

One Voice Discussion Guide



These kids are absolutely amazing. They are flourishing. They are tied to their past. Not living in the past—tied to the past. They have a great deal of pride in what they are doing and it all links back to I'm proud of my ancestors. I am coming to understand what they did. I am now proud to stand on their shoulders.

~~Dr. Michael Chun, Kamehameha School President and Headmaster

Brief program synopsis

ONE VOICE is a documentary film that tells the story of the Kamehameha Schools Song Contest through the eyes of the student song directors. Every year in Hawai'i, 2000 high school students compete in the Kamehameha Schools Song Contest where young leaders direct their peers in singing Hawaiian music in four-part harmony. The Contest is a unique cultural celebration that has become a major local event, broadcasted live on TV, played on the radio, and streamed on the Internet.

ONE VOICE shares the thrill of the competition via the personal stories of the student song directors as they experience the trials and tribulations of competition in this annual high school event. Following the elected student song directors, the audience sees how the tradition creates an indelible experience that builds class unity, instills cultural pride,

and builds character. The film also explores their world outside of school by meeting their families, or ‘ohana, and revealing their hopes and dreams for the future. Through the stories and lives of these contemporary high school students, the audience will experience Hawaiian culture as it has survived, flourished, and grown through the universal power of music and song.



From *LISETTE MARIE FLANARY, DIRECTOR:*

When most people think of Hawai‘i, a tropical dream destination comes to mind. Yet few are aware of the rich history and culture that makes Hawai‘i truly unique. As a filmmaker and a hula dancer, I create documentary films that celebrate a contemporary renaissance of Hawaiian culture beyond the romanticized images found in mainstream media and pop culture. It is my hope that the film *ONE VOICE* will deepen the understanding and perception of Hawai‘i through celebrating the music, language, and tradition of the Kamehameha Schools Song Contest.

The real heart of the film is the story of the young students who with their own individual voices make a unique portrait of contemporary Hawai‘i. I think audiences will enjoy discovering the importance of the revitalization of the Hawaiian language and culture through their eyes. Getting to know each of the students—their personalities and passions—was a real journey and a joy for me. At times, I felt like I was in high school again! Everyone made me feel like I was a part of the family, and this sense of ‘ohana is a Hawaiian value that I believe is reflected in the film. Whether on trips to Moloka‘i or at home with their families, spending time outside of school with the students was certainly a highlight. The film tries to capture some of that spirit as well.

These young Native Hawaiians are an inspiring new generation. One that looks ahead to a promising future with the pride and confidence of understanding their past and heritage. ONE VOICE shares their personal stories leading up to the annual competition that has been a beloved tradition in Hawai'i for 90 years while watching them blossom as young leaders of tomorrow.

By the Numbers

1. For over 90 years the Kamehameha School has hosted its annual Song Contest led by student directors. Annually about 2000 high school students compete in the Song Contest.
2. The poetic songs chosen by the students are called “meles,” a name given to the ancient chants maintained through thousands of years of oral history which recorded all aspects of history and daily life. These songs continue to be composed today by Hawaiian composers and can be classified into two categories, a *mele oli* (music only) and *mele hula* (music with dance).
3. The Kamehameha School is dedicated to keeping the Hawaiian culture and language alive by educating students in a unique environment. They serve nearly 7,000 students with campuses on O'ahu, Maui, and Hawai'i Island as well as at 31 preschool sites.
4. Kamehameha Schools began when Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop left the gift of 375,000 acres of her ancestral lands to the people with specific instructions in her will that the lands were to be used to educate her people.
5. Princess Pauahi saw how rapidly the Hawaiian culture was disappearing and recognized that education was the only solution. Today Kamehameha Schools has stewardship of over 365,000 acres scattered across the islands of Maui, Moloka'i, O'ahu, “Kaua'i, and Hawai'i island.
6. Princess Pauahi Pākī was the great granddaughter of King Kamehameha. She was educated by missionaries and as a young woman she married a successful American business man from New York named Charles Reed Bishop.
7. In 1778 the population of native Hawaiians was estimated to be over 300,000. As a result of disease and colonization, when Princess Pauahi was born in 1831, the native population numbered about 124,000. When she wrote her will in 1883, only 44,000 Hawaiians remained.
8. By 1898, due to increasing pressure from the missionaries and colonists the Hawaiian language was banned and English adopted as the official language of Hawai'i. It was finally restored as the official language in 1978.
9. The 2000 U.S. census bureau reported 401,162 people who identify themselves as Hawaiian or part Hawaiian and about two thirds of these live on the islands.

