

**ABUSE IN CARE ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY  
TULOOU – OUR PACIFIC VOICES: TATALA E PULONGA**

**Under** The Inquiries Act 2013

**In the matter of** The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care and in the Care of Faith-based Institutions

**Royal Commission:** Judge Coral Shaw (Chair)  
Ali'imua Sandra Alofivae  
Mr Paul Gibson  
Dr Anaru Erueti  
Ms Julia Steenson

**Counsel:** Mr Simon Mount QC, Ms Kerryn Beaton QC,  
Ms Tania Sharkey, Mr Semisi Pohiva, Ms Reina Va'ai, Ms Nicole Copeland, Ms Sonja Cooper, Ms Amanda Hill for the Royal Commission  
Ms Rachael Schmidt-McCleave, Ms Julia White and Ms Alana Ruakere for the Crown

**Venue:** Fale o Samoa  
141r Bader Drive  
Māngere  
AUCKLAND

**Date:** 20 July 2021

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**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

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1 **MR POHIVA:** The interview is background information about the interview and then we can do  
2 the affirmation if that's all right?

3 **CHAIR:** Yes.

4 **MR POHIVA:** The interview was conducted in the Tongan language, which is his language he  
5 was comfortable in sharing, and he uses- and it's important for us to receive his evidence in  
6 this language. It also has English subtitles throughout, ma'am. In terms of housekeeping,  
7 we are going to run into lunch time. The video is an hour and a half, so I have asked if it's  
8 okay with the Commissioners for us to take a break at a convenient time, which may be just  
9 after 1 o'clock, and then we can take the luncheon adjournment then, if that's- okay.

10 **CHAIR:** We're in your hands, you just tell us which is most convenient to you.

11 **MR POHIVA:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

12 In terms of exhibits referred to in his video, I just have to highlight that there are  
13 two exhibits. Because we won't be breaking, I thought I'd raise that earlier. The first one is  
14 a newspaper article from the Auckland Star which was printed, published on 2 November  
15 1976. It will be brought up on screen. However, he has prepared a statement for us today  
16 and those- two exhibits are attached to his statement as well. So there's- the - second one is  
17 his Dawn Raids article that was prepared by ACORD but published by Amnesty Aroha.  
18 -Thank you, ma'am.

19 **TESIMONI FUAVAU**

20 **CHAIR:** Thank you. Before we begin, -I won't be able to deliver it in Tongan, so I hope that  
21 English is all right with you, is that all right-?

22 A. Yes.

23 **Q.** All right. So, Tesimoni, do you solemnly, sincerely and truly declare and affirm that the  
24 evidence that you give today through the video will be the truth, the whole truth and  
25 nothing but the truth?

26 A. Yes, I do.

27 **Q.** Thank you very much.

28 **MR POHIVA:** Thank you very much. Commissioners, I now seek leave for the video evidence  
29 to be played to us.

30 **CHAIR:** Thank you, leave granted.

31 **[Video played]**

32 **MR POHIVA:** Madam Chair, I wonder if that's a convenient time to take the luncheon  
33 adjournment?

34 **CHAIR:** I think it is, and I see the food is being brought out so it's a very convenient time, yes.

1 And it's time that you can take a break too, Tesimoni and your nieces. It's a difficult thing  
2 to watch, I know, and we appreciate that you'll probably need a break. So let's take break  
3 and shall we come back at what time?

4 **MR POHIVA:** May I suggest 2 o'clock or 2.15?

5 **CHAIR:** 2 o'clock. 2 o'clock, I think it's -yes, a short time lunch time, so eat quickly-.

6 **MR POHIVA:** Thank you.

7 **Lunch adjournment from 1.16 pm to 2.04 pm**

8 **CHAIR:** Welcome back, everybody. Mr Pohiva?

9 **MR POHIVA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just before we resume the video, there are just a couple  
10 of points. Firstly, at the end of his evidence, ma'am, I'm going to be asking just to make a  
11 few points further that he wishes to add and asking for that to go through- to be provided  
12 via counsel. For the reasons he's stated, he's not able to answer questions from the  
13 Commissioners. The other acknowledgment, ma'am, is we finished his evidence before the  
14 luncheon adjournment with an image of the article that was printed in November 1976. His  
15 family today has printed that on shirts, ma'am, and I just need to acknowledge that. -If you  
16 can, please.

17 **CHAIR:** Thank you for showing us that, that's amazing. Just the two of you or more of you?

18 That's wonderful. Thank you for showing us.

19 **MR POHIVA:** Thank you very much.

20 **CHAIR:** And of course if there's anything else he would like to add through you, that's perfectly  
21 fine.

22 **MR POHIVA:** Thank you, ma'am. I now ask that the video continue.

23 **[Video played]**

24 **MR POHIVA:** Madam Chair, that is the evidence of Mr Tesimoni. I understand his nieces wish  
25 to say a few words. While they are coming up, I just want to address Commissioners on  
26 three points that he would like to add briefly.

27 **CHAIR:** Of course. Please do.

28 **MR POHIVA:** While they're coming up, the three points he wishes to add is the neglect and  
29 separation from parents, he doesn't wish that to ever happen in a situation where- children  
30 are separated from their parents-.

31 The second is in relation to the apology and his words are he would accept the  
32 apology but there needs to be apology and action, so supporting the sentiments of  
33 Luamanuvao Dame Winnie Laban that we've heard yesterday that there needs to be more  
34 for Pacific people. And the last point he wishes to make is in relation to having more

1 Pacific people fight for or advocate for Pacific or do work for them as well. Again, he is  
 2 supporting the sentiments of Dame Winnie by having people at the table when decisions are  
 3 made.

4 I will now hand it over to Tesimoni's niece, who is also the granddaughter of the  
 5 two who were arrested.

6 **CHAIR:** Please tell us your name.

