

# 10

## **“WE HAVE A LOT OF NAMES LIKE GEORGE FLOYD”**

### **PAPUAN LIVES MATTER IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE**

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Inspired by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in the United States, the Papuan Lives Matter (PLM) movement emerged in the summer of 2020, around one year after racist incidents against West Papuans sparked protest and violence in East Java that spread to West Papua and other parts of Indonesia. This paper contextualizes the colonial and postcolonial history of West Papua through the lens of race in order to understand the emergence of PLM. Initially described by European explorers and then colonizers as “Black,” West Papuans—and Melanesians more broadly—came to embrace this designation in solidarity with African Americans, the African diaspora, and with Africa itself.<sup>1</sup> PLM is an extension of this solidarity, arising within the specific context of racism and discrimination in Indonesia.

West Papuans share many of the same grievances expressed by African Americans through BLM: a history of slavery that continues to influence their treatment; institutional and personal racism; disenfranchisement; structural conditions that keep them poorer than their fellow citizens; and violence at the hands of police, military, and security institutions that is often committed with

impunity.<sup>2</sup> The situation of West Papuans is complicated by their problematic incorporation into Indonesia in 1969, including the disenfranchisement of more than 99 percent of the population and the presence of separatist sentiment among a large portion of the population that desires independence from Indonesia. While the study of racism in the West has a long history, studies of racism in Asia are much rarer. Furthermore, as Indonesian anthropologist Veronika Kusumaryati notes, “the place of Black Melanesians in Asian Studies is still ambiguous, as they are not considered to be proper ‘Asians.’”<sup>3</sup> It is my hope that this brief article adds to these bodies of work. It should also be noted that many West Papuans embrace their Blackness as a given in their work; more of their voices would be a welcome addition to Asian studies.<sup>4</sup>

## Background

West Papua, under Indonesian control since 1962, is the western half of the island named Papua or New Guinea, the latter a name given to the island by Spanish explorers in the sixteenth century who decided that the inhabitants resembled those of Africa’s Guinea.<sup>5</sup> The Dutch called it “Nieuw Guinea,” the Indonesians “West Irian” and then “Irian Jaya” (“Glorious Irian”) before renaming it Papua in 1999. In 2003, Indonesia divided the region into two provinces, Papua and West Papua. I will refer to the region focused on in this essay as West Papua for simplicity.<sup>6</sup>

Prior to European contact in the sixteenth century, parts of West Papua were a source for slaves to the nearby sultanates of Tidore and Ternate, but most residents had little contact with outsiders. As other Europeans encroached, the Dutch asserted themselves, and West Papua eventually became part of the Dutch East Indies, ruled indirectly through the Sultan of Tidore. Dutch sovereignty, however, was tenuous.<sup>7</sup> Although slavery was banned in the Indies in 1863, it remained in practice into the twentieth century in West Papua and peripheral regions of the Dutch East Indies.<sup>8</sup> The border with the eastern half of the island, now Papua New Guinea, was formalized in 1884.<sup>9</sup>

The colonial administrative presence was light, and it was mostly missionaries who traveled to the interior. Beginning in the 1930s, the Dutch envisioned West Papua as a place for Eurasians or “Indos,” children of mixed Dutch and Indonesian parentage. Their position in the colonial hierarchy was threatened by the increase in Dutch immigration and the education of native Indonesians, and as the products of miscegenation, they were “problematic.” Dutch fascists also envisioned West Papua as a new homeland.<sup>10</sup> Attempts at transmigration and establishing farms mostly ended in failure, and the Japanese invasion during World War II ended the experiment.

