices, I first had to find my own. Their practitioner[3] and researcher[4] narratives launched me, pushing me to think about the relational responsibilities I, in turn, bear as practitioner and researcher, and even, as educator. In fact, their stories pushed me so hard I came face to face with a knot of

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[2] Cajete (1994) defines pathway as a structural metaphor for the transformation we undergo in learning: "path" represents a structure, an active context we journey through as we learn; "way" is the process of making meaning. Archibald (2008) uses the phrase story pathway to connote the transformation in learning through story.

[3] There are political implications attached to this label; some might identify this word with "cultural practitioner." For this text, practitioner means someone who is practicing kapa—as the practice itself is creative, and exploratory, practitioner in this context also means artist.

[4] There are also political implications attached to this word. In the Hawaiian dictionary (Pukui & Elbert, 1986) research is "ʻimi i ke kumu; huli puke *(literary)*, ʻimi naʻauao, noiʻi" (p. 513). It is an active seeking of knowledge that I interpret is personal, social, and emergent. I define researcher in this text from this more expansive lens: as someone who actively searches for knowledge; formal academic training, like practice, is a tool for that search but not a requirement.

emotions I could not initially get around. I wanted this dissertation to celebrate the stories of my kumu, yet in the space of academic inquiry, I could not articulate why. Or how. Negotiating my own positionality in this new and messy space—among lenses of practitioner, researcher, and educator, insider, outsider—bore no roadmap that I could find. Decades of Western thinking had conditioned an intellectual rationality to choose one "or" the other; that there was "a right answer," and to search for that answer "somewhere out there," in a book, on the internet—but not within. Even as a haumāna who was learning otherwise from her kumu, this binary thinking preponderated as I expanded into the academic realm.

And so, I went on that Great Search. Looking everywhere for the voice(s) that would eloquently articulate the "how's" and the "why's": Indigenous and Western topics and methodologies; Hawaiian history, culture, and kapa; the routes of Captain Cook and other explorations in the Pacific, museums and kapa collections; oral storytelling, oral history, oral traditions; narrative research and inquiry, interviewing methods; ethnography, autoethnography; social justice theory, critical theories, identity theories, learning theories. What I learned was the Search proved fruitful only in finding the knot just kept growing.

I was, in truth, dancing around the edges: of owning up to the responsibility of *being* a kapa practitioner, a haumāna, a researcher. An educator. Specifically, the responsibilities I bear to the relationships inherent in these contexts. I did not anticipate that the simple desire for you, the reader, to love the moʻolelo of my kumu as much as I do, would send me on my own journey. That this Great Search would in fact, lead in one big circle. Gently, patiently, my kumu reminded me. I felt the whispers of kūpuna asking, "why are you sharing these stories?" at the same moment I remembered Kaʻiulani saying, "if you don't, who will?" I felt my own silent questioning, "but how will you share these stories?" at the same time I hear Aunty Verna say, "Marlene, you always start from the center and beat outwards."

And so, that is where I started—or rather, where I ended up, in order to begin. And where this dissertation is written from. From the center. At the place where that knot sits. My kumu did not sit me down and shake the realization into me, nor did they tell me "how to get through this knot." Intentionally or otherwise, they waited for me to be ready to learn the lessons from their stories. They created a space for the voice that yearned not to whisper, but to assert loudly from a place of wholeness. It was as if they put their patient gaze on that knot and urged me to keep going, to keep practicing, to keep beating, even though I wanted to leave it and walk away. They have given many gifts and blessings, shared many things with me about kapa and life, but this, *this*, has perhaps been the one gift most deeply cherished. They found the place where my heart cracked open, and patiently waited. Until I could see that it is also through the crack where the light shines through.

What a beautiful burden, indeed, to step up to the responsibility of *being* a kapa practitioner! Imagine the stories that can be told! I wonder: What stories do we see ourselves in? What stories do we find ourselves sharing? What stories do we come back to, time and again? "There is a story in every line of theory" (Maracle, 1994, p. 8) just as there is a story in every beat of the iʻe kuku against the wauke, in every piece of kapa. In these stories, is where the ʻike dwells. Or perhaps, in the ʻike is where the stories live.

At Kaʻiulani's dining table, under Aunty Verna's house, I listened, entranced, as kapa came alive. In the way the knowledge of a practice lives in its blessing from kumu to haumāna. Time is not linear but bent to the corners where history, and the knowledge of ka poʻe kahiko, connect to their practice and to me. Humble and wise and strong, the voices of my kumu convey a seriousness and depth in one minute and breathe with an easy laughter as they recount their trials and errors in the next. Generously sharing their curiosities and wonderings, their experiments, their successes, their failures.

Each and every time I settle in at their tables, my kumu remind me that learning—to really know something in the way that it connects deep in the naʻau—requires an active engagement with all senses. My kumu show me what inquiry, teaching, and learning from this lens of possibility looks, smells, feels, sounds, and acts like. Their contexts of practitioner, researcher, student, teacher, are indistinguishable. Their fearless and sharp inquiry stands up to the most rigorous of academic analysis. Layers of meaning hide in the folds of their stories like a gift awaiting discovery. Constantly shaping "[my] perceptions, [my] values, and [my] beliefs about [myself], others, and [my] world" (McDougall, 2016, p. 4). It is not their way to point out the lessons, to feed me the information, but to watch and wait for the moment *they* feel I am ready to receive their ʻike. With an inquisitive gaze, my kumu ask, "What do *you* think? How do you feel? Why do you feel this way?" There is no such thing as passive learning. To step into this space with them is to actively engage with my own curiosity, to have a voice, to *think*, to share: aʻo aku, aʻo mai (Chun, 2005).[5]

As communal and social as this learning is, there is also an intensely personal relationship that emerges. To learn kapa is an evolving, perceiving process (Spiller, 2012)[6] best summarized by the first story from Aunty Verna I ever learned about kapa: "Just beat." The practice, itself a curriculum of observing, thinking, reflecting, smelling, touching, reading, asking, listening, practicing, sharing, trying and trying again. Failure is part of the process, a

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[5] Teaching and learning (Chun, 2006). Aku and mai are directionals, the "giving out" of teaching, and the "taking in" of learning. The use of the same word, aʻo, for teaching and learning illustrates the Hawaiian notion of teaching and learning as a continual, reciprocal interchange.

[6] The concept of "perceiving process" is how a researcher "can orient to studying phenomena" (Spiller, 2012, p. 69). A perceiving, rather than conceiving, process, carries socially constructivist underpinnings, and implies "'research as usual' beliefs, theories, routines, and methodologies may be of little use when they enter unfamiliar territory" (p. 72).

First Attempt In Learning; "if you haven't failed then you haven't been doing it enough" (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016). It is how I was taught.

"Just beat," was the answer to many, if not all, of my questions. If at the beginning of our relationship, "just beat" may have related a literal teaching action from kumu to haumāna—ma ka hana ka ʻike (Pukui, 1983, p. 227)[7]—over the course of my relationship those two words framed a scaffolding of experiences. "Just beat" was a reminder from my kumu to pay attention to the fiber: i ka nānā no a ʻike (Pukui, 1983, p. 129).[8] And in the observing and the practicing, "just beat" became a metaphor for reflecting and internalizing: lawe i ka maʻalea a kūʻonoʻono (Pukui, 1983, p. 211).[9] A multitude of signs and signals exist as answers, there to (re)orient and guide—if we pay attention. "The fiber is going to tell you, and even though you have inspiration and intention, you have to be open. And in the end, it always is better" (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016).

> So for myself and what I've tried to instill in my students now, is, study. When you beating, you *look* at the wauke, or your bast, and watch the fibers. You move it according to the fiber. It's going to tell you, you going to see it may be moving to the right, to the left, some parts are thick, then you move it back. (V. Takashima, personal communication, 2016)

I believe my kumu waited for me to realize the wisdom and the depth in these two simple words. Just beat. Two words, crafting stories upon stories, layered with meaning and metaphor, until they became a pedagogy, a language in which the ʻike of a practice is shared. It is what I have always believed to be true: that moʻolelo lives.

Aunty Verna is right: each time we *just beat*, we get closer.

---

[7] In the practice, one learns.

[8] In observing, one learns.

[9] Take wisdom and make it deep.

Perhaps the eyes that read this dissertation are those of a practitioner, whose sharp eye looks closely at the fiber of the story to examine the layers of meaning. Who understands, whether it is kapa or any practice that captures attention and holds it, that stories are where the ʻike lives. Who comprehends that it is through these moʻolelo, built from experiences born from observing, experiencing, reflecting, and sharing, that the practice will continue. These eyes delight in the stories told by the voices of fellow practitioners, and in this kinship searches for the thick details, the clues that might reveal the answers to the ever-familiar question, "*how* did they *do* that?" They may delight in the simple details shared, that remind us kapa is living and thriving, instead of a practice that "was once dormant" (K. de Silva, personal communication, n.d.; V. Takashima, personal communication, n.d.).[10] Constantly learning, always curious, practitioner eyes turn the stories this way and that, first looking at them closely and then far away, all while trying to extrapolate the layers of meaning.

Perhaps the eyes that read this dissertation are of the academic researcher, who possesses a critical and genre-bending gaze (Bochner, 2014). Who notices the refrain from using the word "traditional"[11] to describe the practice of kapa, and the decision not to italicize Hawaiian words throughout this text, as a decolonizing praxis. Who acknowledges the irony in reclaiming an Indigenous[12] practice that lives in the orality of stories through the structure of a

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[10] Kapa as a "forgotten" practice and virtually extinct, is one I have heard countless times.

[11] Wendt (1976) questions the idea of a "traditional culture" and notes it as a colonial reference. A traditional culture implies static and fixed, and therefore "simple and easy to understand" (Wendt, 2008, as quoted in Mallon, 2016, para. 4). In the kapa practitioner community circles I sit in, the use of the word traditional has been vigorously debated. The common term I hear is "customary"—this can be used when referencing established knowledge, practices and ideas, but they do not always mean past or ancient. My kumu have imparted in me the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of kapa, "like a tree…forever growing new branches, foliage, and roots" (Wendt, 1976, p. 52).

[12] While political and social implications in using the word Indigenous can be interpreted to mean the experiences described in this text are universal and generic; in this text, the word "Indigenous" represents

written text. These eyes astutely realize that stories are a “fundamental unit that accounts for the human experience” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 4); and in centering storytelling as a collaborative act and as a rigorous and provoking form of narrative inquiry, this text suggests another layer for consideration in the collecting, caring for, analyzing, and (re)telling of stories—for both the storyteller and the story listener. Researcher eyes possess critical and hermeneutic sensibilities, and recognize this dissertation “connects the research act to the emotion and heart of lived human experience” (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 348). And that by celebrating the ways knowledge might be explained in new and different modalities, we can “construct another world that is richer than either the story or the reality alone” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 36).

Or perhaps the eyes that read belong to the educator whose inquisitive gaze is drawn to the storytelling, for in the rich, thick folds of the stories lie layers of meaning that speak to shaping identity and about how we come to know. Who comprehends that in these philosophical spaces, paying attention to the fiber provides a metaphorical translation to educational practice and praxis about how we pay attention to our children:

> you save, but it teaches you a different thing,
>
> it teaches you appreciation and you never waste
>
> and you can make something beautiful out of what other people call scraps,
>
> I never call it scraps,
>
> it’s good fiber,
>
> just takes a lot longer to get it out of it. (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016)

---

many distinctly different communities and people, “among whom there are thousands of different languages and stories/memories” (Benham, 2007, p. 533), and within which Native Hawaiians may be described. I use Hawaiian, Native Hawaiian, to mean specifically the Hawaiian cultural practices and beliefs. Indigenous is capitalized as a term of respect.

Educator eyes, particularly those who work among Indigenous and Hawaiian children, understand the ensuing questions that present themselves in the reflective pauses of my kumu: What if we paid attention to our children the way kapa practitioners are taught to pay attention to the fiber? What if teaching and learning really was built from the patient waiting for the child to be ready to learn? How different might schooling be, if learning were built from this premise?

My kumu invited me into their spaces time and again, generously granting me the gift of their moʻolelo. To be aware and pay attention with humility and patience honors their stories. To practice the practice, to reflect and read, to be curious and inquire, celebrates their stories. To share their teachings, through stories of my own that interweave with theirs, this passes their stories on. ʻOla nā moʻolelo, ʻola i nā moʻolelo, ʻōlelo (i) nā moʻolelo (McDougall, 2016).[13] How we live moʻolelo, how moʻolelo lives through us. In moving from story listener to story caretaker, to story (re)teller, I realize this is now my kuleana. To ensure their stories are there, that they live and thrive, for those whose eyes have yet to read them.

You, the reader, now begin in the way I did, as a story listener. Come, find a good chair, settle in. No matter which lens(es) you use, I humbly hope the essence for you is the same. That you, too, find yourself at the table, connected and held the way I did. That regardless of the eyes you read this dissertation with, their stories speak directly to your soul. So that you may find the layers of meaning that hide in its folds, awaiting the richness of discovery. And that their stories inspire curiosity and wonder in such a way that it too, cracks your heart open to let the light through and find your own.

Me ka haʻahaʻa,

Marlene Akiko Zeug

[13] McDougall (2016) compiles concepts of ʻola nā moʻolelo (the moʻolelo live); and ʻola i nā moʻolelo, (we live because of the moʻolelo). ʻOla (i) nā moʻolelo intends to articulate “how we live moʻolelo and how moʻolelo live through us” (p. 3). This is appropriate for what I am trying to convey.

## story (re)teller’s note

### organization

This dissertation, written first for my kumu, seeks to experience kapa through story. This inquiry does not factually describe what kapa is, nor is the presentation of stories just about “the coproduction of knowledge and a final text called a life history” (Behar, 2003, p. 229). In respecting the relationship I maintain with them as a haumāna, this text is organized by story and ordered genealogically (and not by progression of the inquiry). In addition, their moʻolelo are presented in their entirety as three major sections: Kaʻiulani de Silva, the kumu of my kumu (part I), Aunty Verna Takashima, my kumu (part II), and my story as haumāna (part III). The overall organization of this dissertation immediately centralizes moʻolelo and prioritizes the voices of three generations of kapa practitioners (rather than the voice of the researcher). Parts I and II contain the stories of my kumu (and part III) and are designed to read independently.

In presenting their stories this way, I had to contend with the presentation of multiple voices in a way that would flow and make sense to the reader. I also had to negotiate academic expectations in collecting, analyzing, representing, and sharing these stories—and the order these components appeared—with practitioner expectations and protocols when sharing knowledge through moʻolelo. For the reader who desires an orientation to the context from which this dissertation was written, it may be helpful to read the introduction first.

Qualitative research explores the human construction of a perceived worldview through the relationship between the research, researcher, and researched, giving space for narrative inquiry to expand and flourish within the landscape. While still a nascent field of research (Clandinin, 2007), literature has examined narrative inquiry methodologically, both at the boundaries of qualitative research and narrative inquiry (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) as well as their points of intersection (see Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). In this text, the

methodological considerations that situate this inquiry in narrative inquiry—particularly the exploration of positionality and the emphasis on narrative—also mediate the inquiry design and layout of this text. To situate the reader, the pewa as a visual metaphor is presented in the introduction to explain the organization of the text; the connecting narratives that layer and weave through the moʻolelo of my kumu in the academic setting of a dissertation are discussed through my contexts as practitioner, researcher, and educator.

Parts and I and II are the stories that emerged from the talk story[14] sessions (Kahakalau, 2004) my kumu and I had over the three days they occurred in the course of this project. Represented in the manner, order, and style they were told to me, I detail the methods of collecting, translating, and representing their stories in a short introduction for each kumu kapa. In these introductions, I orient the reader to Kaʻiulani and Aunty Verna: their storytelling styles, our manner of exchange, and their outlook on teaching and learning through kapa. I intentionally do not provide an extensive analysis to situate the stories of my kumu prior to presenting them in parts I and II. If the experience of moʻolelo is where meaning-making occurs, then accordingly, I chose to create a space for the reader to derive their own interpretations and meanings, independent of my own analysis.

The Search, as I describe it, to become comfortable with my voice and the spaces I occupy as a practitioner/researcher/educator, is autoethnographically depicted in part III. "Autoethnographers tend to vary in their emphasis on *auto-* (self), *-ethno-* (the cultural link), and *-graphy* (the application of a research process)" (Wall, 2006, p. 6; see also Ellis, 2004). While I contextualize the reader to this dissertation in the introduction by laying out my

[14] Kahakalau (2004) references "informational, conversational interviews [as] what Hawaiians call *talk story*" (p. 24, italics in original). I use this to describe the nature of the interviews with my kumu as informal and conversational. Kovach (2010b) references this as the conversational method. I explicate this concept in part three. While I cite Kahakalau in my use of the phrase throughout this text, it is a colloquial expression that even my kumu use.

positionality, part III contain poems, short stories, journals, personal essays and notes that prompted emotional recall (Ellis, 2004) to help me relive "in detail a situation in which [the actor] previously felt the emotion to be enacted" (Ellis, 1993, p. 726). The texture of my own story in part III presents as both "*auto-ethno-*" and *"-ethno-graphy"* depictions; as much as possible, "I chose not to remove the thorns from my story" (Behar, 2003, preface, para. 17). And while deeply personal connections predispose the emic nature of this research to critiques of generalizability and perhaps even notions of essentialism, I believe there is some facilitation of understanding of how a practitioner of any practice might internalize and apply their learning environments to produce their particular educator identities.

Utilizing narrative inquiry with a Hawaiian cultural practice such as kapa where oral storytelling is a platform for teaching and learning presents broad implications for practitioner, researcher, and educator contexts. From these contexts, I suggest next steps and recommendations in the conclusion. Structurally, while the moʻolelo of three generations of kapa practitioners stand on their own, the introduction and conclusion buttress their connection to the academic space; by bookending the sections of literature review, methodology and conceptual framework, positionality, method design, and data capture in these sections, the moʻolelo remain centered, privileged, and uninterrupted by the research analysis. In this way, revealing my underlying intent for sharing the moʻolelo of my kumu in the way I do: because within the layers, hidden in the fold, their stories invite us to reconnect, think deeply, and learn something about ourselves.

**the five poems**

Throughout the dissertation, each major section is announced with a poem. These poems correspond to the pedagogical philosophy of my kumu; as I reflected on their teachings and my

time with them as a haumāna, these five components emerged.[15] While that is not necessarily how my kumu framed and introduced them to me, I articulate them as ʻōlelo noʻeau. The poems are a composite of experiences with my kumu, bits and pieces of manaʻo, threads of stories woven together, each one reflecting the way I internalized the lessons of each component. In these poems, kumu references my literal and metaphorical source of knowledge; representing Kaʻiulani de Silva and Aunty Verna, as well as my connection to all my kumu who have in some way contributed to what is presented here.

The visual layout of these poems are also intentional: single-spaced and in the shape of pewa, they reflect the visual metaphor of this dissertation. Presenting the poems in this way allows for a reflective space for the reader to shift between storytelling styles between sections; while each poem can be read independently, the use of repetition in the opening and closing lines also links them together.

**footnotes**

Footnotes are used to further explicate a concept or idea that appears in the text; or point the reader to a section of the dissertation for further analysis. Consistent with APA style, footnotes are not used to direct the reader to a source in the reference list. These footnotes may contain additional references to explore an idea further, provide related information as a point of interest, and expand on an idea. I also utilize footnotes to explain motivation and intention behind using concepts, terminology, and phrases; in the more creative spaces of this text, I did not want to disrupt the flow and progression of the story, and elected to use footnotes instead. Translations of Hawaiian words are located in the glossary section; other foreign words have a footnote noting the English translation.

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[15] I detail these components in the educator layer section of the introduction.

**formatting and style**

Subverting typographical prescriptive “[j]udgments about what counts as ‘right,’ ‘good’ and ‘correct’ in writing and grammar” (McCann, 2012, para. 8), formatting reflects the decolonizing praxis that reads through this body of work. Linguistic and grammatical conventions we familiarly perceive as “proper” Standard English trace their characteristics to the “dialects spoken by privileged, mostly wealthy, mostly white people” (McCann, 2012, para. 8); the use of capital letters emphasizes and draws attention to certain words. With the exception of the names of my kumu, titles are not capitalized to de-emphasize these words and instead focus the reader on the contents and substance of the written text.[16]

Standard English also uses italics for words that are not English and not assimilated to the English language. The use of italics can be interpreted to distinguish “otherness,” outside of mainstream and what is judged “proper.” I am not fluent in Hawaiian, but I do not consider Hawaiian words foreign or improper to my vocabulary. For these reasons, Hawaiian words are not italicized in this text. With some exceptions, their definitions and explanations are provided in the glossary of terms.

This dissertation maintains parts as opposed to chapters, and style requirements for titles and subtitles follow APA guidelines for consistency and delineation. Subtitle naming conventions are based on the flow of the argument as it progresses through the text, and not necessarily the standardized topical sections of the conventional dissertation.

Throughout the text the reader will see five pewa on the page:

[16] bell hooks also notes this in her decision not to use capital letters in her name (Marriott, 1997).

Centered between sections, these pewa offer a pause or space within the writing. Sometimes the discussion pivots between analysis with the introduction of a new chapter; sometimes the style of writing itself pivots between academic (double-spaced) and creative (single-spaced); sometimes, it is there to offer a reader momentary reflection in narrative itself. Five pewa signifies the generations of my kapa lineage: Uncle Dennis Kanaʻe Keawe, who taught Aunty Moana Eisele, who taught Kaʻiulani de Silva, who taught Aunty Verna Takashima, who in turn have taught me.

Finally, within parts I, II, and III there are segments (e.g., the first day, the second day, the third day) that also house smaller chapters within them; each segment, as well as each smaller chapter, contains a quote, pulled from the moʻolelo and our talk story sessions together, italicized and flushed left, to introduce an overall theme or manaʻo for that segment or chapter. Where I have elected to incorporate quotes from the talk story sessions with my kumu in the analysis, they are double-spaced and formatted to be consistent with APA citation.

**he lālā wau no kuʻu kumu**

"Kumu, tell me a story."

Her eyes hold an amused sparkle as I settle in to listen.
"Do you know how wauke grows?"
I love these moments.
Her voice makes her stories come alive.
Her poetic cadence draws you in and holds you.

"The wauke plant, when he first starts out,
he's the first plant, he's the makua.
It's a he, you know,
you know the moʻolelo of Maikoha[17] right?
The wauke, they're all he's, did you know that?[18]

Anyway, the makua, he digs in with his tap root and starts to grow.
He gets big, his leaves get big, and he sends out these runners.
All these runners, shooting off from the tap root,
all different directions, this way and that.
That's how the keiki come up.
And maybe over time, those keiki, they
send out their runners and more keiki come up,
over here, over there, all different places. And they send out
their runners, and on and on. One, two, three generations, maybe more."

I can feel my forehead crinkle.
What's the lesson?
I really want to ask, but I don't.

She pauses. Head tilted. Watching closely.
Waiting to see if I understand.
"Imagine that!"
"A whole forest of wauke, all from one makua."[19]

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[17] Krauss (1993) writes of Maikoha, "a deified hairy man, as the god of tapa makers" (p. 60); it is from his grave that the first wauke plant grew. There are several versions of this moʻolelo.

[18] Whistler and Elevitch (2006) note the reason all wauke plants in the Pacific are propagated by stem cuttings, not seed, and is not invasive, is because only the male version of the plant exists.

[19] The visual of a forest of wauke from one plant is layered with interpretation and metaphor: the way the practice of kapa is being perpetuated through haumāna, the keiki, that are sprouting up everywhere, but are connected at their source; the way the stories in this dissertation may seem to rhizomatically spread out, but at their roots they are connected.

## introduction

*the entrance chant for the hula, ho'opūka e kalā i ma ka hikina,*
*and that one tells of the mist in the dancers that come from the east,*
*and break through with the sun,*
*and they enter the floor and the restrictions are released,*
*and they perform,*
*and the sun shines, and the knowledge is there,*
*and so that was my inspiration for that performance*
*because we were trying to get people to see kapa for the first time and think,*
*it can be done!*
*It's there!*
*It's used again,*
*it's reborn!*
*(K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016)*

### the pewa

The pewa is a bowtie spline or butterfly wedge joint inlaid across a crack or split in ʻumeke and other wooden pieces to restore its functionality. The resulting repair is often structurally stronger, and the beauty in its imperfection is not only artistic but a symbol of the woodworker's mastery and skill.

In the artistic composition of a Hawaiian kapa piece, positive and negative spaces are layers of design that individually and together, tell a story (K. de Silva, personal communication, n.d.). The ʻohe kāpala are used in creative ways to create layers of design. The shape of the pewa can be created either in positive space (the shape is carved into the ʻohe kāpala, inked and stamped onto the kapa piece) or negative space (the shape is created in the background as a result of another ʻohe kāpala pattern). Imprinted positively or negatively, the pewa can itself be a story or a layer to another story; together, they compose a multidimensional experience for the viewer. Embedded in this experience, are the questions of how and why; it is up to the viewer interacting with the kapa, to discover those layers of meanings for themselves. Does the viewer focus on the positive space? Or the negative space? Or the ways they interact with each other?

Herein is where learning, the making of meaning, comes alive: In the interaction of positive and negative, in the moments of reflection they may spark for the viewer.

The pewa is a visual and multidimensional metaphor for this dissertation (see Figure 1).

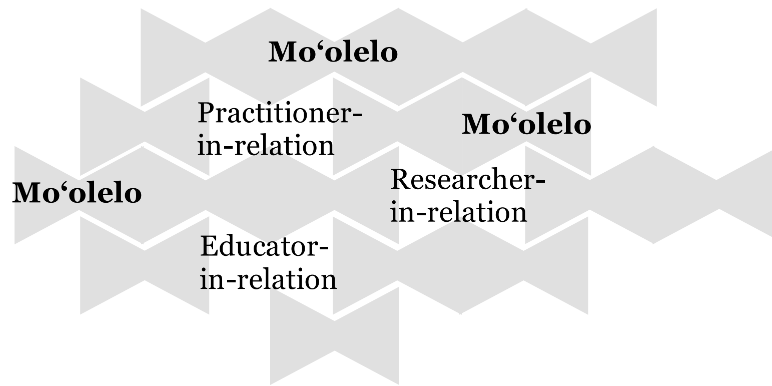


*Figure 1*: Visual depiction of the pewa metaphor in this dissertation.

Moʻolelo are the methodology, the method, and the data in this inquiry; as a centralizing and grounding element, moʻolelo represents the ʻike—of the practice, of place, of my kumu—in the positive spaces of this text. Moʻolelo also represent the layers of narratives this inquiry is situated within (see Figure 2): the narrative of kapa, its history, and current revival (practitioner layer); the narrative of oral storytelling, qualitative research, and narrative inquiry (researcher layer); and the narrative of Hawaiian-based approaches to teaching and learning (educator layer). These narratives are explored through practitioner, researcher, and educator contexts. My negotiative process among the nuances of these shifting contexts fill the negative spaces of this text; they reflect my positionality according to my relational responsibilities. The interconnectedness of positive (moʻolelo) and negative (positionality) spaces are where my learning surfaces; as Figure 1 visualizes, collectively they form the tapestry that describes the layout of this dissertation as well as my own methodological approach.

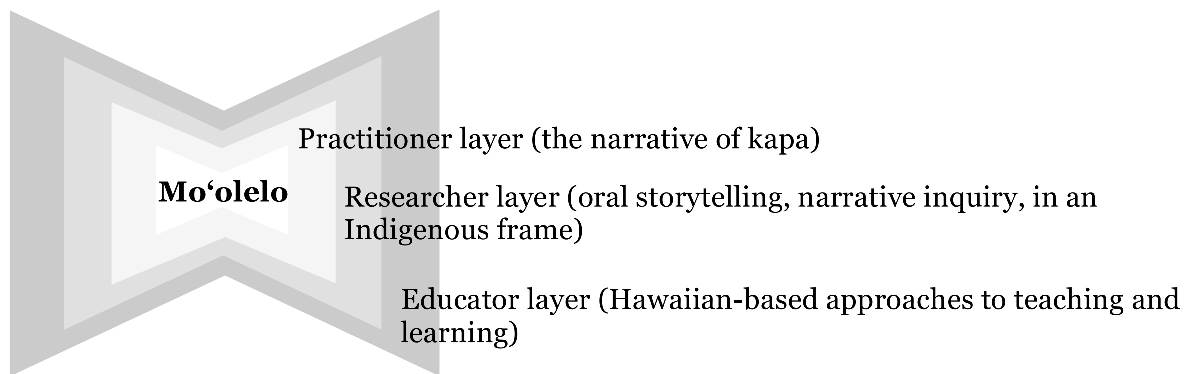


*Figure 2:* The layered narratives the mo‘olelo of my kumu are situated within.

Honoring my obligations to *“all [my] relations* when [I] am doing research” (Wilson, 2001, p. 177, italics in original) remain central priorities of this inquiry. While I label a practitioner/researcher/educator context, in actuality my practitioner “Self-in-relation” (Graveline, 1998, p. 279) and “Researcher-in-relation” (Kovach, 2010b, p. 46) lenses were primary occupants in this project. A marker of where my own learning is evolving towards, it does not mean my “Educator-in-relation” lens is not present. Only that on my dissertation journey, it was not the focal point.

Like the way kapa spreads from the center outwards, arriving at a methodology was not about pushing from the edges. Even as I can situate my dissertation among the qualitative landscape of narrative inquiry, the nuances of my positionality as a practitioner/researcher/educator forced deep contemplation on my own epistemological frame constructed from the experiences and conditions under which I learned kapa. The methodology of this dissertation acknowledges the interweaving of stories and their layers of contexts; in trying understand and stand comfortably in these spaces, I trace the rhizomatic (but connected) roots of my negotiative process through practitioner, researcher, and educator “layers.”

Kapa as a practice is a lifestyle, and embedded in the experience lies the exploration of identity, our understandings of educational practice, and the making of meaning. The

exploration to be comfortable in my own skin in the spaces and communities I enter and move among—kapa, academic research, and education—presents as my story pathway in this dissertation. It is through moʻolelo—the acts of listening, caretaking, (re)telling, and reflecting on my own—that I started to find my voice.

Finding my voice was not clean; nor was it necessarily reconciled within the bounds of these pages. In fact, it is more appropriate to say this dissertation is a reflection of this exploration and where I am at, at this point in time. A marker in this transformative process, a momentary pause to peel back layers of assumptions, beliefs, and thoughts, so I could better understand the ways my relational responsibilities as practitioner and researcher epistemologically and ontologically mediate the utility of knowledge.

Even as I acknowledge the milestone in completing this text, this journey remains unfinished. I do not consider this uncertainty a negative, nor even necessarily a positive, but simply, “what is.” If there are intonations of defiance and rage, struggle and angst, even sorrow and apology in the writing, that’s because they are there. They sat alongside me through this process, just as happiness, wonder, love, abundance, generosity, laughter, humility, and a deep, deep gratitude did. In the stories of uwē wale nō (P. Burgess, personal communication, n.d.)[20] each of these layers possess I also articulate the counterstory. Make no mistake: this text is not built from the problem of practice that typifies academic research; the intonation of the wondrous, amazing *possibilities* of practice is where this dissertation resides. I just simply could not write about the possibility without also writing about the pain. These emotions all existed within the space of that knot, and in the celebration of finding my voice, I choose to acknowledge all of them.

[20] The story of uwē wale nō I learned from Aunty Pua is the story of sadness and loss and grief.

**the practitioner layer: mo‘olelo and the historical narrative of kapa**

The weight of this text holds the stories of three generations of kapa practitioners, a fabric of concentrically and elliptically interconnected experiences, thoughts, and ideas. The motivation for this dissertation could not persist without first understanding that for more than 100 years, between the mid-1850s until its renaissance in the 1960s and 1970s by pioneers such as Pua Kanemura, Puanani Van Dorpe, and Aunty Malia Solomon (K. de Silva & V. Takashima, personal communication, n.d.), kapa lived primarily in books written by explorers and missionaries, and behind the locked doors of museums.

The practice, so intimately embedded in the daily lives, beliefs, and customs of Hawaiians—evidenced by the prolific vocabulary for kapa, nearly 500 poetic descriptives that contained over 2,000 meanings, many of which were specific to the practice (Pang, 1994)[21]—declined rapidly with the arrival of Captain Cook, to the point where large holes in the knowledge of the practice persist today. Hinting at an abundance and variety that was in large part lost by the mid-1850s as “those in olden time [who knew] its methods and its secrets” passed on (Brigham, 1893, p. 76).

**the dominant narrative of kapa.** The historical narrative of kapa, as part of the colonial narrative in Hawaiian culture, provides the first layer in this dissertation:[22] the story of

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[21] Pang’s (1994) dissertation documented 46 pages, single spaced, of Hawaiian vocabulary terms from both English and Hawaiian sources, that were used in kapa making. Showcasing “the specificity and numerous terms by Hawaiians for describing just one activity. Many of the terms (e.g., verbs) are exclusive to kapa making and are not used in any other context” (p. 8). Pang’s dictionary is a compilation of other major glossaries of kapa that had been compiled, such as Brigham (1911), and David Malo (1987) and Samuel M. Kamakau (1870a).

[22] For this dissertation’s focus, I specify Hawaiian culture; literature articulates this narrative is one Indigenous cultures have experienced and continue to shoulder. I only briefly here touch on the full

a thriving, self-sufficient society followed by a rapid decline with the arrival of Captain Cook in 1778 that not only brought a material culture and disease (Dye, 1994; Stannard, 1989), but also introduced an "attitude about the world (and who owned it) that was in sharp contrast" to a Hawaiian worldview (Kovach, 2010a, ch. 4, para. 4). Explorers, missionaries, and researchers who arrived on the heels of Cook, purported a benevolent caricature that belied a pervasive, destructive Euro-American influence. As introduced epidemics collapsed the Native population (Osorio, 2002; Stannard, 1989; Dye, 1994),[23] a context of uncertainty and disillusionment emerged upon which Christianity's promise of life could seize (Kameʻeleihiwa, 1992):

> The church became an institution promising life when death was everywhere, and the eventual conversion of Hawaiians by the thousands must be understood in the context of a time when their own religion, akua, and Aliʻi, could not prevent them from dying. (Osorio, 2002, p. 12; see also Kameʻeleihiwa, 1992)

These settlers created a narrative that subjugated and discredited the Hawaiian existence through a Protestant ideology that systematically dismantled each leg of the "three-legged stool" of their society (Schutz, 1994, p. 339): outlawing language and marginalizing their ways of knowing; supporting a "system of laws based on Christian morality and behavior known as prohibitionary or sumptuary laws" (Osorio, 2002, p.11)[24] that directly challenged cultural practices, beliefs and values; and disrupting fundamental native societal structures, particularly

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history of the relationship and its implications between Hawaiians and Europeans and in so doing, hope I do no disservice its complexity and richness; the connection of the colonial narrative to Hawaiian epistemology is covered more in part three.

[23] Discussion abounds about the population of Hawaiians at the time of Cook's arrival; Stannard's (1989) estimation of 800,000 has been expanded by Kameʻeleihiwa (1992) to 1,000,000. Regardless, there were 134,925 Hawaiians in 1823 (Schmitt, 1968, in Kameʻeleihiwa, 1992); representing "an 80% decline in population in the first forty-five years of Western contact (Kameʻeleihiwa, 1992, ch. 4, para. 43).

[24] These laws were imposed by Queen Kaʻahumanu and her aliʻi in 1825.

the relationship between the ali‘i and their people, and men and women, that had organized and governed them as a nation (Kahumoku, 2003; Osorio, 2002; Schutz, 1994; Kame‘eleihiwa, 1992; Handy & Pukui, 1958). These laws not only criminalized murder and theft but also "behavior that was intrinsically native, such as ‘awa drinking and hula" (Osorio, 2002, p. 13).

Located within this historical landscape, kapa also vibrates along this tenor of colonial influence and marginalization. The stages of loss, survival, recovery, development, and self-determination (Smith, 1999) that mark the visage of colonialism also cycle through the stories I heard from my kumu. Thriving and abundant and widespread for its main use as clothing[25] at the time of Cook's arrival in 1778, kapa rapidly declined to virtual extinction a mere 100 years later. By the time Brigham (1911) arrived in the islands in 1864, he observed,

> kapa was worn only in the outlying districts, and only the plainer forms were made: in Honolulu, when only the *malo* (waist-cloth) was worn, it was of cotton cloth and not of kapa. The noise,—a rather pleasant one,—of the beating was common enough on Hawaii, in the valleys of Kauai, on Molokai and in a few other places, although on Oahu foreign cloth was almost universally worn. (p. 3)

That the practice declined so rapidly can be attributed to the colonial narrative and Protestant mission to "save these naive beings from themselves" (Kahumoku, 2003, p. 161). The nakedness of men in their malo, and women in pā‘ū (typically worn from the waist down), was considered uncivilized and immoral (Brigham, 1911; see also Hume, 2013). The holokū, or ‘Mother Hubbard' dress, was introduced to cover their bodies:

> It is, however, certain that in rendering the Scriptures into the vernacular when the translators came to such a passage as in Psalm CIX, 29, "And let them cover themselves

[25] The main types of clothing were the malo of men, the pā‘ū that women wore, and the kīhei of both sexes. The malo was a loincloth designed to be removed quickly; the pā‘ū was tied at and waist, exposing the chest; the kīhei was worn across the chest diagonally, tied above the shoulder.

with their own shame as with a *robe*," they had no Hawaiian equivalent for robe; either malo or pāʻū was quite too scant to meet the demands of the passage, and so the modern *holoku* was used. "Ae uhi no lakou la lakou iho i ka hilahila me he holoku la." (Brigham, 1911, p. 192, italics in original)[26]

The import of foreign textiles provided a less labor-intensive and more conservative alternative to kapa for clothing, and redirected women's time and attention towards reading and writing (Brigham, 1911). Leaving the practice to dwindle such that by 1890, "the manufacture and use (with such exceptions as we shall find later) had ceased; kapa-making on Hawaii, where it had excelled, was taking its place with the lost arts" (Brigham, 1911, p. 3).

Perhaps because kapa was an everyday and essential practice passed orally and experientially through generations, documenting its practices was not a priority until it was well into its decline (V. Takashima, personal communication, 2016). "We know about everyday labor, like farming and fishing, and the techniques that were used, but we have no detailed accounts of how people were taught those skills, perhaps because they were indeed everyday and ordinary" (Chun, 2006, p. 2). That the accessibility and circulating literature of kapa today primarily persist the perspective and language of the foreigner is a manifestation of this dominant narrative. Indeed, the books I have found myself repeatedly examining and studying closely as a practitioner, that I have myself been referred to and have referred to others, do not share the voices of practitioners and their experiences. The earliest published accounts appeared as the practice of kapa experienced its decline, predominantly informational and in English, driven perhaps by economic incentives of kapa as a traded commodity, and by academic motives to

[26] Brigham presents his translation to be "and let them cover themselves with their own shame as with a holokū." "Ae uhi no lakou la lakou iho i ka hillahila me he holoku la" can also be translated to "and they would indeed cover themselves with shame and a holokū dress" (K. Reppun, personal communication, 2017). The layered meaning of the translation connotes the effects of a colonial narrative not only on Hawaiian dress, but also on Hawaiian identity.

"preserve the fast vanishing art of kapa-making so far as it may prove possible" (Brigham, 2011, p. 4). Alexander Shaw's (1787) catalogues[27] of Polynesian tapa[28] samples were presumably compiled to sell pieces he acquired from sales of items collected during Cook's voyages (Maclean, 2015). Brigham's (1911) *Ka Hana Kapa*, historically one of the first major books in English on kapa, draws heavily from the journals of Captain Cook and other early travelers[29] to document the process of harvest and manufacture, instruments, techniques and dyes of Hawaiian kapa as well as Polynesian tapa. The accessibility to these informational sources at the time of his publication alongside the rarity of active Hawaiian kapa practitioners manages to privilege and reinforce the foreigner perspective. Similarly, Peter Buck's (1957) *Arts and Crafts of Hawaii* profiles an extensive representation of kapa compiled from "field work, extensive examination of the literature, and familiarity with collections at Bishop Museum, but also from numerous visits to mainland and European museums and private collections over a span of more than three decades" (Force, 1964, p. iii). These narratives, derived from impressions and observations of explorers and missionaries and researchers, over time became authorizing

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[27] While not much is known about Alexander Shaw, he chose to assemble a catalogue of tapa samples, *Catalogue of the Different Specimens of Cloth in the three voyages of Captain Cook to the Southern Hemisphere*, containing samples of Polynesian tapa that include Hawaiian kapa. He produced 66 copies, no two of which are alike (Kerr, 2015). These copies were sourced by watermarkings to two issuings, the first in 1787 and the second "to not before 1805-6" (Maclean, 2015, para. 9). It is speculated these dates of catalogue issue correspond to recorded dates of major sales of Pacific items that source to Captain Cook's Pacific voyages: the 1781 sale of items of David Samwell, surgeon's mate on Cook's third voyage, and the 1806 sale of Sir Ashton Lever's collection of items he had collected from Cook (Kaeppler, 1978, 2011). In a visit to University of Glasgow, Hunterian Museum (2016), I was able to view and photograph their copy.
[28] Tapa in this text references Polynesian tapa, used as a collective term for all the cultures who practiced beating "barkcloth." Kapa specifically references Hawaiian kapa.
[29] Brigham (1911) presents a general historical account of tapa throughout Polynesia, starting at the time of Captain Cook and progressing along his three voyages. Brigham cites journal entries from several travelers about Hawaiian kapa, including Captain Cook, Sir Joseph Banks, Reverend William Ellis, George Bennett, and Frederick Debell Bennett, Esq.

statements, essentially certifying the history of kapa through lenses “that usually tell us more about Victorian values than about the Indigenous peoples described” (Cruikshank, 1998, p. 5).

**the counterstory of contemporary kapa practitioners.** For me, the realization that the stories we, as practitioners, turn to for this reclaiming, are in fact (still) told from the “perspective of the powerful and therefore the oppressive” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 139) has translated to a resolve for a new story of kapa. Kapa today thrives through its practitioners. Kapa is no longer needed for clothing or survival the way it was needed in the days of old (V. Takashima, personal communication, n.d.). To be a practitioner of kapa today takes on different considerations. At its core is the responsibility to perpetuate the practice and keep the traditions alive (K. de Silva & V. Takashima, personal communication, n.d.); and from this kuleana emerges the desire for the authentic voices to tell this counterstory.

“Marlene, if you want to learn to beat kapa, you must learn to grow wauke,” Aunty Verna says. In the way that new keiki peeking through the soil are carefully cultivated, so too, must we nurture these stories of kapa, for that is how we keep the practice alive. In the new shoot that peeks through the soil, we see another generation. The labor involved in nurturing each new shoot is not insignificant; and for all the runners the makua may send out, only a few reach to maturity. “You can teach 100 people, and 1 or 2, will carry it on” (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016).

What we know about kapa today, what we utilize in our vocabulary as kapa practitioners, is but a small fraction of what was once communicated among ka poʻe kahiko (K. de Silva, personal communication, n.d.). But the “sharing back” (Smith, 1999) of a new story of kapa continues. As every beat of the iʻe kuku to the kua fills the silence and we make room for these voices. This is how we will tell and retell the counterstory, through the stories that connect at the roots. With each piece of kapa a story is told and retold, of practitioners, for practitioners, by

practitioners, and with practitioners. These are stories that speak to the evolving, living inquiry of the experience. Stories that talk about the way the fiber moves and smells and feels. Stories that teach about life and the layers in-between, that humble us, fill us with gratitude, and remind us we are “students of nature” (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016). The stories of scarcity and deficit and rage that can exist in narratives of cultural practices like kapa lose their power to stories like those of my kumu, who speak—and step up to—the narrative of hope, inspiration, and abundance. What we have today is a community of kapa practitioners who, like me, can point to kumu kapa as living sources of knowledge, and say, Look, “it’s there! It’s used again, it’s reborn!” (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016).

**the researcher layer: moʻolelo, oral storytelling and narrative inquiry**

The narrative of oral storytelling, particularly in Indigenous contexts, and its intersection with qualitative research and narrative inquiry, form the second layer. Perhaps the oldest of the arts and common among all peoples, stories told in the oral tradition are a holistic and relational experience (Kovach, 2010a; Wilson, 2009; Archibald, 2008; Cruikshank, 1990). Oral storytelling brings to life our knowledge belief systems and the way we see the world, with drama and experience. The urge to share an experience organizes our ideas into a story that when expressed with tone and gesture and rhythm, reveals an interconnectedness between the story and the storyteller (Kovach, 2010a; Wilson, 2009; see also Benjamin, 1936/2006). While the telling of the story is important, so is the capacity to listen. The storyteller “takes what he tells from experience—his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale” (Benjamin, 1936/2006, p. 364). With

etymological roots meaning to know,[30] stories "explore connections underlying surface diversity" (Cruikshank, 1998). Stories are "the fundamental unit that accounts for human experience" (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2012, p. 4) and the mechanism to convey and understand this experience. "By the very act of telling stories, narrators explore how their meanings work; by listening, audiences can think about how those meanings apply to their own lives" (Cruikshank, 1990, p. 8-9). This interaction is fluid and dynamic, mediated by the relationship between the story listener and the storyteller. The making of meaning contained both in story, and in the telling of story, encapsulates an epistemology that is socially and relationally constructed.

Within an Indigenous framework, stories function as creation and teaching agents just as they are "personal narratives of place, happenings, and experiences" (Kovach, 2010a, ch. 5, para. 4). As archives for knowledge systems or epistemological frameworks, stories reflect an interpretation of experience through (at least) four dimensions—spatial, social, spiritual, and experiential (Howe, 2002, p. 164; see also Archibald, 2008; Aluli Meyer, 2008). They reflect the storyteller's perspectives about the world and their place in it. Orienting, organizing, and maintaining knowledge through story constructs meaning from the storyteller's voice and their articulation of a spiritual and reciprocal connection to place, people, and practice. Orally told stories are not necessarily chronological, nor are they categorized according to "Western fact/fiction or truth/myth binary classifications" (Stevenson, 2000, p. 77-78). Rather, within an Indigenous context they are told from a holistic focus on important events that reflect these relationships; they may present rhizomatically as stories prompting other stories as the storyteller makes "connections between narratives on the spot" (Howe, 2002, p. 162).

Sometimes stories are told without a discernible beginning, middle, and end; sometimes they incorporate anthropomorphic experiences that reflect a reverence for relationships to

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[30] The word story derives from history, which is "related to Greek *idein*, "to see," and to *eidenai*, "to know" (http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=history, n.d.).

place, people, and practice. Sometimes they bounce between flashbacks and present-day, constructing a narrative that does not adhere to the conventional linearity of time. Teachings, usually embedded as layers of meaning, are for the story listener to think upon and uncover. "All stories are didactic to varying degrees but they hardly ever have built-in analysis—analysis is the job of the listener" (Stevenson, 2000, p. 233; see also Kovach, 2010a). Stories exist in the active experience between the storyteller and the story listener; the relationship between them facilitates the teaching.

**qualitative research and narrative inquiry.** The earliest forms of inquiry sought formulaic precision, findings that could predict and control phenomena by verifying (positivist) or falsifying (post-positivist) quantitative propositions that "easily converted to precise mathematical formulas expressing functional relationships" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 106). The determination of validity was linked to the credibility of reproducing these propositions; the ability to do so reflects an accurate picture of social phenomena (Schwandt, 1997; see also Creswell & Miller, 2000).

The motivation to understand human interaction and experience would eventually challenge these metaphysical assumptions and propose alternative paradigms involving qualitative approaches (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).[31] The element of human construction in a perceived (versus received) worldview expanded the varieties of social inquiry; modernist, constructivist and critical paradigms, with "intellectual roots in *hermeneutics*,

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[31] Guba and Lincoln (1994) analyze intraparadigm and extraparadigm critiques that spawned the blooming of qualitative research. Interior critiques include context stripping, exclusion of meaning and purpose, the emic/etic dilemma, inapplicability of general data to individual cases, exclusion of the discovery dimension in inquiry. Exterior critiques include theory-ladenness of facts, underdetermination of theory, value-ladenness of facts, the interactive nature of the inquirer/inquired into dyad. I mention these because these were precisely what I struggled with in arriving at a methodology for this dissertation.

*phenomenological sociology*, and the *Verteshen*[32] tradition" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 248, italics in original) would concurrently emerge in the latter half of the 20th century (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Searching for a place to grab hold and claim a space within the landscape, the forms of qualitative research that "began with the rediscovery and legitimation of ways of studying social life" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 248) evolved and spread. Eventually, over time, encompassing method, social inquiry, methodology, phenomena, research, paradigm, metaphor, and even social movement (Schwandt, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 1990). Correspondingly, the determination of validity would also shift along these turns in acknowledging the interactive quality between the contextual lens of the researcher, their paradigm assumptions (epistemological, ontological and methodological), and choice of research topic and method (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Within this qualitative landscape, broad movements labeled as turns—shifting dynamics between the researcher and the researched; the use of words (and stories) over numbers as data; the move from universal to specific and local; and an expanding acceptance of multiple epistemologies (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007)—would embrace human experience, reflected and remembered through stories. Philosophically grounded by Dewey's (1938) theory of experience (see also Clandinin & Caine, 2008; Clandinin, 2007), narrative inquiry would push into academic scholarship as a methodological response to an "exclusively positivist paradigm for social science research" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 35).[33] Centralizing the phenomena of

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[32] Verteshen is German for "to understand"; it "is a term associated with the interpretative tradition, emerging in the nineteenth century to contest positivist thought" (Kovach, 2010a, ch. 1, para. 1).

[33] There are other authors in addition to Dewey who contributed to the methodology of narrative inquiry: Bruner's (1991, 2004) narrative and paradigmatic modes of knowing, Geertz's (1973) advocacy for blurring genres in research; Clandinin & Caine (2008) also reference David Carr, Mary Catherine Bateson, Robert Coles; as well as Don Polkinghorne, Amia Lieblich, and Elliot Mishner (Clandinin & Murphy, 2007). Dewey's pragmatic philosophy is commonly attributed in literature as foundational.

experience through stories, narrative inquiry methodologically considers the relational ethics between research, researcher, and researched; the degree to which these relationships are explored comprise the vast diversity of narrative research (Clandinin, 2007). “Perhaps because it focuses on human experience, perhaps because it is a fundamental structure of human experience, and perhaps because it has a holistic quality, narrative has an important place in other disciplines” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). In addition to education, law, and medicine, “biology, history, literary criticism, sociology, anthropology, psychiatry, therapy, management, child studies, Holocaust studies, trauma studies, feminist studies, gender studies, critical race theorists” (Lyons, 2007, p. 616) have all embraced narrative as a means by which the experience of a practice can be explored alongside the internal interpretation and meaning-making of the practitioner.

Applying narrative inquiry across Indigenous cultures inevitably surfaces the evolutionary stories of research and colonialism, and forces a deeper analytic contemplation of the knowledge paradigms that comprise these worldviews (Aluli Meyer, 2008; Wilson, 2001; Little Bear, 2000). Even as narrative inquiry as a field recognizes the value of Indigenous (and Hawaiian) knowledge (Benham, 2007), the constructivist, interpretive nature of knowing that aligns Western qualitative and Indigenous constructs also divides ideologically when evaluating motivations behind knowledge production and purpose (Ladson-Billings, 2000).

Herein lies the delicate balance: “because the narrative offers a relational and cultural site for learning, it becomes a powerful tool” (Benham, 2007, p. 516). “[T]he power of narrative to define what is real can be either a means to illuminate or an instrument to destroy” (Benham, 2007, p. 520). The motivation, intentional or otherwise, can serve a transformative potential or a destructive one. These considerations undoubtedly take on significance when considering “what kind of knowledge, by whom, what for” (Mignolo, 2011, p. xvi); and, as Benham (2007)

describes, "the question of *who* tells and retells, *how*, for *whom*, and for *what* purpose" (p. 517, italics in original).

Perhaps, from the researcher perspective, "collecting information about Indigenous peoples may be seen as a contribution to the body of knowledge" (Porsanger, 2004, p. 108). But when exploring narrative inquiry through an Indigenous lens, the fibers of methodology and knowledge paradigms, and research approaches and methods cannot be decontextualized. Indigenous research today

> tend[s] to approach cultural protocols, values, and beliefs as an integral part of methodology. They are 'factors' to be built in to research explicitly, to be thought about reflexively, to be declared openly as part of the research design, to be discussed as part of the final results of a study and to be disseminated back to the people in culturally appropriate ways and in a language that can be understood. (Smith, 1999, p. 15)

The belief that "everything in the natural world has relationships with every other thing and the total set of relationships makes up the natural work as we experience it" (Deloria, 1999, p. 34) is a cornerstone of Indigenous—and Hawaiian— methodologies, and "define[s] motives and expectations that, in turn, influence even the slightest nuance of knowledge and information gathering" (Aluli Meyer, 1998, p. 24; see also Wilson, 2009, 2001). Capturing stories, particularly within academic publications, can indeed provide a preserving mechanism for knowledge systems; however, the method of documentation that preserves an academic discipline of "dissection and decontextualization" (Stevenson, 2000, p. 79) starts to collide with Indigenous and Hawaiian worldviews grounded in the relational:

> It is often the case in mainstream scholarship, that once a story is shared and recorded, 'facts' are extracted and the remaining 'superfluous' data set aside. The bundle is plundered, the voice silenced, bits are extracted to meet empirical academic needs, and

the story dies. In the process, the teachings and responsibilities deriving from the social relations inherent in student-teacher relations are forgotten. (Stevenson, 2000, p. 79)

**the thorny tension.** Here is where the crusty edges of that aforementioned knot first protruded: I am not Hawaiian, and I am writing about the Hawaiian practice of kapa within a politicized space. While in reality the roots of this knot first grabbed me in the moments I first laid eyes on a kapa moe from Niʻihau, it was in the space of this inquiry and dissertation where I was forced to contend with its visceral grip. Even as I believe that kapa found me,[34] even as I was invited in and hānai'd by my kumu, even as I reflect that I was led on this story pathway, I could not escape the clutches of what I felt was an ugly truth: that I did not belong and I had no business entering this space. This struggle held at its core a connection to the way I internalized my identity as "Hapa"[35] growing up; that as half-Japanese and half-Haole, I wasn't a whole of anything. Forever suspended in this state of in-between, my presence, even the space I occupied did not warrant acknowledgment; and in the violence of this perseveration, I stifled my voice.

At the onset of this inquiry, this thorny knot served a painful reminder that I once again walked in a space I did not belong. As caretaker of these stories, I struggled with the appropriateness of sharing them. My belief systems on the ownership of knowledge, and the responsibility to those knowledges[36] (and the people who possess those knowledges) became a fundamental sticking point. For me, knowledge systems of kapa are collectivist and personal; they are also holistic and multidimensional. This is the learning space I was invited and

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[34] I introduce this more directly through my story in part III.

[35] The definition of hapa formally traces to mean half-Hawaiian, half-Caucasian. I grew up defining myself as hapa, even though I am not Hawaiian, but half-Japanese, half-Caucasian or Haole.

[36] While "knowledges" as a plural does not exist in the English vocabulary, I have come across this term from authors such as Kovach (2010b) and Sefa Dei (2000) to acknowledge the coexistent, multiple dimensions of knowledge. By using the plural term I am making space for multiple types of knowledge to be acknowledged and identified.

indoctrinated into. Knowledges are tucked and woven in the moʻolelo of my kumu; they also spread and deepen through my own experiences. Ownership belongs to the space that sits between us; acknowledging that space acknowledges the responsibility of that connection. I feared that in sharing their stories in this academic setting, I would be perpetuating a position of power and a majoritarian narrative that my emerging identity as a researcher wanted to reject. "Conducting and defending this research, and the knowledges that it holds, ensures a level of exposure within academia. Publication of the research…would heighten its vulnerability" (Kovach, 2010a, intro., para. 5). To invite others into this space who may not understand these beliefs; who may read and misinterpret these stories; whose academy may diminish or appropriate these knowledges because they do not "look" a certain way initially collided with the belief that sharing these stories were part of a new frame to a new counterstory; a desire and a responsibility to fill this space with voices like those of my kumu. I wanted to share the stories of my kumu as practitioners of a practice that had been silenced once before; but at what cost? And for whose benefit? Does the presentation of cultural knowledge through stories in this academic space—one that has historically misinterpreted, dismissed, marginalized, even exploited it (Smith, 1999) —serve a transformative or destructive potential? Is this exercise of confining the richness and texture of their stories into a text itself a bridge too far, "a colonization of the act of storytelling" (Behar, 2003, p. 12)? These questions provoked a familiar unease and discomfort, one that threatened once again to silence my voice; only this time, perhaps out of respect for my kumu, I felt I had to keep going.

**negotiating moʻolelo as exchange.** Over the course of six weeks, I frequented the homes of Aunty Verna and Kaʻiulani de Silva, each three times, always taking care to arrive with food, my iPhone and iPad as recording devices with a plug-in lavalier, and my notepad for notes. During this time, Aunty Verna was working on her second kapa moe, and as a result our

conversations wandered into the nuances of her practice as she described her methods. During these sessions, the knot sat with me every time I commuted to sit at their tables, the drive home after, and later still, during the painstaking hours of transcription. Reminding me that in moving among roles of practitioner, haumāna,  story listener, researcher, interviewer, story caretaker, and story (re)teller, I needed to acknowledge and honor multiple, even conflicting responsibilities. Early on, this part of the dissertation required a meditative preparation that was as much about sitting in this struggle as it was about putting one foot in front of the other to complete it.

The degree of social proximity to my kumu and the practice of kapa surfaced implicit contradictory tensions to both maintain the relationship while preserving my distance (Kanuha, 2000; Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984). Literature posits the familiarity of an insider position breeds bias and loss of objectivity (Unluer, 2012; Kerstetter, 2012; Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Chavez, 2008; Breen, 2007; DeLyser, 2001; Banks, 1998; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), ultimately distorting analysis "because researchers are unable to distance themselves from the accounts of the informants" (Brayboy & Deyhle, 200, p. 165). Research has adopted an increasingly moderate position at the in-between, a simultaneous insider/outsider marginality "intellectually poised between familiarity and strangeness" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 89; see also Kerstetter, 2012). Still, these categorizations created a tension for me. The linearity of "insider" and "outsider" belies the continuum along which I situate and constantly reorient. My own position as someone who neither identifies with the outsider position nor the possibility of total objectivity was layered with cultural expectations of the community I was also a participant in. Relational responsibilities as a practitioner and haumāna needed to be acknowledged, and as part of my own ideological frame, compartmentalizing this was not an option. I was not willing to assume an entirely new role as researcher; rather, I viewed this role as expanding into a new

space that held its own set of relational responsibilities I needed to acknowledge. The lens of the practitioner/researcher/educator as a true insider or even the marginal insider/outsider (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) did not align with my own ideological framework. I was not mediating between these notions across a fixed and static border, but shifting continuously, constantly, in a holistic space relative to the responsibilities to the relationships.

Because of my respect for our relationship, these sessions took their direction from my kumu from the very beginning. I always brought a list of questions to refer to, but from the moment of that first recording, these accounts were more than "just" data, or evidence (Cruikshank, 1990). A collaborative process steered by the relational responsibilities as haumāna and kumu methodologically mediated this project. "Highly structured interviews are not congruent with accessing knowledges that imbue both the fluidity and regulation of the storyteller's role within oral tradition, or that respond to the relational nature of Indigenous research" (Kovach, 2010a, ch. 7, para. 6). The interactions with my kumu were not interviews but conversations, talk story sessions that followed where they chose to venture, and did not probe to share more than they were ready or inclined. Their stories are who they are at this moment in time, and what they shared largely was determined by my relationship with them. This space was not rigid, but open, collaborative, relational, dialogic, evolving, reflexive, purposeful, and governed by protocol (Kovach, 2010b). Responding to (rather than directing) my kumu in our conversations prioritized my relational responsibilities to hear the voices of my kumu responsibly and respectfully.

The intuitive skill of the interviewer and story listener lies in the comfort and ability to listen and ask (good) questions in this exploratory space. The elasticity of the conversation needed to explore alongside the storyteller in this manner I suggest is predicated on context and non-neutral. "Every type of knowledge, including the academic one, is situated: from the way

interviewer and interviewees relate to each other, to the types of values they attach to that knowledge" (Ganga & Scott, 2006, para. 7; see also Clifford & Marcus, 1986). The inward knowledges the interviewer or story listener already contain about the phenomenon of inquiry; the degree of trust and credibility in the relationship between the story listener and the storyteller; the knowledge of protocols to interact with these holders of knowledge; the epistemological orientations of story listener and storyteller reveal themselves, directing and shaping not only the progression of the dialogue, but also what stories are shared, and how and why they are shared, during the interview and later in text.

During the many times I would listen to myself on the recordings and read the transcripts, there were many instances where I recognized "meaning was communicated via a shared understanding of vague comments, innuendoes, and incomplete sentences and descriptions" (Breen, 2007, p. 164; see also Kanuha, 2000). There were instances where I did not probe or pursue thoughts and concepts because as haumāna, I felt it was not my place to, but also because these interactions were already familiar to me. The life story method required my kumu to talk about their roles as grandmother, mother, aunty, sister, daughter, and wife. In actuality, these were only alluded to in our conversations; my kumu focused on the stories of kapa and the practice and what they have learned, through the stories that portrayed them as teacher, as student. Perhaps it was the nature of our relationship as kumu and haumāna. Perhaps it was because I was already familiar with these other roles of my kumu, and assumed knowledge that was not expressly verbalized.

I may have had "easy access to not only the intellectual dimension but also to the emotive and sensory dimensions" (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984, p. 585) of behaviors, practices, and beliefs, but this familiarity also admittedly limited additional exploration of areas the less-familiar researcher might have seized upon. I realized later that even after three interviews, I

never once asked my kumu to describe in entirety their process of making kapa. Was this because my own familiarity assumed knowledge that may have otherwise been further explored? Because I was already was indoctrinated to the ways they experiment and make kapa? "'Knowing' and familiar references that characterize interactions between those who share cultural ways that are profoundly ingrained" (Kanuha, 2000, p. 443) regularly appeared throughout my transcriptions. Shared laughter, the use of colloquialisms and lingo, unfinished sentences and thoughts, finishing each others' sentences, remembering stories previously shared, even mannerisms such as my own repeated use of "right" and head nods that peppered their train of thought, all reflect the degree of closeness and trust I enjoy as haumāna.

These points I raise as potential limitations from the researcher context I contend are culturally appropriate and methodologically aligned with my practitioner context. Rather than suggesting that questions of "objectivity, reflexivity, and authenticity of a research project are raised because perhaps one knows too much or is too close to the project" (Kanuha, 2000, p. 444), I chose to acknowledge my relational responsibilities first as a practitioner and haumāna, in order to understand how to navigate methodologically in my role as researcher. That my positioning necessitated a non-neutral positionality should not mean I "cannot conduct good, rigorous research" (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000, p. 166). Reflexivity and acute self-awareness to these issues forced deep interrogation of my own ideology and identity at the same time it expanded my own literary inquiry within the academy. Listening deeply without asking too many questions; not probing; choosing to follow the direction my kumu set in the conversation; resisting labels of research participants and interviewees; acknowledging conversation (not interviews) and talking story as the modality of exchange and data collection; these activities followed my protocols of respect and responsibility as a story listener and haumāna.

Documenting a topical life story implies a position of artificial superiority on the part of the researcher. There is a choosing of "whose life deserves a place in the world of (our) letters" (Behar, 2003, part 4, para. 15), and how it will be (re)presented to others; that once the iPhone is placed between us, the "real story of one's life" will be told; that we ask for these confessionals without expectation of revealing anything of ourselves (Behar, 2003). In shifting the power dynamic to the research participant as storyteller (Kovach, 2010a, 2010b; Benham, 2007; Archibald, 2012; Bishop, 1999), the purpose of inquiry shifted: from a transactional response to interview questions, to the sharing of stories that may (or may not) provide answers to those questions (Kovach, 2010a).

What emerged, was a rich tapestry of stories that presented a window into what it means to be a kapa practitioner. The stories of my kumu, in their final form, encompassed not only the "personal reminiscences of the kind we normally associate with autobiography" (Cruikshank, 1990, p. 2), but also introspective reflections and detailed narratives that elaborate on the *experience* of kapa. Embedded with chants, ʻōlelo noʻeau, Hawaiian moʻolelo, events, as well as deep philosophical questions, their stories provided a glimpse into their world and celebrated their voice. Their stories also force us to reconsider our own assumptions and socially constructed categorizations of the way we see the world and each other. And in turn, the ways these labels influence how we approach the concepts of teaching and learning.

Accordingly, the kinds of questions I ended up asking shifted; as a tempo and format familiar and natural to the way my kumu and I interact, I found myself responding to their storytelling styles, reflective of their contextual natures as kumu. Talking story and telling stories are "conversations [that] were dialogic, relational, and reflexive" (Kovach, 2010b, p. 46). I was complicit in constructing the stories that show up in this dissertation. There were multiple times when, perhaps symptomatic of our relationship, my kumu answered my question with a

question. Kaʻiulani facilitated the notion of conversation by directing questions back to me; the constructivist nature of her own pedagogical style warranted this interactivity. Aunty Verna, the consummate storyteller, engaged me with the *experience* of her stories; it is the experience she teaches and that, in turn, teaches her.

