When the police break your teammate’s leg, you’d think it would wake you up a little.

When they arrest him on a New York street, throw him in jail for the night, and leave him with a season-ending injury, you’d think it would sink in. You’d think you’d know there was more to the story.

You’d think.

But nope.
late after a game in Atlanta. When I woke up the next morning, our team group text was
going nuts. Details were still hazy, but guys were saying, *Thabo hurt his leg? During an
arrest? Wait – he spent the night in jail?!* Everyone was pretty upset and confused.

Well, almost everyone. My response was….. different. I’m embarrassed to admit it.

Which is why I want to share it today.

Before I tell the rest of this story, let me just say real quick – Thabo wasn’t some random
teammate of mine, or some guy in the league who I knew a little bit. We’d become
legitimate friends that year in our downtime. He was my go-to teammate to talk with about
stuff beyond the basketball world. Politics, religion, culture, you name it – Thabo brought a
perspective that wasn’t typical of an NBA player. And it’s easy to see why: Before we were
teammates in Atlanta, the guy had played professional ball in France, Turkey and Italy. He
spoke three languages! Thabo’s mother was from Switzerland, and his father was from
South Africa. They lived together in South Africa before Thabo was born, then left because
of apartheid.

It didn’t take long for me to figure out that Thabo was one of the most interesting people I’d
ever been around. We respected each other. We were cool, you know? We had each other’s
backs.

Anyway – on the morning I found out that Thabo had been arrested, want to know what
my first thought was? About my friend and teammate? My first thought was: *What was
Thabo doing out at a club on a back-to-back??*

with this story.* Nothing like that. Before I knew the full story, and before I’d even had the
chance to talk to Thabo….. I sort of *blamed* Thabo.
I thought,

Well, if I’d been in Thabo’s shoes, out at a club late at night, the police wouldn’t have arrested me. Not unless I was doing something wrong.

Cringe.

It’s not like it was a conscious thought. It was pure reflex – the first thing to pop into my head.

And I was worried about him, no doubt.

But still. Cringe.

A few months later, a jury found Thabo not guilty on all charges. He settled with the city over the NYPD’s use of force against him. And then the story just sort of….. disappeared. It fell away from the news. Thabo had surgery and went through rehab. Pretty soon, another NBA season began – and we were back on the court again.

Life went on.

But I still couldn’t shake my discomfort.

I mean, I hadn’t been involved in the incident. I hadn’t even been there. So why did I feel like I’d let my friend down?

Why did I feel like I’d let myself down?

A few weeks ago, something happened at a Jazz home game that brought back many of those old questions.
happened, and if you were following on TV or on Twitter, maybe you had a similar initial viewing of it. Then, after the game, one of our reporters asked me for my response to what had gone down between Russ and the fan. I told him I hadn’t seen it — and added something like, *But you know Russ. He gets into it with the crowd a lot.*

Of course, the full story came out later that night. What actually happened was that a fan had said some really ugly things at close range to Russ. Russ had then responded. After the game, he’d said he felt the comments were racially charged.

The incident struck a nerve with our team.

In a closed-door meeting with the president of the Jazz the next day, my teammates shared stories of similar experiences they’d had – of feeling degraded in ways that went beyond acceptable heckling. One teammate talked about how his mom had called him right after the game, concerned for his safety in SLC. One teammate said the night felt like being “in a zoo.” One of the guys in the meeting was Thabo – he’s my teammate in Utah now. I looked over at him, and remembered his night in NYC.

Everyone was upset. I was upset – and embarrassed, too. But there was another emotion in the room that day, one that was harder to put a finger on. It was almost like..... disappointment, mixed with exhaustion. Guys were just *sick and tired* of it all.

This wasn’t the first time they’d taken part in conversations about race in their NBA careers, and it wasn’t the first time they’d had to address the hateful actions of others. And one big thing that got brought up a lot in the meeting was how incidents like this – they weren’t only about the people directly involved. This wasn’t only about Russ and some heckler. It was about more than that.

It was about what it means just to *exist* right now – as a person of color in a mostly white space.
Before the meeting ended, I joined the team’s demand for a swift response and a promise from the Jazz organization that it would address the concerns we had. I think my teammates and I all felt it was a step in the right direction.

But I don’t think anyone felt satisfied.

There’s an elephant in the room that I’ve been thinking about a lot over these last few weeks. It’s the fact that, demographically, if we’re being honest: I have more in common with the fans in the crowd at your average NBA game than I have with the players on the court.

And after the events in Salt Lake City last month, and as we’ve been discussing them since, I’ve really started to recognize the role those demographics play in my privilege. It’s like – I may be Thabo’s friend, or Ekpe’s teammate, or Russ’s colleague; I may work with those guys. And I absolutely 100% stand with them.

But I look like the other guy.

And whether I like it or not? I’m beginning to understand how that means something.

What I’m realizing is, no matter how passionately I commit to being an ally, and no matter how unwavering my support is for NBA and WNBA players of color..... I’m still in this conversation from the privileged perspective of opting in to it. Which of course means that on the flip side, I could just as easily opt out of it. Every day, I’m given that choice – I’m granted that privilege – based on the color of my skin.

