



# Wanted: PI journalism school

by Suenje Paasch-Colberg

The media industry's training agency plans to establish a Pacific Island journalism school to attract more Pasifika reporters.

The Journalists Training Organisation has held recent informal talks with the Pacific Islands Media Association, Pacific Cooperation Foundation, Pacific Islands Ministry and Auckland University of Technology staff to sound out the idea.

Executive director of the JTO Jim Tucker also floated the proposal at the annual PIMA conference in Auckland earlier this month.

He says "little effective effort" is being made to attract Pacific Islanders into a media career.

Journalism has a low status among Pacific Island families as a career choice for their young people, he says.

"This is a problem the JTO needs to address."

Tucker says he found "alarming figures" when he recently asked the country's 10 journalism schools about their students' ethnic origins for an informal survey.

The figures show that 12.2 per cent of current students



CAREER IN MEDIA: AUT bachelor of communications students with Maori and Pacific backgrounds, Qiane Corfield (from left), Te Ataraiti Waretini, Emily Ryan, Toni Pivav and Leilani Momoisea.

PHOTO: SUENJE PAASCH-COLBERG

have a Maori background and 1.6 per cent a Pacific Island background. Only 0.7 per cent of all students are of Asian origin.

Gary Wilson, who ran the Journalists Training Board in the 1980s, has been engaged by JTO to research an overview of Pacific Island and Maori media training.

He says a Pasifika journalism school would improve the flow of talent into the media.

"One of the ways to ensure a greater number of Pacific Island

students come into the media is to establish courses specifically for them."

Wilson helped set up a series of five-day introductory journalism courses for Maori and Pacific Island students in the 1980s, as well as fulltime courses at Manukau Polytechnic and Waiariki.

Those introductory courses are not operating anymore and the Manukau fulltime course was closed in 1993.

The need for a specific Pacific

Island journalism training is substantial now, he says.

Wilson says the special programmes during the 1980s helped to get a significant number of Maori and Pacific Islanders in the media.

But he also says while there is a flow of talented brown journalists, the mainstream media is slow to hire many.

The newsrooms of mainstream media are not capable of reflecting Pacific Island and Maori issues, he says.

Also, he says, ethnic media can't make up for the mainstream media failings because their news organisations are small, under-funded and fragmented.

"The consequence is that most new Zealanders remain largely ignorant of Pacific Island and Maori issues – and we carry on with a media system that doesn't combat that ignorance, or the racial prejudice which it produces."

John Utanga, chair of PIMA, says his institution supports the idea of any initiative to get Pacific people into the media industry.

Associate Professor Barry King, head of the school of communication studies, confirms that AUT is discussing the issue with JTO.

"We think it is a good idea. There is clearly a need to develop Pacific Island-based journalism in New Zealand, just as there is a need to develop Maori and Asian journalism."

But he also says AUT views these course as just a precursor to the ultimate goal of a pre-degree programme targeting ethnic students.

"These short courses are the first step towards the setting up of a Pacific Island journalism centre."

## Celebrate Niuean culture

by Tyler Jane Mitchel

A group of talented Kiwis called Soul on the Rock aims to get Niueans to visit their homeland.

Just 1500 people live on the island, a small fraction of the world's Niuean population. There are 20,000 Niueans living in New Zealand.

Tony Fuemana, director of Soul on the Rock, says Wellington will host the group's inaugural festival in February.

The Niuean musical and creative collective wants to raise the profile of Niue as a destination.

Fuemana's group consists of predominantly Niuean artists who have taken the original idea of holding a Niuean festival on the island and adapting it to a New Zealand locale.

Two years in the pipeline, the festival will see a large group of Niuean artists come together to raise awareness and money for future festivals.

Fuemana's vision is to eventually draw many of those who have never even been to Niue, back to their homeland for an ultimate Soul on the Rock festival in 2007.

"We want to work towards developing cultural awareness and pride in all things Niuean for Niueans living abroad," he says.

## Fiji Observer a first for NZ

by Caitlin McGee

After gracing the screens and radio waves of Fiji for more than a decade, the face of Fijian news has a new focus and project.

Mere Lomaloma Elliott has produced the first bilingual Fijian newspaper in New Zealand – the *Fiji Observer* – as part of her masters degree in communications at AUT.



Mere Lomaloma Elliott

PHOTO: CAITLIN MCGEE

The *Fiji Observer* is one example of the increasing presence of ethnic-based media in New Zealand, but Elliott says there's room for huge improvement.

"There's not enough coverage of Pacific Island issues, which is why I started the *Fiji Observer*. Pacific Islanders are not just about running and kicking a rugby ball," she says.

Elliott says Pacific Islanders are only in the news when they have scored a try or robbed a dairy.

She says ethnic issues need to be addressed properly in the media or ethnic communities will look elsewhere for their news.

"I think a lot of media corporations need to wake up. They need to look at the large migrant community and stop looking the other way. Otherwise ethnic media will only grow larger in response," she says.

Elliott says conferences like the recent PIMA conference are a step in the right direction.

"It's good there are conferences like PIMA. In one year I have seen a definite increase in the presence of Pacific Island journalists," she says.

Jim Tucker, executive director of the NZ Journalists Training Organisation, says budding Pacific Island journalists should feel comfortable working in both mainstream media and ethnic-specific media.

Elliott says Pacific Island influences need to be recognised in both mainstream and ethnic media.

She says one of the biggest problems for publications like the *Fiji Observer* is attracting and maintaining advertising.

"Advertising agencies don't tend to look

at us, they go for the bigger publications," says Elliott.

The *Fiji Observer* started from scratch five months ago, and Elliott says it is coming along well.

"We started with no money, and worked on the friendship and trust we had with some of my existing corporate contacts," she says.

Elliott says the Pasifika Festival has landed the *New Zealand Herald* as one of its major sponsors.

She says the *Herald* should be an example to other organisations.

"It's great New Zealand's largest print company is coming to sponsor the largest one-day Pacific Island festival."

Elliott says Pacific Islanders need a definite voice within society and she wants the *Fiji Observer* to become a global voice for Fiji.

"My aim is to make the *Fiji Observer* a global newspaper. It already goes to Dubai, Fiji and Sydney," she says.

