

## Selina Tusistala Marsh

### Poem Notes

This poem was composed and performed for the Leadership New Zealand Gala Dinner in 2010 where the theme was 'NZ, the lucky country'.

### Poet Notes

Dr Selina Tusitala Marsh is a Poet and Lecturer in the Department of English at the University of Auckland. Her first collection of poetry, *Fast Talking PI* recently won the Jessie MacKay First Best Book Award for 2009.

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## **NZ, the Lucky Country**

New Zealand, the lucky country  
Aotearoa, land of divine memory  
where Papatuanuku and Rangi  
lovers of land, sky and sea  
progenitors of  
    Maori.

Yes - NZ's a lucky country  
Lucky, the brothers were restless sons  
Lucky, they rebelled from day one  
Lucky, they longed for the light of the sun  
    and the warmth of the open air.  
Lucky, they acted for the sake of their brother  
Lucky, they out grew Mother and Father  
Lucky, Tane-Mahuta did things like no other  
And upside down  
Pried his parents apart.

*E iki, e iki e!  
Te turou o Whiti!  
Hiki nuku e!  
Hiki rangi e!  
Hiki nuku e!  
Hiki rangi e!  
Ha-ha!  
Ka hikitia tona uril  
Ka hapainga tona uri!  
I-a-ia!  
I-aia!*

Lucky the lovers loved so much  
Missing the caress of each other's touch  
for Rangi cries tears from the sky so freely  
and Papa's fecund soil's so healing

giving us Tane-Mahuta's forests of jade green  
rivers, lakes, underground springs  
a green belt round the nation's hips  
kissed all over by Moana's blue lips  
from Te Wai Pounamu to Te Ika o Maui;  
Greenstone to fishtail - lucky, lucky country

See the Pohutakawa blush deeply  
along cliff edges rising steeply  
where the dead depart for Hawaiki  
from Cape Reinga to Rakiura's sea

Yes, NZ's a lucky country  
If you're not Tangata Whenua

Your Tangata Tiriti  
Whether British, South African or Somali  
Chinese, Indian, or Israeli  
We've got the diversity  
no ethnic cleansing policy –  
Well, except for around 1833  
that 'infected blanket' strategy  
Britain's 'Manifest Destiny'  
Taking land by any means necessary  
the historical platform for Maori  
fighting land wars, foreshores, Bastion Pointing the way  
to O, blessed Tiriti o Waitangi  
setting a fire in your belly  
against paternalistic tyranny  
*Just do it* said Sir Tipene  
Way before Nike

Yes – NZ's a lucky country  
This land, home to tauiwi  
From 1858 Wellington Gujarati  
to Al Wendt's flying fox in a freedom tree  
Pule's tapatak canvassed ten metres by three  
where 250 thousand at Western Springs  
drink deep from the well: hear them sing  
Samoans, Tongans and Kiribati  
Fijians, Rotumans, those from Tahiti  
and the fusion from Niue to Scottish Highlanders  
makes Fij-ongans, Raro-moans, and Pakeha-islanders

We had our Muldoon but he was no Mugabe  
we're fourth in the world with the least political conspiracy  
we wear our sloganed t-shirts freely  
In Queen street I see:

*Politicians are the same all over.  
They promise a bridge where there is no river.*

And this one, from Taupo, down by the lake:

*In NZ anyone can be Prime Minister –  
it's a risk you take.*

NZ's a lucky country  
Where our birth-right civic duty  
Lets you vote, or not - it's free  
There's no one purple finger vote  
No machete held at your family's throat  
No AK47 to persuade you at the polls  
No standing in the dust, waving the same flag as the presidential Rolls

NZ's a lucky country  
We're inconvenient geography  
No land-locked topography  
We're far but close enough to see  
That our dairy economy

Makes the milk, in this land of honey  
Kiwi-Shakespeare shearing in farming families  
Gumboot brigading, black singlet parading  
No. 8 wire mentality  
In Enterprise and Industry  
Fred Dagg haggling in the city

And we've got water like no other  
Wind turbines and solar polar  
- And Antarctica: Terra Australis Incognito  
Our polar explorers – our global heroes  
It's a land of opportunity  
Hard work meeting synchronicity  
Where we can still think differently  
'Cos we're Te Moana Nui a Kiwa's Kiwis  
Totara waka parked next to chromed humvee  
Next to vesper next to Cooper's mini  
where beaching beauty's for free:  
Reservations of canvas teepees  
Jandals flip-flopping  
Rachel Hunter tip-topping  
Bare feet lapping the sea  
Reading out Holy ozone CV  
Bro'town cartooning our TVs  
Eagle vs. shark mentality  
Jim Baxter's Jersalumming it in Ponsonby  
Sam Hunt's DB Bitter poetry  
Mansfield's Devonshire scones over a cuppa tea  
Corduroy jacket dignitaries  
Swarming hive blue-suited bees

Yep, NZ's a lucky country  
It's a plucky country  
Cuba street busking, husking money  
Where you can buy McDs and KFC  
next to pork bones, puha, and palusami  
taro, kumara and chopsuey  
*swirling* Indian curries  
Korean wokking - no msg  
in this free market of inclusivity  
and we do so good globally

Didn't the All Whites did all right in the World Cup 20-10?  
Winston Reid did the deed, and we all remember when

NZ's a lucky country when  
Our nation's greatest anomaly  
Is the freedom 'to be' or 'not to be'  
To be nouveau culture or customary  
To walk with burqa or face and hair free  
We've got free education high school to kindy  
Hospitals, recycling, and libraries

NZ's a lucky country,

But like Sir Tipene and Sir Paul Reeves  
We've got to *horizon-seek*  
Otherwise it's 'Goodnight Kiwi'  
And everything we think is free  
Lies hostage to a world economy  
We need inter-generationality  
Eco-sustainability  
For our fossil fuels and energy  
In this land of space, water, and sea

We need a bit of Hillary  
Who, like everyone else, had a fear of heights  
and '*knocked the bastard off*' anyway  
'Cos

*When we grow up*  
*We will learn to do the same*  
*Yes we will*