

2015

February

“The Treaty of Waitangi: our founding Human Rights Document”
Waitangi Day Dawn Ceremony
Hopukioire/Mt Drury, Tauranga
6 February 2015

Ko Tauranga te moana

Ko Mauao te maunga

Tena koutou katoa

I am honoured to be with you today.

I am proud to stand with the people of Tauranga. But most of all, I am grateful.

Because today on our 175th Waitangi Day, the people of Tauranga Moana stand together. As you know we haven't always stood together.

The Treaty was signed by two peoples 175 years ago. Back then Tauranga Moana iwi were exporting more produce than any other area in New Zealand. Our tribes were growing crops on tribal lands, processing them in their own warehouses and exporting them to Australia on their own vessels. Our regional economy was created by the tribes of Tauranga Moana: this is something all locals need to know.

But the Treaty was not honoured and the ground rules were changed beneath the feet of Tauranga Moana iwi. 150 years ago the tribal lands of Tauranga Moana were confiscated by the Government.

And more than a century later it's our generation who are witnessing the resolution of injustices that have been felt by generations of Tauranga families.

The injustice is something we can never be proud of but we can be proud that together we are working to replace injustice with justice.

The Treaty settlements process is unique and world leading, it sets us apart from other nations.

If you look around the world right now it's pretty obvious that ignoring injustice and grievance does not make them go away.

So I am proud that we can look back at our shared past with open eyes.

We can look each other in the eye and start sorting things out. We don't agree all the time but it's a start.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

There are some of us who will make a maunga out of a molehill and argue that we shouldn't even try to pronounce Maori words properly. But there are more of us who know that to guarantee our children and grandchildren a country we can be proud of: we have to start now, by working together.

It's ironic that Gareth Morgan's house is just over there, I'd like to congratulate our neighbour for having a go and putting his views out there.

Brave conversations, courageous korero is what we need to be having more of.

Kiwis should be grateful we have a Treaty. 175 years ago our ancestors agreed that all Kiwis have rights. Not just European, Maori or rich Kiwis: the Treaty guaranteed that all Kiwis have rights.

I believe the Treaty is New Zealand's founding human rights document. We should be pretty proud that this is what our nation is founded on.

Back in 1840 the notion that all people had human rights was a world leading concept because in most so called civilised nations: slavery was still legal.

The Treaty of Waitangi and our ability as a people and a nation to be honest about our past is our insurance policy for the future.

Bishop Manu Bennett said the Treaty was a promise of two peoples to take the best care of each other.

Maori culture is an intangible cultural treasure that binds and defines all New Zealanders.

Take the haka, it's about focusing people for the journey ahead, it's about honouring people, it's about uniting people.

The spine tingling haka our own local schools perform – boys and girls from all ethnic backgrounds – are a sight to behold and one as a Mum and a New Zealander that makes me feel so proud of our younger generation.

They give us all hope.

Even our national anthem – thanks to our Kids we sing it in both of our languages, te reo Maori and English.

Our Kids are our greatest hope for the future.

New Zealand is now one of the most ethnically diverse nations on earth. When it comes to race relations New Zealanders are doing better than we've done before. But we can do better, in fact: we have no choice but to do better.

We're pretty good at learning from our past in New Zealand – planning for our future is something we need to get better at. We can't just say She'll Be Right and hope for the best. If we don't plan for our future and our children's future now – chances are, She Won't be Right.

“Maori Basketball Tournament”
Statement
5 February 2015

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy hopes an issue over a Rotorua basketball tournament can be sorted out.

“I’m hoping organisers can keep talking with those affected so this can be sorted out because it’s the kids who are missing out,” said Dame Susan Devoy.

“Sports codes who wish to grow a sport and strengthen networks within ethnic communities aren’t new: the Warriors sponsor the Ethnic Rugby League competition and New Zealand’s Ethnic Football Festival is a nationwide tournament.”

“The Nga Hau E Wha Maori Squash tournament is also hugely popular, the biggest in New Zealand with players from all ethnic backgrounds welcome.”

Dame Susan says some who argue that Maori Basketball’s policy is one of apartheid are wrong.

“Apartheid was a historical, murderous system of racial oppression against non-white South Africans that pervaded every aspect of their lives: It’s incorrect and incredibly disrespectful to casually say that what is happening in Rotorua is apartheid: because it isn’t.”

Dame Susan is unable to make further comment at this time: “At this stage we have not received all the facts about this issue and the commission has not received a formal complaint from those affected.”

January

“Stereotyping ethnic groups as irresponsible pet owners wrong”

Statement

27 January 2015

Stereotyping entire ethnic groups as irresponsible pet owners wrong and offensive - Human Rights Commission

Sweeping claims by an SPCA spokesman stereotyping entire races as irresponsible people who don't care about their pets are “unhelpful, wrong and incredibly offensive to a lot of people” says Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy.

“The SPCA do great things but race profiling pet owners isn't one of them. Some of us are great at caring for our animals and some of us aren't but our DNA isn't to blame,” said Dame Susan.

“Just because some farmers have been convicted for animal abuse doesn't mean all farmers are irresponsible people who don't care for their animals.”

Dame Susan urged the Society to work with all communities, particularly young Kiwis, to help get education messages across to all animal and pet owners.

“Honour our Holocaust Survivors: Don't Be a Bystander”

Holocaust Remembrance Day

Opinion Piece, Dominion Post

27 January 2015

70 years ago in the early hours of the morning and in the middle of a bitter snowstorm, Auschwitz Concentration Camp was liberated. Today is International Holocaust Remembrance Day, this afternoon some incredible New Zealanders – our own Holocaust survivors - will honour us with their presence at Makara Cemetery. Together we will remember millions of innocent men, women and children who were murdered by a ruthless, racist regime.

So today of all days, as we stand alongside our Holocaust survivors we must ask ourselves, have we learnt anything at all? Are we honouring their legacy?

I'd like to share a story with you, a pre-school boy walking home from kindy with his mother is confronted by angry adults who abuse him because he is a Jew.

They rip the yarmulke off his small head and scream hate at him and his mum.

Did this attack take place 75 years ago? Was that little boy from Berlin or Warsaw?

I'm ashamed to say that no, this didn't happen long ago and neither did it happen far away.

This small Kiwi boy lives in Mt Eden and he faced race hate only a few months ago, on the streets of our biggest city.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

Sadly Muslim Kiwis have reported similar attacks on their children and mums on the way home from school.

When our kids are scared to wear a yarmulke or a head scarf because some adult may abuse or attack them: what kind of New Zealand are we living in?

Some may argue we shouldn't be too worried because we don't have the same rate of attacks as other countries. But this argument is flawed.

Because as our Holocaust survivors will tell you, hate starts small.

Hate is born when a small child and his mother are abused as they walk home.

Hate grows when their neighbours and friends stand by and do nothing.

Hate triumphs when intolerance and prejudice becomes engrained across an entire society, from the pages of newspapers to the halls of Government, from schoolrooms to boardrooms.

If there is any lesson everyday New Zealanders can learn from the Holocaust - it's don't be a bystander.

Don't stand by and do nothing when you see people spreading hate and prejudice in your community, or your neighbourhood. I can't help but wonder whether anyone supported that small boy and his mum. Did someone let them know they weren't alone? Did someone challenge the cowards who abused them?

Those who spread hate and prejudice in our communities need to know their hatred is not welcome: and it's everyday New Zealanders who need to give them that message.

Everyday New Zealanders need to challenge prejudice and hate wherever, whenever we see it. We have an excellent international human rights record but it is not worth the paper it is written on if New Zealanders are under attack because they're Jewish, Muslim, Chinese or Maori.

Human rights aren't just found in a declaration at the United Nations.

Our human rights must be found here where we live and work, on the streets of Mt Eden, outside a synagogue in Central Wellington, or a mosque in Kilbirnie. Human Rights begin at home. They are rights we are all responsible for, ours to hold and ours to lose.

I'd like to see more young Kiwis attend Holocaust Remembrance Day. With all that is going on in the world right now our youngest New Zealanders need to hear first hand from some of our oldest New Zealanders, people who can tell them exactly what race hate, prejudice and genocide is all about.

The lesson we learn from the Holocaust is that hate starts small, on the streets we live in, at the places we shop and gather. It grows when good people stand by and do nothing. It's up to everyday New Zealanders to stand up for peace and human rights right here at home. This is how we honour the past and guarantee a future we can be proud to leave our children and grandchildren.

“Let’s Talk About Race”
NZ Herald Opinion Piece
23 January 2015

At the weekend columnist Fran O’Sullivan described my statements on Race Relations Day 2015 as “breathtakingly naïve”. The reality is that my statements were made more than a year ago and were solely about Race Relations Day 2014. Not 2015. However Fran makes some good points and I’m grateful for columnists like her who encourage us all to think about race relations.

Every 21st March, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination marks the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre when 69 people – including 10 children – were shot to death by their own Police for protesting against racist apartheid laws.

Kiwis need to remember that two months after Sharpeville the All Blacks toured South Africa. We sent a team of Pakeha players and kept Maori players home so as not to offend our hosts. Fast forward 21 years and for those of us old enough to remember, 1981 was the closest we’ve ever come to a civil war since the New Zealand land wars.

The thing is in New Zealand there used to be a widely held view – and one that a very young, impressionable 17-year-old me thought I also held – that sports had nothing to do with politics. While this position sounds noble, it was not only naïve but also totally wrong. Sport in South Africa under Apartheid, like everything else, had everything to do with the politics of oppression and racism.

When he heard that anti-Apartheid protesters thousands of miles away had forced the cancellation of a test, the late Nelson Mandela said it was as if the sun had come out and shone through his prison cell. It was a watershed year for New Zealanders, we grew up a bit in 1981 and we’ve grown up a lot since then.

Five years ago our Rugby Union formally apologised to Maori players who were excluded from All Black teams in order to adhere to South Africa’s policy of apartheid. At the same time the South African Rugby Union apologised to players banned because of their race.

So when pessimists say it’s all going to turn to custard here when it comes to race relations I look back at how far we’ve come as a people and think that no.

We’re not perfect but New Zealanders are essentially good people who believe in giving others a fair go. But we shouldn’t pat ourselves on the back too much. We’ve still got a lot of work to do.

New Zealand has an excellent international human rights record but it is not worth the paper it is written on if Kiwis are put down because of their race or religion. While we may not face the same rate of race hate incidents as other nations: one is one too many.

We’re getting better at learning from our past but planning for our future is something we need to get better at. We can’t just say She’ll Be Right and hope for the best. Because as history has shown us if we don’t get it right, She Won’t Be Right.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

This year's Race Relations Day we will launch New Zealand's first annual summary of race relations as reported in our media. Ethnic, religious and other minorities regularly tell us they are dismayed at how they're represented in the mainstream media and with their blessing we decided to look into this further. There are other initiatives we will be revealing closer to the 21st of March but none of them are mere slogans.

2015 marks a year of commemorations. The 175th commemoration of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, 70 years since the liberation of Auschwitz and 100 years since World War One. It's time to reflect on how far we have come and to ask ourselves, where are we heading? We are one of the most diverse countries in the world. Natty slogans or catch phrases won't reduce the everyday racism many of us face – the reality is that many New Zealanders don't even realise Race Relations Day exists. It's worth talking about what kind of country we want to live in and leave for our children and grandchildren.

"New Zealand's race relations under scrutiny"

Interview: Al Jazeera

6 January 2015

New Zealand's four-time women's squash world champion, Dame Susan Devoy, was appointed as her country's race relations commissioner in 2013.

She is in office at a time of rising tensions among New Zealand's diverse communities.

Last December, New Zealand passed anti-terrorism measures that caused particular anxiety among its Muslim population.

So is New Zealand's social landscape on the brink of a permanent alteration?

Al Jazeera: *What are the social challenges New Zealand is facing relating to race and faith communities?*

Dame Susan Devoy: The face of New Zealand is younger and more ethnically diverse than ever before. One-in-10 Kiwis are Asian Kiwis. One-in-four Aucklanders are Asian Aucklanders. Maori and Pacific Kiwis are a young, fast growing population.

The bottom line is about all of us building a future where New Zealand children know they are valued and not just tolerated.

We are at a crossroads when it comes to race relations, ethnic diversity and national identity

Last year's census for the first time recorded that more than one million people living in New Zealand were born overseas, 300,000 more than in the 2001 census.

Al Jazeera: *In the past there have been attacks on mosques and a recent report was made to police after the harassment of a Jewish child. How is this being addressed?*

Dame Susan Devoy: Muslim Kiwis and Jewish Kiwis have told us they are feeling under pressure because of ongoing conflicts taking place thousands of miles away from us here in New Zealand.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

Leaders from both communities have publicly and unreservedly rejected violent extremism, and are vocal advocates for peace, justice and human rights.

If New Zealanders want peace overseas then we need to start right here at home, because human rights begin at home, with everyday people.

The streets of our towns and suburbs are where race relations will thrive or die: it's really up to us.

