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★ ★ ★ *New Community Visions part of the*  
Transforming America's Communities Through the Arts Initiative

# Artists & Communities

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Conversations on Passion, Practice, and Engagement

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OUR KULEANA

Vicky Holt Takamine &  
Kahikina de Silva

EDITED BY

Alicia Gregory  
with Elizabeth Sweeney

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ABOUT THE NEW COMMUNITY VISIONS INITIATIVE,  
PART OF TRANSFORMING AMERICA'S COMMUNITIES  
THROUGH THE ARTS

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*Americans for the Arts'* New Community Visions Initiative is a national visioning exercise for local arts agencies, arts organizations, artists, and those interested in better understanding the future role of arts and culture in helping American communities thrive.

In this series, veteran community arts leaders come together in conversation with emerging community arts leaders to share their visions for, experiences with, and challenges to making healthy, equitable, vibrant communities through arts and culture. As community-based work receives more recognition, and intersections and collaborations become stronger, these conversations illuminate just how artists and community arts leaders can work to sustain and maintain healthy communities through their practice.

New Community Visions is part of a sustained, three-year suite of large-scale initiatives from Americans for the Arts that are together called *Transforming America's Communities Through the Arts*. Through those initiatives, we hope to:

- generate dialogue on a national, state, and local level around the creation and sustainability of healthy, vibrant, equitable communities;
- activate a diverse set of programming and partnerships spanning public, private, and nonprofit sectors;
- lay the groundwork for a collective movement forward over the next decade and beyond;
- and help leaders and the public better understand and celebrate arts and culture as mechanisms for creating and sustaining healthier, more vibrant, and more equitable communities in the United States.

**[www.AmericansForTheArts.org/CommunityVisions](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/CommunityVisions)**

This project is made possible through an ever-growing list of funders, partners, and advisors.



# Our Kuleana

— *Vicky Holt Takamine and Kahikina de Silva in Conversation* —  
— *Edited by Alicia Gregory and Elizabeth Sweeney* —

## ABOUT THE CONVERSATION

Vicky Holt Takamine and Kahikina de Silva are part of the same cultural family, bound together by hula, Hawaiian language, and the myriad of native Hawaiian cultural practices that both women keep alive in their daily work and advocacy. In 1997, when the Hawai‘i State Legislature introduced a bill that would restrict native Hawaiian gathering rights—and thus eliminate their cultural practices—Vicky and a young Kahikina chanted, danced, and drummed alongside hundreds of other members of their community until the bill was thrown out.

Fighting to keep alive the sacred practices and traditions that connect their community to history, earth, and their ancestors speaks to the deep *kuleana*—responsibility—Vicky and Kahikina feel as cultural bearers. In the conversation that follows, Vicky and Kahikina touch on:

- The power of hula as a community and family-maker, a form of resistance, and means of connection
- Navigating tourism as native artists and using the sector to *support* cultural practices, not commodify them
- How Hawaiian cultural practitioners are successfully infiltrating and influencing other sectors like law, health, and education
- And the *kuleana* as cultural practitioners to pass on tradition and language to future generations, as well as a spirit of resistance to protect those traditions

## About the Contributing Authors

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**Vicky Holt Takamine** is a renowned kumu hula (master teacher of Hawaiian dance). In 1975, Vicky graduated as a kumu hula from hula master Maiki Aiu Lake. Vicky established her own hālau, Pua Ali‘i ‘Ilima, (school of Hawaiian dance) in 1977 and has been teaching hula for the past 39 years. In 2001, Vicky established a non-profit organization, PA‘I Foundation, to serve the needs of her Hawaiian community and those who make Hawai‘i their home.



**Kahikina de Silva** is a kupa of Ka‘ōhāo, O‘ahu. She is a kumu hula in her mother’s Hālau Mōhala ‘Ilima and an Instructor of Hawaiian Language at University of Hawai‘i Mānoa, where she earned her BA in Hawaiian Language (2000) and her MA in English with a focus on Asia-Pacific Literature (2005). Kahikina is currently working toward a PhD in Political Science, and was awarded a Mellon-Hawai‘i Fellowship which supports the work of Native Hawaiian scholars in their early academic careers to advance the knowledge of Hawai‘i’s natural and culture landscape.

- VT:** I want to first talk about your background and family because family has a strong influence on who we are and the work we're doing today in our community. Let's start there.
- KD:** Well, even though I'm the oldest daughter of my mom and dad, Māpuana and Kīhei de Silva, I often think of the *hālau* (school of Hawaiian dance) as my older sibling. I was born in 1977, and my mom started her *hālau* in January of 1976, so while I'm the oldest human child, it feels like there is this being my mom brought into the world before I even existed. For me, family has always been hula and hula has always been family. I've never been around when hula wasn't in my house and when mom didn't have a bunch of aunties and uncles over who became part of my family through hula. Hula may begin at home, but it is a huge influence on expanding our family into the larger community.
- VT:** And what is hula to you?
- KD:** Well, what did your *kumu*—your teacher—say hula was?
- VT:** [laughs] Good response. So our *kumu*, Maiki Aiu Lake, said that hula is the art of expressing everything we see, hear, feel, smell, taste, touch—and we express all of those things through the movement, through dance. Given that, how does it reflect with you?
- KD:** For me, hula is so tied with *mele*—song and chant—so you can't have one without the other. Hawaiians are very word-oriented. We don't have a lot of music without words, though we do have slack key guitar, but that's a later development. And even the 'ūkēkē, the musical bow that is the only stringed instrument indigenous to Hawai'i, was performed by shaping words with your mouth, even though it couldn't be understood in the same way a voice could.
- VT:** Right. So in other forms of dance—modern dance, ballet—a whole suite can be performed with just symphony music, or music that has absolutely no words. For hula, there's no performance without text.

