Blinded by Bandung?

Illumining West Papua, Senegal, and the Black Pacific

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It was 1976, and Ben Tanggahma was in Dakar. Hailing from the former Dutch colony of West Papua, the Melanesian activist could easily pass for West African on the streets of Senegal. Tanggahma was the Foreign Minister of the Revolutionary Provisional Government of West Papua New Guinea (RPG), which was embroiled in a bitter armed conflict against Indonesian colonialism. With blood, iron, and fire, the Indonesian government claimed that it was historically and ethnically entitled to West Papua (Irian Jaya). In contrast, the RPG adamantly defended its sovereignty as an Oceanic (Pacific) people of African descent.[1] From Hollandia, Amsterdam, Dakar, and New York, West Papuan activists garnered support throughout the Black Diaspora. With the political and financial backing of Senegalese President Léopold Senghor, Tanggahma established a RPG coordinating office in Dakar in 1975. Senghor's reasoning for assistance was straightforward—Papuans were Black and *Negritude* defended their right to political self-determination and civilization.[2]

Dakar proved to be a fruitful space for fostering relations with the African Diaspora. In 1976, Tangghama attended Wole Soyinka's Seminar for African World Alternatives in Dakar. Black artists, activists, scholars, scientists and journalists from across Africa and the Americas participated in the Seminar. While there, journalists Carlos Moore and Shawna Maglanbayan asked Tangghama about the relationship between Oceania and Africa. He responded:

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> Africa is our motherland. All of the Black populations which settled in Asia . . . came undoubtedly from the African continent. . . . Hence, we the Blacks in Asia and the Pacific today descend from proto-African peoples. We were linked to Africa in the past. We are linked to Africa in the future. We are what you might call the Black Asian Diaspora.[3]

By asserting West Papuans as a Black Asian Diaspora, Tanggahma was intentionally forging Diaspora with the broader Black world. Similarly, in the 1960s his West Papuan counterparts internationally asserted themselves as "Negroids of the Pacific." This was not simply a matter of political expediency, or a new appropriation of Blackness triggered by Indonesian imperialism. This was part of a longstanding conversation within the Black world about how its global dynamics stretched across the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Ocean worlds. A binding factor of this Diaspora was European colonial violence that had defined Oceanic peoples as being Black and Brown since the sixteenth century.[4] It makes perfect sense, then, that West Papuans would identify with other communities who had historically experienced the world as Black people.

Conceptually shadowed by scholarship focused on meetings such Tanzania's Sixth Pan-African Congress (6PAC, 1974) and Nigeria's Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC, 1977), Dakar's Seminar was a critical occasion of Black internationalism and rediscovery between the Black Pacific and broader Black world. Its participants included Senegal's Cheikh Anta Diop, Kine' Kirama Fall, and Annette Mbaye d'Erneville; Trinidad's CLR James; Madagascar's Jacques Rabemananjara; Brazil's Abdias do Nascimento; Guinea's Camara Laye; Mauritius's Edouard Maunick; Panama's Edilia Camargo; Ethiopia's Tsegaye Gabre-Medhin; and Harold Cruse of the United States. These political stalwarts signed a *Declaration of Black Intellectuals*, which called for the sovereignty of West Papua and East Timor from Indonesian imperialism. The document asserted that Melanesia's racial, cultural and political affinities with the African world were indisputable. Linking the struggles of Oceania to those of Africa, Asia, and the Americas, this global roll call captured an incandescent yet largely invisible nexus of Black internationalism. Still, Tanggahma argued that the African Diaspora's *sympathy* for West Papua did not always develop into *solidarity*—that is, tangible material aid. This was also because Black movements were often hesitant to criticize Indonesia because they were blinded by its role in the historic 1955 Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung, Indonesia.

Bandung remains a figurative and literal symbol for the Global South. In 1963, Malcolm X famously cited the meeting as a model for Black and Brown unity against white power: "At Bandung all the nations came together from Africa and Asia. It was at Bandung where Black and Brown communities discovered who the real enemy was—blonde hair, blue eyed and white skinned Europeans."[5]

This article complicates and perhaps disorders this mainstream narra-

tive by exploring Bandung from the perspective and voice of Oceania.[6] Indonesia used Bandung as a platform to solidify support from its African and Asian allies for its claims to West Papua. It framed these efforts within the context of resistance to Dutch colonialism. Indonesia publically lambasted West Papuan nationalists as being reactionary puppets of the Dutch, Stone Age peoples unready for self-determination or rebel traitors who needed to be violently suppressed. From this perspective, Bandung represented a consolidation of Indonesian imperialism in the region, as Indonesia functioned as a racialized colonial power. This critique does not invalidate the broader project of Afro-Asian solidarity, and it recognizes that there were Indonesian voices that disagreed with their government's claims to West Papua.

"Blinded by Bandung" uses the case of West Papua to illumine the relationships between Black internationalism, Melanesia, and decolonization in Oceania. Melanesia today refers to some 12 million persons, 2,000 islands, 1,300 languages and 386,000 square miles of land across the waters of Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, West Papua, Fiji, and New Caledonia. Lying north and north east of Australia, this chain of archipelagos witnessed the pandemonium of colonialism. Since the sixteenth century, European, American, Asian, and Pacific powers have played geopolitical musical chairs in the region. The ideas, memories and legacies of stolen generations, blackbirding—a nineteenth century system of kidnapping and enslavement in which European traders forcibly took Melanesians to work primarily on sugar and cotton plantations in Australia, Fiji, and New Caledonia—and nuclear testing became household terms as common as breadfruit, sandalwood, and kava. Still, Melanesia is not a sea of victims and possesses a longstanding tradition of resistance to colonial violence.[7]

This article highlights the South-South relations that spread the ideas of Black Power, *Negritude,* Pan-Africanism, and African/Caribbean liberation across Oceania. It challenges a conceptual cartography of Africana scholarship that has oriented Pan-Africanism as an Atlantic world experience. It further suggests that notions of the Black world have been blinded by a framework of the African Diaspora largely linked to a narrative of involuntary migration stemming from the Atlantic slave trade. But if we centralize the Pacific in the Diaspora framework, is it possible to speak of a Black Pacific—or Black Oceania?