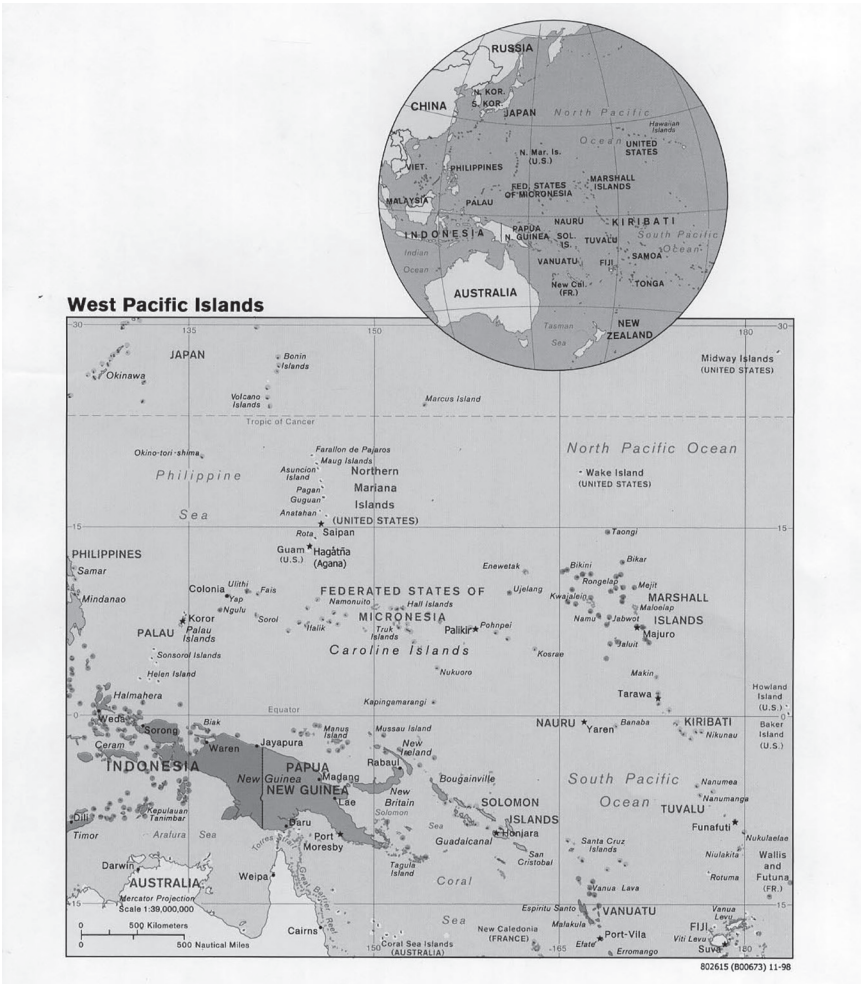


Figure 10.1. “West Pacific Islands.” Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency 1998, Print.

The Japanese occupation was brief, and the Allies fought and retook the territory with the help of Papuans, who captured or killed Japanese enthusiastically because of their harsh treatment and the rewards that were offered. Papuans saw African American soldiers working alongside whites, the first time they saw people with dark skin and hair like theirs in such positions, and it helped expose the lie of white supremacy—a justification for European colonialism—that the Dutch had promoted.<sup>11</sup> Of course, the segregated American armed services of the period were far from egalitarian (and remain so),<sup>12</sup> but it inspired Papuans.

In the series of talks between the Dutch and Indonesians during the revolution, a Papuan was present in an official capacity only at the Malino Conference in 1946.

Frans Kaisiepo, a Dutch-educated elite, originally favored the Dutch but soon converted to the Indonesian position and was rewarded by being named governor of the province in 1964. In subsequent conferences until independence in 1949, Papuans were sidelined, and their fate was left for others to determine. The Dutch and the Indonesians argued that because of the low overall levels of education and development, Papuans were unable to contribute meaningfully. Papuans have argued that Indonesia in 1949 shared these attributes following centuries of Dutch colonialism and that there existed a similar stratum of educated elites.

The fate of West Papua was to be settled in 1951; it was not. Indonesia's President Soekarno labeled West Papua "a colonial sword poised over the neck of Indonesia," and the issue contributed to the nationalization of Dutch assets.<sup>13</sup> Dutch political scientist Arend Lijphart described the "trauma of decolonization" that the Dutch felt over West Papua, losing the last vestige of empire, but they began programs to educate West Papuans and prepare them for self-government. The Dutch created political councils and trained police, bureaucrats, and a civil service and hoped that 90 to 95 percent of all civil service positions would be held by Papuans by 1970.<sup>14</sup> Yet, as Indonesia and Holland were in increasingly belligerent conflict, the United States came to favor the Indonesian position (to court Soekarno), and Papuans remained left out of discussions about their fate.

In 1962, as the civil rights movement was gaining ground in the United States following the "Freedom Rides" one year earlier, West Papua's fate was handed to Indonesia, albeit nominally under a United Nations transition and with the promise of a plebiscite. But the UN was sidelined, and "Indonesianization" began rapidly. Papuan civil servants were dismissed and replaced, Papuan police were confined to barracks, political expression that was not explicitly pro-Indonesia was forbidden, and Papuan nationalists were imprisoned, tortured, and murdered. Soekarno withdrew from the UN over confrontation with Malaysia, and he abrogated the decision to hold a referendum, arguing that there was no need because Papuans wanted to be Indonesian—a non-Papuan speaking for West Papuans.

