

Starting With You by Nicole Rapu

(Writing, Age 14-17)

For thousands of years, I've bled silently. Black, poisonous limbs, birthed from greed and apathy, have unfurled throughout my sacred, blue oceans, and the heaps of plastics—monuments to a long legacy of ignorance and prioritising expedience over empathy—strangle my waters and life within them. My leafy lungs are callously gutted daily, replaced by concrete sprawls that choke my skies and slowly smother me.

For centuries, I've bled, wept, hurt...silently. Silent. We've remained silent. We have been told to hush, to keep our peace; we are the leaders of tomorrow, so today, we are to sit still and watch our future burn before our eyes, sacrificed for the greed of others. But we say no more. This hallowed baton of a hope for restoration has been passed into our hands; now, we need to ensure not to falter, not to let chances to reblossom and rebuild slip through our fingers. We are a boundless generation, teeming with ideas and creativity; our dearest Earth shouldn't have to bleed. The power to stitch and staunch her aching wounds lies within our voices, latent for many, yet burning to be unleashed. The power to heal, change and innovate starts with us—it starts with you.