

Ka Hula with Shereel Washington

1-part 1.5. hours

In this class we will learn basic Hawaiian dance steps, timing, and rhythm that is the foundation in all hula lineages. We will also learn Hawaiian terminology. The following is an example of the basic steps typically covered and explored to further understand body mechanics, rhythm and timing.

- **Kaholo**-to move fast. The “vamp” hula step, more common in modern hula than in ancient hula, consists of four counts.
- **Ka`o**-crowd to go together
- **`Ami**- Hinge, joint; to turn on hinges. A hula step with hip revolutions. Three types are `ami kahela, `ami kuku, and `ami `oniui
- **`Uwehe**-to open, uncover, reveal, untie, to pry open.
- **Hela**-To spread, as the arms but as a hula step, to spread the feet

This class (papa hula) will be accompanied by Traditional & Modern Hawaiian music. Please come **dressed** in comfortable work-out clothes and bare feet. Mahalo!

Brief history of Hula

Hawaii's history and legend is ancient and proud, dating back at least a thousand years before American colonies became a nation in 1776. It is highly unlikely that the exact date when Polynesian people first set foot on these previously uninhabited islands will ever be known, nor much details about events occurring between that date and the first contact with Europeans.

The Hawaiians were a people without writing, who preserved their history in chants and legends. Much of the early history has disappeared with the death of the kahunas and other learned men whose function it was to pass on this knowledge, by means of chants and legends, to succeeding generations.

Modern Hawaiian history begins on January 20, 1778, when Captain James Cook's expedition made its first contact with the Hawaiian people on the islands of Kauai and Niihau. Captain Cook was not the first man to “discover” the Hawaiian Islands. He was the first known European to arrive.

Before Western contact, hula was danced for social enjoyment but its chants also preserved epic tales, myths, history and philosophy. Multiple tales describe the mythic beginnings of hula but the most-often heard is probably that of Pele and her sister Hi`iaka. Laka, the spiritual patron of hula, is more prominently associated with hula and was symbolized in the halau (hula school). A dancer's rigorous training and

performance were taken seriously with dancers paid and materially supported by the ruling ali`i.

James Cook, recorded seeing women dance on Kaua`i in 1778. Cook's crew wrote about hula performances, and the expedition artist John Webber drew a male dancer wearing what appear to be kupe'e made from dogs' teeth, and using a single `uli`uli. These accounts are significant as the first and only records of hula made by outsiders at the time of first contact.

As it had done ever since its beginnings, hula continued to evolve during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. From as early as 1865, the style called hula ku`i (joined hula), blending native and foreign elements, became popular.

In the early twentieth century, Hollywood filmmakers "discovered" Hawai`i, adapting hula to their own purposes and fantasies. Many of the familiar hapa-haole (songs about Hawai`i composed wholly or partly in some haole (foreign) language, most commonly English) tunes like "My Little Grass Shack" and "Blue Hawai`i" date from the Hollywood era.

Nowadays what people know as the Hula is Hula `Auana. The show aspects of dancing are more emphasized in this style of hula. It is more modern and informal, without ceremonies, offerings or rituals. The songs are sung and accompanied by guitars, ukulele and bass-guitar.

Shereel's hula journey began in 2006 at the Academy of Hawaiian Arts in Oakland, CA. For 14 years she studied at Halau Hula `O Kupukalau`ie`ie in Berkeley, CA learning Hawaiian language, culture, history, and arts.

FULL BIO

Shereel's dance experience spans 40 years of training, performance, and choreography in a wide range of dance styles and traditions such as: modern, ballet, jazz, tap, hip hop, traditional Congolese & Senegalese, African Diasporic Genres, and Hula. She teaches and performs throughout the U.S. and Hawai`i, having won critical accolades for major performances in the New York Times and the San Francisco Chronicle. She has also been recognized as a pioneer in the Christian & Praise Dance genres.