After Suharto's rise in 1965 (and Indonesia's turn to the West), he assented to an "Act of Free Choice" to be held in 1969. The referendum was a stage-managed sham by all accounts. The UN representatives were made fools, and Cold War appeasement won out again.<sup>15</sup> Just 1,022 Papuans out of an estimated population of 800,000 were selected by Indonesia to vote, and those who spoke out were intimidated, imprisoned, or killed with impunity.<sup>16</sup> The sham results were unanimous for integration with Indonesia. Thus the "Act of Free Choice"—certainly an "act," though definitely not "free" nor an exercise of "choice"—denied self-determination and possibly independence to West Papuans, but the international community had its "referendum," and the region's fate was sealed.

In 1965, one year before the Black Panthers took up arms in self-defense in the United States—and created self-help social programs in the face of apathy or hostility from the American state—armed separatism emerged in West Papua, although some Papuans had been pro-Indonesia all along and others were swayed to join the pro-Indonesia side for opportunistic reasons. Many pro-Indonesia Papuans, including the territory's first governor, reversed course, however, when they saw how Papuans were being treated and the policies that sent Indonesians to settle West Papua. Nationalist symbols, such as the *Bintang Kejora* (Morning Star) flag, were banned, and cultural expression was curtailed. Papuans have held that cultural differences also support their claims for self-determination. For example, Papuans are predominantly Christian while Indonesians are Muslim. As Octovianus Mote and Danilyn Rutherford argue, Indonesians were enamored with West Papua's wealth—the world's largest open-pit gold mine and second-largest copper mine are in West Papua—but not its people.<sup>17</sup>

Indonesia's logic, which held that in 1969, Papuans had to choose representatives to vote for them because they were uneducated, was ignored in the presidential election just two years later. Some 379,531 West Papuans voted in the 1971 national elections for Indonesia. Yet rather than reflecting the enfranchisement of the Voting Rights Act just six years prior in the United States, this election was also a farce; every representative elected was from Suharto's political vehicle, Golkar.<sup>18</sup> Subsequent elections were similarly rigged, essentially disenfranchising Papuans. Yet the idea that West Papuans are unable to participate fully in voting persists among some, just as some in the United States are promoting laws specifically designed to disenfranchise African Americans and other minorities, something that BLM is fighting. When observers in the Carter Center delegation, who had been sent to monitor the 2004 Indonesian presidential election, wanted to include a section in the report that noted, similar to Aceh, the overwhelming military presence and intimidation in the region, former US ambassador to Indonesia John Monjo blurted out, "For god's sake, they're naked!" His statement raised more than a few eyebrows.

West Papuans viewed the reforms associated with Indonesian democratization that began in 1998—as well as the referendum that led to Timor-Leste's independence—with optimism. The ban on the *Bintang Kejora* was lifted, and the press was freer—for a while. The Papuan Presidium Council was formed, and leaders went to Jakarta, where even those presumed to be pro-Indonesia requested a referendum on independence. Theys Eluay, a traditional chief and a former Golkar politician and Suharto loyalist, emerged as a unifying figure for West Papuans. His assassination at the hands of Indonesian security personnel in November 2001 was viewed by many as a death knell for the resurgent demand for a referendum. Subsequent reforms have been mostly symbolic.

## Papuan “Blackness” and Global Connectedness

Papuans have long identified as Black, and Black movements have long sought to identify with Papuans and Melanesians more generally, including with claims of a shared African ancestry and diaspora.<sup>19</sup> Seeing African American soldiers in World War II stoked this sentiment. In the period between 1949 and 1962, Papuans used this identity to lobby for support for their independence.