- KD:** Exactly. It doesn't exist.
- VT:** So the text is really one of the most important elements of Hawaiian dance. How has that influenced your life?
- KD:** In so many ways. When I think about mele and about the text, it seems that those are words our *kūpuna*—our ancestors—have given to us. They left us words that they composed themselves, sometimes hundreds and thousands of years ago, that expressed what they saw, and experienced, and felt, and worried about, and wanted to see come into fruition. And also what they took joy in. It's a gift and a responsibility to have those words entrusted to us today. Every time we do a hula, we're reviving the very words they said thousands of years ago.
- VT:** Actually, we have to remind our audience that Hawaiians didn't have a written language until the missionaries arrived in 1819. Until then, all of our history, our culture, our genealogies have been captured through the mele (the chants), and the *mo'olelo* (the history and stories) are performed through the hula.
- Hawaiians, who are probably the most avid learners, became very literate in a very short period of time with the arrival of the missionaries. Within our small state, we had so many Hawaiian language newspapers—
- KD:** Over a hundred total, and I think there were maybe five running concurrently, if I remember correctly.
- VT:** Yes, in the span of two to four years, the majority of the population became literate. It was an amazing accomplishment. As you teach the language to the next generation of native Hawaiians, and non-Hawaiians, are you using any of those Hawaiian language newspapers as texts or reading materials?
- KD:** Definitely. In most of my advanced classes, those are the texts. We use the words of our ancestors directly. Who better to learn from, right? Not from a textbook written to teach Hawaiian, although those are helpful, but really to learn directly from our *kūpuna*, our elders.

And that's why I think our ancestors ate up the written language: they knew those words would continue on. There was an article published in the Hawaiian language newspaper *Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika* in 1862

*“Hawaiian cultural practice...is a very rich resource for all of us to pass on the words of our ancestors to future generations.”*

in which the author, J.H Kanepuu, responded to other writers who incorrectly or incompletely recorded our mo'olelo. What happens when our following generations want to read history, but they don't get the real picture? That is what our ancestors were thinking when they wrote their histories down. They were thinking of us.

**VT:** And we have so many Hawaiian historians from that period who have left a wealth of knowledge for us to go back to, to help our research. Another source is hula—the numerous chants that have not been translated or recorded in print, but that we learn from each time we dance. Hawaiian cultural practice, hula specifically, is a very rich resource for all of us to pass on the words of our ancestors to future generations.

**KD:** And that's really our job—our *kuleana*, our responsibility.

**VT:** Yes, this current generation has a real responsibility to preserve the culture and keep the history alive. When we talk about the history of hula, we can go back to the first arrival of the missionaries in 1819 who banned hula from being performed in public. That impacted our community greatly. Personally, my grandmother was fluent in Hawaiian language, but out of the 10 children she had, none speak any Hawaiian language. So in *one* generation, the language was lost in my family. My grandmother's feeling was that her children's generation needed to succeed in an English-speaking society and be able to advance through speaking English.

But in my generation, it's been hula that has helped to maintain the language in my family. When your mom and I *`ūniki*—*`ūniki* is a graduation ritual—as kumu hula (teachers of hula) in the 1970s, we were part of a Hawaiian Renaissance. We credit our kumu hula, Maiki Aiu Lake, as being the “mother” of this renaissance. In 1972 and 1975, she graduated the largest group of cultural practitioners in generations. So all of us went out and took up different forms of Hawaiian cultural practice: weaving, *kapa* (bark cloth) making, dyeing, canoe making, sailing, navigation, as well as Hawaiian language. My grandmother was very happy I was a master teacher of Hawaiian dance, though she still wouldn't speak to me in Hawaiian language.

However, out of my three sons, the two youngest are fluent. And now, out of my four grandchildren, the three younger ones are in Hawaiian language immersion schools and are fluent. And I know you've been responsible for helping to regenerate the Hawaiian language too, Kahi.

**KD:** Well, I'm a product of the Renaissance that you and my parents were a part of. And for my day job, I teach Hawaiian language at the University of Hawai'i. I work with students who have come out of Hawaiian immersion schools that were started in 1983. So for a while now, we've been getting graduates from those schools who are now in college. There are students who want to be Hawaiian immersion teachers, who want to teach other subjects in Hawaiian, who want to learn hula and increase their hula knowledge by taking Hawaiian—all kinds of people. And I really credit hula as being the thing that started me on the path of teaching.

Actually, my first Hawaiian language lessons were in the *hālau*, in my mom's hula school. As a 12-year-old, I was absorbing a bit of the language through the dances and chants I was learning, but my mom and dad wanted to make Hawaiian language classes a part of the *hālau*, too. So my Auntie Valerie Chang, who is now a teacher of Hawaiian language and culture at Kamehameha Schools,<sup>1</sup> became our first kumu, our first

teacher. And we were taught Hawaiian language in the upstairs part of our house while my mom was teaching hula downstairs.

And when we advanced beyond that, my dad and his friend, Louie Lopez, began a class with a *mānaleo*, a native speaker, Uncle Thomas Maunupau. The three of them taught us language once a week, and by the time I got into Kamehameha myself and took my very first actual “Hawaiian language class,” I already had almost a year’s equivalent in what we learned in the hālau. And because of our connection to the language through hula, I already had this love for it and this excitement behind it. It just blossomed when I started taking it in school.

I just thank the whole Renaissance and hula for being part of that. And also the immersion schools that were started so that the language could be there for us to learn, study, and perpetuate. My generation is definitely a product of all of that excitement and knowledge-finding that happened during those years in the 1970s.

**VT:** You know, I’ve always maintained that hula is a form of resistance. In 1820 when it was banned, kumu hula went into hiding in the hills where people continued to practice. And it was that way for over 60 years until 1883 when King David Kalākaua ascended the throne and declared hula as the heartbeat of Hawaiian people, and that it should be performed for his coronation ceremonies. For three days, hula was brought back to celebrate the richness of our Hawaiian cultural practice.

