

Young poet celebrates Kiwi sense of belonging

By Glenise Dreaver

Young poet Nicky Subono was at the National Library of New Zealand on Race

Relations Day Thursday March 21, for the launch of a ground-breaking new book called *More of Us*.

She is one of 46 authors, all

migrants or refugees, whose work featured in the anthology, published by Landing Press. It was fitting that the ceremony went ahead despite

the March 15 massacre at the Christchurch mosques, says Adrienne Jansen, Landing Press spokesperson. "The launch and the book have become a powerful statement of what we want to be," she says.

Nicky, a level four beauty therapy student and a writer, who has also just completed a small business course, calls her poem *Overboard*. It describes, very powerfully, her sense of being a New Zealander rather than someone with an Indonesian heritage "who never felt she belonged in her own land".

The newly-published poet says that she wasn't born in Indonesia as planned however, but in Singapore.

Her mother gave birth to her there unexpectedly, a 24-week gestation baby. That meant heart surgery at three weeks old. Then eye surgery for a bleeding retina saved her sight.

It meant she couldn't play sport and there are still many physical activities she can't do. That's where her passion for reading and writing grows from, she says.

And the lack of sport was no barrier to the warm and continuing friendships she made during her time at Kelburn, Raroa and Onslow College, and during her tertiary education.

"I've always felt very loved and there has always been kindness around me."

Long-term, she wants to set up a beauty business for other Muslim women who cannot use the open environment of a traditional salon.

Yet, wearing the hajib hijab (headdress) she says, is no barrier to looking good. "We still care about ourselves and how we look."

"We still adore taking the time to take care of ourselves from the inside and out."



Nicky Subono of Newlands, at the ceremony which launched the book *More of Us*, wore a traditional Javanese Batik from Indonesia. PHOTO supplied.