

Address given at the Sir Peter Blake Awards

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Malo lelei, Talofa lava, Kia orana, Fakalofa lahi atu, Bula Vinaka, and Kia ora!

As a Pacific person it is with great privilege and honour that I address such a distinguished audience.

As a child growing up in one of the poorest suburbs in Auckland, New Zealand I never imagined how much of a lifelong influence my surroundings would have on me. My parents migrated here in the early 1960's from the Kingdom of Tonga and set up home through the help and support of other extended family members. It was in the 70's when I was born, along with two other siblings. I am often referred to as first generation New-Zealand born Pacific.

Growing up in South Auckland was very different from my later life experiences. Discovering later in the North Shore when I went to Massey University the surprise of not being a majority people as I was accustomed to on my Wakefield Road, in Mangere. I was part of the minority in Albany, a reflection of the wider New Zealand.

It was in the absence of my familiar comforts that stirred me to look at ways I could create better life choices for myself that would affect my family and community.... In hindsight, this is where I believe leadership began for me.

What is leadership?

Can we bottle it? Are we able to sell it? Do we wear it around our neck? or drive it to work each day? Do we catch a lift up to it? Or breed our children in it? Are we empowering our friends and neighbours with it?

Is leadership competitive or collaborative? Is it an action or influence?
If we look around this room, it would be easy to say it is *ALL* of the above.

Which then suggests that we are responsible to describe what good leadership looks like? We personify leadership through our amazing Blake leaders. Our Patron Sir Peter Blake is an optimum example of leadership alongside people like our main speaker today Sir Ray Avery a model of leadership. Sir Ray Avery has endorsed quality healthcare accessible to the world's poorest societies, and by developing self-sustainable solutions, Ray

has narrowed the equality gap and given more people the tools and solutions to improve their own lives.

If you have food, clothes and a roof over your head, you are richer than 75% of the people in the world today. If you have savings of money in the bank, you are in the top 8% of the world's wealthiest today. If you woke up this morning with your good health, you are more blessed than 1million who will not survive this week. If you have not experienced the agony of torture and pains of starvation, you are more fortunate than 500million in the world today.

The Sir Peter Blake Trust provides profiles of leaders who are both distinctively unique and similarly significant. Leadership can be exemplified through influence, impact and these days - innovation.

It was 20 years ago when I began developing unique programmes for Pasifika children and young people to aspire to leadership in their homes and communities. This led to my own company in 2001, in 2004 policy development and consultation, and in 2010 a coffee business in Tonga with 10 co-operative farms and a social enterprise here which is called Community café.

My most recent project was the development of the first chartered school for Pacific Senior Students years 11-13 in Auckland, recently set up in Otahuhu the mid-point of an area I've named the "*brown corridor of Auckland*". This is where the highest concentrations of Pasifika peoples in Auckland occupy a belt that runs from the eastern suburbs of the Waitakere through to Glen Innes, Otahuhu, Otara, Mangere and Manukau. These suburbs are of lower to mid-range private housing, high levels of rental and public sector housing, and some of the city's poorest and least health-promoting housing.

Other key factors influencing this clustering are the systemic inequalities in employment and income that arise from the concentration of migrants in unskilled/semi-skilled work in particular industry sectors. Low workforce participation rates that plague Pasifika in Auckland. Pasifika are also systemically disadvantaged in other key measures such as health and education. Pasifika on average, die four years earlier than other Aotearoa New Zealanders, and have three times the diagnosis rate for diabetes than the general population. Pasifika children are 50 times more likely to get rheumatic fever than European children, and levels of Pasifika youth depression and pro-suicidal behaviours are twice those of the general population.

Auckland's Pasifika also have the highest proportion of those aged 15 years and over who have no completed formal qualification, and along with Maori, have lower rates of achievement across all qualification levels than all other ethnic groups, thus limiting employment options later in life.

The mentoring programmes Affirming Works designed have provided over the last 10 years 80% NCEA pass rate of students compared to the national average of 58%-70%.

Pasifika peoples *"need to know when and how to function well in Western systems and when and how to submit to the timeless cultural standards that our parents personify."*

In 2010 my husband and I's recent project which was a coffee business provides employment in Tonga for 80 families. In Fiji from isolated islands on the east side, 5000 women from the Lau group produced virgin coconut oil that we purchased to create better markets in the region.

Systemic change occurs when people need to know when and how to function in communities within Aotearoa New Zealand and throughout the world.

Approaching the process patiently and respectfully, listening to perspectives of the other with humility, is critical to effecting greater social change. As we launch Leadership awards and week for 2015 we *"corporately or collectively"* must **'believe you can'**, we must use what leadership we each have to **empower** the other.