Indeed, there is inherent hegemony implied in the notion of the "Pacific." It is a construct that reflects Europe's violent assault on indigenous Oceania through genocide, forced labor, sexual abuse, displacement, ecological destruction, and imperialism. In response, Tongan scholar Epeli Hau'ofa convincingly pushed scholars to use *Oceania* instead of the *Pacific* when referring to the region. For Hau'ofa, Oceania speaks to the region's precolonial worldviews, diversity, politics, economics, migration, kinship networks, and ecosystems.[8]

Yet, this article is informed by scholarship that engages the concept of a

Black Pacific. Etsuko Taketani's *Black Pacific Narrative* shows how interwar African Americans imagined China and Japan through culture and literature. Robbie Shilliam's *Black Pacific* is focused on the Polynesian Panthers and Black Power in New Zealand. Gabriel Solis's "Black Pacific" discusses racial identity in Papua New Guinea and Australia through ethnomusicology. Gerald Horne's *White Pacific* documents blackbirding, US imperialism, and African Americans in Oceania in the nineteenth century.[9]

"Blinded by Bandung" uses Black Pacific to refer to the intentional and complicated ways in which Oceanic communities forged Diaspora with the broader Black world politically and culturally by self-identifying as Black or by embracing Black movements. It also describes how Oceanic movements at times rallied around modern concepts of Blackness created by European colonialism. Furthermore, it explores the Global South and world disorder, particularly in the ways in which we think about interoceanic African Diasporas. In doing so, it critically adds to scholarship on Black internationalism, the Global South, and the African Diaspora, which have largely marginalized Melanesia. It also draws from Tracey Banivanua Mar's *Decolonization and the Pacific*, which details how decolonization in the Oceania was both an indigenous and an international phenomenon that transcended colonial and national borders.[10]

From Oceania to the Black Pacific

Recent DNA studies argue that "Aboriginal" Australians are direct descendants of Africa's first Diaspora from some 72,000 years ago. These communities traversed into Papua New Guinea, Australia and the Solomon Islands. Archeological unearthing of Lapita pottery marks a second major migratory wave throughout the region via Southeast Asia some 3,000 years ago.[11] Oceania has been brutally impacted by European imperial violence since the sixteenth century. The European racial imaginary defined Oceania in reference to Africa and the indigenous Americas. In 1545, Spanish explorer Yñigo Ortiz de Retez reached Papua and called it *Nueva Guinea*, as he felt that the people resembled those of Africa's Guinea coast.[12] By the 1830s France's Jules Dumont d'Urville divided Oceania by phenotype into Polynesia, Micronesia, Malaysia, and Melanesia. He defined Melanesia as being "the home of the Black race of Oceania" and, predictably, racially inferior to Polynesia.[13]

The turn of the twentieth century was an intense era of (re)discovery among the Black world. In a moment of Europe's scramble for Africa and the Pacific, Pan-African writers of the Americas framed their views on Oceania in the context of European colonial thought. Their questions about race in Oceania reflected their challenge—not without contradiction—to scientific racism. For them, the shared phenotypical similarities *and* histories of racial oppression across the Pacific and Atlantic Ocean worlds legitimized global political framings of Blackness that included Oceania.

In 1879, Martin Delaney asserted that indigenous persons in Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea were descendants of a mixed Malay race. "Who can doubt," asked the father of Black Nationalism, "that the African once preponderated and was the resolvent race among them?" Ana Julia Cooper's 1925 "Equality of Race and the Democratic Movement" decried Australia's "White only policy." In 1942, W. E. B. Dubois remarked that one could "trace the African black from the Great Lakes of Africa to the islands of Melanesia."[14]

In 1920, a branch of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) was formed in Sydney, Australia. Its communications with Amy Jacques Garvey were published in the *Negro World*. Marcus Garvey referenced genocide in the Pacific as a political imperative for African unity. He once told New York's Liberty Hall, "Do they think that they are going to exterminate 400 million Blacks as they have exterminated . . . the North American Indians . . . and the Aborigines of [New Zealand] and Australia?" The UNIA's 1922 petition to the League of Nations charged, "If Black men have no right in America, Australia, Canada [or Europe] then White men should have no right in Africa."[15]

The *Negro World* continued a distinctly gendered focus on its coverage of Oceania. In September 1924, the paper reported that Blacks in Australia and New Guinea were being "enslaved, exploited and raped by white Europeans." It reprinted reports by Sydney's *Worker's Weekly*, which claimed that there was a slave trade in New Guinea.[16] It found these "vile horrors" to be worse than those of South Africa.[17]

World War II brought increased visibility to Melanesia in the African American press. Cleveland's *Call and Post* reported that African American soldiers stationed in Papua New Guinea "found colored men there already."[18] In 1943, Howard University's Merz Tate argued that the "darker" persons of the world lived in the Netherlands East Indies, India, Asia, the Malay Peninsula, Polynesia, Oceania, and Melanesia, which was populated by "Negroid inhabitants." For Tate, these darker peoples were no longer "filled with terror at the white man's power." They now questioned the reality of white superiority and contemplated their own "possibilities of attack."[19]

Back to Bandung

World War II brought significant change to West Papua as well, which, along with Indonesia, had been colonized by the Netherlands through the Dutch East Indies Company. An 1824 Treaty of London divided New Guinea between Holland, Germany, and Britain "without the knowledge or consent of its Black population." Germany's first overseas colony was German New Guinea, which it claimed by flag weeks before the 1884 Berlin Conference. Both Britain and Germany administered New Guinea with machine guns and punitive expeditions. In 1906, Britain transferred Papua to Australia. East New Guinea was passed on to Australia after World War II. In the 1920s, the Dutch exiled leftist Indonesians to West Papua.[20]

