

KATILO'ANA



After 35 Years, A New Movement

As Nā Lei Hulu celebrates a big birthday, it is turning a new *laua* 'e leaf, or at least shifting its focus. In the past, the herculean efforts of the *hālau* have ranged from transcribing pages of 19th-century newspapers to trying to save the Palace of Fine Arts Theatre and raising money for Native Hawaiian organizations in Wai'anae Valley. Now the *hālau* is helping to raise awareness about the contemporary struggle to reclaim Maunakea and to revert to the ancestral notions of land and culture.

by Constance Kiakahi Hale

In early July 2019, on the island of Hawai'i, Kumu Patrick Makuakāne and musicians from the jazz/swing band Kahulanui decided to do an all-day trek to the Maunakea summit. "It was a casual thing," Kumu Patrick remembers. "I was curious. I hadn't been up there since I was a kid. I said to my friends, Pat and Scarlet Eskildsen, 'You like go see the mountain?' And we did. I rented a Jeep."

When they arrived at the summit, Kumu Patrick began to chant, summoning the snow goddess Poli'ahu and introducing himself and his *hālau* to the mountain. "I had this reverential feeling," he remembers, "like I have when I'm beating my *pahu*, or participating in an *'ūniki* ceremony." His voice was almost drowned out by the wind, and he remembers the red-cinder ground below his feet feeling like a living, breathing entity. "The wind's voice was more important than my own," he says. "And the beauty—the clouds just putting their bosoms onto the mountain."

Kumu Patrick couldn't help but notice 13 telescopes towering in the eerie and

elemental landscape. "They seemed like hardened shells, pods, alien presences on the mountain—ignorant of the cultural disquietude they created," he says. "They may have represented lofty scientific ambition, but they cared nothing about the *mauna* or Native Hawaiians."

Barely two weeks later, the start-and-stop development of an additional telescope was scheduled to begin again, but protesters swarmed the mountain and blocked the access road, as they had done several times over several years. On July 17, a group of *kūpuna* (elders) even locked themselves to a cattleguard. Thirty-eight were arrested. The access road was closed. A standoff between state government and protesters put development of the new telescope in limbo yet again. And the struggle over control of Maunakea exploded into the contemporary Hawaiian consciousness.

His moment on the mountain made Kumu Patrick resolve to lend his own voice—and that of his *hālau*—to the

crescendo of voices of Maunakea *kia'i*, those who work to protect the face and fate of the sacred mountain. He teaches chants, dances, and *mele* about the mountain. He invites speakers to San Francisco to raise awareness. And he is making the epic struggle part of every performance.

"I have come to realize this is something we all have to pay attention to," he says, adding, "My work as a kumu needs to be more than just passing on traditions, or teaching something I love. I'm asking myself, How can I be a better teacher, practitioner, listener? How can I be a more responsible human being?"

He's asking similar questions about the *hālau* itself. "Our 35 years affords us wisdom as well as a chance to do something that can make a difference. What can we contribute as a *hālau*? There is much an individual can do, but as a committed body of hundreds of *haumāna*—with a unified purpose—we are unstoppable."

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The evolution of a hula school

In three and a half decades, Nā Lei Hulu has evolved from a small hula class in a studio on San Francisco's Sanchez Street to a school of 380 students (including *keiki*) and a powerhouse performance and education group. It's an arts organization with an annual show, a string of firsts, and a nationally recognized cultural influence.

Previous anniversaries were celebrated with spectacular shows featuring signature numbers, from "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" to "Hula's Bar & Lei Stand." The COVID-19 pandemic rearranged plans for the 35th. "Social distancing" in early March had us forgoing kisses in class and spacing lines generously. Then classes went online. The October show was postponed.

But in the way that lava heats up underground before bursting forth, a new energy had already started to bubble under the surface of the hālau. Even a health crisis was not enough to block this new purpose, from emerging.

It started last summer, after that trip to the summit, when Kumu Patrick taught the entire hālau "Ai Kamumu Kēkē," with its low-to-the-ground *'ai ha'a* stance, its terse lines bellowed from the gut, and its bombastic movements. It is a *hula ki'i*, in which dancers use their own bodies to represent an image or idol. (*Ki'i* is related to the pan-Polynesian word *tiki*.) The

dance was performed by 280 haumāna on the stage of the Palace of Fine Arts Theatre in the October 2019 *Hō'ike Nui*. In winter, Kumu Patrick taught two more chants popularized by protectors: "Maunakea Kuahiwī" and "Nā 'Aumākua." As it turns out, Zoom is a decent place to practice chants and, through video, dances like "He Mamo Au," a melodious tribute to the movement by Jonah Solatorio (of the trio Keauhou); in spring 2020, it became our shelter-in-place hula.