While we mourn the tragic loss of lives overseas, I believe we must honour their lives by standing up for peace and human rights at all costs.

While our incidents are far fewer than what's happened in other countries, they have still happened.

Al Jazeera: *What solutions to current tensions is your office looking into?*

Dame Susan Devoy: There is no panacea when it comes to race relations. Every country has its own issues to address, its own past to reconcile, it's own future to guarantee.

The bottom line is about all of us building a future where New Zealand children know they are valued and not just tolerated.

We are at a crossroads when it comes to race relations, ethnic diversity and national identity and we all need to play a role in the conversation over where New Zealand is heading.

Now is the time to talk about and plan for the kind of country we want our children and grandchildren growing up in.

When we bring the violence and hatred we see on our television screens into our suburbs, when we scream hate at a woman in a veil and her children, or a boy in a yarmulke: we are the ones creating the terror

We're pretty good at learning from and resolving past mistakes in New Zealand – planning for our future is something we need to get better at.

We can't just rely on our Kiwi saying "She'll Be Right" and hope for the best. If we don't plan for our future and our children's future now – chances are, she won't be "Right".

Al Jazeera: *Is institutionalised racism a problem in New Zealand today?*

Dame Susan Devoy: Every year our team at the Human Rights Commission fields thousands of complaints from people all over the country.

Approximately a third of all complaints and enquiries are about racial discrimination. Nine out of 10 complaints are resolved by our team of mediators.

We still have a lot of work to do when it comes to treating each other with respect. In terms of institutional culture we have some unique strategies in place, one is a partnership between New Zealand police and Maori New Zealanders.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

"Turning The Tide" aims to turn around statistics that see Maori make up more than 40 percent of all police apprehensions, 50 percent of the prison population: even though Maori New Zealanders make up only 15 percent of the population.

Our police commissioner was a keynote speaker at our annual Diversity Forum and told us that 'empathy' and 'valuing diversity' had been added to the key police values.

Reducing the number of apprehensions of Maori was another target officers were working towards.

Al Jazeera: *What is your message to New Zealand's faith communities at this moment of tension?*

Dame Susan Devoy: Our message to Kiwis is to stand up for Muslim and Jewish Kiwis or anyone they see being victimised.

Don't be a bystander, be brave and make sure the victims know they are not alone and the perpetrators know they will not be tolerated.

When we bring the violence and hatred we see on our television screens into our suburbs, when we scream hate at a woman in a veil and her children, or a boy in a yarmulke: we are the ones creating the terror.

2014

December

***NZ Institute of International Affairs
Speech
17 December 2014***

The Tasman Sea got a little smaller this week with the tragedy that unfolded before us in a little café in Sydney.

We work closely with Kiwi Muslims who were as heartbroken and devastated as all Kiwis at the loss of innocent lives. Another key player who helps us support Muslim Kiwis are the NZ Police.

Dr Anwar Ghani, President of the Federation of Muslim Associations said Kiwi Muslims mourn for those innocent people who lost their lives.

He rang us and told us that Kiwi Muslims will honour them by praying, working and standing up for peace at all costs.

Dr Ghani said Muslim New Zealanders relationship with the NZ Police is one of mutual trust and they hope it can be strengthened across the state sector. I agree with him and believe this the best and most sustainable security option: strong relationships and engagement with our communities. Dr Ghani said Kiwi Muslims want to be able to keep an eye on things within their community and feel able to come to the NZ Police with concerns. It is all about trust.

I'm not sure if you heard about a social media phenomenon that gathered speed this week but the hashtag I'll Ride With You saw Australians offering to ride public transport alongside Muslim Australians as anti-Muslim sentiment gathered.

Dr Ghani told me:

When I heard about the I'll Ride With You hashtag and those Australian freedom riders I cheered and I know some cried. Why? Because this is how we work for peace and make our communities stronger: by standing together.

When a community is under pressure, a community's strength and resilience comes to the fore. It's inspiring to see, in the short term, what Sydneysiders have done for one another.

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Every year our team at the Human Rights Commission fields thousands of complaints and queries from people all over the country.

Approximately a third of all complaints are about racial discrimination.

Nine out of ten complaints are resolved by our team of mediators.

If anyone wants hard evidence that we need to improve race relations in New Zealand: then this is it.

Human Rights are founded on respect for others, dignity and mana.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

There are many legal definitions covered by declarations, covenants and treaties but at its core, Human Rights is about respect for others, dignity and mana.

New Zealanders need to remember that Human Rights don't just exist thousands of miles away – Human Rights begins at home, right here in our supermarkets, in our schools and in our communities.

New Zealand is known internationally for our high realisation of human rights but how much is that reputation worth if some of us enjoy a higher level of human rights than others?

If some of us are more likely to be abused because of our religion? If some of us are more likely to be humiliated because of our race?

What is clear, whether people like to accept it or not is that we still have a lot of work to do when it comes to treating each other with respect.

Human rights don't just exist thousands of miles away.

Human rights begin at home, right here where we live.

And they are rights we are all responsible for.

Earlier this year Hamilton woman Rikki Hooper went public about being humiliated and racially profiled at her local Countdown Supermarket.

Not long after Aucklander Irie Te Wehi Takerei was shamed by staff at The Warehouse who wrongly accused her of shoplifting.

In my own town of Tauranga, our taxi drivers went public recently about the racist abuse they field every single day.

The sad reality is that their experiences aren't isolated and neither are they unique to Countdown, the Warehouse or Taxis.

Human Rights legislation, laws and these businesses own policies should have meant these incidents shouldn't happen but they do.

That's why I don't believe we need any new laws to make race relations better in our country.

The reality is that while companies and organisations need to train their staff to ensure racial harassment doesn't become part of their organisational culture – it's ultimately up to everyday people with everyday jobs to make sure racial harassment doesn't become part of our country's everyday culture.

Everyday New Zealanders are the only ones who can truly stamp out everyday racism in New Zealand.

We also have a new kind of hate that is sadly showing its face here in New Zealand.

A few weekends ago an Auckland pre-schooler was abused and attacked with his mother as they walked home from school because he was wearing a Yamulke. This wasn't an isolated case and Jewish community leaders say it's part of an alarming anti semitic trend.

At the same time we are hearing from Kiwi Muslims after their women and children have reported a spike in abuse on their way home from school.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

Those people who are taking it upon themselves to bring the hatred from overseas into our communities need to know that this kind of hatred has no place here in New Zealand and it's up to everyday Kiwis to make sure they know that we won't tolerate this.

I urge all New Zealanders to not be bystanders and to stand up for the victims if you witness race hate attacks, abuse or any other kind of violence in your community.

I am confident Kiwis will not stand for our neighbourhoods and our country becoming the setting for the race hate we see on our television screens.

Part of my job as Race Relations Commissioner means working with and supporting Jewish Kiwis and Muslim Kiwis and both communities tell me they are feeling under siege and under attack. The Human Rights Commission is proud to stand alongside them in peace and to remind our media and our people to not buy into the stereotypes and hatred perpetrated by many online and on our TVs.

The leader of the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand, Dr Anwar Ghani, is a respected, senior scientist working for AgResearch helping to make our farms more productive. He's a graduate of Waikato University and over the years his association has fundraised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Christchurch rebuild and other charities. Dr Ghani and Muslim Kiwis have unreservedly rejected ISIS. He told me he found out about Islamic State when a reporter rang to ask if he supported ISIS and Dr Ghani had to ask the reporter: What is an ISIS? Dr Ghani and the overwhelming majority of Muslim Kiwis have unreservedly rejected ISIS and made it clear that terrorists do not lead them, do not speak for them, and do not represent them.

So we must not label all Muslim New Zealanders with a barbarism and hatred they have totally rejected. The same goes for Jewish New Zealanders whose members are noting a rise in anti-Semitism with the ongoing tragedy in Gaza.

The reality is that if New Zealanders want peace overseas: then we need to start right here at home, human rights begin at home. We mourn the tragic loss of lives in overseas conflicts but we must honour their lives by standing for peace and human rights at all costs.

New Zealand has an excellent international human rights record but it is not worth the paper it is written on if New Zealand kids are under attack because they're wearing a skull cap or a head scarf.

One thing we can be grateful here is the excellent work the NZ Police are doing in supporting communities. They've come a long way and we work closely with them.

Those people who go public about how they've been treated, really put the spotlight on what racial stereotyping and abuse looks, sounds and feels like: they also inspire others to complain and to make a stand. People who stand up for their human rights do so on all our behalf and we should all be grateful for them.

One question for us to ponder on is: What were all the other shoppers doing while Rikki was being shamed in front of them? When the Taxi driver is called names by a passenger – what were the other passengers doing? When those children and their mother are screamed at by random strangers on their way home – what were the other pedestrians doing? The answer is that it sounds like they did nothing, they probably didn't agree with what was happening and I bet they felt uncomfortable: but they did nothing. The lesson from them is when you see racism or discrimination: Don't be a bystander. Standing up to racism – even saying something as simple as "Hey why don't you just leave

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

her alone” – shows the victim they’re not alone. It also shows the perpetrator that he or she is totally out of line

When people talk about Human Rights a lot of people start in the middle of last century with the creation of the United Nations soon after World War Two.

But I’d like to go back another 100-years, to 1840.

174 years ago the leaders of this country agreed that all people have rights.

Not just some people, not just European people or rich people: the Treaty of Waitangi recognised that all people have rights. No matter who they were. We need to remember that the idea that all people have rights was a revolutionary, milestone concept in 1840.

Because in 1840 most nations– like the United States and Australia – were nations that kept Slaves. In most so called civilised countries, some people had no rights at all. Solomon Northrup – the author of Twelve Years A Slave – was kidnapped by slavers a year after the Treaty of Waitangi was signed.

The Treaty guaranteed all New Zealanders the rights of British citizens. It also guaranteed religious freedom for all. Having said that – as we all will know – successive governments failed to honour the Treaty, leaving generations of Maori New Zealanders to suffer economic and social hardship.

We’re still feeling the aftermath of these policies today. We can’t be proud of that legacy but we can be proud that by using the principles of restorative justice, we’re working to settle the grievances of Maori New Zealanders with honour. New Zealand’s excellent human rights reputation is partly due to the way we are looking at our nation’s history with open eyes and replacing injustice with justice.

Not everyone will agree and that’s OK. The important thing is that we all keep on talking, keep the dialogue going. If we love this country we owe it to our children and grandchildren to keep talking no matter how difficult the talk can get

While the media have a responsibility to keep leaders to account and to exercise free speech they also have a responsibility to give people a fair go. To publish balanced news reports. Some of you may know I’ve not been very popular in my own hometown’s online news site, the SunLive with the editor writing a series of offensive editorials about the inclusion of a macron in some Maori names.

Why did he feel he had to use swearwords to make his point?

Why did he only publish letters supporting his editorial stance? I know of several letters from major organisations that were never published.

So I wrote to Sunlive and told the editor he is making a maunga out of a molehill.

The editor’s response to me and the letters they published in response don’t deserve to be repeated but they were offensive, personal and abusive.

My views were quite clear:

The macron change was never going to mean extra costs: only when old signs needed replacing would macrons be included.

What kind of legacy are we leaving our children if we tell them we should respect some languages but not others?

Otūmoetai is a significant pa site and home to many kids who deserve to know how to pronounce the name of the suburb they live in and the school they go to.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

Politicians making fun of an entire race of people, sadly isn't new but it's disappointing and shameful our politicians are still doing it in 2014.

But I know New Zealanders are better than that.

We've come a long way as a nation in terms of treating each other with respect but what's clear is some of us still have a long way to go.

One third generation Chinese Kiwi said recently:

Why should my children have to put up with people making fun of their name? Making fun of their race? I really thought they wouldn't have to go through what I did. But I was wrong.

As Race Relations Commissioner my role is to "promote and protect human rights for all people in Aotearoa New Zealand and foster harmonious relations".

In other words, I'm responsible for encouraging everyone to treat each other with respect, dignity and mana: irrespective of their race, ethnicity or religion.

Everyone also means politicians because they aren't just everyday New Zealanders, neither are they comedians or entertainers.

Politicians are change makers, statesmen, stateswomen and role models who have the honour of representing us in our parliament.

I see it as my job to urge all politicians to act with a bit of dignity: to leave bigotry, racial jibes and racial opportunism at the door.

To treat Muslim, Chinese, Maori, Iraqi, Indian New Zealanders with respect, dignity and mana: irrespective of their race, ethnicity or religion.

Ethnic minorities are sick of being told to get a sense of humour or ironically to "lighten up" when someone makes fun of them: when the insult is made by a Politician and linked to an election campaign the 'joke' takes on a more sinister, menacing nature.

Nelson Mandela opened the World Conference Against Racism in 2001 where member states agreed that politicians and political parties play a fundamental role in humanity's battle against racism. The conference urged politicians to refrain from public statements that encourage intolerance and racism because history has shown that people follow the example of their political leaders.