Even as I listened to my stammering responses, I realized I had (mistakenly) assumed that in this new context as researcher, my kumu would do all the talking. Behind the veil of the researcher, I also assumed my listening could be passive. Even as I was engaged with their stories, I mistakenly entered into these conversations with no expectation of stories of my own to tell. Not becoming distracted "with my own self-reflections on similar events" (Kanuha, 2000, p. 442) was counter to our relationship as kumu and haumāna, and in our talk story sessions, I was expected to engage. My role as haumāna did not wrap up neatly and tuck away during these sessions. The constant negotiation among roles of practitioner, researcher, haumāna, story listener, story caretaker, and story (re)teller, manifested as dialogue that was more than asking questions to gather information. In this expanded space, I was still haumāna and practitioner; the exchange, aʻo aku, aʻo mai, and noʻonoʻo, the reflection, were still implicit expectations.

This dialogic nature also impacted my own experience of listening to the recordings; I found myself critical of my own responses on multiple levels: I was concerned that at times I spoke too much, that my rememories suggested the direction of the conversation, that at other times I was too quiet. At the table, across from my kumu, I was very much in the role of practitioner and haumāna; in listening to the recordings, this role equally prompted a self-critique that was measured against my expectations as a researcher. This push-pull tension was experienced, not intellectualized. The standards I directed at myself were pulled from literature and the academy; I had to acknowledge they pushed against my own epistemological assessments of "feeling comfortable" (Aluli Meyer, 2001, p. 142), or what I thought was "right."

Still, the overall experience of sharing those moments is where I continually return. While they had found my audience many times before as a story listener, this collaboration remains deeply special to me. For even as this project marked a shift, one that I hope has expanded our relationship, I also felt it deepen. They were still teaching, but I felt their gaze grow longer. They had invited me into a philosophical, reflective space I always knew they moved in, but had never before had the courage to ask for entrance to. And in so doing, I found myself toeing the deep waters' edge of kuleana with a sense of preparation and purpose. Of not just what it means to be a haumāna and practitioner, but what it means to be *their* haumāna.

Initially, I was uncomfortable with the idea of any technological recording device between us. I was not sure how my kumu would react, and in some unspoken way, it marked a shift in our relationship I was not sure I was ready to embrace—or that they would. On our first day, we sat and talked for about 45 minutes before Aunty Verna matter-of-factly said, "can we turn this thing on?" Promptly reminding me the discomfort was more my own than theirs. I would later realize that as part of the small community of kapa practitioners that comparably exist today, Kaʻiulani and Aunty Verna present the very early generations of a reestablished lineage of kapa makers; and as recognized master kapa practitioners, they have more than once been asked to be recorded, interviewed, even videotaped. In fact, their routine use of YouTube videos and digital photos to supplement their own learning was a noticeable reminder I was probably more inhibited by the use of technology than they were.

In the months after our conversations, I painstakingly transcribed our conversations. It felt wrong to outsource this activity, even as I was pressured with the demands of work and life; their words they had shared with me needed to be treated with care and respect. After that initial transcription, I emailed it to them, unsure as to how they would react. To the words on the paper, but also to the sheer volume, nearly 100 pages each. From there, it would be my own

interpretation that would edit its final form presented here; we met together, the three of us, over breakfast, to review and discuss their transcripts. The final presentation of their stories, including the introduction, was reviewed and approved by both Kaʻiulani and Aunty Verna.

Even as I am so proud to present the stories of my kumu, I still admit that the careful translation I arrived at for each of their stories falls short to those moments at their tables when they shared their stories with me. The written language does not and cannot portray the richness and complexity of their unique storytelling styles, the experience of their performances, their expressions and gestures that add to their rhythm and parlance.

**navigating the representation of moʻolelo.** Translation surfaces the tension of what format to (re)present stories in. "At each stage of the recording of oral literature, something gets lost" (Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer, 1987, p. 7). The act of storytelling itself is a performance; transcriptions cannot convey their body gestures or hand motions or facial expressions as they tell their stories. Such a static capture immediately "limits the level of understanding because it cannot portray the storyteller's gestures, tone, rhythm, and personality" (Archibald, 2008, p. 17). These interactions, no matter how ephemeral or subtle, also communicate knowledges that are lost in the translation to text.

> When the story is written down, we lose everything about the voice. We don't know how the story teller sounds. We can't hear the change of voice for different characters speaking. We can't hear the tone of voice to know if the story teller is joking. We can't hear the unique voice quality of each elder. We can't hear how story tellers use their voices...Quotation marks are a poor substitute for the marvelous gift of the human voice. (Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer, 1987, p. 7)

This realization was acutely evident every time I sat down to transcribe, every time I read the transcripts against the voices of my kumu. How was I, as story caretaker and story (re)teller,

to authentically convey their experiences of being a practitioner of kapa? The implications of this question front-loaded the awkwardness I felt. “My challenge was to hear and remember what they said and to share or represent their teachings respectfully, responsibly, and accurately” (Archibald, 2008, p. 13). I resisted any neat packaging of their stories so they presented as “simply illustrating or supplementing ethnographic description” (Cruikshank, 1990, p. 2). Instead, I wanted to repeat their stories as they were told to me, as if I was reading them rather than presenting them as forgettable and disposable information (Benjamin, 1936/2006).[37] Transcribing was an interpretation of the way I observed their voices pause as they reflect, or switch topics, or return back to what they were talking about. I found myself using commas instead of periods, recognizing that my decision is based on my familiarity with the expressions and parlance my kumu use. I did not want to “cut, cut and cut away at our talk[s] to make it fit between the covers of a book, and even more important, to make it recognizable *as a story*, a certain kind of story, a life history” (Behar, 2003, p. 12).

The conventional (auto)biography as a written form of oral storytelling traces to the mid-18th century when autobiography separated from historiography as a distinct genre (see Schwalm, 2014). As a method of inquiry, the “biographical, life history, case study, case history, ethnographic method has been a part of sociology’s history since the 1920s and 1930s” (Denzin, 1989, p. 8). The linear, “left to right, top to bottom, beginning to end” sequencing of Western European languages (Howe, 2002, p. 161) governed the early organization of these narratives. Over time, reinforcing style and structure of the (auto)biography as “chronological reflections about individual growth and development, often presented as a passage from darkness to light” (Cruikshank, 1990, p. ix).

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[37] Walter Benjamin (1936/2006) talks of storytelling as an art that declined with the printing press and the newspaper. Text took on the form of communicating information rather than telling of the human experience.

Even as recent, renewed interest in representations of the human condition through narrative has manifested in "anthropology, education, gerontology, history, law, medicine, psychology, sociology, and women's studies" (Gough, 2012, p. 484; see also Denzin, 1989), and even there is a "remarkable, meteoric rise of narrative inquiry research" (Lyons, 2007, p. 600), oral storytelling is still associated with pre-literate societies that lack rigorous application of other forms of data (Kovach, 2010a). Contemporary narrative repeats the pattern of history; the colonial, lettered format of academia that marginalized the orally told story to a "historic cultural method that lacks currency within contemporary knowledge centers" (Kovach, 2010a, ch. 5, para. 6) still persists. Stories as knowledge systems "are treated as subjects of study rather than as systems of knowledge in their own right or as methodological and structural guides" (Stevenson, 2000, p. 78). If the multidimensional space these stories occupy appear unfamiliar and counter data forms that are believed as credible, authentic, and as truth, they "appear more like creative literature than history, more like fiction than truth—and so many discount it" (Stevenson, 2000, p. 233). To maintain the colonial hegemonic narrative and ideology of knowledge production and purpose, even the stories told about orally told stories seek to assert power and control.

Presenting stories physically outside the structure of conventional prose—which could be interpreted as "the truth" (see Ellis, 2003)—provides an opening for other interpretations. The moʻolelo of my kumu kumu draw form and substance from their idioms and expressions as storytellers; their narrative genres do not reflect a familiar conventional, temporal format but instead follow a linguistic genre more reflective of Howe's (2008) tribalography, a kind of story centered around events that "includes a collaboration with the past and present and future" (p. 333). Their stories reflect a community where moʻolelo is an accessible framework for the teaching and learning of the practice. To cultural outsiders the manner in which my kumu share

their stories may not be familiar, but to me they are. Their stories are “inevitably locally grounded, highly particular, and culturally specific” (Cruikshank, 1998, p. xii); they are not presented as a universal explanation for experience of all kapa practitioners.

Reading the transcribed words on paper can present as very long run-on sentences. But in the space of this text, I felt I needed to preserve the pattern of collaborative exploration between a kumu and her haumāna; the conversational “stop-and-start style of oral storytelling and performance, which braids pauses, shouts, whispers, interruptions, and digressions into the written account of verbal performances” (Behar, 2003, p. 12). Kaʻiulani and Aunty Verna both use laughter to pause, to shift course in the conversation, even to articulate a point or lesson. Their sighs and silences were often as infused with meaning and intention as their actual words. Repetition, “meter, cadence, speed, alliteration, connotation, and rhyme” (Ellis, 2003, p. 201) were recreated physically, attempting to reflect the flow in their unique storytelling styles. Throughout both presentations of stories, I use brackets ([ ]) to note their laughter; a comma to continue the thought while taking a momentary pause, and a break in the line to indicate a transition in thought. “Breaking lines to correspond with a pause by the narrator…seems to reproduce the emphasis and cadence of the spoken word more accurately than does conventional paragraphing” (Cruikshank, 1990, p. 18; see also Tedlock, 1977; Quick, 1999). Sometimes, these breaks are noted by an em dash to note a longer pause. At other times, when the pause is longer still, perhaps reflective of an incomplete thought, and a period seems too abrupt, I elect to provide no punctuation at all, noting the fullness of silence that accompanied the thought. For Kaʻiulani, her stories took on a distinctly poetic format, while for Aunty Verna, the visual transition between prose-like paragraphs and moments of poetic candor reflects the way she easily transitioned in her oratory. I discuss the representation of each of their stories more fully in their introductions.

In the research layer, just as the practitioner layer, the counterstories live in the possibility: that the negotiative process of positionality, and the Search to be comfortable in these shifting spaces, thorns and all, can itself occupy a prominent part of the inquiry process. That representing stories in written form—particularly in a manner that honors the event-centered construction of story in its oral form—can add to the ever-widening map of narrative inquiry, and help reconceptualize conventionalities that have categorized stories as stories, stories as data, stories as inquiry. And even Indigenous stories as Indigenous stories.

The stories of my kumu are oral stories because of the method of transmission; they are teaching stories because they teach and inform my learning and epistemological understanding of the world. They are also relational stories because they are stories about their relationship to the practice of kapa, and to other practitioners. Their stories package "teachings, metaphysical links, cultural insights, history, linguistic structures, literary and aesthetic form, and Indigenous 'truths'" (Stevenson, 2000, p. 79). Their stories represent all of these things, but mostly, they are stories, shared across a table, almost always with food, between a kumu and her haumāna.

**the educator layer: moʻolelo and approaches to teaching and learning**

The educator layer of this dissertation also contends with a dominant narrative and counterstory. Indeed, threads of educational research today explores the persistence of this dominant narrative with schooling, research, and policy in two main veins of inquiry,

> the first concerned with how the invisibilized dynamics of settler colonialism mark the organization, governance, curricula, and assessment of compulsory learning, the other concerned with how settler perspectives and worldviews get to count as knowledge and research and how these perspectives—repackaged as data and findings—are activated in order to rationalize and maintain unfair social structures. (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 2)

Knowledge systems are political, cultural, tied to underlying power dynamics (Wilson, 2009; Mignolo, 2011), and social constructions of race (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Scheurich & Young, 1997). Theoretical perspectives of what knowledge is valued and deemed valid trace to Eurocentric epistemologies based on "a narrow foundation of knowledge based on the social, historical, and cultural experiences of [Whites]" (Delgado Bernal, 2002, p. 107; see also Espino, 2012). "The claim of an epistemological ground is a crucial legitimating force" (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 258), and within education, this narrative marginalizes any worldview that does not epistemologically align with Western capitalist and imperialist designs (Mignolo, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Indeed, the very structures, processes, and systems in education that are familiar to us work indirectly and directly, to maintain this Western hegemony; and promote thinking that alternative approaches to teaching and learning are non-scientific (Kanaʻiaupuni, 2005) and therefore lack rigor.

If the thorns of tension from that knot first stubbornly persisted as discomfort and angst as I contended with my positionality as a practitioner expanding into academic research, here, they stabbed with anger and rage. The realization this narrative had informed the teaching and learning spaces I was exposed to in my schooling—and that I, in turn, was unintentionally reinforcing this narrative in my own professional practice as an educator—turned whatever foundational beliefs, ideas, and values of education I had always held to be true, on its head. I had been exposed to culture-based education, it just wasn't the culture I would have necessarily chosen. My own internalized conflict about growing up hapa resurfaced; even as I positioned myself on the fringes, good grades were a nod towards belonging, and so I worked hard, studied for tests, turned in my papers on time, did what the teachers asked. My own acquiescence had contributed to my own conditioned-thinking about what hapa meant, and consequently, what my own sense of identity was. Where I thought my accomplishments would grant me entrance, I

now stood on the threshold, wondering with fists clenched how long I had unintentionally been contributing to my own chaos.

If this initial fury woke me up, the gift was I could no longer look at the fibers of my own educational practice the same way; for the first time, I *looked* closely, and out of this anger, came wonder and curiosity. I started to search for other ways where learning spaces were not so confining, so task-oriented, or so deficit-inclined. Where the nurturing of one's identity and their strengths, is as important as the content itself.

Analytic explication of how this narrative informs the teaching and learning spaces of education from the theoretical (research and policy level) to the tactical (application and classroom level)—and the ways the moʻolelo of my kumu can add to the counterstory, a growing ʻumeke of research and literature on Hawaiian culture-based education, and culturally relevant and responsive instructional practices, philosophies, and behaviors[38]—is a discussion and analysis for a future project. My practitioner/researcher positionality reflects the point on my story pathway that spanned the boundaries of this dissertation; becoming comfortable in the space of education represents a marker yet to come. Instead, what I present is an exploratory

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[38] While I do not present a full exhaustive list, there are a number of further resources to consider: Ladson-Billings (1995) and Jordan (1985) assert culturally relevant practices in teaching that bridge and keep continuous the informal learning environment of home with school; Wilson & Kamanā (2002), and Benham & Heck (1998) articulate the negative effects of Western education on indigenous children; Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995), Brayboy (2005) progress the dialogue of critical race theory in education; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper (2011) give a historical overview and meta-analysis of culturally relevant pedagogy literature; Kanaʻiaupuni (2007) provides an annotated bibliography of culture-based education. Other research documents the impact of culturally relevant schooling on students (Kanaʻiaupuni & Ledward, 2013; Kanaʻiaupuni, Ledward, & Jensen, 2010), as well as conceptual and pedagogical frameworks built off culturally meaningful and relevant material, strengths, and place (Kaʻiwi & Kahumoku, 2006; Kanaʻiaupuni & Kawaiʻaeʻa, 2008; Kanaʻiaupuni, 2005; Kawakami, 2003, 1999). The ʻumeke of this inquiry is vast and deep and rich; while my reading encompassed far more authors than who are listed, I have only named a few of the articles and publications that resonated with me.

narrative of teaching and learning through my own lens and reflection as haumāna kapa. I start with the components that reflect the lessons of my kumu, and that framed the learning spaces I explored with them:

he lālā wau no kuʻu kumu

i ka nānā no a ʻike (Pukui, 1983, p. 129)

ma ka hana ka ʻike (Pukui, 1983, p. 227)

lawe i ka maʻalea a kūʻonoʻono (Pukui, 1983, p. 211)

aʻo aku, aʻo mai (Chun, 2006, 2005)

These ʻōlelo noʻeau impart the essence of the teachings I believe my kumu were trying to impart; they surfaced during our talk story sessions together. These components were not necessarily communicated to me as ʻōlelo noʻeau, nor were they conveyed in the linear, sequential progression implied in this text. In fact, my first experiences in learning kapa were simply about (literally) beating: ma ka hana ka ʻike was the first layer for me, shared simply as, "just beat." In time, the other layers would surface—nānā, noʻonoʻo, aʻo aku, aʻo mai—such that those two words became a language. When I hear my kumu say, "Marlene, just beat," I now hear, see, smell, touch, sense kapa differently; each time, the layers that reveal themselves are different. The beauty (and the challenge) is in paying attention to the process, to be open for what you might learn.

you know you can see something 10 times and it depends on,

just the ʻike and then,

what stage you're in,

on one viewing you see something,

you can see it again and you go, oh,

or you hear something you go,

wait a minute,

why didn’t I hear that before?

But it,

you just weren’t ready, right?

And it’s just like, the process of making kapa,

every time you go through it you’re in a different stage,

and it can be the same, exact thing,

but you learn more ‘cause your ‘ike is different.

(K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016)

These components weave in and out of each other as interconnected, related elements, encompassing the multiple spaces of teaching and learning I moved (and continue to move) in. Sparked by curiosity, learning engages and deepens through multiple epistemological dimensions (Aluli Meyer, 1998, 2001; see also Howe, 2002): empirical (hana ka lima), mental (nānā), social (aʻo aku, aʻo mai), spatial and spiritual (noʻonoʻo). Always with ahonui, haʻahaʻa, pono, kuleana (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016). Relationships are at the core of this learning experience. It is the relationships that give kapa, the stories, meaning. For me, these lessons render an emotional response. While I do not necessarily remember the specific instance they became apparent to me, they have become part of the stories that I tell, about kapa.

**he lālā wau no kuʻu kumu.** Every branch is an extension of its trunk, just as every keiki wauke is an extension of their makua. Just as I am an extension of my teachers. As haumāna, my kumu are my “foundation and source of knowledge” (Pukui & Elbert, 1986, p. 182). My kumu introduced me to stories of protocol and ceremony, moʻolelo and ʻōlelo noʻeau, oli and mele, ancestral knowledges and customs, even the scientific names of plants and Western and Hawaiian uses alongside their own. Perhaps more importantly, my kumu created a

space safe enough for me, and waited. "We were watching to see if you were ready," Aunty Verna reminds me. In those moments beating kapa, making tools, practicing stamping, they were always watching. Not just at the way I was holding my beater, or how I was standing, or how the fiber was spreading, but also at what I was gravitating towards, what I might be ready for: "And when we saw you come in, and here you go, and not knowing anything, and watching you carve your iʻe kuku, it's like, holy mackerel! Look at her designs" (V. Takashima, personal communication, 2016)! Learning, in this space, was full of joy, meaning, and intention.

**i ka nānā no a ʻike.** To learn from watching others. Framing my lens first as a practitioner and then as a researcher, this awareness applies across a landscape of multiple mediums: alongside the stories of my kumu, paging gingerly through nā kūpuna he mau ʻōlelo hoʻomanaʻo, the handwritten notes of kūpuna and other manuscripts; visiting the archives and collections of museums[39] to touch centuries-old kapa; reflecting on my own personal notes and journals; and reading numerous books and journals. Nānā a hoʻolohe mua. To observe deeply and pay attention with all your senses with the intent of learning, is an important first step:

> I think nānā is one of the most important things because when you're teaching somebody,
> for me, it's watching my teachers,
> or watching my students,
> or watching others,
> and if you can learn from that,
> that's a gift.
> If you can't then it's going to be a long haul.

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[39] I visited Hawaiʻi (Bishop Museum), Washington D.C. (Smithsonian), Boston (Peabody Museum at Harvard), and Europe (National Museum of Scotland, and Hunterian Museum in Glasgow) during the discovery portion of my dissertation and research.

(K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016)

There are a multitude of knowledges to learn in order to beat kapa. Beyond understanding how the fiber spreads on the kua, there are the tools, what woods to use and how to make and maintain them. Learning the first and second beat, the fermentation, the finishing watermark, also requires understanding of how to grow wauke, and cultivate and harvest the fiber. There is the chemistry and biology of the plant dyes and mordants, and interpreting the tides and moon and seasons, just as there is knowing the way the fiber moves when it is too wet, too dry, too thick, too thin. These are all knowledges, components that collectively make up a practitioner-based knowledge system. Communicated and embedded as an "active, oral, and experiential process" (Aluli Meyer, 1998, p. 22), this learning begins with observation and awareness—of everything, in relation to everything.

**ma ka hana ka ʻike.** "Just beat," I hear Aunty Verna say, "that is how you learn." The practice is how meaning is internally constructed from signs observed, smells and touch experienced and stories heard. "Just beat" characterizes the application and interpretation of experience; without this translation, this utility of purpose, knowledge is simply information (Aluli Meyer, 2001). "Just beat" also symbolizes the progressive step from the internal intellectual exercise of nānā, to the empirical, to add another dimension of knowing. In the frame of this dissertation, this meant engaging in the literature of Western and Indigenous methodologies; in the work of collecting, listening to, and transcribing the stories of my kumu; and in the tension of my roles as practitioner and researcher. Reading about prescribed rules and methods in literature and applying them were insufficient for the emic nature of this dissertation; instead, this learning was a reflexive process of observing, doing, and reflecting.

Hermeneutic exploration in tandem with intentional observation forms the foundation of comprehension. Meaning-making involves "observation, sensory experience, contextual

knowledge, and recognition of patterns" (Kovach, 2010a, ch. 7, para. 50). Knowledge, then, is "experientially-based and depend[s] on subjective experiences and the inner workings of the self to generate social interpretations, meanings and explanations" (Sefa Dei, 2000, p. 5).

> So for myself and what I've tried to instill in my students now, is, study. When you beating, you *look* at the wauke, or your bast, and watch the fibers. You move it according to the fiber. It's going to tell you, you going to see it may be moving to the right, to the left, some parts are thick, then you move it back.
>
> I beat not just to the side, to the right to the left, or down, I go all, I try to, I beat according to how the bast is moving, you know, so, but it's because I'm gazing on it and I'm, I'm looking at it intensely 'til I'm, actually I'm just focusing on that, so, then, of course then it tells me when to go to the other width. (V. Takashima, personal communication, 2016)

Signs orient and ground the learning; stories form the channels to communicate these understandings and memorialize these interpretations of experiences. As a practitioner-based knowledge system, "what I know" and "how I know," and even "why I should know" and "when I know" are informed and influenced as much by the stories my kumu share as they are by my own practice. How I come to know is a process that internalizes multisensory, multidimensional experiences as part of my knowledge system because they serve a purpose, and that understands this knowing through a reciprocal relational view (Kovach, 2010a; Deloria, 1999).

**lawe i ka maʻalea a kūʻonoʻono.** Observing, doing, and feeling as vital components of comprehension recycle in this discussion. Feeling, housed in the naʻau as a site of intelligence, is part of knowing. Noʻonoʻo is a critical and necessary step; contemplation and reflection coordinates the naʻau with information taken in through other senses. Naʻauao, enlightenment or wisdom, emerges when these multiple levels of knowing align (Kanahele, as cited in Aluli

Meyer, 2001). Informed by observation and experience, this knowing shapes—and is shaped by—sensory cues of "feeling comfortable" (Aluli Meyer, 2001, p. 142)[40] that contemporaneously converge experience, intellect and the "gut sense."

> Knowledge is not carved from anger or joy. Knowing something is *feeling* something, and it is at the core of our embodied knowledge system. Knowing something, however, is metaphorically housed in our stomach region because that is also the site of our emotions, our wisdom, as if knowledge also shapes how we emote. Perhaps, then, feelings precede emotions, then wisdom develops. (Aluli Meyer, 2001, p. 142)

*Feeling* comfortable in my naʻau is finding balance; this innate sensory orientation represents both the starting and ending points in determining and understanding how to proceed in this dissertation. As a practitioner, the experience of beating kapa is as much about finding your own way as it is foundationally learning the process. It also means that failing is simply part of the learning: "it's not fail, it's an experiment, right, we always tell you, it's an experiment, you try something and go, hmm, ok, next time" (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016). That there is no one way to beat kapa (K. de Silva & V. Takashima, personal communication, n.d.) does not mean superficially doing your own thing. Finding your way requires a deep understanding of the foundation, in relation to personal beliefs and experiences (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016).

**aʻo aku, aʻo mai.** Knowledge systems are grounded in a reciprocal exchange that harmonizes perceived dualities: they are holistic and particular; dynamic and stable; personally and socially constructed. Relationships substantiate the dialogic nature of these systems; it is in the interaction, in the sharing of moʻolelo that knowledge lives. Knowledge is experienced

[40] Aluli Meyer (2001) distinguishes between instinctual and innate feelings and learned emotions. "Feeling comfortable" is the instinctual in shaping process and product of knowledge production (p. 142).

through the convergence of "spiritual, relationary, utilitarian, and moral pathways" (Aluli Meyer, 2002, p. 145), and dialogically shared in relationships with people, practice, and place.

This is the exchange in aʻo aku, aʻo mai. Aʻo aku, teaching, to direct the flow of knowledge away and outward. Aʻo mai, learning, to direct the flow of knowledge towards and inward. Teaching and learning are coexisting, non-opposing dualities of information exchange and knowledge; reflected in directing the flow of knowledge away and outward (aʻo aku, teaching), and towards and inward (aʻo mai, learning). Moʻolelo similarly flows between storytelling and story listening; moʻolelo aku, moʻolelo mai (Lipe, 2015). "I mean Verna and I share stuff all the time, you, I, I mean that, that is what helps it grow and if you really love kapa you want it to grow" (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016).

Collectively, in this learning space, learning about Self is as important and necessary as learning about kapa itself. The learning transforms the practitioner, just as the practitioner transforms the learning:

> the first part is, as you know,
> when women get together what are they doing
> they're talking,
> they're passing on the culture,
> and that's to make sure society continues,
> for us as kapa makers it's continuation of the knowledge there,
> the second part is really the self-knowledge,
> and the relationship between kumu and apprentice or haumāna,
> but it is about learning about yourself in this whole process,
> and I think that's what gets me all the time,
> and I think that's what draws us to it, is we do learn a lot about ourselves

and it changes us

makes us better.

(K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016)

This is the way I learned from my kumu; through the lessons, meanings, and metaphors of kapa, captured in moʻolelo, and shared in the relationship between student and teacher.

**part I**
**the kumu of my kumu is my kumu**

**Ka‘iulani de Silva**

**i ka nānā nō a ʻike**

"Kumu, tell me a story."

Her eyes hold an amused sparkle as I settle in to listen.
"What's the most important tool?"
I love these moments.
Her voice makes her stories come alive.
Her poetic cadence draws you in and holds you.

"Is it the iʻe kuku or the kua, perhaps?
The niho ʻoki or the scraper?
We need these things
to cut and clean the wauke of course,
to beat the fiber out, to make the kapa thin.

Or is it the hands, for that is our tool isn't it?
Good working hands
to strip and clean, beat, soften, stamp, you see.

I can feel my forehead crinkle.
What's the lesson?
I really want to ask, but I don't.

Kumu pauses. Head tilted. Watching closely.
Waiting to see if I understand.
"It's their spirit."
"They must have the heart and the naʻau first to nānā."
If they have the tools to nānā and learn from others, that's a gift."

## introduction

*And so,*
*Ka‘iulani means sacred,*
*or consecrated,*
*or dedicated to a purpose.*
*And so that was the commitment that I was going to be the one trained in hula and the culture.*
*So I was dedicated to that.*

Perhaps even before the moment she entered this world, Kathleen Ka‘iulani Mieko de Silva was promised to hula. Her grandmother, Lokalia Montgomery, and her mother had agreed that as the eldest daughter, she would be committed to the practice and culture of hula from the beginning.

She was given the name Ka‘iulani. The one dedicated to hula and culture.

And so, from the age of about 5, her life was shaped by the discipline of hula. Ka‘iulani's first teachers, Aunty Ma‘iki Aiu Lake, and later Lokalia Montgomery, would be her grounding and foundation. Her knowledge systems and methodological framework were built from this tradition and experience. Even as Ka‘iulani greeted the boats in the harbor at Aloha Tower, even among the gaiety of performances at Waikīkī Shell and Queen's Surf, there was always the propriety of protocol. This discipline would reassert itself as haumāna kapa and continue through her teaching as kumu kapa. "I like things to be as close to traditionally done as possible, you can explore after that but you have to have your foundation" (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016).

For Ka‘iulani, intentionality is closely bound with inspiration and spirituality. In the same way the chant inspires the hula, so does story inspire her kapa pieces. The story of "what is this for?" is the inspiration upon which her piece is built and a layer within the kapa itself; "I have to have that story first" (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016). It is mo‘olelo that inspires a picture, from which the patterns of the ‘ohe kāpala and colors emerge. And still, the

process is a fluid one, forever threaded by a gratitude and humility that relinquishes to the wauke. “I have to be flexible for the piece to speak to me. The fiber, especially the dyes… it guides me” (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016).

Kaʻiulani’s strict adherence to foundation is not meant as static, time-locked confinement, that one can *only* do things the way the old people did. Rather, it is tradition that grounds and centers; it is the place from which one begins. Learning deeply the beliefs, the customs, and the ways Hawaiian kapa was made provides the very foundation from which creativity and innovation can emerge.

> You can go out and try some fun things here and there,
>
> but you have to know your foundation,
>
> if you don’t, it’s like standing on one foot you don’t have the balance,
>
> you can go off and then you don’t come back and I think it’s really important.
>
> (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016)

The perceiving process of observing, practicing, reflecting, and sharing constantly bounces against her prolific research and extensive reading. Glossaries “that are inches thick with just names of kapa, names of tools, names of colors” (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016) line the shelves of her home, next to a wide array of books on plants and dyes, Hawaiian legends and the Kumulipo, mele and oli, and others. This is the part of the journey, the part about the relationship with kapa, that is both so intensely personal and relational at the same time. Learning is not from one source, one person, one way, but continuously scaffolds experiences and information, interpreting and applying what is being observed, with what is already known, with personal values. It is a constant cycle of observing and experiencing and reflecting, “where do I want to go with this and what do I want to do to and actualizing to put it to personalize yourself” (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016). This process strengthens

the roots of ʻike so perspective and interpretation can surface. And always, the protocol of intention as gratitude, patience, and hard work, frames everything.

The space where kapa exists today in the chronological sense abounds with healthy discourse. This space is daring, fearless, and feisty, and filled with debates "about what works, what is Hawaiian kapa, what is kapa, what is this, how do we do this" (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016). Balancing the protocols of tradition with new ideas and exploration manifest in these deceptively simple questions. Perhaps too, the propensity today to use kapa as an artistic medium rather than for purely functional use further complicates the discourse. The discussion of labels—what constitutes a Hawaiian sense of design, what constitutes kapa, is it traditional, is it contemporary—are salient points of discussion as artistic license creates permutations that for practitioners like Kaʻiulani (and even Aunty Verna) who have committed to the practice, coexist as exciting and perilous. She reminds of the damaging implications those categorizations can have in generalizing an experience, an entire practice, a community.

> Because I think the assumption by most people is that we use native dyes or you know, things like that, and because we know the process and we know so much behind the scenes of what people do, I think we're a lot more, aware of, how careful we have to be about these things, ʻcause people's assumptions will be "everybody who makes kapa does it the same way," or "they use native dyes, they use the traditional stuff, and it's all the same." (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016)

Even as I initially searched for defining markers that reflect my own Western linearity, Kaʻiulani challenged my inclination to categorize. This kind of "discussion makes all of us think and I think that that reflection and that process is good" (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016). Choosing instead to focus, as she always has, on the fiber; it is the relationship with the

process that defines. “I’ve never said I make Hawaiian kapa, I make kapa in the traditional Hawaiian manner” (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016).

As binary as these notions may appear, for Kaʻiulani they coexist naturally, actively engaging each other. Maintaining connection to the bounds of tradition is not the opposite of pushing against those boundaries. The relationship is generative; a process that demands a commitment to understanding how kapa is made in the Hawaiian way, alongside the reflexive knowing of the why’s and the how’s of one’s own practice. The philosophical depth of the answer to the question, “what does kapa mean to you?” reveals where the practitioner is in comprehending its layers, where they are on their journey. The *choice*, then, to step beyond those markers reflects this deep understanding and frames the making of meaning. When the practitioner arrives here, Kaʻiulani explains, there is incredible freedom to explore. Every kapa piece always reflects the engagement of these dynamics: in its totality, the piece may reflect the artistry and individuality of the practitioner; up close, the fiber always reveals the generations of tradition they stand on.

Kaʻiulani’s moʻolelo and manaʻo consistently maintain the social component of sharing and exchange is as important as the internal reflection. Teaching and learning are not binary considerations but symbiotically interdependent; “...come back and teach me” (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016) reflects the characteristic curiosity with which Kaʻiulani engages kapa; this expectation her students will teach her imparts a reciprocal relational responsibility that methodologically describes her pedagogical style. This exchange, she explains, is how the practice thrives: “you have to teach, you have to share, you have to be out there and step up, you don’t step up, and you just do it yourself, it’s good, but it doesn’t carry on” (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016). Indeed, this cord of kuleana carries generationally, from her kumu, through her to Aunty Verna to me, and now, even, to my niece.

**moʻolelo as exchange**

If reframed within the structure of a prose format, Kaʻiulani's stories read as almost autoethnographic. She uses stories to explain her own internal reflections about kapa, as opposed to chronologically detailing events that occurred in her life. We explored the practice, peering under philosophical and tactical layers of wanderings and wonderings. The authenticity of those shared experiences forced my own deep reflection afterwards. Even as we spaced the taped sessions apart by a week, our conversations left me in a liminal space for days; in spite of being caught up with the daily demands of life, I found myself playing and replaying our conversations. I wanted to linger in the meditative nature of our conversations.

The three-interview, semi-structured format (Seidman, 2012) was designed to follow a chronological and ordered progression: childhood up until kapa, experiences as a kapa practitioner, and reflections. In reality the conversations unfolded as they did because of our relationship as kumu and haumāna. The first day with Kaʻiulani was an engaging recollection of hula and its influence on her kapa, her childhood and ʻohana, and two events that connected us as kumu and haumāna—the performances of Hālau o Kekuhi at the Merrie Monarch on April 15, 2011,[41] and at the Maui Arts & Cultural Center in 2014.[42] The second day seemed to expand the conversation beyond kapa; beyond the discussion of what makes Hawaiian kapa Hawaiian, there was deep reflection on kapa as a teaching methodology, kapa as a teacher, and kapa as a lifestyle. The third day also stayed within this reflective space; her stories flexing between the

[41] In 2011, Hālau o Kekuhi performed on the stage of the Merrie Monarch Festival, an annual international hula competition and showcase, dressed entirely in hula garments made from Hawaiian kapa. Reconnecting two practices after more than a century. It was titled, "An Artistic Collaboration: the Hawaiian Arts of Hula and Kapa."

[42] Mōhala Hou ke Kapa, kapa blossoms anew, was a Hawaiian kapa exhibit featuring 21 kapa practitioners at the Maui Arts & Cultural Center. The gallery exhibit was kicked off with a hula performance by Hālau o Kekuhi, who danced again dressed in kapa.

more technical analysis of the five things about Hawaiian kapa, and a philosophical outlook on the future of kapa.

Kaʻiulani's stories reflect her interpretations of kapa—as a practice, an experience, a knowledge system, a pedagogy, a spiritual grounding. Her poetic storytelling style is her natural rhythm of conversation; true to her teaching nature, these conversations inevitably pulled me in as an active participant. To follow her as she shares her stories is to follow along with an expectation of engaging in my own feelings and emotions, gently reminding me that even as a story listener under the veil of a researcher and interviewer, there is still an obligation to engage. Much in the way I am accustomed to as haumāna, her answers and thoughts were tempered with questions posed back to me. *What is your pedagogy? What do you think of thinness? What does kapa mean to you?* The profundity of her teaching is in the in-between, in those negative spaces that make you pause. For even as I could not reconstruct those spaces in the two-dimensional (re)telling of her stories, the moments of silence were as deep and pregnant with meaning as were the moments of her speaking.

Her questions point to her constant curiosity and learning; that also, I'm sure, reflect to her the layers of my own understanding; and establish the constructive and relational methodology of ʻike. The experience of these interactions was not lost on me, even in this guise as a researcher. The joy of engaging with the question, in defining a shared clarity, is where the soul of her stories spoke straight to my own. It did not matter what ended up on paper, really, so much as the chance we had to experience this sharing and exchanging. Representationally, I negotiated to remove most of my meandering mutterings; I wanted to present her voice as uninterrupted as possible. Because of the conversational nature of our sessions—and that exchange is part of Kaʻiulani's pedagogy—I did not remove all interactions between us. As Kaʻiulani notes, it reflects the intent of our time together, and the spirit of our connection.

**moʻolelo as representation**

Altogether, Kaʻiulani and I spent more than six hours in the space of these interviews-turned-conversations and storytelling. These conversations were initially transcribed exactly as I listened to them, noting where sounds such as sighing, and laughing, and pausing occurred by brackets ([ ]). Even as I tried to structure this account collaboratively, even as I wanted her stories to reflect her voice, I am inevitably interpreting what I believe Kaʻiulani is saying, and the "texture" of how she is saying it.

Her story is presented in the way they were told to me, in its full format, in order of our conversations together, with her approval. The final form also is presented with the approval of Kaʻiulani. I reference portions of our conversations as quotes throughout the rest of this text and to articulate certain thematic points in the introduction; her stories here are not edited for chronology or sequence, nor are they distilled or extracted in any way. There was no attempt to editorially amend sentences for proper subject-object order or subject-verb agreements (Cruikshank, 1990), except to remove the 'ums' Kaʻiulani noted were repetitive, and where I thought it may detract from her original meaning. If there are portions in this final text that are left out from the original transcripts, it was at her request.

The shape of Kaʻiulani's moʻolelo in this account reflects my own interpretation as story listener, and how I perceive her as a storyteller. At first glance her account does not reflect conventional Western descriptors of a defined oral history, or even a topical life history. In the hours I spent listening and transcribing, listening and reading, and listening and re-experiencing our conversations, over and over, her cadence and rhythm in her speaking did not match with the full sentences of a prose format that stories usually find themselves ordered into. Her repetition of certain phrases and words, and where the pauses in her speech appear, to me

reflect poetically, as if to emphasize a certain point, or help me, as the story listener, to remember. These speech patterns I chose to visually portray in a poetic format.

Throughout our conversations there were regular moments of silence, sometimes long, sometimes short, that are portrayed in several ways. The breaks in lines that appear reflect my interpretation of the natural pauses as she spoke. Sometimes there are commas and punctuation marks and periods, sometimes not; where no punctuation appears reflects a longer pause, a moment of stillness. At times, Kaʻiulani would punctuate her stories with laughter; in this text, they are presented as [laughs] on a separate line, spaced between the previous sentence and the ensuing one. When Kaʻiulani read through her transcripts after I had formatted our conversations in the poetic style, her notations about capitalizing letters, adding quotation marks, commas and periods were all incorporated.

Poetry "re-creates embodied speech in its meter, cadence, speed, alliteration, connotation, and rhyme. The form itself conveys something" (Ellis, 2003, p. 201). The open white space on the page reflects the meditative, comfortable silences that also accompanied our conversations. The physical structure of her moʻolelo, itself a story of stories, is her truth; the poetic form leaves interpretation and meaning open. Resisting the prose form dissuades the reader from believing that because it is in prose form it is "the truth" (Ellis, 2003); this is her truth, a truth, and not intended to represent "the" truth. The first day, the second day, and the third day provide markers for the reader, accompanied by a quote that intends to reflect overall emotion and theme of that day. The sections within those chapters mark an interpreted shift on my part, in the conversation; they are also accompanied by a quote to signify the thematic lessons her stories revealed for me.

## the first day

*You and I are sitting in our family home I grew up in, in Mānoa.*
*I'm back in my home after many years,*
*and it's my peace,*
*and center,*
*and grounding.*

## where my name comes from

*When I was born,*
*Lokalia named me.*

My mom is from Big Island and let's see,
I found kapa through hula.
My mom had gone to a concert and seen a wonderful hula practitioner,
Lokalia Montgomery.
And just knew right away she wanted to learn hula from her.

So she went to Lokalia and asked her to teach her.
And Lokalia looked at this 4'11" kepanī young woman,
who wasn't married,
and she kind of looked at her and said,
well, you have to pay me 300 dollars.
And in those days that's like 3,000 dollars,
it was not a small amount.
But my mom was a nurse,
she wasn't rich but she just loved what she saw in Lokalia, and so
she paid the 300 dollars.
That was the last payment she ever gave in 30 years of teaching to Lokalia,
because once she started,
Lokalia, my grandmother,
knew that she was serious and loved hula and wanted to learn it in a traditional way,
and they became so close that she trained her.
Aunty Joan Lindsey was her hula sister in training.

When I was born,
Lokalia named me.
Most people think my name Ka'iulani is because of the princess
[laughs]

which, you know,
they give me all the princess pictures
and all those things,
and she was beautiful,

and I was hapa like her,
but it really was not just because I looked like her or something,
I was Princess Kaʻiulani in Ahahui Kaʻiulani's little pageants and stuff like that when I was little, but
that's another story.

But it was because of the meaning of Kaʻiulani.
My grandmother, when I was born,
my mom told me,
she and Lokalia agreed that I would be trained in hula.
So I would be,
I have two older brothers and a younger sister, but because
I was the oldest daughter she said,
this one's mine.

And so,
Kaʻiulani means sacred,
or consecrated,
or dedicated to a purpose.
And so that was the commitment that I was going to be the one trained in hula and the culture.
So I was dedicated to that.

**hula**

*I think hula is really in my training,*
*it's the base of all I do.*

My mom said like a lot of kumu hula,
she danced with me in her tummy,
and the day I was born she had a 2-hour hula class
and popped me out.

So, you know, I was raised with Lokalia and with wonderful people like Kawena Pukui, Kaʻupena Wong,
surrounded by these really tremendous resources because they were all Lokalia's friends,
and my mother knew them, ʻIolani Luahine,
They were just blessings in my life so even though I'm hapa not Hawaiian I was raised with this wonderful spirit and family,
and, so when I was about four, probably just about five,
Lokalia told me I would be trained by her student Maʻiki Aiu Lake in hula,
and ʻcause Maʻiki would take students at age 5.
And that way, she said,
I'd get the foundation of hula and hālau with the other kids,
and be trained early on.

And so I had learned a lot from Aunty Maʻiki, been trained in,
did the typical Queen's Surf,
dancing at the Shell, big, you know, big shows.
Greeted the boats in the harbor when they came in,
with our grass skirts and green panties that we dyed and red tops,
and did the whole hula training.

And so, Aunty Maʻiki was very strict and very disciplined.
You had to learn the chants,
you had to write them down,
you had to document everything.
You had to.
The discipline of hula was ingrained.
You couldn't get on the floor until
you knew the chant and knew the meaning and could chant it by yourself,
5 or 6 year old,
and then we learned the implements.
And we learned,
from a little bit more modern way of you had to document everything, right.
And so, it was very
very thorough,
very disciplined which is why so many of the kumu hula today are trained well and do that and that's why she was
so well known,
so well loved in hula because she really trained people well.

And so I stayed in the hālau and part of Aunty Maʻiki's group until I was age 13,
and then my grandmother took me back.
She said you've had some preliminary training, but I want to train you in kahiko.
I mean we had learned both modern and kahiko from Aunty Maʻiki,
but a lot of the modern hapa haole songs and you know, performances.
And she said she wanted to thoroughly train me in kahiko.
And she, you know,
also recognized that Aunty Maʻiki was her student and had modernized some things.

Aunty Lokalia was very firm in flat foot hula, in being grounded, and
Aunty Maʻiki's style is more on the toes, right,
and so there are differences in technique,
but Lokalia was very good, she said, you know, that's not for me,
but Aunty Maʻiki is my student, I allow her to grow.

And you need to let go a little with your students, right.
You train them well, and then they explore and create their own.

But she said for me,
she wanted to take me back and train me so one on one,
until I was,
until her death,
she would come up weekly.

My Saturdays were spent going down with my mom,
picking her up,
bringing her here,
they would,
we would talk,
we would chant,
she would go through with my mom the chants, and train me in it.

And her style was that you hear it.
She doesn't give it to me in writing like Aunty Maʻiki,
you hear it.
You chant with her.
After about three times you better know it because you're going to do it,
and you had to do the chant,
and then I would learn to either paʻi on the ipu,
or do the pahu,
or to do it,
and I couldn't get on the floor to learn the dance until I could chant the entire thing *and* do the implements.

And so, then I would learn the dance,
and then she would give me the chant in writing.

And, that's to me the best way of training because I've never forgotten the chants or what her training is.
So, it's really an old style,
and I think having the hula discipline and the training
and that old style.
And just being exposed to those wonderful,
all those wonderful people,
is what brings me to kapa, and,
that's my style with kapa,
that's my grounding with kapa.
It's in the traditional,
it's in,
you know,
doing some things to the best way and correctly.

And sometimes a little bit, maybe
[laughs]
obsessively,
but, you know, it's how I was trained and disciplined in,
and you don't,
you don't take short cuts.
Some kapa makers you know, as we know, do things,
short cut.
Easy way.

But, I don't care to because that's not the training I was given.
And so, I think hula has influenced me tremendously in that.
And after my grandmother passed away,
I took hula from other teachers,
and was trained,
and did that,
and even as soon as my daughter was born she went into hula as well.

And so, all of that, my grandmother released me as a kumu
and she gave me her lei hulu which she always wore when she chanted and performed,
and that was my ʻuniki.
She didn't have a public ʻuniki ʻcause she was suffering from cancer.
She was training me in it and we worked through all the chants and had completed those,
she was hoping to do ʻuniki but her health didn't allow it.
And she eventually had to move to Kauaʻi to live with her two nieces,
and then passed away.
But before she left she released me and told me that that was to carry on her traditions and her dances and so that's what I have taught my daughter and continue to teach her.
We have to finish her.
But, so yeah, so

I think hula is really in my training,
it's the base of all I do,

which is why I think I'm probably sometimes a little different than some of the other kapa practitioners because they're not from hula,
they're from other arts,
and so we approach it differently in that light,
but that's also how I teach,
you know, you've experienced it,
Verna has, and others,

You know there's hālau, but there's also ʻohana,
the way Lokalia taught me was one on one every Saturday and just working together, and practicing it,
and it's nānā, you know you see, you do,
you don't have to, like, in Western culture, teach every single thing and give you a syllabus,
and some kapa practitioners do have classes,
you know I've had classes in ʻohe kāpala or classes in things,
but I think it's a different style, it is more ʻohana teaching that I do,
because that's what I was trained more in,
and I do believe it's the relationship between the kumu and the haumāna that is important.

And some of the things about, watching your student but
letting go at points and
letting them take off and
you may not agree with everything your students do,
but that's their journey and their exploration,
you still can be there and go, "hmm, well, maybe steer you here" or if they have questions or don't have the experience
you can help share that,
but you do have to sort of step back and let go.
Some of the kapa kumu, are a little more into, my way or the highway,
but I don't think that allows for exploration.

Well, my mom also put me in ballet, and modern dance, and other things.
But she told me that my kumu, Maʻiki at the time, and Lokalia later, said that those styles influenced my hula.
You know you, ballet you hold your fingers,
you point your fingers,
you point your toes,
you do, you know,
there's stylistic things so it was influencing hula,
and my ballet teacher wanted me to do more classes and get more into it,
and my mom said, you know, do you want to do it,
and I said no, I just want more hula,
so I quit, all the other dance classes,
for me it was, the choice was hula.
My mom was heartbroken, but
[laughs]
but that's the way it was I just loved hula.

And then, I always continued
and then as I said when my daughter was, my son was born, I was actually,
my sister-in-law is Kawena Pukui's granddaughter, Aunty Pat Bacon's daughter,
and she and I,
Aunty Pat was teaching the two of us, ʻohana style, in her home for a couple of years so that she could pass on the dances that she learned from her mom,
and she wanted to pass it on to her daughter,
and Dodie, and I, had been friends from high school,
and Dodie was like, "I don't want to do this by myself, it's my mom,"
you know how those things go,
[laughs]
so, she, Aunty Pat invited me,
and so we did hula together for many years, on Saturday,
at the house in Mānoa there, and so
*I know Aunty Pat, she's a very dear friend of my dad's,*
oh you're kidding
*her husband,*
yes, George, Bacon,
*that was my dad's boss, I think, right?*
oh my gosh
*Wasn't he at Alexander & Baldwin?*
yes, yes!
*my dad loved him.*
Oh, Uncle George was a sweetheart
*so I have these vague memories*
*of playing at their house, in Mānoa*
yes, in Mānoa.
And Lokalia lived with them for a short time,
and she and Kawena were best friends,
so we were always there for parties,
and we might have seen you there!
*my dad tells me*
*I used to sit on Kawena's lap*
probably in that rocking,
koa rocking chair
*something like, yea, he's like, you don't remember?*
*[laughs] I don't remember*
oh my gosh!
I had my baby shower there,
when I had my son but after my son's birth I took a break for about two years from hula,
actually about 2 ½ years,
and then my daughter was born,
and then after my daughter was about 6, 8 months,
my husband at the time, said, I had a dream and you need to go back to hula.
And I said, what?
He goes, no, I, I know you, you need to go back to hula.
And I said, that's strange, ʻcause I was thinking about it, and I *do* need to go back to hula,
so I looked around and I had always admired Alicia Smith and her hula hālau,

so I went to join her,
and stayed with her for 25 years, 27 years,
and we went to Merrie Monarch,
and a small group of us,
8 of us in one year,
7 of us the next year, and like,
5 of us, 5 or 6 of us in the last year,
and so my daughter was trained by Alicia as well, from the time she was four,
and Alicia picked her for the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts apprenticeship in hula to train her.

Alicia learned from her mother,
her daughter, Piʻi, learned from her,
but she didn't have a tradition of graduating students like others,
she was more ʻohana training as well,
and so, the State Foundation grant was a way that she trained my daughter as a kumu,
and had written into that grant that she was trained as that.

So, you know,
it's just been,
hula has been a part of,
all of our family life,
and training.

**e hana mua a paʻa ke kahua**

*but I like the foundation,*
*I like things to be as close to traditionally done as possible,*
*you can explore after that but you have to have your foundation.*

Through Alicia's hālau I met a woman named Moana Eisele, who was a kapa practitioner.
She had taken a class from Dennis Kanaʻe Keawe on the Big Island,
he taught a class of about a dozen people,
and taught them kapa making because it was a dormant art,
not too many people were doing it,
and so Moana had continued the practice,
but had never really shared with a lot of other people as a teacher,
and so another student in the hālau had asked her if she could find out a little more and learn,
and Moana said well, yea,
and because Moana, in hula,
you know we do lei making,
we do implement making,
we do print, you know,
the pāʻū, we did all that,
Moana had watched me and so she knew that I loved to do cultural arts,
and I would just dedicate myself to do it.
And so she invited me to also learn.

And so two or three of us were introduced to kapa making through that,
and I have some pictures I can share with you of us first starting,
and my first pieces were horrible
[laughs]

I wanted to, in my ignorance,
make a pāʻū
[laughs]
as my project, and outfit myself in hula,

you know how that is,
you have these grandiose ideas that I'm going to just beat a pāʻū
and it'll be great,
and then you do it and you think,
oh my god,
this is the hardest thing I've ever done.

But I was so intrigued by it because it was the challenge,
and I could see that it was the same discipline as hula,
that it had so many facets that you would never,
just like hula you would never be bored.
Hula has implement making,
it has the chanting,
it has the interpretation choreography,

it has the technique,
same with kapa making, right,
you have the tools making,
you have all of
the plants and
the dyes and
the materials,
the wauke,
you have the beating,
you know, it's 50 million ways to do it,
there's *so* many different elements of it, and it was just like,
*this* is what I love!

I had tried lau hala weaving, and I made mats, I've made things,
I knew that was not for me,
I look at other people who make hats and I think, oh my god, it's just fabulous, but it was,
I knew it was not for me when I touched it,
I loved lei making, and I still do, and other things,
but kapa making was such a mystery and such a challenge,
and I loved the fact that there was a discovery there,
because you know, it had been dormant for many years and so much was lost,
and to be able to sit for hours,
and beat and meditate, right?
I mean, those types of things,
just are the same values that you learn in hula and in life you can apply to kapa and it just,
helps you refine them, you know?

It's the noʻonoʻo, the meditation
the ahonui, the patience
[laughs]

You can be in the best or worst mood
and it will show in your work,
you know the appreciation and gratitude,
that the gifts in sharing that you do with other people, you know,
that's how I reached out to Sol, and now over time, we've given back and forth,
the same with Verna, there's so much,
and I think those are the types of things that really made me respond to kapa.

I think that's the other part of it, is that hula,
the kumu rules right,
and you do their technique,
there are lines of traditions and styles and the choreographies are so strict and other things,
whereas for kapa making there are different styles but it's more because the kapa maker comes from different backgrounds.

I mean, you know certain kapa makers like Dalani,
she was raised on the mainland,

she's actually from California so her exposure to the culture was different,
she doesn't come from a hula tradition,
she's very organic and fierce and strong which is wonderful,
and when she found kapa she went full on into it,
but her style is very different and it reflects her background and her training

For me, because of my hula training,
I would say I'm a strong traditionalist, which,
people say sometimes is very conservative and constraining

[laughs]

But I like the foundation,
I like things to be as close to traditionally done as possible,
you can explore after that but you have to have your foundation.

**the chant guides the hula**

*I have to have stories like that that inspire me and get me excited,*
*and that is sort of the hula,*
*the chant inspires.*

But I think even in my creative process it comes from my hula training because before I create a piece, I have to have a concept or a story or, and that builds my work,
whereas I notice for other people like Verna who don't come from hula even though they're my student, she gets an idea and kind of goes from that, and then creates the story,
but because of hula,
the chant guides hula.
You have the inspiration from the words and the oli,
so for me the story,
I have to have that story first.
So if I do a piece for Big Island I look at the place,
and I think of the story or I look at the legend or those other things that are there, and something inspires me in it and then I'll create.

*So if somebody asked you*
*to make something then,*

I'd have to ask them what is this for?
What is the purpose?
And then I think of the protocol,
or is this a piece,
is this about Kāne, and the water, which I did for Maui?
Or, you know, when we did the kapa for Merrie Monarch,
what is the chant they are going to do?
What is the purpose of this performance where they're going to wear it?

And, I think I said this in the kapa video that the State Foundation did,
I saw that performance as the breaking through of the restrictions, of the noa.
So, it was,
the piece I made was inspired by the chant,
the entrance chant for the hula, hoʻopūka e kalā i ma ka hikina,
and that one tells of the mist in the dancers that come from the east,
and break through with the sun,
and they enter the floor and the restrictions are released,
and they perform,
and the sun shines, and the knowledge is there,
and so that was my inspiration for that performance because we were trying to get people to see kapa for the first time and think,
it can be done!
It's there!
It's used again,
it's reborn!
And so that was my *vision* in my piece.

I have to have stories like that that inspire me and get me excited,
and that is sort of the hula,
the chant inspires,
and even the Kāne piece, the water piece I did,
the water theme I did for the Maui performance was the waters of Kāne,
and it was based on the Kāne chant Hokulani Holt Padilla had actually taught,
for one performance that I did in hula before,
and she taught us the chant,
and so that's why it was a tribute to Hokulani 'cause she was host there on Maui,
so *she* inspired me, and so I wanted to do the
Kāne chant, the waters of
Kāne, kawaiakāne,
and so the piece I made was inspired by Hokulani and,
my, our invitation to do a kapa show there at the Maui Cultural Arts Center.

For me everything has a meaning and connection,
it's not just I beat a piece and then I decorate it,
and that's just my path,
I have to inspire,
have that kind of tie to something that's cultural,
and if I do a piece for someone,
like I made that kīhei for Leinaʻala Heine Kalama,
it was because she was doing a tableau and a chant,
that inspired me to make a piece with that story in it and then I had to give it to her because she was the inspiration behind it.

And it's because of my background and training,
and sometimes I do get kind of too,
maybe strict and wishing it was more cultural for more kapa makers,
but then everybody has a different creative process,
so that's where I kind of step back again and say
everyone has their path and their means

*when you're doing kapa, or,*
*whether it's making a piece or it's beating just to beat,*
*where does the language fit in for you?*

I guess in many ways,
when I learned kapa, and as I learn kapa,
I actually did a whole collection of, now I'm blanking on the English word,
what do you call when you, like a dictionary of all the kapa terms?

*Oh, like a glossary?*

Yea, thank you!
I did a collection of all the glossaries of kapa terms
I could find and
I actually found 3 or 4 that are outstanding
I have collected them all, and that's my source because all of the names,
every single kapa may have 10 different names, and it,
based on how it's made and what's made and quality right,
every tool has a name, the processes have names,

and so, one of my missions and paths was to collect the different glossaries because that's part of the knowledge and by reading them, I could learn that
there's this kind of kapa and
there's that kind of kapa, and
there's this kapa made of this, and
there's this kapa made,
and it expanded my understanding of the kapa making process,
because if there is a name for it there is a reason why it's named that.
You know, maybe red kapa can be pa'i'ula, but there may also be another 10 or 20 names because of the *way* it was made,
or the *fineness* or the purpose it was made for,
and so that built my understanding,
and I think that comes again from Aunty Ma'iki,
the research, the documentation,
so, I'm a kinda, odd duck of modern and traditional in that, but I do,
I mean over there is my resource library of kapa books, and plant books, and, I do,
research, and then, I experiment and try,
and when I read something in a story I love,
I also have a lot of the Hawaiian legends because they tell you things too,
and they describe things,
not only the story of Maui and you know, holding the sun,
but small vignettes and small things will tell you, or key questions,
and you think, "oh my gosh, can you do that?"
Or there's a little story about someone walking into a village and there's a kapa comment,
or a kapa story there, and then you research it,
and each island I found was a little different in their approach for kapa.
It wasn't like hula necessarily where you have strong teachers with traditions and lines and stuff,
the kapa makers were a little bit more independent,
but there were differences on each island, and, and that's holds true today right?
You've seen our different kapa makers.

So, I do think teachers influence,
but also each island has different influences,
and each island is known for different kinds of kapa,
and traditional, and from my research,
I'm not a Pua Van Dorpe, who did the most unbelievable, meticulous, you know, microscopic analysis of kapa,
that's her, I would, I would kill to, to see her collection, and her information,
but mine has been more the terminologies, the stories, the process, and since she spoke to different people, you know, I studied with Moana Eisele for a couple years initially,
we did two grants on the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts for kapa making,
so I was her apprentice for two of those grants,
and then after that I went on my own and just explored and did, and you know,
I mean just interacting with great people and stories like Moana Eisele,
Dalani and I actually started around the same time.

We go back decades,
[laughs]
and she's fierce and full on and great.

But you know, we take different paths,
and when I was studying there *really* were just a small handful of kapa makers,
and so it was more just trial and error,
and then going, I literally called up the botanist at Leeward Community College,
and KCC, and the chemical botanist, and worked with a bunch of people,
like a friend of mine at LCC was compiling a list of plants that were used in kapa so I helped him put that together and also tried to help him share how those plants were used and what dyes they made,
things like that, so lots of different, yea,
things like that, researching, kinda explorations there.

**what kapa teaches**

*the haʻahaʻa, you have be humble,*
*you have to be,*
*have humility,*
*because nature is in charge*

So, when I was beating kapa, yea, there was, there was just a handful.
And so part of Moana's request to me was that when I went off on my own that I should teach others, because we should try to bring in more people,
it was such a challenging art,
I mean, unless you have tools you can't beat, and to make tools is huge,
you know,
you know how that goes,
oh my god,
then you need the wauke and all that,
and so, she said, go out and teach others,
and so part of my commitment has always been to educate and teach and share because unless we have more practitioners it's not going to grow,
it's not going to continue,
it's not going to flourish,
but one of my things was,
trying to do the tools the plants doing all the processes was challenging right?
Moana had her husband who was a carpenter who could make the tools,
so I reached out to Uncle Sol ʻcause I had known Alani and Sol for many years,
would you make me iʻe kuku because, I need better tools.
The tools make it easy, right?
So he said, "oh, let me, let me go look at Bishop Museum,"
you know his style,

And, I will go find out and look at it, and "yea, that's kind of an interesting thing"
he was challenged by it too ʻcause he had never seen kapa beaters or others,
or the tools,
he went to Bishop Museum and that's where he found his great, great, grandmother's kapa, and he also discovered that whole resource of tools they had and everything else,
he came back to me and he goes, "oh my goodness!"
"This is meant to be! Your request made me go in the Bishop Museum and find that kapa, I will make you tools if you teach my sister, because this family has got to get back into kapa making."
And I said, "deal" because I'm happy to do that.

So that's how Verna came to me, and that's how we started,
And Sol, ever since then, has been making our tools, and even making kapa,
but he says
[laughs]
kapa's too hard for him he wants to make the tools right?
[laughs]
*[laughs]*
*right.*

*So what were the tools like*
*before Uncle Sol,*
*because I don't know that right?*

I can show you the tools that I made, but you'll laugh.
So after, after we finish talking
But I'll show you, and then you know the quality of his stuff is *so* beautiful,
*eeaasy*
[laughs]
and truthfully,
kapa is something that you really, hopefully *cannot* do by yourself, right,
I mean, Dalani has Eric Enos, and he makes the tools,
he helped do a lot of the growing of the wauke at Kaʻala Farm,
he started on those things,
now Dalani's got a foundation she's got her own patch and stuff,
but you know, you need, it *does* take a village,
so I reached out to Uncle Sol because I know I'm not a woodworker, he is a master,
you know,
[laughs]
I want *him* to make, and just give it to me,
but you know, he gives it to me and says just chisel away!
But, he makes me laugh,

I work with the botanical garden for the wauke and the dyes,
I have my own patch,
but we need to make it more available and stuff too,
and the more we can reach out and work with others the better it is,
the more we can extend the learning and then,
we tap the expertise
I mean you cannot be an expert in every single thing,
and every kapa maker has a particular part
you're nodding
of the process that you love, right, and it changes over time
but, so what's yours?

*The beating*

Yay, that's mine.
[laughs]

Everybody thinks the dyeing is my specialty
but I love the beating.
There's something just with the meditation,
the patience,
the reward,
seeing that move,
It's just like a child
you see that growth,
you see that movement, you know,
it's beautiful,
and every fiber is different because of where it's grown

and, how long it's grown,
and you know, what time of year you harvested
and, *everything* is different,
and so you learn about nature,
you learn it's out of our control
we go with the flow
it leads us right?

*totally*

and the timing and the process

*yep, it's different every single time*

yea we do learn shortcuts,
I mean you can, cook the wauke,

[laughs]

you can, you know, ferment it quickly,

you can do these shortcuts,
I mean, those are ok,
but it's also, sometimes it just tells us when it's ready,
and it humbles us, I mean,
the haʻahaʻa, you have be humble,
you have to have humility,
because nature is in charge
It's been twenty something years and
I think about it all the time because when
I beat and
I see my work and
I think,
close it up,
today is not the day,
you should do something else because it's not beating right,
that's with me I need to fix me,
and sometimes as I'm beating I get answers to all these things I've been struggling over,
so it trains me,
and I see insights about myself there, you know,
and I think that's the values, the Hawaiian values,
the same ones I learned in hula are
the same ones that I learn in life and I try to teach my kids,
are what I learned in kapa making,
is really to look within,
it's not about everything else going on outside it's really within,
and so I have to be true to myself,
and whatever everybody is doing I love and I think is fabulous,
I just have to be true to myself, and whatever that is,

I think, I see a traditionalist in you,
and that's you know, good,
I like that.

*I resonate with the discipline,*
*I like,*

*I like that foundation*

You can go out and try some fun things here and there,
but you have to know your foundation,
if you don't, it's like standing on one foot you don't have the balance,
you can go off and then you don't come back and I think it's really important.
Just like with hula you can do the traditional, the chants,
and then you can do some innovative, fun stuff, modern,
you can do ʻauana,
but you have to know your foundation,
and that's who I am,
so I can't change that.