**KD:** Yes, and against the wishes of many people at the time. Because they had printed the program of hula in the newspapers before the coronation even happened, there were many responses from the missionary sons and daughters—mostly sons—who wrote to the newspapers that hula was a lewd practice and shouldn’t be done. They were worried about the children seeing the *mele ma’i*, the procreation chants. But Kalākaua and those who practiced hula did it anyway. They showed us that hula is a way to resist.

**VT:**     Hula has always been a form of resistance against the colonization process, which then continues on not just in the missionary schools but also when Kalākaua’s sister, Queen Lili‘uokalani, was overthrown and Hawai‘i was annexed

in 1893, just 10 years later. It was a big statement meant to repress our Hawaiian cultural practice. We’ve managed to find ways to keep it strong—and I will say that the tourism industry has been responsible for supporting the kumu hula, especially kumu hula of today. I was a product of that.

*“What’s unique about Hawai‘i is our people and our culture.*

*Through hula, we found a way to make that fact appealing to the tourism industry...”*

I performed with my hula sisters and brothers, Leina’ala Heine and Robert Cazimero, in Waikīkī for tourism, but we were also performing and teaching traditional Hawaiian dances that were the practice of our ancestors, and that has strengthened our community. What’s unique about Hawai‘i is our people and our culture. Through hula, we found a way to make that fact appealing to the tourism industry and the missionaries who were all looking to make economic gains for their businesses.

**KD:**     Tourism is so interesting to me; it’s like a double-edged sword. On one side, it’s a profit that we as practitioners don’t often see. It’s a marketing of our culture that doesn’t quite match how we feel, and what we know about ourselves as Hawaiians, as natives of this land. But on the other side, we have practitioners like you who can be strong enough to incorporate that industry into what you do and not the other way around. You manage not get subsumed by it, but to use it to support our traditional practices and to actually do hula in a very tourist-heavy place like Waikīkī.

**VT:** And that's where I started. Auntie Maiki, my kumu, put me in a Waikīkī lū'au show. The emcee was Ka'upena Wong, a master teacher and master chanter of Hawaiian chants. I danced for him for over a year at the Queen Surf Lū'au show in Waikīkī. He was knowledgeable about Hawaiian cultural practice and all the dances that we did were Auntie Maiki's choreography, so we were performing traditional Hawaiian dance in Waikīkī.

When we're in control of the product—and that was one of the things about working in Waikīkī—if we can control the presentation of our dances, then we are presenting authentic traditional Hawaiian dance. When the tourism industry starts to impose what they think “Hawaiian” is on us, then it's time to go. I got out when I started to feel that my hula was being compromised. As long as I was totally in control of my presentation, I was happy. That work helped me earn my degree, pay my tuition, and pay for my house.

**KD:** Because we should be able to support ourselves.

**VT:** Right. Support ourselves with our art, and performing in Waikīkī was just one way. The other way is the hālau, the school of hula which becomes an extended family system. You were brought up in the hālau and completely immersed in that cultural practice from the time you were a child.

**KD:** Hula doesn't just begin with the family, it *becomes* family. That's why it's so impactful. Your kumu (teacher) becomes like your mother or your father, and your fellow *haumāna* (students) become your brothers and sisters.

**VT:** Let's get back to that—how hula builds community. There is the hula in your whole community of family members that are involved in the practice, but there are also the students and other teachers that have come out of your class. I would love to talk about how hula has influenced the broader community other than just your hālau.

For me, I think back to how all of us graduates went into the community and started to revive all of those cultural practices that people thought were lost, but were really just under the surface.

They were just resting, waiting for practitioners to pick up again. And hālau graduates are in every field now—law, education. Through the hālau system, we’ve infiltrated all of these other worlds.

*“hālau graduates are in every field now—law, education. Through the hālau system, we’ve infiltrated all of these other worlds.”*

**KD:** Right. There are so many different levels to that, it seems; one being that in any of our hālau, beyond hula, what we’re teaching is a foundation. A Hawaiian cultural, behavioral, and psychological foundation that many of us feel like we have lost. But like you said: it’s just there under the surface. And once we’re put into an environment like a hālau, we reconnect to all of those things and have a Hawaiian education that we can come back to.

So you have people like my Auntie (everybody is my auntie!) Kapilialoha MacKenzie who just finished writing a volume on native Hawaiian law, and who was one of my mom’s first five students to graduate as kumu hula. Here she is having her book launch, and creating something on the legal front that is going to be a resource for generations of Hawaiians to come.

**VT:** And the field of health.

**KD:** Yes. Mom has been working on the Hula Empowering Lifestyle Adaptations (HELA) study,<sup>2</sup> which looks at how hula helps people recover from heart attacks and other traumatic events to their bodies. In earlier inquiry, it was discovered that these patients would begin physical rehabilitation, but it wouldn’t last very long and be as effective without another element. When they brought hula in with its cultural and spiritual elements, as well as the element of community—learning

together and being part of the project together—everything was enhanced. So not only were the patients, as individuals, getting stronger in their bodies, but they kept up with it longer, had better relations with their families and with the people in their HELA classes, and it did a lot more than originally expected.

**VT:** It's a more holistic approach, because like you said earlier, hula is family. When you get involved with hula, everybody in the family gets involved with hula. There are chauffeurs, cheerleaders, costume makers—it really involves the whole community.

**KD:** What's really amazing is that hula is so female. There are many more women that are involved in hula than men. And in this society, it is important to build up our women and to give us strength and confidence.

I just recently hosted a little *hō'ike*—a short performance for my class of women of all ages that I teach in my mom's hālau. We went on a retreat and stayed at a camp in Kāne'ōhe for a weekend where we did hula-related activities. Then at the end of the weekend, their families came and brought food so that we could have a potluck together, and we showed them what we had been working on for the past few months. One of the best things was that the women didn't just dance their hula. Instead, one of the students actually introduced every mele, explaining the history of that chant, what it was about, and what it meant to them personally. I think their families were really amazed to see this. Some of them were young girls, around 14 years old, and some of them were moms whose daughters came and watched them give a speech, dance, and wear the lei that they had made. I think it's really important for our community to have that strength, and it really strengthened the relationships within the families too.

