

Future Imaginary Dialogues: Kamuela Enos

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0:00:09 Kamuela: My name's Kamuela Joseph Nui Enos, I'm gonna go by Kamuel. I'm from the community of Wai'anae, which is more west of here. It's on the west coast of Oahu. My father and mother, Eric and Rochelle Inos. My father... I was blessed enough to be born into a family of activism. But a specific type of activism, I think, that started off in resistance to existing systems, and moved more towards how are we being productive on our own terms within these systems using our ancestral practices as a way to think about contemporary solutions. And I was his oldest, Amu's oldest son, so I was kind of riding shotgun with my dad as he was trying to figure these very heady questions out while trying to run a non-profit and be a father in a family. So, I get to see it from the very unromantic side of things, [chuckle] and this is more than just theory. So, I've been blessed to actually have that life. A lot of what I will talk about, maybe I know has really been gifted to me through that experience, it's not my dumb ass that come up with this.

[laughter]

0:01:46 KE: I try to be as a best steward as I can for those experiences, and I always loved it if people asked, because I felt they're meaningful to me, and if there's meaning for others in what I was lucky enough to have been raised in, to me that justifies a lot of the hard parts of it, too. Right now we're in Kapolei, which is... We talk about the future, this is going to be the second urban space on an already urbanized island.

0:02:28 Jason Edward Lewis: So, Honolulu being the first one...

0:02:29 KE: And this is the second.

0:02:30 JEL: And then they envision growth like that here?

0:02:32 KE: And I live... That's basically what it's owned for. So it's on the doorstep of my community. And quickly about my community that I was raised in, is probably one of the largest concentrations of Native Hawaiians in the world. But there's a historical context for that. Most of the Hawaiians who live in that community, not all of them, but a lot of them like my family, we're not genealogically from that community. But they were dispossessed from other lands and moved into what we call the homesteads, where Native Hawaiian settlements... Where we settled. Which also happens to be the most dry, arid part of the state. And so, why that story of Wai'anae matters, and resistance that came out of my community matters relative to the future, relative to this space, is for a long time... The plus side of being relocated out to a space like Wai'anae is that we were rural. Things are cheaper, and you could find intact traditional spaces, like my father found at Kohala. But

the build-up of a increasingly dense urban population on the doorstep, will eventually create pressures of urbanization on my community where I'm from.

0:04:12 KE: And I'm also here because this is where my daughter dances Hula with her Kumu Kumu Miki'ala Lidstone, and Halo Ululuwa'e kind of have claimed that mountain, which is Kapu, to Kapil, Kapolei, and one of the female deities. So, it's kind of like I'm not sure who I am, where I'm from, why we're in this park. And maybe the things that I find fascinating, as a Native Hawaiian, who was lucky enough to be raised in a traditional context, in a tradition of activism and practice. But also being told that I couldn't just hide in it. My dad made me go to college, he said I just can't hide on a farm. Because the forces of places like this will wipe out places like that. And we have to be able to develop dual fluencies, we have to understand the language of urbanization objectively. There is a lot of gifts that comes from urbanization too, [chuckle] that we have to acknowledge. And then have that objective understanding of our ancestry too. Not to romanticize them, which I believe it's just the opposite side of same coin of demonizing them. We try to understand them as people, whose culture they created and traditions, before anything else was shaped by environmental and social realities. That's who made them what they are right now. So futuring for me is something that I'm really passionate about on these conversations. Part of it is... Maybe I can put a period on it, and you can ask the next question. I'll just keep running on. [chuckle]

0:06:13 JEL: Oh, no. I'm happy to have you keep going.

[background conversation]

0:06:17 JEL: No. I want you to keep talking. I want you to talk about sort of the futuring like...

0:06:20 KE: Sure.

0:06:21 JEL: I think it's great, this location. And so we're talking about like what this... Because when we drove off, we came off the freeway, we sort of looked down the hill, we were like, "What is that?"

0:06:32 KE: Yeah, you didn't expect to have a conversation with a Hawaiian activist in a farm, right?

[laughter]

0:06:38 KE: And I think you might as well own it.

0:06:40 JEL: Yeah.

0:06:41 KE: The farms and the areas of productivity is where we aspire to be. But we also have to be in these spaces, too. And I think that's why I'm really passionate about the idea of futuring, understanding the future. Also important is if you look up, that mountain there is an important... It's called Makakilo, and kilo, it was literally used because when you climb up, to my understanding as elders who've told me about its role in traditional society, you have a good vantage point of everywhere coming from Kauai and all the way down the coast. So strategically, you're able to vision. And Makakilo, to kilo is also to vision. So it's a space of visioning. And it also felt

symbolically like...

0:07:54 JEL: A good place to be under.

0:07:56 KE: I think that's an important understanding for us as native people, as we become more self-aware who we are and we desire... The initial desire is to move away from what we call colonization, or like the indoctrination or what's that term they used to pull people into a culture?

0:08:25 JEL: Assimilation.

0:08:25 KE: Assimilation?

0:08:26 JEL: Yeah.

0:08:28 KE: Which is always a good starting point. And it's a good realization, but I also think there's a Zen saying I've always liked that, "If add a drop of ink into a cup of water, you can never take it out." Right? And I think that's the reality of assimilation, is like we're also of this space, because we can talk about culture all we want, and something I bring up is I have an iPhone.

[laughter]

0:09:01 KE: And this iPhone is basically crafted with children's hands from China and rare metals mined out of a mountain. And I use it quite frequently to do indigenous things. So, internally in the first world, this conversation about who we are is important, but to the rest of the world, we're complicit as much as anybody else, right? And to me that's the realization I've had and I wanna own. So therefore, futuring too is very comprehensive. I really believe just through the activism that my father was raised me in and being raised in a really poor community and dropping out of high school, I could link my stories. Even though I was raised by a taro farmer and who was college educated went back home, was active in the community. Me and all my brothers dropped out of high school. And I think there's so many ways that futuring to me comes into play. I never really felt at home in my schools.

0:10:14 KE: We had this really weird childhood of like a father teaching us cultural practices, making us work in the mountains. A mother who is also a native Hawaiian, but making us read all the time because she wasn't from this community, and she moved from an affluent... She's Hawaiian, but she's from an affluent side of the island. She moved to Wai'anae and she was like, "Holy shit! These kids are gonna be raised here. The schools are horrible. Read, read. Read Albert Camus. Read all these different things." So I'd go from working [0:10:44] to reading *The Stranger* in 6th grade, to then having to be authentically a part of my peer group. Going to a public school where the last thing you want anyone ever to figure out is that you're smart.

0:10:56 JEL: Is that you're... Yeah.

0:10:57 KE: Hell no. Hell no. So you playing it, right? And it's like a blessed schizophrenia that comes to bear. That if we survive it without submitting to drugs or violence, because we just can't reconcile it, I think if we can get past that, I think it provides us a unique vantage point. And I make that at the micro and also at the macro. And if we can survive this at the macro level and come out recognizing we're heirs to multiple tradition and we can become fluent in their system, but we have

the competitive advantage of fluency in our own ancestry, and if we can then talk about ancestry not purely from terms of identity, but also from practical considerations, then we're setting ourselves up to answer questions that I think the dominant paradigm has forgot to ask anymore. Like what is our value to our lands? What is our relationship to our landscape? What is our relationship to each other? That is not mediated purely by capital. But we understand capital, so we can be awesome in capital so, we're not yelling from the outside. We can be talking to them in their language.