Papuans’ “race” had been debated for centuries prior to this, including by preeminent thinkers such as Alfred Russel Wallace, whose Wallace Line drew a distinction between flora and fauna but whose racial line was a few islands eastward, differentiating Sumba, Flores, Timor, and Papua from the rest of the Indonesian archipelago. In the colonial era, anthropologists argued over racial distinctions, and often, classification came down to the impressions of individual surveyors that included assumptions about mental and moral capacities.<sup>20</sup> Classifying Papuans as inferior was a convenient *ex post facto* justification for their slavery, including “blackbirding,” or taking Papuans captive to work in Australia and elsewhere.<sup>21</sup>

Despite being left out of the negotiations about their future, between 1949 and 1962, Papuan nationalists lobbied for recognition, especially in Africa. Nicolaas Jouwe published *Voice of the Negroids in the Pacific to the Negroids throughout the World* in April 1962, after US Attorney General Robert Kennedy visited Jakarta and support for the Dutch position was crumbling. The pamphlet asserts Papuans’ separate identity from Indonesia as well as their right to self-determination, and it notes the presence of elected councils throughout the territory. It appeals for support from other “Negroid” countries and includes an open letter to Ethiopian leader Haile Selassie, with copies sent to several other African countries. It also includes a copy of a telegraph sent to US President John F. Kennedy, condemning his brother’s remarks calling Papuans backward during his trip to Jakarta.

The Papuan position put some postcolonial nations in a bind. Some, in the spirit of the 1955 Bandung Conference, found it hard to criticize the Indonesian position. Because some Papuan nationalists identified with the Dutch, and the Dutch were still in control of the territory, some viewed Papuans as colonial puppets. Although identifying with African and Black movements was an attempt to build solidarity, it also allowed racists to view Papuans as they viewed Black people in general: unable to govern themselves, or even as “sons of Ham.”<sup>22</sup> Despite common Indonesian portrayals of Papuans as primitive, Representative to the UN Sudjarwo mocked the Dutch, stating, “It may, in fact, be asked: what kind of racial links have the Dutch with the West Irians (sic)? Certainly, I look much more like a West Irian or Papuan than do my Dutch friends!”<sup>23</sup> Portraying himself as Papuan, Major J. Diamara of the Indonesian Defense Council submitted to the United Nations a document addressed to “all the peoples of Africa” that “West Irian is an integral part of Indonesia”—another case of an Indonesian speaking for Papuans.<sup>24</sup>

Although some African countries voiced support for West Papua, nobody who determined their fate paid Papuans much attention. The African American press reported on events, including a visit by Jouwe, but the mainstream American press portrayed the Papuans as primitive headhunters and cannibals.<sup>25</sup> Despite the “Act of Free Choice,” West Papuan nationalists raised the *Bintang Kejora* and declared independence on July 1, 1971, lobbying for support in Africa and among African Americans, including from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).<sup>26</sup> West Papuans continue this lobbying, including with the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, whose former chair, Eni Faleomavaega, a nonvoting member from American Samoa, was a staunch supporter of West Papuan self-determination before his death in 2017. In 2004, the CBC and Faleomavaega submitted letters to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, asking her to review the “Act of Free Choice” and quoting Nelson Mandela.<sup>27</sup> In 2010, Faleomavaega and others urged the Obama administration to prioritize West Papua, and that same year, West Papuans and other activists and academics spoke to the Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment about abuses in West Papua.<sup>28</sup>

## Contemporary Racism toward Papuans

Although one Dutch official portrayed Papuans as “sweet, timid,”<sup>29</sup> by far the predominant portrayals of Papuans include “stupid,” “dirty,” “lazy,” “vicious,” “hostile,” and “savage,” their land “godforsaken.”<sup>30</sup> They “lived like wild beasts, had no religion, nor kings and superiors, lived from their land, ate pigs, etc.”<sup>31</sup> Ligia Giay shows how “native informants,” predominantly Moluccan, established the initial stereotypes that became fixed and intertextual.<sup>32</sup> Colonial portrayals of other natives frequently used these stereotypes, in part to justify the colonial project and the duty to “uplift” their subjects.

Yet these stereotypes persist. I have heard educated Indonesians say they cannot be racist because Indonesia is a postcolonial society, yet they have referred to Papuans using these stereotypes, justified by the low economic indicators in West Papua.<sup>33</sup> Papuans are referred to as “pigs,” “dogs,” “monkeys,” and other dehumanizing slurs, as noted in the African American press.<sup>34</sup> Papuans’ Blackness is enough for Indonesian landlords to reject them as potential renters.<sup>35</sup>

Portrayals of Papuans in popular culture reflect these stereotypes. Images of the “typical” inhabitants of the thirty-four provinces of Indonesia include West Papuans in *koteka*, or penis gourds. Although worn by some members of predominantly highland groups, they are not reflective of the traditional garb of the entire region. However, the image works to reinforce these stereotypes in the classrooms of Indonesia outside of West Papua.<sup>36</sup> Predominantly Muslim Indonesians view the *koteka* as immodest and a sign of backwardness, offensive



along with Papuans' consumption of pork, both of which become fodder for jokes. These repeated images turn all Papuans into *koteka*-wearing "savages." In 1971, Indonesia launched "Operation Koteka" to get highland Papuans to wear pants and dresses; it failed.<sup>37</sup> The portrayals of Papuans as lazy or stupid can be internalized by West Papuans, leading to low self-esteem.<sup>38</sup>