In other words, I can say every right thing in the world: I can voice my solidarity with Russ after what happened in Utah. I can evolve my position on what happened to Thabo in New
But I can also fade into the crowd, and my face can blend in with the faces of those hecklers, any time I want.

I realize that now. And maybe in years past, just realizing something would’ve felt like progress. But it’s NOT years past – it’s today. And I know I have to do better. So I’m trying to push myself further.

I’m trying to ask myself what I should actually do.

How can I – as a white man, part of this systemic problem – become part of the solution when it comes to racism in my workplace? In my community? In this country?

These are the questions that I’ve been asking myself lately.

And I don’t think I have all the answers yet – but here are the ones that are starting to ring the most true:

I have to continue to educate myself on the history of racism in America.

I have to listen. I’ll say it again, because it’s that important. I have to listen.

I have to support leaders who see racial justice as fundamental – as something that’s at the heart of nearly every major issue in our country today. And I have to support policies that do the same.

I have to do my best to recognize when to get out of the way – in order to amplify the voices of marginalized groups that so often get lost.

But maybe more than anything?
We all have to hold each other accountable.

And we all have to be accountable – period. Not just for our own actions, but also for the ways that our inaction can create a “safe” space for toxic behavior.

And I think the standard that we have to hold ourselves to, in this crucial moment..... it’s higher than it’s ever been. We have to be active. We have to be actively supporting the causes of those who’ve been marginalized – precisely because they’ve been marginalized.

Two concepts that I’ve been thinking about a lot lately are guilt and responsibility.

When it comes to racism in America, I think that guilt and responsibility tend to be seen as more or less the same thing. But I’m beginning to understand how there’s a real difference.

As white people, are we guilty of the sins of our forefathers? No, I don’t think so.

But are we responsible for them? Yes, I believe we are.

And I guess I’ve come to realize that when we talk about solutions to systemic racism – police reform, workplace diversity, affirmative action, better access to healthcare, even reparations? It’s not about guilt. It’s not about pointing fingers, or passing blame.

It’s about responsibility. It’s about understanding that when we’ve said the word “equality,” for generations, what we’ve really meant is equality for a certain group of people. It’s about understanding that when we’ve said the word “inequality,” for generations, what we’ve really meant is slavery, and its aftermath – which is still being felt to this day. It’s about understanding on a fundamental level that black people and white people, they still have it
And it’s about understanding that Black Lives Matter, and movements like it, matter, because – well, let’s face it: I probably would’ve been safe on the street that one night in New York. And Thabo wasn’t. And I was safe on the court that one night in Utah. And Russell wasn’t.

But as disgraceful as it is that we have to deal with racist hecklers in NBA arenas in 2019? The truth is, you could argue that that kind of racism is “easier” to deal with.

Because at least in those cases, the racism is loud and clear. There’s no ambiguity – not in the act itself, and thankfully not in the response: we throw the guy out of the building, and then we ban him for life.

But in many ways the more dangerous form of racism isn’t that loud and stupid kind. It isn’t the kind that announces itself when it walks into the arena. It’s the quiet and subtle kind. The kind that almost hides itself in plain view. It’s the person who does and says all the “right” things in public: They’re perfectly friendly when they meet a person of color. They’re very polite. But in private? Well..... they sort of wish that everyone would stop making everything “about race” all the time.

It’s the kind of racism that can seem almost invisible – which is one of the main reasons why it’s allowed to persist.

And so, again, banning a guy like Russ’s heckler? To me, that’s the “easy” part. But if we’re really going to make a difference as a league, as a community, and as a country on this issue..... it’s like I said – I just think we need to push ourselves another step further.

First, by identifying that less visible, less obvious behavior as what it is: racism.
That’s the bare minimum of where we have to get to, I think, if we’re going to consider the NBA – or any workplace – as anything close to part of the solution in 2019.

I’ll wrap this up in a minute – but first I have one last thought.

The NBA is over 75% players of color.

_Seventy-five percent._

People of color, they built this league. They’ve grown this league. People of color have made this league into what it is today. And I guess I just wanted to say that if you can’t find it in your heart to support them – _now_? And I mean actively support them?

If the best that you can do for their cause is to passively “tolerate” it? If that’s the standard we’re going to hold ourselves to – to blend in, and opt out?

Well, that’s not good enough. It’s not even close.

I know I’m in a strange position, as one of the more recognized white players in the NBA. It’s a position that comes with a lot of….. interesting undertones. And it’s a position that makes me a symbol for a lot of things, for a lot of people – often people who don’t know anything about me. Usually, I just ignore them. But this doesn’t feel like a “usually” moment.

This feels like a moment to draw a line in the sand.

I believe that what’s happening to people of color in this country – right now, in 2019 – is wrong.
poverty as white Americans is wrong. The fact that black unemployment rates nationally are double that of overall unemployment rates is wrong. The fact that black imprisonment rates for drug charges are almost six times higher nationally than white imprisonment rates for drug charges is wrong. The fact that black Americans own approximately one-tenth of the wealth that white Americans own is wrong.