Papuans resisted Dutch colonialism. From 1938 to 1942, an indigenous priestess named Angganeta Menufandu led the *Koreri* anticolonial movement in Biak. She encouraged mass noncooperation against Dutch forced labor gangs, taxation, laws, and missionary bans on traditional dancing and singing. The *Koreri* inverted the Dutch tricolor flag (red, blue, and white) and added a morning star, a Biak cosmological symbol. Uprisings occurred when the Dutch arrested Angganeta and burned the homes of her community. She remained captive during Japan's occupation in World War II. Stephen Simopjaref freed her and transformed the *Koreri* into an armed resistance force. Both Simopjaref and Angganeta were recaptured and beheaded by the Japanese, who killed between 600 and 2000 persons on Biak.[21]

Led by President Surkarno, Indonesia secured political independence from the Netherlands in 1949. A deal with Holland granted Indonesia its former Pacific colonies, including the "Black" nations of West Timor and the South Moluccas. Sukarno immediately claimed that West Papua was ethnically and historically Indonesian. Intent on holding onto West Papua, the Dutch denied this. Ironically, it was Dutch colonialism that had politically oriented West Papua *west* towards Indonesia and the Indian Ocean, as opposed to *east* towards Melanesia and Oceania.[22]

West Papuan nationalists rejected Indonesia's position. They made clear distinctions between the racial and ethnic histories of Papua and Indonesia. For example, the RPG argued that "master-slave relations" defined the historical connections between "Asiatic Javanese," Black Papuans, and the Islamic Sultan of Tidore, as Indonesian merchants enslaved Papuans during the Indian Ocean slave trade circa 724 CE.[23]

These voices of dissent were silenced at Bandung. Attended by twenty-nine countries, the talks declared that colonialism was evil. It affirmed that the "subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation" was a denial of human rights contrary to the United Nations Charter. However, West Papua was the exception. Surkano framed his claims to West Papua as a struggle against Dutch imperialism. As such, Bandung officially resolved to support Indonesia's position on West Papua.[24]

As the conflict between Indonesia and the Netherlands intensified, West Papuan nationalists found themselves in a complicated situation. They pushed for their sovereignty, repeatedly asserting that they were neither pro-Indonesian nor pro-Dutch. In October 1961, they formed a National Congress at Hollandia, and elected a Papuan National Committee (PNC). Given the charge to drive West Papua to independence, the PNC was led by Dorcas Tokoro-Hanesbey, Marcus Kaisiepo, and Nicolaas Jouwe. Days later, it created a flag, an arms, a national anthem, and national names, which it distributed throughout the country as a Manifesto. PNC representative Willem Inuri informed Sydney's *Morning Herald*, "We want our own nation and to rename the territory West Papua." In early 1962, the Partai Nasi-

onal (PARNA) announced to the country that in 1970 West Papua would become a Republic.[25]

Dutch residents in Hollandia pondered if West Papua was going to become a "New Congo." Perhaps to assuage these concerns, the Dutch passed an ordinance stating that the new flag could only be raised alongside a Dutch flag of greater height. Still, Netherlands supported West Papuan nationalism as an effort to stave off Indonesia. As such, detractors claimed that the Council was an extension of Dutch liberal politics, downplaying West Papuan nationalism.[26]

In December 1961, Surkano vowed to "liberate the land" from the Dutch. He called for the "total mobilization of the Indonesian people" to invade West Papua. In a national broadcast to one million viewers, he ordered Indonesians to wreck "Dutch efforts to set up a Papua puppet state" by hoisting Indonesia's flag over "West Irian." Reporting in the *Atlanta Daily World*, he exclaimed, "There is no power in this world which can stop us—no fleet, no army . . . when we follow the path which is blessed and approved by Allah. We ask the Dutch what do you march with? At most, your cheese and butter."[27]

Surkano framed the pending invasion as a West Irian Liberation Command. His Ambassador to Australia declared that Indonesia was historically and ethnically entitled to West Irian and that it would not allow it form an independent country with East New Guinea. In February 1962, the *Bermuda Recorder* declared that 10,000 Indonesian volunteers were ready to invade West Papua. Invoking Western prejudices, the paper reported that they were "skilled in the type of jungle warfare required in the wilds" of West Papua.[28]

The PNC retorted that West Papuans were ready to defend themselves against Indonesia. It remarked that there would be an "unending guerrilla war" if Indonesia attempted to occupy their mountains and jungles. It reminded interested parties how only three hundred out of forty thousand Japanese survived the trek across New Guinea during World War II. PNC Vice President Jouwe repeatedly called for Papuans to resist Indonesia with arms if necessary. In January 1962, he challenged Indonesian propaganda that claimed that Papuans would welcome Indonesia's army. "We will welcome them all right," said Jouwe, "but not with hand shakes." Papuans would resist Indonesian rule with everything in their power, including "flights of poisoned arrows." He further stated that his people's "volunteer battalion of jungle fighters" were urging the Dutch for arms. "Because of our fighting prowess," he claimed, "I think we could fight against one hundred Indonesians with five soldiers." Spokesperson Herman Womsiwor agreed—the PNC sought to form a People's Army through finances from Holland. He wanted "warriors equipped with jungle carbines, grenades, light machine guns." Via conscription of Papuans aged sixteen to forty, they hoped to bolster their Papuan Volunteer Corps.[29]

West Papua, Africa, and the United Nations

By 1962, the PNC began to actively seek direct support from Africa. At the PNC's insistence, the Dutch invited African representatives to the United Nations to West Papua to investigate the situation. According to the Council, several African ambassadors declined the invitation because of Indonesian intimidation. Still, in April 1962, ambassadors Frédéric Guirma of Upper Volta and Maxime-Leopold Zollner of Dahomey visited West Papua for two weeks.[30]

Upon their return, Guirma held a press conference on the issue. He concluded that Indonesia's claims to West Papua rested on weak historical grounds. He felt that they were as logical as if Indonesia was to claim Australia and the Philippines. Guirma found it scandalous that seven hundred thousand New Guineans lived in the Stone Age while the United States and Russia sent "satellites to the Moon." The issue was not whether or not New Guinea should go to the Netherlands or Indonesia, but how to elevate "its people to the level of this century." He advocated that the United Nations administer the territory, and after West Papuans had "improved their way of life," a move should be made to complete self-determination.[31]