7 **MS POPE:** Hello, my name is Sonia Pope. My mum is one of the nine, is Tesimoni's younger  
 8 sister, and I am one of the 19 grandchildren that the Tupou and Setaita have here in New  
 9 Zealand. Before I just start, Kuou kole keu hufanga he ngaahi fakatapu kuo 'osi aofaki kae  
 10 'ataa mo au ke fai atu ha ki'i lea nounou, ko e tu'u pe ke fai atu 'eku lea ke fakamalo ki he  
 11 'Otua hono omai au mo tauhi kitautolu ke fai atu e lea ko'eni 'i he 'aho ko'eni.

12 I wasn't expecting to speak, but now that I'm standing here, thank you for the  
 13 opportunity and I speak on behalf of one of the 19 grandchildren that my grandparents have  
 14 here in New Zealand. I was born here in New Zealand, I was raised here, I've always felt  
 15 like New Zealand was my home. I never heard about the Dawn Raids until I reached  
 16 university, and actually, in one of my classes, it was Melani Anae who came through and  
 17 had a guest lecture about the Dawn Raids, that was my very first encounter with the Dawn  
 18 Raids.

19 Just recently, when Jacinda Ardern had announced that they will be doing a public  
 20 apology, my uncle had called the family over and said, you know, round up all the  
 21 grandkids, everybody, all the family come over to my house because I've got some  
 22 important news. So the weekend before the apology, we all came to my uncle's house and  
 23 he said, "Despite my parents' wish to keep this a secret, I think it's time that we tell the  
 24 grandchildren the history and how the Dawn Raids have affected your family as well as  
 25 your grandparents." To many of my cousins who were on the same page as me, we  
 26 thought, you know, what do you mean? What is this? This is the first time I'm hearing of  
 27 this. My grandparents have never talked about this before and my grandparents lived with  
 28 me in my home until they passed away and they've never said one word.

29 And then my uncle, you know, got the article and my family read it and we were  
 30 just all in tears because that was the first time we've heard that story and it really hit home,  
 31 and in my family, we -you know, us grandchildren were reflecting over that weekend and  
 32 we said, "Wow, our grandparents were so strong to keep this a secret for 50 years", and we  
 33 called it our 50- year- old secret in my family, we said we have a 50- year- old secret that  
 34 my grandparents took to their grave. And then through that weekend, we kind of just

1 reflected and we thought, "Well, does this 50- year- old secret reflect or influence us or  
2 impact us in any of the ways now that, you know, I'm a young adult?" And we sat there  
3 and we said, "Actually, it does, it affects us a lot", because there are some things that my  
4 grandparents did that we didn't understand growing up. -Some of them were touched on in  
5 the video, for example we were always told to shut the curtains when it became sunset, we  
6 were always told to lock the doors every single day, we would never miss a day, and  
7 throughout the whole night, us grandchildren had to go and constantly check if the doors  
8 were locked, if the windows were locked.

9 My grandma would call us every single day, she had this book of all the  
10 grandchildren's cell phone numbers and she'll call them every day after when it's dark and  
11 she will say, "Where are you, are you home? Are you okay?", and me and my cousins  
12 would always hate that book and say, "Oh, if only we could burn the little black book",  
13 because she would call us constantly, every single day, even to the point where we weren't  
14 allowed to answer the door. In my family there's only six girls and no boys, we just thought  
15 it was a cultural thing where us girls weren't allowed to answer the door, but every time we  
16 were at home with our grandparents and there was a knock on the door, myself or  
17 somebody else had to get my grandma or my grandpa or if there was a male in the  
18 household to come and answer the door, because we weren't allowed.

19 And, you know, one of the things that we also struggled with was we had a sleeping  
20 roster with my grandparents, because they weren't allowed to sleep alone, especially my  
21 grandmother after my grandfather had passed away, she couldn't sleep alone, she always  
22 had to have somebody sleep in the room next to her or with her in the same room. And so  
23 us grandkids had to create a roster in terms of whose turn is it to go and sleep with Nana  
24 tonight. And then as we're thinking of all that and we said, "This cannot be coincidence",  
25 and we realised that this is the trauma that my grandparents were still living through and  
26 that's how it's affected us grandchildren, because during that time, we would complain  
27 about some of the things that my grandparents would do, but in reflection, we thought,  
28 "This is just the fear talking, the trauma that is talking", and we had no idea that they've  
29 kept that from us really well, and during that whole weekend, we started to reflect where  
30 we are in our lives and a lot of the grandchildren, you know, we are in Government agency  
31 roles, we work --a majority of us have worked for the Government, but in that week, we  
32 couldn't go back to work because there was something we just felt a little bittersweet, you  
33 know, how can we go and work for a Government that was the same Government that  
34 issued the Dawn Raids in the first place? And we felt stuck in between, you know, what to

1 do, and a lot of that also played into our cultural identity such as whanau.

2 But I guess if my uncle can stand here, encourage, and I'm getting this courage also  
3 from him and this is one of the reasons why I have this t-shirt on is because I'm not only  
4 showing support to my uncle, but I'm- giving homage and thanks to my grandparents who  
5 had the courage to come back from Tonga the second time and really push us and raise us  
6 grandchildren in a very sheltered life that we were lucky not to experience any of the  
7 trauma that they had experienced. And so I don't want to end off with, you know, a lot of  
8 the negative stuff, but just on that positivity note, us grandchildren, we are in a place where  
9 we can give back to our family, we can provide for ourselves, we can stand on our own two  
10 feet and that --and being -I don't think that we would have reached that place if my  
11 grandparents hadn't done what they had done. So,- in saying that, Malo 'aupito, tua ofa atu.

12 **[Applause]**

13 **CHAIR:** And thank you to you, Sonia, for being so brave.

14 **MR POHIVA:** Thank you, Madam Chair, I'll now hand it over to the Commissioners if they have  
15 any final remarks.

16 **CHAIR:** I'll see if there are any questions from us.

17 **COMMISSIONER ALOFIVAE:** 'Alā si'i Tesimoni, Fakamalo atu ho'o loto'ofa mo'oni keke  
18 vahevahe mai e ngaahi me'a fakaloto fāmili pehe ki he Komisiona. 'Oku mau hounga'ia  
19 mo'oni. 'Ofa ke tapuekina koe mo ho'o famili. I just want to express and thank you for  
20 your heart of love, for sharing with us things that have been very private in your family.  
21 Thank you for your contribution to our talanoa this morning, fa'afetai lava.

