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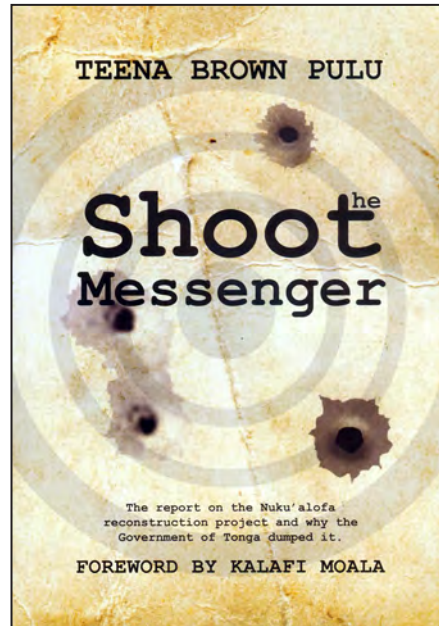
DR DAVID ROBIE is director of the Pacific Media Centre.

Democracy and the price of silence

Shoot the Messenger: The report on the Nuku'alofa reconstruction project and why the government of Tonga dumped it, by Teena Brown Pulu. Auckland and Nukua'alofa: Taimi Publishers, 2007, 171 pp. ISBN 978-0473205591

INVESTIGATIVE journalism is critical to good governance in evolving South Pacific democracies, particularly the youngest, Tonga, which embarked on the biggest democratic reforms in a century in 2010. This is the view of Auckland Tongan anthropologist, social commentator and now author of a suppressed-then-exposed report about post-riots urban development.

'The media's ability to deliver investigative journalism is fundamental to strengthening civic society and participatory democracy,' writes Dr Teena Brown Pulu. 'Critical media should in theory, act responsibly as society's conscience ..., (p. 38).'



Convenor of postgraduate papers in Pacific development and literature in Te Ara Poutama, Auckland University of Technology's Māori studies department, Brown Pulu has provided a rare insight into the murky world of non-elected Pacific advisers acting beyond their brief and public policy. The niece of the current Prime Minister, Lord Tu'ivakano, she was not content to meekly accept the gagging of the Tongan government-commissioned report, Nuku'alofa Central Business District Reconstruction, an inquiry into the TON\$116 million Chinese soft loan to rehabilitate the heart of the capital in the wake of the 2006 riots.

Brown Pulu was insistent that the

Tongan Parliament and public had a right to see the report compiled by her and her project colleague, economic consultant Melino Maka of Pasefika Solutions. So she has published it herself with a contextual introductory section deconstructing the political intrigue in a book with the tongue-and-cheek title *Shoot the Messenger*.

The author believes the Prime Minister's advisers had a prejudged agenda that a sizable chunk of the Exim Bank of China loan had been spirited away, construction was behind schedule and the buildings were substandard. When the report failed to agree with that political agenda, the advisers were determined to bury the report—and Brown Pulu with it. She recalls:

What transpired was a national debacle in derailing democratic process coupled with mismanagement and miscommunication at the Prime Minister's Office. In 15 June 2011 [the Secretary of the PM's Office] signed a letter firing me and Melino over the report. It was alleged that the report was inadequate and so were we. Cabinet would get a new research team to do the same job—twice (p. 12).

The reconstruction report was highly critical of the PM's advisers. But her *Shoot the Messenger* book is even more critical.

Brown–Pulu is particularly scathing about Communication's Adviser 'Ahongalu Fusimalohi, the former Tonga Football Association general secretary provisionally suspended in October 2010 by FIFA over allegations of World Cup vote-selling. She has also strongly attacked the media and political role of London-based researcher Cleo Paskal who was 'friendly' to the PM's Special Adviser 'Akau'ola and wrote a 'fictional and discriminatory' article in the *Huffington Post* accusing New Zealand of 'bullying Tonga' into taking part in the Meridian cost-cutting solar energy project (Paskal, 2010, 2011).

Publisher Kalafi Moala writes in a foreword praising Brown Pulu for her 'uncompromising stand': 'Teena and her colleague did what they were commissioned to do but found nothing inappropriate. They were satisfied they had been asked to "chase a ghost" that did not exist' (p. iii)

This book exposes contested revelations about the inner workings of Tonga's fledgling democracy bureaucracy and power brokers. But it also exposes the weaknesses of the media, both within Tonga, and internationally. Apart from an insightful interview with Brown Pulu by Radio Australia's *Pacific Beat* (2011) and a report on *Pacific Scoop* (2011) on the 'silencing' of Brown Pulu's findings,

the Pacific and New Zealand media has been largely silent on the issue.

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Proactive on climate change

Convenient action: Gujarat’s response to challenges of climate change, by Narendra Modi. New Delhi: Macmillan Publishers India Ltd. 2011, 234 pp. ISBN (10) 0230-331920

THE PICTURE and perception that the Western world and its media have painted of Indian politicians is uneducated and excessively corrupt individuals who manipulate the system to hang on to power. Narendra Modi’s *Convenient Action* removes this myth and reveals a politician in a different light. That is why many Indians believe this Chief Minister of Gujarat is destined to be a future Prime Minister of India.