Guirma's comments were controversial. Guinea's ambassador completely disagreed with him. African American journalist Charles Howard also chastised him: "Why do you, an African, come here and try to propagandize us, on behalf of a colonial power, while the United Nations and the Asian African group are doing all in their power to liquidate colonialism everywhere?" For Howard, it was the attitude of French colonial "puppets" like Guirma and others from the Brazzaville group that stunted Africa's liberation from colonialism.[32]

In Baltimore's *Afro-American*, Howard wrote that Indonesia had appealed to African delegates to the United Nations to help them "restore" West Papua to the Republic. They asked the peoples of Africa "to not heed to the poisonous babble of the Dutch puppets" who made "noises in the interests of their own pockets."[33] Major J. Diamara, a leader of the Indonesian Defense Council, lodged in the United Nations a fine piece of propaganda written on *behalf* of West Papuans. "We, sons of West Irian and representative of West Irian independence fighters, hereby declare to all the peoples of Africa, wherever they may be, that West Irian is an integral part of Indonesia. We, the West Irian Community belong to Indonesia, and since olden times we have spoken Indonesian."[34]

Under the threat of invasion, the PNC launched an international campaign to gather support. It sent delegates to New York, Amsterdam, and cities across Africa. In May 1962, Jouwe took the case of West Papua to the United Nations in New York. Officially a part of a Netherlands delegation, he was very visible in the US media. In July 1962, he stated that Papuans "wanted the same thing the Americans wanted in 1776—freedom and independence." They refused to be "victims of Indonesian blackmail" or be handed down from "one colonial master to another."[35]

The PNC popularized its struggle through the African American press. On

April 14, 1962, the *Pittsburgh Courier*'s two-page center spread read, "PAPUANS SEEK HELP FROM NEGRO BROTHERS AND SISTERS." Tokoro-Hanesbey, Jouwe, and Kaisiepo informed the paper that Papuans needed assistance from their global "Negro brothers and sisters" against the "menace of Indonesian imperialism." This clarion call to the Black world argued that "African Papuans" were a sovereign Black people. The PNC's pamphlet, *The Voice of the Negroids in the Pacific to the Negroids Throughout the World*, declared the Melanesian archipelago to be "New Africa." It stated, "We are living in the Pacific, our people are called Papuans, our ethnic origin is the Negroid Race. We do not want to be slaves any more." The PNC informed its "fellow tribesmen of the Negroids throughout the world" that they were in a "dangerous position." If handed over to their Indonesian enemy, they would be forced to be slaves. They urged African Americans and African nationals to exert their influence to have them placed under United Nations supervision.[36]

The article detailed the PNC's program, which was based on self-determination, rights, and freedom. For the PNC, these were ideals that Black people across the world fought for. Hence, Papua's quest for liberation was no different than that of the Africana world. The *Courier* pondered if West Papuans would have a "right to make their own choice," or whether "the other nations" allow an Asian dictator to keep them down. The *Chicago Daily Defender* reported that West Papuans wanted to be free from any form of colonialism.[37]

The PNC's words were poignant, but the photographs that they circulated arguably had more of an impact. Both the *Courier* and *Defender* published pictures of the PNC's inaugural 1961 meeting. The images revealed the PNC's red, white, and blue flag, which was based upon Angganeta's earlier design. One photograph of a PNC rally on Biak depicted men, women, and children holding placards inscribed with the phrase "Pampampun"— "WE PAPUANS reject Sukarno and his people."[38] The demonstrators were dressed in Western clothing, perhaps attempting to challenge misrepresentations of West Papuans as "primitives."

Racist notions of Papua as being of the Stone Age were widely perpetuated through the media. Leon Dennen, in an interview with Jouwe claimed that it was "tough to be a free Papuan headhunter or the son of one in the age of anti-colonialism." The *Chicago Defender* found it to be anybody's guess why the Dutch or Indonesia wanted backwards West Papua. The *Amarillo Globe Times* claimed that the "Stone Age habits" of Papuans slowed their transformation to independence, even though the Dutch had partially repressed headhunting and cannibalism. Papuans spoke two hundred unintelligible languages and lived under poverty and disease. The paper claimed that Indonesia needed West New Guinea like it needed "the holes Papuans used to drill in enemy skulls to remove the brains for eating."[39]

But while West Papua was being framed as backward and lacking resources, in 1961, photographs of hundreds of spear-brandishing "stark naked savages" organized in "fighting squads like Zulu Impis" with their "faces made even blacker with

war paint" drove the careers of photographers like Eliot Elisofon. *Life Magazine* published articles about Papua such as "Survivors from the Stone Age: A Savage People That Love War," spliced with photographs taken by Michael Rockefeller. Scientific expeditions to study the world's "rarest anthropological treasure," Papua's "Stone Age natives," bolstered the reputation of Harvard's Peabody museum. Pieces of "New Guinea Primitive art" fetched up to $11,000 at art shows by May Co. Whilshire.[40] What this all demonstrates is how pervasive Western prejudices exhibited towards Oceania—once also held for Africa, Asia, and the Americas—were perpetuated in the pages of Black and white media.