The historical section noted the absence of Papuan voices in determining their future; this voicelessness continues. Following the outbreak of violence in August 2019, most of the mass media in Indonesia reporting on it—and its causes—included interviews with non-Papuan officials, the military, and the police. In the context of PLM, one analysis of Indonesian media conducted by faculty of Universitas Udayana showed that although images of West Papuans continue to propagate stereotypes, some media claim that there is no racism toward West Papua because the region is sent special autonomy funding, an assertion that makes no sense.<sup>39</sup> One has to look at foreign sources to hear Papuan voices on the unrest and PLM.

Political representation has proved problematic as well. Soekarno appointed an Ambonese, Zainal Abidin Syah, as governor-in-exile in 1956, who was succeeded by a Javanese, Pamoedji (1961–1963). Elias Bonay, the first governor of West Irian, was Papuan, but he was removed after eighteen months for criticizing Indonesian transmigration. But in 1973, Suharto began appointing Sundanese and Javanese military officers as governors. The provinces have Papuan governors now, but outsiders remain in positions of influence, especially the military.

In the latest offering to mollify Papuans, Jakarta named Singgerei Rumagesan a national hero in 2020. Although he lived in Papua for a time, Rumagesan was Seramese and Moluccan. As a local king selected by the Dutch, he tried to forcefully convert Christians to Islam, was later imprisoned and exiled by the Dutch, and raised a militia to fight for West Papua's integration with Indonesia. National heroes are meant to epitomize an element of Indonesian history, such as nationalist struggle. In conversations with politically active Papuans, none knew who Rumagesan was nor that he was declared a national hero from Papua.<sup>40</sup>

West Papuans—including religious figures—continue to be arrested, tortured, and murdered with impunity by Indonesian military and police personnel. A recent event was eerily similar to the murder of George Floyd. Following a disagreement in a food stall between West Papuan Steven Yadohamang and the proprietor, two uniformed air force officers accosted Yadohamang, wrestling him to the ground while one put his boot on his head to restrain him. Like Floyd, the abuse was filmed and disseminated. Though not fatal, the media made the connection to Floyd, and the government apologized and dismissed the officers.<sup>41</sup> Given the environment of impunity for abuses in West Papua in general, one wonders if the case would be known were there not cell phone video.



Yet even if filmed, other cases, including death at the hands of the police, do not guarantee justice. In May of 2020, a West Papuan laborer named Marius Betera was beaten by a police officer, an act also captured on video. Yet the coroner's report was suspiciously inconclusive, and the police went on a social media offensive to deny responsibility, labeling the accusation a "hoax."<sup>42</sup> It is much easier to find cases such as this than Yadohamang's, given the environment of impunity, or even cases where the police brag that their violence is legitimate.<sup>43</sup> "In Papua, we have a lot of names like George Floyd," stated Elvira Rumkabu, a lecturer at Jayapura's Cendrawasih University.<sup>44</sup> On police abuse, Benny Wenda, the president of the United Liberation Movement for West Papua, remarked, "There is no difference between what happens to African Americans in the US and what happens to West Papuans."<sup>45</sup> Although the situation with West Papuans in Indonesia reflects local political and social contexts, the African American experience continues to be a touchstone.

## Papuan Lives Matter

Papuan Lives Matter emerged as a hashtag after the death of George Floyd and nearly a year after the incidents of racist violence directed at West Papuans in Indonesia, starting at a university in East Java in August 2019. Reacting to a perceived slight, Javanese students—soon joined by security forces as well as militia groups—attacked West Papuans in their dormitories. The violence quickly spread to West Papua and other areas in Indonesia. Images of the protests saturated Indonesian media for weeks and led to violence, arrests, and killings. The hashtag spread, and so did the use of PLM signs at demonstrations. Some West Papuans wrote "monkey" on themselves to draw attention to the racism, and the use of the *Bintang Kejora* was also widespread. PLM is drawing attention to the structural racism directed at West Papuans in Indonesia, complicated by the situation in West Papua itself.

