

MELE OLI

Darienne Dey prepared for Ethnomathematics & STEM institute

A **mele** refers to any type of song or chant, whereas an **oli** is a type of mele that is used for specific occasions (but *not* for accompanying dance).

Mele oli...

...are typically metaphorical as opposed to literal, making use of kaona (i.e., hidden meanings, concealed references, double meanings),

...express humble reverence for our surroundings and unite mind, body, and spirit with all of creation.

...are “rooted in eons of Polynesian culture,” serving as repositories of wisdom, knowledge, history, and prayer.

By challenging ourselves to learn and perform mele oli, we reaffirm our personal and collective connections to the ‘āina. In doing so we also honor and give contemporary credence to the spiritual and intellectual legacy of Hawaiians, whose culture is sustained by oral tradition.

Edith Kanaka‘ole was a kumu hula (master hula teacher), chanter, composer, and Nā Hōkū Hanohano award-winning recording artist. She was also a Hawaiian Studies instructor at Hawai‘i Community College and the University of Hawai‘i-Hilo.

E Ho Mai by Edith Kanaka‘ole

E hō mai (i) ka ‘ike mai luna mai ē	Give forth knowledge from above
‘O nā mea huna no‘eau o nā mele ē	Every little bit of wisdom contained in song
E hō mai, e hō mai, e hō mai ē (a)	Give forth, give forth, oh give forth

Resources

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