0:12:13 JEL: Well, I like the core of the inheritives of multiple traditions that's also inheritives of multiple futures.

0:12:23 KE: Right. And that was what I was thinking about, too. Because even, so when I... Part of like the trajectory is like I was forced to read all of these books, but I fell in love with science fiction. And that was I read to my brother Solomon, who in the community we come is from Wai'anae, we consider ourselves like closet nerds. I was super closeted about my nerdism. [chuckle]

0:12:49 JEL: You were what?

0:12:49 KE: Super closeted about my nerdism.

0:12:50 JEL: Okay. Right, right.

0:12:53 KE: He was pretty open. He was out. [laughter] Oh boy. How late. [chuckle] Green dyed hair, and combat boots, and those ringy Wai'anae high school. Shit! He was out and proud. I was, I couldn't deal... [laughter] But, you know, I think initially it was a point of escape, but because of the family I had and the call to critical thinking then it became just a space. I realize it quickly was... It was a way to throw, forecast out ideas in the future. And we had that talk you guys were a part of several years ago, I found out what I wanted to introduce as a thesis, like what is... Is not like how do we have Indigenous Science Fiction, but the deeper question was like what was science fiction to our ancestors? Because I don't wanna just paint brown people on spaceships.

0:13:54 JEL: Right. Right. Well, you have a nice quote. I don't remember what it's from. I don't think it's the TEDx talk, I think it's a different talk, where you talk about how we're the science fiction of our ancestors.

0:14:06 KE: Absolutely, right? So, their science fiction was to prophesize. So, there's places where they prophesized on a mountain, they kilo, they visioned, those were the Herberts and the highlands. And I've been reading a lot of Dhalgren.

0:14:25 JEL: Oh, yeah? Like Samuel R. Delany.

0:14:27 KE: The Delany's.

0:14:27 JEL: Yeah, yeah.

0:14:28 KE: They were their prophets.

0:14:31 JEL: Yeah.

0:14:32 KE: And they're forecasting things. So, that's what science fiction... That's what it got me early. And I think it was through reading those stories that I began to reconcile the history up onto that point. Extremely dissimilar realities of Western intellectualism, deep cultural practice. And, like...

0:14:53 JEL: Science fiction provided space to kind of bring those together.

0:14:57 KE: And the realities of growing up in poverty, which appears...

[background conversation]

0:15:24 JEL: I really love that idea of sort of like science fiction would be in a space where you can reconcile these different things.

0:15:31 KE: It was science fiction and punk rock for me, and heavy metal. I was one of those, a closeted metal head, and I was a closeted, so like reading Tolkien and listening to Iron Maiden and Dio for me was...

0:15:47 JEL: Good combination. [chuckle] And what did your Mom think about the science fiction, right? So, your Mom's trying to get you to read Camus...

0:15:54 KE: She got... She started off by having us eventually... We had Tolkien lying around the house. And my grandfather, my father's father was a blue collar, native Hawaiian machinist in Pearl Harbour. Him and my grandmother who was also native Hawaiian blue collar. She was a maid. Joel and Carol Inos. She was a maid in Waikiki. They had the foresight to buy land. So, they bought land on the [0:16:25] . So we were raised with land. And these were hardcore workers. And I don't know what level of education they had, but my grandfather... So my mother made me read maternally while my grandfather paternally, was a reader. And he was self-taught. And I always remember him as a kid, reading after all day working in a field. And he'd have his cup of coffee, and his filter-less cigarette. And I just remember him reading Dune.

0:16:55 JEL: Read Dune? [laughter]

0:16:56 KE: Yeah. I remember him, he was reading Dune, and I just fell in love with the book cover. And my grandfather was a super badass. He was hard to pigeonhole, because he was real Hawaiian. But he was just... Later in statistics, I don't know about curves and outliers, and how you can't make a general claim anymore. So I think now I'm just talking about... It's bringing that memory back up, right? So, like, what I learned... So, like, the intellectualism of my Mom and the activism of my father were both kind of retreats. But what I learn from growing up with my peers, who are all from Wai'anae, who are all different levels of violence in a household, and so I can't run away from that. I can't be above them. I love them, right? So, I can't talk down to them. So, it's like the calling was how do I make this make sense to them? I can't shut up about it.

0:18:03 KE: And I found that once I started doing that, then I found I felt real happiness. It was like bringing these ideas to my friends and making a challenge, for me to talk to my boy that could give a shit about everything but girls and sounds and drinking, externally, but I know his internal... Like, who he is as a person, and talk to him about these things, and have these conversations. That just helped me... Science fiction, A, was a gateway for me to think about the world, and then B, to

reconcile things, but then wanna share it with people, and then talk to them about ideas, yeah.

0:18:48 JEL: How did you... How'd you meet the challenge? How'd you get them to talk about those things?

0:18:57 KE: You know, I...

0:19:00 KE: I always understand people from the bottom of the pyramid, like the laslow needs. And if I was just to talk about... So I wouldn't even talk about science fiction, per se, but I would talk about the themes I loved in science fiction. I used to have this thing that... A fantasy, Aragorn was Hawaiian. It's like, "Why?" "It's okay, listen. Listen."

0:19:27 JEL: Gotta figure it out.

0:19:31 KE: Why I believe he was Hawaiian was... And this is like when I was 19, I was talking to my friend, we were in Hawaiian studies class together and, "Okay." He's the heir of the kingdom that he's no longer king, and how does he make it manifest? Him and his friends, they live on the bounds in the wilds around their former subjects and protect them for no fanfare, I mean, that's just their thing. So it's never about the privilege, it's always about the responsibility over the people. Which was made clear to us, our chiefs weren't privileged, they were the people that cared for us, and hell or high water, that's what the prerogative was. Okay. And right when he went in to the wilds and Frodo got stabbed by the Nazgûl, he knew the [0:20:20] , he knew the medicines, and he literally... He was a healer. And I was like, "What?" And then when they were scared and they were frightened, he would chant the stories of his ancestors to them. And I went, "Okay." You could see that kind of awakening. And for me, I was just testing thesis' out to see if it fit, [chuckle] and if it made sense to my friend, I couldn't give a shit about if it made sense to my professor.

0:20:47 KE: I mean, at the end of the day, I'm not there to impress my teachers or anything, I'm there for the people I care about. And I always felt like my role was to take these heady things and see if it made sense, because it was making sense to me and it was helping me reconcile stuff. So it may have been a bit obtuse, but you can't talk about the future without understanding the ramifications, and who is that future for. And there's a great quote I saw someplace, "All science fiction is political." Because it pre-supposes a set of circumstances, and extrapolates them out. You can't fucking have objective science fiction, right?