When I call out politicians I don't expect them to immediately apologise. But I do expect everyday Kiwis to listen to what's going on, to debate the issues and decide for themselves what is acceptable.

We value the freedoms that come with democracy, all of us have the right to speak freely and voice our opinions however freedom comes with responsibility.

And ultimately that responsibility lies with you and with me. It's up to us to decide what kind of country we live in, it's up to us to decide whether we live in a nation that lives up to its excellent human rights record.

INFORM Community Conversation
(Interagency Network for Refugees and Migrants)
Speech
11 December 2014

Kai Tahu Rangatira

Kai Tahu Iwi

Kai Tahu Tangata

Tena koutou katoa

Three months ago Christchurch hosted New Zealand's 10th Diversity Forum, there are many familiar faces who are also here with us today. I'd like to acknowledge

- Her Worship the Mayor Lianne Dalziel
- INFoRM members
- Councillors
- Community leaders and representatives
- And of course Kai Tahu Tangata.

Our forum theme this year was **Valuing Diversity: Migrant and Refugee Employment**.

Nationally some of our sectors are undergoing a skill shortage.

Right here in Christchurch, as you know, that skill shortage is severe. On many levels migrant workers are driving the Canterbury rebuild.

So in spite of what some would have us believe: New Zealand needs migrants. New Zealand needs migrant workers to want to move thousands of miles away from their homes and set up a new life here in New Zealand: Crucially we need the global workforce to help rebuild Christchurch.

But will they want to move far away to a very cold island south east of Australia?

How we treat migrants and refugees – whether it's with respect or not - That part's up to all of us, in some way or another, we are all responsible for the kind of country we live in.

And by all of us, that includes politicians because they aren't just everyday New Zealanders, and neither are they comedians. Politicians are statesmen and women who have the honour of representing us in our parliament. The recent racial slurs aren't worth repeating. Politicians making fun of an entire race of people isn't new but when it's linked to an election campaign the so called joke takes on a sinister, menacing nature. We've come a long way as a nation in terms of treating each other with respect but what's clear is some of us still have a long way to go. One third generation Chinese Kiwi said recently:

Why should my children have to put up with people making fun of their name? Making fun of their entire family? I really thought they wouldn't have to go through what I did. But I was wrong.

My statement calling out this politician didn't just make the news here in New Zealand. Within hours the story was on the homepages of news outlets from Dubai to Taiwan, Jakarta to Beijing.

What many Kiwis don't realise is that the whole world's watching and listening when it comes to race relations. Our excellent human rights reputation is ours to hold but it's also ours to lose.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

By now the people of Christchurch are unfortunately very used to having experts from Wellington and other parts of the country come down here to tell you how to do things.

But in a departure from tradition I'd like say that there's something all of the rest of us need to do first.

When it comes to Diversity: **we** need to change the conversation.

Policy makers, decision makers, leaders and politicians need to stop framing Diversity and Migrants as issues that need to be solved, as problems that need to be cracked.

When business leaders from around the Asia Pacific region came to Christchurch in August, that's what they told us:

Change the conversation you're having about Diversity and migrants.

Don't see Diversity as a difficulty: See diversity as an opportunity.

Evidence shows a diverse workforce significantly enhances business performance. Instead of a single, standardised perspective, diversity gives different perspectives– diversity gives that edge that no one else has. Diversity isn't just good for human rights – Diversity is good for business. Diversity goes hand in hand with innovation because a diverse workforce will tackle problems in different ways: you are less likely to get the 'one size fits all' response. The global economy is multilingual – it's not, and never has been monolingual. For many Kiwis this is a huge barrier to get used to: the more languages, the better! Finally, our business leaders at the Diversity Forum were clear: A diverse workforce reflects the world all of us live in and the reality is that world is changing rapidly.

The changing face of New Zealand is younger than ever before, more ethnically diverse and changing rapidly. Last year's Census for the first time recorded more than one million people living in New Zealand were born overseas, three hundred thousand more than the 2001 Census. Around one quarter of our population identify as not being of European Pakeha heritage but have our workplaces adapted to recognise this? One in ten Kiwis are Asian Kiwis: in Auckland one in four of us are Asian.

I think there is an opportunity for Christchurch is to become a national leader in Diversity and Migrant Opportunities.

On behalf of the Human Rights Commission we would like to work alongside the people of Christchurch on what would be New Zealand's first council led multicultural strategy.

One that weaves together the expertise of those tireless community leaders and representatives with local government, business and service providers.

We would like to stand alongside you, along with the Office of Ethnic Affairs and MBIE to help make a multicultural strategy for Christchurch a reality.

I'm an athlete and you can all the best intentions in the world but if you make the rules in the stand while the players are on the field wondering what's going on: it's not going to work.

I have to say if any city is going to be able to pull this off: it's Christchurch.

What the people here have endured and triumphed over is something the rest of us can never fully understand.

History shows us that so often we find out how strong we are in our most darkest times.

And no other city in this country knows this better than Christchurch.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

The gritty determination demonstrated in the past three years by the people of this city is both inspiring and humbling.

With the greatest respect I would like to take our minds back to just one of those examples.

In the weeks following February 22nd 2011, families descended upon a makeshift morgue in Christchurch.

They came here from the Philippines, Japan, China, Malaysia, Thailand, Israel, Taiwan, Ireland, Turkey, South Korea and of course from across New Zealand.

And in the unfolding tragedy the Kai Tahu tribe did something incredibly important.

Kai Tahu did something that even now few know about because they didn't send out a press release or a media advisory.

As is the custom, the tikanga of Kai Tahu: they stayed with the dead until the last person was returned home.

For weeks on end, twenty four hours a day – Kai Tahu people remained at the temporary morgue with the dead, they did not leave them to lie on their own.

And in doing so, the people of Kai Tahu acknowledged that these were much more than just earthquake victims.

They were more than just bodies: They were people.

People who had names. People who had families. People who had mana and dignity.

So thank you to the people of Kai Tahu.

Thank you for your aroha. Thank you for your love. Thank you for your humanity.

I cannot think of a more powerful demonstration of manaakitanga than looking after the dignity of others.

It is a reminder that first and foremost: Manaakitanga is about mana.

In closing, I think today is an exciting day.

I am convinced that with the leadership and energy of the people here in this room, Christchurch is set to be a model of opportunity and diversity for the rest of New Zealand.

And I am looking forward to working with you all into the future.

The Tasman Sea got a little smaller this morning –
Joint Statement with Federation of Islamic Associations
16 December 2014

New Zealand's Human Rights Commission and Federation of Islamic Associations made a joint statement today.

"Our hearts and minds are with the people of Sydney: the Tasman Sea got a little smaller this morning," said Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy.

"Kiwi Muslims mourn for those innocent people who lost their lives today," said Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand president Dr Anwar Ghani.

"We will honour them by praying, working and standing up for peace at all costs."

Dr Ghani says Muslim New Zealanders work closely with and are supported by the NZ Police.

"Our relationship with our Police is one of mutual trust and we hope it can be strengthened across the state sector. The wellbeing of all New Zealanders and our families is paramount to us," said Dr Ghani.

"When I heard about the #illridewithyou hashtag and the Australian freedom riders I cheered and I know some people cried. Why? Because this is how we work for peace and make our communities stronger: by standing together."

November

Human Rights Commission condemns hate attacks on Kiwi kids

Statement

23 November 2014

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy has condemned the latest hate attacks on New Zealand children.

“Cowards and thugs taking part in hate attacks on Kiwi kids need to know their behaviour has no place in New Zealand,” said Dame Susan.

“I urge all Kiwis to not be bystanders and to stand up for the victims if they witness race hate attacks or abuse in their communities. I’m confident that everyday Kiwis will not stand for our neighbourhoods becoming the setting for the race hate we see on our television screens.”

This weekend Jewish New Zealanders went public after an attack on a pre-schooler. Recently Muslim Kiwis also appealed for calm after women and children reported attacks walking home from school. In August the Human Rights Commission met with and issued a statement supporting Jewish Kiwis after leaders reported a spike in anti-Semitism in the wake of the ongoing Gaza conflict. The commission is also supporting Muslim Kiwis, with FIANZ leaders reporting a spike in Islamophobic hate attacks in the wake of the ongoing ISIS terror campaign.

“When our Kiwi kids are scared to wear a yarmulke or a head scarf because some adult may abuse and attack them: we have failed,” said Dame Susan.

“New Zealand has an excellent international human rights record but it is not worth the paper it is written on if New Zealand children are under attack because of their religion or their ethnicity.”

Dame Susan says the NZ Police does an excellent job working alongside ethnic communities and she hopes they will show no lenience on those bullies attacking some of our most vulnerable people.

October

“Taking a stand epitomises the Kiwi fighting spirit”

Statement

9 October 2015

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy says a Canterbury University professor who has spoken publicly against racist and sexist student behaviour epitomises the Kiwi fighting spirit.

“It’s not easy to be the one who stands up and speaks out but Professor Veer is giving us all a very important lesson: even young people hold obsolete, outdated opinions that belong in 1914 not 2014,” said Dame Susan.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

“Everyday racism happens in our communities every day – it’s not unique to Canterbury University - but only everyday people can make sure it’s not part of our future.”

This year’s Diversity Forum was hosted in partnership with Canterbury University and executives from businesses such as the BNZ, AIA and multinational engineering firm Aurecon told participants that in a growing global economy: diversity gives corporates a leading edge. Diversity also goes hand in hand with innovation.

“Students who embrace xenophobia and sexism will be the dinosaurs of the 21st Century workforce,” said Dame Susan.

“Wanting a ‘tolerance focused’ campus isn’t enough, student leaders need to lead and work positively to help embed respect and dignity into campus culture.”

Dame Susan said Christchurch students should never forget that foreign nations were some of the first to send search and rescue teams into the devastated city in February 2011: “Kiwi Indians also mobilised quickly and within days were providing free accommodation and food. Right now expert migrant workers form the backbone of the Christchurch rebuild while companies from across Asia are investing millions in the quake hit city.”

“While we’ve come a long as a nation in terms of treating each with respect – it’s clear some of us still have a long way to go. The journey is one all of us must take together,” said Dame Susan.

“Every New Zealander deserves to be treated with mana and respect, everyone deserves a fair go.” said Dame Susan.

“Human Rights Commission urges NZers to stand with Muslim Kiwis in peace” **Statement** **3 October 2014**

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy is urging New Zealanders to stand alongside Muslim Kiwis in peace and compassion.

“Muslim New Zealanders have publicly and unreservedly rejected violent extremism,” said Dame Susan.

“We must not label all Muslim New Zealanders with a barbarism they have totally rejected. Muslim Kiwis and their families deserve understanding.”

On behalf of Kiwi Muslims, last month the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand publically and unreservedly rejected ISIS and called for justice, dignity and safety.

“If New Zealanders want peace overseas – we need to start right here at home, human rights begin at home,” said Dame Susan.

“We mourn the tragic loss of lives in overseas conflicts but we must honour their lives by standing for peace and human rights at all costs.”

“Race Relations: Where To Now?” NZ Asian Leaders Inaugural Conference
Speech
Friday 3rd October 2014

In 1993 former Prime Minister Jim Bolger was ridiculed for suggesting New Zealand was an Asia Pacific nation.

21 years later and New Zealand is looking and behaving more like an Asia Pacific nation than a mono-cultural one.

One of our top female athletes is a young Korean Kiwi called Lydia Ko. Arguably our best rugby player is a Samoan Kiwi who's also Muslim.

Our parliament looks more like the people it represents than ever before: three political party leaders are Maori New Zealanders.

When we switch on our TVs we listen to journalists called Ali Ikram, Chris Cheng, Ruwani Perera. We hear from economists like Ganesh Nana and Shamubeel Equb. There is an entire television channel broadcast in te reo Maori.

Anyone who remembers our Rugby World Cup 2011 Opening Ceremony would be hard pressed to think we're mono-cultural. London's Telegraph newspaper said at its heart was a defining cultural pivot around which the entire event could spin. What was clear to the world is that there is no nation on earth quite like Aotearoa: what's great is that finally we too are embracing our uniqueness.

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Young Maori and Pacific Kiwis are a growing demographic, speaking their own languages and studying in tertiary institutions more than ever before.

Today one in ten Kiwis are also Asian Kiwis. Here in Auckland one in four of us are Asian.

While recent growth is rapid, Asian people aren't just recent arrivals. The first Chinese arrived before the Treaty was signed, the first Muslim and Indian Kiwis were working and living here 140-years ago. In rural and provincial centres from Auckland to Gisborne, Hamilton to Levin, Carterton to Dunedin – you will find the footsteps, families and businesses of generations of Asian New Zealanders.

Generations of Asian New Zealanders helped build New Zealand. And it's Asian New Zealanders and people who are literally helping to rebuild Christchurch. Migrant workers, many coming from across Asia form the backbone of the Christchurch rebuild. Asian companies are working alongside locals and investing millions in the Christchurch rebuild.

