

Rangatahi continue to challenge Aotearoa on racism at Race Unity Speech Awards 2023 – Media Release



Six secondary students from around the motu poured their hearts out on the issue of racism and discrimination in Aotearoa at the Race Unity Speech Awards national finals in Auckland on the weekend.

The Year 12 and 13 students delivered powerful and riveting speeches around the theme 'Awhihia te Rito - Nurture the Young' at Ngā Kete Wananga Marae at the Manukau Institute of Technology.

Esther Sovincet, Year 13 from Auckland's Selwyn College, was named the Race Unity Speech Awards National Champion for 2023 and received the Tohu Raukura ā-Motu - NZ Police National Champion's Award.

Chief judge NZ Police Deputy Commissioner Wally Haumaha said the calibre of speeches at this year's Awards was extremely high.

"The depth of the thinking that came through from these young people was absolute gold... It tells us that the future of this country is in good hands," he said.

Sovincet also received the Tohu Auahatanga - Speech NZ Award for Delivery: whose creative and engaging delivery captured the audience's attention.

Former Trustee of Speech NZ Meredith Caisley said Sonvicet's address was lively and vibrant right throughout her entire delivery.

"We promote the living speaker and we're delighted to award Esther Sovincet with this award," said Caisley.

Ebony Kalin, Year 13 from Taranaki's Te Paepae o Aotea, received the Tohu Māramatanga - Baha'i Community Award for Insight - providing deep insights into how we can bring about the oneness of humanity in Aotearoa.

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of New Zealand Nick Moss said it was a difficult decision to make, but Kalin's insightful examples really stood out.

“One aspect that stood out [from her speech], was this idea that race unity was not just about accepting others but also accepting oneself and when everyone is able to do that, then we can come together as equals,” said Moss.

Lena Ormsby, Year 13 from Hastings’ Karamu High School, received the Tohu Eke Panuku - Human Rights Commission Award for Impact - providing an effective practical suggestion for ending racism and improving race relations in Aotearoa.

Human Rights Commission lead advisor Kat Eghdamian said Ormsby spoke powerfully about how stereotypes damaged the fabric of society and offered practical examples on improving race relations.

“[She] gave really practical examples on how technology grants should be given to youth to create exclusive content that educates rangatahi on race relations.”

Eghdamian said she would be taking Ormsby’s recommendations back to the Commission.

Gargi Vaidya, Year 12 from Rotorua’s John Paul College, received the Tohu Aumangea - Hedi Moani Memorial Award for Advocacy - demonstrating how to stand up for our rights and the rights of others.

Trustee of the Hedi Moani Charitable Trust Kambiz Ma’ani said Vaidya’s speech was impressive and strongly reflected what its organisation believes in.

“Her statement: ‘Go forward as one, embracing each other despite our differences’... We believe in this because we find there is a uniqueness in culture.”

Leo Mwape, Year 12 from Palmerston North Boys’ High School received the Tohu Whetumatarau - Ministry for Ethnic Communities Award for Vision - helping to envision Aotearoa’s future as a multicultural society founded on Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Mwape also received the Tohu Manaakitanga - Manukau Institute of Technology Award for Manaakitanga - demonstrating manaakitanga through ngākau (compassion) and aroha (empathy) in overcoming prejudice and building bonds of kotahitanga (unity).

Operational Lead at Te Pūkenga - Unitec and Manukau Institute of Technology Martin Carroll said it was almost impossible to choose one recipient for this award.

“But Leo’s metaphor about the forest is fundamentally about everyone upholding everyone else’s mana as the key to social success,” said Carroll.

“That was a powerful message that you want everyone to hear.”

Jacqueline Te Kani-Nankivell, Year 12 from Te Tai Rāwhiti's Champion College, received the Tohu Manukura i te Reo - Māori Language Commission Award for te Reo Māori - using te reo Māori eloquently and effectively in their speech.

Language planning advisor at Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, Rangiora Trotman, said she was impressed with all the finalists' use of te Reo in the national finals.

“But Jacqueline showed an unwavering level of confidence in her te Reo Māori... She brought forth examples that were absolutely and truly Māori,” said Trotman.

“She's a perfect example of what others in upcoming years can strive for.”

The Race Unity Speech Awards are organised by the New Zealand Bahá'í Community and were established after the tragic death of race relations advocate and Baha'i Faith member Hedi Moani.

Chief executive of the New Zealand Bahá'í Community Suzanne Mahon said the support received for the Race Unity Speech Awards over the years has been phenomenal.

“As a Bahá'í community we are so appreciative of the collegial relationship that exists amongst all our wonderful partners and supporting organisations,” said Mahon.

ENDS.

Photos attached: Credit - Race Unity Speech Awards: Ben Parkinson

1. (L-R) Children's Commissioner Judge Francis Eivers, finalists - Ebony Kalin, Gargi Vaidya, Lena Ormsby, Leo Mwape, Esther Sovincet (national champion), NZ Police Deputy Commissioner Wally Haumaha, finalist Jacqueline Te Kani-Nankivell, Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner Saunoamaali'i Dr Karanina Sumeo.
2. Race Unity Speech Awards National Champion 2023 Esther Sovincet who also received the Tohu Auahatanga - Speech NZ Award for Delivery.
3. Race Unity Speech Awards 2023 finalist Lena Ormsby, who was also the recipient of the Tohu Eke Panuku - Human Rights Commission Award for Impact.
4. Race Unity Speech Awards 2023 finalist Gargi Vaidya, who was also the recipient of the Tohu Aumangea - Hedi Moani Memorial Award for Advocacy.
5. Race Unity Speech Awards 2023 finalist Leo Mwape who was also the recipient of the Tohu Manaakitanga - Manukau Institute of Technology Award

for Manaakitanga and Tohu Whetumatarau - Ministry for Ethnic Communities Award for Vision.

6. Race Unity Speech Awards 2023 finalist Ebony Kalin receiving the Tohu Aumangea - Hedi Moani Memorial Award for Advocacy.
7. Race Unity Speech Awards 2023 finalist Jacqueline Te Kani-Nankivell who was also the recipient of the Tohu Manukura i te Reo - Māori Language Commission Award for te Reo Māori.

Please note* more photos available on request

Video footage of most speeches are available here:

<https://www.youtube.com/@RaceUnity>

About the Awards

- The New Zealand Bahá'í Community established the awards after the tragic death of race relations advocate and Bahá'í Faith member Hedi Moani.
- The New Zealand Bahá'í Community is a religious community concerned with promoting the oneness of humanity at the local, national and international levels.
- The Hui and Speech Awards are organised by the New Zealand Bahá'í Community and are sponsored and supported by the New Zealand Police, the Human Rights Commission, Manukau Institute of Technology, the Ministry for Ethnic Communities, Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, Speech New Zealand and the Hedi Moani Charitable Trust.

Race Unity Speech Awards by the numbers:

- 2,000 – Students have participated in the Speech Awards since 2001.
- 40,000 – People have listened to these speeches in person.
- 2 million – Views of these speeches online.
- 1,000 – Police officers, academics, government officials and other people of influence have served as judges of the Speech Awards.

YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/c/RaceUnity>

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