22 **CHAIR:** I have no questions for you, but I have much respect and I wish to convey that to you.  
23 I'm now going to ask my colleague to thank you.

24 **COMMISSIONER ERUETI:** Tēnā koe Matua Fuavao. Ka piki mai ki te tuku kōrero ki mua i te  
25 aroaro o te Kōmihana. Tēnei te mihi mahana ki a koe. Tēnei te mihi mahana ki tō whānau,  
26 Sonia, koutou mā. E mihi ana ki a koutou. I want to, on behalf of the Royal Commission,  
27 first of all recognise the challenges you had in coming to share, to gift your kōrero to us  
28 today despite -- your health problems and the secret that your whānau has held for many,  
29 many years, overcoming that and speaking your truth to us, highlighting in a very vivid  
30 way for us what it was like for your whānau on that night, in the middle of the night, the  
31 brutality of it and the invasion and the intrusion into your whānau space and the  
32 abandonment of you and your younger brother for the week that followed, and the locking  
33 up of your mum and dad.

34 We recognise too the impacts that that has had on you and your whānau, the anger,

1 the whakamā, the shame and the guilt that you have carried all this time for what happened  
2 to your mum and dad and to your younger brother. We recognise too that as part of your  
3 healing, what you seek and your whānau seek is an apology directly, kanohi ki te kanohi to  
4 those most affected, the whānau who were affected, including yourself, on behalf of your  
5 mum and dad. I was pleased to hear that you had the courage to reach out and ask for some  
6 support and get some counselling to help you to address all this mamae that you've carried  
7 for such a long time. So on behalf of the Inquiry, ka nui te mihi ki a koe i te rangatira,  
8 kia ora.

9 A. Thank you very much.

10 **CHAIR:** A final acknowledgement to the whānau, to your family who have come and bravely  
11 spoken and supported your son, your father, your grandfather. Thank you for coming.

12 **[Tongan song]**. Shall we take a break before the next witness or do you want to continue?

13 **MR POHIVA:** I was going to seek to continue. The --

14 **CHAIR:** That's entirely up to you.

15 **MR POHIVA:** I ask if we can go straight into the next witness.

16 **CHAIR:** Certainly.

17 **MR POHIVA:** Mr CE is also by video pre-recorded interview, ma'am, and he is giving his  
18 evidence anonymously. So I'd ask that he -- that video be played immediately.

19 **CHAIR:** Certainly.

20 **MR POHIVA:** Apologies, ma'am. So just by way of background, Mr CE spends his time in  
21 Weymouth Boys' Home, Hokio Beach School and Ōwairaka Boys' Home where he  
22 experienced all forms of abuse. Mr CE's first language was Samoan before he entered into  
23 State care, and following State care, he could no longer speak Samoan, so he shares his  
24 experience anonymously for us today. I anticipate that we will play the video and perhaps  
25 stop at about 3.30 for our afternoon adjournment.

26 **CHAIR:** Very well. Thank you, Mr Pohiva.

27 **MR CE**

28 **[Video played]**

29 **Q.** "We are here today at the Royal Commission offices in Newmarket to talk about your  
30 experience of being in care. We have in front of you a signed statement that you have  
31 decided to refer to as part of your evidence today. Before we start, do you solemnly,  
32 sincerely and truly declare that the evidence you will give today is the truth, the whole  
33 truth, and nothing but the truth?"

## **Tesimoni Fuavao - Video Transcript – English Translation**

**Tesimoni, I thank you for your courage in sharing your experience with us here at this Commission of Inquiry.**

**I know it is not an easy task, but I thank you for sharing your story with us today.**

**Tesimoni, can you please introduce yourself to the Commissioners and us all.**

I would like to thank the Commission. Please allow me to make a short acknowledgement.

I would like to acknowledge the Heavenly Father for guiding us and allowing us to be here today.

I would also like to acknowledge each and every one of you that is in the room today who are viewing and also the Commissioners who are here. Please allow me to share my experience of what happened to me. Thank you.

**Thank you very much Tesimoni. Can you please tell us your full name?**

My full name is Tesimoni Fuavao.

**Where do you come from?**

I come from Holonga, Vava'u. My parents: my father is from Holonga, Vava'u and my mother is from Koulo, Ha'apai.

**Have you lived here long in New Zealand?**

Yes, I've been living here for many years.

**What year did you come?**

I came to New Zealand in May 1975 for medical reasons.

**Do you have family here in New Zealand?**

Yes, I am one of 6 children and all of us are here in New Zealand. My siblings are all here with families of their own. My parents were also living here in New Zealand until they passed away.

**Do you have a partner and children?**

Yes, I am married to a Cook Island (Rarotongan) lady. We have 3 boys together and they all live here.

**Thank you Tesimoni, before we continue, can you please tell us why you have come forward to share your experience with us today?**

Thank you for this question. The main reason why I want to share what happened or the shortcomings of the New Zealand Government at the time, because I know that there are lot of people who may have heard about what happened but haven't heard it directly from those who were actually involved at the time.

That is why I feel that it is important for me to share what happened to me and also what I witnessed during these events. I want to share them with you. Thank you.

**Thank you Tesimoni. Can you please tell us why you have chosen to record your evidence in this way and the main reason why you decided to pre-record?**

Yes, I would like to apologise for the changes. The main reason why I chose to pre-record my testimony because I still want to share my story and I do not want to back off.

However, due to health reasons especially getting very nervous being in front of a lot of people, I would not feel comfortable doing this in-person on the day.

My health is not that great, I get anxious and nervous most of the time. That is why I asked to record this on video, as long as can still achieve the goal. Thank you.

**So, it is important for you to-**

It is important to me to still be able to achieve the goal.

**Tesimoni, I'd like to take you back to your childhood and the place where you grew up. Can you please tell us about your childhood background?**

My childhood background- I was born and raised in Holonga Vava'u. Growing up, life was not easy because I was very unwell.

Around the 1960s we moved from Vava'u to the main Island of Tongatapu for medical reasons. We were there but most of the time, I stayed in the hospital.