0:21:23 JEL: No. [laughter]

0:21:24 KE: It's totally subjective of who's the person and who gets to make that world, right? And what are the inherent biases, or political...

0:21:33 JEL: What those people are gonna want in that time, yeah.

0:21:36 KE: So, yeah. Sorry, that was off on a super big tangent. [chuckle]

0:21:38 JEL: No, no that totally wasn't off. I think it's a fantastic way of thinking about how science fiction and fantasy can be used to understand your present situation. Even if you're a native kid here in Wai'anae, right? You're reading something written by an Oxford don.

0:21:58 KE: I was listening to Throbbing Gristle, and reading William Burrows by the time I was 17, and China reconciled afterwards. [laughter]

0:22:07 JEL: That in too, yeah.

0:22:09 KE: Those are all, I think, people... In terms of me thinking about it, I mean those people are all the outliers that eventually created the new curve, right?

0:22:21 JEL: Wow, that's really interesting, now, right? To see how central science fiction has become in popular culture. Because when we were reading them, they were like, yeah.

0:22:31 KE: It was a musty book in a library that no one else...

0:22:32 JEL: Yeah, yeah. You had to go, and hunt down and find, and yeah. I don't know about you, but our teachers were like... They weren't... They didn't say we shouldn't, but they're just like, "Nah."

0:22:46 KE: Our teachers are like, "Okay, you're reading. Thank God."

[laughter]

0:22:50 JEL: "Go, go, go, go."

0:22:51 KE: "I don't care if it's Penthouse Forum, just read." [laughter] "God, do something. Just don't be on the street drinking with your friend." Right. I'm being a bit profane here, but it was that level of, "Read kids, read."

0:23:08 JEL: And so for the... Can you just talk quickly, just so we have context on your view about the work that you do at the farm?

0:23:16 KE: Sure. So, like my dad, I wear a lot of hats, and maybe I can talk a bit... Because each of them, I think, is important, but the one, the hat that feeds my family, [laughter] is I work at a social enterprise called MA'O Organic Farms now. I've been here for 10 years, and this is... In a nutshell, MA'O is a not for profit that generates revenue. The revenue generating part of our program is a 24-acre fully certified organic farm, and it's located in the coast of Wai'anae, where I was raised. The founders of our program are a husband and wife team, Gary and Kukui [0:24:00] [redacted], and they're both from the community. And I think I can't really talk about them without quickly talking about the context in which MA'O was created. So the community of Wai'anae is kinda like the Oakland of Hawaii.

0:24:15 JEL: Like what?

0:24:16 KE: Like the Oakland of Hawaii. So you have a lot of concentrated poverty, and therefore a lot of really... It's one of the communities that are like the Oakland of Hawaii, but a lot of activism came out of Wai'anae, like Wai'anae, Molokai I think are just, you can't throw a rock without hitting an activist. [laughter] It's kind of like... But Wai'anae, [0:24:41] [redacted] like my dad's organization of folks, at least are radicalized in the '60s by... Just what was going on in the continent around racial equality and identity. And then came back and started to bring that thinking to community. So my

dad and a bunch of his peers, many women native Hawaiian and non-native Hawaiian became... Really started a movement where they occupied land in a back of a valley and brought back water to restore traditional [0:25:24] [REDACTED]. And back in the '70s when it was like, that was not cool, especially for the Hawaiians, a lot of Hawaiians who'd been told to assimilate.

0:25:40 KE: And I'm not gonna cast stones at them because the pressure was real like, "Why are you doing that? You're opening up wounds for us. We're trying to assimilate to this world, and be good Americans. We've lost everything. Why are you doing this to us? Why are you bringing these things back?" Right? So it was like one of those blessed unrest moments. And my dad and them stuck to their guns, and they brought their water down and they kind of normalized what is now called 'Āina-based education. Learning tradition, creating contemporary classrooms within traditional practice.

0:26:13 KE: And for a long time, they were really hardcore about doing that, but what ended up happening is they began to fight for land. The more successful they became in using traditional practices, the more pressure they put on contemporary society, and the need to develop. And quite often, they'd want to stop development in the community, so they could do traditional practices, where all the developer would have to do is say, "Well, we're gonna provide this... Yeah, well, this golf course we wanna build is gonna provide jobs." And then, boom! Then you rip your community in half, and it's both sides had real issues. And they wanted to say, "Okay now, well, how do we now create jobs then? How do we use our traditional practices to create jobs?" And out of that came this conversation that then was called community based economic development.

0:27:10 KE: So how do we create jobs using traditional practices? How do we use ancestral thinking to provide meaningful employment that we own? That match the character of our community? That match the carrying capacity of our geography? And its iteration iterates off of the brilliance of our ancestry? Which are lofty aspirations, and I think for the most part, they were incredibly committed and visionary, but lacked the business smarts, so they struggled. So MA'O was like the second wave of that, because the founders of MA'O had the dual-fluencies of understanding traditional practices, but also being college educated and knowing how to write good grants, how to create good business plans, right? So MA'O is the iteration off of that. And in its current iteration, also MA'O is a social enterprise, we're now the largest organic farm on Oahu. So we do about 700,000 a year, two tons of food a week. And the fact that we're located in Wai'anae in of itself is a social... Is an act of positive deviance, I guess.

0:28:33 KE: But what truly makes us a social enterprise and why we're not for profit is the daily operations of the farm is now run by young adults from our community through a college internship. So we have interns work on our farm, we have rigorous vetting processes that today as the last day of, over the summer, to enter as a cohort. And once they get in they sign a contract to work with us for two and a half years in exchange for their sweat equity on the farm, Monday, Wednesday and Friday 20 hours a week, 7:00-12:00. We provide them a full tuition waiver to college and \$500 a month. And when we are able to access the revenue, we also open a bank account that we do a three to one match for them. We teach financial literacy, college preparedness and work ethic.

0:29:24 KE: And we ask for a two and a half year commitment because we graduate them with associates and then create a program for them to move on to be managers of the farm, wherein they're salaried with full benefits, and then we help them pay for their baccalaureate degree. And

we've leveraged that model to actually... It's a 12 cohort, so we have a whole bunch of interns that have gotten their degrees and now running the daily operations of the farm. And we have one intern in particular, well, now she's no longer intern, her name is [0:29:52] [REDACTED], and she started with us when she was in high school. And was the first intern to get her associates and then she got her baccalaureates. And upon getting her baccalaureate, we made her farm manager. So one of the greatest joys in my life, aside from my children and my job is a 28-year-old native Hawaiian woman, is my boss.

[laughter]

0:30:19 JEL: That's pretty fabulous.

0:30:20 KE: And then she came into the program. And that's kind of what I do on a daily basis. I'm the director of social enterprise, so there's two metrics we track on a daily basis on our farm, is the sales of our product, and the GPAs of our students. And those two metrics in contemporary society are metrics of power, so we're job creators and degree designers. But more importantly to me, in the ancestral practices that we had, and the way our ancestors have set up a society it was, as I understand it, completely self-sufficient in their own watershed. And it was also a society that was... Wealth was non-monetary. The two things we tracked then ancestrally, during our ceremonies, our yearly ceremonies, was fitness of people and abundance of land. So we did these Makahiki ceremonies where they would come and do fitness games. The chiefs every year would come in and there'd be this ceremony where the people would bring abundance of food. And then before the chiefs, they'd do feats of martial strength or core strength.