The fact that inequality is built so deeply into so many of our most trusted institutions is wrong.

And I believe it’s the responsibility of anyone on the privileged end of those inequalities to help make things right.

So if you don’t want to know anything about me, outside of basketball, then listen – I get it. But if you do want to know something? Know I believe that.

Know that about me.

If you’re wearing my jersey at a game? Know that about me. If you’re planning to buy my jersey for someone else...... know that about me. If you’re following me on social media...... know that about me. If you’re coming to Jazz games and rooting for me...... know that about me.

And if you’re claiming my name, or likeness, for your own cause, in any way...... know that about me. Know that I believe this matters.

Thanks for reading.

Time for me to shut up and listen.
Grounding Hawaiian Learners—and Teachers—in Their Indigenous Identity

Monica A. Ka‘imipono Kaiwi

By rooting Hawaiian students first in their own cultural perspective, we provide the lens through which they can view the rest of the world. A multicultural curriculum taught in Hawai‘i that is devoid of Hawaiian anything—by omission, obstruction, or obliteration—marginalizes Hawaiian culture. Because we are in our homeland, this type of omission affects our academic integrity. If we do not teach Hawaiian students who they are as Hawaiians, we devalue them and their kūpuna (ancestors, elders). This is Hawai‘i, and for that reason alone, as teachers we must use a Hawaiian philosophy of education that establishes Hawaiian literature as foundational before moving out to embrace a global perspective.
As I often share with my graduating seniors at Kamehameha Schools, this is a great time to be a Hawaiian educator, and it is a great privilege to teach our Hawaiian students. The concept of Hawaiian education is exciting, especially as we see the momentum build each year. When I arrived at the conference this morning,* I was thrilled to see two busloads of students—our future educators—arriving. We have come a long way since the first Native Hawaiian Education Association conference on Maui in 2000.

Although exciting, as many of us know, Hawaiian education is not an easy road. We are often met with resistance from without—when we also have to meet national initiatives like No Child Left Behind, new SAT exams, and more competitive college entrance requirements—all to be accomplished with dwindling budgets. “Do more with less” is the expectation and frustration.

We also experience resistance from within our own Hawaiian communities—when parents worry that their child will be shortchanged or no longer competitive if we change our approach to education. And we can’t blame them when so many of our Native Hawaiian community are no longer able to afford to live at home. A good education has become even more valuable.

Some of the questions that we, as Hawaiian educators, field include the following:

- “So what is Hawaiian education, anyway? And does that mean Hawaiians learn differently from other students?”
- “Aren’t you compromising academic rigor when you incorporate Hawaiian culture, literature, and pedagogy?”
- “How can Hawaiian education help students who have only enough Hawaiian blood to fit in their little toe? Do you really want to cram their Hawaiian ethnicity down their throats?”

This essay provides some answers to these questions.

In my opinion, Hawaiian education is a philosophy of education. In many ways, it is like the other philosophies we have learned and incorporated in one way or another throughout our teaching career. When I first began teaching in 1984 in Newport Beach, California, Madeline Hunter and her five-step lesson plan was the philosophical craze. Today the concepts of multiple intelligences and differentiated instruction have become catchwords for educators. As head of the English department at Kamehameha Schools, I receive fliers on a weekly basis for diverse learning seminars. Call it the latest craze, but many of these ideas were introduced by the Hunters, Goodlads, Deweys, and other educator philosophers. Great ideas! Good philosophies! And within our classroom, we use bits and pieces—and discard the rest.

Yet, Hawaiian education differs from these others because it is a philosophy rooted in a sense of indigenous being. And it is a philosophy of education that many of us know works best with our students here in Hawai‘i. When we shift the focal point away from a Western-centered approach to a Hawaiian/Kanaka Maoli-centered focus, our students make relevant connections to what’s being taught, especially our haumāna (students) of Hawaiian ancestry, because so much of what is taught and how it is taught is rooted in our sense of identity as Känaka Maoli. Ironically, many of the Hawaiian teaching strategies we use in the classroom are consistent with what is considered “best practice.” Yes, this is yet another philosophy of education.

So how do we describe or even explain a Hawaiian philosophy of education? I answer this question by sharing a story of how I came to my own Hawaiian philosophy of teaching.

First of all, I am a California-born Hawaiian—I’ll say more about my upbringing later—and I came home to Hawai‘i in 1989. I was assigned four sections of ninth-grade English at Kamehameha Schools, and I began teaching my students the same way I had taught in San Diego, where I had taught the previous year. Initially, my students were very polite and patient, but it became very clear, very quickly, that they didn’t have a clue about what I was saying.

*This article is based on a speech delivered at the Seventh Annual Conference of the Native Hawaiian Education Association in March 2006 in Pearl City, Hawai‘i.
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I was teaching the best and the brightest from the Hawaiian community, yet they did not relate to the literature, to me, or to my philosophy of teaching.

Besides the fact that I was talking 100 miles an hour—I talked as fast as I drove in Southern California, and I was dangerous—the literature that we were discussing was written by authors—mainly dead haole (foreign, Caucasian) males—who lived 2,500 to 9,000 miles away from Hawai‘i. The majority of the literature came from the East Coast of America or from England.

