

Cultural exchange has far-reaching peace building implications in our world today.

Kumu Hula Roselle Bailey has been my teacher for over thirty years. As a member of her multi-ethnic halau (dance school) Ka 'imi Na Auau O Hawaii Nei , I have participated in bringing hula to the U.S. (mainland), Canada, Europe and India. We presented a cleansing hula offering at a holocaust site in Germany, and later brought German students to Kaua'i for a taste of the real thing; the roots of Hawaii's cultural heritage.

I was initiated as a kumu hula by Roselle Bailey in 1979. In addition, for several years my husband and I studied and performed with the Koloa Juice Co., a jazz dance troupe on Kaua'i. After 5 years in Los Angeles studying with master teachers, I returned to Kaua'i in 1992 and founded Halau Hula Ha'iwi Hemolele o Keakawaiola.

I believe that a firm foundation in one's lineage is important. With this clarity we can integrate and exchange cultural ways, and find similarities with other traditions. Hula blends well with many cultures because the love is so strong and because we do not pass judgment. Aloha (alo, "in the presence" of the ha, "breath") is a value that is universal and needs to be recognized and understood. We find parallel meaning in the greeting of other languages, ie. Shalom (peace), namaste (I recognize the divinity within you), adios (to God), and guess gott (greet God).

As cultural exchange facilitator for Aloha Africa I will conduct weekly classes on Fridays at 10 am. I will bring the African guest artists and their core group of students to sacred sites on Kaua'i and to my own property, where I have a taro patch and a dance studio with mirrors.

The curriculum will provide a basic foundation in hula, the language of Hawaii. Through hula, we share not only dance, but also craft, medicine, history, lore, science, chant, and drumming.

I will teach a hula about taro, which is also a traditional food of our guests from Ghana. As part of our study, we will see taro growing, harvest it, cook it, eat it, and learn the legend about taro and the birth of the Hawaiian culture.

I will also teach chanting of the vowel sounds, with hand and body motions that correspond with each element. I will teach about Ulu (breadfruit), which means 'growing and perpetuating' and is our halau symbol. Our study will also include the healing plants noni and olena.

As a culmination of our six months of learning, we will go to Keahualaka , the altar of Laka, and make an offering of dance, chant and drumming.

This program of African and Hawaiian cultural exchange is a way of preserving two vibrant oral traditions, lest they disappear.

I look forward to participating in Aloha Africa.

Me Ke Aloha Pumehana,

Jessi Jardin