0:31:36 KE: And everybody has misconstrued that in contemporary [0:31:38] [REDACTED] as like, "Oh, that's quaint. It's this festival." And it's going to college and taking econ and everything, and my master's. That was actually a year-end reporting to your chief, because if you read Lilikala Kame'eleihiwa's, *Native Land and Foreign Desires*, which is a great book, she talks about the pre-contact economy. And she makes differentiation between feudalism and traditional practice. In feudalism, so in a nutshell super generally, the land and the people were the means to capital that the vassals paid upstream to the church and to the royalty. They were the means to capital, right? And in traditional pre-contact times, the land and the people were capital, because there was no intermediary of cash. So they treated people very different, it's a very different distinction. So we've taken those two principles of land and people as capital as what we invest in, and we created a contemporary corollary of the sales and GPAs. And we also do it as a non-profit, so that all the money goes to the mission versus to any individual. And I can show you my card.

[laughter]

0:32:49 KE: So that's my day job. And I think the commonality I have with all the other hats I wear is this idea that I call... Well, it is a term I've heard used, but I've actually populated it with my specific thoughts around it as indigenizing. And for me, indigenizing literally, as I understand, is re-purposing contemporary structures to be vehicles for ancestral responsibilities. So we've used this kind of framework to re-purpose organic farming to be a vehicle for... So we do organic farming, therefore, not because we are enamored with organic farming, per se, but it's the closest correlative to how our ancestors grew food in a contemporary structure. Because our ancestors, like organic farmers, put the emphasis on the regenerative health of the soil, where contemporary farmers and conventional farmers put the emphasis on annual crop yields at the expense of labor and at the

expense of environmental concerns. So if we did that in pre-contact times, you would have been... There was a lot of corporal punishment. There was a lot of capital punishment if you... [laughter] And capital punishment as political theatre. You watch one capital punishment and you'd be like, "Yeah, let's not... "

0:34:27 JEL: You think they do that?

0:34:28 KE: No. [laughter]

0:34:30 KE: And again, I'm humanizing them. I'm not...

0:34:33 JEL: Well, that's what I was gonna ask or sort of comment, is that earlier on... And actually I'm not sure whether we got it on tape or it was before the tape started rolling. You were talking about romanticisation being the flip-side of the dehumanization coin. And so, yeah, I wanted to dig into that a little bit in the context now in talking about recovering traditional ways of living with the land. But along with those traditional ways came a whole structure of living, and sort of how do you tease those things apart as you figure out where you wanna go?

0:35:09 KE: Right. To me, how I look at it is like... Culture to me was, to a great extent, defined by your geography. And if the geography teach people, then your landscape is your ultimate kumu. Your landscape is always gonna be your teacher. And if you love your culture over understanding your relationship with your landscape, you're using your culture as lip-service for bad behavior. And you can be practicing all the culture you want on paper, the culture you learned in college, but if your landscape isn't productive, then you just... I had a great kumu talk to me and she talked about hula.

0:36:03 KE: And I'm paraphrasing Auntie Pua Kanaka'ole in a talk I saw her give. So much about hula practice is that you go up to the mountain and you bring down what you need to adorn yourself for the hula. And as someone had said, "Oh, Isn't it easier just to bring and grow those stuff in your backyard?" And the paradigm flipping response she gave was like, "No, the point of hula is that you're taking care of the mountain." And hula's ritual has supplanted, ritual has sometimes in... And I say this lovingly because of the historical context, there's times when we've been divorced and severed from our traditional entirety of our society, which includes economics and pedagogies. We try to relearn our culture, but essentially all that's there is the surface and we fall in love with the surface again. But she has such an unbroken lineage, that she pointed to the deeper part of what's the intention of the ritual. And it's like, "If you wanna be a hula practitioner, you have to understand... "

0:37:25 JEL: It's essential...

0:37:27 KE: Yeah, that, "Your job is to care for the landscapes, and you have to understand." Someone said the mountains hold the original lei that you're then weaving. It comes from that original lei that the mountain is wearing that you're pulling and then replicating, right?

0:37:46 KE: And I think we need those people for holders of a tradition, in a purest form, but understand the purity and understand the relevance of that tradition to 21st century problems. And then you also need the people who are gonna be on the other side of it, who feel empowered to take... Who have the same respect for the tradition, and figure out how do we iterate in to a

contemporary space, right? And that's the futuring of it.

0:38:16 JEL: And one other thing that Noe Arista talks about when she talks about her archival work and the methodology around that, is the idea like the old archivist is somebody that contained all the lore, so that when new situations came up, you went and talked to him to sort of figure out how, "Okay, so how do we deal with this new situation?" And he sort of kind of did the search, and sort of came up with the things in the past that motivated how to deal with it now. And it's really a powerful, not just metaphor, but actually you can imagine that instantiation and the necessity for that.

0:38:56 KE: Right. I mean I guess that's the... It's the challenge of the indigenous practitioner, the indigenous people in the 21st century. Yeah, it's ultimately the cultures that were bequeathed existed because they were practical. There is utility to them, and I think we find ourself in this very conundrum where the bottom, the baseline of our pyramid is met by Costco, and... [chuckle] Apple. And we're choosing to practice our culture. That's me, right? I'm not pointing a finger at anybody but myself, and the realities of it. But I think being self-aware of it is really important, and then trying to figure out then... For me, like the wrestling match I always have, and it's kind of expressing the other non-profits that I am a part of, like Purple, my people's fund, I'm on the board of my father's organization, [0:40:09] .

0:40:16 KE: Is kind of like futuring. It's a forecasting what are the dynamics that are gonna be happening to our world that are in play now, climate change, increasing move towards the silo-ing of society, culturally, health disparities, wealth disparities, all these different things, and like you said, looking at our ancestral practices as a codex, and as a well to mine contemporary solutions from. And doing that, not just because I wanna romanticize my ancestors, but for me, the part I look at is like objectively our ancestors were able to live in closed loop societies on the most finite bio-system on the face of the Earth. And they were bequeathing abundance, under the... Upon the pain of death. If you did it, either nature will kill you, or the chiefs will kill you, if you're getting in the way of doing that. And that, to me, was taught to them by the kumu by the teachers that is our island. Our island taught that. And they taught hard, hard lessons. And they taught the people, my ancestors, how to live within their context. And the brilliance of our ancestors is what they did with the teaching. They were not... The ultimate respect always goes to the land, because the land is your teacher. And then it goes to your ancestors that survived.

[laughter]

0:42:02 JEL: Right.

[chuckle]

0:42:02 KE: Because there you're talking about a certain population, and those that didn't, they don't get their story told.

0:42:09 JEL: No, yeah.

0:42:11 KE: And having that then, as then when we look at how we look at our ancestral practice as a codex to pull from, acknowledging it in that place, from that perspective versus, "Everything my ancestors did are awesome."