Although there are people who speak on behalf of PLM, it is similar to BLM in that it is amorphous. The availability of cell phones enables images of abuse as well as demonstrations to spread rapidly. Assa Aso, an activist and member of the National Committee for West Papua, stated, "We have studied digital movements. We realize that it's not enough to encourage people to join the protest but also to let people outside know what we are doing, and then they feel involved. When the news spreads to the international community, we feel satisfied."<sup>46</sup> In a tacit acknowledgement of the power of new media, the Indonesian government shuts down the internet in West Papua during periods of unrest, employs disinformation campaigns, and uses "troll farms" to attack West Papuans' messages. Activists skirt the shutdowns through connections at hotels with their own satellite internet service.<sup>47</sup>

Indonesia has been undergoing democratization since 1998 and has made tremendous progress with regard to freedom of expression, including protest. In West Papua, this freedom is suppressed, making Papuans question their place in Indonesia—are they full citizens? Why, then, is the government denying them the rights it extends to other Indonesians? Why the double standard? Immigration from more densely populated regions of Indonesia to West Papua is also stoking resentment—and fears that West Papuans will soon be a minority in their own land.

Papuan activists and journalists have also capitalized on the interest stoked by PLM to spread their message, and stories have appeared in online and mainstream media in the United States, Great Britain, Australia, and around the world. BLM activists in the United States have displayed *Bintang Kejora* flags in solidarity with West Papua and have told Papuan activists with PLM placards that they should just use Black Lives Matter—an acknowledgement of shared Blackness and experience despite the unique context of the West Papuan struggle.<sup>48</sup>

In West Papua itself, little has changed despite the campaign. PLM is known and respected, but as one confidential source told me, “People who want to make change are doing so by joining NGOs and organizations that provide relief for Papuans,” including combating what he described as a racially motivated lack of distribution of COVID aid to ethnic Papuans, similar to BLM claims in the United States.<sup>49</sup> Among many Indonesians, there is an unwillingness to admit that racism exists.<sup>50</sup> Yet others are more sanguine. Runkabu noted that although there is resistance from conservative and older Indonesians, younger Indonesians are more willing to discuss race and express solidarity with Papuans. PLM, she stated, has opened a much-needed dialogue about race in Indonesia.<sup>51</sup>

## Conclusion

This essay has explored the similarities of experience and circumstance of West Papuans to African Americans in the United States, including slavery, disenfranchisement, economic exploitation, political marginalization, lack of representation, and institutional and structural racism. It also shows the influence that African Americans have had in West Papua. West Papuans continue to draw inspiration from civil rights and African American movements in the United States, connected by shared Blackness and “a sense of common oppression and painful collective memories,”<sup>52</sup> and they continue to lobby for support.

Originally denigrated for the color of their skin, West Papuans (and Melanesians more broadly) have embraced the term “Melanesia” and are actively working to “re-present” themselves in the context of a proud Blackness. The long history of internalized racism due to racist representation means that the “challenges for re-presenting Melanesia are therefore not just socioeconomic

but epistemological.”<sup>53</sup> West Papuans’ identification with Blackness is one way to challenge old representations, and it “demonstrates that the global Black movement has been responded to locally and is shaped by the productions of Black epistemologies.”<sup>54</sup>

The current situation in West Papua has been shaped by colonial history, Cold War realism, and contemporary Indonesian, regional, and international politics. Traditionally, the political discontent in West Papua has been blamed on factors such as the economy or low levels of development. The shocking racist violence of 2019 and the emergence of PLM, however, may reframe the issue. Rumkabu notes that PLM “has highlighted the most fundamental problem of the Papuan conflict, which is racism.”<sup>55</sup> Whether PLM will be successful in the long term at getting Indonesians to acknowledge the racism that exists there toward Papuans and spur significant and positive change remains to be seen, but it appears to be sparking conversation—the first step. Perhaps it will also provoke those of us who study Asia to more deeply interrogate how race and racism fit into our work and acknowledge the marginalized minorities who are frequently overlooked.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Melanesia is a region in the Pacific that includes Papuans, and the term originates from the Greek for “black.” The term differentiates Melanesians from Polynesians and Micronesians. It is the only region in Oceania designated for the perceived color of its inhabitants’ skin, and the name was given to reflect European opinions of racial hierarchy, which considered Polynesians and Micronesians more developed. Tarcisius Kabutaulaka, “Re-Presenting Melanesia: Ignoble Savages and Melanesian Alter-Natives,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 27, no. 1 (2015): 110, 116.