This book, while documenting Gujarat’s proactive action in multi-dimensional initiatives towards climate change, is also intended as an invitation by Modi to scholars, researchers, scientists, leaders and policy planners to visit his Gujarat. He invites them to experience and feel the impact and challenges them to measure and judge Gujarat’s initiatives against any yardstick of scientific and analytical scrutiny.

Those who frown on certain Eastern religions as falling under paganism need to see how religion is conveniently used as a vehicle to promote good husbandry and forestry



practices while providing for 'water temples' and preserving mangroves.

The book outlines simple examples of commonsense rules to preserve power and natural resources through CNG and solar energy and rescheduling office hours to spread the loads on electricity demands. Innovation in transport systems, use of gas and wind can help a great deal in reducing what we call carbon footprint.

The book is a documentation of eight years of initiatives and innovations undertaken by Gujarat state under the leadership of Modi. Among others, academia, NGOs and media have been targeted for capacity building exercise. Media has been gainfully used to enhance communication capabilities to inform and empower. Being a pioneer in establishing a separate Department of Climate

Change, Modi's administration has been successful in developing public participation and public awareness through effective use of media and communication channels.

Such practices are intended to contribute to the adaptation and mitigation of climate change. In fact Modi believes the Gujarat model could serve as an example to decision makers across all political spectrums if there was strong political will to fight climate change and leave the world a better place for coming generations. The message Modi intends to pass to the developed and developing world is that the divide between political cycle and carbon cycle could be filled by firm determination and resolute will.

That is how it has been done in Gujarat. This is a 'must read' for those interested in preserving our world for future generations from the impact of global warming through simple, commonsense actions.—*Thakur Ranjit Singh is a Fiji and Pacific media commentator.*

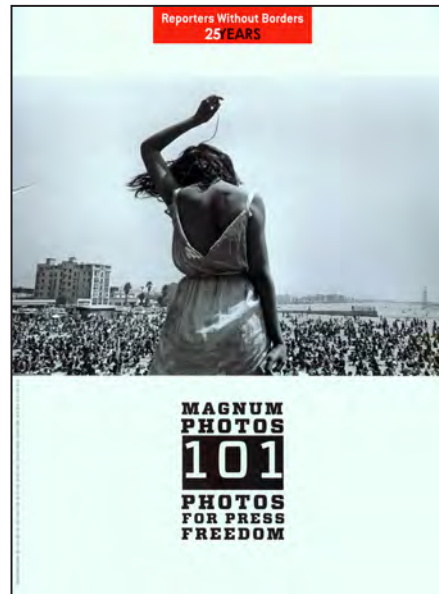
Press freedom tribute

Magnum Photos – 101 Photos for Press Freedom. Paris: Reporters Sans Frontières. 2010, 144pp. ISBN 978-2-915536-89-8

WITH World Press Freedom Day being celebrated again this month (May 3), it is timely to reflect on the achievements of one particular global media freedom advocacy group, which has contributed a quarter century of activism to the cause. One of the characteristics of Reporters Sans Frontières' campaign has been its penchant for stunning posters, creativity, innovation and annual photo collections—motivating one envious International Federation of Journalists advocate from Sydney to dismiss RSF as 'just a publicity machine'.

The Magnum Photos 101 volume marking RSF's 25th year presents many of contemporary history's best-known photographs. Many of them are iconic and have featured in the world's newspapers and magazines. The collection was donated by the celebrated Magnum photo agency to the cause of media freedom.

But why 101 images, when the annual volume usually features 100 photos? According to the publication's editors, they decided to add an additional 101th image when going to



press—the only photo published from the year 2010 showing a gigantic road split marked the tragic earthquake in Haiti (p. 26).

This decision by the editors was due to the important role RSF has taken in Haiti while protecting press freedom: 'Initially, so that we could defend the families of journalists murdered under the dictatorship, and now, so that we can provide aid to media outlets devastated by the disaster,' says publisher Jean-François Julliard.

Among the images of political history that Magnum enables readers to relive are Robert Capa's famous shot of a Republican militiaman being struck by a bullet in the Spanish civil war in 1936; Che Guevara holding a

cigar in Havana the same year; the teenager Dalai Lama arriving in Delhi after fleeing Tibet; and Martin Luther King delivering his 1963 'I Have a Dream' speech. The cover features a Dennis Stock image of a 1968 rock-against-the-Vietnam-war festival in California.

Elsewhere in this edition of *Pacific Journalism Review*, professor Mark Pearson writes about the annual RSF World Press Freedom Index ranking and methodology (p. 171-178). While its profile may not be as well known in the Pacific region, its value and importance should be recognised. For a start, it isn't encumbered by the vested self-interest and continual bickering that serve to strangle the glut of Pacific media freedom groups.

I will always thankfully remember that RSF was the only media freedom group active in the Pacific that defended the University of the South Pacific journalism programme in 2000 when its news website was closed in a ham-fisted and failed attempt to gag the neophyte journalists in the award-winning coverage of the George Speight putsch in Fiji. Some local Pacific media 'freedom' groups actually treated this censorship with glee.

Long may RSF call gang leaders, mafia members, fundamentalist leaders, militants, rebels, corrupt business

men as well as the usual suspect government tyrants to account for stifling press freedom. —*Dr David Robie is co-founder of Pacific Media Watch.*