



## Unnamed ice

A South Island glacier has been “un-named” by an international artist accompanied by a representative of Ngāi Tahu.

**AGASSIZ GLACIER IS** named for 19th-century Swiss-born biologist and geologist Louis Agassiz. His belief in polygenism—that different human races are descended from different origins—lead to widely publishing his theories that ‘black’ races were inferior to white. He was notoriously critical of Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution.

Artist Sasha Huber learned about Agassiz’ racist beliefs after reading a book on slavery written by Swiss academic Hans Fässler, and became involved with his Demounting Louis Agassiz project in 2008—a campaign to have Agassiz’s name taken off the many landmarks around the world that bear it, as well as a crater on Mars and a promontorium on the Moon.

The project’s original aim was to rename a mountain in the Swiss Alps, Agassizhorn to Rentyhorn, after an African slave he photographed.

“[Agassiz] used these photographs to ‘prove’ the inferiority of the black race and presented those photographs in his

lectures,” Huber said.

In July she visited the area of Agassiz Glacier on the West Coast of the South Island. After a welcome at the local marae by Jeff Mahuika (Kāti Māhaki, Poutini Kāi Tahu), Huber and her small production team travelled to the site, between Kā Roimata a Hine Hukatere (Franz Josef Glacier) and Te Moeka o Tuawe (Fox Glacier). There, Mahuika offered a karakia blessing to symbolically un-name and cleanse the glacier of its association with Agassiz.

The glacier was named by German geologist Sir Johann “Julius” von Haast.

“When von Haast named over 100 places after British, German, Austrian, French, Australian, New Zealand, Danish and Swiss scholars, poets, sons of emperors, explorers and scientists (and also after himself and his son), he did so to endear himself to the name-bearers and to solidly locate New Zealand within white European culture while at the same time ignoring the Māori perspective,” she says.

## MĀORI IN THE OVAL OFFICE

A TRIP TO the White House was on the agenda for a small group of rangatahi Māori in July.

Tayla-Rose Campbell from Hato Petera College, Rotorua Girls High head girl Moerangi Vercoe, Taipa Area School head boy Ezekial Raui, and Cale Silich from Kaitaia, along with medical student Conor O’Sullivan travelled to the United States to attend the Tribal Youth Gathering at the White House, part of President Barack Obama’s new Generation Indigenous, or Gen-I, initiative aimed at improving the lives of Native American youth by removing the barriers to success.

The trip was arranged by Lance O’Sullivan’s MOKO Foundation, with assistance by Flight Centre and Air New Zealand, which aims to provide support for challenged and high needs communities and develop young leaders.