Acts of No Choice

Indonesia landed paratroopers in West Papua in April 1962. Without the consultation of West Papuans, the United States government brokered a New York Agreement that conceded the country to Indonesia. Ratified by the United Nations, it was expected that Indonesia would hold a 1969 referendum on Papuan independence. Now backed by the United States and the United Nations, Indonesia proceeded to colonize West Papua. Writing from New York in 1968, the Freedom Committee of West Papua argued that Indonesia had become "more murderous." Chaired by Jouwe, the Committee included Womsiwor and Secretary General Tanggahma.[41] Through violence, military occupation, intimidation, economic coercion, political incarceration, and propaganda, Indonesia ran the colony like a military fiefdom. According to US officials, its army degraded Papuans because of their "darker skin" and supposed lack of civilization. Charges of genocide were generated by shootings from "trigger-happy, jittery troops."[42]

In 1965, Lodewijk Mandadjan led armed resistance in the mountains of Manokwari with about one thousand fighters. After an Indonesian police brigade was injured, the Indonesian military killed over one thousand persons in an air strike. Its "mopping up operations" netted one thousand World War II weapons with documents connecting them to Operasi Papua Merdeka (Free Papua Organization, OPM).[43] Widely supported, the OPM became West Papua's core opposition to Indonesia. The US State Department found it to be an "all-pervasive revolutionary movement." Loosely organized, it was hard to track down not because it was security tight, but because "everyone talked about it." Reflecting an "amorphous mass of anti-Indonesian sentiment," it had anywhere from between 1,500 and 50,000 members.[44]

As Indonesia's military sought to flush out the OPM, Papaun nationalists coordinated their struggle from outside of the country. Jouwe was based in the Netherlands. In a 1969 report, he stated that thirty armed guerillas were fighting for independence, some armed with only bows and arrows. He reported on numerous killings, arrests and refugees.[45]

By 1967, Marcus Kaisieopo had become President in Exile of the Government of West Papua. In December of that year, he met with Francis Underhill,

Director of the US State Department's Indonesia Affairs. Kaisieopo hoped that the United States could use its influence to ensure the vote occurred fairly. Ironically, Underhill encouraged Kaisieopo to get the support of the Dutch and countries from the Global South since he felt that the views of white nations about colonialism would be arbitrarily dismissed. Kaisieopo responded that the Dutch would not do anything to assure that the referendum would be fairly administered. In addition, Papuan leaders had become "completely disillusioned" of any hope that the Afro-Asian bloc would be helpful—it was "blinded by the 1955 meeting at Bandung" and would not challenge Indonesia.[46]

In January 1968, US political consul Thomas Reynders visited West Papua. He reported that Indonesia was focused on suppressing political unrest. Its presence in West Papua was primarily expressed in the form of ten thousand troops. Despite there being a West Papuan Governor, who Reynders insulted by referring to him as a "sun-dazed frog," Indonesia's General Bintoro *was* the Government of West Papua. He was also rector of Tjenderawasih University, a center of political indoctrination for West Papuan students. Indonesian officials made a concentrated effort to keep Papuans away from UN representatives. According to missionaries, almost everyone in the developed areas of West Papua was anti-Indonesian. There were daily arrests of suspected rebels in Biak, and the military held an unknown amount of political prisoners. Given all of this, most Westerners in West Papua were certain that Indonesia would not win an open election. Violence was inevitable, as nationalists would not accept union without a struggle, and Indonesia would not accept separation. The only question was *how much* violence. Certainly, Indonesia was developing ways to avoid an open election and set the stage for an Act of Free Choice in its favor.[47]

About a year from the referendum, Indonesian foreign secretary Adam Malik suggested that Indonesia use careful groundwork to win the support of sixty "key tribal leaders." This included granting them favors and delivering gifts like clothing, flashlights, tobacco, bead necklaces, tin goods, and sago by C-130 military aircraft. Malik advocated giving amnesty to six political prisoners out of four hundred persons.[48]

In August 1968, US officials summed up Indonesia's precarious task of "designing a form of self-determination that would ensure its retention of West Irian" but yet not appear to be "a flagrant violation" of the human rights of Papuans—obviously, this was not self-determination. Its plan was to avoid universal adult suffrage and create a council with handpicked chiefs and approved restricted voter lists. They reported that the Indonesian government was "wining and dining" these chiefs in Jakarta. Meanwhile, the Dutch pledged not to sabotage Indonesia's plans. Serious opposition from the radical UN Afro-Asian bloc seemed improbable and Indonesia had the backing of moderate African and Asian nations.[49]

West Papuans did have some hope that support would be forthcoming from

the United Nations, which had sent Bolivian ambassador Fernando Ortiz-Sanz to ensure that the referendum was held fairly. To Indonesia's disdain, Ortiz-Sanz avowed that he would preside over a completely free election or resign. Critical of Indonesia's handling of the Act, his team included African-Americans James Lewis and Marshall Williams. Both men were totally against Indonesian imperialism, claimed that 95 percent of the country supported independence, and felt that the referendum was a mockery.[50]

According to US officials, Williams "made no secret of the fact that he identified with the Papuans because of his American Negro antecedents." He proudly proclaimed that he was almost declared *persona non-grata* because he openly criticized Indonesia. In one case, Indonesian soldiers ejected him from a UN office during a demonstration because they thought that he was Papuan. The incident in question took place in April 1969, when the OPM organized a one-person, one-vote demonstration in front of Ortiz- Sanz's residence. Troops fired on the crowd of around one thousand persons.[51]

Upon his return to the United States, Ortiz-Sanz felt that at least twenty-five African representatives would not accept the provisions of the Act. In August 1969, as part of an effort to stave off this sentiment, Malik toured Europe and Africa to enlist the support of a number of African states. US officials claimed that OPM leaders abroad used race to mobilize support, arguing that "Brown Indonesia" was oppressing "Black Papua." This political appeal to color speaks to the intentional fashioning of the Black Diaspora across the Global South. Meanwhile, Malik's Africa tour was calculated to use propaganda to counter these operations.[52]

Malik was present for the United Nations' discussions on the Act of Free Choice. Supported by Gabon, Togo, Ghana, and Ecuador, Dahomey's ambassador objected to the short time allotted for the debate. Malik curiously argued the African states understood self-determination in ways that may have applied to Rhodesia. However, he claimed, these states had little understanding of the 1962 New York agreement. Malik asked US officials to convince the African nations to side with Indonesia; US officials were already were discreetly but pervasively pressing them.[53] Of course, the United States government had its own geopolitical interests in Oceania, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean. It had supported Indonesia's push for political independence from the Dutch and saw the nation as a critical Cold War ally against communism.[54] All that being said, the Act of Free Choice passed in Indonesia's favor. Papuan nationalists chided the vote as being an act of "no choice." They continued to press for self-determination internationally while fighting locally.