**So, who did you grow up with in Holonga?**

I grew up in Holonga with my parents, my two sisters and two younger brothers and we all moved to Tonga together. However, my eldest brother was not with us as he was studying in America.

But we all grew up together before we moved to Tongatapu around 1960s.

**Can you please talk to us about the move to Tongatapu? Where is Holonga? Vava'u is another island, then you moved to Tongatapu?**

Holonga is one of the villages in Neiafu, Vava'u. It is about a 1-hour flight from Tongatapu. We moved from Holonga to Tongatapu in the 1960s.

**So, you mentioned that the main reason for moving to the main island was for medical reasons and access to another hospital?**

That's correct.

**Which hospital was that?**

Vaiola Hospital in Nuku'alofa.

**How long did you stay in hospital for?**

I was in and out of the hospital in Tonga for about 10 years – up until 1975.

**What did the doctor diagnose you with?**

My understanding is that, at the time, the doctors said that I had leukaemia.

Although I was in and out of the hospital for about 10 years, I wasn't getting any treatment. They only did blood work and then I was mostly waiting around for results.

**While you were living in Tonga, did your father come to New Zealand?**

Yes, while we were in Tonga we stayed at one of my grandparent's place.

There was a scheme at the time where a group of labourers would come to New Zealand to work for 3 months. My father was selected and came in one of those groups. This was earlier in 1975.

**So, that was earlier?**

Yes, early 1975.

**And what happened when your father travelled here to New Zealand?**

My father travelled here to New Zealand. He somehow found an opportunity to seek help for me at the hospital.

I believe he was persistent in going to the hospital to get help for me. Fortunately, the Auckland Hospital agreed to help. I don't recall the name of the doctor who agreed to help. They provided my dad with a support letter so that I could be brought over.

After the three months' work programme, my father returned back to Tonga.

Then, I came with my father approximately two to three weeks later.

**So, was it just you and your father that travelled?**

At the time, it was just me and my father that came to New Zealand. We came here in May.

It was about a three weeks later, I had medical tests done and they confirmed I could get treatment. I was told I needed to have two operations.

The small one and main thing after.

**Thank you Tesimoni. I am going to ask you about the time your parents first came over. Can you please tell us more about the place and where you lived and what was the living arrangements like in 1976?**

Thank you. When my father and I first arrived in New Zealand we stayed in Otara, while waiting for my mother to arrive. My father then looked for a bigger place for us.

We found a place in Ponsonby, which Tongans also referred to as Grey Lynn because of the close proximity to each other.

We lived together with other people, it wasn't just our family. I think there were about 11 or 12 people that we were living together with.

Please note, that we've never met these people before. We did not know them. But we were all living together.

My parents were in one room with Masiu. I was in another room with three other youth. There were three other Tongan families who lived in the other rooms.

**So, there was a bedroom available for the singles?**

Yes, I stayed in the room for the singles. Even though this was not suitable for me as I was needing space due to my illness and recovering, but this was the only room that was available. I was the youngest out of us in the room.

**How old were you when you first arrived in New Zealand? Can you please tell us what life was like for you back then?**

At the time I was 19. After going in and out of Vaiola hospital for ten years, I was finally able to receive proper medical treatment here in New Zealand.

At the age of 19 most boys were already strong men and could play rugby. However, I was a 19-year-old that couldn't do anything. I was in and out of the hospital for about 10 years. Then came to New Zealand, after having two operations, it took me a very long time to recover. I wasn't your typical 19-year-old man.

**What chores/jobs were you able to do on your own? Or did you rely on your parents to do everything for you?**

At that time, I had no job. I relied on my parents for everything, absolutely everything. In other words, I was no different to my 5-year-old brother Masiu, we were both living under and relying on our parents. There was not much that I could do on my own.

**Tesimoni, I will now ask you questions regarding what you observed and experienced in relation to interactions Police had with the Pacific community at that time.**

**What were the things that happened at the time? What did you observe between the interactions between the Police and our Pacific communities at the time?**

Thank you very much. Talking about that time, I think most of us Pacific Islanders did not like the Police and the way they carried out their job especially with us.

It was big topic back then, that the Police were using dogs to chase people and knocking on doors early in the morning around 5am to wake people up.

I know for certain, that it was a very sad time for our Pacific Island communities.

One of the common phrases used in our community was, "Hey watch out, be careful! The dogs might come out early morning to get you!".

That's not very good. That was not acceptable behaviour from the Police at the time.

### **What about the workplaces?**

Workplaces, yes. The Police and immigration officers raided workplaces.

I know that there were employment unions in place who were calling out these behaviours. The unions tried to stop the Police from chasing workers because it put workers in great danger because as soon as people saw Police or immigration officers, they would run.

No one would stay behind to talk to the Police or immigration officers. Everyone would just run.

So, the unions tried to stop this from happening. To stop the Police from going to the workplaces. That's my recollection of what happened at the time.

### **I am now going to ask you about the time that you went into the city. Please tell us what happened.**

Thank you very much. There was one day my friend and I went into the city. We went to a place that had a pool table and we played pool. This was around 12pm in the afternoon.

While we were playing pool, a Police officer tapped me on the back and asked me for my age.

I told him my age, but I don't think he believed me. He then asked why I wasn't at school. My friend and I both explained to the Police officers why I was in the country.

The Police did not believe us. The Police officers told us to get in the car so they could take us home. They asked for my address, so I gave them my address.

### **What year was that? 1976?**

Yes, 1976.

### **You were 20 years old at the time?**

Yes, I was 20 years old at the time.

**You mentioned that the Police did not believe you?**

That's correct the Police officers did not believe me. They told my friend and I to get into the car and asked where I lived. I gave them my address.

They took us there. When we got home, there was a lady called 'Ana who lived in the house opposite ours who had good English. She came and asked me what happened, and I told her.

She explained to the Police that I was here for medical reasons was true and that I was 20 years old. The Police believed her, they let us go and they left.

And I thought that after that encounter, that was it. So, at the time, I didn't tell my parents about it.