0:42:24 JEL: Right.

0:42:24 KE: And you can't talk about them bad in any type of way. [laughter]

0:42:27 KE: I mean that's like, that's...

0:42:32 JEL: That's faulty knowledge then, right? Like, if you're not talking about the things that were either bad, or the things that we look back on now, and sort of like, "I'm not really sure about that." You don't understand the whole system, right? You don't understand the tradeoffs that people are making either.

0:42:46 KE: Right. I mean, that to me is an important part of where I think the movement needs to go. People talk a lot about political sovereignty, which I get. I used to believe, like, before you could have political sovereignty, we need to have food sovereignty.

0:43:04 JEL: Right.

0:43:06 KE: And I'll be in the food sovereignty movement, but understanding that food is a process of having a group of people work together consistently over time, and be at the table, and find ways to be resilient. I've added another layer, before we can have food sovereignty, each and every one of us has to have emotional sovereignty. We have to have sovereignty over our emotions. We need to be critical thinkers, we need to be resilient, but we also need to be compassionate. And if you look in the Hawaiian language, there's so much of that embedded in our practice. People talk a lot about Hawaiians as warriors, but our traditions of reconciliation, our body is complex, and the robustness of our traditions of warfare. And to me, that's the codex I wanna pull from when we think about program design for the 21st century, and social enterprise that's receiving millions of dollars from the Kellogg Foundation, [chuckle] that's being visited by Michelle Obama, but it's these accolades that's being thrown at us, be really clear that we're iterating from things our ancestors already knew.

0:44:14 JEL: Right.

0:44:15 KE: So, we say our ancestors are powerful, we're not making a blanket statement that can't be critiqued. We're putting our footnote, and doing our homework, and saying, "This is the reason why." Right? And I think that, to me, is a big part of when we talk about futuring and kind of created this paradigm to help with no program design that I call the triple piko analysis. I don't know if I shared that with you. I got tired of hearing a triple bottom line, so I wanted to be creative.

[laughter]

0:44:45 KE: I got tired of you Silicon Valley types telling me what's innovation.

[laughter]

0:44:49 KE: It's like, "Fuck you guys." Long story. I love them, but this is where like...

0:44:53 JEL: No, no. I've worked in the Valley for 15 years. I have the same... I think...

0:44:58 KE: I've had a chance to visit, and I really think... I say that as a joke, but I think there's so much... If there's one part of America I'm attracted to, Silicon Valley. Because I think there's a lot of opportunities for ideation. And I just wanna make sure that we come to the table, not hat in hand.

0:45:14 JEL: Yeah, yeah, yes.

0:45:15 KE: We know our relative worth.

0:45:16 JEL: Yeah.

0:45:16 KE: Right? And that's kind of why I wanna be us, as a people first, to be clear of, and not convincing them. So the triple piko analysis for me is like I use it when I... That's my version of science fiction, if you will. And one of our great kumo, Dr. Kekuni Blaisdell, was such a forward thinker, and he did so much for our people as a Hawaiian physician, but also a thought leader. And I learned this from people who learned it from him. But tradition of three piko, and piko are connection points. You have your fontanel, you have your naval and your reproductive organs. And piko is like... That's what pikos were kind of mentioning. Piko po'o, is the top, is your fontanel, it's supposed to be a connection to your ancestors, and all those that came before you. Piko waena, which is the naval, was the connection to those that are alive now in the time we call the [0:46:14] Ao. And Piko ma'i is your reproductive organs, and that's your connection to your future. So we talk about the navigators that have to hold the three transects of where you came from, what's the avenue you're going to, and where you are now, that's that transect, right?

0:46:29 KE: And it's not you, you are a chain. So, when I talk about triple piko analysis and the idea of indigenization, of re-purposing existing structures. The first part I always start with is like, you know, what is your traditional practice that you're bringing into a contemporary space? Be super specific, granular. What was it done? How was it done? Where was it done? How was success measured? All of these different things, how did they judge it? Who could do it? Be really clear on it. Just I'm doing traditional taro farming. Because if you're not clear, it's like saying, "I practice martial arts."

0:47:13 JEL: Right, right.

[chuckle]

0:47:14 KE: I practice religion.

[laughter]

0:47:16 KE: It's like, dude, you need a little more to work with, right?

0:47:19 JEL: Yeah, yeah.

0:47:23 KE: So that's the first piko. Understanding what are you trying to bring from the past, and try to be as clear and understand as deeply as possible, especially how they measured success. How did you know they were doing it right? Then the second piko is like then how is that traditional practice being deployed in a contemporary space to bring executive power to your community? Not advisory. Choice and control and understanding what does that look like and how is that sustained?

What iteration does it look like? What quality of this contemporary society provide you to move into, to practice that? But what value system are you held accountable to, to make sure that you're not being co-opted? It's like, you can say you want Hawaiian economic development, and I can point to a brother of mine that was selling crystal methamphetamine as [0:48:16] [REDACTED]. That's a Hawaiian business person. This is dangerous to say you practice the culture, it's like you're business people.

0:48:26 JEL: Right.

0:48:26 KE: And what I've learned from traditionally operating in this space, what it means to be a traditional entrepreneur is to refuse to externalize the cost of production on people and landscape. And then point to the stories of the chiefs that were purely about the material gain, a lot of them, and how they got killed, right? [chuckle] And it's a lot of them. So that you don't wanna be that chief. So the second piko is how are you using a traditional practice, and the values of that practice, not just external trappings, to be a successful contemporary space and be specific. And then the third piko for me is then how is that traditional practice being deployed in a contemporary space, providing a platform for future generations right to abundance, and right to agency. So if I unpack that, then at Ma'O farms, using traditional farming in a way that's using land... I mean, being a profitable business while sending kids to college to have choice and control over our land, because the West only understands land's relative value and highest invest youth in how much, either in conservation, or it's...

0:49:39 JEL: Highest commercial.

0:49:40 KE: Highest commercial, right. To show it that way.

[background conversation]

0:49:46 KE: And it's providing agency for students, and holding onto our land. And then to me, the futuring of it is then, what's the ramifications of having more and more young adults going to college? And we've created a college degree program at West Oahu as Bachelors of Applied Science in Sustainable Community Food Systems. That we've headhunted a world class professor in agroecology, Professor Albie Miles to teach and...

0:50:17 JEL: He's already here?

0:50:18 KE: He's here. He's been teaching. We graduate our first intern with a baccalaureate this semester.

0:50:23 JEL: Nice.

0:50:23 KE: And so we've presented at Harvard and presented at this nexus between Stanford, Berkeley and...

0:50:30 JEL: Right.

0:50:32 KE: We have, it's really moving in, that's the future. The third piko is how we're providing a platform is like we've build a structural institution that will outlive us. And though it exists at the

University, the metrics of efficacy that he puts out there to track is climate change, health disparities, and wealth disparities. And making a case in the intersect between academics, this practice and practice of workforce in academia, is doing the science behind restoring traditional practices. If those are the three things that are facing our generation now. Restoring traditional land use practices, begin to reverse climate change, because traditional practices is a carbon sink, and limiting... While the industrialization of food is driving most of our greenhouse gasses, it's driving most of our health disparities, and people think being dispossessed for their land in Hawaii is what is driving poverty.