Even a health crisis was not enough to block this energy, this new purpose, from emerging.

The lockdown became a time to lock in hālau participation with the call for a changed stewardship of land and culture.

"It's been a process," Kumu Patrick says about his decision to raise awareness

about the Maunakea movement in Hawai'i. The process started in 2012. Kumu Patrick applied hālau resources toward a massive volunteer effort to transform 75,000 microfilmed pages of 19th-century newspapers into searchable pages of digital text. (The 'Ike Kū'oko'a, or "Liberating Knowledge," project solicited help from around the world.) Over 240 Nā Lei Hulu volunteers transcribed 1,194 pages, making the hālau the organization that contributed the most to the project.

"We came in Number One," Kumu Patrick says, almost incredulously. "I realized that we have the power to make things happen. That is what we do."

The learning curve

It took a few years to find a new purpose for that power. In 2016, when Kumu Patrick was revising the show *The Natives Are Restless*, he wanted to choreograph a piece about Maunakea, to take a deeper look at an issue brewing back home.

Since 1960, scientists and the business community have encouraged astronomical development of Maunakea. Many islanders take pride in Hawai'i's role in astronomy and value observatory jobs. But over the decades, as a NASA environmental study determined, the scientific activity has caused "significant, substantial and adverse harm" to the mountain. Opposition has grown, and not just among Native Hawaiian groups;

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Kū Kia'i Mauna: Standing Up for the Mountain

by Constance Kiakahi Hale

The past decade has seen a cultural, legal, and spiritual uprising by Native Hawaiians who have faced down the state, the county, and giant national universities over control of the summit of Maunakea, Hawai'i's most revered mountain. What is remarkable isn't the action itself: For 45 years, Hawaiians have protested everything from the U.S. Navy's bombing of Kaho'olawe to the destruction of valleys for freeways and subdivisions. The surprising elements here were the uprising's organizational savvy and swiftness.

A tremendous shield volcano on Hawai'i Island, Maunakea is the tallest mountain on Earth when measured from its base on the ocean bed. The summit itself, 13,796 feet above sea level, is an eerie expanse of red dirt, cinder, and snow. (Often spelled *Mauna Kea* and translated as "White Mountain," the original moniker of the volcano is said to be *Mauna a Wākea*, meaning "Mountain Child of Sky-Father Wākea.") The sun-blached Maunakea is technically "ceded land," the legal term for native Hawaiian lands relinquished to the U.S. when the territory was forcibly annexed.

The summit stands above the inversion layer, which means that cloud cover lies mostly below, ensuring the air is dry and free of atmospheric pollution. The summit also lacks wind turbulence and light pollution (because of its distance from city lights). These conditions make it one of the best sites in the world for astronomy.

And so, near the summit stands a cluster of 13 enormous telescopes, some of the most powerful on the planet. In April 2013, the state Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) approved construction of a Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) on Maunakea. The \$1.4-billion observatory would occupy five acres and rise eighteen stories, dwarfing all other buildings on the island. It would be the largest telescope on Earth. The first issue: It would be built on what many Native Hawaiians consider sacred land. (Extensive archaeological research has so far identified more than 223 sites—including shrines, adze manufacturing workshops, markers, and burial sites.) The second: Development has already wreaked environmental havoc on the mountain.

Protesters interrupted the TMT groundbreaking in 2014. Day after day, members of Mauna Kea Hui and other groups took to the frigid, fog-shrouded road that snakes up to the summit. Over and over, they climbed the mountain and practiced nonviolent action. They formed a series of lines to block the access road and presented ti-leaf lei, symbols of affection and respect, to county police and officers of DLNR. They made news, they persisted, they attracted followers, and soon the ranks of the *kia'i*, or "protectors," had swelled into the thousands. Their battle cry is "*Kū kia'i mauna*," or "Stand up for the mountain."

Others take a different view. The late Senator Daniel Akaka wrote that the telescope would generate educational opportunities and jobs and could become "a bridge between our past, as Hawaiians, and our future." According to Honolulu Civil Beat, astronomy employs as many residents as Walmart and KTA Super Stores combined; direct and indirect benefits might reach more than \$160 million annually statewide. TMT would add 140 permanent jobs, 300 multiyear construction jobs, and another \$26 million a year once operational.

