



OCEANS BETWEEN US

Pacific Peoples & Racism
in Aotearoa

Edited by
Sereana Naepi

OCEANS BETWEEN US

Pacific Peoples & Racism
in Aotearoa _____

Edited by
Sereana Naepi



AUCKLAND
UNIVERSITY
PRESS

First published 2025
Auckland University Press
Waipapa Taumata Rau
University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142
New Zealand
www.aucklanduniversitypress.co.nz

© Sereana Naepi and the contributors, 2025

ISBN 978 1 77671 125 3

A catalogue record for this book is available from the National Library
of New Zealand

This book is copyright. Apart from fair dealing for the purpose of private
study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright
Act, no part may be reproduced by any process without prior permission
of the publisher. The moral rights of the authors have been asserted.

Design by Carolyn Lewis
Cover artwork by Vasemaca Tavola, 2025
This book was printed on FSC® certified paper
Printed in Singapore by Markono Print Media Pte Ltd

*For those who tirelessly work to transform the
future of our Pacific communities – your dedication
and hope inspire us all and pave the way for
generations to come.*

CONTENTS

Foreword ix

Ashlea Gillon Aramoana

Artist's Note xiii

Vasemaca Tavola

RACISM

Why We Need to Talk About It 1

Sereana Naepi

HISTORY

'They Call Me a Bunga'

Colonialism, History and Stereotypes in Aotearoa New Zealand 9

Marcia Leenen-Young

ECONOMY

Is the Migrant Dream a Capitalist Dream?

Pacific Peoples and the Economy 37

Sereana Naepi, Lisa Meto Fox, Dylan Asafo and Evaluesi Tu'inukuafe

EDUCATION

Structural Racism and Education in Aotearoa 53

*Jean M. Uasike Allen, Toleafoa Yvonne Ualesi, David Taufui Mikato Fa'avae
and Fetaui Iosefo*

MIGRATION

Time and Race

Pacific Migration Journeys to Aotearoa 81

Evaluesi Tu'inukuafe

CLIMATE JUSTICE

There Can Be No (Climate) Justice on Stolen Land
Pacific Peoples, Climate Change and the Law in New Zealand 97
Dylan Asafo

HEALTH

‘We Need to Get Real’
Structural Racism and the Wellbeing of Pacific Peoples in Aotearoa 117
Caleb Marsters

HIGHER EDUCATION

The Pacific Pipeline
Structural Racism and Pacific Peoples in Higher Education 153
Sereana Naepi

JUSTICE SYSTEMS

Recognising Stories of Suffering in Section 27 of the Sentencing Act 2002 175
Barbara-Luhia Graham

THE NEXT GENERATION

To Weave Dreams of Liberation 195
Chelsea Naepi

Notes 206

Contributors 239

Index 243

FOREWORD

Ashlea Gillon Aramoana

Haere mai, haere mai, haere mai rā.

Haere mai e ngā whanaunga o Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa nei e.

Whakatau mai ki runga i ngā kaupapa o te

whakawhanaungatanga, o te mana motuhake,

o te rangatiratanga e.

Nau mai, haere mai, kōrero mai, noho mai, whakatau mai,

karanga mai rā.

Tēnā rā koutou katoa.

Manawa mai te mauri moana, manawa mai te mauri whenua,

manawa mai ngā mauri katoa.

Tihei mauri ora.

Ko te Mana Moana te kaupapa o tēnei pukapuka. He kohinga

kōreo tēnei kia akiaki i ngā tangata moana kia

whakapapare tonu i ngā pūnaha whakakōmau. Ko tēnei

whiti he karanga, he pōwhiri mō tēnei kaupapa, mō ēnei

whanaunga hoki, nā reira, nau mai, piki mai, kake mai.

Welcome, come forth, welcome to the relations of Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa for connecting, building relationships, for self-determination and sovereignty. Welcome, share your truth, sit with us, settle, and call forth. Greetings to you all. Bring forward the essence and power of the ocean, bring forward the essence and power of the land, bring forward the essence and power of all things. It is done. The purpose of this book is the agency, sovereignty and power of the Pacific Ocean peoples against the systems of oppression that restrict us. This section is a call, a welcome for these conversations, for these relations. And so, come forth, climb ahead, ascend forward.

KIA ORA. Here, I present a karanga, a call, a welcome, a declaration, a ceremony in its own right. I welcome our whanaunga, our relations of the moana, Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa, I welcome them to speak, to discuss, to share, to rest, to settle, and to call here. I do not speak for all Māori by any means, nor do I pretend to have the power to declare anything definite or permanent, or immovable. Much like Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa, I move and flow with our ocean that connects us. What I offer here is a toka tū moana, a rock in the ocean to rest upon; I offer a type of pōwhiri, a type of spiritual and cultural safety, connection, and welcome to have these kōrero in this space; I offer this with my ngākau and my puku, to ensure that our whanaunga o Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa are safe and welcome.