**During your encounter with the Police, did they ask you for your passport?**

They did ask for my passport earlier but after 'Ana explained that I was in New Zealand for medical treatment, they seemed to be OK with that. So, I remember they didn't actually see my passport at that time. But they let me go, and they left.

**And you thought that was the end of your Police encounter?**

Yes, I thought that would be the end of it.

**What happened after that encounter?**

About 2 or 3 weeks after that incident, my recollection from memory is that it was really early in the morning, during the weekend probably a Saturday - which is different from what was reported. But that is what I remember.

I heard knockings at the door. I opened the curtains and because the street lights were on, I could see Police cars parked on our street.

I felt scared but I still went to open the door for the Police.

**So, you heard the knocking at the door, what did you do next?**

The knocking, it was very loud knocking. I was the only one that got up at the time. Everyone in my household was fast asleep and their lights were still out. I got up and walked over to open the door.

**Who was at the door when you opened it?**

There were about 3 or 4 Police standing outside the door. One of them asked if my name was Tesimoni. I replied "Yes".

They also asked for my parents, I said "Yes". When I turned around, two of the Police officers came inside the house and knocked on one of the rooms. It wasn't long before he opened the door to my parents' room.

**What are your parents' names?**

My parents' names are Sione Mafi Fuavao and Setaita Tupou Fuavao.

**So, when you opened the door to the Police officers, do you remember what ethnicity they were?**

Back then, the Police officers were all palangi. The Police that came home, I did not see any of them that was from another ethnicity.

**Did you have a conversation with the Police officers that came to your door?**

The only thing that made sense to me at the time was when they asked for my parents and when they asked for our passports. I turned around to call out to my parents to get my passport.

**So, did you go to your parents?**

Yes, I walked over to my parents' room. But the Police officers had already opened the door to their room and were talking to my parents. I didn't open the door. The Police opened the door to the room.

**Did you invite the Police officers in to your house?**

No.

**How did the Police officers get in to your house?**

They just pushed me to the side. They walked in and asked me to point out my parents' room. I pointed to their room which was in the corner near the front.

Then one of the Police officers walked to my parents' door, knocked once or twice, then he opened the door. The room was dark. My parents were still asleep.

**How did you feel at that exact moment?**

Confused. Ashamed. Angry.

It all happened so fast. You know, it was very early in the morning.

**You mentioned that when the Police left, it was still very dark outside?**

When they left, it was still dark outside.

**So, the Police knocked once, then twice on your parents' bedroom door. They did not wait for your parents to open the door, they just opened the door?**

To their room.

**To the room. Then what happened?**

To be honest, my parents were very shocked at that moment, especially because my younger brother was sleeping by my mother's side and was crying.

**Was it Masiu?**

Yes, Masiu, he woke up, was startled and then was crying, together with my-

But the feelings I felt at the time. I was feeling very confused but at the same time I felt guilty because I knew the reason why the Police came back had to do with that day I went to city and played pool with my friend.

**So, you felt guilty because-?**

I felt guilty because I haven't explained to my parents the earlier incident with the Police, to at least have them prepared in case the Police would return. But I did not think they would ever return.

**So, you were surprised they came back?**

They came back after about 2-3 weeks later.

**So, when Masiu woke up and your parents were surprised, what happened? Did they talk with the Police?**

Yes, what you must also know that at that time my parents, Masiu and I, we didn't speak much English, only a little bit.

But the lady in the room opposite us, her name was Latai, she knew how to speak English.

While the Police were inside the room, my father kept shouting out to me to get Latai to come and interpret for them. So, I woke Latai up.

But my father was calling out to me to get Latai. He kept calling out louder and louder because he wanted me to get someone to help interpret.

**What was your understanding of why your father raised his voice?**

My father raised his voice, not an act of retaliating against the Police. He was raising his voice because shouting at me to hurry and wake up Latai to come and interpret for them.

But I was really confused at why he was calling out for me while the Police were there.

I was still shocked and just stood there looking at them.

My father was getting angry with me for not hurrying to wake Latai up. That is why he raised his voice.

**So, did Latai come?**

Latai came, and then explained to them, but I don't know.

**So, Latai came and spoke with your parents and Police. What did the Police do to your mum then?**

It is not easy for me to explain, talk about it, but I will try.

Latai was explaining everything to the Police, also provided them some documents. I am not sure what the documents were. But the Police didn't believe Latai's explanation.

The Police then started to- during this time, my mother was crying and so was my little brother. The Police first handcuffed my dad and then locked it.

Then they handcuffed my mum. But when they to cuff her, the officer pulled her away from Masiu and handcuffed her.

Masiu was crying hysterically and clinging to my mum. Police just pulled my mother away and handcuffed her.

When they came through to leave, I said to the Police with the little English I knew "Why you do that for?".

I still remember very clearly what the Police said to me, "She deserves it because she's overstaying".

So, they took them- my- my mum. It's not a very good feeling at that time.

So that's what happened, that particular early morning when they took my-

**You mentioned it wasn't a good thing-**

That's what I believe. What the Police did was not good.

I believe they could have done better by bringing someone to interpret for my parents. They should have thought about their approach better.

Without a doubt I believe that they already came with the intention to take them. They didn't want to hear any explanation. That's what I felt.

That's how I felt about what happened.

**When you heard what the Police said to you, how did that make you feel at the time?**

Anger. Angry.

I don't know what to- I don't believe what they did was right, regardless whether my parents were overstaying or not. No one had the right to separate my mum like that from her six years old son at that time.

Police know it.

They were crying. They should have been more considerate. But they didn't care. Maybe they were just doing their job.

Since then, it created in me a lot of hatred towards Police. Even though I didn't do anything towards Police. I don't favour Police.

### **Favour, as in?**

The Police. I guess in other words, I just don't like them, the Police are people that I do not favour. Just because of that incident. It reminds me-

So, anytime I could sense some racism or discrimination, it gives me a different story.

### **So, after they took your parents, what happened to you and Masiu?**

When the Police took my parents, we didn't hear anything from the Police. You must know, that Masiu and I were relying on our parents for everything- for food.