*it reminds me,*
*someone once told me*
*that if you want to break the rules,*
*you have to learn the game first right,*

exactly

*the more paʻa you are in your foundation,*
*the easier it is,*

to know how far you can go,
and the *right* way,

*right, and there's,*
*there's a tremendous room for creativity,*
*within that, right?*

Yea I mean, a hula analogy is like,
you see a lot of people doing Christian hula now,
which is kind of an interesting, dynamic tension because,
if you're really grounded in the Hawaiian culture,
they have many gods,
not the one god, type of image, right,
Western and so Christian hula is sort of an, oxymoron
and many people do it in church and they dance hula,
but they do it with these Christian songs so it is sort of an interesting dynamic,
but if you, really think about the Hawaiian culture,
the Hawaiian culture embraced Christianity,
so there can be, I think, ways you can do it,
that have sort of the poetic and cultural analogies
that would be meaningful,
without doing the literal,
and so I think there are many things with kapa that you can do once you know your grounding and your foundation,
I mean, you know,
even in our design and decorations you can be like,
really, shazam! out there

[laughs]

Or you know your tradition,
you know what's paʻa, what's the foundation,
and then you can kind of change it,

my design sometimes, like the one when I did for Maui,
was a story on kapa,
it wasn't just a traditional geometric design,
it had the geometrics but it was more like a picture, a story,
but it used the traditional prints, right?
So, that's, contemporary and,
but, I label it as contemporary
I think that's, that's where you know what's traditional,
and I think you do,
and then, you know kind of where you want to go, and how to do it.
And I don't think we've reached as far as we can go,
so there's lots of room for artistry.
I think it's exciting to, to see, you know,
new people try different things,
like, I love to see your work,
because it just inspires me to want to make something

[laughs]

*[laughs]*

*I'm still learning,*
*I'm just still learning,*

I'm learning,
every single time I make a piece I learn,
and that's serious,
and we keep trying new dyes,
everything is inspiring around,
I just wish I made more time,
I'd be beating everyday,
I'd be going, yea,
something for retirement for sure

[laughs]

**camping, digging, hiking, discovering**

*and no doors were locked so you just run in and out of everybody's house in the neighborhood,*
*and as soon as it would rain, like really hard,*
*everybody would be yelling, mudslide!*

I grew up in this house,
so my playground was the mountains.
Our neighborhood, I mean, this is a very small neighborhood,
and the kids I grew up with are living in their houses still,
so my good friend lived right down the road,
and every time, you know this is Mānoa so it rains every single day,
so our playground was running up the mountains
and we made fake lūʻau, with
the rose apples,
the guavas,
the avocados, all
the stuff that's growing in the mountains,
and we would make, like, on ti leaf, and, you know, so,
we'd boil ginger,
the crayfish,
we would take coffee cans ʻcause, cans, you know,
coffee came in cans in those days instead of Keurigs,
we would go down
and catch crayfish,
and ʻoʻopu from the stream,
and boil them in coffee on little fires
[laughs]
for our snacks
That's how, boro-boro we were,
and we would,
it was the best upbringing,
and no doors were locked so you just run in and out of everybody's house in the neighborhood,
and as soon as it would rain, like really hard,
everybody would be yelling, mudslide!
And we had a place you hiked back on that side of the mountain,
and you climb up and you sit in the stream,
and our playground was mud sliding
we have pictures of us covered from head to toe,
and even the adults would come with us,
we would go like, 50 miles an hour,
and sometimes we'd wrap around a tree or something
[laughs]
But that was our playground,
and so we grew up hiking all over these mountains,
picking maile, that is no longer there up there,
going mud sliding.

My mom is from Big Island,
so the only vacations we ever had were spent in,
on Big Island because that's where my grandmother lived, in Hilo.
And my parents actually were art collectors, so that's why I love art so much
and, my vacations, as a kid, I don't know if this is legal so,
but, a good friend of my family,
because Kawena worked at Bishop Museum, was Kenneth Emory.
And Uncle Ken would come up here all the time and be part of the family,
and we would go on digs with the Bishop Museum, archeological digs.
And we would go camping a lot.
So my family's only vacations were camping and going on digs.
[laughs]
I know, what an upbringing.
So, we would camp at Kaʻena Point, in those days you could,
and we, my mom found this old cave, and so we reported it to Bishop Museum,
and they did an archeological excavation of it and so we were able to camp there and observe and assist with it,
on Big Island, my father and his best friend was Leo Fortes who was also a collector and so every vacation we would go camping and we'd stay at Hapuna Beach,
or we would stay with my grandmother in Hilo,
and all over the Big Island,
and many times, there is a beach in Puakō where we would just walk along,
and as the water and the waves would wash up,
fish hooks, would wash up with it,
or kūpeʻe shells,
because off of there there were mud flats
and so much of what old Hawaiians had left
and it was part of a housing or a village, would wash up from the water and roll up
and so in those days, you could actually could just find things like that
and so it was an interesting upbringing because of that,
and so my parents were very much into,
like we used to go visit the petroglyph fields and just walk around and discover them in Puakō,
and hike and camp,
I never went to the mainland until I went into college so I wasn't exposed to Disneyland and all those types of things,
our vacations were camping and hiking
I didn't know any better, so my whole upbringing was around a lot of the cultural stuff
and it was like living in a museum sometimes here, my friends said,
we used to have masks,
and war clubs from New Caledonia and New Zealand and all over,
and stuff like that all over,
and they collected Eskimo art,
and pre-Columbian art,
and African art,
and Hawaiian, of course,
and so we had collectors, we had international people always coming through
and, with hula I've been so blessed by knowing so many good people,
we were blessed.

**ʻohana, stuffed peacocks, and the tsunami**

*and so I said, you know,*
*this is my home,*
*my valley,*
*so I really need to connect and give back*

My mother, learned hula also, from and was a good friend of Aunty Jenny Wilson, and I don't know if you know Aunty Jenny Wilson,
but her husband was John Wilson, Mayor of Honolulu,
and his mother was lady in waiting to Queen Liliʻuokalani,
and so that story of the Queen receiving flowers wrapped in newspaper,
and really, the lady in waiting was bringing her the news of the day, and stuff,
was Aunty Jenny Wilson's mother-in-law.

And so Aunty Jenny was a court hula dancer for the Kalākaua family,
and she traveled to the world's fair as a hula dancer,
and so she was like Hawaiʻi's world renowned hula dancer,
and I still remember sitting on her bed in her home and she used to have these scary,
I thought in those days, stuffed peacocks,
because she and her husband used to live in Waiʻalae Nui Valley at the old brick factory there and they raised peacocks.

But, at her house, in back of Saint Francis hospital, I think it was St. Francis hospital, that's where I remember it,
but she had stuffed peacocks and I used to be so scared of those things,
but her house was so small we used,
my sister and I would sit on the bed and my mom would make us be real quiet which was hard for us as little kids,
and she learned hula.

And Aunt Jenny was in a wheelchair so I just remember these
long, like elegant fingers,
and she would teach my mom hula
and dance hula
and stuff like that.

I think it was because she was just exposed to those good people,
and just amazing that we were just surrounded by these, I mean,
amazing historical people that, I didn't know who they were at the time
they were just aunties and uncles and things like that
she was actually born on Lānaʻi,
but by the time she was 1 her family had moved to the plantation outside of Hilo,
and so she was raised in Hilo,
and she was actually a senior in high school when the big tidal wave hit,
and so her story of being, having the house lifted and being carried out to sea with her and her two parents in it is in that Pacific Tsunami museum
she was actually polishing her shoes,

she was a senior in high school and polishing her shoes on the front doorstep,
when she heard somebody yell “tsunami!”
she looked up and saw this towering wave coming and her mother grabbed her and pulled her in the house,
and the wave hit,
but, you know those old plantation houses are above ground,
so it literally lifted the house up, and floated it out to, which was a miracle,
it floated out to sea, and they bobbed out at sea for a while,
and then the backwash carried it back in to Hilo town,
and she said that it wedged somehow into the second floor window in the Coca-Cola factory which was one of the tallest buildings in Hilo at the time, or still standing,
and they crawled out of their patio on, into that thing and went on roof and that’s how they survived and she said she lost of some of her classmates and lot of people,
but, she rode the tidal wave, and that’s why she lives in the back of,
she came here, and when I was born it was up at Tantalus,
and then they moved here and bought this house,
and she said she never wanted to by the ocean

[laughs]

after that tidal wave,

so that’s why I’m a ma uka girl,
so mountains for me are home,
I love the mountains, because just,
this is home.
My brother’s a fisherman and a seaman,
he loves to fish,
he’s in the water,
he’s a fireman and I think he became a fireman so he could fish,
he’s retired now and he fishes all the time, so I respect the ocean,
I prefer the mountains.

She came here to Oʻahu to go to UH,
she became a nurse, and then was at Queen’s hospital,
she was a psychiatric nurse, head of the psychiatric nurses at Kekela,
and then my dad was a doctor, and he was a psychiatrist
so they met in the psychiatric ward,
which explains me

[laughs]

so they met there, and they married,
my brother Kevin is a fireman, and he’s here in Kāneʻohe,
my brother Shawn is an artist, he did that marble sculpture out there, notice that right?
He’s done a lot of pieces, and marble and bronze are his field
I’m so proud of him, and then he’s adopted, but he came to us hānai style when he was a young kid, and then just stayed with us and became part of our family,
and then as an adult he asked to be adopted because he says,
“eh, it’s already this way but let’s make it legal,”
and then my younger sister who was actually born in Japan, when my fam-,
I skipped over, but when I was about 11 months old my dad was a doctor and he got called up to help in the Korean War.

So he moved my family to Japan for a few years until the age of 5, when I came back.
so we lived in Japan until I was 5.
When I came back from Japan my mom told me that I only spoke Japanese.
But at home, we did speak English, but because we had maids in Japan I spoke Japanese,
so I do remember going to Pali preschool at age 5 and having difficulty talking to the kids 'cause they didn't, they didn't get me,
and my mom said, "because you were speaking Japanese,"
but she said within the year, I learned,
I recalled the English and spoke English, so
I forgot that piece, yea, which is an important piece, just being in another place,

so I have one brother in Kaneohe,
one brother in St. Louis Heights, and
one sister in Pālolo. And
she was sort of the maverick,
she never learned hula she didn't want to,
she was into fencing, and making wine and beer, and
she still makes beer, so
she was much more organic and does her own thing in that way she's very good, and
she studied French,
she majored in French,
she lived in France for a couple years, studying,
and then went to Tahiti, which would be fabulous to study French
and then came back here and worked for Department of Transportation
and then she transferred to Department of Federal Transportation highways and stuff,
so I said, "how do you use your French?"
and she goes "just swearing at the truck drivers."

[laughs]

So, yea, so that's my family, and we all have kids,
and we get together, and, you know, it's a good extended family,
I've lost both my parents,
they both passed away,
but the blessing is that, when they passed away,
my brothers and sisters and I looked at the house,
and all 3 of them had just renovated their homes and fixed it up,
and so, they said we have to keep the house in the family,
you know, it's home.
And I had been through a divorce when my kids were just graduating from high school,
and I had bought another house, which was, good, but you know,
I had to sell the house they grew up in, so it wasn't home for them,
so when this house became available,
my brothers and sister said, we have to keep in the family,
and so I said, yea I will sell my house and I'll buy this one.
It was a lot more expensive than my house,

[laughs]

But, it just,
and it’s old and takes a lot of repair
and work,
but, it was my roots.

And my kids remember growing up here with their grandparents,
and my mom babysat my kids, and you know,
took care of them when I went back to work,
so this is home to them too.
So it’s good, it’s good to be back here,
and Mānoa, always was my home,
I mean this, it has such history and such memories,
and so many stories,
I love stories, you know,
the names of the streets tell you the stories about the place,
and, more and more so
when I came back here I knew I had to connect with different things in the valley,
so that’s how I reached out to Mānoa Heritage Center and now I take care of the wauke in their Hawaiian garden, I’m the gardener there,
I’ve worked with Lyon Arboretum,
I’ve worked with their group, too, Liloa Dunn, and the other botanist there for their wauke,
and have done classes at both places,
and so I said, you know,
this is my home,
my valley,
so I really need to connect and give back.

**i leʻa ka hula a ka hoʻopaʻa**

*the function defines the qualities that are in that piece.*

My mom was Japanese and my parents were collectors when we lived in Japan,
we also had an exposure to the Japanese culture,
and their craftsmanship and their skill level is also very disciplined, right,
I mean they used the wauke, but they call it kozo and they beat it and they make paper.
Well, my parents in Japan had made friends with a number of artists who were part of this whole, what they were calling, folk art movement,
it was the Mingei movement of the 1950s,
and that was a whole cultural renaissance for Japan,
and I was too young to really understand it or know it but my parents became very enmeshed in it and their best friends were some of the leaders in that cultural movement,
Shoji Hamada, Kawai, and Yanagi sensei, Shimaoka,
they were all potters, artisans and craftsmen,
and Munakata sensei was the woodblock artist, a national treasure,
actually all of them became national treasures later on, and so their art is part of my home, and they were in and out of our home here all the time too.
And so the Japanese craftsmanship and their belief that art should be a part of your everyday life,
that use makes it more beautiful,
there's an aging,
and something that, if it looks used it has beauty,
it's wabi sabi, you know
you know?
Ok, I don't have to explain,
there's so many values and so many qualities of the Japanese culture and their view of art that influenced me as well, I think,
I do believe art should be a part of your life, you know,
and it should be used and functional,
so my kapa is not only to be framed, as a matter of fact, very little of it is framed,
I like it for use in protocol, that's why we did the Merrie Monarch, to use in practice,
I make it and I give it away a lot of times,
mostly rather than selling because I want it used,
a lot of times if you sell people will put it on the wall or hang it or stuff, I mean there's use in that stuff too, but I want it to be used so I think that it is from that Japanese culture as well as the Hawaiian tradition.

*so when you look at the craftsmanship of kapa,*
*what are the things that you look at?*

ah, you know how critical I am,

[laughs]

you laugh

I do look at the quality,
I look at how well something is made,
because we know the processes,
I try to look at why it was done in that way.

And there's beauty in so many different approaches but try to understand the artist's reasoning and rationale for doing that
looking at short cuts,
[laughs]
looking if the work reflects knowledge and understanding,
and where the artist is in the process.
I think it's important not to be judgmental on, "is this good or bad",
but where is the artist in this process,
and where is the artist in their development?
Because as you just said and I said earlier we're all learning,
and hopefully we'll continue to learn until we die,
and our work will reflect us at that moment in time,
and then what is the piece intended to show or do,
we could have a whole dialogue about this!
[and] I hope we will.

What do you look for?

*I automatically go to the detail,*
*I'm not even sure,*
*I think I'm still trying to figure out how to articulate that*
*but I realize that I have to touch it,*

texture, yea

*so softness,*
*and the thinness will always wow me,*
*and then the level of the detail,*
*the thought that goes into whatever the design is,*
*you know without even knowing the story,*
*just looking at the care and attention to,*
*the layers of dyes,*
*or, like the positive or negative space,*

and how those layers tell that story of the piece, right?
I mean, everything from the beating, the thinness or thickness
I'm ok with thick pieces if that's part of the story, you know,
and does the dye add some understanding or something to the watermarking,
and how does the print then, emphasize or work with those other pieces,
and how many things are, you know,
stories are coming out of this and telling me, right?
And then, looking at the piece,
I mean, naturally you can see ok, how skilled is this person,
and was this done intentionally or not?
And then, sort of, it, it tells you about the person.

**ʻaʻohe pau ka ʻike i ka hālau hoʻokāhi**

*we were all learning and discovering,*
*and everybody was in different places and it was good to hear*
*and we had some intense, discussions and differences,*
*some very, very intense ones and, Nalani cracked me up…*
*she was going,*
*"Man! Kapa makers are feisty!"*

*I'm thinking of when we,*
*you, myself and Aunty Verna*
*went up early to Maui to look at the pieces,*
*because some of them had torn*
*or that there were repairs that needed to be made,*

yup, wasn't that a great process?

*oh, it was such a great learning.*
*I think I learned more from listening to you*
*and Aunty Verna*
*conversing with some of the hula dancers,*
*because you were asking questions about*

their performance,

*and how you were going to use it, and*

yea, and that was a learning for all of us,
in working,
in making something that was used and functional and then realizing that the function defines the qualities that are in that piece.
I mean, having something super fine and thin, tore,
having things that were not softened, you know, ripped,
and then some things where certain dyes naturally will make something a little bit more tender, or soft,
and so there were soft parts of those pieces,
so the design has to be designed,
if you're going to use those dyes,
so you don't have those wear and tear parts right,
all those types of things were interesting

*and Aunty Verna made a comment about*
*the person wearing the piece*
*and how do they move,*

yes, because, for hula,
you can do things like ʻuwehe, which is, you know, your knees pop, and
you want the pāʻū to lift to show that,
but if it's a stiff piece that's sticking out you won't even see the ʻuwehe,
so what is the dance and how,
what are the movements,
they were doing the crawling on the floor, right?
Some of the low ones and stretching and that's where two of the kapa ripped because it was so tight there wasn't enough yardage,

and also one of them was stiff,
so if they're going to do that movement,
we knew next time we needed to say we need longer pieces, more yardage, give that,
because that's the style of their dance,
it's very bombastic and strong
but if you were just other hālau and other styles and techniques would be more restrained,
you could,
you could get away with other things,
yea, that was a fabulous learning opportunity,
and I thought it was neat because there were so many dancers,
so many different kapa makers,
and we could see the different results from all the treatments, which, to me, was awe inspiring
and then to work artistically, my passion and,
I was so thrilled because I love Hālau o Kekuhi and to work with such a great hula hālau, with hula and kapa together, my two passions was fabulous,
and then, all the learning from it,
it was just wonderful because they were so creative,
so, you know you could do something a little avante garde,
and they would take the kapa
and they would wrap it in a way that was like, oh my god that was fabulous!
And they had taken our previous pieces from our previous performance at Merrie Monarch and reused them, but they used them in different ways,
and I was so thrilled with it,
and just inspired more to want to do more, just the way they used it, yea

*I have this memory,*
*of seeing Aunty Verna on the television,*
*and that was, that's one of those, like,*

aha moments

*but that Merrie Monarch I have a very distinct memory,*
*I have this distinct memory of seeing Aunty Verna,*
*not knowing until much later,*

that you would be connected

*yea, yea*

that whole thing came about as you talk,
and mention how you saw the Merrie Monarch,
I remember distinctly,
Verna and I were visiting with Marie McDonald,
and you've heard this story before,
we were staying with her, and, talking kapa, I mean, you know,
you know when you get three kapa makers together,

[laughs]

Especially Marie,
just phenomenal person and artist,
we were talking
and spending the weekend together
and just working together
and sharing and stuff
and cooking and eating,

and she,
you know, she says, I have this vision,
you know Marie, very understated,
I have this vision, I want to see a whole hālau, come out,
totally dressed in kapa,

And I thought, ok!
and she looked at me, and she went, what?
I said, ok, we can do that. I will help you do that.
And she said, you know we need to have a stage where everybody will see it.
And we had this conversation, with Marie, Verna, and me,
and we said it has to be the Merrie Monarch, because that's the one thing, it's *the* big, hula,
iconic show, and *if* it happens there everyone will see it.
And then we talked about, ok, so, who would wear it?
How would this happen?
And I said, it has to be Hālau o Kekuhi,
I mean, and truthfully, I was with another hālau, right, and other things,
but I knew it had to be somebody,
we were on Big Island,
Merrie Monarch is on Big Island,
it had to be someone of, that would embrace something that organic and
be able to work with us,
because we had never done it before and we knew there were going to be problems,
and it had to be somebody fully immersed in the culture and understanding and willing to take on that challenge and do it,
plus, they were always involved in the hōʻike show,
and we talked about it and said, very consciously, boy if we go to a hālau and we say we are going to outfit them that's kind of an advantage for whatever performing group it is,
that's kind of unfair, you know, and who would we pick, and,
so we said, let's do it hōʻike night with Hālau o Kekuhi,
and so that's where again where my, I think hula training came in,
and so Marie said "ok, that sounds good,"
she says,
you know Marie,
"we'll talk to them. I know Ulu, who lives in Kamuela and I'll talk to her about her sisters and we'll connect up"
and Marie said, "you sure you gonna help us organize?"
and I said, "yea, Verna and I will do it"
and Verna was like,
"ok" because she had not been in hula and she was still pretty new to kapa making,
but she'd been, what, 5 years already?
So, a good solid foundation, I knew she could do it,
and then we said, but we want to invite a whole, all of our islands,
we want *every* kapa maker to be included that we can bring in,
everybody's in,
and so we started compiling lists of the kapa makers we knew,
and that was the hardest thing,

As we, as we extended invitations to people, some were like,
I mean, they had made pieces that were, you know, 12 inches by 12 inches,
they were just starting out,
and there were some that had done more,
but they didn't know who we were,
and if we were going to pull this off,
and very few had ever really made pieces of that use and size and standard,
I think, really, truthfully, so we just pulled together,
we brought Dalani into our planning group,
and that made sort of our core of planners, and it really was a collaboration, you know,
I invited Moana in because she was my kumu and so my tradition is always honor your kumu in that,
and so that was our core group, but,
basically it was just our group and our thoughts and our organization
and because I do organize things for my job I was willing to do some of the organization and Dalani also helped,
and Marie would call weekly on the phone,
and go, "hi Ka'iu!"
and I went, "uh oh, here comes some more assignments or something new"

[laughs]

and she would prod us along and she was great,
and Roen, of course, also gave great thoughts and inspirations.

There weren't a lot of venues to show kapa, when you think about it,
there weren't kapa shows,
there weren't kapa schools, or places, so it was like,
ok I know so and so on this island, and then, we sort of put the word out to each island saying,
can you give us some names of people you know on that island,
and then we would reach out and ask more people,
and there was a very small group, and,
the ones we asked a few of them, like Kana'e Keawe in Hilo,
who was in my line, right,
he taught my teacher,
he declined participation because he was busy with other things,
and other people declined participation,
so, really when it came down to it,
there were a bunch of people who had never made pieces of size,
never made functional pieces, it was more for just small display or other things,
and to make a commitment like that was huge,
and then to define what we needed to make with the pieces with the hālau we had meetings,
so we flew there to say, how do we, what size malo?
How long?
How do you wrap it?
So there my hula training came in because I could ask some questions,
you know, for the pā'ū, how many feet?
5 feet? 10 feet?
Do you want casing?
Is it ok to just wrap and tie?

You know, we had to define the expectations,
we had to do a schedule, then we had to look for funding
and reach out to State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, and other things,
and Hālau o Kekuhi was good because they had the nonprofit foundation, Edith Kanakaʻole Foundation, so there was a way that they could receive the funds to help support the program
and so they became the umbrella organization for it,
and so they really carried us in terms of being able to handle the funds, oversee the projects, I mean they were a godsend,
and they were so creative and *so* neat to work with,
and then their whole thought process of what chants they were going to do and what they were going to do,
and that's what inspired the process,
and we had retreats and meetings and we'd fly over there and meet with them,
and it was like herding cats trying to get the kapa makers on board,
that's why we had the retreat
and tried to talk more about the quality of the kapa and the processes and sharing,
I mean the one thing about the kapa makers,
there were a few like, Pua Van Dorpe who wouldn't share,
and then there were a bunch of us that we know you can't learn,
you know not all knowledge is in one school as the ʻōlelo noʻeau says,
so if we can share,
one person's forte was dyes,
another forte was in growing wauke,
another was in different techniques of preparing the wauke,
so we all shared our experiences and our learning, and said, ah!
That's a secret oh my gosh, that's great!
How do you stop the dyes from fading and in flux,
how do you stop this print from spreading,
all of those things were great learning and people sharing and said I did it this way,
and they went ooh!
And you know beating,
there's like 50 different ways to prepare the wauke,
so some would cook it in an imu,
some would boil it,
crock pot became popular,
[laughs]
it was all the modern ways of doing it,
and people were saying did you ever freeze the wauke
because you can harvest it in summer, but now we have things,
can we and should we be using the freezer, the refrigerator?
Just to slow down the fermentation because we all work and have jobs,
so that was a great dialogue,
because yea we do things traditionally, but now we also have, as you know, other things, can we and should we use them?
Making tools with a chainsaw
nothing, eh, if Hawaiians had a chainsaw they would have used it,
but it was good to talk with people about those things because it's sort of like, is this ok, and we were all learning and discovering,

and everybody was in different places and it was good to hear
and we had some intense, discussions and differences,
some *very, very* intense ones

[laughs]

and, Nalani cracked me up,

'cause oftentimes when we were,
had the kapa makers, and we had some stuff going on and even emailing and stuff,
she was going, "Man! Kapa makers are feisty!"
*Really* feisty, and as a kumu, I'm sure she had, you know,
different issues and positions with kumu,
but you respect the kumu and kumu is king, no student would do that,
but with the kapa makers we got into some *really* heated stuff,
and it was tough, because we were all volunteers,
and I was trying to make pieces as well as organize stuff,
we were all trying to do these workshops and bring people together and stuff,
and it was, it was, tremendous but it was, overwhelming and, *very* challenging as well.
it was great just to compile the list of,
I still have lists of the kapa makers that were known at that time,
and since then many of them have had students and, shared more,
and so the Maui project included some of those newer ones,
which is what we wanted, and now it's even grown more,
so just from my list I can see the growth of the art, which is so rewarding,
and you know, seeing you, participate in the Maui one was great,
and so that's what we want to do is,
those things are, to me, rewarding.
It's the education it's the sharing it's the growth,
you have to give back because it's given me so much.

**lehua moments**

*it was one of those, what Robert Cazimero I think calls,*
*lehua moments*

*it was Friday, April 15th,*
*I turned my television,*
*I sat on my couch,*
*Kamakau's ka poʻe kahiko*
*the book was on the couch next to me,*
*it was right there*

it was right there

*and as I'm waiting for the picture to come up I open it,*
*and it opens to the page of kapa,*
*and I'm reading*
*and as I'm reading all of a sudden the picture pops up*
*and I look up and I see the hālau was dancing,*
*it was literally right when I turned the television on*
*they were doing the documentary*
*and they were dancing,*

see I'm getting goosebumps

*and I just started to cry, and*
*they were panning the audience*
*and they showed the kapa makers*

yea, I remember that,
I think I was crying at the time,

*yea, there was a bunch of you,*
*a bunch of you crying,*
*in tears,*

we were,
it was one of those,
what Robert Cazimero I think calls,
lehua moments,
it's one of those transcending moments where you are literally
in another world
in another place and,
it's like timeless, and
crying from happiness and just joy and amazement and,
you never want that moment to ever disappear
and I still feel that when I think back,
and it was just phenomenal,
and I'm so glad to hear that it was the same for you
that was phenomenal
and one of my life moments
and it was,
it will always live with me,
it was such a joy and such an amazing thing to be there and to see it.

And I thank Nalani,
and Kekuhi,
and Pua
and the hālau,
because they made it possible,
and it really was wonderful,
and Marie, was joyous
and, all of us just, felt so good
yea, will always remember that.

Hopefully for you and for all of us there'll be other moments like that,
and you will inspire somebody with your work,
and that's the beauty of art, I think,
and I think that's the beauty of kapa,
because I have had people come to me and say,
I saw your piece, and it inspired me, I want to learn,
or I saw the video and you were speaking and I have to learn,
and so it happens, that's what, you know, are those magic moments.

You're learning, see that's good that's exactly how I feel,
there's so much and I could spend every day,
every day of the year for the next 30 years and still not know everything.
And every time I see somebody else's work I think, gosh!
Why didn't I do that?
I want to do something, you know,
and it's like for every piece you do you can think of 5, 10, 20 others, right,
and I love when,
I have a hard time saying no, so,
I love when people come with challenges or requests,
and sometimes you have to say no,
but sometimes it's like, why did I say that?

For a while, a couple times during Merrie Monarch that process I was like,
why did I ever say I would do this?
Oh my god,
Oh my god,
people are driving me nuts.

But without those challenges you don't push through,
and these things don't happen and I truly believe that,
and so now I'm working with a hālau, I don't know if I can say the name, because
they haven't,
they might want to keep it quiet, but
they're going to perform it in a future year, all in kapa, and
they're going to be making theirs
so, that's a challenge, because you know how hard it is for anybody who's been beating for just a few years to even make something like that,
none of them have ever beaten before,

and with their hula,
this year they're doing ʻulīʻulī, or
this year they're doing mats, or
this year they're doing other implements
or feather leis or whatever,
they're not kapa makers,
and they're not, like, going to be doing it from now until then,
this was the kumu's request,
and I have faith in them and I am committed to do it,
I don't know how,
I *know* that they don't know how difficult it is,
because even for kapa makers, you know it's,
like for the Maui one that we did,
and even the Merrie Monarch one,
the hardest thing was actually the malo,
because the malo is, has,
every piece has nuances right.

But the malo has to be supple enough
[laughs]
to twist and wrap,
soft, and some of them were like, thick, hard,
and you couldn't, I mean, oh my god,
yet, the ones tore and we had to patch if you remember,
and you don't want any accidents with the malo
[laughs]
no surprises.
It has to be strong enough to hold up against the perspiration and everything,
and the pulling and the knotting,
it has to have that,
and yet, some, some of the artists were focused on the color and the look,
but it wasn't soft, and so the poor dancers
the softening part of it was *so* important
and that takes as much time as dyeing and printing,
the softening takes that much time right
and the malo is like, 12, 14 feet,
so it's not a small thing
that's what we learn by doing, yea,
a lot of my pieces early on were like, beautiful, stiff
[laughs]

But, you know, I think too,
for kapa a lot of pieces over time as you use them soften too,
right, it's just natural,
so, I look at those old pieces and I have some family pieces that were given through my mom's side, and they married Hawaiian, and so they have these beautiful,
and I think how did they do that?
Oh my god.

**the second day**

*I get to ask you questions, right?*

**kapa is relational**

*it's like you get to be,*
*you get to be familiar with it.*

[the kapa making process is]
very diverse,
and it evolves as you beat
there's the technical process,
and then there's the personal kind of application and evolution that you go through.
There is fifteen hundred ways as you know, to beat and process wauke,
everything from the growing of it,
and the varieties nowadays they're finding out that some of the wauke here has been brought from the mainland and other places, Tonga, and Fiji, and all over,
but there a couple of Hawaiian strains, and
I'm not a botanist, but, that's what I have heard from different sources,
and the closer we can get I think to trying to keep it Hawaiian is good,
the ones that they say have seeds and can propagate other than through the roots,
they *say* are from the mainland,
or from other places,
but I'm not sure,
they say the Hawaiian varieties,
some of the botanists and native plant nursery growers say that the native varieties don't seed or propagate through that, and that's why you don't see them flowering and other things

*the Hawaiian story*
*about the dad and his two daughters,*
*and he said when I pass away*
*you need to plant me by the stream*

yes, Maikoha

*right, so that's the male,*

the male, which wouldn't propagate right, yes

*and where it's invasive,*
*I've heard it's invasive in Florida,*

Texas, and, yea,

*yea, and China,*
*they have the male and the female together*
*because it does flower*

yes, yes, exactly,
and I hear that there is a big patch on Maui that flowers and it's growing,
I don't know where,
Verna brought some keiki here, and it looked pretty hairy and, like, wild,

I didn’t plant it in my yard, because I didn’t know it, but,
she said it just takes off
so I think, you know, we’re going to see change in the source plants,
and even in the leaf and the veins and things like that you can identify differences the size of the leaf, the plant,
I’m not a botanist, but I have seen great varieties and differences,
and some of it may be from where it’s grown,
and you know the environment there,
whether it’s on lava, ‘cause it seems to *really* do well in, you know like, volcanic soil and things like that, so, we’ll see.

But, you know, there’s the poʻaʻaha and the manamanalima, basically,
and so you take the plants,
a lot of it is being able to know when to harvest it,
because there is a season for harvesting, as you know
it goes into a dormancy during the winter months, so November through, I would say June, is when it fully leafs and grows and replenishes,
but then you get into the hot summer months,
and because it’s a cellulosic plant and it’s very milky right,
at that point the leaves start to fall off or dry a little more,
and you see the bast start to fill out and that’s what you want because you want the fiber,
so that’s when you’re hoping,
because it’s so hot and sunny you gotta water it and really pump that fiber out,
and then the time of day you can pick it too, is also important,
because you don’t pick it when it’s cool and fresh in the morning,
you wait until the hot, hot sun a little bit because it pops off the middle trunk a little bit,
you know, and you want it to be able to peel, right,
like a banana skin,
you love that feeling.
But if you don’t pick it at the right time of year or the right time of day,
you’ve experienced how it sticks to that middle trunk right,
and so those are the types of things that you have to be maʻa to as well,
and then when you get that peel,
it’s just like yay,
right and it pops off and you get all that fiber,
the fiber is,
so valuable

You can grow it from cuttings, like taking the top and, and rooting it, and stuff like that,
and I’ve worked some of the botanical gardens who do that, it’s tough,
I’ve only been successful with them, with doing about 25% success rate,
but the roots,
the roots are the best,
and to me when it’s a keiki coming from the roots the plant is so much stronger immediately.
You can use those whereas the other ones you kinda need to go through one or two cycles before it really roots.

So the roots are really key and you want it to spread,
and it travels where it wants, as you know
but it's really that, when you see those keiki popping up you know it's happy,
and it likes that loose soil
so it's a process the growing, and then,
the harvesting and all of that,
and there's different ways I mean someone's style of course,
they just take it and whack the trunk a few times and it pops off,
because they harvest it at the right time too,
and then there's ways to store it because if you harvest it all during the summer you're not going to beat it all then,
so you can make it into moʻomoʻo,
or you can dry it as is,
even peeling the, ʻili lepo off of it, the outer bark off of it,
there's techniques and ways to do it, right
I like to cut the entire trunk, scrape it, and then just peel it off.
I find it so much easier, but, I know, like, someone in, Fijian style, they can just slice, strip and peel which is *amazing*,
but to me fiber is so precious and I don't have enough of it,
and you lose some good fiber with that,
you get a beautiful finished piece that way,
I mean a beautiful fiber that way because you clean off all that junk, but
you lose,
you lose,
right

[laughs]

so, aeh,

If I had all the bark in the world,
and sometimes when I, you know, we go to Marie's or something,
there's tons of it we can do it that way,
but, otherwise, yea,
scraping is the best,
to me that's part of the meditation process too,
as you get start to finish,
and you start your meditation from the time you select and harvest it,
and you get to know your plant,
you know me I name all my tools,
I name everything, so,

[laughs]

it's like you get to be, you get to be familiar with it.

That's why I like, like you,
the whole process,
from start to finish,
no short cuts
it's just that connection and relationship with the pieces,
and then you get to see how thick it is,

and you know how to work it because you see it,
is it, like, rawhide and tough,
do you need to soak it, bleach it,
sometimes it turns like, brilliant orange as soon as you dry it or it hits air,
so you think god, what's it growing in?
So you start to understand the chemistry of it, and you start to say ok,
this one's going to be an interesting one to work with 'cause I'm going to have to do these other things, you start to put those pieces together and I love that,
and sometimes it surprises you

[laughs]

you put it in water
and a couple days later it's a different color
and you think, ok right?

Or it keeps weeping this kind of brownish stuff out of it,
and then you think, ok it had all that in there
what might have been if I hadn't had purified it,
and not everything has to be white right,
depends on what you're going to do with it,
you can immerse it in dyes at that point,
and that makes it interesting,
so it's sort of,
it leads you to the finished product.

[Fermentation is] Hawaiian, yea, and because it's a cellulosic fiber,
that is the process for the binding, and it does prepare the fiber
it's different than when you cook it, right,
right away you can feel it, when you cook it it's a little slimy,
you know the fermentation process has been duplicated but it's stopped,
and I think when you cook it it's also just a different texture,
it's easy to work with but it's a different texture, so yea,
it's just really what you want to work with and what you are trying to achieve,
and so I think it's knowing the 50,000 steps, you know,
I have tried to ferment it by making pōpō,
the balls,
shredding it, putting it, you know, in the shade and letting it ferment that way,

*in the banana leafs*

mmhmm,
tried to, to kind of, steam it a little bit in the imu,
wasn't *too* successful with that

[laughs]

I'm sure they had boys to do that,
but it is like a crock pot kind of thing, you know,
I think it's kind of like that,
so some people use pressure cookers nowadays, or crock pot,
because you can just stick it in and go,
but again, not my favorite,

but, it is hard when I'm working and stuff to be able to say
"ok 3 days from now I'm going to have this, and, 2 days later I'm going to start beating everyday or whatever the process is."
And I've experimented with every stage using salt water from the ocean,
and adding paʻakai to the regular water,
using rain water versus tap water,
demineralized water,
you have hard water,
and you get different results
so even the water makes a difference that's what to me is just, just mind boggling, every,
there's *so* many different things in and out of our control,
unless you think about it,
but the surprises that come with it, and every, every piece is unique, so I love that,
you know, if I were *really* good like Pua Van Dorpe,
I probably would document every single step

[laughs]

And every single thing like the water,
and the temperature,
and how many days here I did beat
and the other,
but I don't, get into it at that depth

[laughs]

I've tried mixed things, like wauke and ʻākala,
and wauke and māmaki,
and beaten ʻulu,
and different things there and each one is a challenge and different,
in my mind, there's *no* comparison to wauke,
but each is different, and ʻulu, even, I've noticed some of them come out, like, red veins and it was just beautiful,
and others are just really fine white, but, when you're beating, it's really slimy, right

*doesn't smell good either, mm-mm*

[laughs]

and it depends on what stage you cut the plant,
I've used young shoots, stalks,
as well as branches to try different things,
there's so many variations you can do and even in the beating and prep,
whether you use salt water initially,
whether you use fresh water and how long you soak them,
as we said the different kinds of water,
if you shred it,
if you slap it on the rock to, to soften it,
if you beat fresh,
I think that's the fun part is really knowing kind of what each,
there's so many styles,

and then variations as you go forward,
and then figuring out ok,
what I want and, what is this fiber and what does this fiber need,
does it allow me to do.

I'm not as familiar with each of the South Pacific styles individually,
but generally Hawaiian from South Pacific,
I would say definitely Hawaiian, the fermentation,
a lot of the South Pacific is fresh beat, right, one day, beautifully done pau,
and so, the steps and the process for me are Hawaiian,
it's much thought, and you have to have more patience in that light,
and a heck of a lot more work in some ways
[laughs]

Of course, the others, I mean, you have these massive beaters, right,
and it is about making it even and, and beating it out when it's raw as you know,
you use a lot more muscle, right, it's a lot of work,
and that's where having many people do it is good.
With Hawaiian style I think you can do it over time, because you don't beat it in one day,
necessarily and if you have five pieces, no way you going to beat them,
to the first stage or whatevers, you know, stages,
and I think you kinda have to watch your pieces as you go because you're not fresh beating,
and figure out how many stages you're going to take it, you know,
we had talked about over fermenting too,
so where do you want to take it,
how fast is it moving.

**what’s in your freezer?**

*because nothing comes without the hard work,*
*without the patience,*
*without the gratitude.*

It depends on those pieces, the fiber right,
because you have to start to see it soften,
you have to have that texture, that,
a little bit of, not slime but that viscous,
it has to be for that first stage, you want it,
unless you really want to beat that out and then soak it, you can,
you know I mean there’s so many different paths right,
but initially if you want to let it soften a little bit to make it easier to really whiten and stuff,
you have to see that flexibility,
I mean you’re nodding so you know,
it’s those little signs that make it work
and the bubbling, and the right smell

[laughs]

The smell is everything at every stage,
but it’s not the only thing a lot of it is feel, you know,
and then you use all your senses,
you know it is about looking at it when it moves,
and even when you’re beating,
you want to see,
is it beating evenly or is certain parts of that piece,
and as you know certain parts of that piece are going to be tougher than others,
you just gotta beat that thing out,
or revisit it,
and some parts are ready before other parts,
so you really have to measure your beating and focus different parts and places,
or figure out how it’s going to overlay,
so it’s putting that whole thing together,
and as you’re saying you know it is intuitive and it only comes from experience,
you can tell people and I’ve told students but when I watch them beating and they haven’t gotten the experience they don’t see it,
and you have to instruct them and actually show them,
and so it really comes from that learning,
that ‘ike,
and I think that is very Hawaiian, you know,
your body, your senses know it before your mind does.
But once you know, it’s in you,
a friend of mine last night we had dinner and we were talking,
and she says, you know, you haven’t beaten much this year because of work and stuff,
I said, yea, I know,
she goes, do you feel like you lose something when you,
like knowledge or skill,

and I said, you know, it's like hula,
it's once you do it, you don't lose it,
it's just there you just, dying to get back to it, and once you start beating, it's like, yes!
And they talk about native intelligence and things like that, but I think really part of it *is* that,
that physical knowledge,

*when you're watching a student,*
*what are the things that you're watching your student watch?*

oohoo
[laughs]

Each student is different, you know,
of course there is the simple things about how careful are they,
how methodical, because it is a methodical process,
you need to be,
you know it's like a child you don't just look for certain traits it's gotta be,
you have to watch their whole growth and their whole process
it's even how they hold the beater,
how they're applying the pressure and are they able to adjust?
Some of, some people do these light taps and they don't change,
they don't *feel* the fiber,
and if they don't feel it move are they feeling it move,
so that you can say, you know, you need to be a little harder, it's ok,
or be a little softer,
or look, this part is, is, you're not going to the edges and you need to work your edges,
those types of things
you know part of it is learning your body,
because when a lot of people start beating, and I'm one of 'em,
you start to have tennis elbow from banging or hitting,
after a while you learn the technique of how to beat
so that you don't hurt parts of your body or your shoulders,
I got shoulder pains one time when I beat a huge piece,
and it was just I think from repetition,
but after a while you know your body and you switch and you change.
And so watching them with their body as well,
positioning and things so they don't tire themselves because they have to be,

It's a marathon right,
if they're sprinters you gotta kind of retrain them
and then the whole process when I'm watching them is also talking, you know
and sharing stuff as we work,
because that is the process it's not just about the beating,
it's teaching the values and understanding,
and getting to know the person and why they're doing it and what they want,
and that's also wonderful,
there's so much that comes out of that time together,
and I think that's why women beat in the past and that's how they passed on the culture,
and to me, you know that's sort of the underlying reason why I do kapa is carrying on the
cultural stuff and being able to pass on the values as well,

because nothing comes without the hard work,
without the patience,
without the gratitude.

Nowadays, you know, there isn't that appreciation, gratitude,
it's all like, immediate,
I want to get this done today,
I won't tell you how many people have come by Nā Mea when we're beating and doing demos to say oh I came by, dropped by today to learn how to beat,
and I say, oh ok, so where's your tools?
Oh I don't have any right?
Where's your wauke?
Oh I don't have any,
I just came and you're going to teach me, right
[laughs]

K, it's just like, you're not appreciating what's here, this takes a lot to, right?
And so, it is understanding that,
and going through that process,
the more you appreciate them the more value it has in teaching this

*what it makes me think about is*
*the more I learn about kapa*
*the more I realize I don't know anything*

yea, we are all students of nature

*and I can't,*
*learn how to "just" beat*
*I have to learn so many other things*
*just to get to the finished piece of kapa*

Exactly.
Learn how to work with other people because you're going to need help,
you know, and,
yea there's,
there's so much behind all of that

*you have to know the tools*
*which means you have to know the wood,*
*and you have to know your*

plants

*which means you have to know how it grows,*

and you have to know where to go for dyes,
what they look like,
and how to prepare them,
and then just gathering all the coral,
the paʻakai,
all the wood ash and all those,
and then, you're sitting somewhere,
burning your kukui nut ash [laughs]
so you can get some dyes for printing

and you're collecting things
and you know you need a place to work
and yea
all these pieces that are important.

*what's in your freezer?*

Ah, ʻākala,
noni,
ʻukiʻuki,
delicia,[43]
yea exactly right?

[laughs]

It's like my son, he's just like mom, we don't have any food,
what are these packages?
They're all dyes!
I have to mark them so they don't think they're blueberries

[laughs]

Because half the freezer is mom's
but gosh if we didn't have freezers,
my whole rack outside is full of dried stuff for dyes too,
and you know,
I am so grateful for friends who allow me to pick maʻo for flowers because that's only in the summer right,
so, this, the whole planning is like a year ahead,
summertime I harvest certain things,
the fall, you know when ʻōlena is drooping and going down you harvest it and how do you dry it,
you know it's all of that, it's a cycle.

[43] a type of berry used for kapa dye

**my grandmother's quilt**

*the fiber is going to tell you,*
*and even though you have inspiration and intention,*
*you have to be open.*
*And in the end, it always is better*
*always.*

I guess something will inspire me or motivate me,
like a chant for Maui or,
a chant for Merrie Monarch,
a lot of chants
[laughs]
because of my hula,
or a story,
or a place,
like for Kona there was something that inspired me about Kona,
and so I'll research a little bit about that,
and then a picture starts to evolve or a story,
and I'll take out a sketchbook and I'll start to sketch it,
and patterns will start to show themselves and I'll start to,
and I'll sketch a little bit so I have a sort of visual, kind of what I want,
and then, the colors come,
and as I work, sometimes it evolves,
and depending on the piece,
you have to be fluid 'cause sometimes
you drop a little bit of dye there
[laughs]
and it becomes something
[laughs]

Or you're printing and it's like, ooh,
ok, made a little different one on that one and so we're going to go with it,
but for the most part, yea, it is those steps that will do it for me.

*so when you start the piece,*
*are there times when you put 'em away,*
*when Aunty Verna talks about when she starts,*
*she's going to go all the way until she finishes*

I have 2 or 3 pieces that I have, partially done,
and I actually had done some with series,
so I'll have a visual,
there was one about Pele traveling to Haleakalā and she actually dug the crater,
so I did 2 or 3 pieces,
2 finished and 1 in my garage half-done
with that inspiration and story behind,
so it's taking 1 idea and concept but doing it in different ways,
so I have done those as well,

and sometimes as I'm working I'll think, ok, I like this,
but this one pops,
this is neat so next time I do it, I'm gonna,
I want to do one that does this more or changes it up
that's why I might do a couple pieces in the series.

I have to be flexible for the piece to speak to me.
The fiber,
especially the dyes,
because it, I mean,
it guides me.
You know, sometimes you'll see in a piece,
change in color,
or something that reads to you,
and you have to go with it,
if you fight it,
you find out you're wrong later right,
so I think everything is about knowing,
it is being haʻahaʻa, you have to be humble and know that,
this is nature and this is real,
the fiber is going to tell you,
and even though you have inspiration and intention,
you have to be open.
And in the end, it always is better.
Always.

And sometimes it's like, oh that's interesting,
hmm, now how am I going to use this piece?
You know, sometimes I won't have necessarily a use for it,
and something will happen and then I'll be like,
oh, that's why I made this piece,
somebody will come to me and they're doing a protocol
or they're doing something,
or a show needs a piece for something,
and I'll be like, ok, I have it I don't know why,
and I think that's the beauty to me is that if you're open, it will show itself.
And one, you know you have to be open to challenges too,
one time, a friend Umi Kai came to me and he said,
a mutual, wonderful person, a mutual friend had passed away,
Uncle Kahuanu Lake,
and he is hānai father to Umi,
and so Umi said you know we want to take his ashes,
and his wife is a lau hala weaver, Leinaʻala and she made this beautiful basket,
but he said we want to line it with kapa so we put the ashes in and then,
take it out to sea.
And I said, oh my gosh, I'd be honored
I would be most happy to do this kapa,
when do you need it?

And he said, like, a week and a half
[laughs]
or something crazy,
and you know kapa doesn't like spring out,
and I'm working and stuff,
and I'm like, oh my god,
but I just knew with Uncle K I had to do it,
so I beat it,
I finished it,
and I printed it,
and it all worked,
and you just,
sometimes it's just the most challenging things that you think
you can't do or shouldn't say yes to,
are the ones that really are,
rewarding and meaningful
it's funny because I had made Uncle K a lei hulu years before,
and so that was some of my print on the kapa
was that connection to him through that lei hulu,
was a lei hulu print, but, you know that's the kind of connections
that you have to think about with people and with pieces,
there's always layers,
the kaona,
there's so many layers,
and I don't like to just do the superficial
or the,
the simple.

What inspires you?

*for which part?*

to make a piece or two?

*I was just thinking,*
*I still remember the first piece I made*
*and this was at Bishop Museum right*

yes, I remember it too

*and I could have just beat it*
*and it would have been fine,*
*and then you asked me,*
*what are you going to put on it,*
*it's not finished to this day,*
*because I didn't know what I wanted to say,*
*so I still feel like, that's the next,*

yea, that's full circle, I mean,

*the evolution part,*
*I still feel like*
*there's things I'm supposed to be learning*
*before I figure it out*

that's great

*so I don't have inspira-*
*I stop then it comes time to do the stamping,*
*because I think I stop myself,*

when I first was learning kapa,
I loved the beating part,
and I really wasn't excited about the decoration.
And so I would beat like 20 pieces of kapa
[laughs]
And never dye,
never decorate any of them,
which is why I have tons of them in the garage,
but eventually I started to grow in that area and try things,
and then,
it's wonderful to have all those pieces so you can do those different things when it's ready
and you have it ready when people come to you and say, hmm, I need this
or would you help me with this,
and it's like, oh I have a piece, and I'll just,
and now it's time,
so it's not a bad thing,
and like I said I have some pieces that are partially done and I'm waiting for the next part.
So it's not everything.

I mean it's very Western to think you finish,
you start and you finish,
I think it's more of a, maybe an artistic kind of thing that you have to,
everything in its own time,
so your piece is growing like you,
and maybe when you're,
I have a quilt that my grandmother gave me to work on,
that was actually started by someone else 25 years before she got it
so the person who originally started it, Ordelia Ordenstein,
appliqued this beautiful quilt pattern on it,
and then she gave it to my grandmother
who gave it to my mom
who had it for 25 years
and she started to quilt it,
and then my mom and grandmother gave it to me to finish
and I still have it
and it's been over 25 years
[laughs]

So it's a piece of work,
but you can see the different styles and mine is the worst,
but I think that is sort of a life lesson and kind of path, too,
and I see my change in my stitches and things over time,
and maybe that's your life piece
or when you're done you'll be in a different place in life,
so it's not a bad thing,

you can do a little bit more,
and then in a few years do a little bit more
[laughs]
and you can see your growth
in that piece right.
I'm sure your beating and your life has changed since you started that
and your ʻike of kapa
some of my earliest pieces, curve because
you can tell if you're right or left handed and how you beat, right
[laughs]

And then you learn to move it,
you know,
in a certain way,
or to look at it,
but otherwise sometimes it's like,
it's going wherever it wants to go!
yea, you just happy to finish it
it moves you and you move it.

*that first piece was,*
*it was a kīhei*
*it wasn't a small piece*
*[laughs]*

Yea, I remember but
you were amazing to do that on your first piece,
I remember your dedication,
man, you were a perfectionist,
so that was good.

*I had so much fun,*
*just beating,*
*so much fun*

I know, hours and hours,
I can just enjoy that, do that everyday,
I wish I could do it every single day.
There is a meditation and a peace to it, it really is,
but there is to the, I've learned, to the printing and dyeing too.
And initially I just thought it was a different process,
but you have to be in that same zone,
I have to have time to focus without distractions,
to do that,
especially printing,
and dyeing too I guess, come to think of it,
but to be able to focus and get kind of the layers down,
and the,
make sure it's just as I want it,
and if I'm printing I *really* need focus,
because even though it's a simple thing,

you can go wrong so many different ways,
right?
    [laughs]

And just, painting on the dye and printing,
it's *so* meditative,
I just love to do that,
sometimes it's painful if you're in a rush and trying to get it done,
but if you're not,
just to do it and have peace and quiet to do it,
it's just like oh my god,
you can see it kind of,
rising,
it's nice.

**really good, make you think thoughts**

*I mean, I have, you know,*
*a bunch of glossaries that are inches thick with just names of kapa,*
*names of tools,*
*names of colors,*

You talked about the cultural history and stuff a little bit,
we had talked about the fibers the same, kozo and Japan and other stuff,
and the processes were different,
we had talked about the distinguishing characteristics of kapa, right,
and to me,
there's some really,
kind of neat things which shows how important kapa and wauke were to the Hawaiians
because it's in the Kumulipo
That's how critical the wauke plant is,
it goes back into the Kumulipo itself,
to me that tells you how important it is in Hawaiian culture.

I had read the Kumulipo and had found the section in it,
and it's amazing,
that's your homework is to go find it.

It's listed as the guardian of the weke fish,
so you know,
ma uka ma kai,
Hawaiians always have positive negative,
right left,
in out balance right,
so you'll find that,
I think it said
Hānau ka weke noho i kai kiaʻi ia
E ka wauke noho i uka

So, ma uka ma kai, yea?
And, born the weke mullet living in the sea,
kept by the paper mulberry living in the uplands,
and I won't tell you the lines I'll let you look it up
that tells you that when Hawaiians came to Hawaiʻi they brought it with them because it was their clothing, that was their resource,
and there's lots of different uses as you said,
they repurpose,
but they also used it in different ways,

and, one of them, the strips of kapa were worn around the neck by nursing mothers,
and you put the strips of white wauke around the neck,
and it looks like flowing milk, right,
but also there was a very practical thing, as the strips of wauke rubbed the nipples,

it encourages the milk to flow,
it's like massaging your nipples and stuff,
and so the milk then for nursing mothers flows more easily.

After burning plain white kapa, ashes were spread on the tongue to treat ea,
which is thrush,
they have besides Maui holding the sun so that his mother could dry her kapa,
there are several versions for the legend of Maikoha and his 2 daughters,
so after he was buried by the stream,
the wauke grew,
his 2 daughters,
Lauhuki, who was a beater, the kapa maker,
and La'ahana who was the printer,
she was known as the printer,
who are the 'aumākua for kapa makers,
and then there's also the version of Ehu, who was a male, who was famous for his dyes.

So, there's all these facets of kapa making,
personified, which is very Hawaiian,
everything becomes kino lau or personifications, right,
that's why I name my tools,
to be honest, they speak to me,
I sleep with my,
Verna and Sol, they, seriously,
they tease me right,
as soon as I get a new tool it's in bed with me and I carry it with me,
because it's a personification and I name my tools because they have spirits they have life,
and they're friends,
what are other things that they said,
wauke sap was ingested as a mild laxative,
so hmm, they call it hohoa kuku, no that's the hohoa, sorry, and then
some of the white bast, the fresh fiber, were given to children to chew,
to strengthen their teeth because you know how tough it is and kind of chewy like beef jerky, but
it's not harmful

*I remember you telling me that,*
*because I was telling you how Blu when I would beat*

[laughs]
liked to, yes, strip and clean,

*and I would you know,*
*take off the,*
*the brown spots whatever and,*
*he would pull it off the table and chew on it*

Mele too, she loved to pick up little pieces and,
take it off and chew
animals know

*or he reincarnated,*
*he was a Hawaiian boy in another life,*

yes, he definitely wanted to work with you on kapa
he wanted to be a part of that too with mom, so, yea,
I'm just covering some of the notes that I usually cover in lectures and stuff,
but, the fiber comes from wauke, māmaki, ʻulu, ʻākala,
and you know all the different tools,
I mean you talked about language last time
we use Hawaiian words for them all, right,
and the processes and stuff.

*I think I was telling you I was shocked,*
*I went back and when I was starting this project,*
*I looked at, Kamakau's book*
*and I was shocked at how many words they used to describe to stages of kapa,*
*I mean, shouldn't have been shocked but,*
*that was, you know like, wow,*
*and we don't, we just talk about wauke,*

But you know it's true,
one time, for, for hula,
we did a project for how many different names for rain there are,
and I think I found like 54, or something, I don't know,
it was an unbelievable number for names of different rains or, or types of rain,
so things that are important have many different names and references and I think,
because wauke was important and the kapa was important as you hear from the Kumulipo,
I mean, I have, you know,
a bunch of glossaries that are inches thick with just names of kapa,
names of tools,
names of colors,
I mean, so it was very, very important, and every time I read it I think,
what's that,
or, how is that different from this other,
red, kapa you know,
and you don't know if it's island-specific names
or if it's kapa maker-specific names,
or if there was a reason why it's a different name,
we know for kapa makers we all have slightly different takes on things,
and even with hula they call things little differently,
some steps, or some, you know, hand motions or other things,
so it could be that but it's just, it's neat it is a sign that it was very critical and important,
yea I think, just knowing, just,
every so often just reading through there it inspires me to do something different,
because it's like, oh, huh, does that mean they did it this way?

So you try it again, right, you try it a different way, and you think,
that's why it's a different name or that's why it's called differently
you're a constant student,
a perpetual student of the processes you know and everything,
that's why I think coming together with other kapa artists was important
because there is no one person who is an expert,
I think it really does take a sharing and a willingness of people to,

try different things and appreciate each other's skills and expertise,
and then to, to share it,
I think it's a really an obligation for people to share it,
some people don't like to share,
or they'll share so much,
but then if you're confident,
I mean I looked at my grandmother and other kumu hula who were confident,
and you know they would say,
my lau hala teacher, Aunty Kane,
honey, I'm going to teach you everything I know,
you go out and learn some more and you teach me.
And I said, Aunty Kane, there's no way I could teach you anything you're just so wonderful,
and she goes, no, she says, one person cannot learn everything.
You need to, to try and I want you to learn,
and I want you to find new things and teach me,
that's the beauty of sharing and of learning.
And she had, you know, no jealousy, no fear of, of the student being better.
And it is, come back and teach me,
I mean Verna and I share stuff all the time,
you, I,
I mean that, that is what helps it grow
and if you really love kapa you want it to grow.

I am grateful to Uncle Sol because his tools make it easier for us to do things and work, and he's so generous with it,
and I'm grateful to Marie and Roen who share their energy and just their farm and the resources they have and their excitement on kapa, and because they are so well-known in the arts and well respected that it really has furthered kapa.
And I, you know, I respect all the other kapa makers we've worked with,
who, each in their own way, whether through the pieces they've made and we were able to see, and to do the repairs or work with,
they're, every one of those things was a huge learning experience.
Just feeling other people's kapa or seeing what they did, and then, asking them, right?
I mean when you have 30 pieces in front of you, it's like oh my goodness,
and you can sort of see the processes in each

*yea*
*you had to tell me to put the camera down*
*and stop ooing and awing over it,*
*I was so distracted*

Yes! You know you can see where it would be heaven to go into a museum
and just feel all that kapa and look at it,
which we do all the time, and every time we go and we get inspired and we're like,
ok I'm going to go home and beat 5 pieces like this!

[laughs]

Of course not, never happens,
but yea it just inspires you think, oh my god,
or looking at small little slivers of kapa and thinking,
how did they *do* that?

**a Hawaiian sense of design**

*Someone told me once*
*that kapa makers have to have beautiful hands.*

Like other cultural arts I see evolutions and sometimes it's relying on teachers,
and sometimes it's individual students and stuff,
and you know I do think I appreciate if people,
as we talked about before,
learn the foundation,
the traditional practices first and don't do the first cuts as shorts cuts,
so I do think that that is important,
but I also know that a lot of people today don't have the patience to go through what we might call a full apprenticeship that would last 5 or 10 years either.
So understanding that, you know,
the one thing I'm most concerned with, I think,
is that the Hawaiian sense of design remains.

I think that a lot of exposure to other cultures can and has influenced people's understanding of Hawaiian design,
and understanding that it did,
it's a changing culture,
it's an evolving culture,
so what might have been a Hawaiian design sense 300 years ago was different than what was maybe 200 years ago versus 100 years ago,
but still you can look at and think pretty much that's Hawaiian and that's this era.
Whereas some of the more contemporary stuff that's happening now could be from Aotearoa, or could be from very contemporary,
and I think that's art,
but that may not be necessarily traditionally Hawaiian kapa or Hawaiian kapa.
So it uses kapa, I mean just this past week a school contacted me to repair a mural that they have on their wall they said was painted on kapa, tapa.
And so I said, ok, just send me some pictures so I can see what you mean,
and it was this massive cafeteria wall,
beautiful mural,
I think I recognize the artist,
but you know, had holes in it because it looked like it was glued to some backing but you know,
it deteriorates over time,
and I looked at a small close-up that I had asked for,
and it looked like it was masi or siapo or something that was not watermarked,
and painted on.
So I referred them to a restorer, or they needed to go back to the original artist to see how it was glued on to the backing
and then, you know, the, the types of paints and medium they used,
because I am not a painter,
so I gave them some guidance,
but I think that's part of it is people now take it to a whole different place,
which is good, for art,

but that, then,
how much of that is still more the tradition,
the foundation
I mean, they took tapa and painted it,
but it's not hand beaten,
their own beating, kapa,
watermarked,
with those distinctive designs and patterns.

*it's one of the things I wonder about,*
*Uncle Sol says,*
*our stuff wasn't art, it was*

functional

*functional.*
*if we didn't know how to beat kapa we froze,*
*we didn't have clothing,*

but, like,
we talked about last time with wabi and sabi,
there is a, a beauty in use, and,
beauty in wear and tear,
and a beauty in function,
and I think Hawaiians evolved to the point where it had to be beautiful too,
or they wouldn't have done feather cloaks they would have just done, like, ti leaf cloaks,
or other things, you know,
you get to the point where you take it to a whole different level,
you can frame something and stick it on the wall and its beautiful,
and it's functional it has decorative,
but yea, when you can use it or wear it,
or do something,
it has a different feel, right.

I've thought a lot about that,
because when you see it you know it.
Like pre-Western contact, a lot of it was more painted,
linear but more blocked,
bigger sections because they didn't have the metal tools to carve the ʻohe kāpala as much and things like that,
so it was much more geometric but blocky,
or sections yeah, or lines and color there,
and they still had color,
but then it evolved to the ʻohe kāpala that was very fine and whether it was done with bird bones or nails or metal tools became,
sort of another evolution, but it always was based on linear, or geometric,
small, very small, and applied repetition,
positive and negative,
so there was some distinctive characteristics that when you see it you just know it's Hawaiian,
versus Samoan or Tongan which,
when you see it you think,
oh that's beautiful but you know right away it's South Pacific.

The design, I mean you can see what's a Tongan design,
a Samoan design,
a Fijian design,
a Hawaiian design,
generally, right?

For Hawaiian it's so distinctively different,
not only the color,
but the shapes,
the repetition,
there are design rules and I think about that often,
but I don't know if I can articulate it as clearly,
but it's an intricacy sometimes that designs within designs,
I'm still trying to articulate it,
but when I see it I know it,
oh yea, no question,
I mean you look at masi and siapo,
I mean the fiber of course you see the fiber and it is soft and white and beaten in one day,
fresh beat,
which you can see the fiber,
Hawaiian, the watermarking of course, and the seamless versus the patching,
with pia or breadfruit sap or other things which is South Pacific,
the design the colors,
Hawaiians, the scenting,
I've never seen a scented kapa from Samoa or Fiji,
so it's easy to tell Hawaiian pieces for the most part.
Solomon Islands, even Cook Islands had some bark beating,
there's so many varieties throughout the South Pacific,
and then you look and you can tell,
some used banyan,
some used other types of things and bark and things like that,
but I have to say that when you see the stuff in the museums,
you never say never,
because there's always one piece in a museum that will make you go,
wow dang, what is that?

And it's so different and it's like just conflicts with whatever you just said,
so I think there are some individual kapa artists there's no overriding everybody must do this type of thing, there's always some outliers, and that's kind of fun, because then you think, whoa!

I think part of it too, is that, that you know, as we were saying, design evolves.
Soon as the Hawaiians saw the calico,
even those designs influenced the patterns of kapa because you look at some of the contemporary ones and it looks like calico fabric,
and you start to see some interesting, like, paisleys, and not only chevrons but you know, curly Qs and different things like that,
and I think a lot of the cloth that they sell started to influence their patterns and their designs as well, which is not a bad thing so that's why I say never say never,

because, I mean they did take red felt and beat it in,
they saw this cloth and thought wow, this is fabulous stuff,
but if they're making it they probably thought, oh, I'm gonna,
I mean like we get inspired they got inspired,
so I think we have to look at when was it made,
what was happening at the time and the context too,
when we do studies of kapa, and they got better tools,
they got better at things to be able to make those kinds of patterns and copies,
and you know we all get inspired by things around us,
and the times, so it's not a bad thing.
I think probably think that 9' x 12' piece I made was the biggest.
But, you know, it really isn't about size,
it isn't about making everything kalukalu,
it isn't about making everything white,
and you know, lacy like the kalukalu,
I think it really is what you are going to do with this thing?
It is the function to me that inspires,
so making a waterproof piece with ʻili kukui that was just like,
dark brown and stunning, was fun,
and it was neat because it could be used as a cape, and literally water ran,
making things that are hardier that will last like I made some pieces for hula that are a little thicker than what I would normally make,
but for pāʻū, it needed to be, and over time it really softened.
So, for me now I'm looking at the evolution of the piece,
because sometimes kalukalu is so nice, but it doesn't last, right?
So, if you're going to wear it, you know,
you can make a piece that's a little sturdier and a little thicker but will soften,
and will be able to be used over time because look how much time you put into a piece and they do repurpose,
so you want something that'll last a while and then able to be repurpose because if it's gonna shred up totally then what do you do with it.

[laughs]

But I'm sure for gifts to aliʻi, or,
for certain taxes and things like that
they make those exceptional, beautiful pieces, yea.

Someone told me once that kapa makers have to have beautiful hands.
And I said, then I don't qualify.
But they said no, kapa makers,
they need to have,
because that is their tool.
And it doesn't necessarily mean like,
lovely hula hands,
but hands that are good working hands, and so,
I have taken to looking at people's hands,
I think there's beauty in function and use,
so I do look at, you know, our tools.

**the most important tool**

*it's not about a beater,*
*it's not about a kua or a scraper,*
*but the tools to nānā,*
*to think, and later on apply it.*

The first word that came to my mind was their spirit.
They have to have the heart and the naʻau to do it,
And that comes with the patience, some of those values,
the willingness to work very hard,
to be humble and open,
and then, to be able to remember and recall and apply,
and not be perfect, but continually learn,
it's not about a beater,
it's not about a kua or a scraper,
but the tools to nānā,
to think, and later on apply it.
I think nānā is one of the most important things because when you're teaching somebody,
for me, it's watching my teachers,
or watching my students,
or watching others,
and if you can learn from that,
that's a gift.
If you can't then it's going to be a long haul

What do you think is the most important tool?