The issue of constructing the telescope has bounced around in the courts, roiling state government and the University of Hawai'i's administration. Statewide protests have led to halts in construction and voluntary postponements. An online petition gathered hundreds of thousands of signatures worldwide. In December 2019, the governor and county pulled law enforcement from the base of the mountain, saying that builders had no immediate plans to move forward.

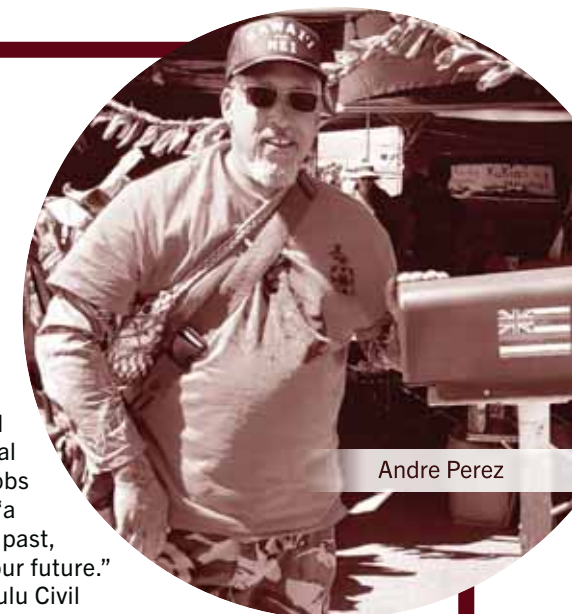
The movement continues to deepen and has fostered a deliberate development of a modern Hawaiian nonviolent philosophy, called *kapu aloha*.

One of the movement's leaders is Andre Perez, a Hawaiian cultural practitioner and longtime community organizer. "We have two approaches," Perez recently said. "There is cultural education—informing people about significance and value of the mauna and changing minds on a moral level. And then there is political action—informing how committed our people are and how long the battle will be if they proceed. We've raised consciousness and we've raised stakes."

The philosophy has been complemented by five years of preparation. "We had training camps on how to make silkscreen banners and how to do blockages," Perez said. "It caught law enforcement off guard and made it difficult for them to come in heavy-handed," he noted.

"We will be back on that mountain, and we can mobilize thousands of people if necessary." 🗡️

An earlier version of this text appears in *The Natives Are Restless: A San Francisco Dance Master Takes Hula into the 21st Century* (SparkPress, 2016). To order a copy of the book, please visit <http://naleihulu.org/natives-book/>.



Andre Perez



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the Audubon Society opposed one antenna, and the Sierra Club jumped into the fray. By 2013, when construction plans were approved for an international Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT), the size, scope, and price tag appalled some. Stopping the TMT became the mission of a Native Hawaiian rights movement that had been building over a generation.

“In 2016, I didn’t take a side,” Kumu Patrick says about the Maunakea

mismanagement by both the Department of Land and Natural Resources and UH.

“I realized something was fundamentally wrong,” Kumu Patrick says, describing his visceral reaction to the role of government agencies and private development. “We’re supposed to trust them to be stewards of an 18-story behemoth on *conservation land*? When there is a moratorium on the entire island of any structure exceeding 10 stories? Something shifted for me.”

in the movement, which is about how all humans create a meaningful relationship with nature.

Among the hula Lanakila Mangauil taught, one—“Maunakea Kuahiwi”—was literally born on the mountain. “It was put together by a whole bunch of different kumu,” he noted, miming the handing out of assignments: “‘You take a line, you take a line, and you take a line.’” He adds, his eloquence spiced with pidgin English: “This hula is a living embodiment, a collective of many different traditions. And this is probably some of the most realistic hula you ever goin’ see, ‘cause it’s a hula used in ritual form to educate, inspire, and call down the gods to serve something beyond the hula world.”



sequence in the 2016 *Natives*. “I was unsure. There was a learning curve.”

