





Le'ol'oe Pasifiki

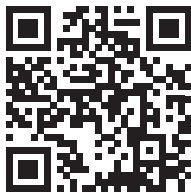


Voices of the Pacific

Written by Palmerston North Pasifika students

Edited by Feana Tu'akoi





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Foreword

Story is vital. It carries the collective experience of humanity and expresses and shapes who we are.

When our own four children were pre-schoolers, nearly all children's books were Pālangi-centric. I couldn't find any that included Tongan characters, Tongan ideas, Tongan situations, or even Tongan legends.

As far as books were concerned, kids like ours didn't exist.

I feel strongly that all readers should be able to see themselves represented in print; to access stories about people and situations that make sense to them; to understand that their stories matter.

This zine, produced as part of my time as 2022 Massey University Writer in Residence, in conjunction with the Palmerston North City Council and Square Edge Community Arts, seeks in some small way to redress the balance. It confirms, to a group of Palmerston North Pasifika intermediate students, that their stories do indeed matter and that we want to read them. My hope is that it may also encourage some to become our writers of the future.

Not all of these stories discuss Pasifika experiences directly, but all are told with a Pasifika world view.

Enjoy!

Feana Tu'akoi
Massey University Writer in Residence
2022



For Sione, without whom this project
would not exist.





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‘Ana Palelei

Dark brown hair
Chocolate eyes
Long eyelashes
Year 8 height

Quiet when nervous
Chatterbox when brave
Body perfume
Nothing but air

Happy when I like something
Crowded when I don't
Hard biscuits for breakfast
Cup of hot tea

Funerals

At Tongan funerals, most people wear black. If you're a Christian, you might want to do the funeral in church. There are many traditional things Tongan people do at a funeral.

Like, if it's your father or auntie, you must cut your hair because it shows who they are to you. Another thing, is that if it's your aunt, cousin, uncle or parents, wear a ta'ovala, or woven waist-mat, over your head, to show that you are a close one to the person who passed away.

Sometimes, one of the relatives is chosen to be the one to reveal the gravestone and read out the words written. On the ground, there will be lots of fala, or traditional mats, gifted from people who attended. There's also the faifekau, or church leader, who does a malanga, or eulogy.

Each person, who goes to give their love to the lost one, has to take off their shoes, in a sign of respect.



Funerals usually take 1-3 days. Day one, funeral. Day 2, burial. Plus, there might be a third day, where the church will gather and hiva Tongan songs, as others stand in line to give their love.

Most funerals have a feed at the faifekau's house or at a nearby building. Also, the close ones, meaning the siblings, parents or cousins, can decide if they want to sleep in the church. (Disclaimer: not right next to the coffin!) That way, they can stay for one last time, before the burial, the next day.

To carry the coffin, there are about 4-6 people for a child, 6-8 for a teenager or adult, and 8-10 for an older person.

As the people carry the coffin outside, people start singing, plus crying, if they feel like it.

Before all of this happens, the relatives pick a spot to bury their loved one. Usually, funerals use these long belts, to lower the coffin slowly into the deep hole.

The group of men, who are the next in line for the faifekau, stand straight in a line and give their blessings to the lost one. The faifekau says the last prayers, before everyone drops a flower on top of the coffin.

If someone is royal, or has been in the army and died at war, a flag is draped on top of the coffin, resembling where they come from.

The church starts singing, as the men shovel dirt respectfully into the hole. When the song is finished, one special relative will put the cross on. It has the lost one's full name and the dates of birth and death.

Sometimes the family might take a photo, but they would not post it without everyone's permission. After all that, all of the families head home.

*'Ana Palelei, 11
Tonga*





Amazing Fa‘atasi

Scary Frankenstein,
Quiet as a stream,
Normal, but Amazing.

Sweet as chocolate,
Milky milo and raspberries.
KFC Queen!

Sāmoan Easter

At special church services, like White Sunday, Christmas Eve, New Year’s, and Easter, I get really nervous. I feel like a combination of anxiety, dread, and excitement, all at once, because I am in the church band, playing the violin!

I play the violin beautifully and amazingly, and people stare at me, like a glass eye and a mad bull, because not many Pasifika churches have a violin player in their band.

I am like a special angel, who plays violin in the band, even though I usually make mistakes when I play. So, when everyone stares and looks at me, I take five deep breaths and squeeze my eyes shut.

When I’m playing the violin, I’m helping everyone worship. When I play the slow songs, everyone is especially close to God.

When I play the fast songs, I play them on the guitar. At the moment, the speaker is broken, so it is really hard to hear my guitar when I play.

Every year, on Easter, our church youth group goes to Auckland or Napier for an Easter Conference. We do lots of activities like camping, fundraising things, road races, games, going into town, and more.

The conference is basically a church service. We sing songs, dance to traditional music and pray. Pastor, who is the head of the church,



preaches. Then, we walk to the back of the hall for a HUGE feast, while the church band plays an upbeat song.

For a family celebration, with just me, my siblings and my parents, we have a small Easter service at Pastor's house, or we go to my uncle Viliamu's house, to have a barbecue and some traditional foods. I hear my tummy rumble, as I wait impatiently to start eating.

I can't wait! When we finally get to eat, I am really excited. We have pakeka (potato), sapaui (chop suey), talo (taro), fa'i (green bananas) and pisupo (corn beef). For the barbecue, we have steak, sausages, chicken thighs and nibbles. We also have faku moa - chicken hearts!

My favourite is the barbecue chicken because it's crispy. I like the sound it makes, when I bite into it, and the way that the salt dances on my tongue.