**VT:** This brings me back to another fact: when the full depth of knowledge is involved in hula, it's not just movements. We don't just put on some music and teach a person how to move their arms and feet. It's much more than that.

- KD:** Yes. We always start with the words, really going over the story and meaning behind the song or chants. Lots of our songs and chants are written in honor of chiefs, of important people, or places, or events—you need to understand who you are dancing for. The history and the movement are not separated in Hawaiian thinking, and if you’re just dancing a hula and you can’t tell me what it’s about or who it’s for, then you just have a shell with nothing inside of it. That’s not beautiful to our people. Hula encompasses our whole history.
- VT:** Exactly. And the presentation, the final step, encompasses all the work that leads up to it, and builds on your own understanding. That gives you a deeper appreciation, and you’re better able to express that when you perform. So yes, there is a whole depth of knowledge that comes with the teaching and the learning of hula, and then the sharing of it.
- KD:** Part of it too is the experiential knowledge. If you’re learning a song for Waimea,<sup>3</sup> for example, then you need to go to that land before you can present the song seriously. And if you’re going to dance for the Kīpu‘upu‘u rain, then you want to go and feel that rain so when you dance, you’re speaking from a place of knowledge and not just imagination.
- VT:** When we talk about Kīpu‘upu‘u rain, which you just mentioned, where is that rain? We have names for the rains that are specific to location which is, I think, unique to other cultures.
- KD:** It’s in Waimea, Hawai‘i.
- VT:** And the Kīpu‘upu‘u rain is only in Waimea. What kind of rain is it?
- KD:** It feels like the points of spears coming down on you. It’s a cold, chilly, harsh rain, not friendly, not misty. It’s named just as Kamehameha’s warriors from that place were named Kīpu‘upu‘u because he wanted them to have that same character of being aggressive and cold, piercing and powerful.

*“Hula  
encompasses  
our whole  
history.”*

**VT:** Exactly. So the word Kīpu‘upu‘u will immediately take you to Waimea on the Big Island of Hawai‘i, and will immediately transform you into that icy cold freezing rain. What about the Tuahine rain then?

**KD:** That’s the kind of rain that leaves only a sheen on your arm, a mist almost. It’s very inviting and enveloping, like a friend or a mother.

**VT:** And where is that rain?

**KD:** That rain is in Mānoa, on the island of O‘ahu. It’s only in a certain area that you can actually feel it, and that specificity is amazing. That’s what our hula and our mele keep—because we know these songs, we don’t have to look in the books to figure out where these rains are. The knowledge already lies within us from knowing the hula. We keep that knowledge alive by teaching and presenting it to others, and giving our narration.

**VT:** It immediately transforms our bodies. When I think about Tuahine, I immediately soften. I transform into that warm, inviting, very expressive, gentle rain. But when you talk about Kīpu‘upu‘u, then immediately my whole body starts to strengthen. It is so important to share this depth of knowledge with our students, our dancers—you can’t expect them to be able to soften themselves when dancing for O‘ahu if they don’t know about Tuahine rain.

It’s important to note this, especially as we talk about hula as resistance. We use chants, the words of our ancestors, to remind us how important those places are. In 1997, the Hawai‘i State Legislature introduced a bill that would restrict native Hawaiian gathering rights. I remember calling your mother because we were going to do a demonstration at the State Legislature, and I said, “Māpu, you have to come and bring your drum and be a part of this protest down at the state legislature,” and she says, “I have hula.” And I said to her, “Cancel your hula. Bring your hālau down to the capitol. I don’t have time to explain.” She just said, “All right. If it’s that important, I’ll do it.”

It's that connection that we have as hula sisters learning in hālau where I can call on her for something and she'll be right there. That's one thing we nurture in hālau: the idea that we're family and we can depend on each other when we need help and support.

So that year, we went to the State Capitol. We organized under the name of *ʻĪlioʻulaokalani*, the Red Dogs of the Heavens, which was a cloud formation that appeared in the sky as we were having our meeting. The dog is very faithful, but a dog is very protective of its people, and the red glow in the sky is a sign of things to come. We drummed and chanted for 24 hours. The legislators were overwhelmed with more than 40 drummers and hundreds of dancers that were drumming and chanting every hour for the first six—from 12 noon to 6:00 p.m. and every three hours from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. We chanted the sun up and we continued to chant nonstop. They had to tear up that bill.

We had been politically active, but it was the first time we ever came together as a hula community to effect political change and take action. I know you came and participated, too. What did that feel like for you?

**KD:** I'm so glad that you called my mom, and that she said yes. I think life would be different for all of us without that moment. Looking back on it, I realized that we've always been political and hula has always been a means of resistance for us, but that was a moment where we were able to look that in the face and say, "Yes. This is who we are and this is one of the reasons that we do hula."

Right at the time the legislature protest vigil was happening, I was just about to *ʻūniki* (graduate), and so had solidly learned our *ʻūniki* repertoire. My fellow graduates and I were so immersed in the cultural side of hula and in internalizing everything that we were in a little bubble.

When mom got the call and we participated in that vigil, the experience opened our eyes to *why* we were doing what we were doing: why we ‘ūniki, why we train, and why we do hula. And to link up with the other hālau and kumu in a community that we knew existed but hadn’t really come together in full force like that—in a situation that wasn’t a competition or a festival—for a collective purpose of really giving testimony. That was our testimony as to why this bill should not be approved. We said what we had to say through hula.

*“...it was so important to bring the next generation of cultural practitioners into this political arena to make sure that your generation would pick up that fight and that struggle if there ever comes a time when those native Hawaiian rights are threatened again.”*

**VT:** We decided to organize and protest because the bill would criminalize all of our students and all of our activities. It would have killed our cultural practice. It aimed to privatize public lands so that we would not be able to go and gather the natural and cultural resources that are necessary for our survival as cultural practitioners, as people, as native Hawaiians.