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As a small, geographically isolated economy - New Zealand needs to be savvy, strategic and sensible if we're going to punch above our weight in the global economy.

And yet there's a few things we need to get clear if we want to succeed.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

As you all know, the Global Economy doesn't just speak English. The Global Economy doesn't just employ one race of people. And crucially, the Global Economy's centre of gravity is now, unquestionably, Asian.

Global entrepreneur and philanthropist Li Ka Shing's is made up of three words: Success with Integrity.

Those intangible treasures can't be found on a balance sheet but are a company's and a nation's most valuable assets.

This is the kind of wisdom that will help future proof our economy and our country for future generations of New Zealanders.

This year's Diversity Forum was held in Christchurch to put the spotlight on migrant labour issues. We also heard from successful business leaders who told us evidence shows that a diverse workforce significantly enhances business performance. Instead of a single, standardised perspective, diversity gives you a different perspective – diversity can give you that edge that no one else has.

If we are to be taken seriously in Asia we need to look to Asia not just as a potential market to make a profit out of – we need to understand and form relationships with Asian peoples here and overseas.

Chinese Kiwi, Sean Kam grew up in Takapuna, where he played rugby for Westlake Boys he was known as the Orient Express.

Sean's also a bit of a financial whizkid, and CFO of one of New Zealand's top 50 listed companies. He says Kiwi companies are missing out on the diversity stakes at both board and senior management level. He knows firsthand that Asian Kiwis can and do bridge the cultural gap companies face when doing business because Asian Kiwis like him understand both sets of cultures.

Diversifying the boardrooms of New Zealand companies – not just their workforce – is a challenge our businesses need to meet. Diversity and business can take on many forms. Last year at the Taniwha and Dragoon festival, Maori and Chinese leaders celebrated and forged cultural, ancestral, historical and economic bonds.

If New Zealand is going to become a true innovation nation, we need to celebrate and plan for the reality that we are fast becoming one of the most ethnically diverse nations on earth.

In the engine room of any great economy are people. People who are innovative creators, people who think outside the square. Innovation is the foundation of our Kiwi number eight wire mentality and it's time we reflect on this as we plan for the future.

Because diversity, difference and thinking outside the square are key drivers of innovation. Diversity is something we must invest in and plan for.

This intangible investment is about integrity and is perhaps the most valuable asset of all.

Investing in diversity won't just be found in a balance sheet or bank account but in our communities, our schools, our offices.

Most importantly whether or not we invest in diversity will be found in the kind of nation our children and grandchildren will inherit from us.

September

“Race Relations is up to you”
Speech to AUT Journalism students
Friday 5 September 2014

SLIDE ONE: GENERIC

Every year our team at the Human Rights Commission fields thousands of complaints from people all over the country.

Approximately a third of all complaints are about racial discrimination.

Nine out of ten complaints are resolved by our team of mediators.

If anyone wants hard evidence that we need to improve race relations in New Zealand: then this is it.

We still have a lot of work to do when it comes to treating each other with respect.

New Zealand is known internationally for our high realisation of human rights but how much is that reputation worth if some of us enjoy a higher level of human rights than others.

Human Rights are founded on respect for others, dignity and mana.

There are many legal definitions covered by declarations, covenants and treaties but at its core, Human Rights is about respect for others, dignity and mana.

New Zealanders we need to remember that Human Rights don't just exist thousands of miles away – Human Rights begins at home, right here in our supermarkets, in our schools and in our communities.

Human rights don't just exist thousands of miles away.

Human rights begin at home, right here where we live.

And they are rights we are all responsible for.

SLIDE TWO: RIKKI, IRIE TAXI DRIVER SLIDES

Recently Hamilton woman Rikki Hooper went public about being humiliated and racially profiled at her local Countdown Supermarket.

Only last week Aucklander Irie Te Wehi Takerei was shamed by staff at The Warehouse out by the Airport. In my own town of Tauranga, our taxi drivers went public last week about the racist abuse they field every single day. The sad reality is that their experiences aren't isolated and neither are they unique to Countdown, the Warehouse or Taxis.

Human Rights legislation, laws and these businesses own policies should have meant these incidents shouldn't happen but they do.

The reality is that while companies and organisations need to train their staff to ensure racial harassment doesn't become part of their organisational culture – it's ultimately up to everyday people with everyday jobs to make sure racial harassment doesn't become part of our country's everyday culture.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

There was no fairness, respect or mana with the way Rikki or were treated but they – like those taxi drivers in Tauranga – responded with incredible courage and mana. By putting the spotlight on what racial stereotyping and abuse looks, sounds and feels like: these people inspire others to complain and to make a stand. People who stand up for their human rights do so on all our behalf and we should all be grateful for them.

One question for us to ponder on is: What were all the other shoppers doing while Rikki or Irie was being shamed in front of them? When the Taxi driver is called names by a passenger – what are the other passengers doing? The answer is that it sounds like they did nothing, they probably didn't agree with what was happening and I bet they felt uncomfortable: but they did nothing. The lesson from them is when you see racism or discrimination: Don't be a bystander. Standing up to racism – even saying something as simple as "Hey why don't you just leave her alone" – shows the victim they're not alone. It also shows the perpetrator that he or she is totally out of line.

I would like to play you a Youtube video out of New York, Jay Smooth with some helpful tips on how to react if you encounter racism.

YOUTUBE VIDEO: TELLING SOMEONE THAT THEY SOUND RACIST

When people talk about Human Rights a lot of people start in the middle of last century with the creation of the United Nations soon after World War Two.

But I'd like to go back another 100-years, to 1840.

174 years ago the leaders of this country agreed that all people have rights.

Not just some people, not just European people or rich people: the Treaty of Waitangi recognised that all people have rights. No matter who they were.

We need to remember that the idea that all people have rights was a revolutionary, milestone concept in 1840.

Because in 1840 most nations– like the United States and Australia – were nations that kept Slaves. In most so called civilised countries, some people had no rights at all. Solomon Northrup – the author of Twelve Years A Slave – was kidnapped by slavers a year after the Treaty of Waitangi was signed.

The Treaty guaranteed all New Zealanders the rights of British citizens.

It also guaranteed religious freedom for all.

Having said that – as we all will know – successive governments failed to honour the Treaty, leaving generations of Maori New Zealanders to suffer economic and social hardship.

We're still feeling the aftermath of these policies today. We can't be proud of that legacy but we can be proud that by using the principles of restorative justice, we're working to settle the grievances of indigenous New Zealanders with honour and with mana.

The reality is that many New Zealanders don't understand what Treaty of Waitangi settlements are for: and the media plays a big role in this.

SLIDE TWO: TREATY SETTLEMENT SLIDE

This slide illustrates a random cross section of headlines about Maori New Zealanders and the Treaty of Waitangi settlement process. These kinds of headlines aren't new, chances are we'll see a lot more of them as well.

While this slide is up I would like to quote Dr Pita Sharples – I understand he visited you yesterday. I am quoting his speech to Parliament upon the First Reading of the Tuhoe Urewera Treaty Settlement Bill. And I quote:

New Zealanders need to know about the war crimes committed against the Tuhoe people.

Banned by the United Nations Geneva Convention, scorched earth is a military strategy where the assets, food and resources of the civilian population are destroyed. Scorched earth military tactics were used by the Crown as it waged war in the Urewera from the 1860s onwards. Crown soldiers executed unarmed Tuhoe prisoners. Crown soldiers murdered unarmed Tuhoe civilians. Entire communities were starved. The loss of life was extensive.

Treaty of Waitangi settlements are much more than dollar signs, they're about a lot more than mere money. Yet a lot of Kiwis don't realise this. In my view it's up to those in our media and in leadership roles to make sure at eventually all New Zealanders realise this.

SLIDE THREE: SUNLIVE NEWSPAPER

While the media have a responsibility to keep leaders to account and to exercise free speech they also have a responsibility to give people a fair go. To publish balanced news reports.

The slide up on the screen now is from my local online newspaper the Sunlive in Tauranga .

Sunlive's owner and editor's opposition to the inclusion of a macron in the name of a local suburb has seen a series of offensive editorials and articles.

I wrote to Sunlive and told them they were making a maunga out of a molehill.

Why did they feel they had to use swearwords to make their point?

Why were they only publishing equally offensive letters supporting their editorial stance when there were many individuals and organisations – including the Maori Language Commission – whose letters weren't ever published?

What kind of legacy are we leaving our children if we tell them we should respect some languages but not others?

The editor's response to me and the letters they published in response to me don't deserve to be put up on the screen here but they were offensive, personal and abusive.

Otūmoetai is a significant pa site and home to many kids who deserve to know how to pronounce the name of the suburb they live in and the school they go to.

SLIDE FOUR: SLIDE OF OTUMOETAI STUDENTS HAKA

And just to prove it here are the students from Otumoetai College.

Something tells me these kids, regardless of their ethnicity, would want to know how to pronounce the name of the school they are performing this haka for.

SLIDE FIVE: WINSTON AND SUSAN SLIDE

Politicians making fun of an entire race of people, sadly isn't new but it's disappointing and shameful our politicians are still doing it in 2014.

But I know New Zealanders are better than that.

We've come a long way as a nation in terms of treating each other with respect but what's clear is some of us still have a long way to go.

One third generation Chinese Kiwi said recently:

Why should my children have to put up with people making fun of their name? Making fun of their race? I really thought they wouldn't have to go through what I did. But I was wrong.

As Race Relations Commissioner my role is to "promote and protect human rights for all people in Aotearoa New Zealand and foster harmonious relations".

In other words, I'm responsible for encouraging everyone to treat each other with respect, dignity and mana: irrespective of their race, ethnicity or religion.

Everyone also means politicians because they aren't just everyday New Zealanders, neither are they comedians or entertainers.

Politicians are change makers, statesmen, stateswomen and role models who have the honour of representing us in our parliament.

I see it as my job to urge all politicians to act with a bit of dignity: to leave bigotry, racial jibes and racial opportunism at the door.

To treat Muslim, Chinese, Maori, Iraqi, Indian New Zealanders with respect, dignity and mana: irrespective of their race, ethnicity or religion.

Ethnic minorities are sick of being told to get a sense of humour or ironically to "lighten up" when someone makes fun of them: when the insult is made by a Politician and linked to an election campaign the 'joke' takes on a more sinister, menacing nature.

Nelson Mandela opened the World Conference Against Racism in 2001 where member states agreed that politicians and political parties play a fundamental role in humanity's battle against racism. The conference urged politicians to refrain from public statements that encourage intolerance and racism because history has shown that people follow the example of their political leaders.

When I call out politicians I don't expect them to immediately apologise. But I do expect everyday Kiwis to listen to what's going on, to debate the issues and decide for themselves what is acceptable.

We value the freedoms that come with democracy, all of us have the right to speak freely and voice our opinions however freedom comes with responsibility

Calling out politicians: why? – use stuff from Diversity Forum

Headline: SST – Mori don't like Asians headline

Earlier this year a study was released and the Sunday Star Times headline screamed out: Maori ...

The problem is that the study did not reflect this headline at all.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

So we wrote to the Editor of the Sunday Star Times and they agreed with us and we are continuing to talk with Fairfax about how we can work with their journalists in the future.

Finally I leave you with this slide.

Slide SIX from One Network News: Should Maori Be Allowed ...

It is from another poll, this time run by One Network News and broadcast on Wednesday night.

Whatever the context I leave it up to you to decide whether or not you think this poll also asked if Pakeha people should be allowed to manage their own affairs? Or whether or not this poll also asked if Women should be allowed to manage their own affairs?

“Media should reflect our communities”

Statement

18 September 2014

With Fairfax Media’s Journalism Intern search closing on Sunday, Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy is urging aspiring journalists from Maori, Pacific and ethnic communities to apply. The deadline was recently extended to 10pm, Sunday 21 September.

“The changing face of New Zealand needs to be reflected not just in our communities but also in mainstream media newsrooms,” said Dame Susan.

“Diversifying our newsrooms isn’t just a numbers game it’s about actively working to report on all New Zealanders with depth and understanding.”

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon has said media professionals play a particularly important human rights role in shaping public opinion, changing perceptions about cultural diversity and building peace. How the mainstream media reports on ethnic minorities was a significant issue for participants attending this year’s Human Rights Commission Diversity Forum.

“New Zealand is fast becoming one of the most diverse nations on earth and we cannot afford to ignore the changing face of our peoples,” said Dame Susan.

“Diversity is good for human rights, for business and excellence in journalism.”

August

“Islamic Awareness Week for all Kiwis”

Statement

18 August 2014

This week Kiwis who are curious about the Islamic faith have the opportunity to visit a mosque, find out about the faith and meet Muslim New Zealanders.

In her speech where she officially opened Islamic Awareness Week, Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy commended Muslim community members and the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand.

“Events like Islam Awareness Week make our country a better place to live in and it is something we can all be grateful for,” said Dame Susan.