I also like the burgers that my mum, Sia, makes. She makes the *best* cheese burgers! The golden cheese is melted to perfection and the crispy bacon smells amazing. My teeth and taste buds connect with the burger and it's a flavour-explosion in my mouth.

The dancing is special. Families get to do their own items and families from other countries, like Fiji and Tonga, come, too. I don't do a dance this time. I just watch my family do it.

The dance item I like best is this Fijian-Tongan girl, who is 13 years old. She does a dance by herself and her dancing is amazing! The best thing I like about it, is how she moves around the whole stage. Her moves are really attractive.

At the end of the celebration, there are prizes for the best outfit. My auntie and my cousin win one, but I didn't try, so I don't win anything.

I like everything about the celebration, even when I don't win. But my favourite part is the eating. It is delicious!

Amazing Fa'atasi, 11
Sāmoa, Salepaga/Matatufu villages





Camille Togisia

internal whispers
light of shining sunshine
sweet strawberry scent
coconut hair

Art

I always love making art. Creating, painting and drawing. When I was younger, I always practised my art.

In art, you have to take your time. Rushing makes a mess and you can end up with an explosion on the page!

I try to take my time, whatever I'm drawing. When I'm out of the house, I normally bring my notebook and a pencil. I explore around and see what I wanna draw or sketch.

I love watercolour. It's one of my favourite things to use. I plan my drawing first. I see it like a painting that's already finished and framed on the wall.

I decide what colours to use. I think of vintage brown and grey. Old style.

Sometimes, I overthink and I have these *what if* questions, like, 'What if I start again?' 'What if this is not gonna turn out good'? Or, even, 'What if this *is* good?'

I think of detail. Splashes of bright colours, deep warm colours, neon colours and all the shades of the rainbow. In my notebook, I draw and doodle what I like and what I'm good at.

I doodle a music note because I love any genre of music. I like pop, rock, jazz, scary and more genres. I doodle a notebook because I love any kind of art.



Sometimes, I draw my name in different fonts, like block letters, curvy letters, fancy letters, bold letters and straight letters. I feel happy and creative when I'm doing art.

Sometimes I get this worried feeling, that I might mess my art up. I try not to think about it because that feeling makes me feel confused and blocked.

Camille Togisia, 11
Sāmoa





Celia Hala

palm tree tall
anxious volcano
better than my class

ok hygiene
mathematics hater
meat and blood

Emperor's Rule

Running, bolting and sprinting, Al and AJ both dash through the Crimson Forest, in different directions.

Al arrives at the top of the Tirees cliff. She looks around, but there's no sign of AJ. Had the crow been lying to her and luring her into a trap? Was it just using the only person she'd ever cared about as an excuse?

Her hands are shaking and her eyes jump at every sound. Before the crow came, Al had thought that AJ was dead. She's been grieving, ever since that ambush, three years ago.

She debates on herself, whether she should hide. Is it another ambush? Or should she just go back? She decides to crouch at the edge of the cliff, so she can look out for AJ. She can use her fire-chains to escape down the cliff, if she needs to.

AJ is lost in the forest. She crashes around. Then the crow swoops down onto a branch above her.

"Get a better view!" it calls. Then it flies away, again.

AJ is confused. Then she remembers the Tirees cliff, that she passed two days ago. She'll be able to get a view from there.

Al is still waiting. She shoots a fireball into the distance off the cliff, in frustration, and watches it explode.



AJ is frozen. Questions pound her head. Should she go this way or that way?

The crow appears again and snaps, "Follow me!"

The crow takes off, with AJ following behind. The crow can fly straight, but AJ has to push and struggle to break free from the branches. The branches grapple with her hoodie and try to pull her back.

When she bursts out of the forest, she spots Al.

Al is mumbling to her schizophrenic selves and hasn't seen her. She has her back to the forest.

AJ takes a couple of quiet steps forward. Is it really Al? She looks so different! Her hair is short and she's grown a foot taller.

"Al?" says AJ.

Al stands up and turns slowly around.

She looks more familiar, now. AJ can see her mask and the tuft of fringe, that covers the scar over her eye.

She approaches Al slowly.

Al is as stiff as a domino, at the edge of the cliff. She can't process what she's seeing. Her schizophrenia always messes with her mind.

AJ hugs her best friend and tears stream down her face.

"I'm so sorry, Al. I know you needed me, but I..."

AJ stumbles along with her words. She doesn't know how to explain why Al was left behind at the ambush.

Three years ago, they were ambushed by blood-lusting zombies, known as scampers. The scampers were fast. They were so stealthy, when it came to their running, that no one had seen them coming. They'd fought for their lives, as the scampers feasted on their prey, satisfying their stomachs by devouring people, as they screamed in agonising pain.



They were still fighting, when Al's father rang AJ and told her to get the team to fall back. AJ didn't want to leave Al behind, so she called her to retreat with the others. But Al wasn't listening. She only saw red and didn't stop forcefully attacking back.

All of a sudden, Al's father flew in, with his big dragon-like wings. He swooped the team up and flew into the sky, leaving Al behind.

Al looked up, to see everyone escaping without her. She felt her father's betrayal. She locked eyes with AJ and didn't break contact until they were no longer in sight.

Back at the cliff, AJ tries to explain. She is cut off when Al speaks in a shaky voice.

"But you're here now!! We're finally reunited!"

Al wraps AJ in a hug. Their heartfelt reunion is what Al wanted all this time, but she knows that she won't be able to make it last. She can't go back to Harpivor.