I was teaching the best and the brightest from the Hawaiian community, yet they did not relate to the literature, to me, or to my philosophy of teaching—which at that time was: I am the teacher, the imparter of all English knowledge, and I have all the answers because I went to college. So these students needed to listen to me because I controlled their grade. What a naïve philosophy I had back then.

In my desire to figure out how to better connect with my students and to understand why they were struggling, I began to envision them and their attempt to connect with the literature as a tree, upside down with its roots in the air, trying desperately to connect with both the literature and my expectations—because as good students, they did try very hard. I soon realized I had two choices: One, I could continue teaching as I was, dragging 100-plus students through my curriculum, pass them on, and then continue the pain and torture, or, two, I could change the way I approached teaching and essentially change my philosophy. I soon realized it would take less effort for me to change than it would take to continue dragging my grade-conscious students through my egocentric, haole-centered curriculum.

This shift in philosophy was spooky. No longer could I be the imparter of all knowledge because I needed to root my students in literature they could relate to before I could introduce the literature I knew best. As a California-born Hawaiian, that meant I needed to learn about my own identity as a Hawaiian as well as learn new Hawaiian literature. My students became my teachers as well as learn new Hawaiian literature. They were my teachers as well as learn new Hawaiian literature. The best part about the shift in focus was that it worked! Using our own cultural literature, my students were able to personally connect to the literature and gain the necessary literary analysis skills from examining Hawaiian mo‘olelo (stories), which they also were able to successfully apply to other, more Western—canonical—literary pieces.

My new philosophy worked especially well when teaching American literature. I began each unit with relevant works from home. For example, we examined the persuasive techniques found in journals and protest letters written by Walter Ritte and Richard Sawyer in Nā Mana‘o Aloha o Kaho‘olawe (Honolulu, 1978) as well as other pieces generated by the Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana during their efforts to stop the bombing on Kaho‘olawe. We read these materials before we discussed Patrick Henry and Thomas Jefferson, who staged a similar “David and Goliath” struggle with a superpower. By placing American literature into a sharper Hawaiian-honed focus, the passion and motivation of Patrick Henry and Thomas Jefferson, the founding fathers of America, became familiar to my students because as Native Hawaiians, they held similar passionate opinions regarding the bombing of Kaho‘olawe. The connections were made, the bridges were built, and my students began to see relevance in literature generated far away from our island home.

However, as expected, my new approach to teaching English was met with the question, “Aren’t you compromising academic rigor when you incorporate Hawaiian culture, literature, and pedagogy?” Unfortunately, yet not surprisingly, my department head and many others at that time questioned me about this new approach.

It was a fair question, but my answer then and now is—No! To assume that including Hawaiian culture or a Hawaiian worldview would decrease academic rigor would mean that our kūpuna (ancestors, elders) weren’t very bright and had no standards of their own.

Was it not our kūpuna who told us “kālia i ka na‘u” (strive for the highest)? It was our kūpuna who told us, even scolded us, to believe that perfection and rigor were to be celebrated. It was our kūpuna who produced the finest kapa (taa made from tree bark) in the Pacific and whom Captain Cook labeled as having established the...
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By rooting our students first in their own Hawaiian cultural perspective, we provide the lens through which they can view the rest of the world. Therefore, if we expect that same rigor from our students, then their performance should be their very best at all times. These were rather high expectations, and I am certain many of you can also share stories of how it works and how our students truly rise to the challenge.

The reality is, our students must function in multiple worlds. As Native Hawaiians, they are the next generation and the hope for our people. They also live in the Western society with its economic, sociopolitical, and cultural realities. These same students must also function in a third world of pop culture and technology. Navigating between multiple worlds takes talent and sometimes we, as their kūpuna (teachers), need to guide them through the maze. I believe that giving my students a solid grounding in their indigenous identity, then transporting them to other cultures through our study of literature, is one way to help them navigate these different worlds.

With this conviction in mind, I embarked on a second mission: building the bridge for my colleagues to understand that solidifying students’ indigenous identity does not mean lost rigor. I needed to justify and demonstrate that the same skills could be better taught to my students when they were rooted first in a Hawaiian perspective. When I made my philosophical justification, my department head did not buy it. It was one of my colleagues and mentors, Richard Hamasaki, who taught me that the secret to changing the status quo was to “answer questions before they were asked.” I began including my justifications in unit plans and yearly overviews as well as project instructions. I also identified the required skills and assessment for the study of both Hawaiian and American literature.

As I introduced earlier, my unit on Kaho‘olawe compared the Hawaiian-generated protest literature with the protest writings of the American Revolution. I required my students to analyze the same persuasive techniques and strategies used in the writings of the Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana in comparison with American revolutionary writers like Patrick Henry and his “Speech to the Virginia Convention” (1788). Not surprisingly, when these skills were taught in this manner, my students got it, even though they still thought Patrick Henry was far too long-winded.

By rooting our students first in their own Hawaiian cultural perspective, we provide the lens through which they can view the rest of the world. Thus in the discipline of English, I first start with Hawaiian literature, then move to traditional and global literature. This process expresses a Hawaiian philosophy of education.

