



# Robie's 'Pacific brand' of Journalism



by EDWARD TAVAVANUA

**I**N his latest book, *Don't Spoil My Beautiful Face: Media, Mayhem and Human Rights in the Pacific*, journalism professor David Robie imparts almost 40 years of first-hand experience and expertise as a journalist and journalism educator in the region.

"This new book is a continuation of where I [Robie] left off two decades ago with *Tu Galala*", he states; bringing to a close his first chapter *Out of Africa*.

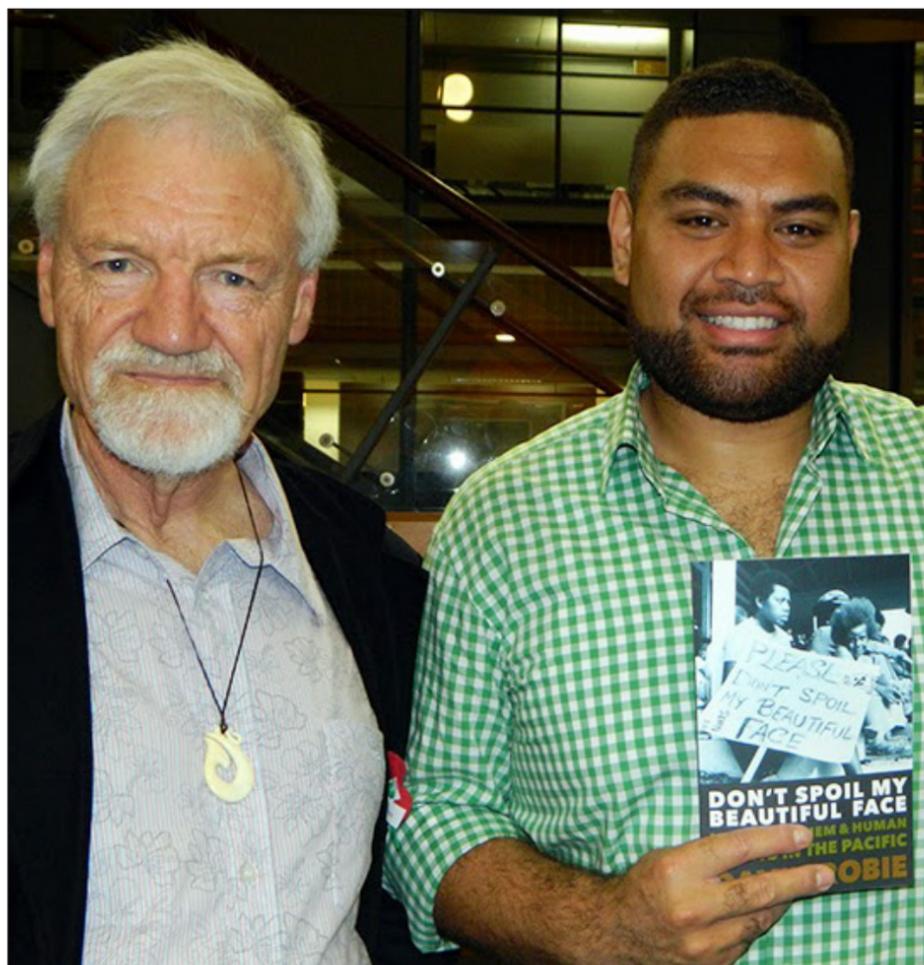
"But unlike many accounts of the challenges of the Pacific – from the viewpoint of bureaucrats representing power elites of disinterested academics – this is an ongoing narration with other 'voices' of the Pacific: they are frequently the activists, campaigners and writers who have been in the vanguard of social and political change in the Pacific".

Robie obviously takes an autobiographical, story-telling approach, exemplified through inserted excerpts of his reportage.

The first-hand experience that Robie relates quite eloquently is an inspiration for any budding or working journalist.

He has covered: (anti)nuclear testing in Moruroa, French Polynesia in 1979; Bougainville Revolutionary Army (known as Rambos) guerilla in Papua New Guinea in 1989; the racial tensions behind the looting and arson in Nuku'alofa, Tonga, in 2006, and Fiji's notorious coup culture since 1987.

His articles offer a sense of refreshing nostalgia. And in that respect, Robie does us the courtesy of recalling important moments in our respective Pacific histories,



Professor David Robie, left, with John Pulu and his edition.

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some of which continue today. This is, without a doubt, the most significant lesson to be learnt from his book.

Much has happened in and to the Pacific in the last four decades, much of which has faded, or been forgotten by its peoples, and much of which eludes many of our younger generations. As Pacific Islanders it is absolutely essential that we know not only our own historical backgrounds, but also that of our neighbours.

It is in-depth and first-hand reporting like what Robie shares through his articles in the book which is lacking, extinct, or momentarily on hiatus in many news-

rooms across the Pacific.