"C'mon, let's go home," AJ says, as she takes Al's hand. She tries to walk, but realises that Al is not following, or even moving.

"Ummm... Al... Come on."

Al stands in silence.

"No."

"W-what?" AJ is shocked into stuttering. "What do you mean, *no*?"

She grabs Al's shoulders. "Al! We can finally go home!"

"I can't," cries Al. "They hate me!"

AJ is confused. "Who?" she says.

"EVERYONE! Father, my family, the team. EVERYONE!!!" She takes a shaky breath. "Don't you realise that my father wants me dead?"

"No, they don't," AJ says, trying to calm Al down.



The voices in Al's head whisper loudly and glitches affect her sight. Everything doesn't seem real. Al covers her ears and mumbles, leaving AJ anxious and worried. What first was a heart-felt reunion has come to nothing but an issue, with anxiety flowing through both minds and bodies.

Rage builds up inside of Al because the noise is annoying her. She starts to heat up.

AJ, not knowing what else to do, cools her own temperature down with her aquatic abilities. Then she hugs Al, creating a hiss as the two elements combine. A big steam cloud flies up to the sky and is visible across the Crimson Forest.

AJ's team has been looking for her. The search party sees the steam cloud and comes out through the trees, at the edge of the forest.

Al sees them and starts shouting. "What are they doing here? And why do they have weapons?"

AJ doesn't have time to reply. Al is shooting fireballs, starting a confused outrage. Trees come down and the forest catches fire. AJ has to save her team, before the scampers come.

She yells for everyone to follow her and runs through the burning trees. Trunks crash down and fire spreads everywhere. They drag each other over the flaming obstacles until they make it to safety.

When they finally see Harpivor, AJ realises that Al is not with them. Looping time, she feels like she's back at the beginning.

She has left her best friend behind. Again.

Celia Hala, 12
Tonga





Daniel Fuafiva

Sleepy sloth,
Silent ninja,
Open can of beans.

Sweaty socks,
Dozy dog,
Chill-as artist.

Six Inch Centipedes

“C’mon! We gotta go!” my mum shouted.

We were all ready to board the plane to Sāmoa and take off. This would be the very first time I would be able to see my grandparents. I rushed my tiny little legs to the plane with my mum, as if I was the Flash.

Once I boarded the plane, I found a TV on the back of the chair in front of me.

“Dad, how do you use this thing?” I asked, in wonder.

“Just use the controller that looks like a keyboard,” he replied.

And that was the day I discovered Chair-TVs!

Once we were all safely landed, my parents pointed at two old people. I put two and two together and obviously knew who they were. My nana has a big-as birthmark, covering her left eye. I rushed up to them, with three of my brothers, and squeezed with all my tiny-man might.

They took us to their house and IT WAS AMAZING!! They had a three floor Sāmoan mansion, with a built-in pool, made from rocks and cement, and a building that was under construction.



We were greeted with some pani popo (coconut cream buns) and savoury keke pua'a (pork buns) with sapaui (chop suey).

I learned many things about my home island. The people in Sāmoa were nice and kind. I learned what kind of work they do, about all of the delicious food and how many six inch centipedes they have there.

After we'd been there a month, I figured out what the building was. It was a church and my grandpa was the church minister. He still is today.

Before we left for home, we decided to see all the major landmarks in Sāmoa. I saw a tall temple, many traditional houses, some cool city-like houses that looked pretty modern and a nice beach house that I always see in drawings. I never thought there would be a McDonalds in Sāmoa!

After all the travelling, we celebrated our last day with our aunties and uncles. We danced and drank some vaifala. Vaifala is a drink made of milk, apple strips, pineapple and peanuts. My mum always makes the best vaifala!

I felt pretty content and happy because I got closer to my family. It made me feel warm inside. I felt like I was at home.

Before we boarded the plane, we said our last goodbyes to our grandparents, both on my mother's side and on my dad's side of the family.

"That was an amazing experience. I wish I could be there a little longer," little me sighed.

When we were finally home, I felt a wave of relief. Not because I didn't like it there, but because of those six inch centipedes!

Faaleole-Daniel Fuaifiva, 12
Sāmoa, Sa'anapu / Vailoa Faleata villages





Esther Folaumoeloa

tall
pretty
long frizzy hair
stressy overthinker
scent of fresh cut grass
hint of fruity shampoo
bitter sweet taste
high squeaky
husky voice

Tau'olunga

Mālō e lelei. My name is Esther. I'm from Tonga and I think being an Islander is really cool. Our cultures. Our traditions. Our languages. That's all I can say.

My family moved from Tonga to New Zealand, for a better, steady life, good education, good money and good jobs. People in our islands have to work really hard to earn good money and stay in a nice warm house. So, I'm lucky that I'm here in New Zealand, where we get these kinds of opportunities.

One of the things I struggle with, as an Islander, is learning my language. I'm still learning how to speak and understand Tongan, fluently. It's kinda hard, learning another entire language when you're only used to speaking English. I guess I should have listened to my grandparents, when they said we have to speak less English and more Tongan.

"You can speak English anywhere else. But when you are at home, you only speak Tongan," my nana says.

What *I'm* saying is that you should always start early, so you don't have to struggle like me, later on.

I remember doing a tau'olunga, or traditional dance, with my sisters, at my aunties' graduation. It was nerve-wracking. I was scared that



I would forget some of the actions and the costume I wore was really uncomfortable.

I had to wear a ngatu, or tapa cloth. It was wrapped around me and tied with a kafa, a long woven belt. Then they attached a tekiteki, a tall flowered head-dress, in my hair and a money clip on the side. A tekiteki helps you look graceful when you do a teki, or head flick, when you're dancing.