Delve Deeper Discussion questions – Exploring the Facts

1. At the Kamehameha School, Song Contest is a highly competitive challenge that the students undertake that is both culturally relevant and yet modern in its competitiveness. After watching the film, how do you feel the students grow personally and culturally from this challenge? Do you feel there are any drawbacks to such a competitive challenge? If so, what are they?
2. Princess Pauahi Pākī Bishop saw the erosion of her culture as a result of colonization and bequeathed her lands to be used for the traditional education of Hawaiian children. Consider and explore what changes she must have seen and why she chose education as a way to combat the loss of her beloved culture.
3. Assimilation is a complex and sometimes loaded word that means many things. On the one hand it means learning to live in a modern, changing culture; but it can also mean giving up what is familiar and long-lived in an ancient traditional culture. Do you feel that it is important for an ancient culture to keep its traditions, language, and music alive? Explain your thoughts and ideas.
4. In ONE VOICE, Michael Chun says that these students are expressing a “living culture and not a “museum culture.” What does he mean by this? In your experience, what is the difference between a living culture and a museum culture? Compare and contrast this to other cultures either in your own life or around the world.
5. Explore the role of the ancestors in Hawaiian culture and compare it to your own culture. What are the similarities? What are the differences? What role did/do the ancestors play in your current culture?
6. In one scene of the film, Ka'ai, a young girl, visits another island to undergo a ceremony to request a blessing from both the island and her ancestors. This ritual connects her more deeply with her culture. By writing her oli, chanting it, and going through the rituals she is linked to her ancestors, the land, her family, and to herself. She gains strength and feels worthy of being a leader. What rituals or cultural traditions are present in your life that may accomplish a similar goal? Do you feel that some of our cultural ties have become lost to us? Either individually or as a group, explore your thoughts and ideas about the role of cultural rituals in modern life.

Suggested activity/action(s) - Ideas for Action

1. Either individually or in small groups, have students study the lyrics of one of the songs from the Song Contest and compose and share a poem or a “love song” to their own homelands. Spend some time exploring the place you live. What is beautiful and unique about it? How do you feel about this place? Then as a class or group, share this with each other.

2. Explore the ancestral traditions and culture of your personal history. What music, rituals, traditions and language did they use or practice? Do any of those cultural elements remain today? For added exploration, use narrative writing or have students create a visual collage of their culture. Then as a class or group, share this with each other.
3. Either on the internet or in the library explore how colonization affected the cultural practices of the Hawaiian people and explore this impact with 2-3 other North American Tribes. In particular look at the effect on language, societal hierarchy and leadership, cultural dress, and traditional foods.
4. The film tells us that in the song contest, a “mele” is a song that uses “words” instead of “weapons.” We could see each group as separate with the song leaders as “warriors.” First individually and then as a group, explore how our world would be different if all cultures used “words” instead of “weapons.”
5. In the Song Contest, the students work many weeks to learn to sing in perfect harmony with one another. As a class or group look up the origins of the word “harmony” and explore its meaning both in music and how the word applies to people, cultures, families, and the self in today’s world.
6. Individually or as a class, use books, articles and the internet to explore the historical changes the Hawaiian people have experienced and what has brought those changes about. What influence do you think the Kamehameha School may have on the future of the Hawaiian people?



Resources

ONE VOICE websites

<http://onevoicemovie.org>
<http://juniroa.com/content.php/onevoice/>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIl-SBbT6MY>
<http://www.lehuafilms.com/pages/onevoice.html> (director's site)
<http://www.onevoicemovie.org/news/one-night-one-chance-one-voice-pbs-Hawai'i-broadcast-premiere-sunday-november-28-700-pm>

Hawaiian History

<http://www.papahanaumokuakea.gov/heritage/>
<http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org>
<http://www.hawaiihistory.org>

Hawaiian Music and Lyrics

<http://www.huapala.org/>

Books

Music, Past & Present, at Kamehameha Schools: Lei Mele No Pauahi, by Jonathan K. Osorio and Kanalu G. Young

Legacy. A portrait of the young men and women of Kamehameha Schools 1887-1987, by Sharlene Chun-Lum and Lesley Agard

Pauahi: The Kamehameha Legacy, by George H. Kanahele

Hawaiian Music and Musicians, edited by Dr. George S. Kanahele