Negritude in the Pacific

On July 1, 1971, the Revolutionary Provisional Government of West Papua (RPG) declared the country to be independent under President Brigadier General Seth Rumkorem. It claimed that Indonesia had killed over thirty thousand Papuan men,

women, and children since 1963. Tens of thousands of others were fleeing the Indonesian army and joining the guerillas. The population's intellectual strata found themselves in concentration camps and prisons. The RPG indicated that Papuans risked being placed on reservations like the North American Indians and Aborigines in Australia and could become slaves in their own country. Rumkorem stressed that the Papuan people, the RPG, and its National Army of Liberation would fight "until either their country was freed of the last Indonesian soldiers" or was "the graveyard of its own last child."[55]

By 1975, the RPG claimed to control a territory twice the size of the Netherlands. They operated schools and two hospitals and had excellent communication with their representatives in Holland and Papua New Guinea. Papuans also lived in exile—five thousand persons in Australia (five hundred were granted asylum), five hundred lived in the Netherlands, and others hid in insecurity amidst the country's dense rainforests. The RPG was represented abroad by Womsiwor, Filemon Jufuway, and Tanghamma.[56]

In 1971, Womsiwor met with Roy Wilkins of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). This was somewhat ironic, as Walter White and the NAACP had ardently supported Indonesia's independence struggle against the Dutch.[57] Womsiwor told Wilkins how, in 1969, the RPG had gone before the UN's special committee on decolonization and garnered the support of Gabon, Jamaica, Kenya, Sierra Leona, Tanzania, Dahomey, Central African Republic, Zambia, Barbados, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda and Guyana, Zambia, and Israel. But as they needed more support, Womsiwor asked if the NAACP could address the case of West Papua at its annual meeting. He provided Wilkins with materials on West Papua's struggle, including a document entitled "African Papuans being slaughtered by Indonesian Government." Sent to Holland from New Guinea, the document claimed that between May and June 1970, Indonesian soldiers killed eighty-five villagers in Biak. This included a pregnant woman. In Bird's Head, freedom fighters had returned to their villages under amnesty conditions, yet they were still "slaughtered on the beaches." From January to August 1970, 2,053 Papuans were arrested because they challenged the Free Act.[58]

Wilkins was convinced. In 1972, he released a charge to the United Nations on behalf the NAACP, stating that African Americans "knew little or nothing about the situation of their ethnic cousins in West New Guinea." In accordance with its stand against the domination of subject peoples, the NAACP urged the United Nations to grant West Papuans a "hearing on their status with respect to Indonesia." At its 1971 Convention, nearly 2000 delegates and over 1,700 local units voted unanimously to support West Papua. The same statement was printed in the NAACP's *Crisis* magazine. In 1975, Womsiwor asked the NAACP to call on influential Black congresspersons to get the United States to intervene on their behalf.[59]

The RPG toured Africa in search of allies. They carried literature, docu-

ments, and photographs depicting their struggle. This included images of Rumkorem and the National Liberation Army. The RPG argued that if Sao Tome, with a population of eighty thousand, could be promised independence—why not West Papua with its population of eight *hundred* thousand? In 1974, the PGW caught the attention of the African and Mauritian Common Organization (OCM). Formerly known as the conservative Brazzaville group, the OCM invited the RPG to attend their August 1974 conference at Bangui, Central African Republic. Also attending was Senegalese president Senghor. It is likely that this is where the RPG first made direct contact with the iconic architect of *Negritude.* Due to his political invitation and financial support, in July 1975 the RPG opened its coordinating office in Dakar, Senegal.[60]

Senghor became an ardent supporter of West Papua and its Melanesian "neighbor," East Timor. He attempted to have them seated at the 1976 Organization of African Unity's Non-Aligned Coordinating Committee meeting. In a 1976 interview published in the Parisian paper *Le Monde*, Senghor was questioned about his interest in Papua. He stated that Senegal supported "all movements of identification" and primarily *Negritude*, which was "the right of Blacks to work in an independent state for the renaissance and development of their values of civilization." Senghor remarked that Papuans differed from Indonesians by race and culture. They were Black and Indonesians were "a mixture of Black and Yellow races." He also linked Senegal's relationship with the RPG to its support of Palestine's efforts to create a national state; the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) also had an office in Dakar. In February 1978, Senghor told Australia's ambassador that he saluted how Australia had granted independence to Papua New Guinea. He felt that the United Nations "had made an enormous mistake in remaining deaf to the demands of Papuans," who stand on their *Negritude* and demanded independence.[61]

US officials found it intriguing that Senghor had given haven to foreign political groups such as the RPG, PLO, the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), and the Moluccans. They believed that Senghor was hoping to enhance his "progressive image," having gotten "good political mileage" for having Senegal be the first Black African state to have a PLO office. Gestures of this nature challenged the idea that he was a conservative. Senghor's support was a closely controlled "vest pocket" operation. He was an "African elder statesman with unparalleled access to, and respect in, western political and intellectual circles." US officials believed that Senghor was intent on earning the trust of radical movements in the Global South, which would theoretically allow him to be leading facilitator between these opposing sides. But they also found that Senghor's fraternizing with "Indonesian separatists" seemed more "adventurous radical chic" than his associations with PLO and SWAPO. Still, they felt that he may have seen these relationships as bridges to Black Diasporic communities that identified with *Negritude.* With the Dutch also concerned, the US State Department wondered if the time

was ripe for Indonesia to make overtures towards Senegal to wean its "flirtation with dissident elements."[62]

Without question, Senghor was sincere. Even Wole Soyinka—whose disagreements with Senghor were legendary—understood Senghor's solidarity with West Papua as being a "logical extension of his pan-*Negritude* convictions." For Soyinka, his "obsession with the mapping of the geography of the Black race" took him beyond the African Diaspora of the Americas to the Pacific. Wanting more clarity about struggles of the Black Pacific, he dispatched Carlos Moore to Melanesia. Soyinka claims the he reached the "earliest guerilla encampment of East Timor" and returned to Senegal with a report and photographs taken of his trip.[63]