The next big bend in that learning curve happened in 2017, when Kumu Patrick watched a documentary, *Fifty Years of Mismanaging Maunakea*. The film goes back to 1964, when the state designated the mountain a “conservation district.” It shows degradation that was swift and vast: More than 13,000 acres that were once crown or government lands (and were transferred to the U.S. at annexation) were leased to the University of Hawai‘i (UH); multiple observatories were built, many without permits; a helicopter airlifted trash out at a cost of \$20,000 in 1995. And in 2004, subpoenaed documents revealed ethylene glycol, diesel fuel, toxic mercury, and sewage had been leaching into the land. Meanwhile, the Hawai‘i State auditor had released a scathing report about

Last winter, Kumu Patrick brought a series of speakers to hula classes. First was Aunty Pua Case, a schoolteacher-turned-activist who taught a chant and spoke of the mountain as a unifier and beacon. The protests that have brought people together could only be on Maunakea, a sacred pinnacle, a place that shapes our conduct, “the place where the spirit world still teaches us,” she said.

Next, Joshua Lanakila Mangauil, also a former schoolteacher, made the point that the movement amounts to much more than a protest about a telescope. Each one of us, he said, is a keeper, a *kahu*, for some part of the land, and each one of us can ask for transformation of the mountain and of ourselves. You don’t have to be Native Hawaiian to be an environmentalist, or to be genealogically related to the mountain to be welcome

“We’re environmentalists, conservationists, sacred beings. Dance is an extension of our responsibility to the *āina*.”

Kaumakaiwa Kanaka‘ole, descendant of a long line of chanters and kumu hula on Hawai‘i Island and award-winning recording artist, visited in February, advocating activist hula. “We’re not entertainers,” she said to a crowd of *haumāna*. “We’re environmentalists, conservationists, sacred beings. Dance is an extension of our responsibility to the *āina*. We’re front-line action people.”

“We’ve stepped so far away from our planet earth,” Kumu Patrick said in April. “In 100 years, many of our shorelines will be gone. Waikīkī will be underwater.” He says his moment on the mountain started to connect many threads for him: Saving the mountain is about saving the islands and saving the culture. “All of our *oli* and



mele describe our precious relationship to the land. They are all climate based. And here we are ruining the environment!”

Kumu Patrick has recently joined a conversation with other kumu and *kia‘i* who are strategizing to petition the University of California Regents. He helped Kumu Renee Ku‘uleinani Price from the South Bay put together a meeting with five of the main *kia‘i* to prepare to speak with board members. (The TMT International Observatory is a partnership between the UC system and the California Institute of Technology, as well as other organizations from Japan, China, India, and Canada.) He was especially moved by something Aunty Pualani Kanaka‘ole Kanahale said: “As a people we can bounce back. But once you start abusing the *land* it’s different. The land won’t bounce back. We cannot allow the abuse.”

Aunty Pualani (Kaumakaiwa’s grandmother) continued: “Climate change is not new for us. We live on an island. On one side, the volcano is erupting. On the other, the land is eroding.” She was one of the elders arrested on July 17 after they chained themselves to a cattleguard.

“The *kūpuna* took their place in this movement,” said Aunty Pua Case in the strategy session. “It was a complete *iwikuamo‘o*: We had a backbone, we had a spine, with every disk in place. We were complete. Our *iwikuamo‘o* stood. It was solid. A whole new level of honor and respect went in right there.”

Bringing the mauna into the classroom

The movement—and voices of activists like Pua Case, Lanakila Mangauil, and generations of the Kanaka‘ole family—has influenced not only Kumu Patrick’s thinking, but also his teaching. Senior classes have shifted from the usual mix of

kahiko and *‘auana* to contemporary *mele* like Jonah Solatorio’s “He Mamo Au.” The lyrical melody celebrates the Maunakea *kia‘i* (its title line proclaims “I am a descendant”); the stanzas are punctuated by a chorus whose lines draw from “O Hānau ka Mauna a Kea,” another recently learned chant.

The shift is even more radical for beginners, who learn about Maunakea almost before anything else. “For close to 35 years, we followed a certain template with each new class,” says Kumu Patrick. “I’d teach ‘Kalākaua,’ ‘Mamala,’ then ‘Kalākaua he Inoa.’” The traditional suite honors 19th-century King Kāwika (David) Kalākaua, hero of national identity and patron of hula, and reflects the repertoire Kumu Patrick learned as a student.

“We have as great a connection today to this mountain, to this issue of climate change, as to Kalākaua and the issue of strengthening the kingdom,” Kumu Patrick says. “And it’s personal. So I’ve decided to teach these potent chants *now*.” He notes the “palpable connection” between environmental issues in Hawai‘i and California. In fact, the UC system is the backbone of the TMT. He led the *hālau* as it joined a protest at a January meeting of the UC Regents in San Francisco.