<sup>2</sup> Amnesty International, “‘Don’t Bother, Just Let Him Die’: Killing with Impunity in West Papua,” (2018), <https://www.amnesty.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Dont-Bother-Just-let-Him-Die.pdf>. I am in no way trying to compare the suffering of two persecuted peoples in order to weigh which is worse, and I am well aware that, should the comparison include other marginalized peoples in other regions, we would also find similarities. Although each person’s suffering is unique, patterns of cruelty nonetheless exist, reflecting power, position, status, and perceptions of race.

<sup>3</sup> Veronika Kusukaryati, “#Papuanlivesmatter: Black Consciousness and Political Movements in West Papua,” *Critical Asian Studies* 53, no. 4 (2021): 456.

<sup>4</sup> Under Suharto’s New Order, discussions of race and ethnicity were banned in the name of harmony, but this ban effectively silenced West Papuans and others who wished to draw attention to racism.

<sup>5</sup> Melanesians were also called “niggers.” Gerald Horne, *The White Pacific: U.S. Imperialism and Black Slavery in the South Seas* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2007): 12; 134. This is, of course, not the first time Europeans looked at newly encountered, soon-to-

be-conquered people, and decided that they resembled some other group: just ask the “Indians” of North America.

<sup>6</sup> West Papuan anthropology PhD student Ligia Giay notes that, “The usage of the term Papuans as an umbrella term for all native inhabitants of the present day Radjaampat Islands and the western-half (sic) of New Guinea is problematic on account of the diversities of ethnicities and culture in the area.” Ligia Giay, “Native Informants and the Construction of Stereotypes of Papuans in the 17th–18th Century” (MA Thesis, University of Leiden, 2014), 2 (fn 2).

<sup>7</sup> Danilyn Rutherford, “Laughing at Leviathan: John Furnivall, Dutch New Guinea, and the Ridiculousness of Colonial Rule,” in *Southeast Asia over Three Generations (Essays Presented to Benedict R. O’G. Anderson)*, eds. James T. Siegel and Audrey R. Kahin (Ithaca: Cornell University, Southeast Asia Program, 2003), 50–78.

<sup>8</sup> Quito Swan, “Blinded by Bandung? Illuminating West Papua, Senegal, and the Black Pacific,” *Radical History Review*, 131 (2018): 62. Gerald Horne describes how hundreds of thousands of Pacific Islanders and Melanesians were “blackbirded” or captured as slave labor and shipped to Australia, Fiji, and elsewhere, where they faced devastating death tolls. Papuans were preferred because of their ability to learn English. As an Australian cleric noted, “It is a remarkable thing . . . that just in the decade that the terrible American Civil War . . . the traffic in Papuan savages arose.” Horne, *The White Pacific*, 2, 33.

<sup>9</sup> After World War I, Australia governed the entire region until its independence in 1975.

<sup>10</sup> C. L. M. Penders, *The West New Guinea Debacle: Dutch Decolonization and Indonesia, 1945–1962* (Adelaide: Crawford House, 2002), 56–57; Arend Lijphart, *The Trauma of Decolonization: The Dutch and West New Guinea* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 79–81.

<sup>11</sup> Penders, *West New Guinea*, 89–90. Yosua R. Mansoben, personal interview, August 5, 2006, Abepura, West Papua.

<sup>12</sup> James Burk and Evelyn Espinoza, “Race Relations within the US Military,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 38 (2012): 401–22.

<sup>13</sup> Soekarno, “Major Address by President Sukarno to the Fifteenth United Nations General Assembly, New York, 30 September 1960. NST 1327/60, Pidato Presiden, Arsip 223” (Jakarta: Indonesian National Archives, 1960).

<sup>14</sup> Penders, *West New Guinea*, 390–92.

<sup>15</sup> John Saltford, *The United Nations and the Indonesian Takeover of West Papua, 1962–1969: The Anatomy of Betrayal* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 98–120.

<sup>16</sup> This is counting the entire population of West Papua at the time, reflecting an estimate, and not those who would have been deemed eligible to vote. In Indonesian national elections in 1971, 379,531 Papuans voted.

<sup>17</sup> Octovianus Mote and Danilyn Rutherford, “From Irian Jaya to Papua: The Limits of Primordialism in Indonesia’s Troubled East” *Indonesia*, 72 (2001): 122.

<sup>18</sup> Biro Humas Komisi Pemilihan Umum. *Pemilu Indonesia Dalam Angka dan Fakta Tahun 1955–1999*. Jakarta: Biro Human Komisi Pemilihan Umum, 2000.