Moore's path to the region took him through Fiji, where he was hosted by activists Claire Slatter and Vanessa Griffen. Both women were integral in the Pacific Women's Movement, the Nuclear Free and Pacific Movement, and Suva's Pacific People's Action Front (PPAF). They also published the PPAF's newsletter *Povai,* which provided timely and reliable information and analysis on the struggles of Pacific people. The paper's revolutionary content was directly gathered from indigenous struggles across New Caledonia, Australia, Hawaii, Tahiti, Micronesia, Vanuatu, East Timor, New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea. Its March/April 1976 issue included an article on West Papua, remarking how little was known about its "protracted guerilla war against Indonesia since 1965." The brief was based on information provided by Moore, anonymously described as an "outside source in contact" with the freedom fighters. *Povai* also printed an excerpt of a speech that the RPG's Foreign Minister Ben Tanggahma made in Colombo, Sri Lanka's 1976 Non-Aligned conference.[64]

The paper also discussed a February 1976 communiqué by Tanggahma that called on the international community to help both West Papua and East Timor fight against "Indonesian colonial aggression." Tanggahma told the Senegalese paper *Le Soleil* that he had been informed by telephone that Indonesia had bombed villages in the nationalist-controlled zone and killed over 1,600 people. Nationalists responded by killing over four hundred Indonesians, including two officers, and wounding more than eight hundred others. The communiqué denounced the "criminal action of the Indonesian junta and its neo-colonial satellite, Papua-New Guinea." Indeed, it revealed how Papua New Guinea's Foreign Minister Albert Maori Kiki stated that his government would cooperate with Indonesia and refuse sanctuary to the rebels.[65]

The pages of *Povai* demonstrate that Oceanic movements stood in solidarity with West Papua. This was clearly the case in Papua New Guinea, which had obtained independence in 1975 from Australia. *Povai* also described how in February 1976, two hundred students at the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) staged a demonstration march to the Indonesia Embassy in Port Moresby. They demanded that the Government supported West Papua and East Timor. These

issues were also raised by organizations such as the Women's Action Group, which held a protest against Indonesian imperialism in December 1975.[66]

Students at UPNG had long since expressed this support. By May 1969, its student newspaper *Nilaidat* had become a space of political education on the issue. The paper published an extensive special edition on the political, geographic, historical, economic, and social implications of West Papua. In May 1969, it published a letter that Kaisiepo had sent to the United Nations which described how, between 1965 and 1968, the Indonesian military bombarded West Papua with napalm, burned the houses of dissidents, and killed and tortured adults and children. Kaisiepo claimed that more than fifty thousand innocent men, women and children had been killed in West Papua.[67]

Nilaidat questioned Indonesia's motives surrounding the Act of Free Choice. Disturbed by the reports that Indonesia was bombing West Papua's highlands and sending warships to Biak, it found Indonesia's actions to be "depressingly reminiscent of Italy's enforced subjugation" of Ethiopia in 1936. Reported by *Nilaidat*, UPNG students held a daylong forum about the political and legal implications of the issue. It used the event to gather supplies for children of West Papuan refugees who had fled into Papua New Guinea.[68]

UPNG students also organized a march to the Australian Government house. Over five hundred marchers protested Australia's support of Indonesia, and the United Nations' refusal to assertively address Indonesia's violation of human rights in West Papua. At the Government house marchers sang songs such as "We Shall Overcome."[69] Leo Hannet, president of the UPNG Politics club, led the group. Communications from West Papua were sent directly to him, and he called on Papua New Guinea's spiritual leaders to express their moral support for their western neighbors.[70] Encouraged by West Papua and other issues on decolonization, Hannet and other UPNG students formed the Niugini Black Power Group—a Frantz Fanon–inspired "African Negritude" movement—in 1970.[71] This is only one example of how Melanesian activists embraced Negritude and Black Power in their Pacific struggles. Their references to Senghor and Senegal reflect how Africa played a conceptual and tangible role in these political relationships.

Tanghamma had directed the RPG's Dakar based office since 1975. During a press conference on its founding, the RPG informed media that Papuans were a Melanesian "sub-race of the Black Race." From Senegal, he popularized the West Papuan struggle. For example, he asked Wilkins and Mildred Bond Roxborough to invite him to the NAACP's 1976 national convention. This RPG sought the support of "a strong movement of Black Americans," as it believed that African Americans could influence US and UN policies on West Papuan sovereignty. Tanghamma also reached out to African heads of state. In March 1976, he met with the foreign minister of Ivory Coast and sent a message from Sumkorem to its President, Félix Houphouët-Boigny.[72]

According to the State Department, Tanggahma lived in a large house provided by the Senegalese government. The RPG's office staff included a second officer from West Papua, and Tanggahma told an informant that four more colleagues would arrive in the summer of 1976. He also maintained an exceptionally low profile; US and Dutch officials found him to be evasive. When US officials accidently encountered him in the SWAPO office, Tanggahma supposedly withdrew in confusion, saying he should not be in contact with diplomats. US officials read this as him trying to keep within the Senegalese government's restrictions placed on him. Whether true or not, his office was adjacent to the residence of the US embassy's communications and records assistant, leading the Department to confidently believe that opportunities "for substantive contact with embassy personnel could arise."[73]

Tanggahma had his own reasons to meet with US personnel. He had unsuccessfully hoped to meet with African American Congressman Charles Diggs during his 1976 visit to Dakar. In 1977, Tanghamma visited the US embassy. Stressing US official policy on human rights, he asked for moral and material support for the RPG. He shared with the US ambassador a memorandum, a letter for President Jimmy Carter and a sixty-page document detailing the case of West Papua. Tanghamma had just returned from an extensive trip to build relationships with Ghana, Liberia, Tanzania, and Mozambique. The ambassador responded gently without commitment.[74]