*I agree, it's the ability to observe.*
*But I like, you know,*
*the idea of having the intent and the purpose,*
*because you can just observe to observe,*

yea

*but what's interesting,*
*I don't know if this is a good thing or a bad thing,*
*but, kapa makers were once abundant,*
*it was lifestyle, right,*
*it was part of daily life,*
*so you had an entire society,*
*an entire society of folks who carried that ʻike,*
*they had to have carried that in some way,*
*shape or form,*

but do you think, or go ahead,

*so to go from that, where everybody understood,*
*and it wasn't something that was articulated*
*everybody understood it*
*and then, to be in a position,*
*that might be the exception rather than the norm,*
*it's kind of sad*

Well, let me ask you, before,
everyone *had* to beat,
because there were no other options for clothing or other things right,
so while everybody may go to school,
not everybody loves it or becomes a teacher.
Today, there are choices, and kapa is not, my god,
*not* for everyone.
My philosophy is everybody is worth teaching to the point that they want to learn.
And it may be one class,
[laughs]
which many are right,
they drop out,
or they make their tools and that's enough,
and, ok, they gain appreciation.
But not everybody embraces it as a lifestyle.
And it is a lifestyle.
So I'm a little different from Verna in that, I think,
nowadays it is immediate gratification,
there are so many things going on in life that not everyone wants something that will take 3 weeks or a month to finish
and then, you know, you have the next phase of decorating it.
But, it is, to me, it's worth teaching,
because it isn't about the piece at the end of it,
it's about the process and about learning about yourself,
and I've done things, like lau hala weaving and other things that I know are not for me,
I've made things and I'm proud of them,
but there are certain people who kapa is right for them and they know it,
and that's the happy people, I guess
[laughs]
who like challenges,
it does take a certain kind of person,
I mean I tried to make lau hala hats and I think that's a challenge, god bless 'em,
I wish I could do that,
but it wasn't for me,
but somehow kapa is right for me,
and I don't know why,
but as soon as you touch it,
you know, right?

So I think in the old days everybody tried it,
probably some liked it better than others and became better at it than others,
but there were probably so many things in life they needed to do that,
everybody had their strengths and their focus, just like now
they probably had a lot more teachers and a lot more chance to do it, which, I'm envious of just different type of lifestyle and different time,
but I'm afraid as we go more into immediate gratification and fast-paced, things like that,
that we lose this very important things in life,
you know the learning experiences and the things that are challenging and hard,

and we need to stick to it-tiveness and a persistence,
and a curiosity and a willing,
an interest in discovery,
and, you know,
you have to kind of be a little mad scientist, right
[laughs]
try a little experiment here, and
try a littler experiment here, and
some works, and
some are just,
ok,
it's not failure,
it's the first attempt at learning,
fail is F-A-I-L,
first attempt in learning,
it's not a failure,
it's just a first attempt and then you do a second one and then you get better
and if you're not, if you haven't failed then you haven't been doing it enough,
especially with kapa
[laughs]
it's not fail,
it's an experiment, right,
we always tell you,
it's an experiment,
you try something and go,
hmm, ok, next time,
[laughs]

I think with kapa that,
one of the challenges is there's so many different ways
and so many different things to learn
it's hard to focus down one path and get them all done and then go methodically to another path and get them all done,
and sometimes a hit and miss,
and then you find something that works better than others and you stick to it because that's what works,
but then there's so much more you could learn.
So I wish, that's why we tried to coordinate so many of those workshops as part of our grant process and our kapa making projects,
collaboratives,
was with the workshops we were able to share,
and we were able to nānā and watch each other,
and if you're good you can say, oh, what was that?
And even the kapa maker doesn't realize what they're doing sometimes,
so that's where I think was the most value and the most fun for me in those processes,
wasn't the herding cats.
[laughs]

It was just the time together, you know,
and to see even the newer kapa makers or the students,
their growth in that process was so good,
it's rewarding.

It's good to reflect,
I mean I thought for days after our last conversation
the things we had talked about,
and just it built gratitude and appreciation in me for,
just having the time to talk about it again, and, you know,
to have kapa in my life,
but then thinking what's next, you know?
And it made me antsy to beat and start another piece

[laughs]

and that whole inspiration process,
it started me like, getting out my sketchbooks and thinking,
you know, I mean sometimes I just read,
and then it's like,
what's going to inspire me in this legend, or
what's going to inspire me in this book,
Kamakau, or something,
and sometimes it's going through that and then all of a sudden,
ping!
It starts and you write down ideas and then
ping!
ping!
And out of 3 or 4 pings,
then it's like,
everything's telling you to go there.

**hoʻololi: pulelehua and the moon**

*I see it like sort of an ice cube,*
*first of all you, you're solid,*
*then it sort of melts,*
*and then you transform,*
*and then, if you can refreeze it,*
*but you refreeze it to a different shape*

Do you ever just open a book,
to anywhere in the book,
and sometimes that's where my inspirations comes,
you sit there and you think for a few minutes and you find peace,
and you open the book, and it's like, ok, that's coming next.

That's the journey and the product, right, is the learning,
and as you do it, to reflect and journal or document,
I think, would be kind of a good blending,
because often times when we beat we're not journaling,
but I have done that as part of my apprenticeship,
and when I go back to my notes it's really interesting,
because you're forced to document, and you say things that I never would have remembered later, so I would encourage you to think about that
Documenting what's going through my head as well as the process,
but it's an interesting juxtaposition,
and as you're doing it, sometimes things,
it gives you more reflection if you have to write it down,
it's kinda easy if you're just saying ok, I'll go to this next step or do this,
but if you write it down, and as you're writing you're thinking, hmm, and
what does it bring up in terms of thought, or
what was I doing when I was beating and
where did that take me, and what was I feeling,
it does give you a whole different cut.
And there is that process what my kumu and
what Aunty Malia Craver and some of the other kūpuna taught,
when you go through kumuhana,
I don't know if you know the practice of that,
people may call it different things,
but it's a meditation process where you do partial fast, and you meditate for a few days, and whatever is revealed to you during that time, is enlightening, and for you to think about and reflect on for a long period of time,
I've done that practice,
and I find that that also has tied into kapa in many ways,
sometimes as part of that,
you can use that technique of opening a book whether it's the bible, or any other books,
and things come to you,
or sometimes words will come to you in a sequence,
and then it's what does that reveal, or

what does that mean,
different things that get you, to sort of reflecting,
and then it's peeling the onion
and going into the layers,
and the kaona,
what are the variable meanings of it, you know,
where is this going,
and it's all personal,

maybe for the past, 2 or 3 months,<br>random places, see a butterfly.<br>Random.

transformation,
transition.
That came through kumuhana for me too,
and the butterfly was the symbol,
and for me, it was,
you know how it cocoons, it transforms,
you are going through that transformation,
through maybe your doctorate or through this process,
but when you see that it's telling you,
you're going through this and so
be alert when those things happen
as to what the other messages may be at that time

random places,

totally right

and other people may be around,<br>but I'm like the only one,

but it comes to you, right, yea, I had very similar,
so for me it was the transformation because I knew I was going through change and going through stuff and it was like,
k then be alert, it's, it's the time, or what am I doing, what am I experiencing,
my hōʻailona recently has been
the full moon, so it's something about
the full moon and that's the feminine right,
the reflection of the sun,
and the feminine side
and the Hina,
so I'm trying to figure that out,
what does that mean for me,
in my time in life and for this point in time right now, so I mean, yea,
and I think all of that is
just to be makaʻala, to be aware,
and then, how do you then apply that to your life and change,
or use it, maximize it.
Butterflies,
pulelehua

trying to figure out what it means,<br>I think it does have to with transformation,

I can see it in you
just hearing your story of what you're doing with your doctorate,
and your time of life,
you're going through a lot of transition,
even your home, you're transitioning your home,
you're going through a change,
and what's the direction
and what's the purpose
and what do you want out of that
it's good that you recognize it,
the first thing is awareness, you know,
and then it's desire, what do you desire, do you desire the change?
And then it's the knowledge, how much do you know of yourself,
how much do you know of, I mean everybody has the subconscious,
and then the conscious, right,
and then there's that unknown, that you're not even aware of yourself,
sometimes other people are more aware of it than you are
[laughs]
All those things,
it's knowledge,
and then it's just acknowledgment
and I think, trying to figure out, ok, yes I do want that, right,
and then it's that recognition,
ok, I'm committed to it, this is what's going to happen,
I feel like I go through that cycle a lot which is good,
because that means I'm still learning,
and I think that's the learning,
my background, and my degree is in public health education.
So education is about transition, transformation,
everybody learns differently,
and until you're ready to learn it's not going to soak in,
it's not going to connect and,
learning is a process.

I see it like sort of an ice cube,
first of all you, you're solid,
then it sort of melts,
and then you transform,
and then, if you can refreeze it,
but you refreeze it to a different shape,
or you know, it's about actualization,
you're going to take something that's external but then you're going to apply it to yourself and make it internal
and so it's going to change,
it's not going to be that same thing,
but you're going to apply it to yourself in the way that works,
and only then do you learn and change.

So you've talked about making this process
so different for yourself than other dissertations or things,
that's your learning and your knowledge right,
you have a desire,
but it's the knowledge of
where do I want to go with this and
actualizing to put it to personalize yourself,
so you're there,
you're on the, verge,
you're in the midst, it's,
you are in the transition,
you are the butterfly.

It's painful,
it's, for me,
I went through a similar process which, now I look back on it,
was wonderful because I could really actually focus on myself whereas normally in life you're so busy you don't have that reflection time and introspection,
but when I was going for my masters in public health it was about learning about myself,
so when I'm in situations I know
what I bring to that,
what biases,
what skills, how I influence
what's around me,
and then, how I decide what I want versus what comes.
And that's always what I apply to even kapa making and even to life,
and so that process was really, scary,
and it was like, you know unfreezing is uncomfortable,
and change is uncomfortable, because you have to change,
and your assumptions have to change,
and it's very disconcerting for me because I'm a control freak

[laughs]

Yea, we all are, but it's also like you
question yourself and you
question your life, and things,
which I think is a really healthy and wonderful if you have the time to do it,
ability to do it in a safe environment,
so challenge yourself, and
forgive yourself,

[laughs]

Let yourself be ok,
it continues, that's just,
I still think back on the time when I was going through that process and
I learned so much, and
I learned just in working with other people,
I learned a lot about myself, and
what I wanted and who I was.

**the pedagogy of kapa**

*you learn what you're supposed to learn*

What do you think kapa brings to you?

*I know immediately the first thing I think of is,*
*it was a completely different perspective*
*on everything,*
*even the way that I was brought up learning,*
*and how I was taught,*
*you set a goal*
*and you go out*
*and achieve the goal,*
*that's how everything was,*
*you want to get a good grade in school,*
*or for me, I wanted to make the basketball team,*
*or whatever it was you set a goal*
*and everything you're doing is in service to that goal*
*[laughs]*
*kapa is not even,*
*it's just completely the opposite*

So what is the pedagogy of kapa?

*ahh, well for me it was remembering*
*it's the process right,*
*I mean I can think of basketball*
*as a very distinct example in my life,*
*and being so caught up in the end result that*
*I forgot,*
*I forgot*
*how much I loved the game*
*and the reasons why I started to play*
*and all those things,*
*and I think that was what kapa afforded me*
*I kind of ended up,*

got drafted
[laughs]

*with Uncle Sol,*
*the first months all I did was make tools,*
*I had absolutely no idea what I was doing,*
*I just showed up,*
*and, it was very*

*eeaassy*

*oh yeah, it was so freeing,*
*you don't have to think about the end result*
*you're just totally absorbed in the process,*
*and somebody else decides*
*when you're ready for the next thing,*
*it was a really nice reminder for me,*

*because I think I had forgotten, you know,*
*how to just enjoy the process,*
*I'd forgotten what was in between*
*I forgot about the in-between part*

And I think that's the difference between say,
Western learning and Hawaiian learning is, the
Western learning you really do have an external end goal,
and *that's* what you're shooting for
and it's not the process, whereas with
Hawaiian learning,
it is about the process
it's about the internal changes
just like Hawaiian language comes from the center out,
to the other person,
learning is that centered,
it's not out there,
it's not the end goal,
it's gotta start with you,
and so the experience is very personal, you know,
value-based,
it's not based on necessarily outcomes
that's because I believe that Hawaiian culture,
cultural learning, is
applied learning,
it's not the Western style, which is teaching is a practice, but
it can be conceptual,
it can be math,
I don't know how you applied that very often
[laughs]
I've never done much of it,
but,
but, I'm making a joke
[laughs]

I think because Hawaiian learning,
and for a lot of our kids it has to be through
applied learning,
project-based learning,
hands on learning,
and that is the nānā,
and that's where it's very different,
and what that does I think is that allows students it allows each individual to apply it personally
and that makes it that much better,
because everybody's going to come out with a different result,
they'll be a different place a different time,
some may not like kapa but appreciate it, but
I think for me, that's always a difference when I see my students,
without that,

I mean I can lecture about kapa and I won't see the same 'ike as
when we beat or carve or print or do something.

You learn what you're supposed to learn
and it is that awareness
and desire and knowledge
and that kind of,
step by step process where you decide whether is this for me?
or how much of it is for me?
or what's the message,
what's the learning,
whereas in Western education you kind of
don't go through that reflection,
unless you're going for your teaching certificate
or something.

*yea, 'cause I know,*
*I felt myself changing as a coach,*
*I don't know if it's,*
*you know the result of kapa or,*
*going through this program,*
*which, made me a lot more conscious*
*it put a language to things I didn't know*
*I was watching doing,*
*or watching others doing*

And, think about it,
when you go through your regular,
what we call education,
it's more rote memorization than it is reflection,
but as a coach you have to reflect because you see your teaching,
absorbed or
bouncing off your team right,
your students.

*yea, that connection right,*
*there's a million,*
*you don't know how to articulate,*
*I know that you're ready for this next thing,*

yes

*but the only way you know*
*is you just gotta go through it*
*[laughs]*

exactly

*it's super humbling to realize that,*
*I didn't know what I was saying*
*when I said I wanted to learn kapa*

[laughs]

*because it's such a simple statement,*
*oh I want to learn kapa,*

*but you can't just learn kapa,*
*you have to learn all these other things,*

yes, but that is life,
you,
you always say ok I'm going to do this,
and you have no idea
[laughs]
what that means in the whole,
until you walked the,
oh my god if I knew this in the beginning, right?
Right, I'm going to go for my doctorate, no
[laughs]

*but having to commit to that, right, and, as a lifestyle,*
*what if every teacher was a practitioner educator*
*you had a practice,*
*that was a metaphor for your teaching,*
*how would education be different*
*how would school be different*
*how would learning be different*

And a lot of teachers nowadays I see
kind of going through that, in a way,
they're teachers, they're all teachers, but
this one will teach through a hydroponics type of program, or
this one will teach through a robotics type of program or other things,
so I think naturally we all gravitate towards that,
Whatever resonates with us
you have to be true to yourself, right.

More and more it's gravitating towards cultural education,
doesn't the Hōkūleʻa have doctor, oh shoot I forgot her name,
she's an educator but her practice is in cultural education
she has her doctorate in it,
she works with the Hōkūleʻa,
she did a lecture for us at, oh darn, where did
she lecture, I was at some breakfast and
she was a guest speaker. Furuto.
And I thought that was phenomenal, you know, so
it is, it's not far from what you're doing, at all,

*so the word education comes from educare.*
*And there's actually 2 meanings to it,*
*one meaning is about the content knowledge*
*it evolved from apprentice learning and that kept society going,*

right

*but the second part actually means to evolve, and*
*to burst forth or emerge forth,*
*the teacher's responsibility is for*
*the student to learn about themselves*
*as much as they learn about the content*

*and we forget about that*

that's exactly what kapa does,
the first part is, as you know,
when women get together what are they doing
they're talking,
they're passing on the culture,
and that's to make sure society continues,
for us as kapa makers it's continuation of the knowledge there,
the second part is really the self knowledge,
and the relationship between kumu and apprentice or haumāna,
but it is about learning about yourself in this whole process,
and I think that's what gets me all the time,
and I think that's what draws us to it, is we do learn a lot about ourselves
and it changes us
makes us better
that's what I call the values that always transmit,
that to me is so much,
as much or more than the content.
You can beat a small piece of kapa for days
and 20 different pieces
and you'll never learn those values
you're not going to get beyond that,
or it will show,
and that's what our society needs, I think, 'cause sometimes,
is education doing that anymore,
kids are exposed to social media,
the Kardashians,
reality TV,
where are those values and those other things coming from,
and I hope to god not from reality television

[laughs]

But when kids come to school or a traditional education center, and they don't have those values or that foundation, what does a teacher do to instill it?
so many teachers talk about most of their time being behavior management,
and I can see that,
but it's these values,
these beliefs and this behavior through values I think that
completes the person,
the respect,
the respect for yourself before you can respect anybody else,
the discipline the
self discipline, because there's, a lot of, a lack of that nowadays,
just those things,
and a practice helps you learn that, right,
whether it's martial arts,
whether it's kapa,
whether it's,
I think that's part of it.

**pedagogy in practice**

*you know what's right,*
*you know what your intention is*
*and I think that is,*
*your own,*
*pedagogy*

*my coaching has changed,*
*hopefully for the better,*
*it always used to be about the coaching,*
*it was always about the game, and,*

the techniques,

*yea, and it's not so much about that anymore,*
*I'm increasingly drawn to*
*what are the things that motivates kids,*
*what tells me that they're learning, and*
*how do we know,*
*how do we know that they actually know*

and that brings joy,
Right?
That's what the joy is from,
when you learn, or
when you have those aha moments,
you *know* you're happy,
that's what builds motivation I think

*yea, the stuff I started to pay attention to*
*has more to do with*
*what values am I reinforcing*
*in the way that I'm designing a practice*
*or the way that I respond to certain actions*

And again, that's the intention, right?
You have to have intention, so what is that focus,
and it's hard to think about it, but once you do,
and once you get onto that line,
that path, it gets easier and clearer

*it's very contextual right,*
*totally reflective of values,*
*if you don't know what you value,*
*and I had been coaching for 20 years,*

but it's that's awareness right

*yea, what do I care about?*
*What are the things*
*that are going to drive me absolutely nutty,*
*that I know that I can't stand,*

and when you have a choice in
disciplining the student or guiding them,
if you're clear, so much easier, right?

There's no question, and I think that's
the best coaches, or
the best teachers, and
the best kapa makers
[laughs]

Because you're not worried about anybody else,
you know what's right,
you know what your intention is
and I think that is, your own, pedagogy

*just have to be more patient,*
*I'm always impatient*

[laughs]

No, but you're on the right path,
it's this,
it's butterfly time,
it's reflection, you need
those breaks, those times
impatience is good because it has passion,
but awareness is key

*I think I'm going to be learning patience*
*for the rest of my life*
*[laughs]*

[laughs]

Join the club,
I know,
I know,
but it's all good.

**the third day**

*but this connects to me, because I'm so much, I mean*
*I love the outdoors,*
*I love plants,*
*I love dirt.*

**talk story before the talk story**

*you, me and Verna will have to like,*
*lunch one time,*
*and just sit and talk story*
*and, you,*
*you share your whole process*
*once you finished it*

*I don't know if I told you,*
*I'm going to London and Scotland and stuff*
*I think*
*both will let me take pictures,*

they should

*so I was just thinking,*
*it would be interesting to,*
*to see what you're,*
*what you guys see,*
*even though it's just photographs,*
*when I get back,*

I'll be curious to see,
you'll have to do a lecture,
like a public lecture, with the slide show of kapa,
and sort of your,
your thoughts on sort of culminating,

*oh, I didn't think about that*

you should, it would be a great finish!
I would go
[laughs]
I'd sit in the front seat
and just go wow, fabulous

*well there's so much out there,*
*because I had never thought about using museums,*
*and then Maile Andrade*
*was talking about how no one has ever catalogued,*
*or tried to figure out,*

the world's museums,

*yea,*
*and where these pieces come from*
*and granted they had kapa*
*and cut it to pieces and sold it off,*
*but, it's really interesting*
*you just start reading*
*trying to discover which explorers went where,*
*and where did their, you know,*
*Hawaiian collections end up and,*

yea

*and what part of the,*
*what part of the islands were they,*
*I mean it's really hard,*
*I mean you've gotta do some digging,*
*and that could*

you gotta read their journals sometimes,
you gotta do all kinds of stuff,
it's crazy,

*yea, probably,*
*it'll take it's own lifetime to,*
*to figure out, but,*
*it's so fascinating*

yea, 'cause a lot of the investors who supported those trips
got some of the Hawaiian artifacts
and they have all these, major collections through Europe,
and even the Provenance, when you read,
like I told you, my parents were art collectors,
when you read the provenance of those pieces you can chart the collections
and kind of, which journeys
and which, like, you know sails, were the source of that piece,
it's amazing, but, doing it from the other end would be neat too

*well, it's just interesting,*
*I mean because Smithsonian*
*when I had emailed*
*and Adrienne Kaeppler,*

yea, I know Adrienne well,
she's a good friend

*because she asked,*
*who are your teachers?*

her husband, Peter, works for,
was it Peabody or London Museum,
when I went there,
he was very gracious about getting me access to it
she's, she's wonderful,
Adrienne is a total yes person and she's so good

*and she goes,*
*well we don't have any of Captain Cook's third voyage,*

*which is of course,*
*because in the middle of the 1800's*
*the US government actually commissioned a sail to the South Pacific*
*so they have some of the stuff from Emerson,*
*they have some of Emerson's collection,*
*but they don't have anything from Cook's third voyage*
*so all of their stuff actually came from,*
*this own, voyage that the government had had,*

sponsored

*yea, so*
*I knew they had māmaki kapa,*

yes, they do

*so I asked,*
*can I see it?*
*Because I've never seen māmaki kapa,*
*she said, you can see whatever you want,*
*I'm like, ok!*
*[laughs]*

I know a lot of people who have tried to work with it
and it's really difficult,
so I don't think we've carved out the secrets of that yet,
that process

*it's slimy*

yea, it's really slimy,
and it can be really,
it can oxidize like crazy

*some of the manuscripts that I was coming across,*
*reading at the Bishop Museum,*
*they were saying that they cut them into 1" pieces*
*and that's how they beat them*

māmaki?

*yea,*

possibly because it's pretty woody sometimes,
depending on how mature it is

*just a very different process than,*
*you know,*
*nice long strips for kapa right,*

well, even wauke you do pōpō,
you strip it and
you rip it up and
you make little balls of it,
I've done that a bunch of times,
it's interesting because then you have sort of that,
warp and weft, and it's,
the movement is tougher and different,
yea, you really have to ferment it
because you have

the fibers going in different directions,
yea,

*so you just,*
*it's just mashed up?*
*Because I've seen the pictures,*

mmhmm,
of the pōpō
it's just shredded pieces,

*oh, so it's not necessarily*
*throwaway pieces*

oh no,

*it was a*
*technique that they used*

mmhmm,
mmhmm, yea
so all is good!
and I don't believe in throwaway pieces

[laughs]

you know me
I clean 'em and I use them

*yea, yea,*
*Aunty Verna*
*was talking about how there's something that she watched you do,*

[laughs]
oh, yea, she used to think I was crazy,
yea
nothing is throwaway

*yea, she said she watched you collect*
*all the scraps or something and*
*then put it back together, and*
*actually make a piece out of it, and*
*she couldn't believe the patience and*
*the, but yea you don't throw anything away*

yea,
you know, if you're really, truly into kapa,
you don't waste anything,
you burn for ash,
you take the pieces,
you reconstitute,
you make it, I mean,
you know,
you treasure every single piece because that has life and spirit.

Have you ever just googled you tube and found all the kapa videos?
That's fun too, really different styles,
there's some of Malia Solomon in there,
and some others,

*so Aunty Verna,*

*I was surprised she watches those,*
*all the time*

mmhmm, we all
[laughs]
we all love to watch them,

*it's so neat right,*
*the technology,*

yea, it makes it that much easier,
but it's fun,
you know you can see something 10 times and it depends on,
just the 'ike and then,
what stage you're in,
on one viewing you see something,
you can see it again and you go, oh,
or you hear something you go,
wait a minute,
why didn't I hear that before?
But it,
you just weren't ready, right?
And it's just like, the process of making kapa,
every time you go through it you're in a different stage,
and it can be the same, exact thing,
but you learn more 'cause your 'ike is different.

**hoʻokuanoʻo**

*to me it's sort of that breath between actions that you kind of have time for that reflection and introspection and say,*
*ok,*
*you know,*
*it brings life*

Oh gosh
I think it's taught me a great deal and it continues to,
because it really is humbling and it really reflects,
it's a mirror of yourself, just in terms of how you view things around you,
how you react to things, if you're really open and patient,
to understand what's before you or not,
and I don't mean to be philosophical
[laughs]
But that, I mean it's,
to me it's sort of that breath between actions that you kind of have time for that reflection and introspection and say,
ok, you know,
it brings life,
it brings this replenishment to me, and
it also makes me more aware,
both of what's in nature and everything,
but also in me,
and it just gives me that,
it almost is like a suspension of time,
where you just sort of have to yourself,
and then you go forward,
we've talked before that when you're working,
you know if you're in the right space,
because either it comes easily and flows,
and all of a sudden it just feels good
and you can do it for hours,
and sometimes it's just like, ok, close it up,
[laughs]
I'm getting a little frustrated here,
this is not a good place,
time to do something else,
and so you then think about it,
and think ok, I must be like, a little tense
or wound up
or, what's going on
and sometimes it takes you to that place where you can relax
and then, have more thought,
so I think that's, it's all about you being receptive,
and you not being so much the lead
as being led.

And, you know, in our lives,
especially with us,
with jobs,
family,
all kinds of crazy commitments,
we lose track of a lot of stuff,
we just, blast forward, and I think
we lose a lot of that,
we have to have those moments, you know,
those lehua moments
that I talked about before
that, you just think, oh my god,
this is,
this is perfect,
this is wonderful,
this is pure joy,
yea, I think that's, you know
moments are not, those
moments are not often but when you get them it's really wonderful.

And it is about, Hawai'i,
it's about this place,
for me this is home, I mean,
so much home that I would never live anywhere else, you know,
travel is fine like we talked about, but,
it's just
connecting,
connecting with people,
connecting with place,
connecting with things that are of this place,
I think in this day and age,
with technology,
with so much instantaneous gratification
and, things are so fast, I mean,
you email,
you text,
you instagram and
you get something back in one second,
whereas you know,
before it was 2 days before you get an answer,
or you have to wait until you touch base with somebody and see 'em face to face,
so I think it's very important to have
those,
those pauses,
those moments,
those periods where you have to work towards something and see a result
it's gotta have that balance,
and so many young people, you know 'cause I do teach and I do a lot of demos,

where they're looking for something,
and once they get their hands into something like kapa, or even woodwork,
depending on what they are,
it makes them feel good
and I think it's because of those values,
that we've learned from doing those things
the hard work,
the meditation,
the team work.

Where else in life, I mean if you're doing Pokemon Go, you know,
it's not exactly the same values you learn from that, right
[laughs]

So I think it is important, you know,
I've seen it in my kids,
I've seen it when I teach or work with others,
I mean in education, same thing,
those are the lessons that you remember,
not what math problem you solved.
It's always the
whys, you know,
why am I doing this?
Why,
why do I like this?
You know, it's those kinds of questions,
when you get the answers,
I mean that's what a dissertation is right,
is trying to figure out
the what's and
the why's, and
the how's
[laughs]

that's what everybody's looking for,
no matter how you find it,
maybe through sports of coaching,
maybe through things like this,
but this connects to me, because I'm so much, I mean
I love the outdoors,
I love plants,
I love dirt
[laughs]

you know, so I think,
there's enough of these things that make me curious.

**the five things**

*I've never said I make Hawaiian kapa*
*I make kapa in the traditional Hawaiian manner*

I think I'm helping to guide it and hopefully inspire some kapa makers,
you know I think,
that was the intent of our Merrie Monarch collaboration projects was to inspire others
and get,
and spread the kapa practice
the more that we teach or demonstrate or lecture, I think that hopefully
someone,
someone out there will be inspired, I mean, when
you see,
you saw something,
you were inspired,
and I think we all feel that at some point
and by doing that I think it shapes the practice.

As you know I'm more of a traditionalist,
so those that I teach will have that grounding and foundation,
but others have taught through other teachers and schools so, it'll be a little different,
but I think all of it together is good, and I think
the more that we collaborate with other kapa makers the better,
because we want that to move forward,
and it is that discussion about
what works,
what is Hawaiian kapa,
what is kapa,
what is this,
how do we do this
that discussion makes all of us think
and I think that that reflection and that process is good,
we may not all come to the same conclusions and we respectfully disagree sometimes,
strongly,
like Nalani Kanakaʻole said,
we're feisty!
Kapa makers are feisty!
But that shows we have such commitment to our practice, right
So, what,
what, how would you define kapa?
What is kapa?

*oh my*

And what is Hawaiian kapa?

*oh boy*
*[laughs]*

Have you thought about that?

*uhh, yea*

Because that's always a point of discussion with kapa makers

*well, yea, gosh,*
*my first instinctual response when you asked*
*what is kapa, is,*
*I think it's probably, almost as*
*philosophical as*
*what you're talking about,*
*it's more than you know, a "practice"*

mmhmm

*it's definitely more than*
*a piece that's on a wall,*
*I would say that it really has to be a lifestyle,*

mmhmm

*it really is, and I guess*
*if anyone were to say they were a kapa practitioner,*
*I know my frame of reference would immediately change,*

mmhmm

*because just knowing what goes into those 2 words*
*[laughs]*

[laughs]

*those are loaded words, right*
*my frame of reference,*
*expectations,*
*anticipations, probably,*
*I think they all shift*
*I don't think it can be compartmentalized*
*into something that you do on the side,*
*And I know I never tried to do that, so,*
*I don't know what it would be like if someone*
*tried to do that,*
*I don't know if it would actually work*
*[laughs]*

[laughs]
yea, exactly,
I don't think they would last long doing it that way,
too much work

*and it's interesting because,*
*when you asked what is Hawaiian kapa,*
*I remember you saying there were three things*
*that make Hawaiian kapa Hawaiian,*
*you talked about the watermark,*

mmhmm

*the stamping,*
*the designs*

mmhmm

*and the fermentation,*
*those were the three things*

*I remember you saying,*

actually, I say,
there are 5
the watermarking,
the seamlessness due to fermentation,
that the South Pacific, they had huge pieces but they were glued,
so they had seams and they were patched and glued,
Hawaiian kapa had huge pieces but because they fermented they could beat out these large pieces and it was seamless,
no patching right,
so that was the second.
The full pallet of natural colors and different dyes, so
the purple, green, blue, red, yellow, everything, right,
as opposed to the browns and blacks of the Polynesian,
the design that linear, geometric, small repetition,
the positive and negative, not so much the curve lines except for circles that's geometric
but, you know, it, you, as soon as you see it you know it's Hawaiian,
because of that repetition of those patterns,
or painted blocks,
which were the pre-Western contact time a lot, and then
the fifth one is the scenting
scenting was very unique to Hawai'i,
and because of the fermentation it was critical

[laughs]

But, it made it more than just
a visual experience, or
a tactile experience,
it was,
the aroma that surrounded along with these yards of kapa,
you know,
that created that,
wonderful experience,
so those are the five.

*anything that Hawaiians did, that was,*
*always came to three considerations,*
*it had to be functional*

mmhmm, right

*it had to be beautiful*

mmhmm

*it had to be sustainable*

mmhmm, absolutely
it's interesting though,
that when you start to talk about,
labels, or categories,
and people say ok, what is kapa,
South Pacific tapa, right,
and so, technically it's beaten bark,

whether it's banyan, wauke, māmaki, ʻākala, wauke,
nowadays a lot of the art shows and technical things usually say
as long as it has some wauke in it it's kapa.

But, I think it has to be beaten
and, the process is important,
and you know, to really say it's kapa,
and then, what is Hawaiian kapa
does it have to be beaten by a Hawaiian, a Native Hawaiian?
Some people believe it does

I think there's traditional Hawaiian kapa, which is,
maybe you know the ones over a hundred years ago that were beaten in the traditional way by Native Hawaiians and things,
today I consider everything done is contemporary,
but even within that the process can be in the traditional Hawaiian methods, and then as you know, it could also be done in very contemporary ways,
so Hawaiian kapa
I believe should have those 5 characteristics
but with contemporary artists,
well, let me take it one step back,
and one thing I am very committed to is this place,
to make it Hawaiian,
kapa beaten in the traditional Hawaiian way,
it has to have materials from Hawaiʻi,
this is my roots,
this is where Hawaiian kapa originated,
so it has to,
it is about place,
and about you know,
the ground and the,
the earth and stuff
so it has to have wauke grown here,
or materials grown here
the dyes I believe have to be from here,
and you know,
some people use Rit dyes
[laughs]
and other kinds of dyes
and that's their thing, but
you know for me,
it's about this place, and so
the fiber,
the dyes,
those things should be from Hawaiʻi,
to make it really, you know,
something beaten in the Hawaiian tradition.

I've never said I make Hawaiian kapa
I make kapa in the traditional Hawaiian manner
I'm not Native Hawaiian,
I'm not going to label stuff,
some people say, Native Hawaiian kapa that's made today has to be made by a Native Hawaiian
and I respect that,
but I'm just not into labels so much
but I am into making sure that a piece of kapa that is made in the traditional manner really is,
has all those components,
I mean, if you take Fijian masi or Siapo and watermark it and dye it with Rit dye, is that
Hawaiian kapa?
I don't know.
What would you say?

*my instinct would be to say no,*
*because where I think, where I'm at*
*is the process,*
*the process is more, to me,*
*what would determine whether,*
*if you needed to label it or not, right*

yea
and I think the process reflects the values,
and so that's more the philosophical part
that you talked about earlier,
that if you do those things,
you're missing some of the lessons,
and those steps are important in,
making something from this place.
Grounded
from start to finish,
and I know you,
you like from start to finish too.

[laughs]

So we're on the same, but
that's,
that's just sort of my thinking,
but, understanding that, with
contemporary art and
contemporary kapa,
people will take pieces,
I mean they will take washi from Japan,
there's some beautiful art that
silk screens the watermarking and
silk screens patterns and I love those,
I call those contemporary art,
not kapa,
even though it uses the same fiber,
because it's,
it's not beaten I don't call it kapa,

but then, you know, these are fine points,
if it's a beaten a fiber, and then it uses maybe contemporary dyes, it's kapa
I just believe they need to disclose that it's using
dyes brought in from South America,
or Native American Indians,
or Rit dye
or whatever they do
it's just disclosing because it *is* all about,
I think, our place,
those steps and
those key things that need to be more traditionally based,
I don't know.

*makes me think about intent*

Yea, exactly

*the intent for which we make kapa has changed*

mmhmm

*right, then,*
*it opens the door for,*

a range,

*right, a range,*
*I think some of that gets configured*
*into the conversation right*

I agree, and,
I know like, for art shows,
they have criteria and
they judge it based on the criteria
I also think it's really up to the artist to,
have their intent
and decide what they want to accomplish
and do, I mean we don't have the kapa police out there, right

[laughs]

But when we do something like our show on Maui or other things,
and we have that project with the hālau and we say,
this is our intent,
this is how we want to do it and why we want to do,
then I do think it's up to the artist to align with it as best they can,
I just get excited by seeing contemporary art shows,
you know, kapa shows that have
a range of intent,
a range of vision, and I think
that's healthy,
that's good,
'cause culture does change over time
I just think we need to share our thoughts
as artists,
as kapa practitioners,
what we want and

what we did because I think
the process, as you said earlier to me, is really
as important
as the product in the end.

*the discussion makes it a living practice*

It is, and,
and it changes because of that,
by the people,
by the environment that we live in, I think,

*would you ever use invasives*

introduced plants,
invasives or something, for, dyes or?
I mean yea, I think you, you can but I would disclose that it's not a Native Hawaiian,
Uncle Sol made a beautiful purple dye with
pōpolo, ah, not
pōpolo,
maile pilau,
right?
It was beautiful purple,
and I thought oh man,
this is the perfect and
he used the whole maile pilau seeds, right?
It's so great,
but you put it down what it is,
you don't say it's Native Hawaiian dyes or,
you can say it's natural dyes because it is natural,
but yea, it's fun to try different things,
we've used 50 million things,
I know Aunty Verna uses matcha tea

[laughs]

which is all for her greens
you know, but if I did that
I would declare it,
I would say
this is native,
this native,
this is nonnative but natural

Because I think the assumption by most people
is that we use native dyes or you know, things like that, and
because we know the process and we know so much behind the scenes of what people do,
I think we're a lot more, aware of,
how careful we have to be about these things,
'cause people's assumptions will be
"everybody who makes kapa does it the same way," or
"they use native dyes, they use the traditional stuff, and it's all the same"
but when you held those kapa pieces
and you inspected them

and you saw the dyes, I mean,
one of the kapa makers used mulberry from the mainland and black walnut,
which was gorgeous,
and it was from the place where she was living,
so that was neat,
and she said what it was which I thought was fabulous,
those are good,
but I think you see more
when you,
when you have a chance to look at pieces like that
and then to have the reflection time to think, now,
what's the difference here,
how do I feel about this?

But then you started to see so many layers 'cause
you can see how people did it, right,
and I think that's where
it's almost,
it's almost like we have
too much information, we know
too much
you know, and then, so
if a Native Hawaiian makes kapa and they use a crock pot to cook it in,
is that bad?

*I don't think it's bad*

I don't either

*just have integrity in the process that you're following*

and if it mimics a traditional process
which it does, you know, I think
it's ok
it's using what's available,

*I've heard that come up*
*in conversations before*

mmhmm, yea,
and when we have our workshops with the kapa makers
all those questions come up

*yea,*
*I mean down to making the tools right*

yea, do you use
a chainsaw,
a dremel
[laughs]
oh yea

*[laughs]*
*yea, right,*
*the Native Hawaiian,*
*the ancient Native Hawaiian dremel tool*

or do you go shark hunting for your 13, 16ft tiger shark,
and wrestle him down for his teeth?
[laughs]

But we also, I mean, amazingly so,
even though we use modern saws,
dremels,
files,
it's so funny that a simple shark's tooth,
seasons it,
is that,

*perfectly, right*

final process, so,
if you really want a good tool,
that's the best way to do it,
so I love that,
you know it's just like

*[laughs]*
*you didn't mention thinness,*
*as one of the five*

No, because it was, never was to me
when you go to Bishop Museum,
you will see pieces that are thicker, I mean
some of them are good size,
some are thinner,
some have a resin and make it crispy,
it isn't about thinness,
I think it's a very Western ethic,
it wasn't necessarily Hawaiian 'cause it's functional,
when you look at function,
I mean you look at cloth,
there's so many different thicknesses,
textures,
how it's used is going to play out what the characteristics are.

Everybody wants kalukalu,
white,
pretty kapa,
but I swear,
Hawaiians must have loved some color and design in there too, you know,
and if you put in that much work,
you, depending on what you're going to use it for,
you want that thing to last and if,
like any natural fiber,
just the usage,
some light fibers are going to fall off,
it's going to soften over time

it's going to get thinner over time
and they knew that, I mean,
they brought wauke from Tahiti
or, you know, Marquesas,
or wherever they came from,
so they'd been doing it for years
so they *knew* what they had to do to make it last for years,
I mean the pieces we have are, like, over a hundred years old,
I don't believe there were *all* paper thin,
and when you look in Bishop Museum I think well,
when we go you'll see the real diversity of textures and,
I mean some of them are neat 'cause they did have holes
beaten into them or cut into them
it's fun, you wonder what that was used for.

*That's always that question yea,*
*what did they do this for?*
*And how did they do it?*

*How* did they do it,
yea, but, you know,
I've just seen such a range, that,
when I first started of course we all tried to get the
thinnest, whitest kapa,
and then realized, you know,
it's not about that,
the fiber's going to tell you what color it's going to come out.

What do you think about thinness?

*I think I thought it always had to be,*
*so thin,*
*and Aunty Verna you know,*
*she references a lot about how,*
*when she was learning from you,*
*she still remembers you telling her to beat*
*until the fiber doesn't move any more,*

mmhmm

*so I don't know if*
*I made an assumption that that*
*means it's supposed to be thin,*
*or it just means*
*you're supposed to pay attention to the fiber,*

that's the second
yes

*but funny how I was just thinking*
*that I just made, sort of that*
*assumption internally*

And it really is about function too,
some of the malo pieces, it's a little thicker,
but you want it supple, so,
the fiber,
is about the suppleness,
that one you don't want to ferment too much,
so it's more about the resilience of the piece, right

*one of the things I was thinking about is*
*all the different names that Kamakau for*

the different kinds of kapa

*yea,*
*I know I had read it,*
*but it didn't hit me until I had read it*
*[laughs]*

[laughs]
yea,
and some of the names are for function,
and some of it is color,

*and they had for,*
*it's almost like for every stage,*
*right, so*

yea

*I just remember thinking at the time,*
*wow, you know,*
*there wasn't just one type of kapa*

absolutely

*so just like you're saying,*
*it couldn't always be paper thin,*
*I mean it makes sense*

And I think there were names of for kapa,
whether it's colored kapa or usage,
that differed by island, so,
'cause I found references to very similar descriptions of kapa but they had different names,
so it might have been the process
but it also may have been
that's what they called it on Kauaʻi,
that's what they called it on Big Island,
that's what they called it on Oʻahu, I mean,
even like, what we call warabi fern on Maui it's pōhole,
and other, Big Island it's hōʻiʻo,
so, I mean,
you know there's different names so maybe that's part of it too,
I don't know,
we've lost so much of that knowledge it's hard to tell
but I don't think that everybody necessarily called it the same thing.

*I think it was one of the manuscripts*

*I came across was a chant,*
*and they talk about,*
*so there's types of kapa*
*that are, the experts were from here,*
*you know,*
*and if you wanted this type of kapa*
*the experts were from here*

Do you have a copy of that chant?

*I think I do*

If you do, let me see it because I know Aunty Edith Mckenzie
had a couple of kapa chants and,
it described the kapa, or, yea,
there were only a few and she said
when she researched them she had gotten them,
and pulled them out, and so, you know,
that's the kind of knowledge and interest that we gotta capture.

**hoʻomākaukau**

*but I try to be as conscious as I can,*
*and as mindful when I do my kapa*

So that brings up a question in my mind,
do you have a protocol when you start to beat kapa
or when you do kapa?
to ready yourself,
or to ʻoli,
or to, do you have,
some people pray,
some people have a protocol when they work,
in kapa

*I know that I don't because I'm not,*
*I'm not versed in the Hawaiian language*
*so I don't necessarily,*
*or I don't ʻoli,*
*but I do know that*
*I have to be in a good space*
*before I start*

yup, and how you ready yourself for that is important,
for me I have a practice,
and sometimes it's a little more formal than others,
but I have certain things that I do,
just in readiness,
I think everybody has a different practice, but you know, that is part of mine,
and it is an opening and a closing,
they have what I've read in the books the protocols
you're not supposed to beat at night,
you have certain kinds of things, you know
like the traditions of you're not sweeping outside of your house at night,
and things like that,
so I think there are, sort of practices and protocols that people follow,
and I'm curious to.

But I try to be as conscious as I can,
and as mindful when I do my kapa,
and so that's what I've come to do over the years,
is to be very mindful when I do it,
which helps me get into the right place
And I have my steps I do,
and my chants I do,
and things like that,
and even in closing, you know,
so there's a beginning and an end,
and it's a mindfulness
I think that's important to get me, ready

I think we,
for all of us who do something seriously and intensely, we do,
but, to be conscious about it is good.

So walk through that,
think through,
that's important,
and then some days when it's good
and then some days when it's bad,
maybe, go through a different practice, you know,
it's interesting
it's interesting too because as I've done kapa with different people
like, I made kapa for some friends for their hōʻau ceremony, their wedding,
Hawaiian ceremony wedding,
and so the family wanted to help beat the wauke so that all their hands would be in it when the couple got married it would surround them,
and they'd be wrapped in it and it would represent the family,
so we had the whole family up here and stuff,
one of the family members was very Christian and so she asked,
are we going to have a chant, because she didn't want to participate in the chant,
and then, someone else, said, well,
it's very different if you do a Christian prayer if you're doing a Hawaiian practice
so there was a whole discussion about what's appropriate,
and how comfortable people feel in doing these practices,
and so my response was, I took care of that before they came,
I had done the protocol, things were good,
as long as they came with a good spirit they could put their hands in and participate,
but it's those types of things that are interesting too,
people's approaches to cultural traditions,
and if you really do something that's based in Hawaiian tradition,
with ʻaumākua like Maikoha and Laʻahana and Lauhuki and all these things,
do you do a Christian prayer?
If you're a Christian do you believe in those things?
You know so, it's interesting, I think
I don't see any conflict,
if you're in the right place and,
you can take care of things,
and as the kapa practitioner I just do my thing,
not to impose it on anybody else

[laughs]

I know,
have you ever run into that, with your practice, or with people?
Having the Hawaiian culture clashing or coming up
against more the Western and, Christian, kind of,

*it comes up in education all the time,*
*the constitution says the state language is Hawaiian,*

yes

*so thinking about what does that mean,*
*what does it mean*
*to be a public education institution in Hawai'i,*
*where your official language is Hawaiian*
*and the level of discomfort that word*
*automatically raises*

mmhmm

*it's different contexts, right,*
*of how you see the world,*
*Western context*

definitely,

*it's just a different way of,*
*of how you look at the world*
*and how you look at teaching and learning*

totally, I mean you look at, ok, so,
there's a separation of Church and State
and in an Indigenous context you'd *never* do that, right
so, how does that fit when you have the Hawaiian culture,
and if you do an oli or anything,
you know it's spiritual,
you know it has spiritual connotations,
but by law there's supposed to be none of that, right?
So, how, I mean,
how do you reconcile all of that?
And I don't, seek to, I mean I think it's funny
'cause we actually had at work an opportunity to have a blessing ceremony,
and one of the executives said ooh, well we can't have anything religious,
it's gotta be sort of nondenominational,
and there was a visitor coming from outside the state, and they were very sensitive to that,
but, it was like, what do you mean?
we said, well we're going to do a, a cultural chant, an 'oli,
and they go, oh ok,
and we said, they're clueless, they have

[laughs]

no clue

'cause they don't understand Hawaiian,
good, don't tell 'em,
it's spiritual no matter what,
and that's what it is but we just don't call it a blessing,
we'll just call it a greeting,
and you know, I mean, that is,
so I don't think there really is an answer to that, and I think part of
the Hawaiian spirit and
the Indigenous spirit is accepting, you know,
people have said there's a conflict between Christianity and Hawaiian culture,
but it seems like a lot of the Hawaiian people have adopted Christianity,
so, I don't know,
sort of in education kind of the same kind of issues,

*in the larger practice, right,*
*is there a way that, that,*
*instead of having it be one or the other,*
*because that what it seems to be right,*
*is there a way for, you know,*
*multiple worldviews to coexist*

exactly
and I think the Hawaiian culture naturally has embraced that,
I mean, it seems like they've embraced every culture that has come to Hawaiʻi,
and absorbed different things about it which makes Hawaiʻi unique,
there is no other place in the world
that has done that so well and easily

*kind of like the kapa practice*
*[laughs]*

yea, except for those traditionalists like us

[laughs]

that are ok, you know

*but there's a place for,*
*I mean there are devout traditionalists even in education too*

Yea, yea, but it's
good,
good to push boundaries,
test things,
try new things,
you know I think,
the main thing is to articulate,
or to be clear on intent, and,
on the process
through my teaching, and adhering to,
sort of that traditional foundation but
allowing students to go out on their own and try different things.

**the road ahead**

*do you feel like you're shaping the practice?*
*by doing it you are*

If one person sees you and they're inspired,
you're shaping the practice,
this work,
this dissertation may do a lot to stimulate discussion,
I think just by participating in discussions,
and by being a kapa maker,
you show intent,
and I think by growing the number of kapa makers out there,
it shows that there is life in this practice,
and that's important,
and it,
people recognize it,
Uncle Sol sees it in you,
we all see it in you,
but it's good.

It's a teaching method,
it's a way to transmit culture and, yea definitely, I mean,
when a child is brought up with different things whether it's maybe a fishing tradition,
or a kapa tradition,
or you know other cultural traditions, lua
or other things,
I think you learn through those,
very much
and it's so good to see in schools now that,
kids are learning with wauke and the process rather than brown paper bags that were soaked
and wrinkled up
[laughs]
like, right,
you hear the stories of,
what was taught so many years, you know
they used to get, like, brown paper bags
and wrinkle 'em up
and pretend to beat with it because that's all people knew,
and that was 4th grade Hawaiian culture,
*so* many people have told me that's how they experienced kapa making
when they were in school,
or they would get the paper bark tree,
you know the, bark
and people would try to beat that,
I can't tell you how many people came to me and said,
I tried to beat it with paper bark,
because they read paper mulberry,

and they said that's what they did in,
like, 4th grade Hawaiian class,
in Hawaiian culture,
so, you know, years of that
[laughs]

So we can be grateful things have progressed.
[laughs]

The question is,
where is kapa going,
where do you think it's headed,
now that it's starting to, get picked up,
more people are doing it,
we're seeing it more frequently

*where do you think it's going?*

no fair turning questions

*[laughs]*

I think there are kind of, evolutionary cycles,
and some things I may not like,
where it goes, like, off beat,
into more contemporary art or things,
and people try experimenting or doing different things,
and that's where I think it turns more into contemporary art than kapa making,
not that it's bad, but,
I just hope that that foundation continues,
and the intent and the values continue,
and if it does become a practice in someone's life,
not among 17 different crafts that they do,
because so many different artists or people you know, they try everything,
and not, you know I'm, one of those who have done,
feather work,
lau hala making, and
lei making,
implement making,
all the basket weaving,
but you find your,
you find what works for you,
you find your niche,

*yea and you go deep with it*

yea,

*that makes sense to me*

I mean, look outside I have boxes of laʻa,
I have my feather work in there
[laughs]
but you know,
those are things I dabble in it,
kapa making is, a life practice,

it is, my thing,
as much as hula
I believe that's why I teach,
you can teach 100 people, and 1 or 2 will carry it on, in that way,
but those 1 or 2 are going to be key,
and there will be a lot of others
who are creative
who are wonderful and will, at least walk away with something, and that's good, but
you have to teach,
you have to share,
you have to be out there and step up,
you don't step up, and
you just do it yourself it's good, but it doesn't carry on,
and because it was shared with me I really feel an obligation to share it,
and not like a look at me kind of stuff,
but to teach or to, inform people,
and build their awareness so they can appreciate,
even if it's those 5 magical characteristics of kapa,
you know you see a light in people going, oh,
and they feel pride in who they are, if they're Hawaiian,
because of those things, so,
I think that's important.

And I do,
love to make things
for, protocol or,
for traditional Hawaiian usage,
there's such a joy in seeing it all come together,
yea

I mean to see it relive,
you can see muslin streamers at Makahiki,
but when you see real kapa used,
it's like yes!

Where do you think it'll go?
I do have real faith in the generation that's coming up now,
they seem to have such a strong commitment
to the language,
to the culture,
I mean beyond what our generation had available,
or was able to do, you know,
it was just reclaiming things,
rediscovering,
so I have faith that that, generation will embrace it,

*I think about,*
*well I wonder,*
*will kapa become commodified*

*if it's not already, you know?*
*making something that*
*a collector's going to buy*

is that bad?
Let me ask you

*I don't think it's bad, no,*
*what I'm actually thinking about in my head is basketball,*
*you know*
*the way that you have folks in the entire sport right,*
*some are professional some are not,*
*and they coexist just fine, it seems*

I think as an evolution,
you get to the point where people will appreciate kapa so much
that it does become, valuable,
and people, artists will make,
kapa practitioners will make it for sale,
which is happening now, and it's great,
I think the intent issue is still there for me,
you know what is the intention if it's just to make money,
and make these quick sells and big, big pieces to sell, you know,
I respect that,
people gotta make a living,
but, for my practice,
I don't think

*it doesn't have to be, right*

yea

*I mean I guess maybe that is a "maturity"*

mmhmm
natural evolution

*it evolves into something that's appreciated*
*enough along all the spectrum,*

shows people's understanding and appreciation for it

*but I don't think,*
*I don't think,*
*or at least I have that, faith that*
*the practice itself won't deviate too far from*
*the process and*
*kind of those grounding markers*
*that make it foundationally a Hawaiian process*

I mean theoretically,
somebody could invent a machine that could beat the kapa,
do rollers,
make sheets of it,
and mass produce it,
right, but then,

*like poi machines*

exactly, so you know, that could be one evolution,

*mmhmm,*

*but you're still going to*
*have the practitioners that are going to do it*

yes, there is,
yes, yes,
that's where on that spectrum where we would lie

*it'd be nice to actually see,*
*you know at least,*
*that, there's actually a market for this,*
*meaning community or society*
*has evolved to a point where there's a market value*
*yea, that would*
*that would be interesting*

it definitely is getting more marketable,
people buy kapa now or, you know,
appreciate it to that level.

**pukas in the knowledge**

*I'm a student of kapa, for life*

Oh god,
there's giant black holes
[laughs]

I mean still, we've just scratched the surface of understanding
the fiber,
the dyes,
the chemistry,
the botany, all of that,
so, I mean, it would be great just to retire and work with
a chemist and
a botanist and
a lāʻau lapaʻau,
and people who understand what's, you know there,
and beat all day and night try to do different things
and work with 50 other people
and just find out these things, but, you know,
as we talked before, it evolves,
I mean initially I was so much into the beating
and trying to find all the different methods for, preparing the wauke
and beating
and cooking
and you know, steaming,
and all of that,
and even making the tools, you know,
sticking it in the loʻi,
and trying to have it dry,
and you know, seal it,
and burnish the wood
and which woods and things like that,
and how to dry it,
and I mean, every step of the way I think there are things that are always, awakening,
and discoveries
and I think that's what makes it so fun for me,
and just being, you know, sitting down with somebody else
and they go hey, did you know,
and you're like, whoa, really,
oh my god,
those are the, to me, fabulous,
'cause it may be that hasn't been done in a hundred years you know,
or all of a sudden you figure out how to get a certain color,
and you're just like, yes!
That's how they did it.

So I think there's, yea,
it's just a machine gun of holes, you know,
it's so much of every single step
and method is a discovery,
you know I have pieces of dried wauke that I have in my garage now for like 15,
almost 20 years dried and I could reconstitute it tomorrow
and it probably would be, like, neat, right,
just to think you can do that with fiber,
it's fabulous, and then just,
finding new plants and growing them,
and then seeing, oh my gosh, this is what this dye does I've been reading about it,
you know,
or playing with dyes and adding other things to it
and then figuring stuff out, you know,
the scary part is at least, like, Pua documented it,
we have to get that published or available some way,
but the rest of the kapa makers,
teaching is the only way that it's getting out,
because otherwise, not everybody is as good as you in documentation,
and, you know, oral history,
those things are important, and a lot of people don't want to share,
which is, kind of sad.

I think you have to be fearless and just be very confident,
that, no matter how much you know,
you're going to learn more going forward,
I mean I'm a student of kapa, for life,
and so I, know I'll still be finding out things and learning things which is great,
and I want my students to go out
and then come back and teach me,
share things with me like what you find,
and I see you carve your tools,
it's like, oh, so beautiful
[laughs]
here, do mine.

But I think that's what it takes to move this forward you know,
is for everybody to share,
everybody has something that they can contribute,
at all levels.

**na‘au ho‘omaika‘i**

*it’s just a whole process of, thinking*
*and, absorbing*
*and, learning,*
*and just, real gratitude that kapa came to me,*
*and brought all these good people*
*and good things*
*it gives purpose,*
*it’s good.*

There’s a lot of wauke more and more,
it’s in pockets here and there,
and some people share and some people don’t,
I think there’s never enough wauke.
When we did the projects we did,
it was the most difficult thing of the whole project
was trying to get enough, fiber and material for people.
I gathered a whole bunch and gave different artists, the, you know, fiber,
and it was hard,
and I think the more you have,
the ones who are really doing it a lot and are growing it themselves like Dalani,
you see the difference in their work ‘cause they can do so much,
and they have it available
and they can beat it all the time.
Verna has her sources and the Maui group does,
if you don’t have it, there’s only so much, you know, that you can do and learn,
it’s, it’s tougher,
and you get scraps
and you put them together and
[laughs]

You save, but it teaches you a different thing,
it teaches you appreciation and you never waste
and you can make something beautiful out of what other people call scraps,
I never call it scraps,
it’s good fiber,
just takes a lot longer to get it out of it

*Aunty Verna said,*
*she goes,*
*it’s not throw away wauke,*
*but I’m not going to use it,*
*so she gave it to me,*
*they were wauke stalks from Ka‘ala Farm,*
*I think you went to go collect them with her right,*
*and it was so hard to take off,*

tough, but, it’s good fiber,

*I showed it to Aunty Verna,*

*it made a, a dark brown,*
*it's natural color was brown*
*it wasn't a white,*
*and I didn't think anything of it,*
*but,*
*it actually became,*
*I ended up giving it away,*
*I gave it as a gift,*
*but it softened to the softest,*

See, it's not about white kalukalu
the fiber will tell you what it's meant to do,
and sometimes, I've had it turn yellowy orange,
and brown,
it sometimes
it's where it grows,
and that's what I mean about this place,
you know you just,
gotta work with it,
and sometimes
the best pieces come out of it.

*she was surprised at how soft it was,*
*and she's like, where did you get this from?*
*[laughs]*
*the throwaway pieces you gave me*
*[laughs]*

I know, and sometimes we learn the best lessons out of those pieces,
if you have great, white fiber all the time,
that's super, it's a luxury,
but sometimes I just like to work with the different pieces,
'cause you learn so much more, about beating styles and prep and,
you know, everything.

*yea, that one was,*
*that took some,*

some beating right

*sure did*
*[laughs]*

yea, sometimes
it's like, man,
it's like three times the work,
but out of it that's the best fiber sometimes.
I get excited
there's such, wonderful places that, the fiber grows and it's all over,
I mean I'm just visualizing as we're talking, you know,
Amy Greenwell Botanical Gardens was so generous in sharing,
and Marie and Roen,
and, over here, Mānoa Heritage Center,
Lyon Arboretum, other growers,
people who've sent

I’ve beaten wauke from Molokaʻi, Kauaʻi,
you know, and so when you,
when you beat those pieces I think of the place,
you feel a difference, you know,
it’s interesting,
it tells you about the place,
and how you harvest it,
so stories,
everything has stories.

It’s helpful to me just hearing you talk,
and asking questions,
it’s just a whole process of, thinking
and, absorbing
and, learning,
and just, real gratitude that kapa came to me,
and brought all these good people
and good things
it gives purpose,
it’s good.

**part II**
**my kumu**

**Aunty Verna Takashima**

**ma ka hana ka ‘ike**

“Kumu, tell me a story.”

Her eyes hold an amused sparkle as I settle in to listen.
“What do you need to know to make kapa?”
I love these moments.
Her voice makes her stories come alive.
Her poetic cadence draws you in and holds you.

“It’s the knowing of how wauke grows and when he’s ready
so the fiber peels off the trunk like a banana,
the stages of ho‘omo‘omo‘o
and ho‘opulu, fermenting pōpō balls in maia leaves.
Your kapa, it depends on how much you know of these things.

It’s the knowing of the processes and techniques Hawaiians used,
fermenting, watermarking, stamping, scenting,
it’s not just the beating,
these things the practitioner has to know too.
How do you know? Observe everything, the smell is everything.

It’s the knowing of the different uses, what will the kapa be used for?
Will it be worn, displayed, slept under? For a burial or ho‘āo?
I like to know the story, this is my way.
The purpose always drives the type of kapa, you see.
Learning to make kapa to fulfill that use, this is part of your ‘ike too.

I can feel my forehead crinkle.
What’s the lesson?
I really want to ask, but I don’t.

Kumu pauses. Head tilted. Watching closely.
Waiting to see if I understand.
“Just beat.”
“Practice, practice, practice.
How do you learn these things? Just beat.”

## introduction

*Just beat.*

For Aunty Verna Apio Takashima, it would seem the journey to kapa was in many ways chosen for her. Maybe it was the kapa and tools of Mama Kahunaʻaina, her five-time great-grandmother, that Aunty Verna and her older brother, Uncle Sol, would find themselves staring at in *Material Culture: the J.S. Emerson Collection of Hawaiian Artifacts* (Summers, 1999).[44] Maybe it was the chicken skin from the ensuing trip to the Bishop Museum, catalog numbers in hand, to touch and feel for the first time the kapa her kūpuna had beaten. Maybe it was Uncle Sol's exclamation, "Ok, look, our tūtū made kapa you gotta make kapa too!" that pushed him to learn to make her tools, in turn, pushing her. Whatever the reason, the kāhea was issued, and Aunty Verna answered. "October, 2005, why I remember 2005 I forget but it was–October, 2005. And here I am 10 years later and I have not stopped making kapa" (V. Takashima, personal communication, 2016). Setting in motion the adventurous, amazing journey she describes herself on.

> My brother, he, so, *he* got me into making kapa, I mean I was thrown into it pretty much, right, so within a month, he made all my tools.

[44] Jonathan Swift Emerson was born in Lahaina, attended Punahou, was a teacher and later a land surveyor on Hawaiʻi Island. During his time as a surveyor, he began to collective artifacts extensively. Fluent in Hawaiian, his collection is known for his painstaking detail and scope, which includes items from commoners as well as high chiefs. It was also during this time that his path crossed Aunty Verna's kūpuna; many of her family artifacts are in the Emerson Collection, including Mama Kahunaʻaina, JW Kahunaʻaina, Mama's brother, Kamahiʻai and his son Keonikaʻai.

I had a kua, the hohoa, iʻe kuku, all carved, all ready, and he says, "ok, you know our third Sunday we're at Nā Mea,[45] no worry I get somebody."

So I show up there and here comes Kaʻiulani de Silva.

So she's gonna teach me. So he knows all these people right, so here I am, so she taught me how to make kapa I'm sitting there she brought everything, the, the wauke.

I never even saw wauke before in my life. (V. Takashima, personal communication, 2016)

As Aunty Verna recounts her early years as a practitioner and haumāna, whether driven, or guided, or both, it is the drive to improve, the pursuit of perfection, that pushes her. This part of the journey is personal for her, born of an internal motivation; Kaʻiulani taught her the basics, she explains, but it has been her persistence to continue beating that has improved her own practice. "But, as, you know it's been 10 years now, and you know I've been beating almost constantly and been doing all, it's, through that, I think, and I've learned, from every piece that I've made" (V. Takashima, personal communication, 2016).

In my experiences with my kumu, this commitment to pursue excellence frames her own methodology; it is connected to ancestral kuleana: "my goal is to make kapa as good as my grandmother's kapa"; she was "one of the *best*, and I'm hoping that I could be as good as she, she was" (V. Takashima, personal communication, 2016). This commitment also cuts deep to the core of her legacy in helping reclaim and revive the practice so it breathes life to Hawaiian as an identity, a worldview, as a people.

And, raising awareness of how special our ancestors were, how intelligent they were, how creative, how, you know, and to raise the pride of all Hawaiians. 'Cause I was raised growing up in an era where we were, we were shame to be Hawaiians. It wasn't good to

[45] Nā Mea Books is a bookstore at Ward Warehouse in Honolulu, Hawaiʻi. Every 3rd Sunday, Uncle Sol, Aunty Verna, Kaʻiulani (and later me too) would show up.

be Hawaiian. We were told lies about our ancestors and our, you know, everything Hawaiian. And I don't want that to happen again. (V. Takashima, personal communication, 2016)

From Aunty Verna, I have learned—both as haumāna and as story listener—that in the practice, this personal challenge to improve, learn, and get better, is tied to the hope that kapa will live, thrive, and progress. In traveling this path of personal mastery, so do we, as practitioners, travel the road to reclaiming and reviving the practice; the responsibility is in the constant learning, which becomes teaching, which becomes learning. This thread—of commitment, the pursuit of excellence, so that others may benefit—weaves through my reflections of my interactions with her: "...you going to learn a lot, on your own, even if I teach, whatever I teach you. It's the basics. You going to take it further, and...hopefully you'll be better than me. (V. Takashima, personal communication, 2016).

This notion, of learning is teaching is learning, is best done through the simple act of the iʻe kuku against the kua: "just beat." There is no such thing as passive learning; the student is an active participant in the learning and therefore the teaching. For Aunty Verna, learning bears a fearless curiosity: it is doing, experimenting, practicing, and trying. The theme of "ok, ok, I'm just going to do it" (V. Takashima, personal communication, 2016) that weaves its way through her moʻolelo of experiences as a beginning practitioner reemerges as a kumu kapa in her expectations of her haumāna.

> And when we saw you come in, and here you go, and not knowing anything, and watching you carve your iʻe kuku, it's like, holy mackerel! Look at her designs! You know, it's, but you know we can see that, there's that commitment, and, you know, you're not going to get very many, of, people like yourself. That will, is able, you know, *willing* to make the commitment and do the work. (V. Takashima, personal communication, 2016)

The commitment to learn, to improve, to push the practice forward frames her practice and her teaching; it is not something she imparts, but something that comes from within. "We're looking for someone with that fire" (V. Takashima, personal communication, 2016).

> You know, it's—because it's, takes a commitment and I don't want to waste my time on just anybody that's, you know. And like you know, lot of people they want to make kapa but then they don't want to stick it out, and I don't want to waste my time on those. And, you know right away pretty much, we can pretty much tell who's gonna stick it out and who's really committed, and that's what I ask.
>
> I need commitment. (V. Takashima, personal communication, n.d.)

How her students respond to her two words, "just beat," is a reflection of her pedagogical style, a type of formative assessment of her haumāna. There are layers built within those two words; her keen eye notes what they are ready for. At its core, those two words simply remind us that to learn something, to really understand something, we must experience the full breadth and depth of it.