Although at times, it is as if Robie fails to make mention, quite explicitly, that social constructs and processes such as decolonization, democracy and media freedom are still in their infancy in many Pacific Island countries. It was only in 1962 that Western Samoa (which has since removed 'Western') became the first Pacific Island nation to gain political independence.

And just last year, Fiji held its first "truly democratic" elections.

However, this understanding should not be interpreted as a *validation* for what

has happened or continues to happen today, rather a *consideration* of the complexities surrounding some of the events and issues Robie discusses.

Robie addresses some obstacles faced by some Fijian journalists under the implementation of the Public Emergency Regulations in 2009 (lifted in 2012), and standing 2010 Media Decree.

He also highlights the clamp down of media freedom in Tonga, in 1996, with the jailing of Tongan journalists Filokalafi 'Akau'ola and Kalafi Moala, and the publisher 'Akilisi Pohiva for alleged contempt of Parliament.

This includes how Robie through Pacific Media Watch aided in their release – which is reaffirmed with some validation by Kalafi Moala in the book's foreword.

"I have watched David evolve as one of the Pacific region's most respected journalists and journalism educators par excellence," he writes.

"I don't know of anyone more committed to developing quality journalism in the Pacific and especially in developing a special 'Pacific brand' of journalism with an in-depth understanding of the issues – including understanding of the geopolitics of the various cultures."

However, some may question Robie's attempts to meet these expectations by constantly drawing comparisons to Australia and New Zealand, for obvious reasons.

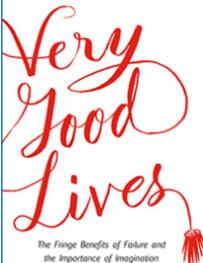
Robie makes mention of the complex notion of a 'fifth estate' (i.e. tradition and culture) in its relation to good governance and media freedom; focusing on how this has (and still) conflicts with reporting in Fiji.

*Don't Spoil My Beautiful Face: Media, Mayhem and Human Rights in the Pacific* warrants the continued support and development of publications on Pacific journalism by and for Pacific journalists.



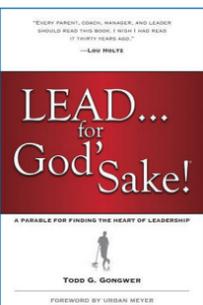
## Books to look out for...

J.K. ROWLING



In 2008, J.K. Rowling delivered a deeply affecting commencement speech at Harvard University. Now, due to popular demand, the most-viewed commencement speech on Harvard's website is published for the first time in book form. In *Very Good Lives*, J.K. Rowling asks the profound and provocative questions: How can we embrace failure? And how can we use our imagination to better both ourselves and others? Drawing from stories of her own postgraduate years, the world-famous author addresses some of life's most important issues with acuity and emotional force. © Little, brown Book Group

Retail price: \$40.95 @ USP Book Centre



If you've ever asked yourself why you do what you do, or wondered what your purpose is in life, this book is for you. The lives of an intensely-driven basketball coach, an ultra-successful CEO, and an unassuming janitor all intersect in this captivating parable about leadership, relationships, and the pursuit of success. An unforgettable story packed with profound truths, *LEAD... for God's Sake!* will challenge you to think deeply about who you are as a leader, what success means to you, and why you do what you do. Whether you're leading a business, a team, or your own family, this book is the first and most important step to becoming the leader you were meant to be. © Amazon

Retail price: \$50.50 @ USP Book Centre



## Novice is slam poetry champ

by ILISAPECI TINANISIGABALAVU

SPOKEN word artist Andrea Narayan's poetry is crafted to motivate others to care more about the real issues that affect society.

Narayan, who won last month's poetry slam at USP, considers herself a novice to performance poetry. She said last month's performance was her second.

Her first performance was last November at another poetry slam, which she also won.

The bass guitarist said she had always wanted to engage in performance that did not require her to play a musical instrument.

Hence, when the poetry slam invitation was circulated last year, she grabbed the opportunity.

Narayan said she had always scribbled poetry as a member of a band. It was the performance aspect that troubled her.

"I am very new to it still," she insisted. She said the experience

so far had allowed her to improve her writing.

"I usually just write a bunch of poems and when the occasion comes, I express my work," she said. "From this year's poetry slam, I aimed to achieve self-expression and get people to be more aware about things around them; to wake up and see that you don't have to follow everybody, you can just do your own thing and be okay."

Narayan's poetry touches on issues like ISIS and poverty, which she feels many of her peers are not interested in because they're more into celebrity news.

She hopes that by putting it out there in her poetry, she can create intrigue and help her peers gain a better understanding of the issues that matter.

USP's School of Language, Arts and Media will hold the next poetry slam contest at the end of next semester.