

# THE MAU

*Samoa is a small island nation in the Pacific, made up of two islands and I am from there. Samoa may seem like a tropical paradise but there were times when things weren't great, just like how I can be, those times held violence, depression, confusion, and anger.*

Foreign contact began in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century missionaries and traders began to arrive. Christian churches were established. There was German, British and American interest in Samoa's resources, land and its People.

An agreement in 1899 between these nations split Samoa into American Samoa and German Samoa. The British took over German Samoa on 29 August 1914 and it became Western Samoa. New Zealand was appointed by Britain to take over administration or the running of the country. The New Zealand administration tried to take away Samoa's titles, customs and other freedoms. This led the people of Samoa's health and welfare to suffer.

In November 1918 a ship called the Talune arrives from New Zealand with people infected with the Spanish Influenza. It spreads throughout Western Samoa. The NZ administration refuses help from American Samoa. More than 22% of the entire population die – around 8,500 people.

Samoans had always been against foreign rulers but over time the people of Samoa felt more angry, disrespected, and frustrated. This eventually led to the formation of the Samoa League or the Mau Movement – a more organized group in 1927. It was a non-violent political movement for Independence for Samoa. Samoans didn't want to be governed by other nations anymore. They already had their Matai system long before they were colonized, and the foreigners didn't appreciate their way of governing their villages.

The Mau protested in different ways like marches, ignoring taxes and keeping their children home from school. The whole of the Mau only protested with non-violent actions. But the New Zealand administration demanded the Mau to stop and exiled their leaders to New Zealand.

Black Saturday, 29 December 1929, was an important event in the Mau Movement. A peaceful march was organized to protest foreign rule and to welcome home their leaders who had been exiled. During the march Tupua Tamasese Lealofi III, one of the main leaders of the Mau Movement, was gunned down by the NZ Military police along with 8 other men, 50 were wounded and another 3 died later. Tupua Tamasese Lealofi's last words were –

***“Samoa filemu pea, ma si o’u toto ne’i ta’uvalea, a ia aoga lo’u ola mo lenei mea” - “My blood has been spilt for Samoa. I am proud to give it. Do not dream of avenging it for it was spilt in peace. If I die peace must be maintained at any price.”***

Many of the men of the Mau were sent to prison after Black Saturday and some escaped to the bush. The women took over the role of the men. The Women's Mau movement held peaceful protests all over the country.

On January 1, 1962 Samoa gained independence from New Zealand.

The Mau Movement speaks to our humanity because it represents our rights as people to be able to live our own lives in a way that we want to. It shows how a small group of people on a small island can make a big change. They were up against a country that had much more power and authority, but they never gave up and they responded in peace, even though they were faced with marines with powerful weapons.

Tupua Tamasese showed bravery by leading the Mau – he showed courage in marching peacefully while faced with armed Marines. He showed compassion to his people while he was dying. He would have seen them suffering as they saw him on his death bed. His final words show true commitment to the Mau and to Samoa. He shows compassion and bravery in the face of adversity.

I relate to the Mau Movement because I am Samoan, and I am a person who would rather have peace than violence. Even though I am a kid I can still make a big change if I believe in something enough.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Field, J Michael 1984: *Mau: Samoa's Struggle for Freedom, 1984, Revised and reprinted 1991, Reprinted 2008, Auckland,)* Pasifika Press
- *May we never forget the spirit of the Mau Movement* by Mata'afa Keni Lesa, Samoa Observer 12/06/2017 <https://www.samoaoobserver.ws/category/editorial/35483>
- *Conversations: Pepe Robertson on the Samoan Mau rebellion against New Zealand rule* by Tapu Misa  
[https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=12208673](https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=12208673)
- *The rise of the Mau Movement* -<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/politics/samoa/rise-of-mau>
- Mau Movement – [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mau\\_movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mau_movement)