It would require cultural practitioners to go to the Land Use Commission, list everywhere that they gather, and every place that they *have* gathered, and present a clear preponderance of evidence that our great, great grandparents gathered the natural resources necessary for the practice of hula, lei making, dyeing, weaving, instrument making, etc. from the land. And the bill wasn’t limited to just hula practitioners; it encompassed anyone who wanted access to and use of the ocean and the upland forests. We had to justify that our ancestors used the land and ocean in the same way prior to 1893. And in my testimony, I said, “You know,

we don't have the digital images of that. We didn't have cameras in those days, but I *know* that my grandparents made these things. I *know* that we practiced the hula."

For me, it was so important to bring the next generation of cultural practitioners into this political arena to make sure that your generation would pick up that fight and that struggle if there ever comes a time when those native Hawaiian rights are threatened again.

We've continued to gather together to protect sacred sites. The current one is Mauna Kea, the mountain that is home to the Hawaiian god Wākea and one of the most important sites on the island of Hawai'i. In the 1970s, the University of Hawai'i and the State of Hawai'i recognized that Mauna Kea would be the perfect site for astronomy and installed a telescope there. Now there are 13 telescopes that have had numerous environmental and conservation district use violations. Each of the telescopes, many owned by foreign entities, pay a \$1 per year rent for the use of this most sacred site. In the 40 years of operations, they have not produced any Native Hawaiian scientists or astronomers. The latest proposed telescope would cost \$1 million per year to operate on that land and will be 13 stories high and several football fields wide.

We're stepping up to protect this sacred site. Both of our hālau have traveled to the top of that mountain to present our physical testimony using the words of our ancestors in chants and dances that mention that sacredness of Wākea.

**KD:** I think as a result of the 1997 gathering, collective action has become a no-brainer for a lot of us. When Mauna Kea happens, we automatically go. It's an expected thing, a way of putting ourselves in those places. Our kūpuna (ancestors/elders) would visit sites like Mauna Kea in order to do hula there, and in order to visit Waiau—Waiau being the lake, but also the goddess that lives there, along with all of the other entities—to share a connection with them. Our community isn't just ourselves as our family, or as our hālau, or even

the community of where we live. Our community also includes those gods and goddesses, our deities, and our sacred spaces. In order to keep those relationships strong, we need to visit the sites and practice our hula there.

VT:

You know, we recognize that the hālau hula are the largest arts organizations in the state. We teach *keiki*

(children) through kūpuna. We're in every district on every island in Hawai'i, and yet hālau hula are the least supported by foundations and funders.

We've managed to survive through tuition, but most hālau don't seek funding outside of tuition and community support. Most hālau also don't have a dedicated space, instead working out of churches, basements, schools, and cafeterias. They lack adequate flooring and mirrors, basics that other dance companies and arts organizations that are savvy enough in the western nonprofit world always have. Many hālau struggle to survive. So one of the things that I am doing, as the executive director of PA'I, is trying to create inroads into other cultural organizations for support, as well as teaching us all to be better funding advocates for our communities.

And for you, as the next generation of kumu hula (master teachers), what do you envision your future will be like 10 years from now? Where do you see hula making a difference in your community in the coming years?

*“Many hālau struggle to survive. So one of the things that I am doing, as the executive director of PA'I, is trying to create inroads into other cultural organizations for support, as well as teaching us all to be better funding advocates for our communities.”*

**KD:** I keep thinking of one of the hula *pahu*, the sacred drum dances we were taught, which carries the message of ‘*Au ‘a ‘Ia*, to hold fast to our lands, culture, people, and those things that are of value to us. That’s a lesson and a hula mele that I wouldn’t have learned without the hālau, and without Auntie Maiki continuing what her kumu had given to her, and without you and the Renaissance you were all a part of. It would be a lesson lost.

Wherever hula goes in the future, and whatever challenges we face both as a people, and as our own individual communities, returning to that lesson is so important. It is one of the ultimate lessons. Now that hula is so popular and so profitable for some people, it is expanding far beyond our shores and becoming a business outside of Hawai‘i, for people who have never been to Hawai‘i.

**VT:** It’s a commodity.

**KD:** Exactly. And it can be something that’s very tempting, that draws us out of what we are doing. But for me, holding fast to what is important and concentrating our efforts and time on our people, our communities, and our lands—that is where hula should flourish first. That is the lesson I want future generations to have growing within them, too.

**VT:** We look at the text of that very important drum chant you mentioned, ‘*Au ‘a ‘Ia*, it evokes the child of the turning times. As our islands are consumed by economy, tourism, new people—I mean, Native Hawaiians are 20 percent of the population, and we’re not in decision-making positions necessarily—we have to hold fast to those things that are vital and important to us as a people.

I have another question for you: why do you teach?

**KD:** Because hula is life and family—it has been from the beginning for so many of us. Our people can’t live without hula and hula cannot live without our people. Both of them need to continue

along with all of our other cultural practices: growing taro, or learning our language, or making kāhili,<sup>4</sup> or even being scholars in the way that our ancestors were. All of these things need to live in order for us to live. We each need to know what our kuleana (responsibility) is, and how to carry it forth. This is the kuleana that has been given to us and that we choose to continue.

NOTES

1. Developed by Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop to educate children of Hawaiian descent, and designed to serve students from preschool through twelfth grade. The schools teach in the English language a college-prep education enhanced by Hawaiian culture, language and practices, imparting historical and practical value of continuing Hawaiian traditions.
2. Developing a Culturally Based Cardiac Rehabilitation Program: The HELA Study
3. Waimea is the largest town in the interior of the Big Island, and the center for ranching activities.
4. Royal feather standards used by families to indicate their lineage.

## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

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**Vicky Holt Takamine** is a renowned kumu hula (master teacher of Hawaiian dance). She is recognized as a native Hawaiian leader and advocate for social justice issues, the protection of native Hawaiian rights, and the natural and cultural resources of Hawai‘i. Vicky established her own hālau, Pua Ali‘i ‘Ilima, (school of Hawaiian dance) in 1977 and has been teaching hula for the past 39 years. Vicky has performed, choreographed, and produced numerous shows nationally and internationally including Jacob’s Pillow (MA), La Mama Theatre (NYC), Iwasaki Hotel (Japan), Hawai‘i Theatre (HI) and the University of Hawai‘i.

In 2001, Vicky established a nonprofit organization, PA‘I Foundation, to serve the needs of her Hawaiian community and those who make Hawai‘i their home. Under her leadership, PA‘I has partnered with Artspace to raise funds Ola Ka ‘Ilima, a project that will provide 84 units of affordable housing for artists and a 4,000-square-foot cultural center that will be managed and operated by PA‘I. Artspace and PA‘I expect to break ground on this project in the fall of 2016.

In 2015, Vicky received the Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce ‘Ō‘ō Award and the Native Arts & Cultures Foundation Native Hawaiian Fellowship. In 2014, Vicky received the Moanalua Gardens Foundation Malia Kau Award, and in 2013, Vicky was the First Peoples Fund Community Spirit Awardee.

**Kahikina de Silva** is a kupa of Ka‘ōhāo, O‘ahu—a place awkwardly renamed “Lanikai” during its development as a residential neighborhood in the early 1900s. Growing up in a place whose true name was once all but forgotten, and witnessing its slow but steady inundation by waves of commerce, tourism, and other forces displacing its Kanaka Maoli inhabitants has had a significant effect on her life. She is continually reminded of the need to ‘au‘a—to hold fast to that which sustains us as a people, and to ho‘omau—to persist, by occupying our native lands, continuing our cultural practices, speaking our mother tongue, and making sure our children do the same.

She is a practicing kumu hula and an instructor of Hawaiian language at University of Hawai‘i Mānoa, where she earned her B.A. in Hawaiian Language (2000) and her M.A. in English with a focus on Asia-Pacific Literature (2005). Kahikina is currently working toward a Ph.D. in political science, with the much-appreciated support of the Mellon-Hawai‘i Fellowship. Her dissertation will focus on the political functions of contemporary Hawaiian mele in the context of indigenous resurgence. Kahikina lives in Ka‘ōhāo, in the house she grew up in, cultivating the next generation of ‘Aipōhaku.

## THE POWER OF “ARTS AND”

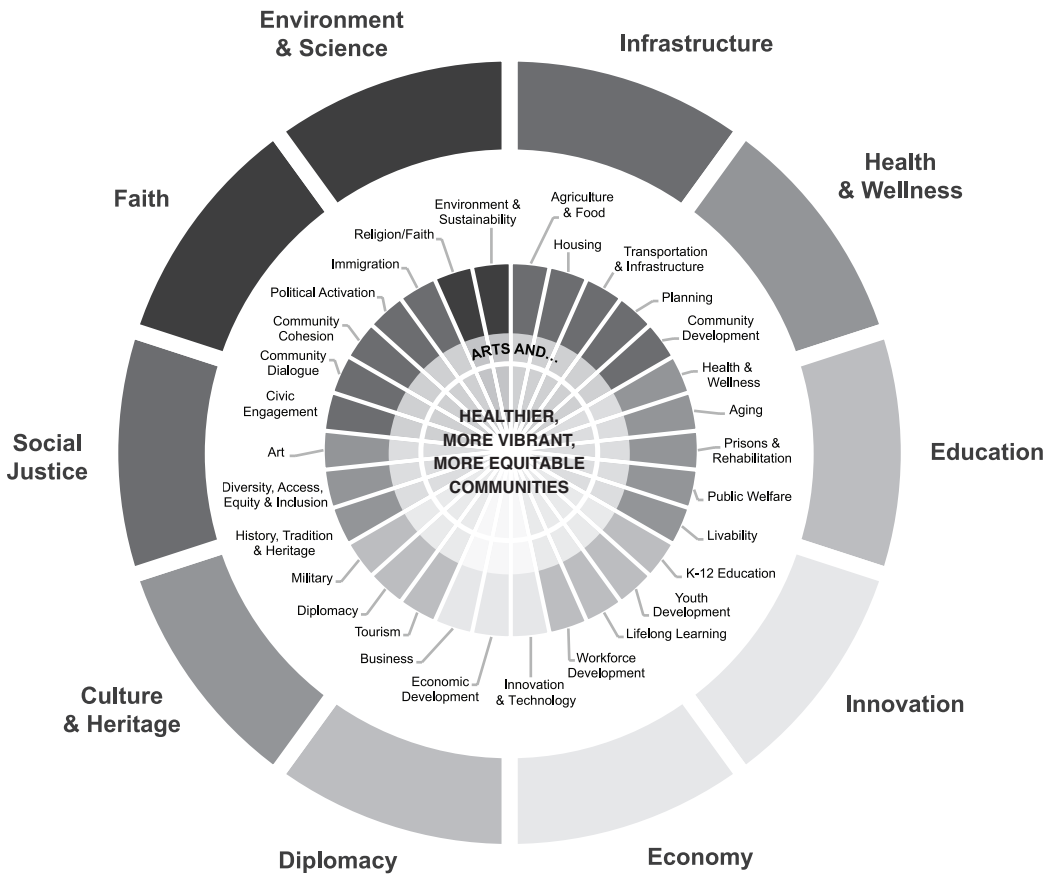
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Between 2015 and 2017, Americans for the Arts will look past the here and now and well into the next decade with a concentrated theory of change we call ***Transforming America’s Communities Through the Arts***. Community development was a foundation of our sector, and the pursuit of healthy, vibrant, equitable communities has been the impetus behind Americans for the Arts’ work for 55 years. This work, collectively, embraces and advocates for what we’re calling the “Arts And” frame, and aims to, in collaboration with different stakeholders on a state, local, and national level, provide the tools and services to help communities map a path forward and integrate the arts to get where they want to go.