A pōwhiri is a process of connection, of relationship, of nurturing and (re)moving tapu, of nurturing and (re)establishing noa, so that conversation, relationship, coming together, and sharing and conceiving new and old ideas may take place. These things often happen within marae, within our wharehenui, a space often understood as a body that may conceive and receive newness and abundance, a space within which to have easy, moderate, difficult, excruciating, blunt, purposeful or hilarious conversations. A place within which children and young people are meant to be disruptive, inquisitive, to disturb the dust, to learn, to argue, to deliberate; a place within which questions are meant to be asked, to challenge, and to seek answers. A pōwhiri is tikanga within which one may talk absolute poetry and truth, and in the next moment, when in good relation, utter shit talk, mockery and joking. It is a tikanga within which safety, mutuality and respect can be (re) created. Within pōwhiri, there are often mana whenua, the people who have agency, the responsibility of guardianship and hospitality, and who whakapapa to the place within which the pōwhiri is being held; and manuhiri, visitors, guests or extended relations who may not have the same responsibilities of manaaki for a space, but may find a home there, and may seek to be in relation. I am re-writing or perhaps, (re)creating pōwhiri here for these purposes, for relationship, for connection, for enabling and (re)creating cultural

and spiritual safety to engage in kōrero that may be taumaha. I am (re)creating pōwhiri to offer a safe, welcome, relational space for the authors within this book to kōrero tūturu, to speak, wholly, their truths, their experiences, their feelings, their histories, their commonalities, their differences. I offer a welcome to our Pacific whanaunga, our kaihana, to kōrero their tika, their pono.

It is a privilege to write the foreword for this book. I have known many of the authors for a long time; we have had many kōrero and wānanga about the racism of New Zealand towards Māori and Pacific Peoples. We kōrero as whanaunga; we discuss in depth the ways in which institutional and structural racism deny, restrict and undermine us and our agency. We kōrero about the ways in which stereotypes and colonialism form racial slurs that seek to disempower us. We kōrero about the ways in which the failures in climate justice inequitably impact Pacific Peoples. We kōrero about this government's utter failures, and about white supremacy, racism and violence towards us. Honestly, brutally, truthfully, transparently. We kōrero utter shit talk, mockery and joking about the sheer idiocy that is racism as a means of carrying the weight of it. We kōrero. And it is a privilege to be a part of that kōrero, along with this foreword, to offer safety and connection to my tuākana in this space so they may kōrero.

This book is a truth-telling of Pacific Peoples' navigations of racism in New Zealand. It brings together Pacific Peoples across disciplines, rohe and histories. This book reiterates the rights that enable Pacific Peoples to tell their truths, to tell of their experiences, to share the genealogy of racism that has controlled and restricted their realities, much like ours as Māori. The chapters of this book flow together, like our oceans, to (re)centre Pacific Peoples in ways that our Westernised, colonial world could not dream of.

Just as a pōwhiri offers critical space to have direct conversations, this book provides the perfect time and space to have these critical, direct conversations about the many promises that New Zealand has broken for Pacific Peoples because of its racism. The stories shared within this book may be difficult for racists to read,

which is all the more reason to read this book, to honour our Pacific whanaunga and their truths, to challenge the structural racism that is embedded within our world, and, quite frankly, to be like our tamariki and learn through disruption and disturbing the dust. In this instance, I see the dust that needs to be disturbed as the dusty, crusty racists who will be mad about this book.

The editor and authors have come together as a rōpū, as whanaunga, to create a book that is critical, transformational, generative, and a beautiful koha to all of us in Aotearoa New Zealand. With koha, comes a commitment to being in good relation. In receiving this important, critical koha, we as readers are making a commitment to Pacific Peoples, and to having ongoing whanaungatanga. As readers, much like when we engage and commit to pōwhiri, we have a responsibility to honour, build and move in good relation, in solidarity, with Pacific Peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand, with all those who experience the violence of oppression, and to work towards unlearning and undoing racism. This is the whanaungatanga and the koha we commit to and can reciprocate for our whanaunga o Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa.

Ki a koutou, e ngā whanaunga
nau mai
kōrero mai
werohia mai.
Tēnā koutou
tēnā tātou katoa.

*And so, to you, the relations
welcome here
speak here
bring forth your challenges here.*