0:51:36 JEL: Right.

0:51:36 KE: And restoring that, and teaching our students to learn, not just the farming part of it, but the political, the scientific, you know, all of these different pieces around them will have them be people that have agency and restabilizing the climate, and if you're growing food locally, you're distributing locally, then you have an opportunity to shift health.

0:52:00 JEL: Right.

0:52:01 KE: And if you're doing it as a business, and you're putting it out there to set up as an economic driver again for your State, you are actually generating revenue.

0:52:11 JEL: Yeah.

0:52:11 KE: And our goal is not to create new jobs, our goal is to create new sectors. That can support secondary and tertiary economies by the restoration of food systems.

0:52:21 JEL: Right.

0:52:22 KE: And to me, that's the triple piko, as an example of how we look at it, right? So like I said, my brother Solomon has been super creative. He had a chance to... And I found I have to move that creative part of me into the ground ready, and the program design. Because I see all of... I see my work then, and thinking through that as similar to what William Gibson was doing when he was writing Neuromancer, that he's forecasting stuff... Or even like Herbert was forecasting Dune.

0:53:00 JEL: Yeah.

0:53:00 KE: When I look at how they did stuff, and I try to approach the program design. But I think I've been blessed in one way because I can put it into practice.

0:53:07 JEL: Right.

0:53:09 KE: And then...

0:53:10 JEL: Can you talk a little bit about Purple Ma'ia?

0:53:14 KE: Sure.

0:53:14 JEL: I think part of what you were talking about is Purple Ma'ia work?

0:53:16 KE: That's a really great segue, because once we opened that up, we had an interesting opportunity in our program to merge with a digital media program in our high school, because they also wanted to also create college internships. It was called C-Writer productions. We had a Kellogg Grant that linked us together, and my executive director, Kukuwei, threw me into do some sense making behind it.

0:53:46 JEL: Your director did what?

0:53:47 KE: Threw me in to help with some of the sense making behind it.

0:53:49 JEL: Oh, yeah.

0:53:50 KE: Because it was a good idea, but I just needed a thesis, right?

0:53:52 JEL: Yeah.

0:53:55 KE: So I sat down and I looked at the digital media guys, looked at the farming. They had a wonderful... They have wonderful programs, it's high school within high school that's getting from Wai'anae to graduate from college. I mean, they're kicking ass nationally, they're always backed in, they're winning every single national award competition, and the same community, and it was community-driven. So at Ma'O farms, that C-Writer Productions that were created by community members in a community that was extensively low-income, and we were successful in really powerful ways. And I mean, I look at it like what made it successful? And I started to realize that they played that triple piko framework, I was like, "These kids ain't just doing good because we gave them video cameras, they're doing good because their ancestors were storytellers." And the founder of C-Writer, who was from Wai'anae herself as a teacher, had this epiphany that was back in the '90s, she was gonna lose students that just didn't wanna sit in her class, in Spanish, and they were acting out, so I had them film their homework. And by just giving them a camera, instead of filming their homework, she kept a bunch of students that would have failed, and she just took the dynamic back as like, "If I get two cameras, I'll keep more students." She built this kind of big system out of that simple principle.

0:55:15 KE: So, looking at triple piko, is what resonates is the kids in our community wanna be outdoors, they wanna work with their hands, they wanna tell stories, not because they're stupid or special ed, because that's how the ancestors lived, and this is still the last bastion of localism where that still is there. So that's the first piko, it was strong because our ancestors were storytellers, and organic farming.

0:55:40 KE: And then the next piko was like these also represent upside markets that have a lot of upside. So the digital media piece, like when thinking about a future for Hawaii, what I also loved about watching them work at C-Writer is they didn't have the same type of limitations to the market that we did, because we're tied to exports imports cost, they could participate in a cloud economy. I was like, "Man." And the footprint of their little studio was making as much as our farm. So we started thinking about what is the future of Hawaii that's weaned itself off of militarism and tourism, what are we gonna need? Because we can't just diagnose the problem, you gotta add a cure, right?

0:56:23 JEL: Yeah.

0:56:23 KE: You go to the doctor saying, "I have cancer," [chuckle] does it help you solve it? I think we're stuck in a diagnosis phase and think that we're winning, but you gotta have something to do when you have the diagnosis, yes we've been colonized and yes structural racism exists. We gotta actually build a counterpoint.

0:56:40 KE: So in that society, you'd have large swathes of land that was growing food and that you'd have these little pockets that we could be global thought leaders in introducing, participate in a cloud economy. And, I never played checkers... The Hawaiian correlative of chess is Kōnane, I'm trying to think one move, like it's playing this for a couple of generations down the line to set up the infrastructure. So I saw there's an investment in that.

0:57:08 KE: So I started that with... I started that with Searider, and I just became enamored with this idea of, I called it 'Āina-based industries and ike-based... Or knowledge industries and our land industries has been the core pillars of how we restore our agency as people again. With or without paper sovereignty like...

0:57:31 JEL: How do you enact it?

0:57:32 KE: Enact it and help the people that was doing the sovereignty work too, by giving them an engine to build off of. And, so it's a long answer, but I became fascinated with that. And Jeff and my brother Solomon started also concurrently being interested with that and talking about ideas. And at that time, Donovan Kealoha reached out to me and asked if I'd be on the board because I had some of that work already done with Searider. So I went and I just got chance to watch them work and I realized then, to me, the triple piko for that is, by teaching indigenous, it's not teaching brown kids how to code. That's part of it.

0:58:17 JEL: It's part of it but yeah, it's not...

0:58:18 KE: But if that is just a be-all end-all, it's patronizing.

0:58:23 JEL: Well yeah, for us, the video and workshops we do it's not about teaching...

[overlapping conversation]

0:58:25 KE: Right. It's a pathway, exactly. And I think... That's why I really appreciate your approach and listening to you talk, it's much deeper than that. So the triple piko or the play to what I saw in Purple Mai'a is, first, if you talk about indigenous coding, [0:58:39] [REDACTED] coding, you have a vehicle that talked about indigenous technologies, and your ancestors had technologies and it talked to, as well, before but like you can talk about these things like the closed-loop bio-systems of how you managed your land, this idea of the chance and this long chance that we had as like, all of these datasets that we transferred pneumonically, perfectly that was part of our purview, like the algorithms of our moon calendars and when we would and wouldn't do things, binary off, like those are things that you will see too in contemporary tech spaces. The difference is, is that I feel the danger of the contemporary tech sector is tech for tech sake.

0:59:30 JEL: Yeah.

0:59:31 KE: Versus you could say very clearly, this technology of ancestry serves something very specific, and there's a group of people allowed to live in their place. So the deep that you could, other than the return on the investment there's other measures that you could look at. So it starts off with, this is an indigenous technology and this is what is used for. Then the second people I found in the work they're doing and Nanakuli High School with Jeff guys and the work Donovan was doing at inner city schools. If you teach kids who live in poverty to code and hack, you're also teaching them to hack into the operating systems of poverty. This isn't...