Ryan Fuimaono, a member of the *hālau* since 2007, notes that the *hālau* activism has deepened his sense of purpose and helped him understand the *function* of chants and dance. It has also, he says, “allowed my hula self to come into alignment with my social justice self and my colonized indigenous Pacific Islander self.” With the new focus on the *mauna*, he adds, “we’re not just remembering something that happened in the past—paying homage, which is beautiful and important—but we’re part of this thing that is happening now.”

And there is something else. A displaced Samoan who grew up in San Diego, Fuimaono says his elders nevertheless instilled in him a sense of place. “I have always felt that mountains are sacred,” he says. “The higher you go, the closer you are to the gods, the *akua*. The top of the mountain is where the clouds gather, where the rains begin.

“The mountain is home to the elemental processes upon which we depend,” continues Fuimaono, who is featured in the photo on page 1. “That place is a source of life, and we need to protect its pristineness, not treat it like a commodity.”

With this new awareness, Fuimaono says hula for him has become something truly sacred. “When I do these dances,” he muses, “I am literally praying.”

To Me, the Mauna

In a *hālau*, our goal is to be unified when we sing and dance, but our students come at Maunakea from different backgrounds and experiences. We asked more than 300 *haumāna* and *kumu* of Nā Lei Hulu to reflect on what Hawai‘i’s tallest peak symbolizes. Here are some of their answers, identified with their class name, from Keiki through adult classes ranging from Beginner to Papa Ola, Papa Kū, Papa Wehi, Papa Malu, and the performing group, Nā Uluwehi, as well as *kumu* from Papa ‘Ūniki Maile.

Edited by Kazz Regelman

To me, Maunakea is

- ...a metaphor for Hawaiian self-determination. 🍷 *Kelly Yamamoto, Papa Wehi*
- ...every good thing. 🍷 *Anna Silveria-Herman (age 7), Keiki*
- ...not an isolated situation. 🍷 *Vincent Hom, Papa Wehi*
- ...a renewed sense of hope in the fight for equity and social justice. 🍷 *Ariel Berwick, Papa Kū*
- ...the culture, the land, and the people of Hawai‘i. 🍷 *Debbie Tom, Papa Malu*
- ...a means to examine my own individual privilege to help restore balance. 🍷 *Karen Gehrman, Papa Wehi*
- ...a reminder the land is part of our ‘ohana, our family. 🍷 *Debbie Kawehi Tong, Kumu, Papa ‘Ūniki Maile*
- ...the potential to find our voice as a people and to be heard worldwide. 🍷 *Makani da Silva, Kumu, Papa ‘Ūniki Maile*
- ...an opportunity for the U.S. government to begin to make reparations to the Hawaiian people for illegally annexing the islands. 🍷 *Charlotte Hatch, Papa Kū*

Many of those law enforcement officers must face off with aunts and uncles they know personally, as they stand, chant, and dance for what they believe in. ... I wish all cultures in conflict could see this peaceful side of protests.

🍷 *Malia Lyle, Beginner*

Our hula sister Nattie Fong’s last email shared the video “Kū Ha‘aheo E Ku‘u Hawai‘i,” encouraging us to sing it with pride. Now when we chant or dance to connect with those protecting Maunakea, I feel the presence of all our deceased classmates, like Nattie, Michael Pechinski, and Ellen Opie.

🍷 *Elaine Chan-Scherer, Papa Malu*

A compromise is possible. Build on the second-highest point so that that highest point remains sacred. Dismantle some of the other telescopes if the TMT is so much better. Create an environmental reserve to limit development.

🍷 *Alex Lin, Beginner*

Although my interest and passion as a *haumāna* is firm, it is difficult to carry that over, especially living thousands of miles away from the mauna. I don’t feel I have enough knowledge to form a valid opinion one way or another.

🍷 *Gloria Vlachos, Papa Wehi*

I am descended from tribes of people who have either been pushed off sacred lands—with violence and governmental support—or who were forcibly taken from homelands, families, and all that was sacred. I am not of Hawaiian descent, but I feel connected to the mauna and what she represents.

🍷 *Karen Smith, Papa Kū*

In 1986 our family moved to Hilo.... I would open my curtains in the morning to her majesty.... Years later I was plucked from Hilo and deposited in Seattle. Another majestic mountain—Mt. Rainier. I think it was Pua Case who offered that the mountains are connected and what is done to one is done to all.

