



## Mothers' Darlings of the South Pacific: The Children of Indigenous Women and U.S. Servicemen, World War II

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Over the course of World War II, two million American military personnel occupied bases throughout the South Pacific, leaving behind a human legacy of at least 4,000 children born to indigenous mothers. Based on interviews conducted with many of these American-indigenous children and several of the surviving mothers, *Mothers' Darlings' of the South Pacific* explores the intimate relationships that existed between untold numbers of U.S. servicemen and indigenous women during the war and considers the fate of their mixed-race children. These relationships developed in the major U.S. bases of the South Pacific Command, from Bora Bora in the east across to Solomon Islands in the west, and from the Gilbert Islands in the north to New Zealand, in the southernmost region of the Pacific.

The American military command carefully managed interpersonal encounters between the sexes, applying race-based U.S. immigration law on Pacific peoples to prevent marriage 'across the color line.' For indigenous women and their American servicemen sweethearts, legal marriage was impossible; giving rise to a generation of fatherless children, most of whom grew up wanting to know more about their American lineage. *Mothers' Darlings of the South Pacific* traces these children's stories of loss, emotion, longing, and identity and of lives lived in the shadow of global war. Each chapter discusses the context of the particular island societies and shows how this often determined the ways intimate relationships developed and were accommodated during the war years and beyond.

Oral histories reveal what the records of colonial governments and the military have largely ignored, providing a perspective on the effects of the U.S. occupation that until now has been disregarded by Pacific war historians. The richness of this book will appeal to those interested the Pacific, World War II, as well as intimacy, family, race relations, colonialism, identity, and the legal structures of U.S. immigration.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

This book is a long overdue and much needed account of stories that have been neglected in the ongoing narrative of World War II.-- "MAMA, New Zealand"

#### Review

*Mothers' Darlings of the South Pacific* targets a scholarly audience, but the writing style and contents are comprehensible and accessible to a general readership. It represents a significant (and overdue) intervention into the history of the Pacific War and interracial intimacy, and it also generates new questions for families of those men who served. (Noah Riseman *The Journal of Pacific History*, Vol. 51, No. 4, 2016)

*Mother's Darlings of the South Pacific* is a valuable addition to Pacific and American history on many levels, in the scope of its coverage, the poignancy of its findings, and the subtle differences between island groups in the way the offspring were treated. It is also a fine example of how historians can blend oral testimony with documentary sources. The book is a welcome addition to Pacific and American history. It is an exemplar of the difficulties involved in broaching tender family topics. (Clive Moore *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 63, Issue 1, 2017)

While not shying away from the sentimentality that pervades their subject, these studies also manage to present a critical perspective on the social institutions that governed race, marriage and immigration in mid twentieth-century America and the Pacific. The result is a highly original set of studies that deserve the attention not only of scholars of the Pacific and the United States but anyone with an interest in problems of familial loss, longing, and intergenerational memory. (?Geoffrey White *Journal of New Zealand Studies*, No. 23, 2016)

This book is a long overdue and much needed account of stories that have been neglected in the ongoing narrative of World War II. (Aaron Smale *Mana Magazine (New Zealand)*)

*Mothers' Darlings* is also an original, extraordinary and much-welcome addition to the historiographies of children and Indigenous childhood; race, gender and especially interracial relationships and marriage; the Indigenous 1940s (including social and labour history); and, of course, the Second World War. (Mary Jane McCallum *AlterNative*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2017)

This important text with its insightful images and maps contextualizes with empathy some of the lived experiences that have not been documented in this way. With its attached resource guide to assist people searching for families, Bennett and Wanhalla's book goes beyond the limits of academia and reaches the hearts of those asking similar questions. (Safua Akeli *Journal of Samoan Studies*, Vol.7, No. 1, 2017)

#### About the Author

**Judith A. Bennett** is professor of Pacific history at the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand.

**Angela Wanhalla** is associate professor in the Department of History and Art History at the University of Otago.

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