To silence the naysayers, my goal was to overwhelm my department head with information—to answer the questions before being asked—so I showed her everything I developed. In turn, she supported my efforts as a Hawaiian educator. It took many more years before I began to truly win her over, but during that time she allowed me the space to explore and develop new curriculum.

Even as a kumu at Kamehameha Schools where I am privileged to teach only Hawaiian students, I have had students who initially thought they were getting shortchanged because I was not teaching them “real English”—whatever “real English” is. In fact, on more than one occasion, a parent or one of my colleagues has asked: “How can Hawaiian education help your students, especially when most have only enough Hawaiian blood to fit in their little toe? And do you really want to cram their Hawaiian ethnicity down their throats?”

This two-part question deserves a two-part answer. My first answer is one that I learned from Aunty Pua Kanahahele in her 1995 article “Ke Au Lono i Kaho‘olawe, Ho‘i (The Era of Lono at Kaho‘olawe, Returned)” documenting the Makahiki on Kaho‘olawe (Mānou: A Pacific Journal of International Writing, 7, 152–167). She calls it ancestral memory. Our Hawaiian identity stays in our DNA! It doesn’t matter how much or how little Hawaiian blood our students have—it takes only one ancestor to connect students to the many who came before. And I have personally seen this played out in my own life.

I was born and raised in a small town on the Russian River in Northern California called Forestville. For most of my childhood, we were the only Hawaiians in the predominantly White town. My Hawaiian father was the baby of a family of eight children who were also born and raised in California. My grandparents are from Hawai‘i Island—Grandpa was a Kāiwi from Kona, and Grandma was a Kumalae from Hilo. Both left home at the beginning of the 20th century, making me, their granddaughter, a second-generation California-born Hawaiian.
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By rooting our students first in their own Hawaiian cultural perspective, we provide the lens through which they can view the rest of the world. Thus in the discipline of English, I first start with Hawaiian literature, then move to traditional and global literature. This process expresses a Hawaiian philosophy of education.

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I grew up in a typical American family that denied our cultural background. Although my mother is 100% Moscow Russian, early in my childhood, she stopped practicing Russian traditions. And my father was intent on capturing the American dream. He talked very little about being Hawaiian, besides fighting the racism that accompanied his dark skin and a last name only identifiable on a map of Hawai‘i—the channel between O‘ahu and Moloka‘i. And I was told that Kiwi meant “the bone,” which seemed very strange to me at the time. I really didn’t have a clue.

For the most part, people in my small town thought I was a rather whitewashed American child with a difficult last name that no one could pronounce; however, I was also very aware of the fact that I saw the world differently. I saw hō‘ailona (signs, symbols) in the environment around me and connected with my surroundings in ways that my friends never understood. I remember I prayed to be like everyone else—to be “normal.” I didn’t know what normal really was, except that this brown girl wasn’t it.

In fact, the first time I began to feel normal was when I came home at age 27 and sat in Kekūhaupō gym on Kamehameha Schools’ campus with 3,000 other Hawaiians who looked just like me. It was then I knew I wasn’t so weird after all. But I had yet to understand what being Hawaiian meant.

My hänai (adoptive) parents, Dani and Philip Hanohano, were the ones who took the time to remind me about who I was as a Hawaiian and to guide me in understanding what I knew in my na‘au (gut). It was 17 years ago that I began my journey of remembering, which brings me to where I am today. It took my kūpuna 70 years before the first of their ʻohana (family) returned home, but they made certain that even though I was born two generations away from the ‘āina (land), I would not forget that I am Hawaiian.

So how does my story relate to the Hawaiian students in my classroom whose Hawaiian koko (blood) can fit in their little toe? Simply put, it is not only about the students. It certainly was not only about me when I came home. My kūpuna had a plan (and in many ways, I came back kicking and screaming). But I have no doubt now that they wanted me home. So, when a Hawaiian ʻkeiki (child) walks into my classroom, I realize that he or she does not come alone—he or she comes with his or her ʻohana—those living and those who have passed. In fact, on the second day of class, my students introduce themselves with their moʻokūʻauhau (genealogical succession, pedigree)—not necessarily for their classmates’ benefit but to remind them of who stands with them and to help me to understand who has been entrusted to my care.

My hänai dad always says that as kumu in the classroom, I am merely the conduit, the guide, creating the environment and opportunity for the journey to begin. I may not see the fruits right away or ever, but I just need to trust that I am part of the process. My educational philosophy dictates that I teach to the whole student—represented by those who have come before and the adult each keiki will become.

So what about the here and now? Do I really want to “cram their Hawaiian ethnicity down their throats”? No, but I also don’t want to ignore their Hawaiian heritage. A multicultural curriculum taught in Hawai‘i that is devoid of Hawaiian anything—by omission, obstruction, or obliteration—marginalizes our Hawaiian culture. And because we are in our homeland, this type of omission affects our academic integrity. If we don’t teach our Hawaiian students who they are as Hawaiians, we devalue them and their kūpuna. There has been enough of that for too long.

