

## Constitution Opinion

I have read the submissions posted and though, different from my husband's but I saw a common theme that resonates through all.

My husband's submission is basically one of *emphasis and reinforcement*. I'm hoping his can be concised into 250 words or less, by the local media to encourage other Rotumans who have yet to make a submission. It will be great for others to do likewise and make their opinions known to the Commission, before he sends his to the Forum.

There shouldn't be any fear of vilification or persecution, for there is a decree that exempts submitters from any actions by the military and also the Police. Thus I believe that the more submissions made to reiterate the same sentiments, the better the chances are for Rotumans to persuade the Commission, to lend Rotuma a sympathetic ear.

Early last week, I over heard my husband talking to our District Rep and he was told of a Government team that was on its way to Rotuma, to discuss the Constitution and also brief the Chiefs, the various chiefly clans in Rotuma and the Council.

I am also aware that my husband's initial stand was to resolutely oppose any push for representation of Rotuma in Parliament, since the abolition of the communal seats. For he believed that, such a move will be discriminatory to the other races in the country. Also I knew too that he had it in mind, to argue against any submission that includes a consultative process clause for Rotuma's future with Fiji. But I'm glad that he thought otherwise and did a back flip.

He only wanted the best for Rotuma's welfare and the destiny of future generations and echoed the same rhetorical sentiments that were made since May 1987. The new Constitution should enshrine ***the protection of these sentiments for Rotuma's special identity and its legitimate claim for preferential treatment and to give it more autonomy, in dealing with its own affairs with an annual budget allocation to help it accomplish these.***

Merely, because of Rotuma's sovereignty, as a distinct island nation before the cession to Great Britain which enabled it to have a separate deed of cession to that of Fiji. But we all know that for ease of administration, Rotuma was grouped together with Fiji by the British and this was further exacerbated by the events that transpired in London. Therefore I agree with the suggestion that the new Constitution should endorse at least a Representative for Rotuma in the House of Parliament, even though the communal based seats are already purged.

Like most Rotumans, I know my husband's heart is in the right place for he only wanted the best for Rotuma which reminds me of an Indian saying that ***"everything will be alright in the end but if it's not alright then it's not yet time or the end"***. But ***"fortune favours the brave hearts and those who asked"*** and unless Rotumans ask, Rotuma may be left floundering behind. Readers need to

read his full submission to understand the premises he used to reach that conclusion and change his mind.

Therefore we need to plan now for the future of Rotuma, by putting the processes in place and making our intentions known to the Commission, rather than miss another golden opportunity. Otherwise when Fiji's population surpasses a million and there's stiff competition, many Rotumans will struggle for access to universities, employment opportunities, to make ends meet and put food on the tables that I envisage some of generation X but more so Y and Z will blame this generation for lack of foresight and courage.

But the freedom of worship is one of the basic human rights principles and therefore must be protected in the new Constitution. Also I saw religion as one of faith and choice that is practised in various forms. Therefore we must **reject any calls that denigrate the beliefs of others** to Christianise Fiji (and Rotuma) and make it a Christian state.

For Christians, **are professed followers of Christ and should reflect the "fruits of the Spirit" in their lives, to be law abiding citizens and more tolerant of others beliefs**. Therefore test for Christianity is in the pudding of their Biblical faith **"to the law and the testimonies, if they speak not according to these words because there's no truth in them"**. Therefore any calls and baseless claims to the contrary are non Biblical, unwarranted and totally inappropriate and to do otherwise to impose it on others beliefs, is absolute hypocrisy.

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