

## **Sāmoa Mo Sāmoa**

*Written on Sāmoa's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence*

Sāmoa Mo Sāmoa  
Sāmoa for Sāmoans  
do I belong to you?

1920s:  
classed below Palangi  
below Afakasi

Does it matter, Sāmoa?  
I am a fleeing anthem

That the Mau continues to move  
within these Afakasi veins.

Am I enough?  
Sāmoa Mo Sāmoa

Sāmoa,  
you cradle my grandparents  
in the sanctuary of your belly,  
full of lost talanoa

2012:  
I tie my mother's 'ie around my hips  
borrowed red  
for love  
for blood  
it hugs me two times

secured  
with a safety pin  
she has placed

My mother's eyes are bright  
with pride

that her Afakasi seed  
is embracing these 50 years

Sāmoa Mo Sāmoa  
is for me  
for you  
each of us leaves  
a stretch mark  
a weave  
within her legacy



“Sāmoa mo Sāmoa” (2013)  
Reina Sutton

## Once Were

The wind carries  
the deep chanting of a drunken haka  
wandering aimless in the darkness of Papatoetoe  
I imagine their twisted limbs  
and stumbled stances  
ready and waiting  
for imaginary battles  
fallen warriors  
throwing mocking faces to the ancestors

Laughter slaps the air  
as bottles smash,  
cutlets,  
scattering to form a map

Slugging insults  
the memory never forgets  
once were warriors gone bad  
causing nightmares  
waking children  
asleep in their beds

Now  
your bros  
are dragged away  
the youngest is left to sweep away  
the glass  
of broken bottles that control you  
the glass  
of pathetic words lost out of you

the glass  
filled with the shame  
if your Mama had heard you.

Brown soldiers fallen  
strong shoulders caving  
liquor disguises  
respect replaced by  
brown brother bravado

Brown for blood  
for liquor—  
for strength?—  
for bruises  
on our sons and daughters.  
these are some of the sons  
that once were Pacific warriors.

The night light dances on her swaying curves  
illuminating their creation  
replacing Aunty's eyes  
The moon spies on her lines  
once used for labours of love  
now used for labours to gain some love  
She tattoos words of strength  
yet she does not breathe them  
Little sisters look up, admire, and follow.

The Gogosina has taken flight  
constantly putting up a subconscious fight  
singing Brown girl in the ring, tra la la la la,  
that entice and excite  
predicaments she invites.  
Stuck between what was

and what is now  
dress it up honey  
only to let it all fall down

Brown suga  
once so sacredly beautiful  
now tourist attraction  
exotic and plentiful.

Easily pushed  
she spells S T R E N G T H  
on her 8 knuckles

she punches  
she jabs

she ain't no alley cat  
this is how some of our sisters now act.

Spilling the blood of her own people  
these are some of the daughters  
that once were Pacific beautiful

Have we come so far  
to be 'Once Upon a Time'?

## Gagana

An unearthed myth of masima tears  
writes the language of in-betweens down my cheeks  
cleansing his full-blooded Fijian-speaking cultural jabs  
He has pinched a scab on an old wound

I am so angry with him

I visited these shores before  
murky volcanic glass  
It used to cut me

I can hear the missed gagana  
of Afakasi's divided tongue  
fishing the sleeping sea  
I tease her  
challenge her with  
language + culture = identity  
a lazy responsibility waking in  
her belly  
rising to her throat  
It reaches up  
skeleton fingers  
squeezing her dead tongue  
choking attempts to speak  
if it does escape  
it sounds  
haunted by palangi intonations

He reminds me  
I am a tourist with my own people

They don't carry dictionaries for Afakasi  
our tongues laze between  
lines within the lines  
pages within the pages  
not lost  
just unrecognised

A sour aftertaste of playground taunts  
sting my buds  
fill me with the spit  
of my own disgust  
drowning my voice  
revealing the under-my-breath ugly truth

I wish I knew how to speak you Sāmoa

Without language

gafa is all I have