After that they rubbed baby oil, all over my arms and legs, and finished by tying a kahoia around my neck. It was so itchy!

When we were finally done, my sisters were ready to go. But I wasn't. I was shaking from head to toe. I was going to dance in front of almost everyone I know, even in front of the prince and princess of Tonga!

Yes, they were there. There was even a camera recording us.

Yay! We did good during the dance. Everybody clapped and cheered. The only thing I hated about it, was when people came up and touched me as they stuck money on my oiled skin. I *hate* being touched, so I've never felt so uncomfortable in my life.

It's especially uncomfortable when they try to tuck money under your clothes. That's a no-no zone! Call me dramatic. I don't care.

But that's how it works, so I dealt with it, and just kept dancing. I kept a smile on my face, even though I was crying inside.

After it was over, I was so relieved. Finally! My cheeks hurt from smiling for the whole entire dance, but what hurt more is that they didn't even let me keep some of the money.

Wow! All that hard work, for nothing! Oh well, at least it was over.

Esther Luisa Folaumoeloa, 12
Tonga, 'Ahau / Ha'avakatolo villages





Fonotele Lokeni

hair that grows too fast
legs that grow too long
voice a low and gentle melody

too much shampoo
not enough breakfast
bad breath in the morning

Developing Confidence

It's easy to hide in a crowd, when everyone looks the same. I'm a shy boy, who spends more time thinking than talking. I feel most comfortable when I'm with people who know me well. My friends and family understand me and appreciate my quiet nature. They encourage me to show my true personality.

We are all different, but we try our best to respect and support each other, so that we'll always be happy and strong. It's not hard to feel relaxed and confident, when you're surrounded by people who share the same first language, sense of humour and cultural values. My friends and family look a lot like me. When I'm with them, I feel as if I can blend in with the crowd.

I hate being the centre of attention! Weird sensations take over my body and control my mind. My legs shake and my hands sweat. I become lightheaded and people's faces spin in circles, inside my brain. I feel as if my hot, sweaty face is surely changing colour and that a huge and dangerous earthquake wants to shake me off my feet. I worry that everyone will notice.

Last year, I managed to face my fears for just long enough to present a speech to our school, during Sāmoan Language Week. Everyone applauded enthusiastically and then... boom! I fainted. At times like this, I wish I could become invisible.

Invisibility is impossible. My height means that my actions are always noticed. I've become used to feeling like a giraffe, surrounded



by monkeys. I know that I'll be judged by my actions, so I try to do the right thing in every situation.

When I started intermediate school, I was full of fear and anxiety. I thought that I would never have enough confidence to talk to anyone, or make new friends. My school's Pasifika family group started meeting informally, straight away, and I discovered that the other Pasifika students felt as if they were part of a great big family at school. Before long, I felt that way too.

Our Pasifika group shares plenty of laughs, as we learn traditional songs and dances. We have a place to go to, whenever we want to, and teachers who are always there for us. They help us to make progress at school and are proud of us when we succeed. The group makes me feel proud of my culture and heritage, and pleased to be exactly who I am. In my opinion, our Pasifika group has certainly helped me to overcome my shyness and prepare me for the challenges I will face in the future.

I am overcoming challenges, one small step at a time, and have started to face situations that once seemed terrifying. Public speaking still frightens me, but I now realise that many other people also have to face this fear. I no longer get stage fright when performing with our Pasifika group.

The other students watch me closely when I dance and sing. They appreciate my guidance and have started to think of me as a role model and leader. I often perform in front of the group, so that I can support and encourage other students as they learn. In our Pasifika group, true leaders emerge through their willingness to help others succeed. I never imagined that the other students would think of me in this way, but I feel proud and humble when I notice that they do.

School is a place where leadership is valued. Leadership roles at school almost always require confidence when speaking in public. It seems to me that confidence and leadership roles are closely connected. Confidence is a key that fits the keyhole, to unlock doors to leadership opportunities.

It is easy to forget that good leaders should also be great role models. Sāmoan leaders behave in a quiet, dignified way and are always admired for their actions. They earn the right to be leaders by being responsible, thoughtful people who help others whenever they can.



Their confidence comes from years of practice and their words inspire everyone.

I hope that someday soon I'll be able to express my ideas in public, without feeling lightheaded. I'm becoming more confident every day, so I'm sure that I'll be ready to take on the challenges of high school, next year.

I know my self-confidence will be challenged at times, but with a sure sense of my identity I think I'll be able to face whatever lies ahead of me. Ahead of me is a pathway. This pathway leads to a future filled with opportunities.

I've discovered that people admire me for my abilities. Perhaps they will also remember me for my kindness and understanding as an intermediate school student.

Fonotele Lokeni, 12
Sāmoa





Kalisolaite Fonongaloa

Tall, sky tower ta'ahine,
Crazy, buff netball player,
Mumbling chatter boxer,
Victoria cherry blossom,
Coconut oil tau'olunga.

White Sunday

It's early Sunday morning. I wake up to the smell of fire, burning in Nana Line's backyard. I remember that she said she'd make an 'umu today. Nana only makes 'umu for special occasions, that are happening on that exact day. Today is White Sunday, so we get to feast!

When we make an 'umu, my uncle Sisi and two of my brothers, Paea and Osaiasi, dig the ngoto 'umu, the 'umu hole. The ladies have to stay inside and prepare the food. We're having lū sipi, which is talo leaves wrapped around lamb and vegetables, manioke (cassava), mei (breadfruit), talo and green bananas.

