



Ni sa bula vinaka,

I was born in Fiji and migrated to New Zealand at the age of 14. I am of iTaukei and Girmitya descent. Over the years, I have developed a strong interest in learning about my indigenous roots and decolonising my spaces. I am passionate about creating spaces for the intersections of the queer community such as for takatāpui, immigrants and people of colour.

I have co-founded the Conversion Therapy Action Group to work towards a ban on conversion therapy. I have worked alongside the Ministry of Education to design a more inclusive education system while as a member of Amnesty International's Youth Taskforce, I've had the opportunity to steer the human rights bodies to advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights.

I am studying a Bachelor of Laws and Arts at UoA, but when I am not occupied with Uni, I enjoy stretching and searching for cats to pat.

What made you want to join the RY board?

When I first applied to Rainbow Youth's board, there were no Pasifika members on the board. I joined the Rainbow Youths board to fill in the gaps but now I recognise that I do more than that. What happens when we fail to recognise that we have gaps in the board? I want queer people to see me and know that I am not only gay, I am Indigenous, a person of colour, an immigrant so when you acknowledge the intersectionality of who I am, I sit at the bottom of the queer social hierarchy. But when you are all the things I am and you throw in being trans or non-binary, you are dealing with a whole new level of systematic oppression. My goal is no longer limited to bringing missing voices and filling in the gaps but to actively identify who and what we are missing and how we solve those issues. In doing this, I hope to make Rainbow Youth accessible to all the diverse groups and design a space for authentic representation.

Growing up in Fiji as a queer person is difficult so moving to New Zealand in 2014 felt like a step in the right direction, however, I left a significant part of my community behind as I moved into a space of privilege. New Zealand has over the years put into place transformative laws that allow the rainbow community to feel safer and freer, however, this has not translated into creating a South Auckland that is a safe space for rainbow people. Having lived in South Auckland for almost 7 years, I have learnt so much about my community: what works, what doesn't and most importantly, what needs to change. In the process of empowering more people to access Rainbow Youth's services, I want to use my

experience of having worked with the non-traditional audience of Rainbow Youth to steer Rainbow Youth in a direction of increased accessibility for Maori and Pacific peoples and those living in low socio-economic communities.

Nothing can be built for us, without us. In the hope of creating a space for authentic Maori and Pacific representation on the board and also for young people living in low socioeconomic communities, I want to continue doing the work I have started with Rainbow Youth. My goal is to ensure that Rainbow Youths board will foster an environment of doing things out of understanding rather than guilt.

RainbowYOUTH is on a journey to proactively and respectfully uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi. How would you contribute to this journey?

My great grandmother is an iTaukei woman. She spent all her life educating me on what it meant to be an indigenous person. According to her, homophobia is a colonial concept; one that her grandparents didn't practice but descendants assimilated to. Not only was being queer culturally accepted, queer people were an integral part of the iTaukei society. But it all involuntarily came to end as an unholy marriage of Western political systems and colonial patriarchy trumped indigenous knowledge. When I grew up queer, my great grandma became hopeful but she couldn't celebrate that in me. The older I get and the more I learn, the more I feel the need to reclaim, decolonise and indigenise. The journey and pain of Takatapui community resonates with the core of who I am. I stand in solidarity with Takatapui to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi because that is the right thing to do.

I recognise that the Takatapui are not limited to being queer. They are impacted by every other system that affects the different aspects of their intersectional identity. This is why I insist on taking a holistic approach when designing and implementing a policy or programme. I recognise that the justice, health and education system do not work in favour of Maori and therefore not in favour of Takatapui. As an ally, it is my duty to look beyond the queer identity of Takatapui and work to dismantle every other system that collectively compound Maori. In doing this, I ensure that the wellbeing of Maori is at the heart of my work.

On the board, I have been an active voice in recognising and reminding Rainbow Youth of its obligations to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Maori and its commitment to creating bicultural governance and constitution. Having experienced being the only indigenous person on advisory groups, it has been an empowering, although little, experience of being able to sit next to other young indigenous people and support their kaupapa on the board. On a personal level, I have challenged myself to unlearn negative practises and stereotypes I have of indigenous communities in the hopes of doing better.

What particular skills do you think you have that would make you suitable for the RY board?

I put myself up for this role because I recognise that this board has to represent more than one group of people and be bigger than any one cause. It is about the ability to work with the community to amplify their voices and work with them to find effective solutions, however, too often, the voices from my community are not heard. Becoming the Youth MP

for Manukau East allowed me to establish strong relationships with the youth in my community. It has also given me an insight into the needs of young people living in my community. Having worked directly with the young people of my community, I can direct Rainbow Youth in a direction that meet the needs of young people in my community.

Alongside my physical presence in Auckland, I have built a large Instagram platform on social media. In the times of lockdown, I have able to use my social media account to connect with young people. It is vital to engage young people who are not traditional consumers of Rainbow Youth service, and I firmly believe that I can effectively engage with nontraditional audiences. I am confident and comfortable with shaping and delivering messages through social media to reach young people that are not directly involved with Rainbow Youth.

Over the years of working with human rights organisations such Amnesty International and government bodies such as the Ministry of Education and the States Services Commission, I have worked to make our government fairer and more open and transparent. While it is challenging to change systems that have been in place for a long time, in this process, I have developed extensive policy and strategy designing skills. I have also developed close relationships with people in these spaces who I can easily collaborate with to consult the wider rainbow community. I have been able to use these skills to co-found the Conversion Therapy Action Group and advocate for a ban on conversion therapy.

Most importantly, I embody many intersections of the rainbow community. I balance my indigenous knowledge with my policy and strategy designing skills. As a board member of Rainbow Youth, I will ensure it identifies the loop holes and shortages of our current systems and find solutions by working with those that the issues affect. I want to work with Rainbow Youth to achieve equality and fairness for all in the hope that one day, we won't need such boards at all.