Most importantly, out of the chop suey mix of ethnicities that I could possibly root my students in, there is only one ethnicity that can truly claim Hawai‘i as its ancestral homeland. We are not in the Philippines or Portugal or China or Japan. This is Hawai‘i, and for that reason alone, I am obligated to use a Hawaiian philosophy of education that establishes Hawaiian literature as foundational.
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I have done my best to answer three of the many questions we face in Hawaiian education. My hope is that somewhere in all I have shared, you can find something that can work for you. It is truly an exciting time to be a Hawaiian educator. And we are all in this together. Mahalo to our kūpuna and Ke Akua (God) who continue to guide us each day.

**About the Author**

Monica A. Ka‘ímipono Kā‘iwi, a 22-year veteran teacher, currently serves as head of the English department at Kamehameha Schools Kapālama High School. In 1983, she earned her BA in English from Biola University, and in 2001 she earned her MA in English from the University of Auckland, New Zealand. As a founding member of the Native Hawaiian Education Association, she sat on the board for 5 years. Presently, she sits on the board of Kuleana ʻÖiwi Press, which publishes ʻŌiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal.
Teaching to Transgress

The academic public that I encounter at my lectures always shows surprise when I speak intimately and deeply about the classroom. That public seemed particularly surprised when I said that I was working on a collection of essays about teaching. This surprise is a sad reminder of the way teaching is seen as a dullest, less valuable aspect of the academic profession. This perspective on teaching is a common one. Yet it must be challenged if we are to meet the needs of our students, if we are to restore to education and the classroom excitement about ideas and the will to learn.

There is a serious crisis in education. Students often do not want to learn and teachers do not want to teach. More than ever before in the recent history of this nation, educators are compelled to confront the biases that have shaped teaching practices in our society and to create new ways of knowing, different strategies for the sharing of knowledge. We cannot address this crisis if progressive critical thinkers and social critics act as though teaching is not a subject worthy of our regard.

The classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy. For years it has been a place where education has been undermined by teachers and students alike who seek to use it as a platform for opportunistic concerns rather than as a place to learn. With these essays, I add my voice to the collective call for renewal and rejuvenation in our teaching practices. Urging all of us to open our minds and hearts so that we can know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that we can think and rethink, so that we can create new visions, I celebrate teaching that enables transgressions—a movement against and beyond boundaries. It is that movement which makes education the practice of freedom.

Engaged Pedagogy

To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. That learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred; who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin.

Throughout my years as student and professor, I have been most inspired by those teachers who have had the courage to transgress those boundaries that would confine each pupil to a rote, assembly-line approach to learning. Such teachers approach students with the will and desire to respond to our unique beings, even if the situation does not allow the full emergence of a relationship based on mutual recognition. Yet the possibility of such recognition is always present.
Paulo Freire and the Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh are two of the "teachers" who have touched me deeply with their work. When I first began college, Freire's thought gave me the support I needed to challenge the "banking system" of education, that approach to learning that is rooted in the notion that all students need to do is consume information fed to them by a professor and be able to memorize and store it. Early on, it was Freire's insistence that education could be the practice of freedom that encouraged me to create strategies for what he called "conscientization" in the classroom. Translating that term to critical awareness and engagement, I entered the classrooms with the conviction that it was crucial for me and every other student to be an active participant, not a passive consumer. Education as the practice of freedom was continually undermined by professors who were actively hostile to the notion of student participation. Freire's work affirmed that education can only be liberatory when everyone claims knowledge as a field in which we all labor. That notion of mutual labor was affirmed by Thich Nhat Hanh's philosophy of engaged Buddhism, the focus on practice in conjunction with contemplation. His philosophy was similar to Freire's emphasis on "praxis"—action and reflection upon the world in order to change it.

In his work Thich Nhat Hanh always speaks of the teacher as a healer. Like Freire, his approach to knowledge called on students to be active participants, to link awareness with practice. Whereas Freire was primarily concerned with the mind, Thich Nhat Hanh offered a way of thinking about pedagogy which emphasized wholeness, a union of mind, body, and spirit. His focus on a holistic approach to learning and spiritual practice enabled me to overcome years of socialization that had taught me to believe a classroom was diminished if students and professors regarded one another as "whole" human beings, striving not just for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world.

During my twenty years of teaching, I have witnessed a grave sense of diseas among professors (irrespective of their politics) when students want us to see them as whole human beings with complex lives and experiences rather than simply as seekers after compartmentalized bits of knowledge. When I was an undergraduate, Women's Studies was just finding a place in the academy. Those classrooms were the one space where teachers were willing to acknowledge a connection between ideas learned in university settings and those learned in life practices. And, despite those times when students abused that freedom in the classroom by only wanting to dwell on personal experience, feminist classrooms were, on the whole, one location where I witnessed professors striving to create participatory spaces for the sharing of knowledge. Nowadays, most women's studies professors are not as committed to exploring new pedagogical strategies. Despite this shift, many students still seek to enter feminist classrooms because they continue to believe that there, more than in any other place in the academy, they will have an opportunity to experience education as the practice of freedom.