Our 'umu takes three hours to cook. That's why we make it early in the morning. While it's cooking, the boys outside have to work. We just wait.

We get ready for church. I wear all white and tie my ta'ovala on top, with a kafa, or woven belt.

A ta'ovala is like a special woven mat that we wear for special occasions. The men wear it most of the time. We usually wear kiekie, traditional Tongan overskirts, which are smaller and more comfortable. Ta'ovala are sometimes annoying to wear. Sometimes, when I sit down, it goes all crinkled.

I also wear a red kahoa that my nana's friend made. It ties around my neck and has little flowers on it. It makes me feel special.



Most of us leave, to go to church. My uncle stays back, to look after the 'umu.

We read hymns at church. We each have a verse to read and, after we read it, the church sings back to us. The church is bright with whiteness and it feels like heaven.

When we get back, my brothers help my uncle with the 'umu, again. They pull the kato 'umu, the 'umu basket, out of the ngoto 'umu. It is full of food.

The food is wrapped in foila, aluminium foil, and all I can smell is the coconut cream in the lū sipi.

Don't tell my uncle, but sometimes I can smell the burnt manioke! Manioke is usually the one that gets burnt in the 'umu, because it's always at the bottom.

The boys carry the food inside and then we're ready for Nana Line to begin the lotu, or prayers. I can't wait!

*Kalisolaite 'I Enselmo Ngala Mei Ha'amoā Fonongaloa, 12
Tonga, Vava'u*





Kilauea Petero

storm-crazy morning hair
a whisper of wind
conditioner
hot lava
milo

Tokelau Language Week

It's Tokelau Language Week. We celebrate at the Pasifika hall in Highbury.

We all run straight to the changing area. The girls and ladies put on traditional dresses. The men and boys wear lavalava with titi, which are traditional overskirts, woven out of kanava bark strips. We all wear lei on our heads. Sometimes, these are called Tahitian flower crowns.

We start with the girls' dance. A glance to my right shows me that the ladies are putting a lot of effort into this dance that represents our amazing culture. There are a lot of hand movements. The movements are graceful and, when the time is right, there's a slight swing of the hips and bending of the knees. The lower you go, the better.

After we finish, it is time for the boys' siva. When they start their dance, everything gets loud. The drum bangs. The men sing with their deep, booming voices and stomp their feet on the ground. It is so beautiful, seeing my people of Tokelau dance!

Did you know that Tokelau dances actually repeat over and over again? This makes them really easy to learn.

As we dance, we get sprayed by perfume. It smells like a sweet lolly factory, or like red roses. We are handed \$20 or \$50 notes, as we dance, but it's mostly adults who get the money.



We're being recorded, live, for Facebook. Afterwards, I see lots of nice comments and cheering. It makes me so happy to see how many people support our country.

Now, it's time to eat. When my aunty and grandma spread the food on the table, I can smell it, from all the way outside. They call us in, to do the lotu, or prayer.

Everybody rushes over, to get a plate, and fills it up with food. There is sapaui (chop suey), puta (fry bread), koko laisa (chocolate rice), curry, seafood and yummy salads.

Everybody eats peacefully, as we watch some people speaking live, on the TV. They are talking Tokelauan. I am not fluent in Tokelau, so I have trouble with the words that they're saying, but I know that they are happy and proud of our country.

As we watch this beautiful speech, the adults fan themselves with coconut and pandanus ili, or fans. I can admit that it is hot inside the hall, since we don't have an electric fan, to let the cold inside.

Now that everyone has cleaned up the hall and settled their bellies properly, it is time for a game of cricket! Most people don't know what sports Tokelauans like. Well, if you didn't know, cricket is our native sport. We play for a really long time, while some of the big kids teach the little kids how to say words in Tokelau.

After the adults pack up the cricket equipment, they come into the hall. I look outside and it is already dark. Everybody helps to pack up the hall, while me and the kids clean the kitchen. Some people pack food for their families to take home.

Everything is tidy, now. It is time for a family photo, in front of the Tokelau flag. The photographer sends the photo on Facebook and it looks wonderful!

Everyone grabs their food and heads out to their cars.

We say, "Mālō," as a thank you and "Tōfā ni," as a goodbye.

Kilauea Petero, 12
Tokelau





Laifone Liuvaie

A brown giraffe,
combined with an elephant.
A mumbling waterfall
of words.

Scent of a damp monkey,
A confused bunch of clouds.
Taste buds full
of saliva.

Tau Toa Niue

This is dedicated to my great grandfathers, Privates Fati and Liuvaie, two of the 150 great Niuean soldiers, who made up the Niuean Tau Toa.

The sound of the conch shell blasts through the village. People start to stampede, foot after foot, to find the source of the ear-ringing sound. After a while, a crowd of people begins to herd around a group of well-dressed, strange-looking men. As the crowd's moaning grows louder, one of the men announces something extremely life-changing.

“Quiet down, everyone!” he calls. “There is a war in Europe and New Zealand has invited our strong Niuean warriors, to join the New Zealand Army force. Only some will be selected.”

Lots of the island's young men express their interest. The young men sign up for adventure, PRIDE, family and to serve their country and the British Empire.

As the clock ticks, hour by hour, day by day, the names of those who have been selected are finally announced. People hear them, with mixed emotions. Excitement, disappointment, honour and fear.

Weeks later, a big bell rings, signalling the departure of Niue's warriors. Those who are selected line up, whimpering about loved



ones they might not ever see again. People's eyes are pouring and their hearts are heavy. They wave goodbye, as the *Te Anau* slowly disappears into the horizon.