The inspiration in Aunty Verna's designs come from the patterns and shapes she sees in her surroundings. "I can be walking, or I can be shopping, I see something in the window, a dress or a design" (V. Takashima, personal communication, 2016). Her eye will distill the design to the geometric components of a diamond, a triangle, a square; and as the pattern begins to emerge, so does her idea. In her pieces, stories do not necessarily comprise the designs, but result from it; her creative, artistic process, her successes and her challenges, become the stories she shares.

> I'm looking at the skies, the clouds, nothing. Just nothing. But if I see designs, and I like the geometric figures, and shapes and so, when I see it put together that kind of stuff, I go ooh, that looks pretty neat, because you can see, how it was placed, and, I think more

when I can see a picture of, or an art piece, then, you know, come up, I think that's, otherwise, another thing is, I'll get, ʻohe kāpala and lay it all out, and look at my ʻohe kāpala, and go ok, oh I like this one, I pull couple out, and I see how it placed and, you know, kind of, think about how it's gonna look, and then I take those that's how I start. You know, it's pretty much a blank slate, many many times, and then once I place it, then I have an idea.

It's the shapes for me. (V. Takashima, personal communication, 2016)

In my own reflections of our time together, it seems that for Aunty Verna, kapa represents freedom—of expression, of constraint, of labels. It is a blank slate upon which she can create. From an artistic standpoint, the interplay of colors and designs and shape in her mind's eye reflect endless possibilities; and in that creativity, is the expression of self.

I didn't think that I could design, I mean I didn't think I was an artist. Or feel like an artist. I never had formal art, you know, education, but I think if I can do it anybody can. You just take that ʻohe kāpala and you print, and you start stamping and you make a design out of that. You know, you can also look at other kapa, go to the museums and look at the, you know, how they did, look at all the various kapa designs and take it from there, but you know, you don't have to stay to that. You just kinda, you get an idea of how they did it and then, you know, just let your creativity just go crazy wild. (V. Takashima, personal communication, 2016)

She rebuffs categorical notions of what constitutes Hawaiian kapa—"I don't know that it should be labeled as Hawaiian kapa. They didn't, back in, you know, hundred years ago when our ancestors was doing it they didn't say it was Hawaiian kapa, they said it was their kapa" (V. Takashima, personal communication, 2016)—along with a resistance to labels of cultural practitioner, traditional and contemporary. "Practitioner is a title. That was always the thing

about, you know, it's just a title. And I don't care what title you put on, I mean I am making kapa. That's the way I see it" (V. Takashima, personal communication, 2016). When I asked her what is takes to be a master kapa practitioner, she promptly redirected the question back. "What is a master kapa practitioner? What does that mean?"

> So people have given us these titles "master" and, of course, my brother, we laugh about it right, so it's like "oh you one master now!" 'Cause somebody came up and said "he's the master" or "I'm a master" and we're looking at each other, I'm not master, I still haven't mastered, I don't feel that I'm mastered kapa, I mean especially years ago when they first said I was a master. (V. Takashima, personal communication, 2016)

Even as she constrains against the inclination to categorize or classify, Aunty Verna, like Kaʻiulani, challenges all of us to reexamine our own assumptions. As much as kapa represents a freedom of expression, for Aunty Verna, the foundation of tradition as it speaks to the process of Hawaiian kapa still rules. This is where the thread of her lineage to Kaʻiulani remains strong. "…I don't think it should be called *Hawaiian*, kapa. We're doing traditionally, we try to do, traditional, kapa. In the Hawaiian, in how Hawaiians did it. (V. Takashima, personal communication, 2016).

In my interactions with Aunty Verna, it is all about the process of making kapa—and so much more. The focus on wanting to learn is fundamental to her teaching process; whatever lessons you are meant to learn are for you, as haumāna and story listener, to find. She simply creates a space and watches to see what you'll do. The rest, is up to you.

**moʻolelo as exchange**

To spend an hour or two with Aunty Verna and her stories is to venture into the experience of the event itself. You cannot help but be drawn in by the virtuosity of her

storytelling. Her stories explain events, the process of kapa, rather than chronicling her life; they introduce the point she is trying to make, or is even is wrestling with. She invites you in to remember along with her, recreating characters and voices effortlessly as she recounts events, ponders on philosophical concepts, and arrives at conclusions. In these events she is both a participant and an observer; events are sometimes conversations she has had, sometimes about the conversations and debates those characters have had with others. Her stories do not approximate any Western conceptions of a topical life history.

Aunty Verna's storytelling style is an experience, not to be constrained or circumscribed. She will set out through her stories in one direction, and it will prompt a memory or spark an idea, leading to another story. Engaging and delighting you, as the story listener, with her impersonations of the characters of her story. To those unfamiliar, the personalities she incorporates and the contexts she shares from are not always introduced. But in her way, she manages to present a context for the storytelling itself that nonetheless pulls you in and connects with you. Her stories will engage you in a moment of lighthearted recollection in one moment, and hit the pit of your stomach with its complexity in the next. I have learned, as haumāna, that when she says, "you know, I've been thinking about..." to stop what I am doing, and lean forward into what she will share. For always, woven through her stories, through the humor and easy laughter, are moments of philosophical contemplation that speak to larger ideas. Time and again, I find myself returning to her one-liners, to marvel at the layer of teaching it reveals.

It is the shared experience of her stories that linger with you, the moments of laughing together, the way you *feel* as a story listener that remain. Aunty Verna and I share contexts of kapa, the kapa community, as teacher and student; even as I had heard some of her stories

previously, I still found myself deeply drawn in to her stories. Re-experiencing the moments all over again, laughing alongside her laugh, and delighting at her reenactment of events.

Perhaps because she was actively working on her second kapa moe at the time of these interviews, she reflected more extensively on the processes she was undertaking. But, in my own experience with her even before this inquiry, it is an insight into her mind and approach; her tactical, practitioner lens provides information, through story, that is rich with the nuance of the process. When read alongside Ka‘iulani's mo‘olelo, while different, they reveal the deeper layers of the how's and the why's of the practice. We also loosely followed the three-interview format (Seidman, 2012), allowing the conversation to flow where it was designed to go. Our topics ranged from Mama Kahuna‘aina and the events guiding her to kapa on the first day; to stories about wauke and kapa on the second day; to the kuleana of a legacy and a practice, and the reflection on socially constructed labels, on the third day. At times she circled back to previously-told stories, to illustrate a different point; these stories were not rearranged, but presented as they were told.

**mo‘olelo as representation**

Over the same duration of six weeks as my time with Ka‘iulani, more than six hours of sessions were captured as recordings with Aunty Verna. What is not captured are the conversations over food that ensued after every taped session; the time we spent over her second kapa moe, examining and sharing and reflecting; or going through the pile of notes from Aunty Malia Solomon she gave me to use during this project. These conversations, also talk story sessions, were also initially transcribed exactly as I listened to them; the editing and converting to the stylistic semi-prose, semi-poetic format of this text represent my interpretations of those experiences. Aunty Verna constructs her stories through recalling memories of events that

inspire memories of other events, sometimes even, in the middle of a thought; stylistically I chose to follow this stream of consciousness. Grammatically and organizationally, I refrained from reordering and editing in overall sequence and flow, as well as sentence structure. Her story is presented in the way it was told to me, removing words of repetition at her request.

There is a sequence and a natural rhythm to the way Aunty Verna tells her stories; the process I used with Kaʻiulani was repeated here. Listening and transcribing, listening and reflecting, listening and reading, listening and re-experiencing were all circuitous functions that over time, reflect what I felt was a semi-prose, semi-poetic structure to her stories. Laughter permeates her stories, and in addition to accentuating her own affect, it often triggers another related thought or a similar story; where this occurs, [laughs] appears on a separate line, spaced between the previous sentence and the ensuing one, as if to both alert and "lead" the reader from one idea or story into the next. Inevitably, though, I am the story (re)teller and had to interpret to a certain extent. Repetitions and 'ums' were removed at Aunty Verna's request; in places where I felt these repetitions reflected her storytelling *style*, I left it as is. Commas and periods are used based on the way I listened to the transcripts; grammatically, they do not appear to follow conventional rules, but it was important to me that even the use of notations reflect the way I heard her stories.

Structurally, her story is arranged similar to Kaʻiulani's, with chapter titles demarcated as first, second, and third days; and with an accompanying quote that to me, signified the overall theme and intent of that session. Within those chapters, sections mark a perceived shift in the dialogue, either by a long pause, or a slight change in course of conversation. These sections are also summarized by a quote from within that section. Overall, Aunty Verna follows an event-centered storytelling format; as they are presented as part of the natural flow of the conversation, they are not delineated or sectioned out.

Overall, her prose-like storytelling style presents as a shorter length than Kaʻiulani's; it, however, belies the density of what she is sharing. Her two words, "just beat," seem to reflect this coexisting dichotomy: the simplicity of an expression that carries layers of meanings, each deeper than the other, the more you reflect on your own practice. She leaves for you to interpret and understand for yourself the meaning; this is for you to reflect on, and think about.

**the first day**

*October, 2005, why I remember 2005 I forget but it was –*
*October, 2005.*
*And here I am 10 years later and I have not stopped making kapa.*

**childhood**

*I always look and remember the Koʻolaus.*
*And also you could hear the ocean in the distance*
*so at night I would be up, sitting with my head out the window,*
*listening, to the ocean, the waves.*

I was born in ʻEwa, and at the time my parents lived in Maili.

So I was born in ʻEwa, lived in Maili, I think when I was about 4 years old we moved to Waimānalo, where I grew up. And went to Waimānalo school went to public school.
I think that was the best part of my life, being in Waimānalo I just loved it.

It's the area. I always look at and remember the Koʻolaus. And also you could hear the ocean in the distance so at night I would be up, sitting with my head out the window, listening, to the ocean, the waves.

And then looking at the mountains, and always felt ah, protected.

I *loved* the mountains. And it was just the, you know, growing up it was, it was a good time. It was a good place to be.

And we traveled, my father loved to go riding on his car so we'd be going, I think we were one of the few families that went outside of Waimānalo on a regular basis. Because we would drive from Waimānalo all the way to Maili at least once a – I would, I could swear at least once a month to visit friends. And then my grandparents lived in downtown so we'd go to you know, my mother's, my popo, so my mother was Chinese Hawaiian, my grandfather was half Chinese half Hawaiian.

My popo was from China pure Chinese.

But, and my father was hānai'd but grandmother, our tūtū, and we would ask her, I mean I was the one always asking if she was related by blood because my real grandmother died at a young age so we grew up, never knew her.

So I always wanted my tūtū to be a blood relative.

And, I don't remember her saying yes, she said just said "I'm your tūtū."

My grandmother was her sister, she never said that was her hānai sister, you know, but that's on the Hawaiian side. But we went regularly to see them. So you know, growing up, going into school my classmates never went to town. A lot of them never saw downtown, I mean if they

did it was maybe once in so many years. We were at least every other week we in town, believe me, but anyway, so you know that was fun. You know. Then I grew, after my parents divorced, we moved to ‘Ewa Beach.

God, was that cultural shock.

Went from

[laughs]

going to school we had all these Hawaiian kids and then of course we had the haoles from Bellows, right, but it was like stepping into the Philippines. It was total cultural shock.

I couldn’t understand for a whole month, these girls that befriended me, because I was new, I didn’t know what they were saying ‘cause they had this strong Filipino accent.

I was in my junior year when we moved to ‘Ewa Beach.

Yea, that was difficult, being uprooted and having to make new friends.

Hated ‘Ewa Beach

I hated the school

[laughs]

I just hated being there, you know, but that’s what happens you know when you uproot your kids I mean as a teenager I went to school, grew up with all my classmates you know, so that was really difficult, and then to go to the school that was brand new.

It was a small community so you went – when I went to school and my cousin who was 5 years old in kindergarten passes me up so we were all in the same campus. So, you know I mean going from, I went to Waimānalo School but I also went to Kailua High School, you know, so,

And, that year, we were number 1 in football, right

[laughs]

so then, to go to ‘Ewa Beach you go to Campbell, and you know they didn’t win a game in twenty-something years, it’s, yea, so,

[laughs]

anyway and then I got married. I have 4 children, we lived in ‘Ewa Beach, and then Waipahū, then I got divorced and I was a homemaker, right, so at 40 years old I had to go and find a job, had no skills whatsoever.

No marketable skills.

And so, went to work, worked hard, and had to move you know I actually moved and looked at, I looked at what was available for me knowing that I was a single mother, single parent, I had to raise my kids by myself and I had to make earn a living.

You know I started making minimum wage and I looked and I said “I can’t support myself on minimum wage.” And so I looked around at where, what opportunities were there for me within this company and worked towards getting promoted. I realized that we would get yearly raises but it was like, good if you had like 5%. So 5% of minimum wage isn’t much, I

would have to work, yea, I don't know how many years before I could, you know, actually be able to support myself let alone my kids.

So I worked hard and I got promoted and promoted and promoted, until when I first started I was making like $9000 a month, within 4, 5 years I was making $20,000, and then, I was offered a position on Maui which doubled my salary, you know, so I started making a really good income and I was happy. I enjoyed what I was doing I was in marketing, and you know it had that creative side to it because I could design ads and brochures and stuff like that, which, I had *no* experience but I thought, you know, I did pretty good with what I did know, and

I think that's where I think I've always had that creative side but really didn't know how to apply it, how to use it, you know. I'd get into all kinds of projects, I went into ceramics, I stayed away from the painting art, I didn't really have any formal art education, you know, but I would dabble in all different stuff, okay.

So then, after my kids you know, after I finished I moved back. I moved to Maui in '96. I – that was a career change for me, which was very good, but I got homesick.

I missed my family and I said "I give Maui at least 5 years."

I was there 6, 7 years and then came back home right after 9/11.

I quit my job and I sold my condo and everything was being packed and you know I was staying with a friend for about a week until I could move into my new place. And then they woke me up one morning and said, "9/11 happened." So, I was in the travel industry, so when I, you know, I thought well, when I move back to Honolulu I knew a lot of people there I could easily get a job.

After 9/11, ah everybody was without a job.

So then, you know I'm like "what am I gonna do." So anyway so eventually I did find work, so that's the career side.

So recently I finally decided to retire and do kapa but I'll get to how kapa all started yea, [laughs]

getting off the subject to where kapa started.

**Mama Kahunaʻaina**

*I know, that my great great great great grandmother,*
*Mama Kahunaʻaina, has guided me,*
*and, in everything to get us started.*

So I used to do, I was working on genealogy, off and on, you know, so one day – and my brother, whenever he'd get phone calls about, they'd say they'd think they're related to us he'd tell them to call me.

And so I was working on my grand- on my father, my paternal side, and, one of my great, great, well 5x great grandparents had property on the Big Island and this was back in the 80s we had gone to court we had some of our ancestral lands back, but during that, we found out, you know, we went back 5, 6 generations to our grandparents who owned this property.

But that's all we knew, I only knew their names, didn't really know what they did for a living, but while we were there we used to have these experiences—

I had dreams, I had visions, I had physical changes, and, it all had to do with that property.

So anyway, fast forward, one day we were up in the Big Island and my brother, my brother Solomon Apio, he's, you know he turned wood, he did weaving, he did stone carving, and he's always ask me, tell me, you know, "why don't I come to the Bishop Museum, and you know, work with him, and do stuff."

And I really didn't know anything Hawaiian kind of crafts other than lei making, which I did I used to dabble, I did, I used to love to make haku leis. And so, that was my thing but I thought, "you know, can't do haku leis with him right" so anyway, so I always said "no, no."

I didn't really go and then we went to the Big Island one day and met this lady Marie McDonald through a cousin, and so, that was the first, she had showed us her studio, and we walked in and she had all these kapa pieces on the wall and I never knew what's kapa but she has asked my brother if she could if he could cut some blanks for her to make iʻe kuku ʻcause she was doing kapa and so we were looking at her kapa pieces and that's the first time I think I ever got to see kapa up close and actually even touch it and look at it.

And so, but still, anyway, we get back home and one day my brother calls me and he's looking at this book JS Emerson's book what is that, Material Cultures. And so it's a collection of all, he was a collector of sorts, of Hawaiian artifacts actually, and in 18, later 1800s he was the land surveyor on, the Big Island, on Kona side.

So, while he was there he went you know, he collected all kinds of artifacts. So, anyway, my brother was looking at this book while he was going to cut these pieces for Marie and he, he came across my great, my ancestor's names in this book. And so he calls me of course, I run—

I go to his house and I'm looking at it and it has all their names, there was 100-something pieces that was collected directly tied to my ancestors.

So their names were Mama Kahunaʻaina, JW Kahunaʻaina, Mama's brother, Kamahiʻai and his son Keonikaʻai.

In that, he had a story pretty much about who they were and he had collected he went to these people, to purchase these items, and, a lot of it had Mama Kahunaʻaina's kapa and her kapa tools. So, I was like, writing down all the numbers, to all the, going through this book, like I went, ridiculous, went through every bit, wrote down the numbers.

So of course my brother calls someone at Bishop Museum and we were able to go and look at the collection, so they pulled out all these kapa pieces.

I mean it was like, chicken skin.

It was like, oh my gosh, here we have, now I can connect to, my great, great, great, oh 5x great grandmother, you know, now I know a little bit about her, who she was, and he wrote, this Emerson, writes about who they were what all the pieces that he purchased that, like kapa, he would have the names of the person, where they lived and the dates. And in the story we went back two generations on both maternal and paternal side.

So now I have names for, my, you know, 6 or 7 times great grandmothers and grandfathers. So Mama, we find out in this book, Mama's father's name, now I have his name, and what he did he was a canoe master—

and a fisherman, so was Kamahiʻai. So here we have Kamahiʻai also makes a lot of these tools, so my brother of course now we're looking at this and he tells me, "Ok, look, our tūtū made kapa you gotta make kapa too!"
I did not know *anything* about kapa except for when I went to Marie's house and that was the first time I saw kapa up close.

So, I said, I told him, I said, "I don't know how to do, I don't know anything about kapa, you know, who how am I going to learn how to make kapa?"

"Don't worry," my brother says, "Don't worry, I know somebody that can teach you how"

[laughs]

"Ok, so I'm going make the tools and you gotta make the kapa." And all I do is, "o*kay*," well, you know my brother, he, so, *he* got me into making kapa, I mean I was thrown into it pretty much, right, so within a month, he made all my tools.

I had a kua, the hohoa, iʻe kuku, all carved, all ready, and he says, "ok, you know our third Sunday we're at Nā Mea, no worry I get somebody."

So I show up there and here comes Kaʻiulani de Silva.

So she's gonna teach me. So he knows all these people right, so here I am, so she taught me how to make kapa I'm sitting there she brought everything, the, the wauke.

I never even saw wauke before in my life.

And so that was 10 years ago, October, 2005,
why I remember 2005 I forget but it was—
October, 2005.
And here I am 10 years later and I have not stopped making kapa.

I love it, I think the best part about kapa that I enjoy is the beating. Everybody says, "whoa, that's a lot of work that's a lot of patience," yes but it's so enjoyable, 'cause it's, it's a stress relief, you know, you're alone, all by yourself, and it's just, blank.

After a while all your thoughts, all your stress gone.

You know I was working, the last couple jobs I had were really, really stressful.

Coming home to beat or on the weekends and just be able to just let it all go and just concentrate on the beating and watching every fiber that moves—

I mean that's the best, you know, people think, they, you know, they like the art part, you know, the dyeing, the printing, that's the most stressful for me. You know, just coming, trying to come up with a design, because people will ask, "oh, what is the story, what is the manaʻo."

Heck I don't know, I mean,

[laughs]

like, I take an ʻohe kāpala, put it down,
and that's how it starts.

But in the beginning, you know, like I said, I have no art background, right, so it's the matter of placing the ʻohe kāpala and you can make all different designs just with one, just with one stamp you know.

How the placement, and of course at the beginning I was very limited because I only had what I could carve 'cause my brother I think he carved a few, Kaʻiulani gave me a few to start, and you know, it was easy enough to carve. If you don't know how to draw, which I'm not very good at, so you know, a lot of the ʻohe kāpala designs is all geometrical so you got the diamonds, you know, the triangles, that kinda stuff and I thought, "oh I know, I can go and do the fonts on the computer."

[laughs]

So that's what I did, tape it on the bamboo and then carve, so, I was able to carve my own, right, so, anyway, that was the beginning of you know, of my kapa adventure, and it has been an adventure!

**Merrie Monarch & the big can of silica**

*it was a chicken skin moment*

It's taken me so many, to places now that I never dreamed of. You know, this is 10 years later, oh, so let's go back when I first started, ok, so—

I had just started, I had just learned to make, to beat, to make kapa. And I was out of a job, that was when I kinda just moved back from Maui, so I went down Bishop Museum with my brother, and you know, and, practicing beating, and so you know this was like a month, two months, maybe, so, Noelle Kahanu comes up to me, who's at the Bishop Museum and she says, "oh, Aunty Verna, we're going to start this whole this, new, not project but event, it's called MAMo,[46] and they're also going to have this kapa exhibit."

And she asked, she says, she wanted me to participate in this, and I said, "Who me? I'm not an artist, I don't know, I just started making kapa I don't know what I'm doing."

And she goes, "Oh no, Aunty Verna, you're an artist,"

And I said, "oh, no, no, I'm not." Ok, so within 6 months, I was into kapa exhibit, I mean and it's like, I'm on this thing all I'm doing is saying, "ok, ok, I'm going to do it."

You know that was the first kapa exhibit so everybody, you know, there wasn't very many kapa makers that was out there at the time that we knew of, that was actively making kapa, and I still didn't think I was no kapa maker, not with only a month or two months' experience, you, you can't even call that experience, right

[laughs]

so, but anyway, it was crazy. I mean, the first one was a kapa exhibit, so Marie McDonald is putting together this kapa exhibit at the Bishop Museum and included not just one kapa maker but many kapa makers. And so she had invited me, or through Noelle, I'm sure, so you know, I was a part of that, and then MAMo comes along, so they're having an exhibit an art exhibit at Mark's Garage and they want us to put kapa, our art pieces up, and I'm like, I still don't know what I'm doing," so ok so, I made 3 pieces put it up.

And you know, that first year it was like, crazy.

I kept, kept thinking, "What is going on? What is happening? I mean, I can't, how can, these people keep telling me I'm an artist?"

I don't believe, at the time, I did not believe, and up until recently, even now I'm still questioning myself 10 years later, I know that I can make good kapa now.

As far as the art part, it's still iffy, you know, for me. But so anyway, in that first year I was in several kapa exhibits.

[46] Maoli Arts Movement is a wearable arts show that features Native Hawaiian and indigenous designers; the show highlights traditional designs and patterns in contemporary spaces (see www.paifoundation.org).

And then, several years later, and this is what, 5 years later Marie McDonald has another idea. And she wants to do, dress this hālau with kapa, because you know, she didn't believe that anybody danced in kapa in, you know, at least a hundred years.

So she said, asked if I was willing to help, and I said, "sure, ok, you know, I'm like that, ok, whatever you need help, I'll be there."

Not knowing what we were getting ourselves into.

But that was an amazing experience, you know, we challenged ourselves, because many of us had never made a pāʻū, or piece to wear other than a kīhei or shawl. I definitely didn't, you know, so, and the challenge was to get enough wauke, for, they had 30 dancers. We had to, the goal was to be able to dress 30 dancers, but when it came down to it, we were only able to clothe only 18 dancers because the number of kapa makers.

We didn't have, we didn't know of, you know, anybody.

The wauke, so some people had, they planted their own, they had their sources, so what we did was we pulled together, we gathered whatever we had, if somebody didn't have wauke, ʻcause Marie wanted them to participate, and, in order for us to clothe everybody we had to have enough, we just collected and made sure everybody had, so, you know, we sent out memos saying "who needs wauke, who has more than enough," and so we were able to get, we ended up with 26 kapa makers.

And I think we did, we clothed, only 18, no we did more than that, I forget the number, so that was the, they went on Merrie Monarch, 2011, and that was *so awesome*.

It was a chicken skin moment, I mean

It was the whole, just to see all the hard work, and to see it on stage, you know, and the dancers all in kapa, and they were—

we thought we were honored and we were privileged to have them dance, but it was reciprocated, *they* felt *more* honored to be able to wear kapa. And so of course we were all, every one of us, every one of the kapa makers sat in the audience, and as they danced, we were holding our breath, praying that it didn't fall apart, didn't tear, which we knew it was, and many of it, did tear.

There were a lot of problems, but, you know, Nalani Kanakaʻole, told us, don't worry, she'd be able, she'd make it work, so, some of the pieces, the pāʻūs were short, first she said they should have been like 12 feet, but because that was our first event, Nalani said 6 feet would have been good, she could work with 6 feet, so we only asked them to do 6 feet for pāʻū. Then we had kīhei and then malo, we had, you know, we had several men so we had to have, I think we did, at that time we had, like, 6 malo.

And, they, nobody could tell that there was problems with the costumes, you know, it was beautiful, there was also a documentary that was made when they found out that we were gonna do this, so,

*I saw you on television, that that's how I started*
*I turned on the television, and,*

*they were talking about the hālau as they were dancing,*
*and I remember it vividly, and I didn't know it then,*
*but I know it now, when they panned the audience I saw you.*

Ohhh (!)
Well good.

I mean, that's why you know, as I'm learning, through my journey in kapa making, we wanted to have this continued because, you know it was an almost a lost art.

There was one lady, and I found out later she was my aunty, Malia Solomon. And she was at Ulumau Village, she started Ulumau Village, previously I think she was at Ala Moana, but she did art Hawaiian crafts and wanted to learn kapa.

So she went to, she traveled here and asked around who was doing kapa, and at the time this was in the 60s, early 60s, and there was nobody that was actively making kapa or knew anything about kapa making. So she went to Samoa, and she was able to get some kind of a grant from Bishop Museum. So she went to Samoa and learned, Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, and even to Japan, because Japan, you know, for paper making.

Then came back and she couldn't even find wauke here, so when she was I think Tonga, they gave her some wauke plants, and she came back and she planted and she says, you know, many of the, I forget if it was like 60, she had a lot of plants, and she killed them all, almost. So

[laughs]

So I guess in another try she was able to bring and plant, so she planted down in Ulumau, and from the plants that *she* planted, the wauke plants, some of the wauke that's on some of the parks, city parks, is from Malia.

So you know, so, and Malia is related, again it's my father's side, but it's my father's mother's side, so on the Kahunaʻaina Mama, is on my paternal's, father's side.

But you know, I think, back in those times, all the women had to make kapa.

I mean, that was their clothing, you know, so they had to beat their own clothing, so everybody had to, you started learning when you were a child.
But anyway, from previous to the 1960s, it was almost a lost art, you know, and Malia brought it back and revived it, and it took, what, 30 years later, 40 years later, that we're now, you know, really getting into it.

And of course, so you know Marie, Moana Eisele, they've been doing kapa for, you know, 30 years, and, you know, I think it started from Malia Solomon after - in the 70s, then it was Pua Van Dorpe, and she did the same thing, she traveled to Tonga, Samoa, she did the same route that Aunty Malia took. I don't know how, why they never connected, it doesn't seem like they connected, or she could have learned from Malia, but I'm sure she would have, I mean, Aunty Malia was well known at the time.

But anyway, so from there, you know, after Pua, many people learned from Pua, and then I think that's how Moana Eisele, and then several of the other kapa makers. And now, since the Merrie Monarch, so many people have come and said they want to learn kapa. And, you

know, we're out there teaching and we're happy that we're able to share, because we don't want this you know, to be lost again. In fact, kapa making, is one of the last arts, art forms, we think that was missing, you know, with the Hawaiian culture and traditions. You know you had the music, you had the surfing, you had ukulele, you had the hula, you had the tool making, you had all of those things—

but not kapa.

So when they danced, I mean, the amazing thing after the performance, Merrie Monarch performance, the very next day we asked to meet with the group because we wanted to get their feedback in how the dancers felt about wearing the kapa. What was the problems, if it was dyes, tearing, you know, and so listening to the dancers we never, I never expected to hear what they were saying, that, one of the dancers said that it was, he felt complete, in his hula. Because, you know, they had the music, they had the dance, but they danced in, you know, they wore muslin, or, you know, it was never kapa.

And they were so honored I mean, they were in tears, they had us in tears, because of, you know listening to their experience.

They also told us later, because we wanted, *we* wanted to know.

Okay, so what was the problems.

So there was tearing, so we said, ok, what, "we want to do this again." Because we want to make it better the next time.

So I asked "What is the *length* of the pāʻū should have been, the desired length." And so they said, "12 feet. 12 to 13 feet." So, ok, so that's double what we did right, 6 feet. And then with the malo, at first it was, I think they said like 6, 7, 8 feet, the malo. They made that first one. So then we said, ok what is the malo. Well we went from 12 feet, then we went to 18 feet, ok, so we said, ok—

so in 2014 we did it again. So, we went from 6 feet to pāʻūs is 12 feet, we also sent out requests, or invitation to all these kapa makers and now these kapa makers had haumāna. So they brought some of these people in, new kapa makers. So the requirement was, though, they had to be able to make a pāʻū, kīhei, or malo that was wearable, comfortable, flexible. They had to make malos, they had to make sure it was soft enough, and everything, so there was all these different requirements. And so we got maybe, we had 30 kapa makers, almost 30 kapa makers. And we were able to clothe the 30 dancers plus the 3 kumu.

They performed at the MAC, on Maui, in 2014, and after, I mean it was awesome, again, the hālau, Nalani, they had this whole—

it's not just this hula dance, it was a whole production. You know, with the stage, the décor on the stage, it was just beautiful. And then, the dances were all of kapa chants. You know, some that, I understand, I think the Kanakaʻoles wrote a few chants, and then they also had chants, ancient chants. And you know, to have these dancers up there and plus, too, they made all their implements so this was another thing in 2014—

when we did the Merrie Monarch, we didn't realize what the hālau was doing, we said, we'd make the clothing, can you, you know, you can dance in it. And they said, sure, of course, you know, Nalani, kinda tried to, you know, sat there in her chair and I knew she wanted to jump up and down when we asked her if it was ok that you know, that if we made kapa for them to dance in.

Ah, so. But anyway, so what they did was they took it further for their dancers, the dancers were required to, for a whole year they had to diet, they had to run, so they had to do all these different exercises to get in shape.

And they had to *earn* the right to wear this kapa.

So they put them through a *lot*.

And a lot of them didn't make it. You know, and then, each of them had to make their own tools. Now we're talking about, not just, even the keiki, they had like, a 5 year old girl, they were talking about, she had to make her own, they had to make their own their kuas, and their implements, so the iʻe kuku, and the hohoa, that was the each of the dancers had to make. So this little girl good thing, Nalani said that well, you know, her daddy was a woodworker so he was able to make their/her kua.

So here we have on stage every dancer comes out with their kua and all their kapa implements, the iʻe kuku, the hohoas, which they all had to make on their own.

*Then*, they're beating kapa, wauke.

They had to learn how to plant it, and how to harvest.

So they did everything, so that they could appreciate what it was, what the kapa makers had to go through for them to wear this kapa clothing.

And, so the appreciation was there, you know.

And none of us, none of the kapa makers expected that. It was so unexpected, and, you know, there was a few people that had questioned why would we want to just make a costume, a kapa pāʻū for somebody, and why can't they make it themselves? You know, they belong a hālau why can't the hālau teach them, you know, why should we? And when they saw and they heard what these dancers went through and how they appreciated they were, you know, they could not question.

You know, so *we* learned a lot, by doing this project. And we continue to learn.
Oh yes, that's right we did the repairs yes, so, when they, you know they practiced they had to do dress rehearsals, right. So they had 2 dress rehearsals, and there was a few tears, and we, you know, Nalani had asked to come the morning of the performance, if we could come and, and, you know, patch some of the costumes. Which we did.
Afterwards, after the performance, I passed Nalani, and she said to me, "Aunty Verna," she says, "we made it, not one tear, everything is all intact!"

[laughs]

So

[laughs]

we were all thrilled and that was the thing,
we wanted to improve on the first one we did.

We learned, from the first time.

Ok, so, there was this one gal that did, this was relating to the dyes. So she wanted to do this black and yellow, and you know, it was, black and yellow it beautiful, right. So she got, she did the whole soot charcoal thing, and it was just *beautiful*. When it dried, the black is ash, right, it's charcoal. So, it was, I mean she went into a panic, now she had soot flying *everywhere*. And that was for Merrie Monarch. So she did, and this was one of, uh, she was from the Big Island and she one of Marie's haumāna. And so, she went to Marie, and she said they did everything, they swept it, they vacuumed it, they shook it up and it was just, it just had dust, *poof!*

All over, black, everywhere.

So, of course, she goes to Marie, Marie does the same thing, you know, she's brushing it, she's oiling, doing whatever they could and it would not come out. So, packed it up, sent it off, because you know have to send it to the hālau. Well, when they opened the box they *still* had, she said they had black everywhere. The dancers, she says the black was getting on all the other pieces. So, you know, of course she was so embarrassed, you know, the kapa maker, but she learned from that and of course she said she would never do black again. But you *can*, you gotta know, you need to know how to apply it correctly. And we're still learning about all of that—

you know? So what is the right mix, even the ʻalaea, you know, if you put too much ʻalaea when it's going to dry, it's dirt. So again, it was all over. So you had, red, so you had the soot, you had ʻalaea, you had red—

And so the men have to use the malo and it's, you know, some of the malo was just, they didn't soften it. You know, so they're all learning. So even when I made my piece, I had to learn how to soften.

And I had, I had *major* issue with mine.

And I was in a panic, two weeks out. Yes, I was working on it, I was dyeing it, and printing and it was, I had followed this lady, this gal's instructions on how to make the dyes. And they said you put salt. So I put salt in the dyes, but not realizing that most of the piece was yellow. So, it had salt in it. When it dried, so I'm working on it one night and it's rainy and damp, and when I touched it, it was like, wet.

And I thought, oh my god, it rains Merrie Monarch every year!

Merrie Monarch there's always rain!

So what happened was, and I didn't realize it, until afterwards, of course I call Marie, I'm in a panic. "Marie, my piece, it's, it's wet, they're gonna to be dancing in it, Merrie Monarch, it rains every year, it's gonna be raining and damp, this thing is not going to hold up, it's going to fall to pieces."

I didn't know what to do. And so actually Roen had a really good idea, Marie's daughter. So you know that silica from dried flowers, so she tells me, "Verna, you go get, you know that silica, well try putting that."

So what I did was I went down to Flora-Dec, bought this big can, it's like you can't buy a small box of silica, ok

[laughs]

And so what I did, was, I rolled up, and you know and if it was, you know once it was sunny or dry, the kapa, it was fine. It was dry. But if it was wet because of the salt the salt was absorbing the moisture. I mean, I was in a panic praying, praying that it doesn't rain at Merrie Monarch, which thank God, that year, I mean, the Gods were with me, believe me, that year, Merrie Monarch was later April, so, and it didn't rain, you know, so if it was in early March, guarantee right, still winter time. But it held up and then the silica I did, when I sent it, I packed it, you know, I had little bags of the silica put in the container so that it kept it dry.

And I still have it today, *that* I didn't give to the hālau.

**rediscovering, reconnecting, and reviving as research**

*my goal is to make kapa as good as my grandmother's kapa.*
*She's got beautiful, I mean, it's so wonderful to be able to go to the museum, and look and touch their pieces.*

So, getting back that's right I forgot to mention this.

Merrie Monarch, when we did the Merrie Monarch, we asked if, you could either loan it or give it. Some you know, some gave, a few of them gave their kapa.

I didn't.

And I didn't because it wasn't good enough. I didn't think it was good enough, and I didn't want to give a piece that I know, that someday that someone would be dancing in it and then it falls apart. And of course, even with the dancing, there was a lot of tears, so you know, in that box that I sent my pāʻū with, I even had tape. Said, "if it tears, just tape it don't worry about it." Because I knew it was already really not that well. So for me, doing the 2014 performance I wanted to do it because I wanted to improve. And that's why many of us did, because we wanted to do it better the second time.

And I think we all, we proved, that we did.

Iʻve made several other pāʻū since, and I've learned several different methods just by, you know, beating, by *doing* the kapa. Seeing where things could, I could do something better, and it's now, it's stronger, and I believe, I'm almost sure, that if you wanted to wash it, I could.

Because they said, they could wash it.

It was washable.

Yea. So for me with kapa making, my goal is to make kapa as good as my grandmother's kapa. She's got beautiful, I mean, it's so wonderful to be able to go to the museum, and look and *touch* their pieces.

Mama. There's, from Mama, her mother, and her grandmother's. Three of them, three of them. And it's, it's beautiful. I mean there's, there's several pieces, and there's one, it's a paʻiʻula, which is the pink. So it's a pink kapa, and it's a kapa moe. So there's *ten sheets*. ʻCause I was, you know, thank God we were able to go and see it in the museum.

Ten sheets.

So the top sheet is the paʻiʻula, ok, so Emerson writes in this, that book, Material Cultures, of the paʻiʻula, he says, "that is one of, it's the best paʻiʻula kapa that he has in his, that he's ever seen." You know, so, she was the, one of the *best*, and I'm hoping that I could be as good as she, she was. I don't know, I started when I was what in my 50s, almost in my 60s, now it's been 10 years you know, I maybe have another good 10 years to get -

*You have plenty time*

Huh? Ok
[laughs]

*growing up,*
*you said there was 4 of you?*

Growing up we have 6, yea there was 6 of us actually so, I have 2 brothers, 3 sisters.

*And you're the only one practices kapa?*

Yes, nobody else wants to 'cause it's stinky.

[laughs]

They avoid me like the plague!

Yes, everybody thinks this is so glamorous, oh I want to make kapa!

And then, of course, the first test is, we got fermented wauke, right, if *you* can tell me, oh this smells good! I can't really, you know, smell the stinky, then *you're* a true kapa maker, because

[laughs]

'cause yes, because it's fermented right, yes, it's smells. Bad. And you know, it's like, it's funny because, Ka'iulani and I, you know, we're beating, and everyone is going "oh what is that *stinky* smell? Where is *that* smell coming from?"

And we just look at each other, and smile, and we keep beating, and, "oh, I don't know?" But that smell can stink on you, it's in your hands, you're fingernails.

Don't go shopping after you've been beating because people will be looking at you strangely

[laughs]

But, that's one of the drawbacks, but you know, like, we don't really smell it, I mean, it doesn't really bother us, yah we know, you know it smells, but, you know after you beat, you just, don't even think about it.

We never, we were not exposed to kapa, at *all*.

I mean even if we went to the Bishop Museum, which is the only place that they would have, right,

So you see it in the back in the window, you see this lady supposedly dress in kapa, but, it, or you see a piece, the display tells you it's a piece of kapa, you know, but it's just a piece of cloth, you don't even think about it as cloth, either.

So it wasn't really *real,* it's just another piece it's like looking at the whale hanging up in the ceiling, I mean you relate more to that whale than we did to the kapa, or even to be drawn to.

Some of the kapa makers will say, you know, they saw kapa at the museum, and they always wanted to make kapa. I never, never saw it, I never even thought twice about it as clothing, or cloth, or even a piece of art.

So that's why when my brother said, "ok so you're going to make kapa," I had no idea. How to make it, what the plant was, nothing, nothing. So other than, I mean, I used to sew, but then, you don't *sew* kapa, you know, I don't think there was *any* collection. At all. So. You know.

And then, growing, even in school you never learned about it, we never learned about that. You know, we never *knew*, that our, growing up during that period, and my parents, you weren't proud to be Hawaiian. Hawaiians were lazy, Hawaiians were stupid, Hawaiians, you know you had, all the negatives about Hawaiians.

Today, and thank God for the museum that we can see these, these pieces of art and appreciate it, and I think, only because of my brother, really, that when he started into it and he started making bowls and he wanted to do traditional ʻumeke, was, that's when I started to really appreciate it, because he was making all these pieces that I didn't realize or, you know, like again, we see it in the museum, we don't know what the use is, ok so we knew the ʻulu maika, that kind of stuff, but, the *craftsmanship*, *that's* the thing, you know, never knew, because we never got up close to see how it was made. And to appreciate that and understand that these people, our ancestors, were intelligent and artistic, you know, it was opposite of what we grew up believing who our ancestors were.

You know, now we can stand proud and say, "hey, *no way*, Hawaiians made the best, in almost *everything*."

Ok, so, it's not for me not so much looking at the designs which is a whole different thing in itself, but it's the kapa, the cloth.

How well it was made, how well it's—

when the pieces that we see in the museums, it's hundreds and hundreds of years old. So we wonder how could they make it so even, so fine? It's paper thin, it's soft, it's strong. You can go to the museum, you can pull these pieces and it's not gonna tear.

It's still strong.

So you know, you still very, you still lift very delicately, but if you really tug on it, it's still strong. So, and then when I'm making, when we beat out these pieces, I always end up with, you know there's like, this one thread, you know, after it's dried, too late, and now you have this cut, or this puka,

And it's like we *still* trying to make so even, ʻcause they never had pukas. No more pukas! If you hold it up, and you know, you see there's this watermark, and that's another thing, right—

The watermarks, how did they come up with that, right? To put this beautiful watermark, again, it's the craftsmanship.

Every piece.

Maybe it's because, you know, what we're looking at, it is museum quality too, so the collector was looking for the best. A lot of the pieces were from Royalty, you know, that some of the, many of the, that's in the collection, so again, it's the *best*. You know.

So they had the everyday stuff, you know, that they're not gonna buy, so we don't know how, how they made the everyday clothing. But if you look at just the kapa moe, or the kīhei, they're all, I mean now this is, kapa moe is *huge*, right? And they got 10 sheets.

You know, they got at least 10 sheets. And I saw a few like, my grandmother's things there was one that was, I think 4, 4 sheets was the least, 6, so, and then there was one that was really interesting—

oh no I saw this one at the Canterbury Museum, it was actually a pāʻū, and there was 10 sheets, but it was reversible. So you could, you could reverse it, so you had on the one, well no the kilohana, the top sheet, was one design, and then another one, was another

design, so you could flip it over and tie it wearing the same, you know, it was like tired wearing the same clothes, it was amazing!

Ingenious! Exactly!

So we scratch our heads, we think, how did they *think* these things, I mean we're talking in 1800s! You know, and to make the tools, so fine, well at first we used to scratch our, '*how* could they do it?' You know, with a niho 'oki carving tools, well, we talking, at the peak of kapa making was in the mid-1800s. And by then, they already had the missionaries came, they had carvers, they had tools. So, they were able to chisel and do the finer cuts and designs, you know, but still.

*We* having a hard time making those same designs like the watermarks carving it even on the 'ohe kāpala, some of them are *so so tiny*, skinny, it's like not even, 1/18th of an inch wide, and they carve these little designs on it.

Amazing!

And you only find it in Hawai'i. Because if you look at other Pacific cultures it's very crude, a lot of their tools and stuff are very crude compared to our Hawaiian artifacts. Their bowls are finished, you know, it's shiny, I mean, it's so smooth, and everything it's made to perfection. You cannot compare the Hawaiian artifacts with other cultures, for being out in the middle of nowhere, so isolated from the rest of the world, it's just mind-boggling.

Yea, but, anyway, so to get back to that question on what I look at, in the kapa, the, the perfection. And the thinness.

That is what I strive for every time.

I'm working on right now a kapa moe, which is

[laughs]

gonna be 10 by 10 feet wide,

[laughs]

square! It's like crazy!

So, but it's my second one, and, I made one kapa moe, last year, and it was about two years ago I finished it last year, and it was for an exhibit in New Zealand.

It was actually, so at first I was gonna do a pā'ū, and then, *somebody* by the name of one of my haumānas, by the name of Marlene, says to me, Aunty Verna, you know one day I want to make a kapa moe.

And I said, "ok, you go girl, because *that* wasn't on my radar."

I take small steps. And

[laughs]

of course, so this is another story.

Ok, so my brother one day shows up to me, at my house, and he always, he makes my tools, right, 'cause, according from what he said when first started, he said, "the men, in, in the old days the men made the tools, the women made the kapa. I'll make your tools."

So he does that.

So he made em, of course he made me a kua and everything.

One day, he calls me up and he says, “Oh, I got something for you.”

So he shows up, and he has this kua, it’s like 6 and a half feet long. And it’s like, Ohhhh-kay! He could, he could barely carry it down he had to come with a friend. It was so heavy. And so he said, “ok here, made you a kua, now you can go make a kapa moe.”

I said, “ok,” so at the time,

I said, “oh yeah *right*, I don’t think so!”

My exact words.

And so, then, you know, Marlene comes along and says that,

[laughs]

Now, I’m talking to this gal in New Zealand about this exhibit that’s coming up. And so I’m telling her that I’m, she said to me, “Why don’t you make a pāʻū,” so I said ok. So I figure that by then, it would be my third pāʻū, I could pretty much get it.

Ok, so. I made a pāʻū. And I was just about, it was all done, and so, I was talking with this gal, Ngahiraka, she was the curator for the Auckland Art Museum. And, you know I was telling her, we were talking about the exhibit, and so I said, “yea, you know, Marlene wanted to make a kapa moe,” and so you know, I went and opened my mouth, for some reason and I said that, and so

[laughs]

Ngahiraka says to me, “Aunty Verna, that would be wonderful!” So *now*, I said

[laughs]

I get hooked in, it’s like hoooly moly I’m gonna make a kapa moe. But then I thought, ok, it’s another challenge. I figured, I already made pāʻū, which was, I can, I *know* now, that I made it good enough where they can wear, comfortable, flexible, and wearable, you know, so.

So, ok, so the next challenge *was* a kapa moe.

So I start out, ok, I started out and made a kapa moe.

I was thinking one sheet at the time. Then, when I *finished* it, I thought, a kapa moe is not a kapa moe with only one sheet. The one sheet would be a kilohana, so I had to go now, with two sheets to make it a kapa moe. So, that was 8 feet by 8 feet. And I finished that, and fortunate, actually that was intended to make one for my bed.

Well, this gal Ngahiraka comes by one day, and I’m showing her, I had printed up the kilohana, and she says to me, “Aunty Verna, are you thinking of selling it? Would you be interesting in selling it?” I said, “Well, I hadn’t thought about it, that was for me, for my bed.” And it looks pretty good on my bed too!

[laughs]

It *really* looked good on my bed.

And so I said, “Well, you know, I guess, I don’t know, I could be open, I hadn’t thought about it” So anyway, she took the picture and asked if she could send it off to people, so she did.

The very next day, the Auckland Museum, says, they want to buy it.
I was like, flabbergasted, I was like, ok, I didn’t expect a response so soon, and so they wanted to know how much, now I had to go figure out the cost. My hand was shaking because it was so much

[laughs]

Just going on the low end, and so, they did purchase it, and it’s now, will be in the museum collection for generations. So someday, could be a hundred fifty years later like myself, going to the museum, and seeing, and finding that, they can, you know my great, great, great, great grandchildren, will be able to see my work.

In the museum.

That’s awesome. It’s such a privilege and an honor, you know, so,

*I remember you sharing about,*
*trying to figure out how to come up with a price*
*[laughs]*

Oh gosh, yes. Shall I tell you that story?

[laughs]

Ok, so I’m sitting down, I’m thinking I have to go figure out how, what to sell this thing for, I think the most I ever sold anything previously was I think, about, 3 or 4 thousand dollars. And that was a lot.

So now I’m trying to figure out for the kapa moe, which is, at the time when they asked me I only had the kilohana, so I still had to do the second sheet.

So I kind of gave an estimate on what size, I knew I wanted to make the bottom sheet bigger. So I was shooting for 8 feet. So I said, ok, so, the top sheet ended up, was, with the trimming and stuff, was, came to about 6½ , 7 feet, the bottom was 8 feet.

So now I got 2 sheets, I’m figuring it out.

So I’m doing the calculations, ok, so I’m start on the low end, and I, you know, didn’t, at first I didn’t even know how to start, where to start.

So I call friends, right.

So I call my artist friends.

So I call and said, “so I need help. How do you um, place, place a price on your art work? Is there a standard of some kind?”

“Oh, no, Aunty Verna, you know artists it’s so, but nobody knows how to price their own piece, art.” It’s pretty much, you look at, they look at the piece, and say “ok, this is how much I want for it.” And they put it out there.

So I said, so, I said, “well thanks a lot!” Well

[laughs]
you're no help.

So then I call Marie. Marie *gotta* know, she sells kapa.

'Cause the other artists are, you know, they do oils, painting, that kind of stuff, right.

So I call Marie 'cause Marie sells her pieces.

"Marie, I need help. How do you price your kapa?" So I tell her what it's for, what I'm doing. And so she says, "No."

[laughs]

I mean, this is Marie

[laughs]

She'll tell you exactly how it is. Ok.

"No, I'm not gonna tell you."

It's like, holy crap, she's not gonna tell me!

So I'm thinking to myself, right. I said. But.

So she says, "Verna, I tried every way you do by the square inch, square foot, you know, you, or, how much," she said, "You also have to take into consideration if you, you planting it, how many years, because we have to plant, we have to make our own tools, we have to do all of this, you can't buy anything."

So, she takes into account all the planting, 2 years before you can pick your stock.

Then you gotta do your dyes. You gotta plant, or you gotta collect your dyes, you gotta, you know, and all of this, she says, "By the time you finish calculating all of these different costs, it's so, you know, outrageous, that nobody, it's, you know, nobody would able, be able to afford it, or it just is too ridiculous, right."

So anyway, right, so okay, well thank you Marie, you no help, right

[laughs]

So she goes, "Well, no so I just look at it, and I think ok, it looks like a 2,000 or 5,000 dollar piece, and that's it. That's how I price it."

I said, "great."

Still no help, right. 'Cause I'm looking at my kapa moe, and it's not telling me that

I'm, you know, whatever

[laughs]

So, ok, so anyway, now I go, ok, and do the, by the foot, square foot, and so on the low end so I go may 1.50, maybe 2.00 a square foot, or square inch.

So at the low end, I'm coming up with 25,000.

It's like, holy moly, my hand is shaking. I sold one piece for 4,000. Now I'm too, talking about 25? I can't go any lower than that.

And, so, call my friend, and I go, "ok I came up with 25."

And she says, "Aunty Verna! That is a *kapa moe*, you can't sell it for 25! That is too low! At least 50!" I said, "Oh my God, 50? Are you *kidding* me? 50,000??"

My hand was shaking with 25, right.

So anyway I'm talking to my sister one day, right after that, talking to my sister and telling her about my problem, and so all of a sudden, I see this 60K flash right in front of me. And so I tell my sister, "holy Moly, I just saw 60K." So she said, "well I guess you're going to have to charge 60K." And I thought, it's not, I'm looking at the kapa moe, I don't think it's 60K. Because I'm still thinking,

And I think when we price stuff, we're looking at what we can afford, right. We're not looking that there's this bigger audience out there, so there is maybe somebody that *has* that kind of money. But we don't look at, and many times that's what I think. You know, when I'm trying to price something.

And you know, even my brother, when he prices his stuff, like, it's so ridiculously low or free, right.

[laughs]

And so, we don't, and I was also trying to think of, ok, so this is one, this kapa moe, is probably one of the *only* kapa moe out there, that's really out there for sale. I don't if anybody has, anybody else that has made a kapa moe, within this group of kapa makers, now.

I know Marie hasn't.

Dalani hasn't.

Moana Eisele hasn't.

I think maybe, Pua Van Dorpe, I know she made a piece big enough, but I don't know if it was just for art, or whether it was for kapa moe, you know.

So but anyway, taking that, I had to take that into consideration. Also, if I price it too low it might hurt anybody else, so if somebody makes that and they want to go higher, mine is so low, you know, there's no comparison because there isn't really, for kapa makers it's hard to compare prices, because there's very few pieces out there.

So anyway, I have the 60,000 but I was thinking more like, I went up to maybe 30, so now I'm working on the second sheet. So when I'm finished, I'm printing, I'm dyeing, I had to do a lot of touchups, go over and over again, and smoothing, and softening it, and doing all that work, until I finally felt it was, if I asked for 60,000, it was worth the 60,000. You know, I didn't want to put a high price and it's not that quality, because I really try to do every, whatever I do, I try to do my best, and if it's not good enough, it either gets tossed or, you know, put aside. But I felt when I was finally finished, I could say 60. And that's when I went back to the museum, and gave them the price.

I, and so I did ask for 60.

They came back and of course they had to, it was a big ticket item, and they, you know, they had to go and look for resources, and so it took about, almost a year, and we finally finished, they came back and said if I would consider 50. And in my mind, I knew that was, I would go as low as 50, and that was, that would be it. But, I accept their offer at 50. We didn't

negotiate any further, I didn't want to play the game, you know, going back and forth so, when they came back at 50 I said good.

And you know I feel good about it, they're happy with it. They were able to see it when we went up in March, or, yea, March, they had the PAA, the kapa was put up for display, so they, the museum people were very happy about it. And, you know I was thrilled. And just to see, they have the kapa symposium, and they have my kapa moe up by the stage, and you know we know see Tongan and Samoan pieces, they're huge, right? So they had all their pieces hanging up on the wall, and, you know normally, I think this was actually the first time, *really* kapa, Hawaiian kapa was presented.

And to see that there's a huge, a big piece, not just a small piece, but a kapa moe, I mean I was so proud for Hawai'i that I could represent Hawai'i with a kapa moe. You know, it wasn't, not, it's not that I was proud because oh, that was my kapa moe look what I did, it was wow, Hawai'i is, we have a big, a big kapa, what is the word, that's been done today and not just in the collections or in the back of the—

we have a contemporary piece.

Yes, so, you know it had the watermark, it's, it was thin, it was soft,
I had to make it soft enough because I had to take it with me to New Zealand. So I had to be able to fold it, because it's 8 feet, if I rolled it and I had to put in an 8 foot tube, that wasn't going to work, so I worked to soften it.

Took me months.

That's why I ended up going with such a high price, too, when I while doing it, I realized and especially after doing all the touch ups and the printing, and the, you know, 'cause each, I put like 6 coats of dye to make it that vibrant colors. You can't just go with one because then, you know, the black will look like gray, so it, it took, 6, maybe even more, 'cause I went back to touch up because as I'm working on it, rolling it, folding it, some of the colors they fading away or, they coming off, because it's 'alaea,

*So you paint, let it dry, paint again,*

Yes, yes
So, at least, I know at least 6, for sure 6 coats. And, plus touch ups.
Then, the softening.
You know, try to sit and soften pieces, a piece that's 8 feet.

[laughs]

And I'm going to do a 10 feet, can you imagine?

[laughs]

*You softened it,*
*you softened it after you stamped it?*

Well, you soften it after it's beaten and dried because it's stiff.

So you have to be able to you know, roll it. And so, I do soften it a bit, so I go with, I beat it out with the mole side, the flat, so you beat down, all the, the watermarks to, so that it's smooth for printing. And then, I rub it with the shell.

So it was hours and hours.

And every night I'd take it out, rub it, you know I'm on my bed, watching TV, with a board, on my lap, and just rubbing. So rubbing, then I gotta roll it, you know, then I open it up, rub it again, roll it, keep, until it's soft. And that took a long time, because, it had to fold be able to sit on the bed, you know.

And it wasn't stiff, so I was able to get it pretty soft, and was able to fold it and put it in my suitcase and took it there so, yea, and now it's in the Museum, Auckland Museum.

And I had, you know I was hoping that I would be able to have displayed it over here at Bishop Museum, but I really didn't even have a chance to, right, because I wasn't even finished with it and they were making an offer. I was kind of debating, oh should I?

You know after you work on it for so long and you put your blood, sweat and tears in it, to not have it, and to give it away, it was a little.

Yea that was kind of hard, you know, so, but you know I'm happy for, that it is in the Museum, and if I want to see it, I can go to New Zealand, I can go to Auckland Museum, and look at it. It might not be on *my* bed, but at least it's there and not in,

If I sold it to a collector you'd never see it.

So, yea. I'm really, I'm really, really thrilled and honored.

You know we have to keep challenging ourselves, and, the more you do it, the better you'll get at it, because you're learning from,

every one,

every piece is different,

every plant is different, even if it's the wauke.

If it comes from Waiʻanae, it's different from the one you're going to get in your back yard, or in Mānoa, you know, so, you're never going to get the same result. Unless you keep beating, and beating, you know, it's in getting the right, not texture, but the thickness, you know like, Marie makes hers, and she always says hers is pretty thick, hers is made for art, so when we did the Merrie Monarch, it was a challenge for her, to make it soft. In fact, when she took it to the hālau, she took her piece, and she said, let them try it on, and as soon as the dancer bent it tore.

But, you know Marie knew that, she said, "Don't worry," she was there, said "don't worry about it," of course the dancer felt sick because she tore Aunty Marie's kapa, but it was because it was still stiff, and she was asking *me,* "how do I soften it?"

You know, and I don't do the traditional, I mean I try to be traditional, and my kumu, Kaʻiulani's, she's very traditional, and you know she'll always question, "is that traditional?" oh that's not, you know, so, but, I say I'm not sticking to traditional, if I want to color, I'm going to work at that color that I want, and sometimes I'll use other means to get the color.

Stained, but using the Hawaiian plants. You know, I don't think, I've used anything

outside of Hawaiʻi. There's a few times I've got some plants that weren't Hawaiian, but when we were doing the two projects we had to use traditional plants. And dyes. So, we had to stick to the Hawaiian plants so – and I think, like before, I used to say I'll not you know, really, stick to tradition, I even used to use acrylic paints at one time.

Now as I'm doing it, I *really want* to do traditional dyes. You know, and I try to, you know, I may use a little different mordant, but still try to stick it, so a lot of times what I'm using is ʻalaea, because it's, *I* know it's not going to fade. So we use plant dyes and it fades, or it changes color, I don't know, we don't know to today, we don't know how our tūtūs did their dyes and their colors are still as vibrant as ever!

Their purples are purple, and, their blues are blues, still dark, ours, our blue in, in 6 months it's gray, you know, how did they keep the colors?

So, you know, that's the thing that we, I think we still strive to figure out how they were able, how they were able to do, what did they use to get these colors, what did they do to make this kapa so perfect in their beating. You know, so.

Unfortunately they're not here to show, to tell us, but, for me.

I take that back.

For me, I know, that my great, great, great, great grandmother, Mama Kahunaʻaina, has guided me, and, in everything to get us started. I mean, God, you don't know how many times, I swear, like my brother when we first started. And he's one, says, "I don't believe in that kind of stuff, you know, those Hawaiian superstitions, whatever." You know I don't think it's superstition but, that's ok, so we get started, we found out it's, you know, Mama, we see her stuff in the Museum.

So he's now gotta make my tools, right, so he's goes, "aw, ok, I gotta make your iʻe kuku," so he's looking in that book, and he says, "oh you know they use kauila, um, koaiʻa, and ʻolopua," and all these different woods *I've* never heard of, I never heard of that woods, those woods. We know koa, you know, even ʻōhia, you know, ok, but native woods? No.

So when he was saying these woods, as soon as he said ok, well, you know, it started out with the kua, he says, "oh look, they make, they use olopua, for the kua" and I said, "well what is olopua?" right? So—

All of a sudden the phone rings. I mean, I, I swear to God, the phone rings. So it's this guy from the Big Island, and he says, "oh Sol, you know, um, I got this log," and, I, he has this big property on, in, ah, the Big Island, he says, "I got this log, and it's olopua," and he wanted to make a kua. So he said, "you know, I think you can get two kua so you can make one for me and you can have one." You know, you can make, have the other wood for whatever you want to do. So, he goes, he brings back this wood, and he makes this kua for this guy and makes one for me.

And so, then he's going one day, again one day we're sitting and he goes, "oh, gotta make the iʻe kuku, you need," ok so they use kauila, "but you know kauila is a rare wood you know," and he's going on, ok, so, I'm sitting there, ok, whatevers, because I don't know, have a clue about any of these woods I never heard of right?

The phone rings. And then, it's koaiʻa. The phone rings, ok, so this guy has this ah, koaiʻa tree and this huge branch is growing over the road and into the, phone lines or electrical lines and gotta cut ʻem. So he goes up, he gets koaiʻa.

And then, somebody calls again, and you know, it's kauila.

So finally I said to him one day, and I said, "you know cannot – somebody is making all of these things available to us, somebody from the, from beyond," and I said, "maybe it's our tūtū."

So, I said, "but I don't know," so I said, ʻcause he says, "why?" I said "because every time you open your mouth—the phone rang!" I said, "Look, you said koaiʻa, the phone rang! You said olopua, the phone rings! Who *does that*?!" I mean, you know you never heard of these woods, all of a sudden, every time you open your mouth, I mean it was amazing.

ʻTil today, he says he needs something and he gets these phone calls—

[laughs]

And so, and he tells me, he don't believe in that kind of stuff, I said, "I don't know what it would take for you to believe, but, you know, it's, it's, somebody up there beyond, is, making this happen. And you know, this, ʻtil today, here we are, you know.

It's been a journey, and it's a wonderful journey, it's, it's, amazing, I mean I never know what's going to happen tomorrow.

I just leave it, out there. And hope for the best and, believe me, this, ever, you know, this, this past few years, things happen that I never, ever dreamed.

So, going back to that question, about, my, you know, if it's the past, did I see kapa, or what inspired me or, to do kapa. Nothing. Not in the past. Not that I'm aware of. Maybe subconsciously but no, it was Mama pushing me

[laughs]

It's, you know it's like, I think I'm fulfilling her dreams, of you know, having this continued, or just to see us taking this path that she's just, helping me, helping us along. You know, so it's special. And, yea. And I'm, I feel so honored, so blessed, to be the chosen one.

Because I don't know how come she chose me, but, I'm, I'm just, so grateful.

Anyway.

That's it, for the night.

**the second day**

*What are we covering today?*
*You, you gotta ask me a question*
*it's like I've been in kapa beating mode.*

**the second kapa moe**

*Think I'm doing pretty good, so, and then, so again, then I go back, to the watermark.*
*And like I said, the last one took me 8 hours, straight 8 hours.*
*I didn't even break for lunch, so I know, with this one being 10 feet, that 2 feet wider made a big difference.*

Oh, making another kapa moe. My goal is, 10x10, if I get 9x10, or 9x9, I'll be happy. But it's, I'm almost at the finishing stage. Just gotta do the watermark. That'll probably take 2 days. The last one I did was 8x8, and that took me 8 hours.

Just to beat the watermark in.

It's just one, we just go one time through and beat in the watermark so, it's just a tapping, it's not where, you actually beating out the kapa to – it will spread a little bit, depending on which you know, watermark you use, so I have to decide of course, which one I want, haven't decided that yet

[laughs]

But then, you know, I'll be beating across, what I've found and I was timing myself, beating 5 in-, 5 inches by 10 feet, it's taken me half an hour to do one row.

And then move it.

And that's just, you know I'm almost at the end, so it takes longer because you gotta even it out. Make sure, you know, making sure there's no holes, or splits. I'm just trying to get it really nice and even. Spreading it to the desired width and length.

So I think I'm almost there. Today it's probably the fifth day that I've spent just working on spreading it out, I joined four pieces together that was about 26 to 30 inches wide. And about, 9 to 10 feet long.

So, to start out on the kapa moe, I beat out pieces about 2 feet wide, and then, got the length, so about, went for 9 to 10 inches 'cause you know, you allow for, as it spreads it gets either longer or wider. So once I got that, some of the pieces were 26 to about 30 inches in width. Then, I got, so I beat 4 separate pieces because I wanted to get you know, shooting for 9, at least 9 feet width. And then, the length is easier because you can, you're adding the pieces and you get it to that length so you know pretty much the length, it's the width that's you know, kinda iffy. So I got the 4 pieces then I beat it out as thin as I could and then joined at the seams about, I overlap about an inch, to 2 inches.

Then once it's all connected, which I *used* the vinyl, because that way it's easier to, you know can lie the whole sheet down, and then join. I don't know how they did it in the, during our kūpuna's times, but that's for me, you know with one, just myself doing it, that made it easier. So once I got it on the vinyl I rolled it up, and worked, beat, you know, beat, downwards. So by beating out the seams and, you know, just moving it along, so that's, that's been taking quite a while, to do. You know once you, once I added the pieces together, it was, you know it was kind of tedious and, time consuming, and it's still so it's, and the more I beat, as you get closer to the finish, it takes even longer, so—

*how come?*

Because the, the fiber has already, it's, you know you've beaten it down, it's gotten smoother, you have to get it thinner, so you're now working to get it thin, even because you don't want to have, you know bunches, there's sometimes you have some areas where the wauke is thicker, so you gotta work that down, you gotta beat that out to, you know, even it out with the whole, the whole piece, and I usually try to take my time because I do want to get it as thin as I can, and even. So.

Think I'm doing pretty good, so, and then, so again, then I go back, to the watermark. And like I said, the last one took me 8 hours, straight 8 hours. I didn't even break for lunch, so I know, with this one being *10 feet*, that 2 feet wider made a big difference. Already 8 feet when I did the last one, it was challenging.

Of course it was my first one that was that large.

And, so now it's 10 feet, it's taken even much longer. So, when I timed myself the other day to see how long it was taking me to just do 1 roll because each time you're beating on the kua, on the top it's about 4 to 5 inches. So as you, so, and then the whole length is I got, at this point it's 10 feet. So, you only moving it 5 inches. So it's taking me half an hour just to do one row.

So I'm almost there!

[laughs]

I'm almost there. And then, once I do the watermark, then it will be dried, and then the next thing is to kinda soften it, a little, at least enough for me to be able to roll it.

