

24 June 2013

MEDIA RELEASE

'Cultural diplomat' awarded writing residency in Hawai'i



Former diplomat, magazine columnist, Pacific historian and poet Leilani Tamu from Auckland will spend three months in Hawai'i writing about "Cultural Diplomacy" for a book of the same name, as recipient of the 2013 Fulbright-Creative New Zealand Pacific Writer's Residency.



2013 Fulbright-Creative New Zealand Pacific Writer in Residence, Leilani Tamu

A self-professed "pale-skinned, brown-eyed woman of Pacific Island descent", Leilani examined her mixed Samoan/Pākehā heritage in an opinion piece for *Spasifik* magazine in mid-2012, while working as a New Zealand diplomat to the Kingdom of

Tonga. Soon after, she was offered a regular column for Auckland's *Metro* magazine. In the column "Cultural Diplomacy" she has written about social and cultural issues including racism, unemployment, home ownership and youth suicide.

On her exchange to the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa from September, Leilani will work on a second book of poetry and prose, also entitled *Cultural Diplomacy* (her first book of poetry is scheduled for release in early 2014). The book will include an exploration of the life of Princess Ka'īulani, a 19th century Hawaiian princess of mixed cultural heritage who was heir to the throne before the monarchy was overthrown and the kingdom annexed by the United States of America. Born to a Scottish father and educated in England, Princess Ka'īulani visited the US following the deposition of her aunt as queen to fight for her kingdom and people, and is held up by Leilani as "a great example of a Polynesian ancestor who effectively exercised the art of cultural diplomacy in her time". The book will also feature dialogue with contemporary New Zealand and Hawaiian poets of mixed cultural heritage, discussing how their heritage has shaped their work.

Leilani Tamu is the tenth recipient of the Fulbright-Creative New Zealand Pacific Writer's Residency, which was established in 2004 to develop and foster closer links between the peoples of New Zealand and Hawai'i, to increase the profile and awareness of Pacific literature as an art form within New Zealand, and to provide New Zealand writers of Pacific heritage with the time and opportunity to undertake creative and professional development while working on a new project. Previous writers from various genres to receive the award have included filmmaker Sima Urale, poets Tusiata Avia and Daren Kamali, and playwright Victor Rodger.

"This residency has offered great opportunities for many talented New Zealand writers of Pacific heritage for over 10 years," says Creative New Zealand's Pacific Arts Committee Chair Luamanuvao Winnie Laban. "Leilani's fascinating exploration into mixed cultural heritage through her rich and varied career makes her a deserving recipient of this year's residency. We are excited to read the material she will produce."

ENDS

Fulbright New Zealand was established in 1948 to promote mutual understanding through educational and cultural exchanges between New Zealand and the United States of America. The Fulbright programme offers a range of prestigious awards for New Zealand and American graduate students, academics, artists and professionals to study, research, teach and present their work in each other's countries. Fulbright New Zealand offers over 70 exchange awards each year – half to students and half to scholars – and more than 1,600 New Zealanders and 1,300 Americans have benefited from a Fulbright award to date. The programme is mainly funded by the US and New Zealand governments with additional funding from award sponsors, private philanthropists and alumni donors.

See www.fulbright.org.nz for details about Fulbright awards and how to apply, or download a Media Fact Sheet of further background information here: www.fulbright.org.nz/mediafactsheet

Andy Mitchell, Communications Adviser, Fulbright New Zealand

email: andy@fulbright.org.nz | phone: +64 4 494 1502

www.fulbright.org.nz