“I commend New Zealand’s Muslim community for taking up the challenge of sharing your faith with your fellow Kiwis, not just for the sake of Kiwi Muslims– but for the sake of all Kiwis and for the future of our nation. ”

Islam Awareness Week is an annual event organised by FIANZ. It aims to increase New Zealanders’ awareness of Muslim diversity and beliefs, values and practices and provides an opportunity to engage with Muslim communities throughout New Zealand.

“Islam Awareness Week helps to enlighten everyday New Zealanders. Because just as intolerance and bigotry is taught: intolerance and bigotry can also be untaught.”

In her address Dame Susan referred to attacks on Muslim people by a New Zealand politician as well as a recent instance where an Egyptian Kiwi on a flight from Auckland to Wellington endured racist taunts by a woman sitting next to him.

“We’ve come a long way as a nation in terms of treating each other with respect but what’s clear is some of us still have a long way to go. It’s up to everyday New Zealanders to challenge everyday racism,” said Dame Susan.

“Where to Now? - Diversity Forum 2014”
Monday 25 August 2014

Aoraki Maunga

Kai Tahu Iwi

Te Waipounamu tangata

Tena koutou katoa

I'd like to thank you all for what's been a really insightful and inspiring couple of days.

While it's clear that there's a lot of work to do: what's also clear is that we have some of the right people with the right skills to get on and get started with that work.

As Annie Brown from BNZ said: Let's get going.

When we ask ourselves as a nation: *Where to now?* The reality is that we're the only ones who can truly answer that question.

Don't just wonder about what kind of future New Zealand your grandchildren will grow up in: start planning for that future New Zealand now.

The face of New Zealand is changing faster than it's changed in more than 100-years.

I'd like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to our amazing young people taking part in this weekend's Youth Forum.

Habek Omar's moving story of being attacked by her classmates. Why? Because Habek was different. Because she wore a head scarf. Because she didn't speak English. But one day while she was being attacked Habek says a girl defended her. A Maori girl, she didn't even know her name stepped in. Instead of standing by and watching Habek be attacked – this girl stepped up, challenged the hate and stopped it. It's an important lesson for everyday Kiwis: don't be a bystander when you see everyday racism. Stand up and speak out.

So thanks to these awesome young New Zealanders: Muslim Kiwis, Kurdish Kiwis, Ethiopian Kiwis, Chinese Kiwis, Malaysian Kiwis, Indian Kiwis, Colombian Kiwis, Sudanese Kiwis, Pasifika Kiwis, Maori Kiwis, Pakeha Kiwis, Migrant Kiwis, Refugee Kiwis.

Their bravery, their beauty and their leadership – this gives me faith that the future of this nation is in safe hands.

With migration almost at an all time high and Auckland classed as one of the most diverse cities on the planet: we have no choice but to get better at and to excel at race relations and diversity.

That's why I'm calling on all New Zealanders to join me in a *National Conversation on the Changing Face of New Zealand*.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

The conversation will not begin and end in an office in Wellington. The conversation needs to be had across Aotearoa, from Masterton to Riccarton. From Rotorua to Aranui. And the people who need to be taking part in the conversation are everyday New Zealanders.

Not just politicians, experts or decision makers. The National Conversation on the Changing Face of New Zealand needs to start in our towns, suburbs and communities.

Because the reality is that Diversity and migration is not just happening in Auckland. Right here in Christchurch migrant labour numbers are greater than they've ever been before.

I am also calling on our local bodies and iwi across the country to take part in and help lead Regional Conversations on the Changing Face of New Zealand.

It's a conversation every New Zealander needs take part in and one that all of us have a stake in.

I'd like to thank Mike Bush for sharing his vision for the future of the NZ Police, and as he said: the future of the NZ Police is intertwined with the NZ People. The fact that he has added Empathy and Valuing Diversity into his organisation's key values is a huge step.

I think all of us at this morning's session were challenged and inspired listening to our business leaders, Wayne from AIA stressing that Diversity had to be authentic for it to work.

Abbie Wright from Aurecon saying you do a lot with a little but don't do it alone and always be proud of who you are when going for a job interview.

Who can forget Priscilla's presentation about how Australian NGOs are tackling everyday racism: these are lessons for us all to draw from and hopefully create some initiatives designed for and by Kiwis.

So many of us were amazed by Dr James Liu's presentation and particularly his slide on the "warmth" from different regions in NZ towards ethnic minorities: whether or not the city you live in remains blue or not is up to you.

This year's Diversity Forum theme is Migrant and Refugee Employment and for a moment I'd like to focus on our Refugee community who now call New Zealand home. This year the UNHCR reported that global refugee figures have passed 50 million for the first time since the end of World War Two. Tragically, more than half are children.

What's clear is that those who suffer the most in a war or humanitarian crisis are everyday people. Kids, women and families unlucky enough to call a warzone home. From Gaza to Sudan, Ukraine to Syria. Everyday people with nowhere else to go, no options but to survive or die. And it's those people that everyday New Zealanders may be able to help.

Seventy years ago this October a boat full of children sailed into Wellington harbour. On board were more than 700 child refugees from Poland. They were War Orphans who'd survived starvation, war and a 4000 kilometre trek from labour camps in Siberia to the Persian Gulf. From there, these tiny refugees sailed to the other side of the world to a tiny red dot on the world map called New Zealand.

Since then, for seventy years, that little red dot on the world map has opened our doors to more than 30,000 people who've survived against the odds and sought refuge here. Thousands of miles from home, thirty thousand refugees have created a new home and future here in Aotearoa New

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

Zealand. Thirty thousand extraordinary, everyday people whose resilience, courage and incredible contribution to our country makes New Zealand a better place.

As a Kiwi I'm really proud of what we've done in the past as well as what we do to help refugees settle in. But as a Kiwi I also know we can do better. Because for a country that's renowned for punching above our weight on the world stage: when it comes to taking in refugees we lag behind the rest of the world. New Zealand's intake of refugees has remained the same since 1987.

Compared to the rest of the world, per capita we don't make the top ten. We don't even make the top fifty. If there was a World Cup for nations that provide homes and hope for refugees and asylum seekers: we wouldn't even qualify. Per head of population Australia takes twenty five times more refugees than we do – and no that's not including those in refugee detention centres.

And with 33 million displaced people in the world – more than we've ever seen since the end of World War Two - New Zealand has the capacity to accept more refugees. This is part of our responsibilities as an international citizen. Without the will of everyday people: governments are unlikely to make change on their own. The reality is that all of us are responsible for human rights – us as individuals who need to walk the talk and call for change.

Everyday New Zealander's have no idea of the challenges refugees have gone through and still face every day. Most of us will never know what it's like to flee our home, never knowing if we will see our loved ones again. Most of us will never know what it's like to survive a war in our own homeland. Most of us will never know what it's like to put our lives on hold as we wait for another country to give us refuge and a home.

Refugees are everyday people who've faced extraordinary hardship – and it's everyday New Zealanders who need to stand up and call for an increase in our refugee quota. I hope we start punching above our weight not just in sport: but in compassion, kindness and most of all, humanity.

It was a sunny Tuesday morning back in 1941 when 700 homeless, parentless children sailed into Wellington Harbour. Those children said the first things they noticed was that there were no guards, no high fences and no barbed wire here in New Zealand. I hope we can use our Kiwi ingenuity and spirit once more to replace the barbed wire of refugee camps with our own number eight wire mentality. I hope we can be there for some of our planet's most vulnerable children, families and people.

When I welcomed everyone here yesterday morning I began with a story about the Kai Tahu people, honouring the dead and staying alongside those killed in the February 2011 quake.

I would like to end with a similar story about Diversity but one that took more than a century ago. Migrant workers from across the world headed to the Otago Goldmines in the nineteenth century and thousands came from China. It was common for those who died here to have arrange for their bodies to sent back to their home villages for burial.

More than a century ago SS Ventnor Ship sunk and the remains of 500 men – en route to China – were also lost. It was a devastating tragedy, as their families contemplated an eternity where their loved ones souls could never be at rest. But incredibly a few years ago, second generation Chinese New Zealander Liu Sheung Wong was visiting a marae in Hokianga when she heard an incredible

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

story. More than 100-years-before, the remains of many of those men washed ashore not far from the marae. Members of the local tribe recovered their bodies, prayed over them and buried them alongside their own people in ancestral burial grounds. Last year in a moving ceremony their descendents gathered in this remote Hokianga and unveiled special memorials honouring both sets of ancestors.

This incredible story demonstrates that Diversity in New Zealand is not a new phenomenon that arrived with the growing global economy. Migrant employment isn't new in our country either. And most importantly, treating one another with dignity, respect and mana: that's not new either.

When we consider the question: Where To Now? We need to honestly look back with open eyes at Where We Have Been. Some things we can proud of. Other things: not so much.

What I do know for sure is that Chinese New Zealanders – and New Zealanders from any ethnic minority - do not want a future where their children are told to harden up when people make jokes about their ethnicity or surname: I look forward to a day when all New Zealanders agree with them.

Recognising that the face of Aotearoa New Zealand is ever changing, these past two days we learnt that diversity doesn't just make human rights sense: it makes business sense. In a growing global economy, whether or not New Zealand's excellent human rights reputation is strengthened or weakened does matter.

There are many things we can be grateful for when it comes to race relations in New Zealand. We've come a long way since Maori Battalion soldiers returning from World War 2 had to drink their beers outside because they weren't allowed inside hotels. We've come a long way since Chinese migrants were made to pay a tax simply because they were Chinese. While we can be proud of how far we've come as a nation – where we are going as a nation is the big question. Will the future New Zealand be the kind of country we want our grandkids growing up in? Will they be given a fair go? Or will making fun of someone's colour, culture or race be fair game? That part's up to us.

"Diversity Forum 2014: Migrant and Refugee Employment"

Speech

Monday 25 August 2014

Migrant and Refugee Employment is our theme this year and it's an important one facing not just Christchurch but all New Zealand.

Whether we like it or not some of our sectors are undergoing a skill shortage and we need skilled people to want to come and live here.

How we treat our migrants and refugees – whether it's with respect, dignity and mana – that part's up to us.

This morning we will hear from some of New Zealand business leaders as well as Aurecon's Diversity and Inclusion Manager for the Asia Pacific region, Abbie Wright.

What they will be telling us is that in a growing global economy: Diversity is good for business. And to be honest this is not really a new thing for New Zealand.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

Some of our country's very first trade missions took place 200-years-or-so ago and were led by Maori entrepreneurs and tribal leaders.

From the Gold mines of central Otago to the economic boom of the 1950s: New Zealand businesses have filled skill shortages by attracting migrants for years.

The thing is while we are no strangers to diversity: we should be better at it than we are. Right now in terms of the Christchurch Rebuild: diversity is crucial.

Last year's TechConnect's online event to attract skilled migrant workers to this city saw more than 2,500 job applications from candidates around the world, all thinking about a future here in New Zealand.

Is New Zealand the kind of place where migrants and their children will be treated with mana? Or will they scan the media reports on New Zealand and see that their children will be expected to "harden up" when people make fun of their ethnicity?

These kinds of questions can only be answered by New Zealanders.

How we treat our migrant and ethnic minorities – whether it's with respect and dignity and mana – that part's up to us. What's clear is that we can do better than we've done in the past, we can do better than we do right now.

Chinese Kiwi, Sean Kam grew up in Takapuna, when he played rugby for Westlake Boys he was known as the Orient Express.

Sean's also a bit of a financial whizkid, and CFO of one of New Zealand's top 50 listed companies. He says Kiwi companies are missing out on the diversity stakes at both board and senior management level. He knows firsthand that Asian Kiwis can and do bridge the cultural gap companies face when doing business because Asian Kiwis like him understand both sets of cultures.

Diversity and business can take on many forms. Last year at the Taniwha and Dragaon festival, Maori and Chinese leaders celebrated and forged cultural, ancestral, historical and economic bonds.

If New Zealand is going to become a true innovation nation, we need to celebrate and plan for the reality that we are fast becoming one of the most ethnically diverse nations on earth.

In the engine room of any great economy are people. People who are innovative creators, people who think outside the square. Innovation is the foundation of our Kiwi number eight wire mentality and it's time we reflect on this as we plan for the future.

Because diversity, difference and thinking outside the square are key drivers of innovation.

Diversity is something we must invest in and plan for.

This intangible investment is about integrity and is perhaps the most valuable asset of all.

Investing in diversity won't just be found in a balance sheet or bank account but in our communities, our schools, our offices.

Most importantly whether or not we invest in diversity will be found in the kind of nation our children and grandchildren will inherit from us.

Diversity Forum 2014
Welcome Speech
24 August 2014

Mihi

Kai Tahu Rangatira

Kai Tahu Iwi

Kai Tahu Tangata

Tena koutou katoa

It is my great honour to welcome you all to the tenth New Zealand Diversity Forum.

Our sincere thanks and gratitude to our sponsors whose support has helped make the Diversity Forum 2014 a reality.