And then I can put it away for a little while but it will be, that's going to be another challenge, just to, get it soft enough, just to be able to, uh, make it, pliable, where, you know, I can do the printing or dyeing. And then after that, it's softening it, and softening it, you know, it will, it will take hours and months to soften it to make it soft enough for, to lie on a bed, because you want it to be able to, you know, be a blanket at least. So.

The first one, because it was, well it was my first, the way I looked at it when I decided to make a kapa moe, I thought well, I made a pāʻū, so the pāʻū is 12 feet long and it was 30, 34, 32 to 34 inches wide, I thought ok, I can make a kapa moe, I mean a pāʻū, all I have to do is 4 pāʻūs. So yea, in my head

[laughs]

so that's how I went about it, and then put that 4 pieces together, so, you know, if somebody wanted to, ah, a kapa moe, I would suggest, you know, that's the thinking, you know, process if you can do a pāʻū, then you can do 2 pāʻūs. And you can start with a pūneʻe type of, you know top, spread, or kapa moe, and then just, you know work your way, and to a bigger size, which I did, the first one was smaller, so, actually when I first, when I started, I was thinking that I was going to make a kapa moe, but then, ah, so I did one sheet, but then after was done I realized, wait a minute, a kapa moe has to be 2 sheets otherwise it's just a kilohana right, the top, so it's like, oh shoot! I gotta do 2

[laughs]

I need to be, it has to be a kapa moe. So, the first one, I started, um, it was 7, came out about 7 feet, 'cause you know at the, I didn't know how much to, how many, how much wauke to use, you know all of that, so you, that's—

you gotta make sure you have enough, otherwise, so I was short, you know I was shooting for 8 but I ended up with 7 feet. So I was short with the wauke.

So the second one I did, I added more, I added extra.

So I figured out how many it would take for 8 feet, then I added you know, another, 2 feet width to make sure I get the 8 feet. And you *should* add extra, because some of the wauke when you beating, you know, you got thinner ones and you got some that are thicker, or you got the top end, and the bottom ends of course is always wider so you gotta kind of, you know make up for that difference. So adding extra it's always better to add extra 'cause you know you can cut it off or you can use it for something else too, so, better to have more than not enough.

So with the one I'm making now—so getting back to your question, I learned, another thing was when I did it on the plastic, on the vinyl. The first one, I didn't tape it, I just kind of overlapped the, the vinyl, thinking you know, it would stick to itself. And it worked until I had to open up to dry.

It kinda shifted, so it pulled so, you know, on the edges, but what happened, though, I kept it that way because it came out looking kind of lacy, you know some parts, I left it at that, but you know, it didn't look like it was holes, it wasn't like it tore, but, it, it just kinda gave that, a little lacier look to it. So I just left it.

But with this, with the one I'm doing now, I tape the whole, I got the vinyl that is, it comes in widths of 5 feet, so I just taped the 2 pieces together to make it the 10 feet.

*Because they're long, how long are they?*

I got 12 feet to make sure I had enough for the top and you know, just, so just being able to work with that large piece is, challenging right. Especially for 1 person.

So when you looking at Tongan pieces, it's huge, they have lot of women working on it so they can move it easily, I mean you have 5 or 6 women sometimes, you know, pulling it, moving it, and each time they're beating, so, but with Hawaiian, with, Hawaiian kapa, it's finer so you

still have to have a method to move it without tearing, and because it's wet. So, anyway, so you learn and you try to figure out better ways to move it.

So the first one I was by myself, I had it put on the vinyl and just kind of, folded it and then moved, but I had to go from one end to the next, to the other, go through the center, pull it, each time so you moving it 5 inches.

Every 5 inches you have to move, every 5 inches you have to move it.

So that took a while.

So with this 10 foot piece, my brother who's, always, making my tools and trying to make my job easier, went and got a 10 foot long piece of, what is that, pipe? What do you call that? PVC pipe, and then he got another piece that was smaller, because he knows how to, if you could add this piece together, I wouldn't have known, that you c-, get this, you know, another type of, what, clamp, or connector. Yea, then he got this glue, who would have thought? Not me!

[laughs]

But he came and he did it so now, I was able to roll, put the kapa onto this pipe, and roll it, which made it so much easier. And quicker. Now you know I can lift the whole thing, turn it, and it pretty much keeps it even. And so the first day he comes and he makes, you know, I didn't think about it, but I just thought 1, pipe. Well, then after I was done, I went with the "oh shoots, I have to roll up the other side"

[laughs]

"How am I gonna do this right?"

So, he went home, the next day calls me up, I got another pipe, bringing it over, so now I got 2 10 foot long pipes, actually it's what about 11, feet, with the connect—

Oh yeah,

he made a handle right, for me to be able to pull it.

Yea, so it's always good to have a handy brother.

[laughs]

**black splotches**

*...it's hard to say when, it's hard.*
*You cannot say ok beat it 2 times then move on to the next one.*
*It all depends on the fiber.*

Yea at the beginning, ok, so the *very* beginning, the first beat you're beating on the pōhaku. So this is right after you strip it, scrape off the outer bark, you know you're going to beat it on the pōhaku, with the hohoa.

So, then we soak it in water, in this case we drying it, because what I found is, if you do the moʻomoʻo, and then it allows you to collect enough wauke to make a big piece like this, right, so. But it also, because you're drying it, it's, it's stronger, the fiber. It's maybe takes longer to beat, beating something that was dry first, rather than beating fresh, you know, and it doesn't break down as quickly, but I think, from what I'm finding, it's stronger than my beating fresh wauke, so—

and then of course, you know, if you want to make a big piece like that, you gotta collect. So I saw this, I have slides by,

I don't know if I'm supposed to say this, by a former kapa maker, and what she did to make these large pieces she would collect the wauke, and she would do moʻomoʻo, so she would beat it out, then dry it, and she put it in boxes and she'd measure it out, so there's some wauke that's 4 feet, 5 feet, 6 feet, so it's all marked and all sized. So when you doing a kapa moe it makes it so much easier because you're going to get these sizes and it's—

*So she left them in,*
*she didn't roll them up,*

She may have, I don't know, no she probably rolled it up. No, if you beat it out on the pōhaku really thin, which is that what she, you want to do that, the thinner you can get it, the better, you know at least more than one time. So you know, we used to beat one side, and then both sides, and then done, right?

But I'm finding with, when I was doing my classes, couple of my haumāna, were on the pōhaku just beating away, beating away, and they came to me and said "I think I overdid it." But when I looked at it, it was paper thin it looked like gauze. And I thought, oh this is perfect, because if we don't, I mean either way you still have to beat it out right, that's the goal is to beat it out thin but if you start out on the pōhaku which, and, with the hohoa it breaks it down even faster.

So, beat it out as thin as you can.

So then you dry it. And then you roll it,

So now when you gonna start beating, and you're going to add your pieces, because you've got to add pieces together to get your width, you don't end up with a thick, you know, if you're putting 2 to 3 pieces of stalks of wauke, it's thinner, so, it's already beaten out 4, 5 inches, not more, and it's easier to beat out a thinner piece, than trying to, you know, thick pieces.

Also what I found out recently, as I'm fooling around, as I was stripping some wauke, you know how they say we're folding—

if you pull the wauke stalks apart, it's already, the fibers are already interwoven. So we don't really have to fold and fold and fold.

So what I did was I get 2 pieces, 2 stalks that I've beaten out thin, and that's all it takes. You beat it out thin, then you add it on top of each other, and so, and it beats out, and it is strong. So by us beating thicker pieces, it takes longer to beat out and break it down, and we overbeat. This way, we beat it out thin on the pōhaku, then you put it to dry. Then you, of course you going to reconstitute it when you ready.

I find that the kapa that I'm making now, is much stronger. Much stronger. And I think it's because of the drying too.

The moʻomoʻo.

I'm not beating 4, 5 pieces together and keep adding on top of each other.

I'm adding at the seams.

*How do you determine when do you move,*
*when do you move from the wider grooves to the smaller grooves?*

The first, the wider grooves, ok, so, when you beating on the pōhaku already you using the wider groove *or* the smooth hohoa

So, then you going with your iʻe kuku, you using the wider.

When, when it starts to, when you beating and it keeps getting holes, and pukas and tearing, then you move to the next.

You know, it's hard to say *when*, it's hard.

You cannot say ok beat it 2 times then move on to the next one.

It all depends on the fiber.

So for myself and what I've tried to instill in my students now, is, study. When you beating, you *look* at the wauke, or your bast, and watch the fibers. You move it according to the fiber. It's going to tell you, you going to see it may be moving to the right, to the left, some parts are thick, then you move it back.

I beat not just to the side, to the right to the left, or down, I go all, I try to, I beat according to how the bast is moving, you know, so, but it's because I'm gazing on it and I'm, I'm looking at it intensely 'til I'm, actually I'm just focusing on that, so, then, of course then it tells me when to go to the other width.

Sometimes, ok so sometimes I'll be using the really finer, I've gone to the next, smaller width, finer lines, but I get to this one part that's not moving, then I go back to the previous one. So you still gotta, again, you know, by watching the bast, how it's moving, you gonna change. So don't just stick because, well, I moved to this line and I have to stick to this width of the, iʻe kuku, do whatever it takes to break it down and make it even. And again, if it, if you're using a wider one and its starts to get too thin, or lifts, or gets holes in it, then you're, it's breaking up too much so then you go to the finer one.

So it's, you know, once you start doing it, listen to your wauke.
It will tell you what to do.

Once you start a big piece like this, you gotta commit.
I mean, in anything, you should commit.
Especially with the, once you start beating, unless you can put it away in the refrigerator, fold it and put it away in the refrigerator to keep, for next week, if you leave it out it's going to rot, starts to mildew, so you gotta work it, as long as you're opening it up and exposing it to the air, it will be fine, but you gotta keep beating.
Don't leave it for a week, 2 weeks, and expect to, when you going to open it up, that it's still going to be nice and white.
You know, so, when I was working, what I would do was take vacation, I would plan it. If I wanted to work on a large piece, I could be doing the initial stages, because it would take, you know, a couple of hours, on the weekend or whatever, but when you get to the final stage and you gotta finish it, you gotta commit because it's going to take you, can take you 6 to 8 hours of beating. So I take vacation. I take a 2 week vacation and that's all I do is I work on the kapa and beat it. You know, once it's beaten out, dried, it's, you know, you, you can put it away you don't have to worry about printing it, dyeing it, until you're ready.
So if, you know, I wouldn't have been able to do a kapa moe if I was still working. Because I've been working on this kapa moe for over a month. Just beating almost everyday. You know, couple hours here, whatever, but—
and, there was, actually I did have it, when I was able to fold it up, because I could still, you know, in the beginning when I'm doing the separate pieces, so I had 4 separate pieces like I said, so I would beat one, put it away, so I'd put it in a Ziploc container, and it was ok. But I think there was one week that I didn't touch it for about, well not 1 week, over a week, and when I went to start again, it was already starting to, to get grey, the color. So, from that point on I knew I couldn't just leave it, I have to keep beating, so.

That's the thing, you know, so, I remember once, this, this guy came to, we were at Nā Mea on our Sunday, this guy shows up, and he was asking Kaʻiulani to help and he had this, he was making this, he was beating kapa, and he had this, it was a big, huge piece, but, he didn't work on it for over a month and he left it in this plastic container and it was black.
I never saw wauke *black* like that. It wasn't just turning grey, it was black.
It was horrible.
You know, so, and then he says, "well, what can I do, to, you know, how can, how can I get this, all this black out?" We said, "nothing, just take it and throw it away" I mean it was, it's a waste because it takes how long to grow it, or if somebody gives you, you know, you, you cannot waste it. You know, if you not going to be able to work on it, throw it in the freezer, throw it in the refrigerator
Yea, so, you just gotta be careful, cannot waste.
And that happened with one of my students on Maui.
Every, I tell them all the time, beat.

Beat, beat, beat. Finish it. Just beat it out.

And they would be waiting for me to come back. I'd go up there maybe once a month, I'd go back, they're at the same stage. They didn't do anything during the time I was gone, right.

And, in the meantime, they had, she had this, one gal had this beautiful piece. She was the one that beat it out really, on the pōhaku, I mean it was beautiful it was *so thin*, and it was, I was so envious. I thought, oh my gosh, it was better than me! I gotta learn that one. And that's, actually, that's from their experience, then I realized that's what we gotta do.

But here she had this beautiful piece, she was almost done. All she had to do was do her watermark. But then, and I had given her, she didn't do her watermark on her iʻe kuku. So, but I had taken my iʻe kukus up so I said "ok, you know, choose, if you want to use any of these watermarks."

But she said she wanted to carve her own.

And of course, she wanted to do something that was, actually *carving*, she wanted to do some-, you know, it wasn't one of the easier designs, which I, you know, suggested that she do.

Anyway she didn't do it.

And, she calls me one day in a panic, and she says,

[audibly gasps] "I just opened my wau-, my kapa, and it's, it's black. And, what do I do?" And you know it's like, I'm over here thinking, Oh, I just want to wring her neck, I've been telling you over and over again, beat it, finish it, dry it, if you're, even if you *don't* have a watermark, it's better than, you know, going to waste, *all* that work she put in. And when she took a picture of it, she had *black splotches*.

It was just ruined.

So now if she, even if she dried it, it wouldn't have been strong en- I mean you know, it be weak, the, the fiber breaks down to, to a stage where once it's dried, it would be like paper that was put in a blender.

It'd just fall apart, so.

I don't know what to say sometimes to them, trying to, you know I had, we had to learn through all of our experiences, and many of the kapa makers, when we get together, and we're talking, we want to ask, you know everybody has their own issues that has come up and how do you solve it, 'cause we all learning by, by our own experiences. And, you know, trying to improve each time.

So, we learn from each other, we share from each other, and it's amazing because sometimes from these people that have been beat kapa for 20, 30 years, asking, some, some new kapa makers, questions so how did they do this, or how did they do that, and you know, it's because every piece you beat, you learning from that piece.

Every one.

It could be the wauke that came, you know, where it came from, how *old* it is, how *young* it is, I mean, *everything*, everything.

So every piece is different, you learn from *every* time you beat.

*Mm. Yea I remember you telling me,*
*the answer to most of the questions is to—*

just beat. Yup. So when

[laughs]

when I'm doing the, I get calls or texts from my gals on Maui, Kumu what do I do? I'm, you know, it's getting holes or it's not moving, or whatev- When do I stop, and I'm looking at, and they think, they say, I think it's too thin, and so I look at it, just by, you know, they're, texting me their pictures, I just tell them just beat.

And so, so I even sing for them

[sings] "Just beat it, beat it!"

[laughs]

I mean they get tired of me saying, "beat it, beat it!" Because I get up there, I go back to Maui, and it's thick. And they think it's thin. You know, so, I take pieces up there, and I show them ‘cause you know, Maui they don't really have much that we can look at as far as, like we got, over here we got the Bishop Museum, right. So we can go and we can look at samples.

And then I also have samples that was from Malia Solomon, my cousin had given me some pieces so, and these came from Bishop Museum collections, so these are, you know, samples of, hundreds of years old.

So I show them how thin and that is the goal.

I keep telling them, that's the goal, that's my goal.

I don't know if that's what you want that to be your goal but to be kapa as thin and as good as they did, so-

When I go up and they say it's too, you know, they think it's too thin, and it's still thick. And I go and I beat it, out, and I get at least 2 inches, and you know, they're amazed, and that's why I keep telling them, beat, beat, beat.

You beat and, you know it was Ka‘iulani that told me, when I first asked them, because we *all* ask the same question.

When you first begin, "when do we know when to stop?"

And Ka‘iulani said, "you beat until it doesn't move."

I *always* remember that.

And so, my first piece kept moving and moving and moving. And it was like, thin, thin, thin. And then I finally said, "ok, you know, it's not moving," and, I was able to stop.

Then I stopped.

And ‘til today, I beat ‘til it doesn't move.

Hopefully, I mean, you know, like, but, this large piece? No way.

I could, I could beat another, I could beat this whole thing, you know, 2 more times, 2, 3 more times and it will still, you know, and I could get it, you know, thin, but, you know, no. I- my hands are aching, my back is breaking

[laughs]

So, but that's what they did if you look at the pieces, it's so thin that they had to beat 'til it stopped moving.

We see, you know, various pieces. The kapa moe, though, is probably the thinnest. I think malo is a little thicker, so we said.

Ok so I just take this back, 'cause Marcus told me one day, 'cause I asked him, right, and he said, the malo, they're all thin. It's all beaten the same way.

You know, but if you think about it, right, *especially* a malo. It's going between their legs so you don't want it so thick, right.

So, you know, and women used malo too.

That was their underwear, right, so- women had to, yes, women wore, they wore the malo. But you know, they only hear writings, because the men wore the malos, but women had their pāʻū or they had something but they had underwear.

We have to think that. Not just when they had their maʻi.

You know, and they, so. And Marie was the one that told me, and it's like, you don't even think about it, but that's true. Because they had, they,

But they, anyway.

But you want, when we were doing the Merrie Monarch for that hālau, we realize you know, you cannot make thick, too thick, because the thicker it is it's harder, they're twisting it, right, so they twist it and it's going between their legs and up their behinds, right. You want it as thin, you want it thin so, the malo if you look, it's thin, too. And it's just softened, but they were able to make it strong where they could, and you can make it thin, and strong. *Das* that I'm going do next, my brother was asking me, so, you know, he told, he came the other day and he says, "so what you going do after this now that you made the kapa moe? You know you gotta make pāʻū now, you know, and make it good."

I said, "I did, pāʻū, by the third one I made and, now that I, you know if I can make kapa moe, believe me

[laughs]

I can make a pāʻū

[laughs]

So, and, and I've done it so, I can make it soft.

I can make it and the last one I did, it's almost like, it's, it's strong, it's *no*t going to tear. And I, you know I was able to soften it enough, so, I'm almost sure that, you know, I feel really confident that the pāʻū is, whoever dances in it it's not going to have any problems with it, so, but the, I've never really, I've made one malo.

So, the next, that's what I'm going to do, is do a malo. And try to get it really thin and strong, be able to, twist it, and I think, I'm, I'm almost certain that I can. Especially since doing, you know the kapa moe, I'm making it thin, I'm making it long,

So if it's 12 feet now you gotta do 18 feet, but,

So I've done all the clothing, I don't know I'm going to do, what the next challenge is going to be, but I think the biggest challenge is doing kapa moe. So I do have to do another sheet so this one is the first of at least 2.

So I'll do another one.

**kuleana**

*But, you going to learn a lot, on your own, even if I teach, whatever I teach you.*
*It's the basics. You going to take it further, and you going to want to, you know, however you want to take it. And you'll be, hopefully you'll be better than me.*

Kaʻiulani taught me the basics, and I think that's all, pretty much what you need. It's, it's up to you to take what you learned and just practice.

And keep beating, like, I keep saying, just beat.

So, and she, I mean we met at least once a month, beating together, stripping together. She helped get me wau—,

she helped get me started.

I had no wauke I had nothing.

And of course, you know so she taught me the whole, the basics. But, as, you know it's been 10 years now, and you know I've been beating almost constantly and been doing all, it's, through that, I think, and I've learned, from every piece that I've made. You know. How to get better—

even with the wauke, where it came from, I mean some, some wauke that we got, especially in the beginning, you know I, I *never* worked with wauke before and, my brother went to the Big Island and he brought back wauke, and I think Kaʻiulani too, so she used to, I mean, give me all this wauke, and there was one time that this came from the Big Island, I think it was Manukā Park, state park.

And—*beautiful* wauke.

It was like, nice, beautiful, when we stripped it, the fiber was nice and strong. And so, anyway, we, I stripped it, and cleaned it, and as soon as I stuck it in water, this thing started turning. I mean it was like, crawling, this is like, this orange color, just like you know all the threads that weave through the plant, the fibers, it was almost like it was alive, just moving, this eerie, orange, brownish, color. It was just creeping me out, you know, for the, so

[laughs]

but I couldn't waste it, so anyway so, I, but I couldn't work on, with it either. So I dried it, rolled it up, and the longest time I just left it. And it was, you know I couldn't figure out why it was turning color. But it was something that was in the water I think there was like, copper, the, the pipes were, I forget what it was, but it was oxidizing. Some kind of oxidation in the waters over there.

So, get this weird color. And so the, and of course, I mean, I didn't waste it, I did use it. It, the kapa came out good. But it was brown.

You know, it wasn't white. But it was just, I'll never forget that, ooh that thing was like, just

[laughs]

like, crawling, yikes.

[laughs]

I thought it was possessed.

[laughs]

But you know, you learn a lot from your experiences. With Kaʻiulani, after, her working with me, the first week that she taught me, was, and then, it was at Nā Mea, my brother only goes there once a month right, so. I saw her the next month, and by then I was finished with that piece, but. I went home, and I just beat. You know, I just did what, ʻcause I, we had stripped, we had done all that, fermented it, and I just started beating.

We would beat together and I would watch her too, how she beat.

Because you don't know, sometimes when you, especially at the beginning ʻcause you questioning, am I doing this right, am I going left, right, where should I beat, right. So by watching somebody beat, everybody has their own methods. You know, they develop, you develop that on your own, so cannot really tell you *how* to beat.

You going to learn that and adjust.

But basically, *I* think, you know, I learned through just beating and practicing and doing it on my own. If I had questions I would ask her, you know, and of course you know she helped me with ʻohe kāpala, with the dyes, so she helped a lot.

But as far as, you know, beating goes, it just takes a lot of practice. You know, once you learn the basic, it's just a matter of now you go and beat. It's the same thing, it's the same method you gonna strip, you gonna soak, you gonna ferment, you do all of that, and then you start to beat. So she also had, of course she also taught me how to add pieces together, which is important too.

But, you going to learn a lot, on your own, even if I teach, whatever I teach you.

It's the basics. You going to take it further, and you going to want to, you know, however *you* want to take it. And you'll be, hopefully you'll be better than me.

I don't think there's any one way.

I mean, you know, like Moana Eisele, always used, everywhere, every time we see, you know, we bump into each other, she'd ask me about my beating.

And she said, "do you beat down or up?"

Like, I beat, down, up, side, crooked, you know

[laughs]

whatevers.

So there's, you know if you're just gonna, and if you watch there's some people that just have to do it one way, and they're just gonna do it. Ok, so they're going downwards, they going side.

But, you cannot just go downwards you gotta beat to the side, and then you take it down again, because you, whatever you moved to the side to widen it, you also have to straighten—

and that's another thing I learned. You know, I beat all over the place right, because I'm moving it. And I had to stop, because now that I'm teaching classes, students, I had

to look at what I was doing so that I could tell them. Because otherwise I'm just by myself and I'm just doing, you know, so immersed in it, and not thinking.

So, one day I sat down and watched, as I'm beating, I had to take note of what I was doing. And so yea I beat sideways, up, down, to the left to the right, crooked, I mean, you know, I'm moving it along, but then I found that I was, when I'm done moving, to a certain poi—you can only move it, the fibers, you know, just so far, otherwise it just gets crooked.
So you what you do is, what I found, that I come back down and I even it downwards so I'm taking the threads now, straight back down. Almost straight, so, what you're removing is all the broken up fiber and the, the moisture.

Right, so removing that and it helps to break it down but, the threads, the fibers, you beat back down, and you strength—and so that way, as you moving it, the bulk is gonna come, you know you going to have this even, everything is going to be even out through the whole width of it. So I come back down. So I'm beating this way, and crooked, whatever, but, then I come back, even it out, then I move it.

So, and now, this is like, just recently that I figured that one out. So, otherwise, you just doing it, right so, when you actually stop and think about *why* you doing it or what you doing it, what you doing, you learning.

So again, each time you going to learn something different, something new.

What's my favorite piece?

I don't, know, I don't have a favorite piece because I still don't think I've made a perfect piece. I don't, I mean that's, honestly—I guess I'm, you know, I'm too much of a perfectionist, and I always see something wrong, a flaw. I won't think it's good enough, so you gotta make it better, you know. So like, when I did the kapa moe, ah geez, I mean yes I know it was impressive because it was a big *piece*, I did, you know two *sheets*, and it came out pretty *nice*, and you know.

But there was a lot of room for improvement. And that's what I saw.

It was beautiful, yea, I could, I saw it on my bed, and I thought *WOW*, you know.

Every time I looked at it I thought 'WOW, it looks nice on my bed,' and I guess that was, I guess that might have been my best piece. But I still wanted to do better. Because I saw that there was *lot* of room for improvement and that's why I'm doing this other one, too make sure it's better. Hopefully when I'm done, I can say, *'WOW*, that *is* perfect!'

**hoʻokuleana**

*we're looking for somebody with that fire*

Being able to know that somebody else is going to be able to, carry, on.

And you know you can, you can see those, that are really going to continue, and you know, we're looking for somebody with that fire, I guess, and—

Finding that one, or knowing that you have some of your students that has that in them and will continue, you know, ʻcause you have plenty, a lot of people come and they want to learn kapa, and they don't realize the dedication it takes. You know, so, they drop out like flies. I mean they come in, they finish one small piece, and you never see them again. And those that really stick it out, you *know* that that's, we *hope* that they're going to be able to continue this art form, and there's so much potential for them. I mean even if we, most of us what we do, we want to learn so that we can also teach it to someone else right, so that this art form doesn't get lost again, or forgotten. But, when I look at the students and I see, that like even my brother and I,

So, ok so there was, one of my first, our first, haumāna was my cousin. And we didn't know her previously, and it was at one of our gathering for our family property, so, course we invite her to go to Bishop Museum to go look at our tūtū's kapa. And she came out and says ok, so, you know, same thing, if, if you want to learn kapa, here we are. And, here, it was Chris, so Chris comes, and she went ahead, she went right into it, she was eager, she made her tools, she, you know, she was always there, she got the materials, she did, she took the steps to, to make her tools and, and, continued it. So you know you already see that, you know that interest.

Then you have some, those that, just say, well, *where can I buy, uh, iʻe kuku from? Where can I buy the wauke?* Already, right there, you know that they might not continue, but then, you know, the appreciation is really not there. Because for us having to make our own, everything, I think we appreciate it more, and we're going to stick with it.
Be*cause* we had to make it. Just like with you.

And when we saw you come in, and here you go, and not knowing anything, and watching you carve your iʻe kuku, it's like, holy mackerel! Look at her designs! You know, it's, but you know we can see that, there's that commitment, and, you know, you're not going to get very many, of, people like yourself. That will, is able, you know, *willing* to make the commitment and do the work.

You know, so look, how many years later, and, and so, like Chris, and yourself, we threw you into this projects, right, so first there was Merrie Monarch comes up, Chris, she had no choice.

Ok, so you're going to make a pāʻū. Ok she says, "*oKAY,* but I never did." Don't worry we going to help you. You know, so Kaʻiulani and I, you know, both together, we worked together to help. And that's what we want to do, you know, we want you folks to get in there, and we willing to help you, to get better, and then yourself, and then here we have Chris, okay so, you know at the last minute if she's coming over, and she's beating, and we're helping her along, and making sure that she, you know, she had, she finished her pāʻū for Merrie Monarch. And then, when

2014 came, Maui project comes along, and you know, Bernice had to drop out for personal reasons, ok so, we were short, you know, one kapa, one pāʻū or kīhei or whatever it was, and we said ok, Marlene!

[chuckles]

And but, and yet, both of you know, both you and Chris, never hesitated. *Yes,* you said. 'Yes, I'm there.' Just, and we said, don't worry right, we'll help you.

And, you know, here you are. But I don't think we'd have done it for somebody else, because we saw that you folks *had* that drive. And you *wanted* to learn, you were eager. You know, so, we'll always be here to help you, when you're ready to get started up again

[laughs]

*[laughs]*
*I will*

But, yea, you know, I not worried I know you will, and you know, so, that's what I see when I'm teaching. And I don't teach just anybody.

You know, it's—because it's, takes a commitment and I don't want to waste my time on just anybody that's, you know. And like you know, lot of people they want to make kapa but then they don't want to stick it out, and I don't want to waste my time on those. And, you know right away pretty much, we can pretty much tell who's gonna stick it out and who's really committed, and that's what I ask.

I need commitment.

If it's, and even if the class, the people I have on Maui, it's just a handful, really not that many, but then, I like it that way. I want to be able to get referrals from my haumāna, because they already know these people, they're their friends, they can tell me if they're committed, and I can ask them "do they have tools?" you know, they gotta have their tools.
"Do they have wauke?" 'cause you know, many of them come, and they want to do it, but do you have tools? No. They want to use your tools, they want you to provide the wauke, but *we* hardly have any wauke for ourselves, let alone having to have enough for somebody else. Which is why I don't have classes here.

Because we don't have the resources here. Not yet, anyway, we planting, but it's hard just to get the wauke, yea. But on Maui, I have the resources, you know we have people that can make tools. So the, whoever started the classes on Maui they come with their tools.

*That's the thing that gets overlooked all the time, yea*
*is the preparation just even, to learn*

I think when people look at, and they see kapa, what they looking at is somebody's artwork on kapa. So they want to make a piece like that. Go print it on canvas, then, if that's what you want. But if you want to actually *make* kapa to wear, or even to do a nice big piece, you gotta have, still you gotta have commitment. Unless you only gonna, if you *only* want one piece, then that's not commitment, right, you want to be able to continue making, and I hope someday

like you will, like I know you will, because that's what you always wanted to do. You're going to make it one day, you know, and don't let not having enough wauke stop you. Don't let nothing stop you. It didn't stop me, I found a way to get, you know even if I don't, it's not mine, it's not planted, or, it's so much easier. And not only when you do it this way. I didn't have to figure out how much wauke is it going to take to make. Because of the sizing and all of that, not just collecting it, you know, it's just, trying to figure out how many stalks do I need, because you still gotta beat it out right.

This one was already beaten out for me.

And you know what? Ok, so, there was several people that said to me, that, well, that wauke isn't from here. So what? It's wauke. It's the same material. And if they do a DNA analysis of the wauke, do you know where the wauke came from? Tonga. So you know it's still, it's the plant.

And it still took me how many hours, and hours.

You just cut back that many hours from not having to go cut it down, go harvest, strip, and then try to measure it out and beat out every one on, you know, it just saved, what would that be? I think when we strip and clean one stalk, can take you to, 15 minutes to one half hour for just one stalk.

*You need how many for the kīhei?*

The kīhei would, if you have a nine foot stalk, then you can get up nearly six, seven feet, right—and that's so that you have extras. And then times that by how many this, I was trying to figure that out, but, it's like, I got lost, my head was spinning already, it's just too much. But I would, you know, if and when you ready, to do it, you have the kua, you can come here, you can use that board, now you know what it takes.

So that's what I would like to see from, my students to shoot for the stars. You know, go big—when I first started ok, so like, I went, like, *I* don't know, I don't know anything about kapa, you know, so. And then, I said, when Ka'iulani was teaching me, well I'm not gonna, I'm just, 'cause she asked me what I would want to do, with kapa, and I said, "oh, I don't know, I guess I'm going to do artwork." 'Cause, but I didn't want to do anything, with, for ceremonies and stuff, because that wasn't, I had no idea what they used it for, burials, "no," I said, "not doing that, and I'm not doing clothing."

[laughs]

I said all these things I'm not going to do because I couldn't see myself, I mean I, especially at the beginning, making, you know, large pieces. Because it wasn't my intention. It was, my brother said, "you going make kapa," so here I was, making kapa.

And then you know, *now*, I figure, I think, it's not just my brother, it's my tūtū, over there, on the other side, pushing me into this. And when the Merrie Monarch came, I guess, that's when it pushed me to do, clothing.

And then when I did the first one, and it didn't come out too great, then, you know, just, being me, I gotta be better.

Gotta do it better, gotta do it better, until I can perfect it then I move on.

And then *somebody* said,

[laughs]

"oh, I'd like to make a kapa moe" and I was like, 'oh my gosh,' never thought I was going to do a kapa moe, told my bro-, but here I am so, but I'm so glad that you did, because now look—out of *all* the kapa makers that are doing kapa today, nobody has done a kapa moe.

And that wasn't my intention, really, you know, don't know what, have no idea what I'm going to do with this other than, letting it sit on my bed for *at least* a little while.

*[laughs]*
*right... how are you going to dry it?*

Yea, that's what I was thinking, so I'm going to overlap it onto this table, and move it, I know it's gonna, and I'm going to push it further out, maybe, or just have to bring out more tables downstairs and then lay it out.

'Cause once I, you know once you do the watermark, you cannot roll it up, you gotta let it go, open it up to dry. Yea. So this is about, what, two, four feet—
so, ten, I going have three feet hanging over, it's not going to work, I need another table. Another—I have to do it before, I cannot leave it, I'm going be gone two weeks, that's why I'm trying to rush to get it done. I can't do it tomorrow, then Monday, Tuesday, all day, and then Wednesday I leave

[whispers] Oh my God.

I gotta finish it Monday. Maybe tomorrow morning before I go off to Nā Mea I'll finish it up and then, roll it up, Monday, just do the watermark.

[whispers] Oh my God, it's going be hard. I'm moving at half an hour at five inches, I gotta figure out

[laughs]

Well with the watermark shouldn't be that long because I'm just putting in the watermark. Hopefully I don't get any, you know, more bulk.

So everybody says, "well what are you going to do once it's dried?"

That's another thing, how am I gonna, 'cause once it's dried, it's gonna be stiff.

And I'm not going to have enough time to soften it up to roll it up or, so I think I'm just going to roll it back onto the pipe, and this, leave it somewhere, hopefully that's what I can do—

I think, what did I do on my last one? I was able to dry that one upstairs. It might be able to, oh I don't know, no, I gotta dry it downstairs.

*Would your sister let you,*
*if you put string and hung this,*
*and then draped it over?*
*And stuck it in the garage?*

Oh I've done that before, but cannot dry it in the garage. It's better to lie it flat. 'Cause if it's wet and you're hanging it, it's gonna, yea, no, you gotta dry it flat. Lie it flat.

*And in the sun?*
*Would you leave it in the sun?*

You don't want it to be in the sun, especially because we got it on the vinyl, so, the heat it's gonna start, just, if it dries too quickly it'll curl. That's when you gonna get the tears and the, yea,

*It's not gonna be even*

Mmhmm, mmhmm.
So, all of that you gotta take into consideration,
But I'm, you know, I'm not going to dye, I'm not sure yet what I'm going to do, but if, I know I got enough black—
let's call this a day, pretty soon, I wanna show you something.
Because we got one more day, right, we can continue.

**the third day**

*if you don't have the wauke, it's hard to go and make bigger pieces, which you would evolve and that's part of the evolution, right.*

**the danger of labels**

*I don't know that it should be labeled as Hawaiian kapa.*
*They didn't, back in, you know, hundred years ago*
*when our ancestors was doing it they didn't say it was Hawaiian kapa,*
*they said it was their kapa.*
*So, I would think, it's just kapa.*

What constitutes Hawaiian kapa, and I've been thinking about that. ʻCause basically, from what I understand, what I've seen, they all started with, the same way, they using wauke, or whatever material.

I don't know if, now this just came to mind, so with Hawaiian kapa they did, they used various plants, materials, so not *just* wauke. I don't know much about the other cultures, Samoan, Tongan, what else did they use previously, so, if you look at Hawaiian, what they used, they used māmaki, I think prior to the wauke, māmaki was the favored bark for kapa. And then when the wauke came, it was softer so they preferred that. And the wauke was pretty much reserved for the chiefs.

So they also used banana bark, they used ʻulu bark, I mean there was a lot of different ones, different kinds of bark that they used, and of course wasn't as soft. And it was like, the māmaki, I've never beaten māmaki, but, you know the branches are smaller you don't get as much fiber from māmaki. You know whereas with the wauke you have this long stalk, you got really good fibers, and so I think the, preferred is the wauke.

The ʻulu, again, I tried one time, but I didn't know what I was doing, so, I scratched that. But from what I understand they used the younger branch. So, and even that, again it's, you don't get nice, long, um, stalk of fiber, so—so that, does that constitute, you know Hawaiian kapa, because they used various plants, right.

So if we're looking at, after contact, post contact, I mean, we're looking at Cook's collections, the kapa that he had, it looks like most of it was with wauke already. So you know, talking in 17, 18$^{th}$ century, right,

So if we go back, how far do we want to go back, and say this was Hawaiian, you know at, but even prior to Cook coming and they already developed the uses of wauke, using wauke pretty much almost I think as almost the main fiber, and I could be wrong, because I'm not versed in that area—

but as the primary plant for kapa, it's now the methods to making it Hawaiian. And we don't know when they started to ferment, you know to be able to make these large pieces, but it was pre contact that they were already doing that, so some,

there's very little written about kapa, so, you know, we don't know, *when* they developed, when it, *when* or *how* the fermentation process came in, and that's the difference with other Polynesian kapa, or tapa.

Hawaiians are the only ones that ferment, that fermented the wauke,

*Is there an understanding of why they fermented it?*
*Or is that a theory?*

It's a theory, there's no, we think well maybe somebody forgot to, you know, left this bucket of wauke sit- or, not bucket, they didn't have buckets then, but, they had it fermenting, you know, sitting out and forgot about it. And then being, I mean this is how I would look at it, is, you know, they not going pohō, right

[laughs]

It's a waste, all that, all that, wauke, you cannot waste so they went and tried to beat it, and probably found that hey this, this is much better than trying to beat the wauke, as a dry beat. 'Cause all the other cultures they dry beat, so they didn't ferment, they don't use, a whole, you know, a lot of water, they soak it maybe one day and then they're beating it, and so, you gotta beat pretty hard to spread the wauke.

When you beating fermented wauke, or plant it's softer, you don't have to pound. You know you don't, you're just beating, actually much softer—

like there's pictures of I don't know if it was Samoan, or Tongan, or Polynesian ladies beating kapa with, or tapa with their hands, arms raised with the mallets, you know, and they coming overhead, right. And beat-, and pounding, so they're pretty, you know, they're hitting pretty hard, and, because if they're beating the dry beat, that's what you going to have to do, but whereas, because the Hawaiian kapa, it's fermented, it's soft, we never have to beat that hard.

So you know, that's one area that we think, that we believe that that's Hawaiian, that makes it, but that still doesn't make it Hawaiian. I think that's the only difference, really, in how they prepared the wauke for beating. And because it's fermented, they're able to beat, you know, pieces together. Without gluing, whereas with the other cultures they used glue. They use the sap, and then, they're gluing the pieces together. They can make huge, large pieces, but it's all glued.

Hawaiian kapa, the kapa moe is, there's twelve, ten, 12 feet, pieces of kapa *without any glue* and it's all beaten together—

you know, so, when you look at their kapa, you look at Hawaiian kapa without, we have these large pieces and there's no glue, so that would be another aspect, I think, of Hawaiian kapa. And that's just I think the beating, you know, just *making* the kapa, that would be the difference.

And then when you get to the dyeing and the printing, the prints are different, I think pre-contact, or, and I don't know how many hundreds of years prior to Cook, they used block

prints or they painted, and as time went on and they developed finer designs using bamboo, and cutting the, carving, you know, the shapes onto the bamboo and using that as the stamp—

and even *that*, how did they come up with using, you know, that method? You know, and no other, I don't think any other culture does that. You know, they using block print, or they'll carve a stamp and then use a design onto wood, and then use that as a stamp, not bamboo. So the bamboo is maybe what, about half an inch? And from that they make these beautiful designs? So again, you looking at the designs are different compared to the other cultures, using a bamboo stamp, and taking that one stamp and going. If you printing a kapa moe, you taking that one stamp that's about, could be less, you know, half an inch, or less, in width, and length, you get about a five, a four to five inches, and sometimes less, and you go and you cover a whole kapa moe of eight, ten feet wide, that's a lot of stamping, that's, *thousands* of stamping.

So, when I did the kapa moe I never counted, I don't, and that one was more, you know, I painted the shapes, and then went with the ʻohe kāpala stamping in between but, it wasn't that much, yet it was, but, oh—

Ok, so when I did the, what is that, pāʻū, in 2014, so I did this hulu, this feather design, the hulu. So what I did was I got, and that one I counted because all I did was I took one part, I carved like a triangle with just the edges around right, so I wanted to get this feather kind of look, so all I did was I took this one ʻohe kāpala, and I painted *half* of the tip of that one diamond. And I filled in each of the shapes of the feather. So each one, I did count.

It was 50. Just, 50 stamps in that one feather.

*And how many feathers did you have?*

I forgot how many, but you know, it all depends on the designer, what you want to do, so that's brushing paint on that one tip. Print, tip, paint, print, and, you know, it takes time

[laughs]

but so, again, it could be, it could be a hundred, it could be thousands of, of stamping.

*Do you have any thoughts about what makes Hawaiian kapa Hawaiian?*
*Or what makes kapa Hawaiian kapa?*

You know, I don't know?

Does it, is it because a Hawaiian made it? It came from Hawaiʻi at the time? You know, I was thinking about that, right, so, we know that there's differences. Ok, so like we said the fermentation and all that, but what makes it Hawaiian, like, it was made by a Hawaiian 200 years ago, 100 years ago, but today, people are making kapa the same way as our ancestors did. And, if a Hawaiian is making it, we say it's Hawaiian.

A Japanese person who loves the culture, a haole person who loves the culture, wants to make kapa, would somebody say that's not Hawaiian because a Hawaiian didn't make it? You know, so it's hard to say, I mean, I don't know that it should be labeled as Hawaiian kapa.

They didn't, back in, you know, hundred years ago when our ancestors was doing it they didn't say it was Hawaiian kapa, they said it was their kapa.

So, I would think, it's just kapa.

Hawaiians say kapa, some others say tapa, some say Masi, Siapo, by adding the Hawaiian, personally I don't think—

I never thought about it until now, that the question comes up. I don't think it should be called *Hawaiian*, kapa. We're doing traditionally, we try to do, traditional, kapa. In the Hawaiian, in how Hawaiians did it. But that doesn't make it Hawaiian. If that makes sense, yea—

Just for myself I can say, I've used different methods.

Getting the same results, trying to say it's traditional, it's, it's, you know what?

Come to think of it, ok, so we say that this is how they did it.

Traditional, this is the traditional, way. But there's very little written about how it was made, and then from what I understand a lot of what was written, was written, 50 plus years *after* they stopped making kapa. So they never wrote about it, they never talked about what the method was. So when Kamakau, and then, you know, when they went and interviewed, I mean there were several other writers, I can't remember. They interviewed people about the process. But these people never beat kapa, they were talking about their mother or their grandmother, and what they could remember of how it was done.

You know, so, in the 60s when, Malia Solomon wanted to do kapa, she had to go to Tonga and Samoa, and Fiji to learn, how to make tapa, how they made it. 'Cause they were still actively making tapa. So, once she learned how to do it, she came back here, went to the Museum, studied, and looked at the kapa pieces that was in the collection, and tried to develop kapa from what was in the museum. But it took a lot of practice, you know she had to kind of figure it out, and I'm sure, she had to come up with different methods, to get to make kapa like the traditional, you know—

but calling it Hawaiian, I would say, we try to stay traditional, and as we're working with it, we're finding out, learning more, and it could have been traditional, it could have been the way that our kūpuna did it, made kapa. But we can only go by what was written and take from that, and practice, and see what transpires, and we get a lot of challenges, come up with a lot of issues, that we don't know,

For one thing, the wauke.

If we start off with wauke—it depends on a lot of things. It could be where it was grown, if I get wauke from Waiʻanae, and, or, Mānoa, or ʻEwa Beach, I mean, some, or the Big Island. It's different, you know it's not all the same. So while you working it, working on it, you'll see that there *is* a difference. And then it could be weather, it could be the time you pick it, that was another thing, *that* was something I learned

[laughs]

If you pick in the early morning, which I was doing a lot, because I'm running off to do a demo or something, I cut down a stalk and I take it and I'm scraping. When you get to strip it off

the stalk, it's all stuck, so you can't, you know, I was having a hard time. And so of course, Kaʻiulani told me she would pick it in the afternoon, or you know, after about noon, 11 or noon. When it's warmer, and then, 'cause, at night, I guess the moisture goes down to the roots, right, so, as it gets hotter, warmer, the plant is now taking in the water, and it goes up to the stalk.

And then, even if you water it, I mean I water ours, we water ours every day. So I couldn't figure out, and every time I would forget, right, so I'm picking up, picking it up in the morning. And then one time it dawned on me, I had picked it up, like, about ten o'clock or something, and I go and I'm scraping, and the bottom it's like, it's coming off pretty easy but I got to about halfway, and then now it's all stuck. But the next time I picked it up later in the afternoon, and I was able to strip it without any problem.

But, you know, our ancestors they knew that, 'cause they knew when to plant, you know, they had all this, you know, they went by the moon or whatever, and I have no clue about those things.

They didn't write that down, so they had to figure out, so today, you know, now they know about the plants and everything. If you're talking to somebody that's making kapa they'll tell you about the plant, and that's just, how, in general, plants are, right? Took me several years to finally realize

[laughs]

*duh*, didn't they tell you, pick it up. So that's another thing, yeah, and I mean it can be difficult when, you know you get this wauke and you having a hard time, you know, stripping it off the bark. 'Cause, it all, it's stuck to the inner stalk, right, so you gotta scrape it, you want it to pull up really easily so that when you're beating you have a nice, straight piece. And then there's time periods, too, so not just in, whether you pick it up, cut it down, harvest in the afternoons, but also the time of the year.

When is it from, May through November, that's the time when you can harvest or cut the wauke. So again, here I am, not thinking, you know I'm doing the same thing, January I'm out there cutting a stalk and I'm wondering, how come, you know, again, it's sticking to the stalk. And I'm watering it, you know, it's in the winter, but because, the plant knows, you know it's winter time, It's not ready, it has to do its thing I guess, so, but, come May? No problem. 'Cause it, it gets warmer, right—

so there's all those little things that you have to take into consideration. But, you know, at the beginning when you first learning, you don't, you not going to remember all that, there's so much to think about, and if you not a plant person like me, and most people, you not going to think about it, right. So that's one of the things that you gonna learn when you, you know, when you making kapa.

So many, so many issues, you wanna pick a young stalk. You know, not more than an inch and a half, two inches sometimes. Like if Marie's we can pick it at two and a half, inches, and it's still, she's got some nice stalks, you know, *nice*, fiber. If it's too old you don't want it, it's going to be harder to beat, and then I was reading just recently, that when they made, in the old days when they made the kapa they went for young stalks. So it was an inch, to inch and a half.

And not more than 7, 8 feet.

So the younger, so that it was soft, and, you get nice, smooth, soft fibers.

So all of that, and then you don't get the browning, because the fiber is getting old already, so it's nice and white, you know. So that was another thing, and a lot of times people had given us wauke or we picked up wauke from some place. And not every stalk is the same, so you pretty much have to sort it by age, I think, or by width. So if you look at it when you strip it, it's woody, grainy, you know, you know you gonna struggle with that, you put it on the side and you can use it for something else, I guess. But you do still, you *do* wanna stay with the younger stalk.

So then we get to the beating, we talking about issues—

it's really, hard, you know, each one is different, so every piece, every wauke, when you beating, it's different. You not going to have the same results sometimes. Especially at the beginning, and with me, when I'm beating I mean I'm totally focused on every fiber as I'm beating. I'm watching how it moves, if it doesn't move, then what's holding it up, if I have, you know, old threads and brown threads, and little stuff you know you want to pull it out.

When I first started you know, I had some stuff, and, some wauke, and I'm beating and it was brown, 'cause I didn't clean it really good and I just said, "well, you know if it's brown, just dye it right?"

Well now, I want it white. You do, it took me a long time to do that, but, Kaʻiulani, when you watch her, she is *so* meticulous. *Every little speck* she'll find it, I mean, it is, I'm struggling just to see, I need magnifying glass, but she'll go and take out every, every little speck of whatever. So, when she's done, her piece is white white. And there's no bleaching, she doesn't use soda ash. I still end up with mine kind of brownish, or you know the tan or the cream, but this is manamanalima, so.

But I've watched her many times, she has this wauke that she got from somebody, she doesn't waste anything, and if it was me I'd sit down cry

[laughs]

Or I'd put it aside I wouldn't even use it, I'd dry it up, put it away, or even toss it. But she doesn't waste, I mean she had this bag one time, just little strips, that, I guess when somebody was stripping the wauke was stuck on the stalk, you don't end up with this long strip so you get all this little, pieces, you know, skinny threads.

And she actually beat it out.

She went and reconstituted it, and I looked at her and I thought, 'Are you gonna use that?' And she says, "yea well, you know, you cannot waste."

It was hundreds and hundreds of pieces, that was like maybe half an inch wide and maybe 5, 6 inches length, that kind of pieces of wauke, just little, just shreds, and she put it all together and went and she beat it. And one by one, and I mean, she's with her tweezers, taking out all this stuff, you know, this brown threads or whatever.

When she was done, it was still, it was white!

I have white, white stalks and I still don't get it white as hers. I mean, she's amazing.

I mean, even I think it's kind of crazy, but, but that's the kind of patience she's got, you know. I couldn't do that. I wouldn't even bother, I wait for some pretty good stalks before

[laughs]

But, you know, because wauke is so hard to get, and we have to plant our own, when somebody gives you wauke, or you take it and you gonna use it, and you don't want to waste, because

[laughs]

and Marlene, you know you had, you've had the same experiences too, but yea, it's just, you work it, and, even if it's brown and even if it's in pieces, you take your time you'll still get a nice piece. And you can make it for art, I mean, yes, you can even make it to use your clothing, it's just, takes, much longer, and a lot of patience. And yes, if you like me, you just dye it if it comes out brown and whatever, but it's still good, as long as the fiber is strong, you can, because it's stained, or you have a lot of, what do they call it, if you have too many branches, you know have that, it, it stains right, so, that's where you get that brown. I guess—

*Oh, from the sap?*

Yea, from the sap, what is that word, the oxidation.

You know, it starts to turn brown, the fiber is still good. When you're finished it looks kind of brown, but as long as the fiber's still good you can dye it, you know, it's still usable, you can still get a nice piece out of it. So those are the things, there's a lot of not just little issues, a lot of big issues too. But it's how you look at it, whether you know you have the patience and the skill to make it work. And, you know, it just takes time. A lot of people give up—but they shouldn't. You know, 'cause, making kapa actually is, kapa is the most forgiving. 'Cause as long as it's in the wet stage, you just beat over it, you keep beating you have a big, big puka, or like the one I did today, pulling that piece and I tore it, and you know it's almost done, I put the watermark in, and, you know it's like

[laughs]

I thought oh my God, because it was a big tear, and it was at least 8 inches. And I thought oh my Gosh, I thought I was going to finish and now, what am I gonna do? Well I was able to go back, I wet it down, and rebeat it, and hopefully you know, and put back the watermark, and looks like it's gonna stay. So again, you don't panic, you can still fix it, a lot of times it's still mendable, and if you, if it tears after it's dried and, you can patch it. We patch it, those are the things that come up, but there's always a way that we can do it and especially, today we got glue, we can sew it, we can do all kinds, you know. So then now you step out of the traditional so now we doing the more, today we have thread, we have sewing machine, we have patches that we can iron so it's all fixable.

But when you're beating there's so many things that come up. You know, how do you, how do you move it along, how do you patch the puka, and sometimes there's holes that's from where there was branches and you cut it, and you're beating and beating and that thing stays as a hole, you still got a puka. You just keep beating and work it out, and then you can patch, you put a wet patch on it, and you beat the patch into it. Just gets more wauke, so all of that, you'll learn it, as you're doing, and if you know your teacher, your kumu should be showing you how,

which, Kaʻiulani taught me how, taught us how to, patch so—because of all of that, you don't have to panic, you don't have to worry about you know, you ruined this beautiful piece that you've been working for hours and hours and days and weeks—

you know, but anyway, that's some of the issues that I've come across. I'm sure there's, there'll probably be a lot more that I can't think of right now.

**the evolution of a practice**

*This last piece, that pāʻū, I can almost guarantee, I'm almost certain, that it would be washable. Maybe not scrub-able? But if I was to, if we was to drop something and spill something on a spot, on that piece, you can wash that piece out.*

When I first started, ok, so, I didn't know anything, like I said I didn't know anything about kapa. I wasn't gonna do clothing, you know I said I'll just do art. And because I didn't have wauke, I was ok with small little pieces. And then, each time I got challenged because of several different projects, things that came up, and, I was invited to participate, and so I took on those challenges, started from small art pieces. Then when we, really when we did the Merrie Monarch, pushed us, pushed me, and a lot of the kapa makers to make larger pieces. And of course the challenge was always getting the wauke.

So, if you don't have the wauke, it's hard to go and make bigger pieces, which you would evolve and that's part of the evolution, right. Getting, growing and making larger pieces. And so, of course, by then I had planted. So I only have a small patch, but, you know with other people, with other places giving us wauke, and now I have some other resources, so I was able to make the larger pieces.

So I went from art to that pāʻū, then I made a kīhei, and, oh I did a malo ʻcause I wanted to give my brother a malo. I think that was one of the first large pieces, which isn't really large ʻcause it's only like 12 inches, but, you know, was long, it was 12, 15 feet long. But since then I've had couple pāʻūs and so I actually wanted to be able to make a pāʻū that was wearable, washable. So the last one I did, I wanted to see if I could make a piece that could be washed. Because there was this one, when we had that retreat, it was just a small piece, Dalani had brought some wauke that she had cooked with soda ash. And so she gave everybody enough to go make a piece. And I was busy but I had a small piece, like about 8 x 8 piece, beat it out quickly. When I got home, it was drying everything, I tried to dye it, I was going to print on it, and I didn't like the color. So I washed, when I pulled it, it was like "chee this thing is really tough" and I pulled it and I yanked it and I twisted it, and it was, it wouldn't tear. So I ran it under water, at first you know gently I rinsed it, it held up, it dried it was still, you know, it was still strong. And so that piece really, I was intrigued by that piece. And I thought they made kapa that could be washed. So, it was just figuring out how they made it. So, and you know I still have that piece and I've washed it with soap and scrubbed.

It still held up, because when I talk with people, and, you know if somebody says something that interests me, or questions, or would answer something, I always put it on the back burner, you know, because we're talking sometimes I hear something, and then I think oh, you know that's pretty interesting, and then I put it in the back of my mind and then at some point it will come back, right, so.

This was with, ah, Roz Solomon. So she was talking about when her mom started kapa. and she went, I think it was on the Big Island, she was looking for somebody who was active, you know, making kapa, right. And so she ran into this man who wearing a malo. And so she asked this man if they could wash, he could wash the malo. He was insulted and he said, "of course we can wash our malo."

So as we making malo, as we making kapa, I'm finding that yes, we can. It's like I said earlier, I changed, the way I was making kapa. 'Cause when we first started, when we did the first pāʻū, I realized we were overbeating. I mean, when we did the 2014 one. It was, something was, I wasn't doing something right. Because I still wanted to make sure that we could wash it.

So when I made my third pāʻū, it's pretty strong. And that's because I changed the way I was beating. I wasn't folding and folding and folding, folding and beating, folding and, we were overbeating. So by overbeating, and it just takes longer to beat it out, to get length and width, by that time the fiber is getting old, its aging and it's not as strong. So you still want to have that threads. So, you know when we look at some of the, sample pieces, you don't see threads, you know we say, wow can't see the threads, well the threads are there. And even by beating, if you beat it, if you look at our first pieces, my first pieces, you cannot see the threads, it's very thin, but then it's not strong. If we wash it it's going to fall apart.

This last piece, that pāʻū, I can almost guarantee, I'm almost certain, that it would be washable. Maybe not scrub-able? But if I was to, if we was to drop something and spill something on a spot, on that piece, you can wash that piece out. That area.
Even the kapa in the collections, it's still strong. It's strong. You can, you can, pull at it and it's not gonna tear. And it's, it's thin, you know, and it's hundreds of years old and it's still strong. So what were we doing that was different?

You know, so, I did change the way I'm beating. I'm beating it out without folding as much. You know, I'll beat out a piece, then I'll beat, if I want to make a large piece I'm beating at the seams so I beat each piece really thin, and then, we add pieces rather than folding. If I fold, I'll fold once, twice, that's it, but beating it out really thin before I fold, so then I rebeat, I don't have this thick stack of wauke which is about a half, you know, sometimes a half an inch, because you're folding, so we keep folding, we beat it out, ok so we got it at 30 inches, so we going to fold again and beat it out some more?

Yea, didn't work that way, so just changing the way we beat, it's allowed it to be stronger. And even, you know, I can, I can twist the pāʻū, you know, and I did! Because I tried, 'cause I tried, I twisted it, pulled it, tugged it, tugged at it. So that's pretty much the test, yea, if you can tug at it without tearing.

Of course you don't do it right away the way like Dalani did, you know, just smash the thing, no, I have more respect for that

[laughs]

but you know if you soften it, for a little bit, and pretty soon, you'll be able to squeeze it, twist it, you know, crush it, and that helps it to, that's part of the softening process.

The dyeing, geez, that's, I think that's pretty much, I mean we're using the same mordants right, so if we do it traditionally using just those mordants and the plants it's really iffy. You know you may get the color today then tomorrow the same thing, you do the same, you using the same material, and you not gonna get the same color.

You know, Marie and, and, or even Malia Solomon, and I have all her, I have a lot of her tests, and she would write down what she used, and what colors she got. But they all say they

never get the same colors so when they say so "well do you document?" And I thought well I, you know, at first I did, I used to write down this was the, you know, make the sample, but if you not gonna get the same thing every single time, why even bother?

That's my thought, you know—

I'm not going to bother, because unless what you need, what you do, is, I mean, if you gonna do a big piece, when you gonna mix your dyes, make sure you mix enough at that time. Because tomorrow you gonna use it, especially if you using plant dye, you are not going to get that same color. It's like buying, fabric. You know, you buy one bolt, if you use the same fabric, or like a red, you know the whole row bolt, ok, so, but you gotta you want more, from this other bolt, you ran out. You not gonna get the same color. It's gonna be off just a little bit and that's the same thing with the dyes.

The stamping, because, well I don't use the plant dyes for stamping. Plant dyes are usually used for dyeing, you know, the back of it. Printing, you want, you get you get one time that's it, right. You gonna stamp, you have one shot at that to get a nice print. If you have to go back and because if you using dyes, plant a plant dye, say ʻōlena, and it's gonna be light. So you gotta go one more time, one more coat, and you have to make sure you get it exactly otherwise it smears.

So they didn't use dyes to print. It was the black, made with the soot, the kukui oil, or ʻalaea. That was, that's if you look that's what they use for stamping. They dyed it on the back, they had all different colors. But they used it as, you know, for dyeing, on the back.
So it is fun to work with the different plants, and trying to get the color you want. And you know, it's exciting because sometimes you go, WOW, how I get – like, the time I did the red. I got that red, and it was, but it was,

[laughs]

so disappointing ʻcause I only made a small batch, and I was just, you know, I had everything out on the table, and all the different mordants, and I had noni bark and I *love* the noni bark, and I'm still trying to get this red. I want red red, not ʻalaea red, not orange red.

So anyway, so I'm sitting here, sitting down at the table, got some noni, and I mixed the mordant, and I got this beautiful, beautiful red. I, it was like, oh I was so excited, it was this deep ruby red, beautiful beautiful. So, and I was actually mixing because I was trying to get this color ʻcause I was gonna print something, so I needed a lot. You know, what was I gonna print? Oh that was for the Merrie Monarch one, no, no, that was when I was doing the Maui. So just then, so I was actually gonna do, I was looking at doing the red and black. K, cause I wanted red and black.

So I get this red, and I'm all excited, the next day I go and I pull out, I get the noni, and I get everything all the mordants and I'm mixing, and I'm not getting this red. I kept mixing and I kept mixing and I kept mixing and I think, using the same thing, and I thought, What's happening?

For days, I tried. Finally I gave up.

Then I realized what I was doing wrong. The noni was aging. So the first day was fresh! So added the mordants, it was at its peak so I had that red. The very next day, it's a day old, and I didn't put in the refrigerator, so I had it sitting out, not *thinking*—

and I'm just waiting for some noni roots so I can do it again and this time, I'm going to do it right. But you, you know, actually if you keep in the refrigerator it would have been ok if I had not left the noni out of the refrigerator, I think it would have been ok. But. Yea.

You scrape the noni, the outer bark of the root, the root bark. And then the root itself, on the inside, if you scrape the outer bark of the root, it's yellow. I love that, I love noni I love noni.

It's yellow, yellow, yellow.

Beautiful yellow.

And it, you know, I don't know, other people they always say it fades. They don't use ʻōlena, they say ʻōlena fades, noni fades. No. I, my noni, my ʻōlena, does not fade. Not for me anyway. Still got stuff that is still that is yellow as when I first printed. I mean it changes a little bit but, it's still, yellow, bright yellow.

But yea, when we get to dyes it's a whole different thing. It's, it's fun. You know, but if I'm doing something that I want to last I tend to use the, well I use ʻōlena and noni if I can get, and just ʻalaea. ʻCause you know it's not gonna fade, it's gonna last. And you, there's all different shades of ʻalaea, you know, so you still can get some nice colors, you just, but you know if you using a plant dye you want to go with those that are not going to fade, that is not going to change color.

Lots, there's *so* much, and that's what fun about, so enjoyable about, making kapa. ʻCause it's not, I mean, the beating is one thing and I love to beat, you know ʻcause you can sit here for hours and I guess because I love to be by myself at times,

A lot of times, I can be by myself a lot. And, you know, you just sit here hours and it's just relaxing. And then you have the dyes and collecting, finding out what plants, collecting your dyes, and then printing, and then making your tools, ʻcause you gotta make your own tools, and even that, you know. So it's not just one thing, it's not monotonous, so, you finish beating, like I just finished this huge piece, the next is now I have to think about a design, or the colors, what colors am I gonna use, if I do print it and dye it, so then you know, just like making sure I have enough, of whatever color I wanted, and start mixing dyes and playing around with it, ok, because you know, I can be mixing something, and I thought I was gonna get a yellow and I got something else, you know, so, it's always a surprise you never know what you gonna get—

So anyway.

**on being a "master kapa practitioner"**

*we're not kapa makers, we're artists*

Marie McDonald, who really has been, an inspiration not only about who she is, but you know she encourages you. And when you think you're not good enough, which, believe me, I was there, many times, because of course, I didn't know what I was doing, and, I didn't think, I didn't know what the term cultural practitioner was. I was just there to learn how to make kapa. And then when we did the, the first kapa exhibit, so we're into these discussions about practitioners. So there was this one kapa maker who insists that we were cultural practitioners, because we were practicing an ancient practice. Right. Or doing an ancient practice, traditional practice. And because of the, especially with kapa, because there's this artistic part of it, aspect of it, Marie says, we're kapa makers. No, no we're not kapa makers, we're *artists*.

Kapa makers, you are artists. And so there was this debate, it was pretty funny watching those two go back and forth

[laughs]

and both, you know, steadfast in their thinking. But, you know, when Marie says that, she didn't limit us. You know she inspired, she says if you are printing, you're dyeing, you're designing this piece, this kapa, your kapa, that makes you an artist. You're an art, this is a whole art form, the making of the kapa, and, then the designing, she says, and it wasn't like she was saying it to make you feel good, and Marie is not that kind of person she's going to tell you like it is, right. And you know she kept insisting that. And she told all of the kapa makers that was involved with that project, with the Merrie Monarch project, she said, "you folks are all artists. You're not cultural practitioners. Yes, you're doing a cultural practice, but it's, you're artists."

And she wanted to raise the value, not value, I guess self-esteem, really. And that was encouraging because you know, you're looking at this is Marie, she's an elder, well respected, she was an art teacher, art major, she's an artist, to have her say that, you know, it validates, it was a validation. Even if we didn't believe it or feel it at the time, but look, she's taken many of us beyond just the cultural practitioner.

Practitioner is a title.

That was always the thing about, you know, it's just a title. And I don't care what title you put on, I mean I am making kapa. That's the way I see it.

You know when people ask me, "are you a cultural practitioner?"

I don't, I'm a kapa, you know—"I'm making kapa."

And I think maybe now, I can say maybe I am an artist to some degree, and you know it was funny when we had the first, the first MaMo market, we were at the Bishop Museum, and it was several artists, several people that was just starting. And that was the first time that they could actually, there was an event where they could have you know, many of the Native Hawaiian artists could, you know, have their start. Anyway. So, I remember

[laughs]

So I had some pieces, you know, some of my first kapa pieces which, ok, wasn't all that great, but, so we had to sell, so I sold. And there was this one gal next to me, and she's now gone onto, she's come a long way, and we were there for like, you know, two days. And so I sold that one piece, and I said, and then she sold and you know, one of her artwork, and she says, "wow now I'm an artist!" and I said, "me too!"

Once you sell, when somebody sell, somebody buys your piece, you're an artist right?

[laughs]

otherwise you're a practitioner. I mean, it's just like, now when you think, I just thought about it, ok so we watching the Olympics, right? So, not until they become pro, once they receive money, you're a pro right? Same like an artist once you sell a piece, if you never sell a piece, then you just a practitioner maybe. But I still don't get it, that way. I put "cultural practitioner kapa maker" because I'm doing kapa, you know, really not doing much of other stuff which I could, but I don't, you know, I'm not doing like carving or weaving, I'm not doing it as much as I'm doing kapa, you know. So, like my brother, ok, so he's, is he a cultural practitioner? He does, he does everything, he's a master of all these different arts. So he's a master so everybody, you know, so now, ok, so people have given us these titles "master" and, of course, my brother, we laugh about it right, so it's like "oh you one master now!" 'Cause somebody came up and said "he's the master" or "I'm a master" and we're looking at each other, I'm not master, I still haven't mastered, I don't feel that I'm mastered kapa, I mean especially years ago when they first said I was a master.