Progressive, holistic education, "engaged pedagogy" is more demanding than conventional critical or feminist pedagogy. For, unlike these two teaching practices, it emphasizes well-being. That means that teachers must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students. Thich Nhat Hanh emphasized that "the practice of a healer, therapist, teacher or any helping professional should be directed toward his or herself first, because if the helper is unhappy, he or she cannot help many people." In the United States it is rare that anyone talks about teachers in university settings as
healers. And it is even more rare to hear anyone suggest that teachers have any responsibility to be self-actualized individuals.

Learning about the work of intellectuals and academics primarily from nineteenth-century fiction and nonfiction during my pre-college years, I was certain that the task for those of us who chose this vocation was to be holistically questing for self-actualization. It was the actual experience of college that disrupted this image. It was there that I was made to feel as though I was terribly naive about "the profession." I learned that far from being self-actualized, the university was seen more as a haven for those who are smart in book knowledge but who might be otherwise unfit for social interaction. Luckily, during my undergraduate years I began to make a distinction between the practice of being an intellectual/teacher and one's role as a member of the academic profession.

It was difficult to maintain fidelity to the idea of the intellectual as someone who sought to be whole—well-grounded in a context where there was little emphasis on spiritual well-being, on care of the soul. Indeed, the objectification of the teacher within bourgeois educational structures seemed to denigrate notions of wholeness and uphold the idea of a mind/body split, one that promotes and supports compartmentalization.

This support reinforces the dualistic separation of public and private, encouraging teachers and students to see no connection between life practices, habits of being, and the roles of professors. The idea of the intellectual questing for a union of mind, body, and spirit had been replaced with notions that being smart meant that one was inherently emotionally unstable and that the best in oneself emerged in one's academic work. This meant that whether academics were drug addicts, alcoholics, batterers, or sexual abusers, the only important aspect of our identity was whether or not our minds functioned, whether we were able to do our jobs in the classroom. The self was presumably emptied out the moment the threshold was crossed, leaving in place only an objective mind—free of experiences and biases. There was fear that the conditions of that self would interfere with the teaching process. Part of the luxury and privilege of the role of teacher/professor today is the absence of any requirement that we be self-actualized. Not surprisingly, professors who are not concerned with inner well-being are the most threatened by the demand on the part of students for liberatory education, for pedagogical processes that will aid them in their own struggle for self-actualization.

Certainly it was naive for me to imagine during high school that I would find spiritual and intellectual guidance in university settings from writers, thinkers, scholars. To have found this would have been to stumble across a rare treasure. I learned, along with other students, to consider myself fortunate if I found an interesting professor who talked in a compelling way. Most of my professors were not the slightest bit interested in enlightenment. More than anything they seemed enthralled by the exercise of power and authority within their mini-kingdom, the classroom.

This is not to say that there were not compelling, benevolent dictators, but it is true to my memory that it was rare—absolutely, astonishingly rare—to encounter professors who were deeply committed to progressive pedagogical practices. I was dismayed by this; most of my professors were not individuals whose teaching styles I wanted to emulate.

My commitment to learning kept me attending classes. Yet, even so, because I did not conform—would not be an unquestioning, passive student—some professors treated me with contempt. I was slowly becoming estranged from education. Finding Freire in the midst of that estrangement was crucial to my survival as a student. His work offered both a way for me to understand the limitations of the type of education I was receiving and to discover alternative strategies for learning and teaching. It was particularly disappointing to encounter white
male professors who claimed to follow Freire's model even as their pedagogical practices were mired in structures of domination, mirroring the styles of conservative professors even as they approached subjects from a more progressive standpoint.

When I first encountered Paulo Freire, I was eager to see if his style of teaching would embody the pedagogical practices he described so eloquently in his work. During the short time I studied with him, I was deeply moved by his presence, by the way in which his manner of teaching exemplified his pedagogical theory. (Not all students interested in Freire have had a similar experience.) My experience with him restored my faith in liberatory education. I had never wanted to surrender the conviction that one could teach without reinforcing existing systems of domination. I needed to know that professors did not have to be dictators in the classroom.

While I wanted teaching to be my career, I believed that personal success was intimately linked with self-actualization. My passion for this quest led me to interrogate constantly the mind/body split that was so often taken to be a given. Most professors were often deeply antagonistic toward, even scornful of, any approach to learning emerging from a philosophical standpoint emphasizing the union of mind, body, and spirit, rather than the separation of these elements. Like many of the students I now teach, I was often told by powerful academics that I was misguided to seek such a perspective in the academy. Throughout my student years I felt deep inner anguish. Memory of that pain returns as I listen to students express the concern that they will not succeed in academic professions if they want to be well, if they eschew dysfunctional behavior or participation in coercive hierarchies. These students are often fearful, as I was, that there are no spaces in the academy where the will to be self-actualized can be affirmed.

This fear is present because many professors have intensely hostile responses to the vision of liberatory education that connotes the will to know with the will to become. Within professional circles, individuals often complain bitterly that students want classes to be "encounter groups." While it is utterly unreasonable for students to expect classrooms to be therapy sessions, it is appropriate for them to hope that the knowledge received in these settings will enrich and enhance them.