Kia ora to the University of Canterbury for sponsoring our venue and to the New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO for once again investing in our young people and sponsoring our Youth Forum

Our other sponsors who made today possible also need to be acknowledged:

Christchurch City Council; AIA Insurance; Bank of New Zealand; MBIE and of course, our longstanding friends at the New Zealand Police.

Your generosity and your support for Diversity has enabled us to come together this weekend to debate, discuss and share in the challenges and opportunities that the changing face of New Zealand brings us all.

Young people are critical when it comes to enduring peace and I hear there's been some awesome work done in the past couple of days by young Kiwis taking part in our Youth Forum. Many are here today, we're really pleased to have you with us. We are particularly grateful to Kai Tahu for your welcome and your presence with us today.

History shows us that so often we find out how strong we are in our most darkest times. And no other city in this country knows this better than Christchurch.

The gritty determination demonstrated in the past three years by the people of this city is both inspiring and humbling. With the greatest respect I would like to take our minds back to just one of those examples.

In the weeks following February 22nd 2011, families descended upon a makeshift morgue in Christchurch. They came here from the Philippines, Japan, China, Malaysia, Thailand, Israel, Taiwan, Ireland, Turkey, South Korea and of course from across New Zealand. And in the unfolding tragedy the Kai Tahu tribe did something incredibly important.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

Kai Tahu did something that even now few of us know about because they didn't send out a press release or a media advisory. As is the custom, the tikanga of Kai Tahu: they stayed with the dead until the last person was returned home.

For weeks on end, twenty four hours a day – Kai Tahu people remained at the temporary morgue with the dead, they did not leave them to lie on their own. And in doing so, the people of Kai Tahu acknowledged that these were much more than just earthquake victims.

They were more than just bodies: They were people. People who had names. People who had families. People who had mana.

So thank you to the people of Kai Tahu. Thank you for your aroha. Thank you for your love. Thank you for your humanity.

I cannot think of a more powerful demonstration of manaakitanga than than uplifting and looking after the dignity of others.

It is a reminder that first and foremost: Manaakitanga is about mana. Nga mihi nui kia koutou katoa, Kai Tahu Tangata.

Ten years ago after anti semitic attacks on graves at Wellington's Jewish cemetery our interfaith and ethnic communities stood united against intolerance and hate.

The NZ Diversity Action Programme was born, facilitated by the Human Rights Commission and with support across Government and from many communities.

Ten years on in 2014, I'm disappointed to report that some New Zealanders are still taking part in hate attacks on Jewish Kiwis. These are not unlike previous hate attacks on Muslim Kiwis.

If Kiwis want peace in other countries – then Kiwis need to start by building peace in our own country.

While we mourn tragic conflicts overseas – we must honour their lives by standing up for peace at all costs.

Yes, the Human Rights Commission will defend the rights of New Zealanders to protest.

But we will also defend the right of every New Zealander to practise their faith, free from fear. To be able to attend services at their mosque, synagogue or temple free from hate attacks. This is a basic and fundamental human right.

Human rights don't just exist thousands of miles away. Human rights begin at home, right here where we live. And they are rights we are all responsible for.

As you will know there has been a lot of commentary about race relations recently. The racial slurs aren't worth repeating.

Politicians making fun of an entire race of people, sadly isn't new but it's disappointing and shameful our politicians are still doing it in 2014. But I know New Zealanders are better than that.

We've come a long way as a nation in terms of treating each other with respect but what's clear is some of us still have a long way to go.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

One third generation Chinese Kiwi said recently:

Why should my children have to put up with people making fun of their name? Making fun of their race? I really thought they wouldn't have to go through what I did. But I was wrong.

As Race Relations Commissioner my role is to "promote and protect human rights for all people in Aotearoa New Zealand and foster harmonious relations".

In other words, I'm responsible for encouraging everyone to treat each other with respect, dignity and mana: irrespective of their race, ethnicity or religion.

Everyone also means politicians because they aren't just everyday New Zealanders, neither are they comedians or entertainers.

Politicians are change makers, statesmen, stateswomen and role models who have the honour of representing us in our parliament.

I see it as my job to urge all politicians to act with a bit of dignity: to leave bigotry, racial jibes and racial opportunism at the door.

To treat Muslim, Chinese, Maori, Iraqi, Indian New Zealanders with respect, dignity and mana: irrespective of their race, ethnicity or religion.

Ethnic minorities are sick of being told to get a sense of humour or ironically to "lighten up" when someone makes fun of them: when the insult is made by a Politician and linked to an election campaign the 'joke' takes on a more sinister, menacing nature.

Nelson Mandela opened the World Conference Against Racism in 2001 where member states agreed that politicians and political parties play a fundamental role in humanity's battle against racism. The conference urged politicians to refrain from public statements that encourage intolerance and racism because history has shown that people follow the example of their political leaders.

When I call out politicians I don't expect them to immediately apologise. But I do expect everyday Kiwis to listen to what's going on, to debate the issues and decide for themselves what is acceptable.

We value the freedoms that come with democracy, all of us have the right to speak freely and voice our opinions however freedom comes with responsibility.

Migrant and Refugee Employment is our theme this year and it's an important one facing not just Christchurch but all New Zealand.

Whether we like it or not some of our sectors are undergoing a skill shortage and we need skilled people to want to come and live here. How we treat our migrants and refugees – whether it's with respect and dignity and mana – that part's up to us.

Software developer and Egyptian New Zealander Mena Bassily recently lifted the lid on his own instance of racism by a fellow traveller on a flight from Auckland to Wellington.

I would like to quote Mena:

The woman stared at me. "What's in the bag? Is it a bomb?"

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

Great not only I don't get a window seat but I have to sit next to an Arab."

Mena says, It took me a few seconds to realise that, yes, this is happening. I was being racially profiled and stereotyped.

I'd like to thank Mena for being brave enough to go to the media and put the spotlight on everyday racism, perpetrated by everyday New Zealanders.

Because everyday New Zealanders are the only ones who can get rid of everyday racism in New Zealand. Intolerance isn't something people are born with.

Initiatives like the Diversity Action Programme, Islam Awareness Week, Maori Language Week and Holocaust Remembrance Day all help to educate and enlighten everyday New Zealanders.

Understanding and appreciating that people from ethnic minorities also helped build New Zealand is another thing New Zealanders need to start to realise.

The first Chinese people arrived before the Treaty was signed, the first Muslim and Indian Kiwis were working and living here 140-years ago. When they arrived they worked. This legacy of migrants to this country has not changed. My own father celebrated his first birthday on a ship heading for New Zealand. Just like all migrants his family left Ireland for a better life and a brighter future. Our family worked hard, my grandmother was a cleaner at Government House, we grew up in a state house.

Migrants work hard from the moment they arrive in New Zealand and work hard to fit into mainstream New Zealand: but mainstream New Zealand needs to do some work as well. At the very least migrants need to be given a fair go – a fair playing ground not one that's skewed by prejudice.

Cultural diversity makes a nation and a people stronger: not weaker. That's why diversity isn't just important for migrant New Zealanders: diversity is important for all New Zealanders. We can't leave it up to chance or to luck: we are all responsible for race relations in New Zealand.

Last week at the launch of Islam Awareness Week, our former Governor General Anand Satyanand talked about the Capital's iconic statue of Mahatma Gandhi. The small, determined figure of one of the world's greatest proponents for peace stands in one of Wellington's most windswept spots. This statue is the perfect metaphor for one of his most well known sayings about race relations, tolerance and peace.

Mahatma Gandhi said:

"I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed.

I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible.

But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any."

I think while we've come a long way when it comes to race relations in New Zealand: it's also clear to me we've got a long way to go until all New Zealanders are treated with respect, dignity and mana.

We still have a lot of work to do.

Tena koutou tena koutou tena koutou katoa.

“We have a lot of work to do – Race Relations”
Statement
11 August 2014

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy says “politicians making fun of an entire race of people isn’t new but it’s disappointing and shameful New Zealand political leaders are still doing it in 2014.”

“We’re better than this and our political leaders need to realise that.”

“We have come a long way as a nation in terms of people treating each other with respect but sadly we have some people who just don’t get it and who don’t want to get it,” said Dame Susan.

“Winston Peters needs to know he’s not funny. His outdated rhetoric belongs in New Zealand’s past: it has no place in New Zealand’s future.”

Dame Susan supported the comments made this morning by Chinese New Zealander and former Chinese Association chair, Stephen Young who said Mr Peters words belonged in the past.

Every year the Human Rights Commission fields thousands of complaints from people all over the country: approximately a third are complaints about racial discrimination. Nine out of ten complaints are resolved by our team of mediators said Dame Susan.

“We still have a lot of work to do in New Zealand when it comes to treating one another with respect. There is still, quite clearly, a lot of work to do,” said Dame Susan.

“All New Zealanders – including and especially those charged with the responsibility and honour of representing us in our parliament – need to treat one another with dignity, and respect: the foundations upon which human rights are found. Human rights begin at home.”

July

“Human Rights Commission urges politicians to stick to the major issues”
Statement
30 July 2014

In the run up to the general election Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy is urging politicians to “do the right thing and stick to those major issues that will help make New Zealand a better place for all our children to grow up in.”

“Equating Maori New Zealanders to French aristocrats who were murdered because of their privilege is a grotesque and inflammatory statement. Accusations of Maori privilege are not borne out by Maori socio economic statistics.”

“Whether we like it or not the reality is that ethnicity and disadvantage are connected and found in damning statistics that on average sees Maori New Zealanders life expectancy, education and health outcomes lagging behind non Maori New Zealanders,” said Dame Susan.

“The connection between ethnicity and disadvantage did not appear overnight and breaking it won’t happen overnight either. Treating everyone exactly the same will not necessarily make everyone exactly the same and anyone who thinks so is incredibly naïve.”

In its latest review of human rights the United Nations recommended New Zealand do better in a range of areas including the socio-economic outcomes for Maori New Zealanders.

“Think Tank Talanoa: Human Rights & Pasifika Women”
Speech
Thursday 24 July

Kia ora koutou and Warm Pacific Greetings.

Thank you for inviting me to be with you today and inviting me to talk about my work with the Human Rights Commission.

The horrors of World War Two saw New Zealand work with other nations to develop the world’s first international human rights framework, a United Nations charter and a Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

New Zealand was one of the first to sign and we are recognised as having an excellent human rights record. The United Nations regularly reviews our human rights and they’ve found that one of the main areas we need to do better in are reducing violence against women and children.

This should come as no surprise to any of the women in this room tonight.

My role as Race Relations Commissioner is about fostering harmonious race relations: What does that mean?

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

The reality is that race relations and human rights are first and foremost about people, and our relationships with one another, how we treat one another.

As you know a nation can have laws, international treaties and covenants.

Swimming pools and supermarkets can have internal policies, rules and regulations.

But as we've seen recently at the swimming pool over in Newmarket, or the supermarket down in Hamilton: internal policies, rules and regulations still didn't stop staff from publically humiliating two women and their families.

Do we treat people with respect? Or do we treat people with contempt?

At its heart, race relations and human rights are about people, and our relationships with one another.

When people talk about human rights often they start in the middle of last century with the creation of the United Nations and the UN Declaration of Human Rights soon after World War Two.

But what's important to acknowledge is that human rights didn't just start in the nineteen forties.

174 years ago the leaders of Aotearoa New Zealand agreed to a law that acknowledged all people have rights. Not just some people, not just European people or rich people: the Treaty of Waitangi recognised that all people have rights.

I think it's hugely significant and something every New Zealander can be proud of. Because at a time when human beings were being bought and sold on the other side of the world: Here in New Zealand we agreed that every person had inalienable rights. No matter who they were.

Having said that – as we know – successive governments failed to honour the Treaty, and generations of Maori New Zealanders suffered incredible economic and social hardship. The aftermath of these unfair, appalling policies are still being felt today. We can't be proud of that legacy but we can be proud that by using the principles of restorative justice: we are settling those grievances honourably.

But even before 1840 - this region's had it's own unique ways of working out how we relate to one another.

In Samoa the concept known as Vā is about all about relationships between people and how relationships are defined with each new interaction.

At its heart, tikanga Maori is also about how we relate and interact with one another: our rules of engagement so to speak.

The thing is when society's rules aren't followed: what then?

Last week Hamilton woman Rikki Hooper's bravely decided to go public and highlight racial profiling at her local supermarket. Some media incorrectly reported I was shocked but I wasn't shocked at all because like you, I know racism does happen in our country. Rikki's experience at her local supermarket isn't an isolated case and it's not unique to Countdown, Hamilton or the retail industry.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

Our own human rights legislation and the supermarket's own explicit policies should have meant Rikki wasn't publicly humiliated: but she was.

The same kinds of policies should have meant Sarai Tepou wasn't victimised at the Olympic Pools: but she was.