I did not master the art, I am slowly getting there, I think I'm getting close, you know, and then by selling that, by having a museum purchase, my kapa moe, I think then, kind of validated for me that yea, I guess I am an artist. Or yet, maybe I am a master. You know, but, I don't know maybe I just don't let it get to my head

[laughs]

That's probably it, 'cause I, you know, for me, in everything that I do I go for perfection. You know. And then, if, and it's for my own, somebody else might say that's not perfect, but if it's perfect for me, then I can, you know, I move on. Or I can feel like I've mastered it, ok so then I can do something else. But I think, yea, I'm getting there. If I can make an 8 foot kapa moe, now a 10 foot, well, actually I measured it out, so it's like, just short of 10 feet, 9 ½ maybe, without any glue, so yea, I guess I can, you know, I've mastered that much.

**he moʻokūʻauhau ke kapa**

*We cannot go, maybe, further back, because we don't really know if this is the exact way that they did it. But we take it from this point forward, and so 100 years from now hopefully they can say, our great great grandchildren can say, well, this is how my grandmother, made kapa. And this is how, and this is what we should do and this is what we want to do, and that's why we're teaching this method of kapa making.*
*That's our hope.*

About the practice itself. I think I would- what we're teaching is that we want to continue this art form, we want traditional kapa made, so I guess Hawaiian kapa in that respect. And that just takes commitment. A huge commitment. In order to be able to pass it on generation to generation, like I wanted, like we have to, we want to, make kapa like they did. We cannot, so the new, so my haumāna, or the future generations of kapa makers, they can go to Tonga, learn making kapa in the Tongan style or the Samoan style. They cannot call that Hawaiian kapa. Doing the fermentation, being able to beat a piece without glue, that would be the difference in Hawaiian kapa. Otherwise call it siapo, or masi, or whatever. That would be my expectation and that would be a responsibility, I think, in order to pass it down from generation to generation.

So we can say my students, or my grandchildren, this is how my grandmother or how my mother made kapa. So they can take, so the next generation, the future generation can look back and can say, this is how, like, I could say, this is how Kaʻiulani made kapa, this is how she taught me. This is how Moana Eisele makes, because she is, you know, Kaʻiulani's teacher.

This is how we made kapa.

We cannot go, maybe, further back, because we don't really know if this is the exact way that they did it. But we take it from this point forward, and so 100 years from now hopefully they can say, our great great grandchildren can say, well, this is how my grandmother, made kapa. And this is how, and this is what we should do and this is what we want to do, and that's why we're teaching this method of kapa making.

That's our hope.

That's our hope.

And you know, they can do the designs differently, 'cause that's contemporary. When we talked about designs, traditional designs, and I look at all the kapa pieces, and I mean I've seen hundreds of them already, and, at the time, this is my thought, it's, at the time it was contemporary. Because it's no, you know you look at all the kapa pieces, you can tell, there's some, that, you know, was the same artist, or same kapa maker, but in most cases they're all different. You know, you know it evolved from a lot of painting, or when they did cord stamping, so you see it, you see it change, but it was contemporary too. Every time somebody thought of something else a new design. You know, they used a different plant to print, and they used a wana plant and they created a new design with that. So. And I don't think anybody told them at the time, that's not traditional or that's not Hawaiian. Like, today. You know. I would never, I hope I never say that about anybody's piece. 'Cause you can see that there's a difference, you know, mine is different. I mean, in a lot of my pieces, it's not traditional, it's not, you know, I try to stay traditional, but I don't even know what traditional is.

I've asked many people. About what is the traditional designs.

And you know, it's a lot of it, they think, when you look at tattoos, that's, they said, that's the traditional design. Well, tattoos came, you know, off of kapa designs, and they say, well, and they don't have this big, painted, you know, they painted, take the kapa moe for example. I have these big like, diamonds, real bold print, and I painted, on, I brushed on the dyes, but, so the design itself isn't really traditional, and I say then it's contemporary, it's what comes to my mind, and what I see, what I want to make it look like.

I mean I have no, a lot of times I don't have you know, really an idea of what I'm going to make other than I like shapes—

and so you know, the geometrics, the only difference with, with, from what I've seen with kapa designs, you don't have the circles, you don't have waves. So it's, so you know, so even if, you know, I keep thinking why didn't they think of waves? Because you could, I mean even if to do the dyeing, it, when you look at the dyes, it's straight, all these diagonals, you know, um, straight lines, but you don't see a curve in the designs why is that? When they, when you looking at the plants, you looking at the sky, even the moon, how come they don't do anything with the moon or the sun, which was important to them too, right? You don't see that in *aaany* of the kapa.

It's, but now, today, people are doing that.

I mean Marie's stuff you see, and she always says, you know, her stuff is very contemporary, and you know, she has the circles, but she uses the methods, she using the ʻohe kāpala—

This is quoting Marie, an artist has always, you know when they are designing, or they're painting, or they're coming up with a picture or a painting or whatever they want to do, it's a new idea, and it's, what is this term that she says, artists are given, they don't limit, there's no limit to an artist what he's going to design.

And so, if you say traditional, you're stuck in that time period. It doesn't allow for creativity. So we say, we try to stick with the method, by using ʻohe kāpala, by using, you know, we can brush, we can do that, so it's, but as far as design goes, it's up to the artist, that, whatever you create.

I didn't think that I could design, I mean I didn't think I was an artist. Or feel like an artist. I never had formal art, you know, education, but I think if I can do it anybody can. You just take that ʻohe kāpala and you print, and you start stamping and you make a design out of that. You know, you can also look at other kapa, go to the museums and look at the, you know, how they did, look at all the various kapa designs and take it from there, but you know, you don't have to stay to that. You just kinda, you get an idea of how they did it and then, you know, just let your creativity just go crazy wild.

Lotta times if I see something, I, you know I can be walking, or I can be shopping, I see something in the window, a dress or a design, taking a picture. So there's some people, many of the kapa artists, the kapa makers, you ask them what the design is and they have this whole story about, well, you know, I was looking, I was looking at this tree, and in the tree I saw this shape and this vision, and duh duh duh duh duh, so this is what this kapa is all about.

Well, I sit here, and I'm looking at the trees

[laughs]

I'm looking at the skies, the clouds, nothing. Just nothing. But if I see designs, and I like the geometric figures, and shapes and so, when I see it put together that kind of stuff, I go ooh, that looks pretty neat, because you can see, how it was placed, and, I think more when I can see a picture of, or an art piece, then, you know, come up, I think that's, otherwise, another thing is, I'll get, ʻohe kāpala and lay it all out, and look at my ʻohe kāpala, and go ok, oh I like this one, I pull couple out, and I see how it placed and, you know, kind of, think about how it's gonna look, and then I take those that's how I start. You know, it's pretty much a blank slate, many many times, and then once I place it, then I have an idea.

It's the shapes for me.

I mean, Harinani tells me, let's sit down, and k, just draw out ten.

Ten, ten designs. Ten.

Like. Ten? I cannot even draw one ʻcause I don't know, you know, I have a problem, I mean, drawing, I can draw, I can look at that ti leaf, that plant, and by looking I can draw it out you know by looking at something. But to visualize that ti leaf plant and draw it out, I cannot. I have stuff in my mind, I think oh maybe this would be good, but I don't know how to put it on, so there is this disconnect for me. So many times I can go to the, if I come up with an idea, it's like, ok, will maybe I want to do something, but I don't know how to draw it out, then I'll go to Harinani. I need help, can you help me draw something, ʻcause she'll make me draw it. And then she'll draw some, and I always pick, I always pick hers, ok you can do it better.

Ok, so, I want to do pueo. Ok, so, let's draw pueo. Ok. But it's things like that. But mostly shapes because I know I can draw, I can draw a diamond, I can draw, you know, a triangle, a square. That's easy. And that's what, that's actually what, with kapa you not drawing a plant. You drawing just these shapes right? So easy!

That's why I think, I've been able to—

I guess you know, I come up, and a lot of times it's not my own idea, or it's somebody else's

[laughs]

and it kinda pushes me to do it, right. Ok so, I just finished, I'm working on this piece, right, that I was gonna do a kapa moe. K, I'm gonna do a kapa moe, make it bigger than the last one. So he asked me the other day, he says, "so what you doing do next, you know? You can do a kapa moe, what you going do next? Ok, you gotta make clothing." But I did clothing, you know, so I said well, you know the only thing I really didn't perfect to my, what I think, is the malo. So I will probably do a malo, just to get the length and to make one that's good.

The first one I did was, you know it was kinda thick, wasn't the length, it wasn't, so it's the short malo, it was kinda, it's kinda thick, so it wasn't really good and it wasn't as strong, yea. At this point, the malo that I did make was almost 10 years ago. And I tried, and finally what I

did was I softened it, and I worked it, so I can twist it, I was able to twist it and pull it and it's strong, but it's thick.

I want to make it thin and strong.

Which I think at this point I know can do it, I mean if I can make a 10 foot, 10 x 10 foot piece of kapa, I can make that.

So the big, the next thing, is, and this is really pushing it, you know if I think making a kapa moe is pushing, and it is, I mean it was challenging, it is challenging, to get it, you know, really nice.

I'm almost afraid to say it, but I want to make a holokū. And, you know I talked about it before and that was after, this year when were at Pasifika, when we were in New Zealand, and somebody sends me this picture of his Tongan wedding dress. And it was just, it was *so* beautiful, so, so beautiful, and this large train, I mean this is just, this whole big wide circle, and, I said, I want to make a wedding dress, a holokū. So that'll be the next, yea, at some point hopefully I will make it, and I just have to make enough kapa, and then find somebody to help sew it, because I haven't sewn in years.

I want to have a you know, really long train. My mom, used to sew holokūs. She used to sew so many holokūs for May Day queens, Waimānalo and Kailua school, high school, all, you know, she made holokūs for these girls for so many years. She made my holokū for my wedding, and I want to make a holokū copying her design. And she, my mom never had any formal training. She designed her own clothes, cut her own patterns. She didn't even learn how to do that she did it all by herself. With newspaper, cutting patterns. And so anyway, she made, my cousin, this is years ago, was May Day queen at our school. She was, I think she was in high school, she wasn't in high school yet, it was I think in middle intermediate, but my mom made her a holokū, and she still has it.

So I'm going to ask her if I can borrow it, and then try to, make one, like that. And then I have pictures of mine so I can use that as well. But, you know, I had a train, it was a 6, 6, 7 foot train, of my holokū, and, it was all in one, you know, it was a one piece, but, she sewed it, it wasn't where, you attached the train, it was like

*one piece*

Yea, so, that will be. And possibly, well we had talked about this, doing MAMo in 2018, and I thought, well, you know, MAMo you usually have some, the wearable art show, and they usually have, you know, several models going, and I thought you know we don't need 10 different models, we need 1 wearing, 'cause, this is going to be one of a kind. Nobody's ever done it before and just have that, you know, we can have some other stuff going on too, but pretty much, that's gonna, that's what I'm envisioning.

Yes! So I am leaving, you know my son, I was thinking about this today, and my son, he's like, I don't know, a teenager, not even, yea he was a teenager.

One day he told me, "you know mom, you not leaving us anything, there's no legacy." And then he also said well we don't have a home, I was renting at the time, you know you not leaving us anything. And of course I said well money wise, you not going to get anything you shouldn't expect money or an endowment or whatever it is.

But then I thought, you know, a legacy. And this is, this is something that is going to be worth more than just money. More than money. Because what I'm doing and what we've been doing, through the practice, we're leaving, I'm leaving this legacy for future, for generations and generations to come.

And now we have written, stuff, where, not like us we have to go and try figure out what our kūpuna did. But they have something that's written they have stories about me so they'll know about, you know, the journey.

My journey.

So I'll be leaving something for them, which is why, you know, why are we here? Why was I born? Am I just going to waste my life? No. I want to be, I want to leave something behind. I want to make a difference.

I said that, you know, this was when I was a kid, I think. I always said, I want to do something, I want to, of course at that time I think I wanted to be a star, or something, right, so that's, just so that somebody remembers what you did.

And, I think, I'm doing it, you know, so that makes me feel good.

And so will you, you going to be doing the same, once you start practicing, and you going to feel, you know you're going to have your own reasons of why, and that kind of, I, I think for me, that's kind of what drives me and keeps me doing it. And of course, I enjoy doing it, but then I also know, that, I mean, I'm doing what our grandparents did, you know, ancestors did. Yup.

This is not final. It's a continuation, of learning, of reviving, of revival—

And, raising awareness of how special our ancestors were, how intelligent they were, how creative, how, you know, and to raise the pride of all Hawaiians. 'Cause I was raised growing up in an era where we were, we were shame to be Hawaiians. It wasn't good to be Hawaiian. We were told lies about our ancestors and our, you know, everything Hawaiian. And I don't want that to happen again. I don't want to allow people to come in, foreigners to come in and steal any more from us than what they've taken. And in order to do that it's to keep Hawaiians, our culture alive, and continue it. Know what aloha is, practice aloha, *really* what aloha means. Not what the tourists believe, is, you know, aloha. And that's I think, for me, working in the industry and seeing what, outsiders come and want to just take, take, take, then I'm not willing to give anymore? Because, I mean, to that—

I want to give to other Hawaiians, I want to give to others who practice, but mostly, to Hawaiians. So that they can be proud and they can see that, this is what we've been doing, this is what, go to the museums, look at the quality, don't let other people tell you any more lies about us. Stand proud, because, they were so, so smart, intelligent, and, I don't know, so there's no final, I think.

Hopefully I got another 20 years. And if I'm not able to lift that beater, I'll be able to at least talk about it, and share it, and teach it. It's like one beat at a time, one student at a time, one person at a time, learning, so that they can move on. Not just anybody.

And I am, I say I'm very particular in who I'm giving, sharing my knowledge with, because they want, they need to be committed to it as I am, you know, so, anyway, that's, that's all, that's it, the end.

[laughs]

## part III
## my story as haumāna

**Marlene Akiko Zeug**

**lawe i ka maʻalea a kūʻonoʻono**

"Kumu, tell me a story."

Her eyes hold an amused sparkle as I settle in to listen.
"What does kapa mean to you?"
I love these moments.
Her voice makes her stories come alive.
Her poetic cadence draws you in and holds you.

"It's the ahonui, the perseverance
it's haʻahaʻa, and gratitude,
and awareness.
It's surrendering to the wauke
even with inspiration and intention the fiber tells you."

"It is protocol, and tradition,
and process
and lots and lots of practice."

I can feel my forehead crinkle.
What's the lesson?
I really want to ask, but I don't.

Kumu pauses. Head tilted. Watching closely.
Waiting to see if I understand.
"kapa is life."
Kapa is beating, but it's also
the values, the process, the intention.

## introduction

*I am of both: of my kumu, and of the kumu of my kumu.*

The first two parts of this dissertation portray the topical life stories of my kumu as kapa practitioners; part three transitions to an autoethnographic exploration of my own experiences. Presented as a series of vignettes that toggle between creative and academic styles, I trace the trajectory of my transformation in this project: as a haumāna, an emerging researcher, as a practitioner/researcher/educator. What started as an autobiographical capture of reactions became guideposts for this explorative inquiry, as these captured moments forged a deeper understanding of my own educator identity. Questions raised from the sessions with my kumu—*What led me to kapa? What does kapa mean to me? What do I look for in a kapa piece? What is the most important tool? What does kapa bring to me?*—found their way into my reflections, superimposing themselves onto the ongoing dialogue that frames my professional life as an educator. Ontologically and epistemologically, navigating my relational responsibilities—and reflecting on how to proceed—mandated the acknowledgment of my own presence in this inquiry. The process of writing—articulating important pivots of my own experiences and surfacing intentions from these multiple lenses—became an act of inquiry into my own evolving identity as an educator.

In many ways, my story is literally and symbolically the shortest. This did not surprise me; after all, when I gaze upon my own future I can sense my story pathway stretches for miles. While the underlying narrative of my positionality frames the introduction and conclusion sections of this dissertation, the moʻolelo I share in this section speak more to my reflective process to understand myself. While the introduction and conclusion sections analytically trace this journey in relation to the research itself, here my story is presented, unfolded through

vignettes and rememoried experiences that have marked the contours of my context as practitioner and researcher; and that have no doubt, influenced my emerging identity as an educator. Each of these stories, these memories and experiences have turned my head in some way, to *look* and reflect deeply. No longer silenced behind the knot of emotion, no longer dancing around the edges, this is the presentation of my voice, thorns and all. Where in the learning space of kapa "just beat" was my first lesson, here, this doing is part of my sharing. In exploring these spaces autoethnographically, I also leave room for you, the reader, to interpret what layers of meaning may lie within.

**haumāna: the practitioner context**

*I think, I see a traditionalist in you, and that's you know, good, I like that.*
*(K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016)*

**hapa**

The Māunuunu wind of Waiʻalae sweeps down the valley, nudging my mom's pīkake bushes below the house. I amble to the window, blowing hair out of my eyes. I has been years since I stood at this window. Peering out at the valley of suburban sprawl below. From my perch on the side of Waiʻalae Nui Ridge, I can see all of Kāhala, the mall, Kāhala Hilton, all the way out to the blue of the Pacific Ocean. My gaze follows the roads awake with traffic, watching specks for people walking on the sidewalks. I'm too far away to see their expressions, hear what they are saying. It's as if I am watching a silent movie.

The house I grew up in has 66 steps to the front door and an elevator my dad built, that cuts straight into the side of the mountain. It used to be painted chocolate brown with an orange monier tile roof, but now it's more like antique white. The heat of early summer has nudged the pīkake buds open, and as the breeze spirals across the clear blue sky, the scent stirs a tumble of small kid-time memories that, for a moment, lose form and function.

Twirling in my favorite, pink tutu
cigarette smoke curls as sensei takes one last drag
she shakes her head
at my skinned knees from soccer
"How will you dance ballet with scarred knees?" she asks.

Mānoa Japanese Language School
the smooth grinding of the ink stick on stone
the thick, ink smell drips
watching the newspaper pucker as the brush touches
I am a leftie, it feels uncomfortable,
and sometimes, the tears falls silently, but
I am forced to use my right hand to write in shōdo class.

And books in the bathtub until
my fingers are prunes
Trixie Belden and Nancy Drew
and Encyclopedia Brown
and Beverly Cleary
and Judy Blume
I got lost in their adventures

and wanted to stay there.

Summers at the Zeug farm in Minnesota
watching my boy cousins make forts with bales of hay
from inside the kitchen
the sweet smell of dough rising
and Grandma Zeug watching
as I knead the dough and shape it
oh, how I wanted to be out there.
Aunty Dorothy catching the bus
she always visits when Maui Grandma comes
they smell of ivory and incense
and watch General Hospital and All my Children
and argue in pidgin-Japanese
but I know they are talking about me.

Sitting among my mom's pīkake bushes
on the terrace below the house
with a mayonnaise jar and the buds
fat for picking
staring out at the big deep blue of the ocean
wondering
what was beyond where
the water fell off the edge of the earth.

I have spent a lifetime on the margins.

Half-Japanese, half-Haole, a yonsei. I have brown skin and big teeth, and big eyes with folded eyelids. I was acutely aware I did not seem to fit from an early age.

A story I remember:

I was 7 and at a function where my mom was the featured guest. But instead of sitting nicely in my new dress, I played hide and seek and tag in the dark hallways of the building with my newfound friends. I tore the dress and messed my hair and missed the presentation, and the drive home was filled with lectures and angry scolding.

My mom was not proud of the way I had acted.

"You are not acting like a big sister should!" "Who do you think you are? Acting obnoxious like that!" "Why can't you be more like Aunty Winnie's daughter? Always such a tomboy! What am I going to do with you?!"

I looked at my younger brother in his child seat, who looked back at me through 4-year-old eyes. I was full of emotion and silent. Born premature and sickly, he consumed the energy and attention of my parents—except when I was really, really bad (or really, really good).

I didn't know who I thought I was. I didn't know what a big sister was supposed to act

like. I only knew I was obnoxious and a tomboy and not like my cousin at all.

In the backseat of the car, I felt myself grow uncomfortable in my own skin.

Later, among the pīkake bushes in front of our house in my torn dress, I cried. Big, rolling, silent tears mixing with the heavenly scent of the pīkake buds, soothing my tiny, heaving shoulders. In these bushes, fat, thick with pīkake buds and the sweet smell of aloha, I could sit and cry myself into the next moment when I could stand up and move on. Where I could breathe without constricting, lock those feelings up tight, and smile.

It was if we didn't understand each other, my parents and I. I was rough and loud and liked to play outside. I was not shy and quiet and comfortable in a dress. I made my mom mad, and my dad madder, all the time. My mom put me first in Japanese school, then in modeling classes, to teach me manners and politeness. "You have to learn to act like a girl," she would scold, exasperated. But at least, even in those moments, they were forced to look up from caring for my brother and see I was there, too. I wore the guilt of wanting their attention and knowing it would take them away from my brother.

I did not understand their hearts could expand to love the both of us.

Underneath it all, I wanted to be seen and heard. Without having to put on a dress and make my hair nice. Without having to be perfect in school and get good grades, so my parents would acknowledge and congratulate me. And so I worked at their attention, often vacillating between precociousness and trying-to-be-perfect. Only then, it came out in a rush and tumble of emotions and activity as I ping-ponged between angel and hellion, not the least of which was considered feminine, or polite, or proper Japanese etiquette. My behavior grade in Japanese school was never above a C; but I got all As in English school.

One day, at English school, we were playing jacks, my two best friends and I. It was Friday recess and we had just decided we were each other's best friends. Like a club. We ate lunch together, liked the same boys, and walked to Japanese School everyday after Noelani.

"You don't look anything like your mom or your dad." The remark came out not as a question, but as a statement. Like matter-of-fact. I felt thrown off-center.

I didn't know what to say and so I tried a retort. "Well, my mom says it was my *brother* they found in the taro patch, not me!"

My two friends looked at each other, a smile passing between them. And as I watch, awkwardly, as they shared a secret look between them, the fear starts to gnaw.

"She's so *weird*," they say to each other and laugh. I do not know what to say.

"Well, I was only joking," I mumbled. I try again. "I'm hapa." As if that should explain the lack of resemblance I seemed to bear with my parents.

"What's *that*?"

The recess bell rings just in time, and they grab each other's hands and skip back to class. Leaving me with the jacks, sitting by myself, blinking back tears I do not understand.

The takeaway from this scene replayed itself throughout school: the sudden, awkward realization that I am gazing from a place just out of reach of where everyone else is. Before I found sports, books became a refuge. Books did not ask me what I was. I devoured books and

read everywhere, even in the bathtub, until the water turned cold and my pruny fingers could no longer hold the pages. But the further I stuck my nose into Judy Blume and Beverly Clearly and Trixie Belden, the farther away my friends at school seemed. They were collecting stickers and erasers and spent their time hanging out at Ala Moana; I was reading Encyclopedia Brown.

In seventh grade, I entered a new school. It was a private school, and my mom started a business of sewing baby bibs and bags to help pay for the tuition. On the first day I carefully dressed in my favorite outfit my mom had sewn for me, and sprung out of the car. But as I walked the hallways, past friends hugging each other after a summer away, I was acutely aware they were also staring at me. They were also sporting the newest brand-name clothing. We were not poor the way my mom and dad both described their upbringing, but we were not the kind of rich (nor famous) I attended school with.

Suddenly, the spring in my step felt like cement. I was immediately self-conscious. "Who is *that*?" "Do you know who that is?" "What is she wearing?" I hear as I walk by. My face is on fire and my heart is pounding in my ears. I stop outside my homeroom door, suddenly afraid to turn the handle and step in. The image of that emotion, standing outside the door, watching the scene unfold before, once again, blinking back tears I now only understand too well, forever viscerally imprinted in my memory.

**hōʻailona**

In telling this story, I will say: it was kapa that found me.

It was my birthday and it was a Sunday. I'd been working 80, 90 hours a week at the time, and my weekends were usually spent in front of the computer. But today I decide I am going to Bishop Museum to see the Kū images. It's the last day of the exhibit.[47]

You need to go and see them, I think. You'll regret it if you don't.

So, in a moment of rare spontaneity, I decide to go. Throw my work to the wind and get outside. I'm already anticipating my soy misto from Starbucks. I glance at my laptop on the table as I lock the door. It feels strange without the big bag of work attached to my shoulder. For the first time in a long time, I dig out my sunglasses and let my hair down.

I'll only be a couple of hours, I think. Then maybe I will head somewhere, where shall I go? I shrug. Anywhere I want, I think. I have the whole day. It's my birthday!

Hawaiian Hall is dark and quiet. I vaguely hear people talking in hushed tones as I amble with arms crossed, towards the three wooden kiʻi. Most people are standing in front of them taking pictures, but I end up behind them, off to the side. I stand, staring, behind the kiʻi, for a long time. No thoughts. Just gratitude and peace.

The back corner of the second floor is darker and quieter. Tucked away, most people walk right past. It is six hours later, and I am still here. I can't bring myself to leave. Every once in a while my gaze finds the three kiʻi in the center, as I continue to amble through Hawaiian Hall. But now, I realize I have been in this spot before. Several times before, in fact. The back corner of the second floor.

What is this? What am I looking at?

A kuʻinakapa from Niʻihau, I read.

What is kapa? I've never heard of or seen kapa before. What am I looking at?

This little-by-little feeling starts to replace itself with an all-at-once kind of feeling. I am captivated. The emotions tumble and conflict into an internal argument.

Shame: I'm not Hawaiian. Why am I so drawn to this?

Curious: Where can I learn more? How do I find out more about it?

Anxious and shy: How does one get started? Where does one go to learn about kapa? It's not like I can open the yellow pages and find someone!

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[47] E Ku Ana Ka Paia: Unification, responsibility, and the Ku images was an exhibit at the Bishop Museum that reunited 3 wooden carved kiʻi from the British Museum in London, the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, and the Bishop Museum, for the first time in over 150 years. Each kiʻi of Kū is over 6 feet tall and 800 pounds; although Kū is thought to manifest in different forms, names, and functions, all three kiʻi are thought to be Kukaʻilimoku, who guided Kamehameha I in his conquests to unify all the islands in 1810. These 3 kiʻi would be reunited 200 years later, in 2010.

Shame again: Why would I want to learn something that's not part of my culture? Why should I? Who am I to think someone would share this with me?

Curious again: But, how do I make sense of this feeling of being *pulled* towards this? That I feel I need to learn more?

Shame, again, this time more strongly: That's not for you to decide. For shame you be so pretentious to ask for this kind of knowledge!

I try to rationalize these feelings. I cannot explain them, and I cannot walk away. I am hooked. Standing on the fringes, just outside the circle.

Looking for something to grab and hold onto.

This time, shame wins. When I finally leave Bishop Museum that day, it is long after the museum closes. The bookstore staff pushes me out the door and I stand, pausing, at the entrance before walking towards my car. I pull my sunglasses out, but I hold them instead. My hair is pulled back into its familiar ponytail bun. I sigh. The parking lot is empty.

I put my head down and allow work and life and everything in between to stuff it deep.

It sits.

It's six months later.

Friday evening. April 15th, 2011.

It has been a long week, longer than the others. Each week, I chase the frenetic reality of the nonprofit world. *No time, no money, just grind*. Each week, with 90-hour work weeks, I hold on tight, wearing the burden of a hundred years of social justice. This week is no different. It has chewed me up and spit me out. I imagine I look like what a sigh feels like as I fall into my couch with the remote. I can feel the tired in my eyes. I wait for the television picture to focus on the screen, aware of how hard it is for my eyes to focus. I look at my watch.

Next to me on the couch is a book. I shrug, an idle thought, a stream of consciousness. Why is there a book on the couch? Didn't I put this away?

Outside, it is dark. I listen to the rain drumming on the metal roof of my house.

On the television screen, the sound from the stereo system hooked to my television kicks in. I grab the blue paperback, opening it aimlessly, still waiting for the television picture to appear. Kamakau's *Nā Moʻolelo a ka Poʻe Kahiko*.

It opens to the section on kapa, *The Obtaining of Kapa*. My fingers trace the title just as the sound of kahiko from the television draws my attention. Just in time to see the ōlapa of Hālau O Kekuhi, dressed entirely in kapa, fill the 50-inch screen. And now, time suddenly slows as my breath stops in my chest. The hairs stand on my arm as a chill runs down my spine.

What is this? What am I looking at?

My vision narrows and focuses, and every detail suddenly magnifies sharply.

The camera pans the audience slowly, resting momentarily on a line of women and men, mostly women, before moving back to the dancers. Holding tissues, dabbing eyes, holding hands. A woman stares up at the dancers on stage, a smile of wonder and emotion. Tears stream down her cheeks.

On stage the dancers move in unison to the chant and the beat of the pahu. Hands and feet and toes all in sharp unison. And kapa! In dizzying colors of yellows and greens and reds and browns. The designs! The kapa stretches and flexes and bunches to their movements. Sweat beads on backs. And their eyes. There is something in their eyes.

They dance, wrapped in the experience of kapa on their skin, while the world, the audience, and me, watch.

Hula and kapa, connected.

I am transfixed.

The little-by-little feeling no longer, it is all at once. Full, thick, and commanding attention. It has filled my entire being. With tears streaming silently and chicken skin, that Friday night in April, in front of my television, I watch them kahiko.

This time, the kāhea speaks to someplace deep and holds on.

**the mayonnaise tub**

The first Wednesday I met Uncle Sol, I brought my friend for courage.

"Uncle Sol, I was told to come find you. I want to learn how to make kapa." I half-mumble the words out as I speak to the ground. I am suddenly aware of my shame. Here I am, showing up, asking for something, and I don't have anything in return to offer.

Uncle Sol stands and starts ruffling through his tool chest. My friend smiles and leaves quietly. As I awkwardly stand there, hands crossed, waiting. He turns and gives me a wood blank and a tiger shark tooth.

"It costs 5 dollars, you can pay me now or next week." He takes the wood blank, picks up his electric sander, and starts to sand it. After a while, he hands it to me. Wood blank and sander. "Here, you do 'em now."

"What if I do it wrong?"

"No worry," he says, smiling. "That's how you learn."

"Easy."

I settle in and start sanding. I have a goofy grin on my face but I don't care.

The second Wednesday, Uncle Sol shows me how to carve out the space where the tooth will sit. "You have to fit it so she's snug, but not too snug. Just go, then check it with the tooth, then go some more. Main thing, she gotta sit straight." He shows me what he means with the dremel. "Here, you do 'em now. Easy right?"

As I am carving, he drills tiny pin holes through the wood, then starts on the shark tooth. The smell of the drill bit burning through the shark tooth curls in my nose. The dremel's whine shifts from a hum to a piercing squeal as he works the bit through the tooth. My eyes water.

"We gonna use pegs, not cordage," he says. "We drill holes through the wood and the shark's tooth, and then pound these pegs through with glue."

"Because you gonna use this, it's not gonna sit on a shelf, so we not going to lash it. That will come loose." I am silent, listening, watching. Intently.

Then he shows me how to polish and burnish, wood on wood.

When I finally finish, he looks at it from different angles. Peering, the way a wood maker peers at the grain. He looks satisfied. "Ok," he says, "looks good!"

"Uncle, what is this called again?"

"Niho ʻoki."

*Niho ʻoki,* I mentally repeat. Shark's tooth knife.

"This is what you use to strip the stalks with."

And slowly, the picture of "how to make kapa" starts to take a slow, beautiful form.

One Wednesday, Uncle Sol gives me an iʻe kuku blank. Four sides smooth and made of kauila. With his trademark "O" and "Solomon Apio" burned in the side.

"This will be your beater," he says.

I take it and hold it in my left hand, my thumb rubbing slowly over the etchings of his trademark signature. *Iʻe kuku*. The pictures from the book *Arts and Crafts of Hawaii* are still fresh in my mind.

I cannot speak.

I can only nod, my eyes widening to hold back tears. The intense gratitude comes from someplace deep.

He clamps the iʻe kuku to the table, and using a tool he made from a hacksaw blade, rakes the teeth over the length of its smooth surface. Starting outward and pulling in with two hands, he shows me how to carve the grooves. Out to in, one smooth motion. Each side is a different width, he explains. Very wide to wide, to thin, to very thin.

And then he leaves me, hunched over my very first iʻe kuku.

I focus on each pass, carefully, copying the movements Uncle Sol made.

Out to in with two hands,

One smooth motion.

Again and again,

Over and over.

Watching the kauila ribbon and shave and peel as the teeth scratch, then grab and dig in as lines give way to grooves.

"You want the grooves like this," he says, touching his hands together in a V. "Because that's what spreads the wauke without cutting it."

He leaves me again, lost in my own concentration, until I ask, "Uncle, is it deep enough yet?" He takes the iʻe kuku and peers at it from different angles, and says, "no, not yet. We'll ask my sister when she comes, but I think it needs to be deeper. Make ʻem more deep." I take it back to continue the ritual now embedded in the memory of my muscles.

This is my learning. Watching Uncle Sol intently, then mimicking until the experience feels, sounds, looks, even smells, familiar. Every Wednesday he watches and chuckles, and shakes his head at my determination.

"Eh, you *all right,* you," he exclaims.

"I don't want to make a mistake," I say.

"*No worry*," he says. "That's how you learn. *Eeaaseh*."

One Wednesday, Aunty Verna shows up carrying wauke, a small water spritzer and a kua. Uncle Sol shows her my iʻe kuku and she raises her glasses with one hand to look at it closely, nodding approvingly. I feel happy. Aunty Verna hands me the wauke. It's cleaned, bundled and freshly washed, in one of those old gallon-sized plastic mayonnaise tubs with the blue screw-on lid.

I have never seen—or smelled—wauke before.

The thick, fat, coils are a little slimy, cool, and smell. *Ripe*.

"Beat it," she says. I look at her with confusion, panic behind my eyes. I am too scared to tell her I don't know how. She smiles, waiting patiently.

Slowly, I unscrew the lid and remove a slimy bundle. Automatically, my nose wrinkles and my eyes water. She chuckles. She knows that look.

I uncoil a bundle, place a length of wauke on her kua and pick up the iʻe kuku I made.

"Just beat it," she repeats, nodding. Encouraging.

I take a breath. *Here goes nothing,* I think. I start, the iʻe kuku making a small, feeble sound against the kua. I look at Aunty Verna, and realize she is watching me, not the wauke. The way I'm standing over the kua, how I am holding the beater.

I look down again, noting I had not hit it hard enough to make a mark. I beat again, this time a little harder. I see the fiber start to split; under the fermented skin, the fiber is white, soft, pulpy. *Ok,* I think. *I can do this.*

Aunty Verna is still watching.

Calmed by the rhythmic ʻouʻou as the iʻe kuku taps against the kua, I start to lose myself in the process. There is something meditative yet demandingly *present* about this. I am aware of how happy I am. I'm in a good place.

After watching me for a time, and only after watching me, she steps in and shows me how she beats. As she works from the middle to the outside edge, I watch how she holds the iʻe kuku, how she stands in front of the kua. *Her wrist doesn't move much, actually her whole arm doesn't move really move*, I think. Almost as if the momentum of the iʻe kuku striking the kua lifts it enough to guide it back down again.

I listen to the way her beater sounds against the kua. *It sounds flatter,* I think, she's holding the beater almost parallel to the kua, so she can hit the wauke with the full surface of the iʻe kuku.

Middle-to-out in both directions, forward and back, over and over, I watch. After a while, she moves the emerging kapa four inches, the width of the kua, to start the process again. She picks it up, pulling it carefully away from the kua. Emboldened, my curiosity gives me courage to speak.

"Aunty, what's the right way to beat?"

She smiles and shakes her head.

"There is no one way to beat," she says. "You have to find your own way." She looks at me, seeing if I understand. I nod slowly. There are layers to what she just said, but right now, I take this literally.

"But the way to thin kapa is to beat from the middle out, like this."

"You gotta watch the fiber," she says. "It will tell you."

This is how I started—by making my tools with Uncle Sol.

Another four months or so went by before I met Aunty Verna and Kaʻiulani.

It was another two years after that before I started calling them my kumu.

**the moʻolelo i learned from**

I'm wondering how I got here.

I'm in Kings Cross, outside the railway station that borders the northern edge of London, waiting to board the train for Edinburgh. Even at 9am on a Sunday, the city throbs and pulses with people. *Everywhere*. Spilling on the streets, jaywalking, swearing at impatient Aston Martins and Bentleys and red double-decker buses that honk and jerk and swear back.

It is impossibly clear and impossibly blue.

And cold. Impossibly cold.

London, the place where Captain James Cook hails from. Whose three voyages into the Pacific 7,000 miles away forever altered the history of Hawaiʻi. Whose threads intersect and intertwine with the stories of my kumu's kumu, my kumu. Me.

London, the place of foreigners. Whose ships would bring waves to Hawaiʻi. Whose captains King Kamehameha I established agreements with on the trade of ʻiliahi. Whose products, including the steel nail, forever altered the history of kapa.

London, the place King Kamehameha II, born Kalaninuikualiholihoikekapu, sailed to with Queen Kamāmalu on the English whaleship *L'Aigle*. The place where they both succumbed to measles before meeting with King George IV. Whose royal black kapa, tagged with the scrawl of Reverend Andrew Bloxam, "used at the funeral of the King & Queen of the Sandwich Islands, who died in England in 1824," I found myself holding yesterday, nearly 200 years later, in disbelief.

At once bringing full-circle the intersection of those threads.

I wonder, not for the first time, about the intersection of truths. *Decolonizing Methodologies* (Smith, 1999) and *Education for Critical Consciousness* (Freire, 2005), books from the summer's EdD class, *Social and Cultural Contexts to Education*, had slammed against my comfortable reality. I felt betrayed and exploited. Rudely upending my own ideological framework, a raw, visceral rage awoke from a long, burning slumber.

Just whose Truth did I learn anyway? Who decided what Truth I was to learn?

Running became a familiar companion. Physical activity seemed the only path to momentary peace. I was revolted but the first layer had peeled itself back, and I needed to peel another. For the first time, the current of *hate* coursed through, twitching my fingers.

I read, raged, and ran my way through that summer.

This anger had eventually settled, left on the side of the road from miles of running. But the blinders had been permanently removed, and even now, in the middle of London, the idea again had poked its head. Taunting. Like whack-a-mole.

Inside the train station, I'm gazing at a trellis of five crisscrossed white steel columns soaring up, up, nearly 75 feet into the air out of the epicenter, only to fan and cascade out in a parabolic trajectory, a canopy lattice of steel diamond cells that flare down to mantle the entrance where people are peppering in. Urban, performative architecture that commands your attention until you can break away and see the refurbished south facade of Lewis Cubbit's original 1852 station behind it.

Behind me, coffee shops and bookstores are full and hum with commerce. The *whirr* and *snap* of an espresso grinder dispensing fresh ground beans. The *ding* and *schunk* of the cash register drawer closing another sale. The smell of coffee and diesel. Muffled sounds come from headphones. Somewhere, someone is listening to *Jay-Z* or *Eminem*, I can't tell which. People are sitting. Standing. Milling. Oblivious to the huge steel white net, opaque and transparent, that seems frozen in time as it is cast out to draw in. It is expansive and confining at the same time.

Four months ago over sushi and shrimp tempura, I had wondered aloud with my parents. "I want to see these museum collections," I say, playing with my chopsticks. The tempura is hot, crispy. A sharp, hot, juicy taste against the smooth of white sticky rice. We are talking about kapa and my dissertation.

"Oh, really?" My dad asks.

"Yes. I'm curious about what 'pre-contact' kapa looks like. Cook's third voyage, that's when he gets lost and happens upon Hawai'i. There are kapa pieces from that voyage that give some clues about what Hawaiian kapa was like before Western contact, because whatever he left with would have been made prior to his arrival."

Mom and dad are chewing, listening. I continue.

"And, what's interesting is thinking about how old *those* pieces were that he ended up with. There isn't any real way of knowing—they could have been generations old, or fairly new. But they would likely have been the best, most treasured pieces that they presented to him because they thought he was Lono, one of the Hawaiian Gods."

"And it's not just Cook. Folks traveling on his ships also collected kapa pieces and sold them. Aunty Verna's kūpuna has pieces in museums today from this. The U.S. Government themselves commissioned an expedition to the Pacific where they also collected kapa samples, that's in the Smithsonian. Granted, these are probably the best pieces, I doubt there would be examples of 'bad kapa' in the museums, but I'm so curious to see what these collections have."

From that dinner emerges a trip, a museum-hopping trip spanning continents: Smithsonian in Washington D.C., the National Museum of Scotland of Edinburgh, an impromptu visit at the Hunterian in Glasgow via a 45-minute bus ride. The Peabody Museum in Harvard. In these spaces, I spend hours—and gigabytes—touching, smelling, peering, observing, photographing, reflecting on, writing about, and discussing kapa.

In the beginning, I wonder, what would Aunty Verna and Ka'iulani think about this piece? I hold a piece of kapa gingerly, turning it this way and that, the way I remember my kumu doing. What would they notice? What would their careful eye observe? What their practiced hands feel for?

Later, I begin to ask myself. What do I see? What am I feeling? What am I thinking?

My notes shift from information to sporadic capture of dizzying emotions as I try to make sense of my observations. I am looking at types of kapa I have never read about, heard described before.

*Thick- what is this ribbing? Is this from a papa hole? Thin- the watermarks! Soft- how the heck did they do this? Crackly- waterproofed? Painted or stamped? Fibers- I can see the red fibers beaten in! Blue balls made the blue. Huge, 5 sheets of kapa moe?? Designs- stencils, rubbing, looks like gingham. Cut sections gone- where did they go? what museum did this*

*piece end up in? Lacy- is this kalukalu? Black kapa- ribbed, no watermark, what are these crystals from?*

There are huge pieces of kapa moe and malo, kīhei and pāʻū. Small slivers and cutouts from pieces sold and resold and resold again. History comes alive for me in these back rooms at the same time it unravels a small thread of foreboding. Stories begin to emerge from these early collections of Cook, and Beechey, and Wallis. Of white men who decided, whether by barter or by force, that they wanted some of the "beautiful, soft white tapa from *Owyhee*"[48] (personal notes, October 9, 2016, italics in original). Of the collectors who, because of their magnanimity (or thievery), preserved these pieces for my eyes to see. Of the elusive practitioner, who "beat kapa because that's what they did everyday" (personal notes, October 13, 2016), save for the generic descriptive of "the native women, probably the ones most renowned in their villages" (personal notes, October 13, 2016).

It is impossible to consider these pieces without considering the stories of where they came from, who made them, and how they ended up here.

A discomfort lodges in my throat.

The roles of researcher and haumāna begin to converge and collide.

Overhead the announcer monotones, '*the next train to Edinburgh departs from platform 13.*' That's us. I break from my reverie, watching as loosely organized clusters instantaneously transform into a stream of people and purpose. I squint at the long row of monitors' dizzily blinking of departure and arrival times. It's cold. I shiver into my jacket, picking up my luggage. Shuffling into that stream of people and purpose.

On the train, I open my laptop and again wonder about the intersection of truths.

Kapa pieces, collected and squirreled away in the back rooms of museums, whose fibers share stories I had never come across in the books I read. Who were the practitioners that made these pieces? What made them decide to experiment the way they did? What did they look at? What did they feel for? What did kapa mean to them? What would they say Hawaiian kapa is?

Kaʻiulani and Aunty Verna find their way to my ear. "You always watch the fiber. The fiber is going to tell you what you need to do."

The truth of this settles in, and another layer emerges from the fold.

We will never know, I think. But in the stories of my kumu, they share those things. Their stories paint a different picture of kapa. Their stories are stories of activists recovering a dormant tradition. Their stories are stories as traditionalists who find comfort in the protocols and discipline. Their stories are stories of contemporary artists seeking their own expressions of creativity and nuance.

Their stories are stories as thinkers and doers and storytellers and story listeners. As practitioners and researchers and students and teachers. As botanists, chemists, biologists, anthropologists, philosophers, and historians.

The stories of my kumu remind me they are not "just" kapa practitioners.

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[48] Owyhee is an older English spelling of Hawaiʻi. I use it here sardonically, in context to the white men who arrived and named and claimed.

There are stories of stories here, the kind that build on each other, thread in and, weaving over generations, grabbing hold of the soil and digging in until it is impossible to ignore their roots.

I stare out the window. The train has picked up speed, and I feel my body rock to its rhythm as it whirs and hums along the track. It has started to rain. Splotches of water grab at the window. My dad muses at the countryside with the practiced eye of his farming youth. “They leave their fields clean and bare,” he remarks. “They must not have enough of a wind break.

“Why?” I inquire, filling in the blanks as he starts to respond. I know the answer. Because of erosion. I too, have my roots in dirt.

I look at my hands and think of my kumu.

These stories, I think.

These stories are the ones that need to be told.

**the butterfly**

In the early gray of daybreak, the yard awakens.

Oblivious to the metal snake of cars already impatiently inching towards the workday in the background. Glinting and winking.

And sighing.

It'd rained last night. Not the ua kanikoʻo, the rain that drums on the roof like canes tapping and makes you sleepy, but the ua ʻĀpuakea, the one aunty once told me was named for the beautiful goddess that Hiʻiaka had changed to rain.

But like the night before that, and the night before that, the ua has left sloppy kisses on the leaves of aunty's old pua kenikeni tree. You can tell it's old because of the white lichen that's growing on the trunk, and well, because it seems to hunch over more and more these days. Kind of like how I remember Aunty Dorothy and Maui Grandma used to.

A butterfly, orange and black and full of vibration looks for a place to land. Trying first just past the moss-covered rocks bordering the pond next to the creeping young maile, whose crushed leaves will one day scent kapa. Next circling the ʻalaʻalawainui, the plant for the gray dye, just sprouting new keiki. Then skirting past the ʻulaʻulaponi bursting through the soil, the kalo that makes the red dye. Finally, tentatively, landing near the waterfall, pulsing her wings slowly in a resting crouch, where the ʻaeʻae toes and dips in next to the slender trunk of the ʻūlei. It is too wet in Kāneʻohe for the berries, the white ones that you can eat and that makes the lavender dye.

From the southeast, the ulumanō wind stirs two young wauke. Their fuzzy, lobed leaves like fingers shaking off the ua as they greet the day. Slender and slight, there is new green on their stalks. After months of cajoling and waiting for them to grab hold and dig in, their leaves now unfurl and curl out from their center. Soon it will be time to manicure the wauke, plucking the buds above the leaves so they grow tall and straight, without branches. In that time their roots will send out runners, rhizomatically searching for the next place for their keiki to dig in and grow.

Opening up, up towards the sky.

All the while digging in deep with their roots.

The butterfly uncoils her proboscis to take a sip, a long black straw agitating the watery mirror. A slow pulsing of orange and black. Eyeing the swaying wauke.

Espresso steams from my favorite mug as I lean in, mentally greeting every plant. Watching this unfold. However brief this moment in time there is for me a connection to something timeless. For many it is a yard with a pond and some Indigenous plants, green and lush with rain. But to the eye of the kapa practitioner, it is a landscape of possibility and color.

The experience complete, I turn to my kua.

It is time to beat.

The iʻe kuku is substantial in my left hand, and as I feel it hit against the kua, I search for the sound. I need to add water, I think, grabbing the spritzer to spray the kapa. I vaguely wonder what the kapa practitioners of old thought as they made their pieces. Where did their eyes look?

What did they pay attention to? I'm in my home in Kāneʻohe, but when I beat, the familiar ʻouʻou of the iʻe kuku against my kua transports me somewhere else.

I have beaten two length of wauke, front and back. Yesterday, Kaʻiulani showed me how to place them on top of each other and beat them together.

"This is one pair. Then you take another pair and beat them together," she explains. "Both sides, front and back. Then join with this, two and two, beat them together, front and back. Keep adding until you have added all you need, and then you just keep beating. Fold and beat out. From the middle, and this way you have no seams."

"Hawaiian kapa has no seams," she says. "Hawaiian kapa does not use sap or pia, no gluing the way other cultures did."

I pick up the beater, remembering to focus my eyes past where the wood connects with the wauke to the fiber. I watch the fibers of the wauke in front of me move and spread. I smile at the memory of my conversation with Aunty Verna.

"How do you know when to stop?" I ask. It is one of those Wednesdays at Bishop Museum. She chuckles. It is the question all her haumāna ask her. *How do you know?*

"I will tell you as Kaʻiulani taught me," she says.

"You just beat, you keep beating until the fiber stops moving."

**emerging: the researcher context**

*just like Hawaiian language comes from the center out,*
*to the other person,*
*learning is that centered,*
*it's not out there,*
*it's not the end goal,*
*it's gotta start with you.*
*(K. de Silva personal communication, 2016)*

**the pedagogy of kapa**

"So, what is the pedagogy of kapa?"

The question sat with me as I drove home after my second session with Kaʻiulani. Now, months later, it wags a finger as I experience the conversation again, listening to the recording.

I feel myself stumble and bumble again as I listen to my stammering answer through my headphones. She's patient, I think. I wonder what my answer shows her about where I am at in the learning. I realize I have not reflected on this at all. I fall into the rhythm of her poetic storytelling as she continues on, lured into my own philosophical introspection.

*Western learning you really do have an external end goal,*
*and that's what you're shooting for*
*and it's not the process, whereas with*
*Hawaiian learning,*
*it is about the process*
*it's about the internal changes*
*just like Hawaiian language comes from the center out,*
*to the other person,*
*learning is that centered,*
*it's not out there,*
*it's not the end goal,*
*it's gotta start with you.*

My mind drifts. What *is* the pedagogy of kapa, I think? I am searching for the threads of connection I sense are there, just out of reach. I force myself to be patient, to slow down. To walk in this stream of consciousness with the curiosity of discovery instead of my normal impatience to figure it out.

I try to articulate what I am experiencing.

Words come out in free form.

he lālā wau no kuʻu kumu
start from the place where I acknowledge my first responsibility,
to my kumu and the stories they have shared with me
this is where the
            ʻike
            starts

i ka nānā no a ʻike (Pukui, 1983, p. 129)
pay attention with all your senses
nānā a hoʻolohe mua,
this is how the
            learning
            begins

ma ka hana ka ʻike (Pukui, 1983, p. 227)
apply the learning in practice
this is how the
            learning
            makes sense

lawe i ka maʻalea a kūʻonoʻono (Pukui, 1983, p. 211)
noʻonoʻo
this engages the naʻau
this is how the
            wisdom
            deepens

aʻo aku, aʻo mai (Chun, 2006, 2005)
moʻolelo aku, moʻolelo mai (Lipe, 2015)
through stories, ʻike breathes
this is how the
            ʻike
            lives

this is my way
this is how I was taught

**the faces i see**

Years later, I remembered the small book.

Inauspiciously standing on its side, dog-eared, the worn spine a story of a book well read. Almost hidden by my dad's yellow, tattered collection of *National Geographic*. I had never paid attention to it before. I was 7 and it was summer and it was in Japanese and I was bored. I went exploring, as kids sometimes do, little fingers working their way across the bookshelf that held the collection of thoughts and ideas and hopes of my parents.

*Okagesama de*.[49]

I asked Maui grandma but she simply smiled in her way, peering at me over her glasses, while she sat and watched her Japanese soap operas. She smelled like Ivory and menthol and never said much, and washed her clothes everyday with the old wooden washboard my mom kept for her.

Today, I am making my way to Kahuku from Kāneʻohe on the one-lane highway that snakes alongside the inviting iridescent blue of the ocean. To my left, the mountains, deep green from the fall rain, soar. Up. Crags and cliffs, cutting into the cloudless blue sky. I look up and am startled to see faces. Weathered into the Koʻolau, they are proud and gentle and smiling. For some reason, I suddenly know they have been there for a lifetime of lifetimes. I know they are watching me. Watching over me. I remember the small book and my grandma and wonder how long they've been there. Waiting for me to look up.

What's striking is not that I see faces, but how many I see.

Later, I ask my aunty about the faces.

"Aunty, why didn't I see them before?"

She was sitting like she always does, ankles crossed and hands in her lap. Listening. Her eyes were closed and I watched the thin line of her red lipstick curled up into a smile.

"Why do you think you didn't?"

I shrug. "It felt like they had always been there. Maybe I just wasn't looking for them?"

Her eyes opened and she smiled in the way that reminded me of Maui grandma. "Maybe they were always there. They just didn't think you were yet ready to see."

[49] okagesama de, I am because of you. A Japanese saying that notes the connection to ancestors and those who came before

**start from the middle**

It's a comfortable silence. I'm sitting across Kaʻiulani de Silva at her dining room table in Mānoa, discussing this project. A breeze wraps itself, pulling the hairs off the nape of my neck. The space is safe; I decide to tell her about the butterfly I keep seeing. Most often orange and black, it flutters into my field of vision in the oddest of moments. A fleeting experience of motion and energy. Running, at basketball clinic, stopped at a stoplight. "Each time, the butterfly, she stills me to watch her," I say.

Kaʻiulani smiles and nods in her way. She's waiting for me to arrive where she already is. She seems to know I have attached 'she' to the butterfly.

"Who do you think that is?" Her question is soft, her eyes bright.

She sits with me, comfortable, while I settle in. The thoughts here pull from someplace deep. I am suddenly shy and back away from what I want to say.

"I'm not sure," I whisper finally, even though I am pretty sure I know it is my aunty. I wonder what she will think. Still, Kaʻiulani seems to know, and this comforts me.

"Perhaps she shows up because there is change coming," she suggests. "You are changing, something in your life is changing. Something to pay attention to when she appears." I nod. I can feel my brow furrow in concentration.

"You have to be makaʻala when she appears, think about when she shows up, and think about how you will apply it to your life."

I want to ask. What change? Why? How do I pay attention? But I don't.

I let it sit.

Months later, I watch my yard yawn and awaken with the morning sun. From my dining room, I peer out through exhausted eyes. Writing this dissertation has been frustratingly slow. Painful. I did not anticipate the full weight of the responsibility in sharing someone else's stories would be so hard to bear. Particularly in an academic context. I am conflicted, and my "selves" as haumāna and emerging researcher seem to pull at each other. I feel paralyzed. Splintered.

Broken open, almost.

My mind wanders to the memory of Aunty Verna teaching me how to beat kapa for the first time.

"You always start from the center," she says. "The way to thin kapa is to beat the wauke from the middle outward, little by little. Always watching the fiber as you go."

I stare, blankly. Feeling the small smile on my lips as I pull back into the experience of that rememory.

Not seeing, until the butterfly flutters into my field of vision.

Circling, drifting on the morning breeze, finally landing.

Delicately.

Almost directly in front of me.

I feel my body once again still, my breathing matching the slow pulse of her wings. With each exhale, the butterfly stretches her wings. Until at one point, catching the sun, her whole body fills to resemble the shape of the pewa.

My eyes widen in understanding. In the way she always does, without really ever having to say a word, my aunty is telling me what I need to know.

Almost at the same time I remember Kaʻiulani's words:

*you're on the, verge,*
*you're in the midst, it's,*
*you are in the transition,*
*you are the butterfly*

The way forward is not at the ends, but the center.

Start from the middle and work your way outward, little by little.

From the place that bridges, like the pewa.

**kapa is life**

My researcher context asks,
bluntly,
"*are* stories enough to fill the weight of an academic text?"

My practitioner context retorts,
"why would they not be?"

The rabbit holes of research that shape the contours of this dissertation dance around this question. I think about this as I run my finger along the shelves of books I have collected. Past the familiar titles with the creased spines and dog-eared pages. *Arts and Crafts of Hawaii* (Buck, 1957), *Plants in Hawaiian Culture* (Krauss, 1993), *ʻŌlelo Noʻeau, Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings* (Pukui, 1983). Books by Malo, Kamakau, Meyer, Pukui, Chun that have taken up residence next to a growing collection of academia. How many times after a Sunday with Aunty Verna and Kaʻiulani and Uncle Sol, have I pulled them out to read and read again?

And yet, these books the new practitioner eagerly reads to catch a glimpse of history, that I still pore over, these are stories told mostly from the view of European men who have no connection to the practice. These books present themselves as the reigning authority on kapa, by virtue of no other authors occupying literal and symbolic shelf space. Is this what happens when there is no other voice to listen to? When we are made to believe there is no other voice? Do we forget to listen to our own?

The critical gaze of my researcher context looks past the words of the page, past the creased spines and dog-eared pages, to the place where my practitioner context meets. These books now seem flat. Compressed. Where are the stories of the experience? Where are the stories of the how's and the why's? Where are the stories that invite us in and hold us, if only to glimpse a moment of their world?

It is the fiber I am searching for, the thread of moʻolelo that brings the rich, thick, full, weight of the experience to bear. The thread of moʻolelo that connects and pulls me in.

The defiance in this introspective musing gives way to perseverating uncertainty. The physical space of the words that comprise and share the stories of my kumu now take on the weight of a tome. I wonder how it will all be received.

What happens if this is not taken seriously?
Will it be because I am not convincing enough, articulate enough, eloquent enough with my own argument to be granted entrance into the hallowed halls of the academic club?

I still remember the day I finished my first kapa piece. A kīhei beaten painstakingly and carefully, it represented the evolution of my learning at that point in time. I had made my tools, I had beaten the wauke, patiently removing the pieces of bark and brown along the way. Slowly, with Aunty Verna and Kaʻiulani watching and pushing, the wauke had transformed from pulpy, fermented strips to the seamless canvas that was now laid out in front of me. In a way, I was spent. Getting to here had been more demanding than I realized.

Kaʻiulani fingers the kapa, eyeing the fiber. She asks about the stamped design.

"What are you going to say?"

I freeze. The knot squeezes my chest, pushing the pulse of my heart into my ears. My eyes dart and my pulse quickens. I have no idea, I think. I search for an anchor among her patient and steady gaze. Is there a right answer to this?

I stare at the kapa I had just beaten. Mind blank. I don't know. *I don't know*.

Kaʻiulani seems to sense my anxiety. "It's ok, you don't have to know now. It will come, when you're ready."

I look at the blank canvas. And wonder what, in fact, I want to say.

This time,
my researcher context asks
more quietly.
"What stories can we share?"

My practitioner context smiles.
This voice is stronger now.
"What stories *do* we share?"
"What stories do we *want to* share?"

## reflections of a practitioner/researcher/educator

*I see it like sort of an ice cube,*
*first of all you, you're solid,*
*then it sort of melts,*
*and then you transform,*
*and then, if you can refreeze it,*
*but you refreeze it to a different shape,*
*or you know, it's about actualization,*
*you're going to take something that's external but then you're going to apply it to yourself and make it internal*
*and so it's going to change,*
*it's not going to be that same thing,*
*but you're going to apply it to yourself in the way that works,*
*and only then do you learn and change.*
*(K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016)*

## the thorns that first emerge

The childhood home Kaʻiulani grew up in is tucked into the Koʻolau mountain range that forms the backbone of Oʻahu, way back and way up in Mānoa valley. From her lanai, the valley floor of the ahupuaʻa stretches out, out, until it dips into the sea. On each side, the green mountain ridges of Pālolo and Tantalus flank the residential community of Mānoa and the glittering concrete and sharp urban angles of Waikīkī, its folds weathered deep from hundreds of thousands of years. With ʻAkāka, the mountain spur that forms the ridge of Waiakeakua, the Water of the Gods, at the valley's head. If I listen carefully, I can hear the sound of Mānoa Falls alongside the rustle of the wind. Kauakuahine, the famous Mānoa rain that births the waterfalls and streams, and Kahaukani, the Mānoa wind.[50]

Here, way back and way up in Mānoa Valley on ʻĀnela Place, the insistence of life seems to suspend and slow. ʻĀnela Place, the place of angels.

It is peaceful, here.

Comfortable.

I smile. I can understand why this is her center.

This morning is like the other mornings I've driven up here. The cool morning Mānoa air, filled with the smell of rain, rolls softly down the valley. I stopped at Andy's for fresh-baked

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[50] Kahaukani and Kauakuahina, who were brother and sister, were adopted at birth and raised by a chief, Kolowahi, and Pohakukala, a chiefess. They were married and gave birth to Kahalaopuna, the princess of Mānoa, who was said to be the most beautiful woman of her time. The union joined the wind and rain for which Mānoa is known for (Nakuina, 1907).

chocolate chip muffins and hot coffee, carefully placing the small package next to my iPad mini and iPhone charging from the USB port of my truck.

Going through my mental checklist,
checking and
checking and
checking again, the clip-on lavalier to make sure it is working.

That my iPhone and iPad have batteries. Reviewing where they will each be placed to not distract while Kaʻiulani talks, but so that I can see to make sure it's recording.

In spite of having made this trip several times, a small unease sits.

It was there three days ago when I visited Aunty Verna at her home in Punchbowl, to record her stories.

It had surfaced again as I drove home later in the dark. We had sat, talking story long after the dusk of nightfall, until our faces were visible only by the illuminating glow of my iPhone and iPad still recording.

Now, as I hop out of my truck and stretch, taking in the view outside Kaʻiulani's home, I again acknowledge my unease. The internal conflict surfaces. I feel protective of their stories. I'm grateful to document them, and I delight in listening to them. I also feel silly to be capturing them in this way.

Especially for a dissertation.

Will I ever get comfortable recording their voices? I wonder. It seems like I am crossing some kind of line once I put technology on the table in between us.

But if you don't record it, you won't capture what they said, I argue.

The recordings document their stories for the future, I counter. Besides, you'll be so engrossed in the conversation you'll forget to take notes. So shame if you don't do it right!

**talking story, telling stories**

Over six weeks, we sit. Together, at their tables. Haumāna and kumu. Interviewer and interviewee. Underneath Aunty Verna's house where she worked on her second kapa moe one day. At Kaʻiulani's dining table tucked into the mountains the next.

Always with my iPhone, my iPad, pad and pen, and clip-on microphone.

Always with food.

As if to temper the intrusive scrutiny these instruments imply.

Negotiating this power dynamic of interviewer and interviewee against the deferential dynamic of haumāna and kumu feels awkward. I am shy and self-conscious, unsure how to navigate this border. My kumu, perhaps out of respect that I was asking for the conversation, asking me to point the way forward. Me, out of deference and discomfort, pointing right back.

In our first meeting, the pre-meeting before the first interview, I show up with food and paperwork, explaining Seidman's (2012) three-interview model[51] I intend to follow: semi-structured interviews with a catalog of questions, about 90 minutes in duration, each a week apart. It feels so official and artificial behind the pages of signed consent forms. It also feels foreign and cold and distant.

I wonder, later, if I can do this.

In our second meeting, I find I cannot not step beyond the boundary of respect that define the roles of haumāna and kumu. We settle into a cadence that maintains this deferential dynamic. Them, not as interviewees or research participants but as storytellers, controlling content and pace. Me, not as interviewer or research but as story listener, happy to follow as they go from story to story. Talking about kapa and everything in between.

Their stories expand to fill the space between us as they share their lives, their children, their views, their hopes.

The interviews are never really interviews, but conversations. A dialogue of 'remember whens' and stories about us among stories about kapa and stories about them. This is not the one-sided interrogation of an interviewee in the search for a 'tell all' or 'real truth' reveal, but a comfortable space filled with stories, hand gestures, voice changes in tonality and cadence. The more time I spend at their tables, the more I see how their stories as practitioner nest within their life stories. Kapa is a story among stories, and yet it is also a big story. A moʻolelo nui. Time takes on a different standard here. Mediated by protocols of catching up, eating and sharing, the conversations finishes when they decide it is a good place to stop.

Talking story and telling stories.

At times I can almost forget the technology is there.

And at others, as they share their stories, I am so grateful it is.

And always,

after the microphone is put away,

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[51] Interview 1, focused life history up until becoming a kumu kapa; Interview 2, details on the experience as a kapa practitioner and teacher, Interview 3, reflections on the experience as a kapa practitioner.

after the iPhone stops recording,
after the honi and goodbyes complete and close the session,
I drive slowly home.
Replaying our conversation, mulling over the clumsiness of my questions.
Laughing, smiling, pondering all over again.
My heart aching with the gratitude of the gift they have just given me.

**the experience of moʻolelo**

How I love the stories! Time and again, I return to the recordings.

My iPhone, the silent and resolute witness, transports me back to Kaʻiulani's dining room, to the table underneath Aunty Verna's house, with their stories and easy laughter.

Placed between us, it picks up more than just the voices of my kumu, revealing layers to the memory of those experiences.

Sometimes I hear the background, sounds of birds chirping, glasses clinking, Mele, Kaʻiulani's dog's tail wagging, a car driving by, the fan blowing. Other times, I am focused solely on what my kumu are saying, drawn into their thread. And at others, noting critically the way I did not let them finish their thought, did not pursue an idea, or wondering why the heck I asked what I asked.

But always, drawn in, marveling and wondering and laughing right alongside them.

Their stories mix experience and history and childhood memories growing up in Hawaiʻi, just as soon as they share stories of their first vivid moment of learning kapa. They share stories of 200-year-old malo and pāʻū and the elusive kalukalu that sit behind locked doors in museums, stories of the intricate designs of iʻe kuku even older than that. They share stories connecting them to the careful cursive of nā kūpuna he mau ʻōlelo hoʻomanaʻo, the handwritten notes of kūpuna like Aunty Malia Solomon. They share stories of theories about how the kapa was made. Stories of experimentation and discovery in trying to recreate those pieces. Stories of triumph and failure, patience and perseverance, collaborating and commiserating. All in a resilient, almost defiant, celebratory, fearless pursuit of reclaiming a practitioner-based system of knowledge.

