

## 2016 RACE UNITY SPEECH AWARDS

### STAND UP FOR RACE UNITY – DON'T BE A BYSTANDER

Te Ariki Te Puni, Palmerston North Boys' High School

I stand up today for racial unity, this is my choice  
I chose to convey my thoughts through the power of my voice  
To those who sit and silently watch the hatred in our society  
I urge you now to take a stand, shake off that anxiety  
Freedom of speech is our right - race unity is the cause we fight  
I stand here defiant against racial adversity  
and ask you to join me - support cultural diversity

The time has come for New Zealand to turn and face itself to look deep within its soul and consider -  
What kind of country we are and what we stand for?

But before we move forward we should take a look back....For it is our own heroes (past and present) that embody the true meaning of courage and unity: Kate Sheppard was motivated by humanitarian principles when guiding civic freedom for woman. Dame Whina Cooper marched courageously uniting people for cultural freedom and rights, and for me personally and more recently - Pa Dawson Tamatea from Palmerston North Boys High school dreamt of students standing together united in haka, and in July 2015 1500 students performed as one...a riveting haka as we sadly bid farewell to the man himself - united we found strength! Ki te kotahi te kakaho ka whati, Ki te kapuia e kore e whati - Alone we can be broken. Standing together, we are invincible.

My perception of NZ is a country of colourful culture and distinctive diversity we appreciate exotic food, mystical melodies and dramatic dance forms from around the world... and from a young age we are taught the principles of partnership, participation and protection. The Treaty of Waitangi was the beginning of an inter-ethnic journey and has since taught us a valuable lesson on the importance of communication. As youth we learn values and what it means to be a Kiwi and we swell with pride when we hear the spine tingling All Black Haka or a rendition of the national anthem echoing around the world.

We proudly stand hand on heart and recite the words....

God of Nations at thy feet, in the bonds of love we meet

Yet, only last year, a professional Fijian rugby player left the field in tears after being racially taunted and verbally abused by a NZ spectator.

Hear our voices we entreat!

Would you have the courage to intervene? ... In the words of Albert Einstein "the world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch and don't do anything about it" Silence is a form of consent and acceptance – while the power of our voice is a force to be reckoned with! Why are we so concerned with social acceptance,...it's not cool to oppose arrogance or disapprove of our peers. Moral courage requires that we rise above the apathy, complacency and hatred in our society

– Are you up for it?

God defend our FREE land

If a friend makes a racist joke.  
Do you laugh?

A Muslim woman is insulted in the middle of town  
Do you pretend you didn't hear?

An overweight student is bullied at school  
How do you react?

I will not stand here and pretend I have all the answers, but what I do know is that it all begins with speech – we all value the freedom that comes with democracy, that which gives us the ability to speak up and openly share our opinions, but what use is free speech if we don't use it!

Men of every creed and race, gather here before thy face...

New Zealand migration statistics are at all time high...but heads up.... unemployment rates are dropping, there is minimal impact on the housing market and increased spending is obviously boosting the economy, so I say.....Nau mai haere mai whakatau mai ra...welcome to NZ.

The best pathway forward is accepting that we are all equal because we are all different, we are all the same in that we will never be the same, we are all connected to earth by the same force of gravity, but most importantly - we all share this country Aotearoa – the choice is ours, do we stand up for racial unity and build a country of rich diversity or sit by silently and watch it dissipate?

Let our cause be just and right, God defend New Zealand!

So the next time you proudly stand hand on heart for the National anthem.....just remember....

We have no right to judge race or ethnicity  
Let's take it all back to basic simplicity  
A drop in the ocean one leaf on a tree  
I am you - you are me  
Individuality is what we should recognize  
Character, humanity not colour or size  
United we will rise, divided we will fall  
Together we march, alone you will crawl  
If we want to move ahead we need to take a stand  
Take responsibility – protect the mana of this land!

Tuturu Whakamaua Ki a tina.....