The New Community Visions Initiative is one of the major, outward components of Transforming America’s Communities Through the Arts. The New Community Visions Initiative is designed to ***surface new knowledge*** and ***create new systems and tools*** for arts agencies, presenters, artists, and supporters, along with public and private policymakers, including civic leaders, so that they can encourage use of arts and culture to help create healthier, more vibrant, more equitable communities over time.

We are hoping to do this by:

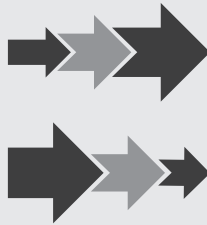
1. ***Curating cross-sector and inter-sector “think tank” conversations***, and ***encouraging new relationships***, that end up being useful to those in the room as they return to their communities to pursue their own work of building visions and plans.
2. ***Detecting the common systems and barriers*** that facilitate or impede community progress (community-defined), and figuring out how the arts can be of service to larger societal and community shifts as they occur.
3. ***Strengthening and amplifying those common systems*** with national-, state-, and local-level arts agencies, arts organizations, foundations, and artists throughout the country through the development of programs, services, and tools that can help communities embrace the arts to make progress.



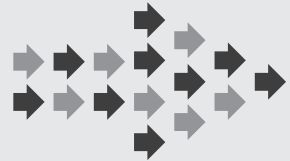
*When integrated fully, the arts can:*



**Transform systems** by working at the intersection of different sectors, individuals, and communities



**Amplify positive impacts and mitigate negative impacts** by providing alternative common ground for thinking and communication



**Increase participation, opportunity, and access** by reducing barriers, encouraging creativity, and celebrating multiple points of view

Americans for the Arts designed this initiative with the goal of enhancing the health, vibrancy, and equity in places, both within the arts and through the arts within the larger community. The people who come together in meetings across the country are invited to explore together what the end result might be, how they might move toward that result, and how we all might make that movement easier.

## **The Theory of Change**

The theory of change that underlies this project has to do with the ways that a set of interlocking, overlapping contributors to communities interact, and the role that the arts can play in those interactions over time. Americans for the Arts has identified 30 linked-but-separate contributors to healthy, vibrant, equitable communities that relate to social justice, the environment, faith, culture and heritage, the economy and workforce, innovation, education, health and wellness, the military, and infrastructure, and that together strongly inform the life and experiences of individuals and the communities in which they move.

By encouraging the “Arts And” integration of the arts into the vital work of all of these contributing components of a community, we believe that we can help transform America’s communities through the arts over time.

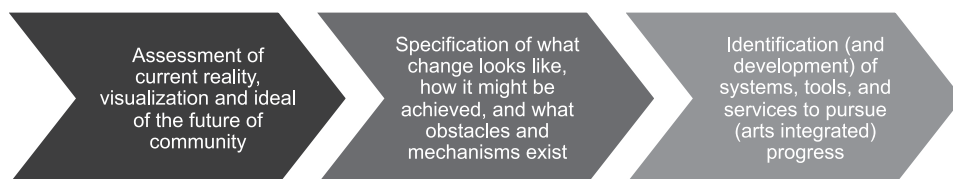
All of this work echoes and reinforces the strategic goals of Americans for the Arts:

- to lead and serve individuals and organizations to help build environments in which the arts and arts education thrive and contribute to more vibrant and healthy communities.
- to generate meaningful public and private sector policies and more resources for arts and arts education.
- to build awareness and appreciation of the value of the arts and arts education.
- to ensure the ability of Americans for the Arts to continue to stably exist and creatively serve and empower a dynamic field.

## The Mechanism

We will pursue this integration with an 18-month set of activities that move from vision and ideation, through specification of outcomes and obstacles, to the identification and ultimate creation of systems, plans, tools, and services that are deeply practical and can be used by all community stakeholders. What starts as a general interrogation of what each individual in the room thinks is a more ideal community eventually transitions into a collective conversation about the mechanisms that can be crafted and deployed at a local and national level to ensure that, as we pursue our more idealized communities, we are:

1. Ensuring that the arts are seen as a necessary tool and artists are active partners.
2. Building a deeper understanding of the role that arts and culture play in the creation of healthy communities.
3. Assembling a set of examples about the ways in which the arts are currently working with other sectors to carry forward critical community progress towards equity, health, and vibrancy.



## Why “Healthy, Vibrant, Equitable Communities?”

We chose the words “healthy, vibrant, equitable communities” deliberately, because they speak to our goal that this work explore the impulses driving people from their most basic to their most complex needs. Health, equity, and vibrancy each exist in tandem with each other. Inequalities manifest within each area, and this work aims squarely at those inequalities. We hope we are making spaces where Americans for the Arts, as well as the others assembled, can listen to challenges communities face, surface visions communities are moving toward, and begin to explore what arts-based tools might help that movement.

We recognize that “community” is a concept with more than one meaning, but in this context we view community as a collection of affiliated individuals, which may be geographic, or not. Community identity is fluid and sometimes impermanent. With this project, we seek to learn from the relative agency, expertise, and idiosyncrasy of the individuals in the room as it pertains to every community through which they move—and to determine if there are common tools, skills, and systems that can help move communities in a more desired direction.

## **What Else?**

The New Community Visions Initiative is just one way in which we are Transforming America’s Communities Through the Arts. As we carry forward the visioning work, we also continue to educate and empower decision makers and advocates through programs like the pARTnership Movement (tailored toward business leaders), the Arts Education Navigator (focusing on providing online strategies for those invested in advancing arts education at the local, state and national levels), strategic partnerships (with non-arts entities such as the U.S. Conference of Mayors, National Lieutenant Governors Association, The Conference Board, the National PTA, and many others), and the National Initiative on Arts and Health in the Military (working with the Army, Veterans Administration, American Legion Auxiliary, and others to demonstrate the healing power of the arts to our returning veterans).