At the place we stayed, each family made their own food. Even though we were living together with different families, each family made their own food. So, there was no food for my brother and me.

But luckily, there were other families at the house who continued to look after Masiu and I during the time my parents were taken away until they returned.

### **Money?**

No, we didn't have any money, that's what I meant, we didn't have any money or anything.

Remember, that at the time there was nothing like weekly shopping stacked in the fridge. It was just daily shopping.

Most of the time there was nothing. We did not have a fridge. The house wasn't furnished with whiteware.

So, when our parents were taken in, we had nothing, since they were taken abruptly.

I'm sure if there was enough time our parents would have left us with some money or something. But it all happened so fast, so we were left with nothing.

### **Did they let you say goodbye before they were taken?**

No. That's what I am saying, they were locked up and taken away. My only exchange was with the Police when I asked them, as I mentioned earlier. So, they just took them away without giving us a moment.

### **So, they left both you-**

Masiu.

**How did you feel at that time? Your parents were taken. You were left with Masiu. Did you look after Masiu?**

It wasn't a great feeling that I felt at that time. I was still recovering from my treatment. I didn't have any money and I didn't know where I'd get a job. Masiu, he was only 6 years old and was always crying. He was a bit older but still.

As I mentioned earlier, each family would make their own food. So, when our parents were taken away, the other families kindly took us in. The way things were, one family would have their meal then after they were done then we'd go and have our meal.

So, whenever the other families would eat they would call us to come join them.

**During the time that the Police took your parents, did the Police make any contact with you?**

As far as I know, no. Police did not make any contact with us up until they were released. I believe my parents returned home in a taxi, the Police did not bring them home.

**They didn't check how you both were?**

No, I recalled they never checked on us.

**So fortunately for you, the other families were Tongans?**

Yes, fortunately the other Tongan families took care of us during that time.

**What about your immigration matters, did you know much about it?**

From the beginning, no. All my immigration matters were handled by my parents.

I knew there was a lawyer that helped them. But I don't recall nor know anything regarding immigration matters.

**You were relying on?**

I was relying on my parents. I was living under them and so was dependent on them.

**I understand there were other information that you just now found out about, one of them was the ACORD. Can you please tell us about that?**

All these new information, like ACORD and Dr Sutherland and others. Yes, it's only recently that I found out from these articles that there were people who did a lot of work in recording this case. But that was the first time I've heard about it.

Basically, on behalf on my mum and dad, it would have been better if they were still with us, to say thanks to Dr Sutherland for the great work that he did. Had I known before, I would

have wrote and thanked him for all his hard work. It's comforting to know that there were people who cared and helped us.

So, I want to acknowledge and thank ACORD and Dr Sutherland for their great work that they did at that time.

**If you could just refer to the new information you talked about, what was this new information?**

All these accounts of what happened, I had no idea there were information like this about my family. So, I just found out, that there was an organisation that were working on my parents' case.

There is a lot of new information to me. For example, what was reported in the Auckland Star saying that the incident happened on Sunday morning. But I always thought it was earlier than Sunday. So, I thank those who recorded this.

**Now referring to the article "The Dawn Raid: The Ugly Reality", were you aware of what happened to your parents at the time they were in Police custody- when taken into Police custody?**

This article shows a lot of information about what happened to my parents when they were taken away. I didn't know about this information before. It makes me more sad and upset learning that my parents were trying to contact us, but they couldn't.

So, in terms of the article and the contents, I didn't know about it before.

**Were you aware that your parents tried to be put in the same cell?**

No. The only thing I know for sure was when they took them away and when they were released. I didn't know anything other than that.

**So, they were taken to Mount Eden, and taking it back to court, you weren't aware of all this?**

No, I had no idea. Bear in mind it was only I and my younger brother at home. We had no option but to wait for our parents. I didn't know anything else.

**The article talks about the Police returning to you, what do you say about that?**

If they had said they came to us, then that's not right. Maybe they had sent someone to the house? But I was not aware of this and we were not informed of any visit.

While my parents were in Police custody, Masiu never left my side. I moved to their room, so we were both sharing a room. I don't believe Police ever came back to check on us. No, I don't accept that they did, that's not right.

**There was another article in the paper, I will give it to you. Can you please talk to us about the article and its content?**

This article is from The Auckland Star, when we were interviewed.

**Can you please describe to us who are in the picture?**

The photo is Masiu and I. He was 6 years old, I was 20. I still remember clearly what I was wearing in the photo. Like what I said earlier [in my written statement], they took our picture for the newspaper.

**Can you please explain that? Your picture was taken for the newspaper article?**

Yes, our picture was taken for the article. I remember, I think it was on the Monday evening, there were news reporter at our place. Masiu and I were photographed for the story.

My understanding was that this story came on the paper, is that it was Sunday morning but, in my head, it was Monday morning. So-

**So, this aired on television on the news?**

Yes, it showed on TV One News but I'm not really sure whether it was Monday evening, on the same day, or Tuesday, but it was around the same as that [article].

We were live on the News, but that was after my parents were released and have returned home, and we were filmed in our room.

**According to the information I have, there was an apology by a representative of Government at the time?**

I do not recall, and I do not know any apologies made. Plus, my English at the time was not that great, for me to have known. But I'm not aware an apology made directly to us. They may have said that on TV, but it didn't get to any of my family.

I remember clearly, my dad would sometimes mention, "One day the Police will come and apologise to me". If my memory is correct, there weren't any apologies made to us.

**So, after this incident, did you hear back from the Police?**

No, I did not hear from them.

**So, they didn't check up on you?**

No, nothing.

**I am now going to ask you questions about what happened to you, your parents and Masiu since the incident. How did they feel? Or were your parents' lives impacted by what happened back then?**

Yes, I knew very well that my parents, especially my mother was very upset and that she would always cry. After they were locked up, she wanted to go to Tonga straight away. My father- yes, that really affected Dad.

I think for both of them, they both held the Police in high regard. In Tonga, the Police are highly respected people with authority.

So, when a Police arrests someone in Tonga, even though they may be innocent, people would generally assume that person is guilty.

