



PHYLESHA BROWN-ACTON



Born: February 1976, in Auckland City, New Zealand; from the Village of Fineone Hakupu Atua, Niue

Organisation: F'INE Pasifika Aotearoa Trust

Phylesha Brown-Acton was born to a Niue mother and an Australian father. She knew she identified as a girl from the age of four and suffered abuse and bullying in school for this.

She began socially transitioning at the age of 15 and commenced hormone therapy in her twenties.

Originally a dancer, Brown-Acton entered activism in 1996, pursuing community work with the New Zealand AIDS Foundation in 2006 for a decade.

She has been outspoken about the human rights, violence and inequities that trans people face since she was attacked by a group of 10 men and victim-blamed by the police in the aftermath.

Brown-Acton was the first person to introduce a Pacific-specific acronym for Pacific sexual and gender minority communities: MVPFAFF+ (Mahu, Vakasalewalewa, Palopa, Fa'afafine, Akava'ine, Fakafifine and Fakaleiti/leiti, + acknowledging other Pacific countries who also have terms). She is also a spokesperson for the fact that homophobia, biphobia and transphobia have roots in colonialism in many Pacific countries.

"A lot of my work was around bridging (understanding) because I could see that there was nothing in the Pacific... [not just] in the Aotearoa context, (but also) in a Samoan specific way, in a Tongan way or Niuean way. It was ensuring that we weren't forgetting about our (Rainbow) brothers and sisters in the Pacific." ([Radio New Zealand](#), June 2019)

She is now the executive director for F'INE Pasifika Aotearoa Trust, a New Zealand based MVPFAFF+ and Pacific LGBTQI+ rights organisation that she founded in 2015 to carry the joint vision of her co-founder and mentor Mama Tahere-Strickland, who died in 2013.

She is also the Co-Chairperson of the Steering Committee of the Asia Pacific Transgender Network; the first Pacific trans woman to receive a New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) for services to the Pacific LGBTQI+ and Pacific communities; and in 2020, she was selected as a member of OutRight International's Beijing+25 Fellowship program.

"I worry that we are going to become more invisible in the bigger political picture - our fight and our politics are no longer going to be factored in (decision making).... Once you become invisible, you become voiceless." ([Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Co-operation](#), June 2020)

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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phylesha_Brown-Acton#/media/File:Phylesha_Brown-Acton_MNZM_\(cropped\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phylesha_Brown-Acton#/media/File:Phylesha_Brown-Acton_MNZM_(cropped).jpg)