These and many other programs are critical to helping our nation’s leaders understand the transformative power of the arts as a community development tool and problem solver.

Visit us at [www.AmericansForTheArts.org/CommunityVisions](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/CommunityVisions).

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## FORUMS CURATOR AND DOCUMENTARIAN

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Michael Rohd and the Center for  
Performance and Civic Practice

Margy Waller and the Topos Partnership

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## FUNDING PARTNERS

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Americans for the Arts would like to thank the following  
funding partners for their significant support of the  
New Community Visions Initiative.



We would also like to thank the City of San José Office of Cultural Affairs, Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, The McKnight Foundation, The Applied Materials Foundation, The California Wellness Foundation, Ken and Mary Ann Fergeson, Kirkpatrick Foundation, Cultural Development Corporation, The Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation, The Saint Paul Foundation, Arts Council Oklahoma City, Mayor Weinberger and Burlington City Arts, the Vermont Community Foundation, Allied Arts, Norman Arts Council, Oklahoma Arts Council, and the Oklahoma City Museum of Art for their generous support of the New Community Visions Initiative.

*Support as of March 15, 2016*

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## NEW COMMUNITY VISIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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The New Community Visions Advisory Committee, which has informed the nature and trajectory of the project, includes:

- Jennifer Cole, Metro Nashville Arts Commission
- Deborah Cullinan, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts
- Shannon Daut, Alaska State Council on the Arts
- Carla Dirlikov, opera singer
- Randy Engstrom, Seattle Office of Arts & Culture
- Floyd Green, Aetna Inc.
- Tatiana Hernandez, Hemera Foundation
- Maria Rosario Jackson, The Kresge Foundation
- Michael Killoren, National Endowment for the Arts
- Jeremy Liu, PolicyLink
- Ron Ragin, composer and artist
- Bahia Ramos, The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
- Holly Sidford, Helicon Collaborative
- Nick Slie, performing artist, Mondo Bizzaro
- Regina R. Smith, The Kresge Foundation
- Katie Steger, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
- Carlton Turner, Alternate ROOTS
- Nella Vera, Serino/Coyne
- Laura Zabel, Springboard for the Arts

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## REGIONAL, STATE, AND LOCAL PARTNERS

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The regional gatherings associated with New Community Visions would not have been possible without the participation of this growing list of regional, state, and local partners who have contributed thought leadership, proposed the names of participants, and assisted in crafting the regional events.

Special thanks to our national funding partners, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, for their significant support.

### **Regional**

- Arts Midwest
- Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation
- Mid-America Arts Alliance
- New England Foundation for the Arts
- SouthArts
- WESTAF

### **State**

- California Arts Council
- Georgia Council for the Arts
- Minnesota State Arts Board
- New Mexico Arts
- Oklahoma Arts Council
- Oklahomans for the Arts
- Pennsylvania Council on the Arts
- Vermont Arts Council
- West Virginia Division of Culture and History

## **Local**

- Allied Arts
- Arts & Business Council of Greater Philadelphia
- Arts Council of Oklahoma City
- Burlington City Arts
- Philadelphia Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy
- City of San José Office of Cultural Affairs
- City of Santa Fe Arts Commission
- Clay Center for the Arts & Sciences of West Virginia
- Creative Santa Fe
- Cultural Development Corporation
- Flynn Center for the Performing Arts
- Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance
- Macon Arts Alliance
- Metropolitan Regional Arts Council
- Minneapolis Office of Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy
- Norman Arts Council
- Oklahoma Arts Council
- Oklahoma City Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs
- Oklahomans for the Arts

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## COLLABORATORS AND VOICES

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### Collaborators

- Michael Rohd, Center for Performance and Civic Practice
- Margy Waller, Topos Partnership
- Barbara Schaffer Bacon and Mara Walker, Americans for the Arts

### Voices

- |                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| ▪ Jennifer Armstrong       | ▪ Libby Maynard            |
| ▪ Hilary Bass              | ▪ Donna Neuwirth           |
| ▪ Roberto Bedoya           | ▪ Cherie Norton            |
| ▪ Rosa Cabrera             | ▪ Michael Osowski          |
| ▪ John Davis               | ▪ Marty Pottenger          |
| ▪ Matthew Fluharty         | ▪ Felipe Buitrago Restrepo |
| ▪ Maryo Gard Ewell         | ▪ Judy Rollins             |
| ▪ Julie Garreau            | ▪ Jay Salinas              |
| ▪ Ian Garrett              | ▪ Kahikina de Silva        |
| ▪ Talia Gibas              | ▪ Jessica Solomon          |
| ▪ Deana Haggag             | ▪ Vicky Holt Takamine      |
| ▪ Brea M. Heidelberg       | ▪ Erik Takeshita           |
| ▪ Sean Hendrickson         | ▪ Judith Tannenbaum        |
| ▪ Christina Sanchez Juarez | ▪ Lindsay Tucker So        |
| ▪ LaMoine Laughlin         | ▪ Carol Tuynman            |
| ▪ Liz Lerman               | ▪ Mark Valdez              |
| ▪ Clayton Lord             | ▪ Michael Warlum           |
| ▪ Robert L. Lynch          | ▪ Constance Y. White       |
| ▪ John Malpede             | ▪ Laura Zabel              |
| ▪ Laura Mandala            |                            |

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# EVERY DAY THE ARTS TRANSFORM AMERICA'S COMMUNITIES THROUGH

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EDUCATION COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ECONOMIC IMPACT HELPING AT-RISK

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HEALTH AND WELLNESS CELEBRATING DIVERSITY BUILDING A CREATIVE WORKFORCE

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ENVIRONMENT CRIME PREVENTION TOURISM RETURNING MILITARY AND VETERANS

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NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION POLITICAL ACTION INFRASTRUCTURE ACTIVISM

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*The arts transform America by working with other sectors to contribute to the health, vibrancy, and equity of communities nationwide.*