That's what happened to my parents. Even though the investigation resulted in their case being dismissed.

But to be honest, they themselves thought they were guilty, and that significantly affected both of them. They did not even want to share the incident and their experience with anyone except me.

**So, you mentioned your mother cried daily?**

Yes, every day she was crying.

**Do you think she was also afraid?**

Yes, she would cry every day. Many times, she would say, "I do not want this happening again". She kept telling my dad that she wanted to go back to Tonga. She did not want Police to ever touch her again.

**So, she was scared?**

Yes, very scared, extremely afraid.

**You mentioned about how the Police are highly respected in Tonga, so their arrest was a really big deal?**

If this happened in Tonga, it would have been a huge deal. If it happened here in the Tongan community, it is huge deal.

If the community heard that someone was arrested by the Police for whatever reason, and like I said earlier, whether you are innocent or guilty, once you're arrested you're guilty.

This was how my parents felt most of the time- that they felt guilty because of what happened to them. The thing that was most hurtful was that they were imprisoned. That was really hurtful.

**So not only they were arrested, they were also sent to prison?**

Yes, they were imprisoned, at the Police station.

**You had mentioned before that your father was deeply affected by this and that he barely talked to anyone else in the family about it. Can you please elaborate on that and why do you think he did not share with others?**

Yes, sure and thank you. I think this would be the first time for me to share with anyone about what my father went through.

My dad was highly affected by what had happened and not only that, but it brought shame on our family.

Even up until the day he passed, he still remembered the badge number of the Police officer that arrested him. And he did not talk about it to anyone else except me.

He refused to talk about it to his grandkids or to any of his other children; just because he did not want anyone to know. But he opened up to me because I was there when it happened.

It wasn't until one day we were at home and he brought it up and said, "You know, I still remember clearly the badge number of the Police officer that arrested me". And I jokingly responded, "What for? Why do you still remember that? Why hold on to it when you could just let it go."

And then he said this to me: "I wish one day that Police officer will talk to me." And I laughed. But that's what he wished for – that one day he will be able to talk with this Officer that arrested him.

So, to me, I feel like I should've written the number down, but I guess at the time I didn't know how significant it was to him.

But since his passing, I've realised that more, that the incident affected him a lot more than I realised. It really affected him in a huge way.

My mother was also affected. When she lived with my sister, my sister said that our mum would not sleep at night until she checks for herself that all the doors are locked and if she sees one of the doors open she would say: "Remember to close and lock your doors before the Police would come and take you!". At the time we did not take notice of it until she passed away last year.

We have come to realise when we would talk about her that she would say it often even when I'm there and as well as to her grandkids: "Close the doors before the Police officers come and take you during the night."

Now I've come to realise that this is proof that they were traumatised and affected by what had happened till they both passed.

**And when did your father passed away?**

09 [2009].

**So up until he passed away, he still remembered?**

I think a few months back before he passed I remember when he told me he still recalls the badge number of the Police officer that arrested him.

**You mentioned before that the only reason why your father opened up to you is because you were there with them at the time. Do you think he would have still shared his experience with you if you were not there?**

From what I know, yes that is why he opened up to me. Because he knows that the only person that experienced what happened was me and that I was there in person. There were papers he took to Tonga, copies of news articles that they were imprisoned, were in his bag.

My sister found them and asked my dad if they were arrested by Police. My dad was so mad and growled my sister for going through his drawers and things. That's all I know about those articles.

Yes, I know for sure, if I wasn't there then- on the other hand, you know, it was his way of maybe protecting them because it is too shameful in our Tongan community. Because he did not want his grandchildren to experience anything like that in the future.

So, I guess that's the reason why he did not like to share his story.

**So, most of your family, would've only recently learned about what happened?**

Most of my family, yes. I would at times bring it up to them as well as to my wife. Like one day we went out shopping at the area where it happened, I showed my wife the house and I would talk about it to her.

But I could just see it in their face sometimes they just seemed unbothered by it, like its "oh whatever." But that's just how I perceived it to be, I guess.

But ever since this whole thing started they seemed to believe in it more and realise the impacts are true.

**They didn't think it was important?**

Yes, I think they took it lightly. Probably because our parents hardly talked about it. Because if my parents were open about it like I am then it would've helped. It's not that they doubted it happened though.

**But now, do you think it's important for the family and the grandchildren to know about what happened?**

As of now, yes. Everyone should know. Not only my family but everyone. I do not want this to ever happen again (i.e. the Government's shortcomings). It's one of the reasons why I'm doing this. I just hope for a safer community and environment. That is my personal opinion.

**You mentioned that the news about what happened would bring shame or embarrassment to the family. Did this news reach Tonga?**

Correct. In Tonga at the time, news travels faster in Tonga than here. As I mentioned earlier, it was very embarrassing to us what happened.

The story that went around in Tonga which we heard, was that my parents were arrested and imprisoned for overstaying. The fact that my parents were released without any charges wasn't part of the story. Our family were really affected by those stories.

**Do you think that was one of the reasons why your father did not want to share what happened?**

Yes, I believe that without a doubt. He wanted to keep the story to himself, so the shame and embarrassment goes with him, so that the shame doesn't happen again later.

**Tesimoni, I will now ask you about the impact of the incident on your life. Can you talk about how you felt at the time and since the incident?**

It's been 45 years that I've kept this with me – and this is not just a made-up story, this is what really happened. It affects me a lot. I will share with you only some examples of how it has affected me.

For example, when I can sense that someone is racist or being discriminatory, it really affects me. I was working a night shift at one of the workplaces, this palangi man and two other guys and another palangi, I was the only islander guy. There were four of us and we were on our break having cup of tea.

The foreman turned around and said to me: "Tesi, why you black?". And my feeling- I wish I die on that time. I don't want to listen to that crap anymore. I almost forgot about it. But that's the truth. It really affected me.

I know my family noticed and a lot of people too, I was always angry and determined to fight until I win. But then looking back, I realised I was affected by what happened.

I'd like to share something with you, about what happened with my son. He was part of this youth group which the Police approached as part of their recruitment campaign, encouraging young Pacific Islanders, it was not long ago – for them to join the Police.