After these cases were highlighted social media has been rife with people recounting their own experiences of racial profiling. One of my friends recalled how her two boys were made to empty their pockets while in the toy aisle of the Warehouse: but the Palagi kids weren't made to. Her eldest boy was heading home from the mall one afternoon with his friends: tidily dressed, they weren't smoking, drinking or breaking the law. And yet a passing Police car stopped and only questioned her boy, not the Palagi boys. What'd you buy at the Mall? Do you usually go to the Mall and buy nothing? What's in your bag? He replied politely to every question and eventually the officers drove off. But if they'd asked a few more questions they'd have found out he was a leader in his college, who did volunteer work and had just received a scholarship after gaining more than 100 NCEA excellence credits. My friend shrugs and says when her boys get a bit older they get "the talk" on how to cope when stopped for no apparent reason. Not if they're stopped, when they're stopped.

Like Countdown, the NZ Police has its own policies including the multi-faceted "Turning the Tide" Whanau Ora strategy. Police say there is no specific policy to target Maori so what happened to my friend's boy shouldn't have happened: but it did.

The reality is that while companies and government agencies must train their staff to ensure racial harassment doesn't become a part of their organisational culture – it's ultimately up to everyday people with everyday jobs to make sure racial harassment doesn't become part of our country's everyday culture. There was no fairness, respect or dignity with the way Rikki Cooper and Sarai Tepou were treated last week: but they responded with incredible courage and mana. By putting the spotlight on what racial stereotyping looks, sounds and feels like: Rikki and Sarai have already inspired others to complain and take a stand.

One question for us to ponder on is: What were all the other shoppers doing while this young woman was being shamed in front of them? The answer is that it sounds like they did nothing, they probably didn't agree with what was happening and I bet they felt uncomfortable: but they did nothing. The lesson from them is when you see racism or discrimination: Don't be a bystander. Standing up to racism – even saying something as simple as "Hey why don't you just leave her alone" – shows the victim they're not alone. It also shows the perpetrator that he or she is totally out of line. What you do or say depends on the situation: but do the right thing and do something. We are working on ways to help people call out discrimination when they experience it or when they see it: outing it is the only way to get rid of it.

New Zealanders like a challenge so we need to ask ourselves: Am I targeting these people simply because of what they look like? Am I giving them a fair go? Or am I publically humiliating them?

Our nation's excellent human rights record means nothing if New Zealanders are still targeted simply because of their ethnicity.

Racial stereotyping has no place in Aotearoa's future: it's everyday people who need to make it part of our history.

“Bilingual Waikato River Publication”
Speech
Thursday 24 July

Waikato Ariki

Waikato Iwi

Waikato tangata

Waikato awa

Tēna koutou katoa

Ka mihi hoki ki te kaupapa o te rā

Te taonga pukapuka hou kua oti i a koutou

He taonga ngā korero o roto

He taonga tona kaupapa nui, arā, te tiaki i te awa

He taonga hoki te reo Māori o roto

Kia ora tātou katoa

- Rahui Papa and Waikato-Tainui: Tena koutou.
- The Honourable John Luxton and the Waikato River Authority: Tena koutou.
- Nick Edgar and James Barnett from New Zealand Landcare Trust: Tena koutou katoa.

Thank you for inviting me to share this milestone with you today.

Last month the Human Rights Commission recognised the importance of this publication by awarding Landcare Trust one of our *On the Bright Side* awards.

I've also been asked to talk with you today about human rights and race relations. The thing is this publication is a real example of how human rights are realised and how race relations can be strengthened.

Because race relations and human rights are first and foremost about people, and our relationships with one another, how we treat one another.

As you know a nation can have laws, Police and supermarkets can have internal policies: but as we saw only last week race relations comes down to people, our relationships with one another and how we treat one another.

When people talk about human rights often they start in the middle of last century with the creation of the United Nations.

But I'd like to go back another 100-years.

174 years ago the leaders of this country agreed to a law that recognised all people living here have rights.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

Not just some people, not just European people or rich people: the Treaty of Waitangi recognised that all people have rights.

I think it's hugely significant and something every New Zealander can be proud of.

Because at a time when human beings were being bought and sold like cattle on the other side of the world: Here in New Zealand our forbears agreed that every person had inalienable rights.

No matter who they were.

The Treaty guaranteed all New Zealanders the rights of British citizens.

It also guaranteed religious freedom for all.

Having said that – as we know – successive New Zealand governments failed to honour the Treaty, and generations of Maori New Zealanders suffered incredible economic and social hardship. The aftermath of these unfair, appalling policies are still being felt today. We can't be proud of that legacy but we can be proud that by using the principles of restorative justice: we are settling those grievances with honour and with mana.

This is how we right our wrongs: looking back at the past with our eyes wide open is the only way we can face the future with honour, and with mana.

What New Zealanders need to realise is that human rights are at the heart of the Treaty of Waitangi because that document serves to protect us all.

Race relations is essentially about relationships.

And this is what we are here to celebrate today.

I would like to thank Landcare Trust and Waikato Tainui for showing leadership and leading the way forward for all your people.

Kia ora.

Korero Maori:

Ka mihi ki te kaupapa o te rā i a Tainui Waikato me Landcare

Te taonga pukapuka hou kua oti i a koutou

He taonga ngā korero o roto

He taonga tona kaupapa nui, arā, te tiaki i te awa

He taonga hoki te reo Māori o roto

“National Refugee Resettlement Forum”
Speech
Thursday 10 July

Nga mihi nga mihi mahana kia koutou katoa.

Acknowledgments and warm greetings to you all. I would especially like to welcome the relatively new representative from the UNHRC Thomas Albrecht..welcome to our part of the world, the Deputy CE for Immigration Nigel Bickle and the Ian Axford fellow Jody O’Brien.

I’d particularly like to thank today the many regional representatives from Strengthening Refugee Voices from Canterbury, Ahmed Tani, from Auckland, Abann Yor, from Waikato, Ismail Gamadid, from Nelson, Netra Kafley, from Manawatu, Chuda Ghimirey and from Changemakers, Yusuf Khalif.

Most of all thank you to the members of New Zealand’s refugee community who are here with us today.

Tena koutou. Tena koutou. Tena koutou katoa.

Thank you for inviting me to talk to you today.

Recently many of us here celebrated World Refugee Day, some at the function at Parliament and others at the Mangere Resettlement Centre. At the parliamentary function, who would not have been moved by the stories of people like Daniel from Colombia?

His story brings home the reality that the refugee’s arrival in New Zealand isn’t the end: it’s the beginning of another journey.

How their New Zealand journey goes depends on many things.

Daniel reminded us that successful resettlement depends on things like:

- access to language
- access to education
- access to employment

and above all else: getting a sporting chance.

There remain many hurdles to get over if we’re going to make sure all people are fully enjoying their fundamental rights and freedoms.

The Human Rights Commission supports the findings and recommendations from the Changemakers Refugee report “Marking Time”.

As you know “quota refugees” receive support and services that are not available to asylum seekers and reunified family members.

We agree with their consistent recommendation that convention refugees receive the same support as quota refugees.

It is the fair and just thing to do.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

Despite the many efforts of communities and successive governments: discrimination, social and economic exclusion and entrenched inequalities is still a reality for too many New Zealanders.

Some of our nation's most significant inequalities are about the right to health, education and work.

Despite being acknowledged by Governments of all political colours, there are still huge gaps.

But at the same time there is progress and it's important to also recognise the positive things that are happening.

The Government's new resettlement strategy is about improving settlement outcomes for refugees. It focuses on five goals:

- Self sufficiency: all working age refugees are in paid work or supported by a family member in paid work.
- Participation
- Health and well being
- Education, particularly language skills and
- Housing, that is safe, secure healthy and affordable

In addition to the \$58 million Government spends each year, work has already begun on upgrading the Mangere resettlement centre.

The Minister of Immigration Michael Woodhouse also announced another \$5.6 million over the next four years to support new refugees during their first year in New Zealand.

So while there is work to be done, we also acknowledge the Government and New Zealand's ongoing commitment to refugees.

It's a commitment that's been going on for a while.

Seventy years ago this October a boat full of children sailed into Wellington harbour.

On board were more than 700 child refugees from Poland.

They were War Orphans who'd survived starvation, war and a 4000 kilometre trek from labour camps in Siberia to the Persian Gulf.

From there, these tiny refugees sailed to the other side of the world to a tiny red dot on the world map called New Zealand.

Since then, for seventy years, that little red dot on the world map has opened our doors to more than 30,000 people who've survived against the odds and sought refuge here.

Thousands of miles from home, thirty thousand refugees have created a new home and future here in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Thirty thousand extraordinary, everyday people whose resilience, courage and incredible contribution to our country makes New Zealand a better place.

As a Kiwi I'm really proud of what we've done in the past.

I'm really proud of what we do now to help refugees settle and build a future here in their new homeland.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

But as a Kiwi I also know we can do better.

Because for a country that's renowned for punching above our weight on the world stage: when it comes to taking in refugees we lag behind the rest of the world.

New Zealand's intake of refugees has remained the same since 1987.

Compared to the rest of the world, per capita we don't make the top ten.

We don't even make the top fifty.

If there was a World Cup for nations that provide homes and hope for refugees and asylum seekers: we wouldn't even qualify.

And with 33 million displaced people in the world: New Zealand has the capacity to accept more refugees.

This is part of our responsibilities as an international citizen.

The thing is, I can call on Governments to do things until I'm blue in the face but without the will of everyday people: governments are unlikely to make change on their own.

The reality is that all of us are responsible for human rights in New Zealand – us as individuals need to walk the talk and call for change.

Everyday New Zealander's have no idea of the challenges that refugees have gone through and still face every day.

Most of us will never know what it's like to flee our home, never knowing if we will see our loved ones again.

Most of us will never know what it's like to survive a war in our own homeland.

Most of us will never know what it's like to put our lives on hold as we wait for another country to give us refuge and a home.

Refugees are everyday people who've faced extraordinary hardship – and it's everyday New Zealanders who need to stand up and call for an increase in our refugee quota.

Another thing I was asked to talk about today was race relations and instead of making up my own words I'd like to quote some brilliant young people who took part in this year's Race Unity speech competition.

Incredible Iraqi New Zealanders, Somali New Zealanders, Korean New Zealanders, Afghani New Zealanders, Maori New Zealanders.

Young people whose stories tell us what is wrong and what needs to be done:

"People tend to judge me by the colour of my scarf rather than the content of my character.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

Don't judge me by my physical beauty but rather accept me by my modesty and the inner beauty that I possess as a unique individual."

"My brother is 6 he is a refugee fleeing a civil war.

My brother is 12 he is a so-called ungrateful immigrant for refusing to read in front of the class.

My brother is now 21, studying as a mathematician at Victoria University.

My question is: How do we as a nation ensure our people are freed from the shackles of stereotype and prejudice, free of the limitations society imposes on them?

How does one move from being ostracised and shamed by his teacher in front of his peers, to pursuing his passion? "

Racial harmony in Aotearoa New Zealand is about dignity, respect and mana for all people.

But as far as I'm concerned the hope for our future lies in our children.

And I'm happy to say that the future does look bright.

New Zealanders like backing the underdog.

My plea today is for New Zealanders to start backing the Refugee.

My plea today is for Kiwis to start punching above our weight not just in sport.

New Zealanders need to start punching above our weight when it comes to compassion, kindness and most of all, humanity.

It's up to us.

It's everyday Kiwis who will make a difference.

It's everyday Kiwis who need to make a stand for everyday families: mums, dads and kids – millions of them who right now are imprisoned in refugee camps all over the world. Some right here in the Pacific.

It was a sunny Tuesday morning back in 1941 when 700 homeless, parentless children sailed into this harbour.

Those children said the first things they noticed was that there were no guards here in New Zealand.

Those children said there were no high fences and no machine guns here in New Zealand.

Those children said there was no more barbed wire here in New Zealand.

So I urge all of us to use our Kiwi ingenuity and spirit once more.

Let's replace the barbed wire of refugee camps with our own number eight wire mentality.

Let's be there for some of our planet's most vulnerable children, families and people.

Let's stand up for the Refugee.

***“Human Rights Commission raises concerns over news report on race relations”
Statement to Radio New Zealand***

The Human Rights Commission has raised concerns over a news report that claimed Maori people dislike Asian people more than other New Zealanders

“New Zealand newsrooms have a responsibility to report on race relations professionally and without prejudice,” says Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy.

“Maori New Zealanders – just like all New Zealanders - have a right to be portrayed fairly and accurately in the media,” says Indigenous Rights Commissioner Karen Johansen.

The news report “Maori dislike of Asian immigration deepens” appeared in the May 25th 2014 edition of the Sunday Star Times and referred to research commissioned by the Asia New Zealand Foundation. The foundation’s Perceptions of Asia report polled more than 1000 New Zealanders: 10% were Maori New Zealanders, 44% of whom agreed with the statement that New Zealanders felt less warm towards Asian people than they did a year earlier.

“The news report’s claim that “Maori dislike of Asian immigration deepens” is not supported by the Perceptions of Asia report. This is also the opinion of the Asia New Zealand Foundation,” said Dame Susan.