It takes time for the men to recover from their eye-balling session. As the coast gets fainter, one of the ship's operators announces, "The next stop is New Zealand!"

The ship's bell rings, signalling the Niuean warriors' arrival. Men scuttle their feet and clinch their butts in fear. Hands are heard clapping, but some are shivering about being in a new and far-away place. Feelings of loneliness, isolation and nervousness take over.

The men exit the ship, following the sergeant. Reaching the military camp, they are greeted and escorted to their beds. The men do not feel confident. Everything looks different from life in the village. People speak a different language, the food is strange and the cold weather hits them hard.

After the Niueans settle and put their woven pandanus bags away, they have to start training. Star jumps, sprints, press ups, pull ups and burpees. They repeat these for many hours, with some of the men fainting from dehydration and exhaustion. Their feet shake in agony. They are not used to army boots.

At 8pm, the commander gathers all the future soldiers and says, "Could the Niueans please stay with me?"

The Niueans obey the commander's call. He tells them, "After a few months, you will be sent with the New Zealand Army force, as trenchers."

Going back to their assigned tents, they finally process what the commander has said and start to tear up.

A few months later, the men get up from their beds, ready for the hardships that they will face from that point on. The bell crashes, side to side, preparing the soldiers for their future struggles of war. Everyone lines up, waiting for the ship's bridge to drop. Slowly, the gangplank lowers and everyone enters the ship.

All these soldiers go to various countries around the world: to Belgium, France and Egypt. The Niuean trenchers face plenty of



adversities, with catching a cold or burnout, from the outrageous weather. Rats and mice fall on them, making them faint, or scraping them. Some Niuean soldiers drop dead from the harsh weather conditions. Some think of suicide, but others remind them of the lives they will enjoy with their families, when they get back to Niue.

As the Niueans' war service ends, they pack their bags and head back to Niue. On the way back, on the *Te Arawa*, some die of disease and are wrapped in cloth, blessed and buried at sea. At Hornchurch in England, a few more perish from sickness. Their comrades bid them farewell.

When they finally reach Niue, the men cry their hearts out, as their families clap in celebration. Some of the families notice that their loved ones are not in the bunch of sobbing men. They weep because their loved ones are lost. The war has swallowed them, never to be seen again.

The gangplank is lowered and the survivors hug their families and celebrate their great achievements. It is a great day for Niue, as the whole island welcomes back its warriors.

Laifone Liuvaie, 11
Niue, Hakupu / Mutalau villages





Liam Qiokata

hair like Medusa
smells like lost property
skin like dry sand
built like a burger

First Cook Island Holiday

The night we arrived at the Cook Island airport was warm. My family were waiting to see me - my nan and my aunties. We stayed in a lovely beach house, right next to the beach. That night, I remember being excited to experience Cook Island life.

For breakfast we had hot, tasty donuts from this nice lady from down the street. Donuts are an Island type of food they eat. I also ate lots of fish and chips. I think their fish and chips have *way* more flavour than ours!

During the week, I went to the flea market, the movies and a traditional Cook Island dancing show. My aunty and uncles work there, so I got to see them dance. They wore lavalava, straw skirts and flowers.

The next day, I went on Koka Lagoon. It was a nice boat trip. There was a glass floor, so we could see what was under us, in the sea. There were all kinds of fish and a massive stingray. We listened to some nice Island jams, bopping our heads in time.

On the boat, I remember first tasting a coconut. I drank some of the coconut water and ate the rest. I thought the coconut water would taste sweet, but it tasted kind of like the ocean.

We got to have a dive and then they took us to an island. We had a feed and they put on a crack-up show. There were lots of people from different countries, some that weren't in the Pacific. The guide made jokes about everyone and made us all laugh. He was a funny guy.



They got us to do a crab race. I put my crab into the circle for the race. The last crab to stay in the circle would be the winner.

My crab was one of the first to go!

I had a mean-as holiday, mainly because I got to spend it with my family. I liked doing new activities and trying new food, and I loved seeing what my family from the Cook Islands do over there. I just didn't expect the island to be that small!

Liam Koroi Leota Qiokata, 11
Fiji, Lomaiviti, Gau Island, Nukuloa village
Cook Islands, Rarotonga, Titikaeveka village
Sāmoa, Avao village





Sontel Liuvaie

If the Amazon Forest was my hair
Tall swaying coconut tree
Blasting speaker of excitement
Artificial conditioner-splattered puffiness
Random emotions as if I was a dice
Chicken cooked anyway

Nena's 80th

The noise crashes through the hall, with the sounds of family and music clashing on top of one another. Today is a special and important day for my family. The special event is Nena Siga's birthday. More than 200 people have come.

As I view all my family from the kitchen, I feel a light tug from my t-shirt. When I turn around, Dad gives me the sign. Nena is here, now.

I hurry outside of the main entrance. It's a heavy rainy day. I finally get to see Nena Siga on her special wheeled couch. Telson, one of my older brothers, leads her to the foyer where my family waits.

Outside of the foyer, Dad's side of the family gets ready to lead her in. From loud and chaotic, to distinctive whispering noises, Dad starts a lologo, or song. Our family joins in the singing, as they bring Nena in.

The passionate singing echoes through the hall, with everyone clapping in unison to the melodious beat. Once Nena gets to the front, with the family towing behind, the lologo finally concludes.

After parading Nena in, I can see from the corner of my eye that she is all flustered. I'm not surprised, given the number of people celebrating this momentous occasion, her 80th birthday.