[overlapping conversation]

1:00:13 KE: This isn't set forever.

1:00:13 JEL: Yeah.

1:00:15 KE: You can fuck with this. You can find ways to move this around. You are not just acted upon. You can be an actor.

1:00:23 JEL: Yeah.

1:00:23 KE: You can get into these things and shift them. I think if, [a] they made the correlation of their ancestral thing of power versus a thing of shame, and [b] they've learned these things that, they're empowered to actually know that you have agency in your life and you can hack your reality, if you will. And then the third piko, you teach them coding, then you're giving them an opportunity to enter a sector that has a lot of up-side, but you are giving them a moral compass and a competitive advantage relative to their peers. And that they can enter the table not just like, "Oh I want to create the new Flappy Bird." Or, versus like, "Hey, this is a deep ancestry and technology, the science and the technologies of integrated..." I tell people, "Don't say Hawaiian culture, say ancestral sciences and technologies of integrated bio-systems management," and then you enter in that space. Then you can step into these spaces as a learner, co-learner.

1:01:25 JEL: Right.

1:01:26 KE: Not just as, "Oh please, teach me great wise ones because I'm this impoverished brown kid." [chuckle] It's like, "I have so much to offer you guys. I know my relative value... I know my value relative to you. Let's have a negotiation," which I think Purple Mai'a has been really awesome at doing. And that's why I enjoyed being there. And I think... Yeah.

1:01:49 JEL: Great. Wondering what is your... What do you think is your main goal in the next five years?

1:02:03 KE: In my lifetime, I might wanna honor my prophecy that I wanna see out is that, we're setting up the infrastructure that people in our community and people of other communities like ours will be contracted to help solve for global problems. Especially around climate adaptation, and societal reconciliation. I think they are one and the same. In Hawaiian, there's no word for environment. The environment is just an externalization of our attitudes. You can talk about adaptive technologies but if you don't figure out adaptive psychologies first, you're shit out of luck, right?

[laughter]

1:02:55 KE: It's us.

1:02:56 JEL: Yes.

1:02:57 KE: It's, this environment is a reflection of our attitudes and our consumption, right? And to do that I think locally, I really, have been called... I've had 10 years on the ground and try to implement the stuff that I talk.

[laughter]

1:03:14 JEL: Yeah.

1:03:15 KE: It has been very humbling, but it's also has been extremely rewarding and you learn a lot from having to back up what you say, the people you really care about and the community that you love, but wanna strangle sometimes. [chuckle] I think that, I see the path to getting there in five years is, I think we have a working thesis on the ground. I think where it's important for us to be able to negotiate with now as leverage what's working on the ground to shift policy and philanthropy. I think, I feel a real calling to do that and if we can... In Hawaii is a really unique kind of social circle climate. We have these things called "Ali'I Trusts," where you have the chiefs' will and all of the landholdings are put into these trusts that have now become huge power brokers in Hawaii with billions of dollars and land assets of policy arms and I think they're really beautiful things because they say... Despite people may have beefs with them, I see they just, they're a tool that [1:04:26] [REDACTED] it doesn't matters who's populating, right? Intrinsically, they're there to serve.

1:04:31 JEL: When I had a long conversation with a couple of partners in Kamehameha Schools where they told me about the different trusts. Because I only knew about the bishop's thing I didn't know about the other ones. That's one of the things we were talking about afterwards is that it's a tool that no other indigenous community has.

1:04:50 KE: I think that to me the hope that I have is... Call them "Ali'I Trusts," and in the Hawaiian society they're... And I'm just 15 years out of Hawaiian Studies so people probably can pick this apart with all the new [1:05:01] [REDACTED]...

[laughter]

1:05:01 KE: Have at, then go in a community and do something with it instead of just critiquing people on Facebook. But you have Ali'I Trusts or Ali'I and then you have the people on the ground which is the Maka'ainana that did the work. And you have these intermediary level which is a Konohiki, they are the brokers between the Ali'I and the Maka'ainana. And I think the emerging... People talk about Ali'I Trusts as this conglomeration of different Ali'I organizations that have all of these resources and money. The challenge I think with Ali'I Trusts is that they talk about it in English, and therefore, the people are the beneficiaries. But in pre-contact times, the Maka'ainana were not beneficiaries, they were experts. And the role of the chiefs was to convene the power and distribute it to the experts so that they convene power and turn it into productivity.

1:05:52 JEL: Right.

1:05:53 KE: The Konohiki was the intermediary, they were the brokers. And now that is actually playing itself out in program structures. You have your more and more enlightened members working in Ali'I Trusts, you have social enterprises that are coming up and you also have some really awesome networked organizations. Like my wife's organization works at KUA, Kua'aina Ulu Auamo, HACBED where these organizations are people that go on and help networks mobilize, who are actually acting like, Konohiki and they're doing the brokering. I think what I wanna see in the next five years is that, as we have Ali'I Trusts, we are now able to articulate Maka'ainana Trusts. That we are earning power, our infiltration of the education system... What starts off as infiltration of the education system moves into the normalization of it. Where ancestral thinking is shown to be completely relevant and valid to the state of Hawaii, not just us as Hawaiians.

1:06:57 JEL: Right.

1:07:00 KE: And I think that core learning is happening and I think those two things come together to really magnify the thinking of Pacific Islanders. Not as an act of justice but as an act of practical survival for the species. 'Cause I think what the world is coming to realize is what our ancestors knew, this is an island and this is a hot... We live on hot islands, we're forecasting what the world needs to understand. So, in five years, I really want to see... 'Cause as a father of two children, an eight-year-old and a five-year-old, if we're not doing this intervention now we might as well be jumping on the next spaceship with Elon, right? [chuckle] 'Cause it's like... And I refuse to subscribe... I think what I love about ancestry is that we don't have an apocalypse.

1:07:51 JEL: Is that we... Okay.

1:07:52 KE: Don't have an apocalypse, there is no end game in our story. There is no great ending of it all, it's continual adaptation...

1:08:00 JEL: Yeah.

1:08:01 KE: And I believe that having met our Maori cousins when I went down to New Zealand, the first thing I thought was, "This place is cold." And the second thing I thought was like, "They're just like us." The shift in this weather did not change them from being recognizable to me as a Hawaiian. So, I know that we can adapt...

1:08:20 JEL: All kinds of things. Yeah.

1:08:23 KE: Two things, and one in five years that, we're really intentional about setting these structures up. And that, we're really intentional about setting them up to be able to be bequeathed and not just hold onto forever and building in our succession plan. And I think why this for me I'm sitting here is I really want... The thinking and it's happening in Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders to have more of a national or international fitting, foothold. And I think we have a hard time having conversations outside of Hawaii. Because Hawaii Visitors Bureau controls the narrative of how Hawaii is. But I think the more solidarity we are with brothers and brothers and sisters on the continent are all indigenous people. As a starting point, it can help us reach out beyond indigenous communities. So we can have this to everybody, this just becomes a practical conversation but on the other hand our indigenous people own the IP. [laughter] We're not fucking around, we know what we're doing. We know our relative value, you don't get away with giving us middle for the...