Kapa, for them, is a living inquiry, one they have a deep and genuine relationship with. Their practice bears a responsibility to reclaim and preserve and evolve.

Teaching is learning is teaching.

Their context, their way of being, is influenced by, and influences, kapa.

I wonder, how to capture the wonder of all of this? The *experience*? This thought persists in the hours I painstakingly transcribe their words to text, in the moments I listen to their recordings and read the transcripts. How do I decide what words get emphasized in italics, and what don't? How do I spell certain phrases? When do I use a period, when do I use a comma? How do I *show* the way they speak, each unique, both full of life?

How dull, how flat, how stridently black and white the words on the paper seem. There is no way to *hear* these stories on paper.

I want readers to *experience* these moments. Laugh out loud where I laugh out loud. Smile through the tears where I smile through the tears. Ache where my heart aches.

I begin to understand, in the way something sits close to the bone, how far short this exercise falls. No matter how eloquent the words, how thick the description, how elegantly displayed, it still cannot capture the full totality of the experience.

**reflecting on my educator identity**

Driving home, my thoughts return to the conversation with Ka'iulani about coaching. Coaching is the way I teach; the basketball court is my classroom. My mind drifts, taking me back to my first season as a coach at Kahuku. Even, after twenty years of coaching, this season was my most challenging.

It wasn't that our girls didn't play well. They did. It was a raucous, tight game that went down to the wire. But what left me breathless, the wind knocked out of me with nothing to say, was the way it ended. They didn't compete. They didn't fight. Backs against the wall, they didn't come out swinging. They just waited until the end of the game. And in the silence of driving home, long after the smiles and hugs for a "season well done" from families and players, doubt now wends its way to the surface. In the bareness of being, the ache in my chest asks the question: What if I'm not enough?

All the doubt of the season and my coaching now exposes itself. What if I'm not the coach those girls need? What if I had it all wrong all along?

This basketball season was my first back as head coach. After two years of saying I would never do it again, I found that when asked the question "will you coach?" I could not say no. Saying no would have felt like letting down the world—the girls I had not yet met, the coaches who coached me, myself.

And so, holding the gift and burden of that responsibility I said yes, thinking it was going to just-like-every-other-time it had been for the past 15 years. But while it's the same, it's not the same at all. Not for the first time, I questioned everything.

But questioning my ability to coach—the expectation I had that I could coach—that was a first. This is uncomfortable. Raw. For the first time in twenty years, what I had previously held as core and steadfast felt shaky and unsteady. The tighter I held my grip to what I thought I knew, the harder it became to hold on.

At home, I look at the book on my bedside table. *As Far as the Heart Can See* by Mark Nepo. Sighing, I absentmindedly open to where he writes of Ganes, the Hindu God typically represented as an elephant who is the "provider and remover of obstacles" (2011, p. 63-64):

> *He is a god because he has lived through all the world has to offer, not because he transcends it. Often, he holds in his right hand one of his own tusks, which he broke off in a fit of anger and hurled at the moon. But the moon spit it back, and he carries that broken piece of himself as a reminder of the earthly journey no one can escape.*
>
> *Often, in living through what the world has to offer, we find ourselves in our own way, stubbornly gripping our own tusk—stubborn in what we want, how we see things, how we approach things, and how we respond to things. And so the life of obstacles, or what we perceive as obstacles, is suddenly there to break our stare and return us to what matters. Another name for Ganesh might be God's Timing, through which we are humbled to realize, again and again, that we are not the center but of the center.*

Tonight broke my stare.

The season had been so much about what I was doing, I had forgotten about the how and the why of it all. After what felt like pushing so hard, trying so hard, the last home game of the regular season finally made me look up. And even while it was all for these girls, it reminded me it was not about me. And so in the darkness of my bedroom, the breeze fluttering my curtains, the soft rhythmic *thunk thunk* of the ceiling fan, the ache of it all lets down my defenses and finally reaches the place where those tears break forth. I know I'm supposed to sit in the presence of this pain and confusion. I know it's supposed to break the autopilot of my days and return me to what matters. What I don't know, is how to move towards the space of acceptance. How to be comfortable with this. How to find my way back to the place where I'm rooted and on solid ground. This rawness of emotion tells the story of how selfish I really am: I want to know that I made a difference. That I mattered. I feel guilty for wanting that.

Perhaps this has to come from faith, I think. That what I'm trying to do is right. That I am enough. That I'm not crazy or stupid. That this road, the one I choose to be on, is enough because it is the one I choose. The fear of *not enough* comes from a childhood of experiences that have marked my journey, like notches on a stick. I cried in silence then, too, from not quite fitting in, from feeling awkward in most situations. This faith, I know, comes from listening to those deepest of places, beneath the fear and the hurt and the sorrow, where my voice lies. It lives in the reason why I ever decided to coach. This faith, I have to believe, has strengthened and stretched, like a muscle, because I have traveled this road before. But even in this space, when we aren't winning and everyone wants to point a finger, this road is lonely.

It is very, very lonely.

It is summer, now. Time away from the girls has brought a different perspective of the season. The scars have healed and I can look up from my hands and knees. And I wonder if the gift is not so much about the resilience of getting up as it is about standing still. I look at hands and I can see the story of my first season at Kahuku.

Peering deeper, I am fascinated by the way my veins have popped from the curl of holding on. I am reminded of the words of Mark Nepo and realize I am not alone. The struggle is as ordinary as the way our hands hold a glimpse of where we have come to know what's in our hearts. "But once climbing, once falling, once gathering ourselves to climb again, it's the moment our hand holds our weight that we become aware of the simple courage necessary to stand in a life" (Nepo, 2014, p. 62).

I cannot change the part of me that will always look at the young women in my care through eyes of love. I realize now that while I may have felt shaken and unsure, the core of Me, the place where I come to embrace the gift and the burden of that responsibility, has never let go of its grip. But like the way a plant searches for the light as it grows, it always finds a way to break through. If I can remember to stand still for a moment in the ache of falling down, I can feel it, the way the sunlight warms our face.

**the keiki breaks through**

The two wauke in the yard have taken root, growing fast. They are now taller than me. Their big, hairy leaves reaching upward, breathing the promise of kapa not yet beaten. Soon they will be ready to harvest, I think. Their stalks will swell and fill, pumped by the heat of summer, priming the inner bast to peel off. "Like a banana skin," I hear Kaʻiulani say. I look carefully at their stems, touching my middle finger to thumb around their stalk. Not yet, I think. But soon.

It is early morning and I text my nieces. *On my way*. We are headed to the Grow Hawaiʻi Festival at Bishop Museum, where Aunty Verna and Uncle Sol always have a booth. I like to take my nieces to go, spend the day with them, and help. "It is part of you learning gratitude and service," I say, when my younger niece asks. Secretly, I want them to spend time with them. It is my way of inviting them into my world, for us to build a connection.

This morning is particularly challenging.

"Aunty, *why* do *we* have to *go*?" She is tired, grouchy. Emphasizing every other word for affect. Not even breakfast from McDonald's can brighten her dour mood.

"You'll be fine," I say, as we inch through the drive-thru. She *harrumphs* loudly as her glare meets my gaze through the rearview mirror.

I hope they'll be alright, I think.

It is about 10 AM, we are at Aunty Verna's booth. The sky is overcast, leaving the air cool. I shiver a bit in the breeze. Aunty Verna is demonstrating stamping with ʻohe kāpala; next to her, she has set my niece up with a piece of wauke on her kua. My niece picks up Aunty Verna's iʻe kuku, holding it with two hands. It is too heavy for her to use one hand.

"Aunty, I should have brought mine," she says. I nod.

"You could have spent today with Uncle Sol, finishing your grooves."

She smiles and shrugs, and starts to beat. She understands what I mean. Uncle Sol had made her a smaller, lighter iʻe kuku. Four sides smooth, made of kauila. Just like mine. Giving her instructions to carve the grooves, the same way he did for me.

Aunty Verna watches her start to beat. After a while, she takes the iʻe kuku from my niece and shows her. As she beats, I ask her, "do you see how she is holding the beater flat against the kua?" My niece nods, just barely. She is engrossed, intently studying Aunty Verna's technique. I watch her mimic Aunty Verna's motion with her hand.

Aunty Verna gives the iʻe kuku back and steps aside as my niece begins to beat. The ʻouʻou of the iʻe kuku against the kua is pure, and solid, and beautiful to my ears. I turn away to break the emotion. To hide the tears that have started to form behind my eyes.

That day, my niece beats her first piece. "Aunty, look." I proudly show it to her. Aunty Verna picks it up and inspects it carefully, looking at the fiber. She approves. "It's so thin!" she exclaims to my niece.

My niece responds matter-of-factly. "Well Aunty, you told me to keep beating until the fiber doesn't move, so I just kept beating."

Aunty Verna and I look at each other and laugh. Knowingly.

The lesson has made its way.

From Kaʻiulani, to Aunty Verna, to me, and now to my niece.

It has been a long day. I pull into my garage, noticing my niece has left her jacket in my truck. It's laying next to her carefully rolled piece of kapa. Aunty Verna had wrapped it in napkins, explaining to her that she needs to lay it out and dry it. My niece had looked at me. "Aunty, can you help me?" I nod. Of course.

I'm too tired to call her and tell her I have it. I'll text her tomorrow, I think.

It is late afternoon, and the sun has ducked behind the late afternoon clouds. I smell the air. It will rain soon. I walk my yard, a daily ritual, stopping in front of the wauke. At their base, a tiny keiki has just pushed through the soil. Despite the tired that now pulls at my eyes, a shiver of momentary energy. A keiki! Coming up!

I think of the genealogy I belong to.

Dennis Kanaʻe Keawe, he was self-taught. He was right around the time of Pua Van Dorpe and Aunty Malia Solomon. He taught Moana Eisele, who taught Kaʻiulani, who taught Aunty Verna, who teaches me, who teaches my niece. But before that, for about 7 generations, there was no one.

I bend down, close, gently fingering the new leaf. Smiling.

Grow, little one, I whisper.

Delighted at the idea of another generation to be.

**a‘o aku, a‘o mai**

"Kumu, tell me a story."

Her eyes hold an amused sparkle as I settle in to listen.
"What is the pedagogy of kapa?"
I love these moments.
Her voice makes her stories come alive.
Her poetic cadence draws you in and holds you.

"You know I haven't, I don't feel like I've, I feel like the part
that I still I mean I still need to learn everywhere."
My answer is clumsy.
Still, she sits. Patient. Waiting in the silence.
I breathe. Close my eyes into the memory and follow my gaze.

I open my eyes and smile.
"The fiber."
"I watch the fiber."

She smiles, satisfied I have paid close attention.
"How do you know when to stop?"
I smile as she smiles.
"The fiber," I say. "when it doesn't move."
"Yes! The fiber tells you, it tells you everything you need."

It's the nānā, you know, you see, then you do,
the no‘ono‘o, the meditation,
but you have to teach, you have to share, too.

A question followed by another question
forcing you to look in your experience
and find your voice.
This is how I was taught.

This is how the ‘ike grows its roots deep, deep
All the while unfurling to the sun.
Imagine, indeed, a whole forest of wauke, from a single makua.

## concluding thoughts

*So you've talked about making this process*
*so different for yourself than other dissertations or things,*
*that's your learning and your knowledge right,*
*you have a desire,*
*but it's the knowledge of*
*where do I want to go with this and*
*actualizing to put it to personalize yourself,*
*so you're there,*
*you're on the, verge,*
*you're in the midst, it's,*
*you are in the transition,*
*you are the butterfly.*
*(K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016)*

If this dissertation reflects a contextual marker on my story pathway, then this story, or rather, this story of stories, represents a connection not only to the people, the place, the practices contained these stories, but also to other stories yet to be told. Like the way the wauke sends out its rhizomatic runners and from one makua can grow into a forest, the implications here are many. But as I pen these concluding remarks, there are two I choose to acknowledge, for they are where the lessons of these stories and this experience took me.

### implications for the practice of kapa

For the kapa practitioner, even as contemporary practitioners continue to share their stories, what remains unknown is the documentation of kapa that may be contained in other languages (particularly Hawaiian) and through other means. The oral tradition[52] carries stories of Hawaiian history through place, practice, and people in a variety of ways: "stories are 'read'

[52] While I intentionally refrain from using the word "tradition," in this context tradition references the collective variety of ways Hawaiian culture was archived, communicated and perpetuated.

on the body and heard in the voice" (Case, 2013, p.2) through hula. Mele, oli, ʻōlelo noʻeau, pule, and moʻolelo moʻokūʻauhau also comprise the tapestry by which culture was archived, communicated, and perpetuated. Many of these "songs, chants, prayers, and proverbs that had been handed between generations before the introduction of literacy" (Case, 2013, p. 3; see also Aluli Meyer, 2003) were documented in Hawaiian newspapers[53] that predated the earliest published accounts of kapa in English, and they were prolific in their observations of life:

> They called this their national archives: put your chants here, your genealogies, your wind names, your rain names, the politics, the events, put it all here. Hawaiians understood the changing environment, they understood that the old ways of holding on to knowledge were leaving and this was going to be our new medium, so put your knowledge here. (Sai-Dudoit, 2016)

Hawaiian newspapers emerged as Hawaiian language "drastically declined and almost disappeared in the 20th century" (Case, 2013, p. 4); increasing the utility and reliance of translated texts as a false authority:

> The canon of translated texts is problematic in that it alters the work of the original authors, recasting important auto-representational writings by Hawaiians of the 19th century into a modern Western framework. (Nogelmeier, 2003, p. v)

It is highly conceivable that Hawaiian newspapers, alongside other early publications by Hawaiians, such as Dibble's (1838) *Ka Mooolelo Hawaii*,[54] a compilation of oral histories in

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[53] The first Hawaiian newspaper, Ka Lama Hawaiʻi, was printed in 1834 at Lahainaluna School by Protestant missionaries; Ka Hōkū o ka Pākīpika, the first Hawaiian-edited and Hawaiian-owned newspaper began in 1861. "Between 1834 and 1948 over a hundred Hawaiian-language newspapers published some hundred and twenty thousand pages" (Steele, 2016, para. 3).

[54] Nogelmeier (in Dibble, 1838/2005) notes *Ka Mooolelo Hawaii* holds an esteemed position in Hawaiian history as "the first book credited to Hawaiian writers, the first history of the islands published in the native language, and the first concerted effort to bring Hawaiian oral tradition into writing" (p. xvii).

Hawaiʻi, contain a rich repository of literature on kapa in Hawaiian. Kamakau listed names of Hawaiian kapa in the Hawaiian language newspaper Ke Au Okoa (see Pang, 1994).[55] Indeed, a quick nūpepa online database search for the word "kapa" today provides more than 2,700 hits ("Ulukau: Hawaiian Electronic Library," n.d.). Other sources, such as Hawaiian manuscripts from the Bishop Museum,[56] the publications of Fornander (1919),[57] unpublished notes from Aunty Malia Solomon,[58] and various versions of Malo's unpublished and unedited manuscript, Moʻolelo Hawaiʻi (Lyon, 2013),[59] similarly hint at the rich texture of voices from practitioners and early anthropological and ethnological efforts to capture the practice. Moʻolelo about the gods of Hawaiʻi also reveal clues about kapa (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016). Hawaiian language dictionaries (Pukui & Elbert, 1986; Pang, 1994), compiled by analyzing and

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[55] Pang (1994) notes that although there were lists, many terms were "not defined in terms of the design, plant(s), or function" (p. 7); they remain undefined today as it appears they were used only by Kamakau.
[56] In my research, I accessed written notes by H.P. Judd, Emory, and Stokes (1923); Webb, Emory, and Stokes (1924); as well as an analytic compilation by Stokes (1967) of various written texts on kapa. While translations are provided, I look at these Hawaiian manuscripts and wonder if the translations would be different from a practitioner lens. These manuscripts focus largely on the process of making kapa; I was searching for the 'how' and the 'why' of things.
[57] Abraham Fornander was a Swedish born emigrant to Hawaiʻi who wrote extensively about Hawaiian history and was fluent in the language. His writings became known as the Fornander collection. He recorded interviews with kapa makers throughout the islands.
[58] Notes of Aunty Malia Solomon were provided to me for this project by Aunty Verna Takashima. They are largely undated, but contain significant research on kapa and contemporary kapa making. Aunty Malia Solomon is widely considered an early pioneer in reviving the practice of kapa.
[59] Lyon (2013) analyzes 9 versions found in Bishop Museum archives of David Malo's work , Moʻolelo Hawaiʻi, all of which translated extensive portions (if not all) of his unpublished manuscript. Malo was another prominent mid-1800s author who wrote in Hawaiian about Hawaiian kapa making. Portions of his manuscript appear in Hawaiian newspapers through other authors, such as Reverend J.F. Pogue (Pokuea), who published (without crediting) Malo's work in the newspaper Ka Hae Hawaiʻi as a series between 1858 and 1859 (Lyon, 2013).

translating other early works of Hawaiians, suggest the extensive variety and abundance of kapa terms. Even oli composed for kapa provides clues (Meinecke, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c).

Examining these texts through the original Hawaiian writings (rather than through the translations) can be an important and significant compilation and analysis, one that my non-fluency of the language prevents access to. The sheer diversity of focus within kapa—beating, tools, dyeing, growing, stamping—make for tremendous opportunities awaiting discovery. Future inquiry and exploration into these avenues can also reveal even more insights, for "...we've just scratched the surface of understanding the fiber, the dyes, the chemistry, the botany, all of that" (K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016).

**implications for educational practice**

In the moʻolelo of my kumu stories of possibility lie in exploring the nuances of teaching and learning through the lens of kapa: how knowledge systems and pedagogies built from strengths (and not deficits) can work in transformative ways for both educators and children, and embrace failure as simply part of the learning; how creating space for the child to be ready shifts the constant of learning from time and task, to learning itself; how moʻolelo offers the potential for critical studies about pedagogy embedded not just in place, but in *practice*; and even, perhaps, how a practitioner-based knowledge system like kapa can serve as a metaphor for the practitioner-based knowledge system of teaching.

If narrative inquiry is a means by which we understand human existence (Polkinghorne, 2007), and this meaning-making is by nature didactic, then moʻolelo that carry in them the ʻike of place, practice, and people present for consideration new modalities by which knowledge and understanding can be captured, transmitted, represented, and shared. When the lens of an Indigenous or Hawaiian worldview is applied, these narratives become important vessels in

reconstructing history and correcting stereotypes; sharing back these stories through research designs and presentation formats that honor and prioritize Indigenous or Hawaiian epistemology and ontology adds “unique lifeways and thoughtways to the field of narrative inquiry” (Benham, 2007, p. 532). Indeed, the presentation of positionality as an underlying narrative in my story pathway of this dissertation promotes not only the consideration of understanding how I engaged with the research given my own context as haumāna and practitioner, but also its implications for my own practice as an educator.

For the educational practitioner, it is worth noting while narrative inquiry is increasingly used in educational spaces, the broader landscape of education at least nationally still operates from a quantitative, positivistic mindset—and that this perspective not only frames research funding, but educational policy (and consequently, educational practice), presenting an interesting contradiction: “on the one hand is the remarkable, meteoric rise of narrative inquiry research…in contrast is the present, precipitous narrowing of the definition of what counts as valid education research” (Lyons, 2007, p. 600). First as scientific based research in No Child Left Behind (2001) and then as evidence-based research in Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), the quantification of quality teaching and learning has become highly politicized. In some ways, it makes the work that narrative inquirers do more important; that in working to shift methodological plotlines about what counts as evidence, or science (Lieblich, 2007), the field also continues to press on the ways funding, legislation, and policies are decided.

Perhaps by virtue of this dissertation being a presentation of stories, this inquiry can continue to advance strides already made, not only within research agendas but in understanding the phenomenon of human experience. “No growth or development, professional or personal, is possible without interpretation” (Lyons, 2007, p. 624). The significance of

interpretation, and creating spaces for those interpretations become thorns of their own, protruding just enough to remind us of its presence:

> I believe this may be precisely through research agendas—that is, through narrative investigations into some of the complex issues of contexts, history, culture; of individual students as learners; of educational studies and their results may be usefully addressed through narrative research." (Lyons, 2007, p. 628)

**ha'ina 'ia mai ana ka puana**

And so, this dissertation, and my story pathway, pauses here. Leaving me to contend with the quiet realization of what I knew all along: That this travelogue led in one great big giant circle. Finding my way forward in this process required me to start from the middle, from the place I really didn't want to: the self-described knot of emotions that initially goaded me into a paralyzing angst at the thought of capturing the stories of my kumu in an academic space.

After a lifetime of being identified as hapa, I was used to sitting at the in-between. I had always been half of one thing and half of another, never quite the whole of anything. In this "half-ness" I had associated both a "not-enough-ness" and a "rootless-ness." I was constantly cast as the other, the one always just outside the circle. In those tender childhood moments of wanting to belong, my heart had cracked, painfully. Over time these events would fade in the intensity of the rememory, but this identity I associated first with being hapa was nonetheless profound. I swallowed my voice whole and learned to dance, to remain on the fringes just beyond reach. I got good grades, studied hard, made friends, listened to my teachers, but these were intellectual exercises. No place felt safe enough for me to step across the threshold and enter. I had stuffed my voice deep along with those painful memories, and I would remain that

way, dancing on the edges, until the moment kapa led me, or perhaps my kūpuna pushed me, that Sunday on my birthday, towards that back corner on the second floor.

Conceiving of myself as *being* a kapa maker was a marker of belonging, to a community, to a genealogy and lineage. Even, to the responsibilities inherent in that belonging. The notion did not lie within the realm of possibilities I afforded myself in the most private of moments. To "be enough," to be rooted, to *be* a kapa maker—even, in my professional practice, to *be* an educator—these things to me meant to I also had to be whole. And since I could never be that, I was forever relegated to the margins. Layered in the disguise of the question, "are stories enough to fill the weight of an academic text?" were the questions I feared reflected this thorny side of my own context: did I portray their stories compelling enough? Critical enough? Was I *enough* to do this? The knot of perseverating emotion had wedged itself in the back of my throat, silencing me once again.

"Inevitably, if you sit facing another woman at the table long enough, you start to feel like mirrors for one another" (Behar, 2003, ch. 15, para. 75). The talk story sessions with Aunty Verna and Kaʻiulani presented a safe harbor from which I both departed and arrived. At the beginning of this journey, I didn't know what I was getting into, or really even why I was getting into it; only that I felt I *had* to. I was pulled towards their stories, searching for the points of connection between their identities as courageous and wise women and teachers, and my own emerging one. I was hoping, deep down, the stories of my kumu could present an image of me that reflected favorably to them. That they might see their reflection in me and approve, so that I might approve of myself.

Here, among the many, is the most profound lesson my kumu have taught me, for at least this moment in time on my story pathway: In holding the mirror up between us, they were not searching for an image of their reflection, but the ways I reflected their teachings back to

them. At the heart of this knot was my own reluctance to step up to the responsibility; the responsibility of holding and carrying their ʻike, the responsibility of connecting, the responsibility of hearing my own voice. The responsibility of *being* a kapa maker. Where I might have tried to turn around and the point mirror back, they would not have it. It was just not their way. No longer could I stand in the margins and remain mute and unscathed. I really didn't want to, anyway. Their genuine curiosity in what I had to say was the gentle but firm requirement. I had to "just beat": engage, *think*, listen to myself, reflect what was in front of me, and share the meaning I was making. Like the keiki wauke, my kumu had watched me, patiently waiting for the moment where I would dig in, hold fast to the dirt, and grow.

The keiki wauke does not ask for permission to grow, or even to be a wauke plant, after all, but simply grows.

"…you are in the transition, you *are* the butterfly." (K. de. Silva, personal communication, 2016, italics added).

I had heard this, time and again and in different ways, at both their tables. But on this day sitting at Kaʻiulani's dining table, in these nine words, the thread of that comment began the knot's slow unraveling, pulling apart the veil I was trying to hide behind. In capturing their voices, I was really bridging an understanding to my own. This was not about *becoming* a kapa practitioner, but *being* one. To *be* a kapa practitioner is not to ask for permission to *become* a student, but to *be* ready to learn. There is a difference, here, profound for me, if even subtle. To engage in learning from the lens of *being* a practitioner, rather than *becoming* a practitioner, reframes my own orientation: of my identity, of my practice, of the responsibility I accordingly carry. Learning, in this sense, is a humbling and lifelong space; an ironic realization that to learn

more is acknowledging how much *more* there is to learn; and that "teaching and learning with" (as opposed to "teaching to" and "learning from") is necessary in order to teach ourselves.

I am still (and always will be) the haumāna who fell in love with the stories of her kumu. I am still a practitioner/researcher trying to get comfortable in her own skin, wrestling (now) with the ways this positionality, and the learning environment I was exposed to, influences—and is influenced by—the formal space of education. The act of transformation did not make me into a kapa practitioner; it occurred because I am a kapa practitioner. The further I thought I moved away from my own voice during those conversations, I was really coming back to find it.

I see it like sort of an ice cube,
first of all you, you're solid,
then it sort of melts,
and then you transform,
and then, if you can refreeze it,
but you refreeze it to a different shape,
or you know, it's about actualization,
you're going to take something that's external but then you're going to apply it to yourself and make it internal
and so it's going to change,
it's not going to be that same thing,
but you're going to apply it to yourself in the way that works,
and only then do you learn and change.
(K. de Silva, personal communication, 2016)

On this dissertation journey, my story pathway, I was once again haumāna, my kumu once again waiting, patiently. Until I could hold the mirror up and allow my own gaze to reflect

back on me. Only this time, I did not see the shape of my own reflection, but what I think my kumu saw all along: the shape of the butterfly I was changing into. Connecting through our stories was a gentle reminder that I really had roots all along. That even with two halves, there is still space to be a whole of something. And whole, I am.

‘Āmama, ua noa.

## appendices

### appendix a: institutional review board approval letter

UNIVERSITY *of* HAWAIʻI®
MĀNOA

Office of Research Compliance
Human Studies Program

May 5, 2016

TO: Marlene Zeug
Makalapua Alencastre, Ph.D.
Principal Investigators
College of Education

FROM: Denise A. Lin-DeShetler, MPH, MA
Director

SUBJECT: CHS #24005 - "An Intergeneration Oral History of Hawaiian Kapa Practitioners"

This letter is your record of the Human Studies Program approval of this study as exempt.

On May 5, 2016, the University of Hawai'i (UH) Human Studies Program approved this study as exempt from federal regulations pertaining to the protection of human research participants. The authority for the exemption applicable to your study is documented in the Code of Federal Regulations at 45 CFR 46.101(b) (Categories 2, 4).

Exempt studies are subject to the ethical principles articulated in The Belmont Report, found at the OHRP Website www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.html.

Exempt studies do not require regular continuing review by the Human Studies Program. However, if you propose to modify your study, you must receive approval from the Human Studies Program prior to implementing any changes. You can submit your proposed changes via email at uhirb@hawaii.edu. (The subject line should read: Exempt Study Modification.) The Human Studies Program may review the exempt status at that time and request an application for approval as non-exempt research.

In order to protect the confidentiality of research participants, we encourage you to destroy private information which can be linked to the identities of individuals as soon as it is reasonable to do so. Signed consent forms, as applicable to your study, should be maintained for at least the duration of your project.

This approval does not expire. However, please notify the Human Studies Program when your study is complete. Upon notification, we will close our files pertaining to your study.

If you have any questions relating to the protection of human research participants, please contact the Human Studies Program at 956-5007 or uhirb@hawaii.edu. We wish you success in carrying out your research project.

1960 East-West Road
Biomedical Sciences Building B104
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822
Telephone: (808) 956-5007
Fax: (808) 956-8683
An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution

**appendix b: consent to participate form**

**University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa**
**College of Education**
**Educational Professional Practice Ed.D.**

**June 30, 2016**

**To:** **Kaʻiulani DeSilva**
**Fr:** **Marlene Zeug**
**Doctoral student in College of Education Professional Practice EdD**
**Re:** **Letter of Consent**

**Consent to Participate in Oral History Research Project**
*An Oral History of Three Generations of Kapa Practitioners*

Aloha e kāua,

My name is Marlene Zeug and I am a doctoral student at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa, College of Education. My research focuses on understanding the lived experiences – and the meaning made of those experiences – of three generations of Hawaiian kapa practitioners. The study aims to document these life experiences in ways that will personalize and provide insight into the kapa practitioner experience, and perhaps the haumana-kumu relationship we share. The primary research question is: *what will a life history approach to studying the lives of kapa practitioners help to uncover and transform around native ways of teaching and learning?*

You were selected to participate in this project because you have been practicing kapa for at least 10 years, you are well respected and well regarded in the kapa community as a master practitioner, and you are part of my kapa genealogy.

**Project Description – Activities and Time Commitment.** In-person interviews will take place on approximately three separate occasions at a time and place convenient to you. The interviews will last for approximately 90-120 minutes and will be recorded using a digital audio-recorder. I will also have my iphone as a backup. The interviews will be informal and conversational, following a semi-structured format, as I want to get your personal recollections of your experience and journey as a kapa practitioner.

Throughout the course of this project, I plan to take field notes, reflections, observations that may be included as research for this project. This may include instances we are together outside of the three interviews described above, and/or if we decide to beat kapa together.

After the interviews, all audio-recordings will be transcribed into a word document. I will check and edit the transcript for accuracy. Once the transcriptions have been confirmed and organized, I will give the transcribed data to you to check for reliability and accuracy. You are free to make any changes to the transcript, as you deem appropriate. I estimate it will take you several hours to do this, depending on how many changes you note. I will then incorporate your revisions into the transcript and, at a later date, type the final manuscript.

The plan is for me to use the final transcript in my dissertation. In addition, there may be personal artifacts such as documents, photographs and videos (pre-existing and in your personal possession), that you may want to share with me in the course of our time together; if I would like to include as part of my dissertation, it will be done only with your consent. It is possible that at a future date the final transcript will be distributed to libraries (or in other ways disseminated) for use by other researchers, oral historians, or the general public. Others will be permitted to use, in unpublished works, shorts excerpts from any of the transcriptions without obtaining permission as long as proper credit is given to the interviewee (you) and the interviewer (me).

Audio recordings, field notes, interview reflections and observations will all be kept in a locked office within a locked filing cabinet. All electronic documents will be on a password-protected computer. At the completion of the project, personal information, records and transcribed data will be destroyed, and audio recordings will be erased. Any personal artifacts you may have provided will be returned to you.

**Voluntary Participation.** Your participation in this project is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time, up to the completion date of the project, which is expected to be Summer 2017. During the interviews, you can choose not to answer any question(s) at the any time for any reason. If you disapprove of, wish to change, add to, delete, and otherwise change the transcripts or audio file of the interviews, you may do so at any time up to the project's completion.

**Benefits and Risks.** I believe there is no direct benefit to you in participating in this research project. However, your participation in this project might help me and other researchers learn more about the kapa practitioner experience and practice, as well as contribute to the historical record of Hawaiʻi regarding cultural practices and master practitioners. Because of the need to create an authentic record and make available to scholars and the general public a reliable historical document, it is important that your actual name appear as the interviewee on the transcript. Thus, one potential risk to you is loss of privacy. Another potential risk is that some topics you discuss during the interviews might bring back painful or unpleasant memories. In such cases, we can take a break, skip that topic, and/or you may choose to stop participating altogether.

**Privacy and Confidentiality.** As noted previously, in order to accurate document your life story, it is important that your name appear as the interviewee on the transcript.

However, you retain the right to change, delete, or add information in the transcripts. Legally authorized agencies, including the University of Hawaiʻi Human Studies Program, have the right to review research records.

**Questions.** Please contact me, Marlene Zeug, by phone at 808-256-2268 or email at mzeug@hawaii.edu or my dissertation advisor, Makalapua Alencastre by phone at 808-932-7411 or email at kaawa@hawaii.edu should you have any questions. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in this project, you can contact the University of Hawaiʻi, Human Studies Program, by phone at 808-956-5007 or email at uhirb@hawaii.edu.

---

**Agreement to Participate in an Oral History Research Project**

*An Oral History of Three Generations of Kapa Practitioners*

*"I certify that I have read and that I understand the information in this consent form, that I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions concerning the project, and that I have been told that I am free to withdraw my consent and to discontinue participation in the project at any time without any negative consequences to me.*

*I agree to have my actual name appear in the results as the interviewee (please check a box)*

☐ *YES* ☐ *NO*

*I give my permission to be audio recorded (please check a box)*

☐ *YES* ☐ *NO*

*I agree to allow for use any personal artifacts such as documents, photographs, videos, that I may provide in the course of the interview process (please check a box)*

☐ *YES* ☐ *NO*

*I hereby give my consent to participate in this project with the understanding that such consent does not waive any of my legal rights."*

______________________________ ______________________________

Printed Name of Interviewee Signature of Interviewee

______________________________

Date

**appendix c: interviewee agreement form**

**University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa**
**College of Education**
**Educational Professional Practice Ed.D.**

**[Date]**

**To:** **[Participant's Name] (Interviewee)**
**From:** **Marlene Zeug (Interviewer)**
**Doctoral student in College of Education Professional Practice EdD**
**Re:** **Interviewee Agreement**

**Interviewee Agreement**

I the undersigned interviewee give and grant to the interviewer all rights, title and interest to the following

**APPROVED TRANSCRIPT EXCERPTS of interviews recorded on:**
**[Dates]**

**ALL BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION provided to the interviewer.**

It is understood and agreed that the interviewer may utilize and authorize public use of any parts of the above for such scholarly and educational purposes as she shall determine. The interviewer currently plans to use excerpts from the final transcript in her doctoral dissertation. It is possible that at a future date the final transcript will be distributed to libraries (or in other ways disseminated) for use by other researchers, oral historians, or the general public. Others will be permitted to use, in unpublished works, shorts excerpts from any of the transcriptions without obtaining permission as long as proper credit is given to the interviewee and the interviewer.

______________________________
Name of the Interviewee

______________________________
Street Address

______________________________
City, State, Zip

______________________________
Signature of Interviewee Date

## appendix d: followup letter with question topics

**University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa**
**College of Education**
**Educational Professional Practice Ed.D.**

**June 30, 2016**

**To:**

**Fr:** **Marlene Zeug**
**Doctoral student in College of Education Professional Practice EdD**

**Re:** **Follow-up Letter with Question Topics**

**Follow-up Letter with Question Topics**

*An Oral History of Three Generations of Kapa Practitioners*

Aloha e kāua,

It's such an honor and responsibility to have the permission to document your story. I wanted to share with you the general interview questions, so you are comfortable with what's coming. In this project I am looking at 3 areas: your life story up until becoming a kapa practitioner, experiences as a kapa practitioner (from haumana, to loea and kumu), and how kapa has impacted and influenced you. I plan to start with broad questions and let the conversation direct how we proceed. It's quite possible the format will not follow these questions, but it will give you an idea of my focus and ideally they will get you started in your thinking. It should take all 3 interviews to get through the nature of these questions.

- What was life like before you discovered kapa? What kinds of things did you do?
- What led you kapa? Why did you decide to learn? How did you learn?
- Tell me about a lesson you had with your kumu. What was it like?
- How do you sustain your practice now?
- Tell me about the Merrie Monarch where the hālau danced, entirely outfitted in kapa. Where were you? Was anyone with you? What was your reaction?
- Tell me about the first piece you beat. What was your reaction?
- Has your practice evolved? How?
- How has kapa impacted your life?
- What is it like being a trailblazer of sorts?

Again, very general questions. If you have any artifacts, photographs, journals, letters, scrapbook, etc. that you think you might want me to see, please feel free to bring them. I look forward to seeing you on [DATE] for our interview. If you need to reach me for any reason, my cell is 808-256-2268.

Naʻu,
Marlene

## appendix e: interview guide

**First Interview**

General Questions/Themes

Establishes context of the participant's experience

- Where is your family from?
- May I ask how you got your name?
- Do you remember stories about when you were born?
- Describe the house you grew up in. What was your room like?
- Who were the main figures in your early life?
- What were your parents like? What was their upbringing like?
- Do you have brothers and sisters? What are they like?
- What was it like growing up? *summers, family reunions, best friend, etc*
- What kinds of things did you do for fun?
- What activities were you involved in (outside of school)?
- How would your family and friends have characterized you?
- What was your neighborhood like?
- Who was your best friend?
- What were the difficulties/challenges you faced while growing up?
- Who were the most influential people in your childhood (or life)? Why?
- What type of student were you in high school?
- Did you have a favorite teacher, coach, mentor?
- Does any story stick out to you about your childhood? *Favorite food, color, activity*
- How did your family spend time together?
- Are there any pieces of advice, values, attitudes, your elders taught you growing up?
- What do you think were your biggest influences?

Other topics:

- Early childhood.
- Schooling and education
- Mentors

**Second Interview**

General Questions/Themes

Reconstruct details of experience within context in which it occurs

Kapa:

- What led you to kapa?
- Why did you decide to learn? How did you learn?
- Who was your kumu? How did she become your kumu?
- What kinds of things did she teach you that you remember most?
- Tell me about the first lesson you had with your kumu. What did you learn?
- Tell me about the first piece you beat. What was it for? What was your reaction?
- Tell me about a typical day where you engage in the practice. Where is it happening? Who are you with? What are you doing?

- Tell me about how you graduated from haumana to kumu. What has that been like?
- Tell me about a typical day where you spend teaching someone, a class, etc.
- What kinds of things do you think about to prepare for teaching?
- How did you decide who would be your haumana?
- How do you sustain your practice now?
- Tell me about the Merrie Monarch where the hālau danced, entirely outfitted in kapa. Where were you? Was anyone with you? What was your reaction?
- What other memorable have happened to you as a kapa practitioner? Is there one (or two) that are most special to you?
- Are there any challenges to the practice?
- Is there anyone you look up to in the kapa community?

**Third Interview**

General Questions/Themes

Encourages reflection the meaning of their experiences have for them

- What kinds of things are happening in the kapa practitioner community that makes you excited?
- What things do you feel you still want to learn? (doesn't have to be kapa)
- What is the responsibility of a loea and kumu?
- What do you want your legacy to be?
- What are some of the joys of being a kapa practitioner?
- If you could give one piece of advice to a budding haumana kapa, what would it be?
- What things do you think about when it comes to the sustainability and future of the practice?
- What has been your biggest success? Your biggest challenge?
- Can you tell me about a time when you experienced self-doubt. How did you react?
- What's important to you, that you want to see succeed, with kapa?
- What do you think it means to be a kapa practitioner?
- What do you think it means to be a loea and kumu of a traditional practice like kapa?

Other topics:

- Reflections about time as haumana
- Reflections about transition to loea and kumu

## appendix f: post interview contact summary form

**Contact Summary Form**

**Interviewee:** ______________________________ **Contact Visit:** __________________

**Site:** ____________________________________ **Date & Time:** __________________

**What were the main issues or themes that struck you in this contact?**

**Summarize the information you got (or failed to get) on each of the target questions**

**Anything else that struck as salient, interesting, illuminating, or important?**

**What new (or remaining) target questions do you have in considering the next contact?**

## appendix g: biographical data sheet

**Biographical Data Sheet**

FULL NAME ______________________________ PHONE ____________________

ADDRESS ______________________________ EMAIL ____________________

______________________________

BIRTH PLACE ______________________________ BIRTH YEAR ____________________

LANGUAGES ______________________________ ETHNICITY ____________________

MOTHER'S NAME ______________________________ ETHNICITY ____________________

FATHER'S NAME ______________________________ ETHNICITY ____________________

SISTERS/BROTHERS (interviewee's place in family)

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

DATE OF MARRIAGE ______________________________ MARITAL STATUS ____________________

SPOUSE'S NAME ______________________________

CHILDREN'S NAMES ______________________________ BIRTH YEAR ____________________

______________________________ ____________________

PLACES LIVED (and dates)

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

EDUCATION

ELEMENTARY ______________________________________________

MIDDLE SCHOOL ______________________________________________

HIGH SCHOOL ______________________________ GRAD YEAR ____________________

COLLEGE(S) ______________________________ GRAD YEAR(S) ____________________

______________________________ ____________________

WORK EXPERIENCES (and dates)

___

___

___

ORGANIZATIONS – MEMBER OF (past and present)

___

___

___

AWARDS

___

___

___

HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

___

___

RELIGION (optional)________________________________________ACTIVE _______INACTIVE_____

ANY OTHER PERTINENT BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

___

___

___

## glossary of terms

The following glossary is divided into two sections: Hawaiian phrases, Hawaiian words, and other words and phrases (including Japanese and local words regularly used in Hawaiʻi). Listed alphabetically, the term appears in bold, with the English translations following. Where additional notes may be pertinent to the translation, they are also included. Unless noted, translations of Hawaiian words were obtained from the online dictionary, www.wehewehe.org. Supplemental information on plants was obtained from www.nativeplants.hawaii.edu, and www.hawaiiannativeplants.com.

### translation of Hawaiian phrases

**ae uhi no lakou la lakou iho i ka hilahila me he holoku la.** Brigham presents his translation to be "and let them cover themselves with their own shame as with a holokū." However, the phrase can also be translated to "and they would indeed cover themselves with shame and a holokū dress" (K. Reppun, personal communication, 2017). The layered meaning of the translation connotes the effects of a colonial narrative not only on Hawaiian dress, but also on Hawaiian identity.

**aloha mai a ka maka heluhelu.** Aloha to the eyes that read. This was a pretty standard greeting in Hawaiian newspapers (K. Reppun, personal communication, 2016).

**ʻāmama, ua noa.** And thus it is released; this can be said at the end of a prayer,

**aʻo aku, aʻo mai.** Teaching and learning (Chun, 2006, 2005). Aku and mai are directionals, the "giving out" of teaching, and the "taking in" of learning. The use of the same word, aʻo, for teaching and learning illustrates the Hawaiian notion of teaching and learning as a continual, reciprocal interchange.

**ʻaohe pau ka ʻike i ka hālau hoʻokāhi.** All knowledge is not taught in the same school (Pukui, 1983, p. 24).

**e hana mua a paʻa ke kahua.** First, build yourself a firm foundation (Pukui, 1983, p. 34).

**haʻina ʻia mai ana ka puana.** And so, the story is told (common ending to Hawaiian songs).

**hana ka lima.** Literally, to work the hands. It references the "doing" of kapa.

**he lālā wau no kuʻu kumu.** I am a branch a beloved trunk. It also means I am an extension of my teachers.

**hoʻopūka e kalā i ma ka hikina.** Kaʻiulani is referencing the name of a chant, Let the sun rise in the east (www.halaumohalailima.com), which was the inspiration for the design on the kapa piece she made for the Merrie Monarch.

**i ka nānā no a ʻike.** In observing, one learns (Pukui, 1983, p. 129).

**i leʻa ka hula a ka hoʻopaʻa.** The hula is pleasing because of the drummer (Pukui, 1983, p. 133). The lesser details that one pays little attention to are just as important as the major ones. Although the attention is given to the dancer, the drummer and chanter play an important role in the dance.

**lawe i ka maʻalea a kūʻonoʻono.** Take wisdom and make it deep (Pukui, 1983, p. 211).

**ma ka hana ka ʻike.** In the practice, one learns (Pukui, 1983, p. 227).

**nānā a hoʻolohe mua.** Pay attention with all your senses with the intent of learning.

**ʻola nā moʻolelo, ʻola i nā moʻolelo, ʻolelo (i) nā moʻolelo.** McDougall (2016) compiles concepts of ʻola nā moʻolelo (the moʻolelo live); and ʻola i nā moʻolelo, (we live because of the moʻolelo). ʻOla (i) nā moʻolelo intends to articulate "how we live moʻolelo and how moʻolelo live through us" (p. 3).

**translation of Hawaiian words**

**ʻaeʻae.** Water hyssop, a succulent herb, *Bacopa monnieria*. An indigenous, flat growing ground cover with light green leaves and bluish white flowers

**ʻAkāka.** The mountain spur that forms the ride of Waiakeakua, the Water of the Gods, in Mānoa valley.

**ʻākala.** Two endemic raspberries, *Rubus hawaiensis and R. macraei.* A dye could be made from the ʻākala juice of the berry; Kaʻiulani also references that kapa could be made from the ʻākala plant fibers.

**ʻākia.** An endemic shrub and tree, *Wikstroemia spp.*, with small leaves, tiny yellowish flowers and yellow to red, small, ovoid one-seeded fruits. The bark, roots and leaves were a narcotic that was pounded and mixed with bait, then thrown in the water to feed (and stun) the fish. The bark was also said to have been used for kapa, but presumably because of the sap contained, is thought to not have been very comfortable to wear (K. de Silva, personal communication, n.d.).

**ahonui.** Patience.

**akua.** God, goddess, spirit, ghost, devil, image, idol, corpse; divine, supernatural, godly.

**ʻalaʻalawainui.** An indigenous plant, *Peperomia blanda*, that had medicinal and dye-making uses. The leaves and stems produced a gray green dye, called ʻahiahia or puahia (Krauss, 1993).

**ʻalaea.** water-soluble, colloidal ocherous earth (dirt), used to make red-colored dye in kapa.

**aliʻi.** Chief, chiefess, ruler. **Aliʻi nui** is a high chief.

**Aotearoa.** Māori for New Zealand. Translates to the land of the long, white cloud.

**ʻaumakua, ʻaumākua.** Deified ancestors who assumed different forms, and with whom humans held a special and symbiotic relationship with. Maikoha, Lauhuiki, Laʻahana,

and Ehu are ʻaumākua for kapa makers. Offerings and offers of grace are made to them in exchange for the kapa produced. ʻAumākua is the plural of ʻaumakua.

**ʻawa.** Kava, *Piper methysticum*, a shrubs whose roots produces a drink for medicinal, ceremonial, and cultural uses.

**ʻea.** A general term for infections and infectious diseases; the thrush disease of children.

**ʻeʻepa.** Gnomes, persons with miraculous, mysterious powers. The menehune (legendary race of small people who worked only at night) of Nuʻuanu valley described in the legend of Maikoha were ʻeʻepa.

**ehu.** The ʻaumakua, or diety of kapa dyers, because he was said to have discovered the red dye in the blood of the kukui tree. Offerings were given to him if the kapa maker desired a red of that same intensity and color; for kapa practitioners, red is an elusive color (K. de Silva and V. Takashima, personal communication, n.d.).

**haʻahaʻa.** humility. **Me ka haʻahaʻa** is used as a closing, meaning humbly (yours).

**haʻi moʻolelo.** The Hawaiian practice of storytelling.

**haku moʻolelo.** Author. Haku, which means to braid (as a lei) or plait (as feathers), and moʻolelo, which means story. Haku moʻolelo literally translates to braiding of stories. While the conventional translation of author implies this action is in a written form, I utilize this descriptive term for my kumu because in their oratory, they skillfully weave together stories upon stories.

**hānai.** Adopted child.

**haole.** White person, Caucasian; formerly, any foreigner.

**hapa.** Of mixed blood. The definition of hapa formally traces to mean half-Hawaiian, half-Caucasian. I grew up defining myself as hapa, even though I am not Hawaiian, but half-Japanese, half-Caucasian or Haole.

**haumāna.** Student, pupil, apprentice.

**he moʻokūʻauhau ke kapa.** The genealogy of kapa; in this context, it is the lineage of kumu kapa I belong to. My relationship to the practice is tied to this lineage; the ways I practice kapa, what stories I have been gifted to hear, even the details I notice and how I express them, can all trace to the backbone formed by my teachers.

**hohoa.** A rounded kapa beater resembling a club, sometimes with grooves carved, that was used during the first beat of kapa (usually against a pōhaku, or stone).

**hōʻailona.** Symbols, signals, signs, provided by nature; Polynesians (not just Hawaiians) believe these signs help them direct their lives and make decisions.

**hoʻāo.** Marriage ceremony.

**hōʻike.** To show, exhibit. I was taught it also means to demonstrate one's ʻike or knowledge.

**hoʻokuanoʻo.** To meditate, think deeply to comprehend.

**hoʻokuleana.** In this text, hoʻokuleana is to give a responsibility to. Kuleana is translated as responsibility; hoʻo is essentially, "to make."

**hoʻololi.** To change, transform.

**hoʻomoʻomoʻo.** To beat raw bast of wauke into moʻomoʻo.

**hoʻopulu.** To soak, saturate, moisten; as in pōpō balls to ferment in maia (banana) leaves.

**Hōkūleʻa.** Kaʻiulani is referencing the modern replica of an ancient Hawaiian open ocean voyaging canoe that recently completed a three-year (2014-2017) circumnavigation of the globe using traditional wayfinding (no modern navigational instruments).

**holokū.** A loose, seamed dress with a yoke and usually with a train; these 'Mother Hubbard' dresses were introduced by the missionaries to cover the body of the Natives, whose nakedness was considered uncivilized and immoral (Hume, 2013).

**hula.** Hawaiian dance accompanied by chant or song that perpetuates the stories, traditions, and culture of Hawai'i.

**i'e kuku.** Four sided beater with a handle, made from Hawaiian hardwoods, used in making kapa. Associated with the second beat (for the first beat, see hohoa).

**'ike.** Knowledge. My learning is that 'ike is holistic, encompassing all senses. To have 'ike is not just to know something intellectually, but through multiple dimensions: spiritually, empirically, socially, physically.

**'iliahi.** Hawaiian sandalwood, *Sandalum sp.,* shrubs and trees, with fragrant heart wood. From 1790 to 1830 sandalwood trees were cut and exported to China.

**'ili kukui.** 'ili is the skin, 'ili kukui is the skin of the kukui nut, which is used in kapa.

**'ili lepo.** Ka'iulani references the outer bark of the wauke as 'ili lepo, the one part of the wauke that kapa practitioners want to completely remove.

**imu.** Underground oven used to cook food.

**ipu.** The bottle guard, *Lagenaria siceraria,* also *L. vulgaris*, which grows from a vine, and is native of Asia or Africa. Hawaiians used ipu as receptacles, for rattles for dances, larger ones could hold kapa and other articles, and to serve as drums (depending on the thickness of the walls).

**ka po'e kahiko.** The people of old.

**Ka-I-i-mamao, or Lonoikamakahiki.** There are actually three chiefs called Lonoikamakahiki and they all lived at different times (www.ulukau.org). Ka-I-i-mamao was the son of Keaweikekahiali'iokamoku by Lonoma'ikanaka; he is who the Kumulipo is dedicated to.

**Kahaukani and Kauakuahina.** Kahaukani (the Mānoa wind) and Kauakuahina (the famous Mānoa rain), who were brother and sister, were adopted at birth and raised by a chief,

Kolowahi, and Pohakukala, a chiefess. They were married and gave birth to Kahalaopuna, the princess of Mānoa, who was said to be the most beautiful woman of her time. The union joined the wind and rain for which Mānoa is known for (Nakuina, 1907).

**kāhea.** To call, cry out, invoke, greet.

**kahiko.** Old, ancient, primitive. It is also an ancient style of hula dance. It is vigorous and performed to chants, not music, and accompanied by pahu, drums.

**kalukalu.** A fine, gauze-like kapa said to have been made on Kaua‘i and reserved for chiefs; the process to make kalukalu is not known today.

**Kāne, kawaiakāne.** Ka‘iulani references Kāne, one of the four great Hawaiian gods. Kawaiakāne are the waters of Kāne.

**kaona.** Hidden, concealed meanings.

**kapa.** Literally, "the beaten thing." Hawaiian kapa is barkcloth made from wauke (it was also made from māmaki bark); in this text, I reference kapa as Hawaiian kapa, and tapa, as the more generic term for barkcloth made from other Polynesian cultures.

**kapa moe (also known as ku‘inakapa).** A bed sheet, usually in layers of 3 or 5 that are strung together with cordage from wauke (later, cotton thread) (V. Takashima, personal communication, n.d.). The kapa moe of Aunty Verna's kūpuna were legendary for their beauty, and were actually ten sheets strung together.

**kauila.** A native tree of the buckthorn family, a hardwood increasingly rare that is favored by practitioners for their kua (S. Apio, personal communication, 2016).

**keiki.** Child.

**kepanī.** Japanese.

**kīhei.** A shawl, cloak, rectangular in shape, tied over one shoulder; one of the garments made of kapa that Hawaiians wore.

**kilohana.** The outside, decorated sheet in kuʻina kapa (bed coverings).

**kino lau.** Literally, "many bodies." These represent the body forms of Hawaiian gods and they were everywhere. Every plant, animal, cloud formations, winds, lava movement, etc., are kino lau, embodiments of a god. From a Hawaiian worldview, the divine is everywhere, and everything is (the) divine. The relationship to all things, then, becomes extremely important.

**koa.** The largest of the native forest tree, *Acacia koa*.

**koaiʻa.** Variation of koaiʻe, a native tree, *Acacia koaia*, similar to koa but smaller. Koaiʻa is rare today. It is a hardwood treasured by kapa practitioners and tool makers; the best iʻe kuku are made from koaiʻa (S. Apio, personal communication, n.d.).

**koʻolau.** Windward side (eastern) of the Hawaiian Islands; Aunty Verna references the Koʻolau mountains on Oʻahu, which dominates the eastern half of the island.

**kua (or kua kuku).** Wooden anvil, usually "4 to 6 feet long, and usually 3 to 4 inches wide on the smooth upper surface, and hollowed out beneath, supported at each end by stones" (Brigham, 1893, p. 78). Also called kua kuku. My kua is made of milo, a Hawaiian hardwood.

**kuʻinakapa.** Bed covering made of kapa, consisting of five sheets sewn together. The four inner layers (iho) were usually white, the outer layer (kilohana) designed.

**kuleana.** Responsibility.

**kumu, kumu kapa.** Kumu, in Hawaiian, takes on many meanings, teacher, source and foundation, beginning, reason. My use of kumu implies literal and symbolic representation: my teacher (kumu kapa), being my example and model (kumu alakaʻi),

as a sign of respect, acknowledging they are a source of my own learning (ʻike kumu) as a kapa practitioner and haumāna kapa, or student of kapa.

**kumuhana.** Kaʻiulani is referencing a practice of deep meditation and reflection, and whatever is revealed is what you think about.

**Kumulipo.** The Hawaiian creation chant; also means origin, genesis, source of life.

**kūpeʻe.** Kaʻiulani is referring to the edible marine snail, *Nerita polita*, the shells of which were collected and used for ornaments. They are hard to find today.

**kūpuna.** Ancestor, relative; kūpuna is the plural form of kupuna.

**laʻa.** A fern (same as palai ʻula).

**Laʻahana.** The ʻaumakua of the pattern markings on the beaters. One of the two daughters of Maikoha.

**lāʻau lapaʻau.** The Hawaiian practice of herbal medicine.

**lau hala.** Pandanus leaf used in plaiting and weaving.

**Lauhuki, Lauhuiki.** The ʻaumakua of those who pound and prepare bark for beating kapa. One of the two daughters of Maikoha.

**lei hulu.** Feather lei.

**loʻi.** Irrigated terrace, especially for taro.

**lua.** A type of hand-to-hand fighting. Lua experts were bodyguards to chiefs.

**lūʻau.** A Hawaiian feast.

**maʻa.** To be accustomed, to know thoroughly, to be familiar, experienced

**maʻaloa.** A low, native shrub, *Neraudia melastomaefolia*, related to the māmaki, with a bark that was used for making kapa.

**mahina.** Moon.

**maʻi.** Menstruating.

**ma‘o.** Native cotton, *Gossypium sandvicense,* bearing yellow flowers that can be used in dye.

**mai‘a.** Banana.

**Maikoha.** The ‘aumakua of kapa makers, it is from his remains that the wauke plant grew.

**maile.** A native twining shrub, *Alyxia olivaeformis*, with fragrant, shiny leaves that Hawaiians used to scent their kapa.

**maile pilau.** A local name, also known as kusui maile (kusui is stink in Japanese); pilau in Hawaiian means rotten. It is a vining plant with leaves that look like the Maile, but do not smell like it. In Kāne‘ohe, where it is wet, it grows very aggressively and does not flower or produce berries; on the ‘ewa side, because it is dry, it produces purple berries that produce a beautiful dye for kapa (K. de Silva, V. Takashima, S. Apio, personal communication, n.d.).

**maka‘ala.** Alert, vigilant, watchful, observant.

**makua.** Parent.

**malo.** Male loincloth, also a garment made from kapa.

**māmaki.** Native tree, *Pipturus spp*., whose bark was valued for kapa (although those who have tried to make kapa with it contend it is slimy, smelly, and hard to work with); the leaves can be used to make māmaki tea.

**mana‘o.** Thought, ideal, belief, opinion, theory, meaning, suggestion. To ask one’s mana‘o is to ask for their thoughts on something.

**manamanalima.** Manamana lima means finger in Hawaiian. Manamanalima is one of two types of wauke kapa practitioners use today in Hawai‘i; it is the more common variety, and is called as such because its three-lobed leaves resemble fingers. Also known as laumana, this type of wauke grows straighter and requires less care.

**mele.** Song.

**mele koʻihonua.** Chant of the creation of the world.

**moʻolelo.** Story. From moʻo ʻōlelo, or succession (moʻo) of talk (ʻōlelo), where stories were oral, not written.

**moʻolelo moʻokūʻauhau.** Genealogical story.

**moʻomoʻo.** Strips of wauke that have gone through the first beat, and bundled (in strips of five); they can be soaked to prepare for the second beat, or dried and stored.

**nā kūpuna he mau ʻōlelo hoʻomanaʻo.** The handwritten notes of ancestors

**nā loea.** Skilled experts.

**naʻau, naʻauao.** Literally, guts. Considered a site of intelligence; naʻauao is enlightenment or wisdom.

**naʻau hoʻomaikaʻi.** Translated as grateful heart, but I translate it to mean a deep gratitude, a thankfulness that hits one in the naʻau, or in the guts; when I listen to Kaʻiulani share her stories and manaʻo, that is the emotion I feel.

**nānā.** To observe, pay attention, see, notice, inspect.

**niho ʻoki.** Literally, shark's tooth knife. It is used to strip and harvest the wauke; it was also used as a weapon, presumably by women, because of the way it fit into the palm of the hand (S. Apio, personal communication, n.d.).

**noa.** Freed of taboo, released from restrictions; freedom.

**noʻonoʻo.** Thought, reflection, thinking, meditation

**noni.** The Indian mulberry, *Morinda citrifolia*, a plant whose roots are highly favored by kapa practitioners for dye.

**nūpepa.** Newspaper.

**ʻohana.** Family. When Kaʻiulani references ʻohana style of teaching and learning, it is smaller, one on one, more intimate of a learning space.

**ʻohe kāpala.** Bamboo stampers that kapa practitioners use to stamp designs on kapa.

**ʻōlapa.** Hula dancer.

**ʻōlelo noʻeau.** Proverbs, wise sayings, traditional sayings.

**ʻōlena.** Turmeric, *Curcuma longa*, used by kapa practitioners to make a yellow dye.

**oli.** Chant that was not danced to, especially with prolonged phrases chanted in one breath, often with a trill (ʻiʻi) at the end of each phrase.

**ʻoʻopu.** General name for fishes you could find in the upland streams

**olopua.** Large native tree, *Osmanthus sandwicensis*, in the olive family. A hardwood that was dark brown with black streaks, it was commonly used for kapa tools, as well as spears, adze handles, and digging sticks.

**ʻouʻou.** The sound of the beat of the iʻe kuku on the kua, or the anvil.

**paʻa.** Solid, tight, durable, strong, mastered, learned, studied, whole, complete

**paʻakai.** Salt.

**pahu.** Drum.

**paʻi.** To slap, beat, hit, clap; print, publish

**paʻiʻula.** Kapa made by beating red fibers into the kapa, forming a mixture of red and white. Aunty Verna's kūpuna made a kuʻina kapa, or bedcover, that were 10 sheets sewn together, the top sheet (or kilohana) was a paʻiʻula. My learning is red is a difficult color to obtain in nature; such a sight as a red bedcover, especially a top sheet to 10 sheets sewn together, would be admired by kapa practitioners near and far.

**pāʻū.** Skirt, a garment traditionally made with kapa.

**Papahānaumoku.** Earth mother.

**pau.** Finished.

**Pele.** Volcano goddess.

**pia.** Polynesian arrowroot, *Tacca leontopetaloides*, an herb formerly cultivated in Hawaiʻi for its starchy tubers, which were used for medicine and food. In kapa, pia was used as a glue to hold pieces of kapa together.

**pīkake.** *Jasminum sambac*, an evergreen climbing plant cultivated for its fragrant white flowers; the buds are sewn into lei.

**poʻaʻaha.** The second variety of wauke, this wauke has round or ovate leaves (instead of fingered, or three-lobed leaves). This type of wauke is thought to be finer, softer, whiter, and reserved for aliʻi (V. Takashima, personal communication, n.d.). This tends to be very branchy.

**pōhaku.** Stone. Aunty Verna is referencing the kua pōhaku that kapa practitioners use for the first beat. It is a flat, smooth stone, against which freshly harvested and stripped wauke might be beaten with the hohoa; this loosens the fibers in order to prepare them to be soaked and fermented; or they can be bundled into strips of moʻomoʻo and dried, and stored indefinitely.

**pohō.** Out of luck. Aunty Verna means they will not pohō (wauke), they will not waste.

**poi.** A Hawaiian staple, made from cooked taro corms, pounded and thinned with water.

**pōpō balls.** Kaʻiulani uses this to mean balls of shredded wauke that are wadded together; this is a stage in kapa making

**pōpolo (berries).** The native pokeberry (pōpolo kū mai or pōpolo lū mai), *Phytolacca brachystachys*, whose berries are used as dye.

**pōʻulu.** The bark of tender breadfruit shoots, used for making kapa.

**puakenikeni, pua kenikeni.** Perfume flower tree, *Fagraea berteriana*, a small spreading tree with orange fragrant flowers; locals say it is the official tree of Kāneʻohe as nearly every home has one. My Aunty planted the one in my yard back in the 1960s. The name

is because each flower would be sold to make lei for ten cents (kenikeni); pua kenikeni is the ten-cent flower.

**pueo.** Owl.

**puka.** Hole.

**pule.** Prayer.

**pule hoʻolaʻa aliʻi.** Prayer consecrating aliʻi.

**pulelehua.** Butterfly.

**pūneʻe.** moveable couch, daybed.

**ti (plant).** Kī. Hawaiian plant, *Cordyline terminalis,* in the lily family, native to tropical Asia and Australia. Hawaiians had many uses for the leaves, including roof thatch, food wrappers, hula skirts, sandals, cloaks; the roots could be baked or distilled for brandy. Green ti leaves are often planted around homes as protection from spirits.

**tutu, tūtū**. Grandmother (tūtū wahine).

**ua ʻaupuakea.** The rain named for the goddess that changed Hiʻiaka to rain.

**ua kanikoʻo.** Cane-tapping rain; this kind of rain accompanies the Koʻolau wind and sounds like a cane tapping on the roof.

**ʻuniki.** Graduation exercises, as for hula, lua fighting, and other ancient arts (probably related to niki, to tie, as the knowledge was bound to the student).

**ʻukiʻuki.** *Dianelle sandwicensis,* a native member of the lily family, whose berries form a pale blue dye for kapa.

**ʻulaʻula poni.** A variety of kalo that is said to make a red dye.

**ʻūlei.** A native spreading shrub, *Osteomeles anthyllidifolia*, with small white roselike flowers and small white fruits (which are edible). The berries could be used for dye.

**ʻulīʻulī.** A gourd rattle, containin seeds with colored feathers at the top, used in hula.

**ʻulu.** Breadfruit, *Artocarpus altilis*, the bark of the tender, young shoots could be pounded into kapa. The male flower (Pōuleʻulu) was also said to be used as a dye in kapa.

**ʻumeke.** A bowl, calabash, circular vessel, of wood or gourd.

**uwē wale nō.** As I learned it, the story of sadness, grief, despair (P. Burgess, personal communication, n.d.).

**wā.** A period of time, epoch, era. In the Kumulipo, there are 16 wā, or eras of creation.

**wana.** Sea urchin, as *Diadema paucispinum* and *Echinothrix diadema*, considered by some an ʻaumakua. It is also a kapa design stamp carved into the flat end of the ʻohe, or bamboo, node.

**wauke.** Broussonetia papyrifera, paper mulberry. A canoe plant from eastern Asia, from which kapa is produced (www.wehewehe.org, n.d.)

**weke.** Certain species of the Mullidae, surmullets or goatfish. In the Kumulipo they are the water-pairing with wauke.

**translation of other words**

**boro-boro.** A local saying derived from the Japanese word, "boro," which means torn-down waste cloth. Boro-boro is an onomatope for anything that looks shabby.

**kozo.** Japanese tissue paper made from the kozo (paper mulberry) bush, the same plant Hawaiians call wauke.

**masi.** Fijian tapa.

**sensei.** Japanese for teacher.

**shōdo.** Japanese calligraphy. The suzuri ink stone is a flat grinding stone used to make the ink; it has a well-shaped indentation on one end.

**siapo.** Samoan tapa.

**tapa.** I use tapa to distinguish other Polynesian forms of barkcloth, from Hawaiian kapa.

**wabi sabi.** A Japanese tradition and practice where the beauty of things is imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete.

**warabi (fern).** Edible fern shoots, also known as hōʻiʻo, pohole, even pako.

**washi.** A style of Japanese paper that can be made from the paper mulberry.

**yonsei.** Fourth-generation Japanese American.

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