One of my sons fit the criteria. At the time, he already graduated with his Bachelor's degree. They offered him a position to join the force and my son was really happy.

He came, we had a talk and he asked me "Dad what do you think?". I said to him, "You know, if you go and be a Policeman, you are not my son".

Only because, it really affected me. My son just sat there and said to me, "Don't worry Dad, it'll be OK". He later changed his mind and he continued on studying Health Science.

But the reason why I'm sharing this because I believe what happened, really affected me. The other reason why I wanted to share with you is because I wish it to end there.

**So, did you not trust or hate Police or not like them ever since the incident?**

To be honest, ever since up until not long ago, I had this strong feelings of hatred towards the Police. I did not trust them, and I did not believe anything they said or did.

It's different from what I'm feeling now. I now understand that it was not only the Police that were the cause of what happened. The Police were just doing their job. Their orders came from above.

### **Above?**

From the Government. I've just realised and understood that now. But for a long time, I hated Police for their actions.

I now understand and I've learned that from the Dawn Raids news articles and readings, that it was not just the Police that were doing this injustice, they were only doing what they have been told to do.

### **You mentioned earlier how you'd stand up for your rights and for the truth, did you feel angry?**

Yes, that was one of the feelings I felt, it really affected me. Like when I hear someone makes a discriminatory/racism remark, I would just get angry.

### **About racism?**

Yes, any racism or discriminatory remarks, that really affect me. At the time when I was working, I would stand up against work policies and decisions that I thought were discriminatory.

At one workplace, they would call me crazy- the crazy man because when I sensed racism or discrimination, I would just stand up. Even the CEO I can get up and say it straight to them. And then I would think about it after.

### **Think about?**

I would think about it after, maybe I should have not said things like that. That was another example of how I was affected. There was one time I felt that I was getting out of hand. But I did not want to step over and break the laws, so I went to get counselling, out of my own accord.

### **You sought help?**

Yes, I wanted to get help. I went to get counselling twice which made me feel better. I was always angry but at the same time I was also worried that my anger might get me into trouble with the law and stuff like that.

### **So, was there ever a time you thought about getting compensated or how to redress what happened to you?**

No, there was never a time that I thought of seeking compensation from anyone regarding what happened. I always knew what the Police did was wrong.

Most of the time I would listen to the radio and the news about Dawn Raid, racism and stuff, but it didn't cross my mind to seek redress or compensation regarding what happened, no, or do something about it, no. Or do anything, no.

**So, were you aware of the work that ACORD and Amnesty Aroha were doing at the time to help you and your parents in '77 and '78? Were you aware at the time or were you just made aware recently?**

Oh, how I wish my parents were still alive to answer this question. They would have been so happy to know that there were people on their side helping them. I only found out about this information recently with the documents and the letters kept by Dr Sutherland.

So, I take my hat off to Dr Sutherland and I will see if I can write a letter to say thank you. I would like to thank everyone that helped, whom I had no idea at the time helped us. On behalf of my mum and dad, who are no longer here, thank you.

**You have heard about the upcoming Government's apology regarding those that were affected by the Dawn Raids. What do you think about this and how do you feel about this Government's apology?**

The thing for me is that, you know in the Tongan way when a wrong is committed, the wrong doer would often immediately apologise and try to resolve the problem. The earlier this is done, the lesser the impact.

It has been 45 years since what happened to us. I think it would have been better if they had apologised to my parents as they were the ones arrested.

However, I take it. But my main concern and I'd like to ask, is it going to end there? Will it end here? It's still over there.

Like what happened to me in 2005. There were four of us that got a job interview. One of us looked like a New Zealander and three of us didn't and were asked for our passports. The other guy wasn't asked to provide his passport. Not even his ID. So, to me, it's [i.e. racism and discrimination] is still there. I wish to stop it here.

**Can I ask, when you say "look like a New Zealand" what do you mean by that?**

Ok, I will just say it. It's a palangi, it's a pakeha, that's what I mean "looks like a New Zealand".

**And the other three?**

They were Pacific Islanders, two Samoans and I.

**So, it was the three of you that were asked to provide your passport?**

They asked for a copy of the passport and we gave it to them.

**So, this happened in two thousand-?**

2005. It may be a small thing, but it still bothers me. I wish to tidy up.

**To stop?**

To stop, so it doesn't happen again. We are all New Zealand, no such – you look like a New Zealand or not look like a New Zealand.

**We'll wrap up our talanoa for the evening. So, after what happened, then you got your residency later on?**

Are you referring to the incident in 2005?

**No, I meant the 1970s.**

Yes, as I've said before, my parents returned back, and I make a decision for myself to stay in New Zealand.

I stayed here and later got married and we have three children together.

**So, your parents passed away here in New Zealand. But after the incident, they went back to Tonga. When did they come from Tonga?**

There are two parts. First, they returned back for the birth of my eldest son, they came for three months and after their permitted time they went back. Second part, I filed their residency and they returned back and stayed here in New Zealand.

**At the time of their return to New Zealand after the incident, how did they feel? Did they come willingly?**

My feelings about it, I knew my mother wasn't really happy when they came for the birth of my eldest son. Their permitted stay was for one month. My mother would always ask about immigration matters.

So, we went and extended their visa. To me, they were restless until they know that I've legally extended their visa. We applied later to get their residency through the Family Reunion visa category.

That's the one, family reunion. My eldest brother from America moved here with his family. Same as my sisters. So, most of us were here. So, we brought our parents here to live in New Zealand with us. I can't recall the exact year that was.

**When your parents came, you mentioned they weren't too happy to come?**

Yes, my recollection is that they weren't really happy. I never forced them to come. The first time they came was because my mother wanted to be here for the birth of my son. But to be honest, they weren't happy to come back here to New Zealand, especially my mum.

**So, they only came because of their family?**

Yes, when they came for their residency they weren't happy. But they had to come because they had no choice, there wasn't an option as we were all here in New Zealand. There was no one in Tonga to look after them and that is why we brought them over.

**I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you Tesimoni and to commend your courage to share your story.**