Currently, the students I encounter seem far more uncertain about the project of self-actualization than my peers and I were twenty years ago. They feel that there are no clear ethical guidelines shaping actions. Yet, while they despair, they are also adamant that education should be liberatory. They want and demand more from professors than my generation did. There are times when I walk into classrooms overflowing with students who feel terribly wounded in their psyches (many of them see therapists), yet I do not think that they want therapy from me. They do want an education that is healing to the uninformed, unknowing spirit. They do want knowledge that is meaningful. They rightfully expect that my colleagues and I will not offer them information without addressing the connection between what they are learning and their overall life experiences.

This demand on the students' part does not mean that they will always accept our guidance. This is one of the joys of education as the practice of freedom, for it allows students to assume responsibility for their choices. Writing about our teacher/student relationship in a piece for the Village Voice, "How to Run the Yard: Off-Line and Into the Margins at Yale," one of my students, Gary Dauphin, shares the joys of working with me as well as the tensions that surfaced between us as he began to devote his time to pledging a fraternity rather than cultivating his writing:

People think academics like Gloria [my given name] are all about difference: but what I learned from her was mostly about sameness, about what I had in common as a black man to people of color; to women and gays and lesbians and the poor and anyone else who
This is Gary writing about the joy. The tension arose as we discussed his reason for wanting to join a fraternity and my disdain for that decision. Gary comments, “They represented a vision of black manhood that she abhorred, one where violence and abuse were primary ciphers of bonding and identity.” Describing his assertion of autonomy from my influence he writes, “But she must have also known the limits of even her influence on my life, the limits of books and teachers.”

Ultimately, Gary felt that the decision he had made to join a fraternity was not constructive, that I “had taught him openness” where the fraternity had encouraged one-dimensional allegiance. Our interchange both during and after this experience was an example of engaged pedagogy.

Through critical thinking—a process he learned by reading theory and actively analyzing texts—Gary experienced education as the practice of freedom. His final comments about me: “Gloria had only mentioned the entire episode once after it was over, and this to tell me simply that there are many kinds of choices, many kinds of logic. I could make those events mean whatever I wanted as long as I was honest.” I have quoted his writing at length because it is testimony affirming engaged pedagogy. It means that my voice is not the only account of what happens in the classroom.

Engaged pedagogy necessarily values student expression. In her essay, “Interrupting the Calls for Student Voice in Liberal-Education: A Feminist Poststructuralist Perspective,” Mimi Orner employs a Foucauldian framework to suggest that regulatory and punitive means and uses of the confession bring to mind curricular and pedagogical practices which call for students to publicly reveal, even confess, information about their lives and cultures in the presence of authority figures such as teachers.

When education is the practice of freedom, students are not the only ones who are asked to share, to confess. Engaged pedagogy does not seek simply to empower students. Any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow, and are empowered by the process. That empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks. Professors who expect students to share confessional narratives but who are themselves unwilling to share are exercising power in a manner that could be coercive. In my classrooms, I do not expect students to take any risks that I would not take, to share in any way that I would not share. When professors bring narratives of their experiences into classroom discussions it eliminates the possibility that we can function as all-knowing, silent interrogators. It is often productive if professors take the first risk, linking confessional narratives to academic discussions so as to show how experience can illuminate and enhance our understanding of academic material. But most professors must practice being vulnerable in the classroom, being wholly present in mind, body, and spirit.

Progressive professors working to transform the curriculum so that it does not reflect biases or reinforce systems of domination are most often the individuals willing to take the risks that engaged pedagogy requires and to make their teaching practices a site of resistance. In her essay, “On Race and Voic...
Challenges for Liberation Education in the 1990s," Chandra Mohanty writes that

resistance lies in self-conscious engagement with dominant, normative discourses and representations and in the active creation of oppositional analytic and cultural spaces. Resistance that is random and isolated is clearly not as effective as that which is mobilized through systemic politicized practices of teaching and learning. Uncovering and reclaiming subjugated knowledge is one way to lay claims to alternative histories. But these knowledges need to be understood and defined pedagogically, as questions of strategy and practice as well as of scholarship, in order to transform educational institutions radically.

Professors who embrace the challenge of self-actualization will be better able to create pedagogical practices that engage students, providing them with ways of knowing that enhance their capacity to live fully and deeply.

A Revolution of Values

The Promise of Multicultural Change

Two summers ago I attended my twentieth high school reunion. It was a last-minute decision. I had just finished a new book. Whenever I finish a work, I always feel lost, as though a steady anchor has been taken away and there is no sure ground under my feet. During the time between ending one project and beginning another, I always have a crisis of meaning. I begin to wonder what my life is all about and what I have been put on this earth to do. It is as though immersed in a project I lose all sense of myself and must then, when the work is done, rediscover who I am and where I am going. When I heard that the reunion was happening, it seemed just the experience to bring me back to myself, to help in the process of rediscovery. Never having attended any of the past reunions, I did not know what to expect. I did know that this one would be different. For the first time we were about to have a racially integrated reunion. In past years, reunions had always been segregated. White folks