

## Fa'nana Efeso Collins 1974 - 2024.

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Yesterday Efeso Collins died as he had lived, giving service to others. He was taking part in a Water Run to raise funds to provide the children of the Pacific with clean drinking water when he collapsed. In spite of medical staff trying for an hour to revive him he died.

Efeso Collins was a first-time Member of Parliament for the Green Party. He delivered his maiden speech just 6 days before he died. The first half of this speech was delivered in Samoan but was liberally sprinkled with a familiar word - Fa'afetai, (Thank you). He gave thanks, first of all to God, then to his parents who came to New Zealand from Samoa, to his family, to the local schools that had educated him, to his community, etc. The motto of his College was "kia mau tonu me te toki i te moana" "Steadfast as a rock in the sea" and this man was certainly that.

In his maiden speech he spoke of the need for love, saying that *"love is an act of courage, a commitment to the oppressed wherever they are found."* Efeso said "There's a saying in Samoan: 'E le tu fa'amauga se tagata' - no one stands alone, no one succeeds alone - and for me, no one suffers alone".

Efeso also spoke of the greatest challenge our world is facing - climate change - and the racism he and his family had been subjected to. He quoted James Baldwin, American writer and activist *"Not everything that is faced can be changed but nothing can be changed until it is faced."* He also said that he had not come to Parliament to learn but to help. The Government cannot just be a bystander but must help. It is hard to be poor, and he knows this because of his childhood poverty and because of the people all around him in South Auckland.

Numerous tributes have come in following Efeso's sudden death. One of the best is from Carmel Sepuloni, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, who said that the death of Collins was a loss for the country and the Pasifika community which he both celebrated and advocated so strongly for. *"His priorities never wavered: they were God, family and serving his community"*. The Green Party, who were completely devastated by Efeso's sudden death, promised to *"continue to aspire to the dedication and commitment Efeso showed to always putting the greater good above our own."* He showed us what that means every day."

Efeso's maiden speech in Parliament finished with a description of the end of Mass with the priest saying *"Go now in peace to love and serve the Lord."* Efeso answered this challenge daily.