The formal part of the day begins with a liogi, or prayer, to bless the matriarch of the family, followed by heartfelt speeches from families



and her special friends. Once the family is told to be seated, I make my way to the kitchen, to see if I can help with anything.

From the kitchen, I take a good look around the hall. The magnificent colours collide and make it more majestic, with the vibrance of the special mumu dresses, decorations and colourful fougou, or flowered headbands, that the matua fufine (ladies) are wearing.

Adorning the walls are Niuean decorations and artefacts. The beautiful woven lili wall hangings, Nena's afiluluga (crochet pillow case), vaka (canoes), and tapa surround the hall and add a real Niuean flavour to this beautiful occasion. This bedecked hall is also filled with tiale (frangipani) and kaute (red hibiscus), both Nena's favourites.

Mum calls my name, to come and help my cousins transfer the food from the kitchen to the table. Weaving through the crowd, I put the platter of talo down.

Before heading back to the kitchen, I take a quick glance at the food. A spectacular variety of Niuean and modern cuisines is piled on the table. Five minutes after the prayer, I can't see the table, any more. Loads of people are swarming around, like bees to a bouquet of flowers, eager to devour the appetising food. I sneak up closer, to take a big sniff and the heavenly smell uplifts my food spirit.

Mouth-watering, beautiful, succulent and scrumptious food fills my nose, before I even get to eat any. The strong scents take me back to the island with all this umu-cooked food. I can pick up the scent of the big puaka, or pig, in the middle, the soft cooked talo, and the traditional Niuean dish, takihi, made of sweet pawpaw, talo and coconut cream. This is what real food is all about.

One of the highlights of today is performing in front of Nena Siga. I will perform a siva Sāmoa, a traditional Sāmoan dance, to represent Papa Liu's other culture.

My younger cousins open the performance with their singing, dancing, and cute little selves, dazzling the audience and compelling them to depart from their hard-earned cash. People tuck money inside their clothes. Because they are dancing, it falls like rain.



Glancing at the stage floor, I see it is covered with all different colours of money.

As soon as me and my siblings take to the stage, my legs start to feel like spaghetti. My arms are heavy and I sweat like a shower. I begin to fidget my hands, to squash down my nerves.

I see Nena is quite tired. But she is still enjoying the entertainment. I head onstage with my brothers, feeling like a red tomato. I'm so nervous of dancing in front of a large crowd. My brothers do a Tongan dance and I follow with my siva Sāmoa, which I have learnt in record time.

During a dance skit, my older brother Telson is being the hype man for me. The entertainment concludes with a family item, displaying a fusion of unco aunties, awkward dance moves from the matua taane (men), and funny cousins dancing along, too.

From the comfort of her wheeled couch, Nena thoroughly enjoys every part of the day. It makes me and my family more pleased to see a good reaction from her.

I walk down the stage, to where Nena is, and say, "Happy Birthday Nena!" and give her a loving kiss on her forehead.

*Sontel Ligiasena Heresa Fakaalofa Tararua Liuvaie, 12
Niue, Hakupu / Mutalau villages*





Vallene Banga

Bright smile, easy laugh
clear, confident speaker.
Full of joy
humble and grateful
fresh and clean.

Gentle scent of frangipani
taste of strawberries
lingering breath.
Memories of good things
stay close to me forever.

The Eldest Child

“Oi! You can’t take the last ice block. I already had dibs on that!” I yell at my little brother.

Angry words tumble from my mouth and surround this small demanding child, who is now grasping the very last ice block, with the kind of delight that is usually reserved for a special prize.

“Mum said I could have it,” he responds triumphantly.

He strengthens his case, by reminding me that I had eaten one yesterday. I guess he has forgotten that he also had one yesterday. He continues his unconvincing argument by declaring that he should rightfully enjoy this frozen treasure because he is the youngest in the family.

A huge sigh of frustration escapes from me. I feel like a flat balloon, as I imagine the sweet refreshing taste of the ice block that little Hakai is now enjoying. Disappointment grows in me.

“You’re so unfair!” I tell him in a strong, righteous, big-sister voice. It seems important to tell him this, although I know he hasn’t yet fully grasped the concept of fairness.



Hakai responds by poking out his brightly stained tongue. His mischievous smirk and sparkling eyes infuriate me! I refuse to acknowledge his messy cuteness. I stomp upstairs to my room, like a frustrated bull that has just lost a battle, and stare blankly out my window.

Eventually I begin to notice careless drops of rain, dancing on the ground. The raindrops distract me long enough to recognise the futility of arguing with a small child. I let the sound of heavy rain fill my ears and soothe my mind. Calmness returns to me, as I take deep, slow breaths.

Suddenly, the door is flung wide open, with a shuddering bang. I'm amazed that a small hand is capable of such a violent shove.

“Jeez, Hakai!” I exclaim, “WHAT DO YOU WANT, NOW?”

A feeling of shock and despair rushes through my body and my heart skips a beat.

“Mum wants you to fold the washing,” Hakai says. He gives me the familiar up to down look, of someone who is delivering an important message. I roll my eyes at him, as I trudge downstairs. My shoulders droop lower with every step I take.

Folding clothes is not the peaceful activity I had been anticipating. I dutifully complete this job and quickly discover that there are more chores to do. I long to run towards my device, but find myself rinsing the dishes and tidying the house instead.

My tired mother is busy cooking for us. I know that she depends on me for help. A delicious smell drifts from our kitchen. It reminds me that Mum constantly has work to do and that I should be willing to help with a few chores.