1:09:31 KE: Nope.

1:09:31 KE: We went to your business schools [chuckle] to figure your stuff out, and we want to be able to help people, but we don't want to be supplanted in the process. And I think that's the emerging conversation. Does that answer...

1:09:46 JEL: Yeah, no, that's great, that's great. The last question. Which I think I emailed to you, I'm not sure but...

1:09:51 KE: Sorry, I haven't gotten to...

1:09:53 JEL: Yeah. I usually ask this at the end...

[background conversation]

1:10:00 KE: I never ask the interviews, I always get asked to interview as a... It's just like, I know, my dad would always be, he is such a great speaker but his big thing to me... You know [1:10:11] sometimes if he just talks, and I was like, he's like 90% work, 10% talk, right?

1:10:18 JEL: Right.

1:10:19 KE: And I don't believe that there's such thing as a professional thought leader, it's the doing comes out of it. If I get asked for whatever reason I've been... I'm really lucky that I actually have an opportunity to share these things. 'Cause everything I feel is value, people feel value and they ask me and talk and are super curious, this is because I was invested in, and people have taken the time to talk to me. And also I tend to be working in a lot of organizations that are, especially in Ma'o that are doing something really unique 'cause people always wanna understand it.

1:11:12 KE: So, you have a lot of opportunities to speak and I found that people wouldn't ask me certain questions so I just full disclose all the... Like, "Oh yeah I grew up listening to punk, " all these weird things, just to make it really clear that... There's a lot to my thinking and to what I pull from and all of it is from indigenous practices. This from all these other things too that are really important. So I've always, I guess as long as we're saying, that I always... No one ever asks me to talk about what I do from the perspective of science fiction or all these other things. So, I found that I always inserted what the questions they wanted people to ask me [laughter] to whatever the hell it was they were talk... I'd just...

1:12:02 JEL: Yeah, yeah yeah. You'd find a way to...

1:12:04 KE: Just to keep myself interested sometimes.

[laughter]

1:12:06 JEL: It's like...

1:12:09 KE: I was like, I would like to talk about this this... [chuckle] But, I guess... I don't know...

1:12:15 JEL: The answer could be, "There isn't anything."

1:12:19 KE: I guess the answer I have... That is such a good question. I really have to think about, like, what... I think that question is [1:12:29] [REDACTED]... It's a gift I think. I think a lot of the people like Noe and myself... We were mentored by people that were great speakers and great voices for our community and then we were pushed into that role. But we carry a lot of weight. 'Cause I know knowing myself, I know who I'm accountable to.

1:12:55 JEL: You know...

1:12:55 KE: Who I'm accountable to.

1:12:56 JEL: Right. Right.

1:12:57 KE: And I gotta go back home everyday and work with them, right?

1:13:00 JEL: Yeah.

1:13:01 KE: And I also know the struggles of those that came before me, what they have invested in me so I could have a voice. So the moment I fall in love with my own voice, whatever happens, but [1:13:14] [REDACTED] talk, fuck me, right? It's really... What's the utility of me sharing and is it of value? And is it honestly reflecting the people that invested in me? It's honestly creating a platform that people that, for whatever grace of God, I can be speaking for and they can't. I'm really mindful and often puts us in a heavy head space... I guess why I like that question is, despite all that, we're actually really people too, weird and quirky. We never get a chance to ask that.

1:13:49 JEL: No.

1:13:49 KE: And I feel I operate the best when I could just put aside the job titles and just be people with people.

1:13:55 JEL: Well, part of my motivation for doing these interviews is also that interest in finding the people's side.

1:14:06 KE: Right.

1:14:08 JEL: You guys are all people. You all got big brains. You're doing great work. And you're all people too.

[laughter]

1:14:12 KE: With burnt out frontal lobes. [laughter] I think if there was a question that no one has ever asked me is... I don't know. Would probably go into some dark place. [laughter] I think that one of the things I've learned to embrace is to ask dangerous questions lovingly.

1:14:44 JEL: Okay.

1:14:46 KE: But then hold yourself accountable that you're the person that asked it. And join in the

answer and not just put people on the spot but share risk in a dangerous question. I think the question, quite frankly, I would ask myself is, how much of the things you talk about do you still really believe in? And I think that's a dangerous question.

1:15:12 JEL: Mm-hmm. It's related to a sense of momentum. A sort of momentum built up over years of...

1:15:20 KE: It's laws of entropy. Nature abhors stasis. We can fall in love with our ideas but if we're not open to critiquing them as hard as we critique each other and know that it's not if, it's when these ideas began to no longer answer what's actually happening on the ground now. The danger I feel for folks that do get often asked a lot questions is to believe that they have a lot of answers. And when you lose the ability to ask questions of yourself, all the time, question the things you love, you run the risk of becoming a prisoner of what you're good at. And I've seen that burn people out. There's a wonderful quote from the Buddha. Actually, what is it? I'm paraphrasing. I'm probably saying it wrong, but "I am the finger pointing to the moon. I'm not the moon. Let go of the finger." And I think asking questions... To ask people how much of that... If you've been saying that for a long time and you're going... There are certain things I say. I just... And asking myself, like, "Do you really believe that anymore?" [laughter] Really?

1:16:52 JEL: Sounds good, but yeah.

1:16:53 KE: And I think that humbling yourself to knowing that maybe it may have made sense at one time but things change and now you really gotta think about that.

1:17:04 JEL: Right.

1:17:04 KE: 'Cause you should never be in service of your narrative. You should be in service of service. And that's like being in a relationship. If I was to ask myself that question, I'd say that's a really good question.

1:17:16 JEL: Okay.

1:17:17 KE: I think there's a lot of things that... I still do but I can see... 'Cause I get to work with youth on a daily basis... Every single year, the same age. I think I'm lucky enough to see the layers of strata beginning to pile up and these shifts happening.

1:17:39 JEL: Yeah. Yeah.

1:17:40 KE: I guess the eternal question is, what's the enduring and what's the flex?

1:17:44 JEL: Right.

1:17:45 KE: What is perpetually relevant?

1:17:48 JEL: Well, I think it's related to what you've talked about, touched on here and there, which is, what is the success metric?

1:17:54 KE: Right.

1:17:55 KE: Right?

1:17:55 KE: What endures, right?

1:17:57 JEL: What is it that you're really looking at moving and changing...

1:18:00 KE: And that's the beauty of life I think is that, it's imperfect. And it's... We try to create grandeur in our narratives and all these things but really, a lot of us is just like, just fucked up as everybody else. [laughter] You know what I mean? [laughter] To be perfectly frank, you ask my wife... [laughter] Yeah, it's like, I see her rolling her eyes when I get to talk, but I think it's as if people are not given the ability to be fucked up.

1:18:28 JEL: Right.

1:18:29 KE: You have to be the noble savage.

[laughter]

1:18:32 KE: 'Cause we gotta save everybody else with their shit, right?

1:18:34 JEL: Exactly.

[laughter]