“The commission will be raising concerns about inaccurate or prejudiced news reports that sensationalise and impede race relations through inaccurate or prejudiced reporting,” said Dame Susan.

“Some of New Zealand’s first pioneers came from China. Asian New Zealanders did not arrive yesterday, they have been an integral part of our nation since it was born.”

Ms Johansen says “In fact Maori and Asian New Zealanders have long ties to one another that stretch back to the 1800s. As well as family links, Maori and Asian people and families share ancestral, cultural and historical bonds that were highlighted last year at Auckland’s Taniwha and Dragon Festival: the world’s first celebration of Maori and Asian culture”

***“Te taonga pukapuka hou - bilingual guide a demonstration of leadership”
Statement
24 July 2014***

“Waikato River Restoration: A Bilingual Guide” to the Waikato River that saw Tainui Waikato, Landcare Trust and the Waikato River Authority working together is a demonstration of rangatiratanga or leadership says Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy.

In Hamilton last week to launch the publication Dame Susan said “This is a real example of how human rights are realised and how race relations can be strengthened.”

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

“Because race relations and human rights are first and foremost about people, and our relationships with one another, how we treat one another. It is also a Maori language taonga.”

“Ka mihi ki te kaupapa o te rā i a Tainui Waikato me Landcare. Te taonga pukapuka hou kua oti i a koutou. He taonga ngā korero o roto, he taonga tona kaupapa nui, arā, te tiaki i te awa, he taonga hoki te reo Māori o roto,” said Dame Susan.

“Race relations are essentially about relationships and this is what we are here to celebrate today. I would like to thank Tainui Waikato, Landcare Trust and the Waikato River Authority for showing leadership and leading the way forward for all your people.”

Launched during Maori Language Week, Dame Susan – herself a Maori language student – says the publication is a taonga for the future.

Battle to make racism history is one everyone must fight (NZ Herald Opinion Page) 24 July 2015

After Hamilton woman Rikki Cooper made her brave decision to go public and highlight racial profiling at her local Countdown supermarket, some media reported that I was shocked.

I was never shocked. Angered, frustrated and disappointed, yes. But shocked? Not at all.

That's because I know racism happens every day: Rikki's experiences aren't isolated and they're not unique to Countdown, Hamilton or the retail industry.

Human rights legislation and the supermarket's policies should have meant that Rikki wasn't publicly humiliated, but she was.

Social media were later rife with people talking about their experiences.

My friend's teenager was in a group going home from a mall in the school holidays. Tidily dressed, they weren't smoking, drinking or breaking the law, yet when a passing police car stopped, the officers approached only the Maori ones.

The boys replied politely to every question and the officers drove off. Had they asked more they'd have found out the boys were leaders in their secondary school who help at their whanau marae. One gained more than 100 NCEA excellence credits and a science scholarship.

During the same holidays my friend's younger boys - 11 and 9 - were stopped in the toy aisle of a department store and made to turn out their pockets. Their non-Maori friends weren't searched.

Like Countdown, the police have their own policies, including the multi-faceted Turning the Tide Whanau Ora strategy. Police say there is no policy to target Maori so what happened to my friend's boy shouldn't have happened. But it did.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

Companies and government agencies must train their staff to ensure racial harassment doesn't become part of their organisational culture, but it's up to everyday people to make sure it doesn't become part of our country's culture.

There was no fairness, respect or dignity in the way Rikki was treated but she responded with incredible courage and mana. By putting the spotlight on racial stereotyping Rikki has already inspired others to complain.

I wonder what other shoppers were doing while this young woman was being shamed in front of them? It sounds like they did nothing. They probably didn't agree with what was happening, but they did nothing.

The lesson is, when you see racism or discrimination don't be a bystander. Standing up to racism shows the victim they're not alone and shows the perpetrator they are out of line.

Racial stereotyping has no place in Aotearoa's future; everyday people must make it part of our history.

"Young Hamilton woman thanked for going public on racial profiling" **Statement** **14 July 2014**

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy has thanked a young Hamilton woman for going public after being subjected to racial stereotyping by supermarket workers in her home town.

"Sadly what happened to Rikki Cooper isn't new but it highlights something that's faced every day by everyday people," says Dame Susan.

"After being hounded and humiliated, Rikki was brave enough to go to the media and put the spotlight on what racial stereotyping looks, sounds and feels like."

"Racial stereotyping has no place in our country's future and it's everyday people who need to make it part of our history."

Dame Susan urges organisations and companies like Countdown to do the right thing, train their staff and make sure this never happens again. She congratulated the company for doing the right thing, apologising and investigating this incident. However ultimately treating people with respect comes down to people said Dame Susan.

"But it comes down to individuals. People must ask themselves: am I just doing my job or am I targeting these people just because I have prejudices about them?," said Dame Susan.

"This is a challenge for every New Zealander to think on. Our country's excellent human rights record means nothing if New Zealanders are still targeted simply because of their ethnicity."

"Those people who have the courage to call out racial stereotyping when they experience it or see it are helping to make our country a better place to live in."

“Let’s spell out our determination to embrace NZ culture”
Opinion piece, NZ Herald
10 July 2014

As Māori Language Week nears, Race Relations Commissioner and Māori language student Dame Susan Devoy says instead of making a maunga out of a molehill we should look to our kids for inspiration.

Tracing my whakapapa or family tree is something I’m looking forward to and there are some awesome people who are going to help me do it. It won’t be easy but we’re a determined bunch so I’m sure we’ll get there. By the time my mokopuna are at school I hope they’ll know a bit more about their whakapapa than their grandmother did.

So I’ve been trying to learn te reo Māori for a year or so now. Trying is the operative word because it’s not easy. Like most Kiwis I’m monolingual, which means I was brought up speaking one language and that language permeated every inch of the nation I call home.

I grew up in Rotorua – or Rotovegas as we fondly call our sulphur city – where Māori culture, language and people are a huge part of our identity. But even here in the Bay of Plenty, the stronghold of Te Arawa and Mataatua: the Anti-Anything-Maori mentality is still very strong. A good example right now can be found in Tauranga, where a few are making a maunga out of a molehill over the addition of a macron or a dash over the u in Otūmoetai.

One local commentator’s maunga is so huge he’s resorted to profanity - “Arselets”, “dick”, “dicks”, “stupid little dick”. I wrote to him and told him freedom of speech is a right: but his words aren’t about freedom of speech, they’re just offensive. Spelling words properly isn’t about being PC. It’s about spelling. Quite simply this issue isn’t about a Māori name versus a Pākehā name : it’s about the correct spelling of the Māori name. As I understand the changes will take place when the signs need replacing, therefore there’s no burden on the tax payer either. A hugely significant pa site, Otūmoetai is also a major suburb and home to many kids who deserve to know how to pronounce the name of the place they live in. Would the British argue over whether or not to bother spelling or pronouncing Stonehenge or Windsor properly? I doubt it. A newspaper campaign to deliberately mispronounce a word is quite simply pathetic.

When Hinewehi Mohi first sung our national anthem in Māori at a rugby test in England, there were howls of indignation. How dare she! some cried. But 15-years-later, singing God of Nations in te reo is normal and sung loudly and proudly by thousands of Kiwis. Like South Africa , we publically and proudly highlight our national languages before every test. But to give them their dues, the Springboks beat us to it. Four years before Hinewehi sung E Ihowa Atua at Twickenham, the Springboks stood alongside their President, Nelson Mandela to sing their anthem in five of the republic’s eleven national languages.

The centre of gravity of public opinion about te reo Māori has shifted significantly since 1999 and we have many people and particularly our own children to thank. Unlike a lot of their elders, Kiwi kids don’t bat an eyelid at te reo because they know Māori language and culture doesn’t threaten them; our kids know it’s one of the things that makes us Kiwis and our country not just unique, but also totally awesome.

“New Zealanders should stand up for the refugee”
Statement
10 July 2014

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy urges New Zealanders to stand up for the refugee.

“Let’s replace the barbed wire of refugee camps with our own No. 8 wire mentality. Let’s be there for some of our planet’s most vulnerable children, families and people,” she said.

“If there was a World Cup for nations that provide homes and hope for refugees and asylum seekers: New Zealand wouldn’t even qualify.”

Speaking at the National Refugee Resettlement Forum that opened in Wellington today Dame Susan says she is proud New Zealand has taken in more than 30,000 refugees over the years.

“But I also know we can do better. New Zealand’s intake of refugees has remained the same since 1987,” said Dame Susan.

“And with 33 million displaced people in the world – most of them children - New Zealand has the capacity to accept more refugee, it’s part of our responsibility as a global citizen.”

“For a country that’s renowned for punching above our weight on the world stage: when it comes to taking in refugees we lag behind the rest of the world.”

Dame Susan said change depends primarily on the will of everyday people: which is why everyday New Zealanders need to take a stand and call for a rise in New Zealand’s refugee quota.

“Most of us will never know what it’s like to flee our home, never knowing if we will see our loved ones again. Most of us will never know what it’s like to survive a war in our own homeland, or put our lives on hold as we wait for another country to give us a new home,” said Dame Susan.

“My plea today is for Kiwis to start punching above our weight not just in sport: New Zealanders need to start punching above our weight when it comes to compassion, kindness and most of all, humanity.”

June

***All Blacks to Samoa the least we can do
(NZ Herald Opinion Page)
10 June 2014***

New Zealand needs to prove its mutual respect and make a Pacific test happen, writes Dame Susan Devoy.

Hold fast to your cultural treasures, "Taofi mau i au measina" was this year's Samoan Language Week theme and it's good advice. Because the measina or treasure we need to hold fast to is about a sport embedded in the DNA of families who live in places called Apia, Thames, Nuku'alofa, Bluff, Suva, and Greytown. The treasure we need to hold fast to is people and mutual respect for one another.

Outside of Samoa, more Samoans live here than anywhere else so in a way, New Zealand is Samoa's second home. Some refer to Samoa as a friend but the island nation and its sons and daughters are more like family, or fanau.

But our relationship has had its share of darkness. This year marks 100 years since New Zealand seized Samoa from Germany. Ninety-six years since our Government allowed an influenza-infected ship to dock in Apia: 8500 died and Samoa lost 22 per cent of her people. Eighty-five years since "Black Saturday", when New Zealand officers opened machine gun fire on unarmed Samoan civilians marching for independence; nine were killed including Paramount Chief Tupua Tamasese Lealofioana III.

From these painful beginnings, our modern relationship with Samoa was born.

Thankfully, and more recently, in 2002 Prime Minister Helen Clark apologised for the early, appalling years of New Zealand rule.

For Samoan Language Week, I attended an unforgettable church service at PIPC Porirua. Unforgettable because, as well as entertaining sermons and beautiful singing, we also heard our national anthem sung in Samoan for the very first time. Next morning, out at St Patrick's College Silverstream, students re-enacted a photo of the college's first Samoan boarders. One of those boys from 1955 is a nephew of the chief gunned down on Black Saturday, and now he's Samoa's Head of State, His Highness Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese. Pacific Island Affairs Minister Peseta Sam Lotu-liga was also at church that Sunday. Born in Samoa and raised in Mangere, he's a Cambridge graduate and former hooker for the NZ Barbarians Club. Peseta was humbled at how Samoan people are influenced and inspired by identity while ever keen to share it with the rest of New Zealand.

However we can't be proud the All Blacks have never played a game in Samoa or Tonga. Pacific New Zealanders' contribution to New Zealand and global rugby is extraordinary. Their potent legacy can be found in clubrooms and on playing fields across our country, in the scores of coaches, administrators and players. Respect for each other and for this legacy demands change.

Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy Speeches

As part of Helen Clark's apology she said we are bound by geography, history, culture, family and mutual respect. But mutual respect is at the heart of today's problem: Samoa has no seat at the decision-making table and no vote on the IRB Council, while Sanzar nations and France have two each. For 15 years our rugby union has led every motion to give Pacific rugby nations economic benefits but we do not have a majority vote. New Zealanders need to realise this.

Whether or not the All Blacks and other international sides should play in Samoa is not the issue: working out how to get them there is. Would a one-off test in Apia be best? Or would Samoa's entry to the Rugby Championship be more sustainable, with a mix of home games in Auckland and the islands. What support could the Ministry of Culture and Heritage come up with? Can John Campbell and TV3 come up with a broadcasting deal to match their awesome #ABstoSamoa campaign?

In the short term, New Zealand should do everything possible to find a way to play in Apia. This is a real opportunity to do the right thing, pull our sleeves up and come up with a solution. Sometimes we take for granted those things that deserve our gratitude: this is one of those times. In the long term, international rugby needs to give Pacific rugby nations a place at the table and the respect they not only deserve, but have totally earned.

Race relations isn't all about enforcing laws and international conventions: at its heart, race relations is about giving others a fair go and treating them with respect. Not because you have to, but because it's the right thing to do. We need to have the courage to act with mana now, so in years to come we don't look back with regret.