Mum smiles at me, as she opens the oven door and releases the comforting aroma of pani popo. These Sāmoan coconut buns are everyone's favourite! I catch Mum's warm smile and feel surrounded by love. My frustration finally drifts away.

The smell of pani popo attracts Hakai like a magnet. He approaches, wearing clothing that has been smothered by dribbles and smudges from the ice block. His cheerful smile is like sunshine!



I try to hide my chuckles as I lay eyes on him and pretend to growl. “Mum is going to kill you if she sees you like that! I’ll get you cleaned up before we all eat.”

I notice with pride that my brother’s face is bright with joy and satisfaction. He needs my help and he loves me almost as much as he loves Mum.

My heart is full and a smile has returned to my face. My saliva flows like a waterfall, as I anticipate the fresh pani popo that we’re about to eat. I think about the gooey coconut cream that makes the warm buns so soft and delicious, and realise that my mood has improved.

I feel so fortunate to live in a happy home that is filled with love. Mum cheerfully puts three creamy buns on each of our plates, although we all know that we are certainly going to eat more.

My gratitude is reinforced when we say our tatalo before eating. We all say, “Amene,” together at the end of the prayer. We lick our lips and dig in.

I certainly know that time spent doing chores, helping parents, and constantly looking after siblings has given me parent-like skills at a young age. I’m incredibly grateful for this. Being the oldest boy or girl in a Sāmoan family can be a role that is full of obstacles and challenges. It can also be an opportunity to develop independence and a sense of responsibility. I think it gives me a chance to practise leadership.

My mother has set a great example for me. She has shaped and guided me, to be the girl I am today. Without her presence, I would be a complete lost cause.

If there is a moral to my story, it is to always love your mother and cherish the family she has helped to create. Appreciate them!

I can’t wait until the day my child writes something like this about me. I love my family!

Vallene Bella-Maree Banga, 12
Sāmoa, Vaimoso village





Ve'a Folaumoeloa

Short, with curly luscious hair.
Innocent and sweet,
Psychotic laugh.

I smell like fresh laundry
from the washing machine.
A mixture of pride and stress.

My spit jumps up and down
inside my mouth,
like kids in a bouncy house.

A Tongan Kid

I was born in Tonga but, at the age of two, my family and I moved to New Zealand because there are more lucky chances.

My parents saw opportunities, like education, sports and work. I am very grateful here. I am lucky that I have a roof over my head and the food my parents prepare for me.

Tongan traditions are very beautiful and unique. Traditional things like our clothing, dancing and my most favourite....FOOD!

Tongan food is very yummy. We eat all sorts of stuff. Pork, chicken, beef, sheep ribs and, of course, fish. My favourite is lū. To make lū, you need to get talo leaves and put meat inside them, with coconut milk.

Some Tongan food I dislike, like talo, yams, bananas and coconuts. I don't like them because, to me, they have no flavour. But I love *most* Tongan food. I could eat it all day!

Some of my traditional clothing is very similar to other Pacific cultures, but we are the only ones to have something called a ta'ovala. A ta'ovala is made out of dried pandanus leaves, woven



together, and it is worn around your waist. I have been told that it is a sign of respect.

A ta'ovala is something you can wear to Tongan occasions. It kind of starts off as a fala, or mat, and then you just wrap it around your waist. To keep it up, you tie a kafa around it. A kafa is like a long, thin rope. It can be any colour or design.

In my opinion, a ta'ovala is VERY uncomfortable. It feels tight, when you sit down or stand. And it leaves a mark.

The exciting thing, is when we take it off. You can just imagine the breeze!

In 2019, my Grandpa's brother died, so we set the funeral in Auckland. In Auckland, we slept in my second nana's house. The next day, we went to the funeral.

There were lots of tables everywhere. That was because we were going to have a feast, right after.

I always say to myself, "Why would we be having a feast after a funeral?" It's almost like we're celebrating death.

But we were not celebrating his death. Since the funeral took more than three hours, we needed to eat some food. I had potato salad, sheep ribs and two sausages.

Some of my family from Tonga were there. They said that they had baby-sat me, when I was a little kid. But to me, I've never seen them in my life. We talked together for a while. Then we went into the church.

The church was right next to the hall. In the church, there was a giant coffin, with a fala, or mat, surrounding it. There were giant pictures of him everywhere and lots of flowers around him. We stayed for more than three hours.

This is not 'traditional' but every May the 1st, all the kids gather together to have our Fakame, or White Sunday. This year for Fakame, we had to do it on Zoom because of COVID.



What my family and I did for Fakame was perform an action song. I barely knew the actions and I was super nervous because we had to read our himi, or hymn book, live, in front of everybody. Luckily, I did all right.

I wore lots of clothing. I thought I looked amazing! For the base, I was wearing a white dress with a white tupenu, or lavalava. I wore a plain ta'ovala, with a beautiful kafa. I wore a red flowered necklace and my hair was tied in a low ponytail. I cleaned my face over five hundred times because I had to be perfect!

One main rule that my family tells me, is to only speak English out of the house and always speak Tongan in the house.

The bad thing is that I haven't been following that rule! And since I haven't been following that rule, I'm not the best at speaking Tongan. I can understand SOME sentences and SOME words, which is not that bad. But at the same time, it is.

Learning to speak proper Tongan is one of my goals because when I grow up, I want to teach my kids how to speak Tongan, as well. I want them to be able to speak AND understand it.

Simaima Veamotulalo Folaumoeloa, 11
Tonga, 'Ahau / Ha'avakatolo villages



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Go, Palmy!

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