🍷 *Linda Barrett, Papa Malu*

Our health is intertwined with the health of the land (air, waters, fires below). Hula grants us an opportunity to align our internal energy with that of the world around us. Aloha ‘āina!

🍷 *Ryan Fuimaono, Nā Uluwehi*

The image of *Hōkūle‘a* sailing across my *hō‘ike pā‘ū* skirt reflects my awe of courageous navigators. It is with this same sense of awe that I offer gratitude to the *kia‘i*, or protectors, at Maunakea, who have demonstrated to us their vision, courage, restraint, and stamina.

🍷 *Ellen Warner, Papa Ola*

I had the HUGE privilege of traveling to the mauna and participating in the final protocol of the day on February 29th. It was rainy, freezing, and most camps had been blown over from the week’s previous windstorm, but never had I felt so connected to my people.

🍷 *Breanna Manore, Beginner*

Growing up in Lake Tahoe, we experienced similar obstacles when residents came together to try and stop pollution of the waters via tourism and boating companies. The Maunakea movement speaks to larger global issues of overconsumption and development of our natural world in the name of “science.”

🍷 *Chris Brodie, Nā Uluwehi*

Being of the native people of El Salvador—the Pipil tribe whose people, language, and traditions have been mostly wiped out—I have had a difficult journey to find belonging. The Kānaka have welcomed me. To me, the mauna means unity, acceptance, and the preservation of all native people and cultures.

🍷 *Victoria Salazar, Beginner*

Sacred. I understand all that, but also understand the importance of science to help us, as in finding protection from the present calamity—the coronavirus. There has to be a balance of respect for what is “sacred” and what is gained from science and research.

🍷 *Yuhum Digdigan, Beginner*

Majesty, mythology, grandeur. Yet I am for ALL telescopes—the gift of knowledge has lifted mankind throughout history. Does TMT truly harm the majestic mauna? I think not. This is not fracking, or a hotel or resort, and would offer good-paying jobs—much needed on the Big Island. But I respect and applaud protest; it raises consciousness.

🍷 *Lionel Craven, Papa Kū*

Having participated in a number of Bay Area “Save the Mauna” rallies, I took a trip to Hawai‘i Island to experience the mauna firsthand.... I arrived just in time for the morning protocol, ‘aha. The cold, wet ground made me shudder. And then, almost immediately, I felt a cozy warmth comforting me. I sensed the presence of my *kūpuna*, the link to my blood line. The feeling overwhelmed me, and I cried tears of aloha.

🍷 *Ana Pastor, Papa Malu*

It is sacred, spiritual, *ho‘ohiwahiwa*, to be respected with reverence. It is my 90-year-old auntie mustering strength to “go mauna.” It is my *kumu* introducing our *hālau* in an *oli* to the mauna. It is my *kuleana*, my privilege and responsibility: *Mālama i ka ‘āina*. Save the land.

🍷 *U‘ilani Pa‘alua Campana, Papa Malu*

When I stand up for the mauna, I stand not only for Hawaiians but for all people who have had their culture, language, and land stripped away.

🍷 *Jason Ogao, Nā Uluwehi*

My prior work experience was with a law enforcement agency, so from that aspect I was against anyone breaking the law. Recently, because of mauna exposure with guest speakers coming to *hālau*, I have a clearer understanding of the causes of controversy. I am for construction, but only when and if the unused telescopes are dismantled and removed totally from the mauna.

🍷 *Bobbie Mendes, Papa Malu*

Though science is vital to our existence, no decision impacting a community (especially a native community) should be made without including that community in the conversation. Adding the knowledge, experience, beliefs, and traditions to the conversation can only enrich the dialogue, and lead to better, more sustainable outcomes.

🍷 *Lisa Silveria, Beginner*

CONGRATS

to Kumu Patrick Makuakāne and
Nā Lei Hulu for being selected as one
of 10 recipients of this year's
Hewlett 50 Arts Commissions.



This commission supports the creation
and premier of 50 exceptional new
works by world-class artists to inspire,
engage, and challenge audiences
around the world.

Patrick Makuakāne and Nā Lei Hulu i ka Wēkiu present

The Hula Must Go On

This year's show is in your living room!

SAT, October 17, 2020
7:00–8:00pm

Enjoy an hour of aloha on your favorite device.
We dance, sing, and build strong bonds through hula.
This is how we connect to each other.
And how we connect to you.

For information on viewing, please check our website: naleighulu.org