Unsurprisingly, Tanghamma found most of his support from Black spaces. In February 1976, a group of Black intellectuals, scholars, researchers, and scientists from across the Americas and Africa attended Dakar's Seminar for African Alternatives. Tanggahma attended the talks and described West Papua's political history within the context of its struggles against Indonesian and European enslavement and colonialism. In response, the Seminar released a *Declaration of Black Intellectuals and Scholars in Support of the People's Struggle of West Papua New Guinea and East Timor Against Indonesian Colonialism*. The document expressed alarm over the reports of Indonesia's "campaign of extermination" against the Melanesian populations of West Papua New Guinea and East Timor. It found it shocking that 165,000 West Papuan Blacks had been killed, imprisoned, or herded into strategic hamlets since 1965, and that 30,000 East Timorese were butchered by the Indonesia since its annexation of East Timor in 1975. It denounced the racist and genocidal acts that Indonesia had bought onto the 2.7 million Melanesians.[75]

The *Declaration* asserted that Melanesians were distinct national communities whose racial, historical, cultural, and political affinities with Africa and the Black world were "beyond question." It understood the armed struggles of West Papua and East Timor as being part of the struggles of all oppressed peoples in Africa, North America, the Caribbean, South America, the Pacific, Asia and the Middle East." It argued that by taking up arms against Indonesian oppression, the twenty thousand guerillas "shedding their blood in a silent isolated struggle" were

making a laudable contribution to the emancipation of the Black world. The Seminar resolved to "support to the utmost" the national liberation struggles of West Papua and East Timor. It expressed "unreserved fraternal solidarity" with their brothers: the RPG's National Liberation Army and President Rumkorem, and the Democratic Republic of East Timor's Revolutionary Armed Forces and President Francisco Xavier Do Amaral.[76]

Significantly, the Seminar expressed Indonesia's aggression from a perspective of class, power, and global economics. It considered Indonesia's expansion to be driven by the greed and self-interest of Jakarta's Javanese ruling class, which had also resulted in the deaths of the Indonesian people and was supported by global transnational companies that sought to loot Melanesia's mineral resources. The Seminar was convinced that "without the active mobilization of the Black peoples of Africa, the Caribbean, South America, North America and the Pacific," the "fascist Javanese junta" would be encouraged to enact further acts of genocide.[77]

The *Declaration* called on the Black nations of Africa, the Americas, and the Pacific and other "justice seeking nations" to support West Papua and East Timor. It called on the terrorized 125 million people of Indonesia, "now crushed under the merciless boots of a right wing fascist regime, to rise to their feet and contribute to their own national and social liberation" by aiding these states against a common enemy. It asked the United Nations, the OAU, the Organization of Non-Aligned Nations, the Organization of Afro-Asian Unity, the Arab league, and the Organization of African, Caribbean, and Pacific Nations to compel Indonesia to withdraw its armed forces from West Papua and East Timor.[78]

Interviewed by *Le Monde* during the Seminar, Tanggahma allegedly asserted that West Papuans needed to get rid of Indonesia's guardianship, which was "favorable to yellow supremacy, racist, expansionist, colonialist and fascist."[79] He gave a fascinating interview on the historic struggles of Melanesia to Carlos Moore and journalist Shwana Maglanbayan. Tanggahma defined Melanesians as part of the African family, sharing a common past and destiny with the Black world. He discussed the enslavement of Papuans in the Indian Ocean and Middle Eastern slave trade, enslaved "Black Philippinos" taken to Mexico by the Spanish, African migration into the Pacific, indigenous Black communities in Asia, and blackbirding.[80]

According to Tanggahma, the RPG's ideology was Melanesian nationalism. The Black peoples of Melanesia needed to "determine their own future, and work together with . . . the rest of the Black world to redeem Black peoples from" racial servitude. How would they defeat Indonesia, with its military might, while they had few weapons and material backing? For Tanggahma, this was "a question that our ancestors in New Guinea, in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific" must have repeatedly asked themselves "in the face of the invading White man." The only answer was "reliance on the courage, awakening and determination of our people to be free. . . . Reliance on the active and total support of the Black world."[81]

But was it this simple? For Tanggahma, West Papua had received much *sympathy* from the African Diaspora, but it needed "active solidarity" in the form of "concrete material and humanitarian aid." Senegal and Senghor lead the way in this regard.[82] Indeed, the RPG was convinced that if not for Senghor's humanitarianism, they might have been "erased from the face of the planet." He felt that the mere existence of an office in Dakar capable of denouncing "the crimes of Indonesia" had been undoubtedly instrumental in encouraging Sweden to accept West Papuan refugees.[83]

From the US State Department's perspective, the RPG's office in Senegal made strategic sense. While there, its representatives could be in proximity to Black organizers—and potential supporters—who were drawn to Dakar by *Negritude*. The Seminar only seemed to confirm this. As Bermuda's Pauulu Kamarakafego informed the *Black World* in 1976, Black internationalist meetings such as Atlanta's Congress of African Peoples (1970), Senegal's Seminar, 6PAC, and FESTAC were critical spaces of rediscovery between the Black Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Ocean worlds.[84]

Dakar's role as a hub for communication between liberation struggles *within* the South Pacific is striking. This reminds us how the roots and routes of Black internationalism spread across the Global South in ways both unexpected and predictable. The case of West Papua passes through Black communities living in the Harlems of the United States, Netherlands, and West Papua. The surveillance of the Global South speaks through the archives of Senegal, Netherlands, Indonesia, Australia, and the United States.

West Papua remains a colony of Indonesia. In 2010, the Free West Papua Campaign participated in Dakar's World Festival of Black Arts. In opening the Festival, Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade exclaimed that "West Papua is now an issue for all Black Africans." His comments also welcomed to Senegal the founder of the Free West Papua Campaign, Benny Wanda. It would be interesting to know: while Wanda seeks solidarity from Black communities across the Global South, to what extent are they still, if at all, "Blinded by Bandung?"[85]

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