<sup>19</sup> According to W. E. B. Du Bois, one could trace “the African black from the great lakes of Africa to Melanesia.” Swan, “Blinded,” 62. Despite sharing the island and whatever personal sympathies its residents may have, Papua New Guinea has supported Indonesia politically with regard to West Papuan claims for self-determination. Kusumaryati, “#Papuanlivesmatter,” 462.

<sup>20</sup> Fenneke Sysling, “The Human Wallace Line: Racial Science and Political Afterlife,” *Medical History* 63, no. 3 (2019): 314–329.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 318. Gerald Horne has written an expansive account of Melanesian slavery in the Pacific entitled *The White Pacific*.

<sup>22</sup> David Webster, “Race, Identity and Diplomacy in the Papua Decolonization Struggle, 1949–1962,” in *Race, Ethnicity and the Cold War: A Global Perspective*, ed. Philip Muehlenbeck (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012); Horne, *The White Pacific*, 22.

<sup>23</sup> Sysling, “The Human Wallace Line,” 328.

<sup>24</sup> Swan, “Blinded,” 62. Statements of support for Indonesia delivered to the UN purportedly written by Papuans were predominantly written by immigrants to the region. Socrates Sofyan Yoman, “Injustice and Historical Falsehood: Integration of the Territory of Papua into Indonesia in 1969,” in *Comprehending West Papua*, eds. Peter King, Jim Elmslie, and Camellia Webb-Gannon (Sydney: Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, the University of Sydney, 2011): 116.

<sup>25</sup> Swan, “Blinded,” 65–67. This section of Swan’s article paints a stark juxtaposition between portrayals of West Papuans in the Black and mainstream presses.

<sup>26</sup> The NAACP wrote to the UN in 1969 to protest the “Act of Free Choice.” Kusumaryati, “#Papuanlivesmatter,” 456.

<sup>27</sup> The East Timor and Indonesia Action Network, “Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Joins with Faleomavaega in Urging U.S. Secretary of State and UN Secretary General to Support West Papua’s Right to Self-Determination” (2005), <https://etan.org/news/2005/03blkcau.htm>.

<sup>28</sup> The East Timor and Indonesia Action Network, “50 Members of U.S. Congress Call Upon Obama Administration to Make West Papua One of Its Highest Priorities” (2010), <https://etan.org/news/2010/08faleo.htm>; “Crimes Against Humanity: When Will Indonesia’s Military be Held Accountable for Deliberate and Systematic Abuses in West Papua?” Hearing before the Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, September 22, 2010, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-111hhr58430/html/CHRG-111hhr58430.htm>.

<sup>29</sup> Rutherford, “Laughing,” 63.

<sup>30</sup> An NPR story on Carl Hoffman’s book *Savage Harvest* (New York: William Morrow, 2014), a sensationalist and speculative look at the death of Michael Rockefeller that itself perpetuates these stereotypes, emphasized the region’s headhunting as though it remained widespread. “A Tragic Disappearance (Mostly) Solved in ‘Savage Harvest,’” NPR Weekend Edition, (2014), <https://www.npr.org/2014/03/15/289828793/a-tragic-disappearance->

mostly-solved-in-savage-harvest. See also Maile Arvin, "The Polynesian Problem and its Genomic Solutions," *Native American and Indigenous Studies* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 27–56.

<sup>31</sup> Leupe, in Giay, "Native Informants," 30.

<sup>32</sup> Giay, "Native Informants," 2.

<sup>33</sup> These reflect, however, exploitation at the hands of Indonesians, including migrants, as well as foreign corporations such as Freeport McMoRan. The economy is controlled by outsiders, and Papuans are marginalized. Ikrar Nusa Bhakti, "A New Kind of Self-Determination in Papua: The Choice Between Independence and Autonomy," in *Violent Internal Conflicts in Asia Pacific: Histories, Political Economies and Policies*, ed. Dewi Fortuna Anwar, et al. (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2005), 227–228.

<sup>34</sup> David Love, "Monkeys, Dogs, and Pigs': After Years of Racial Abuse, Genocide, West Papuans Continue to Fight for Freedom from Indonesia," *Atlanta Black Star*, September 2, 2019, <https://atlantablackstar.com/2019/09/02/monkeys-dogs-and-pigs-after-years-of-racial-abuse-genocide-west-papuans-continue-fight-for-freedom-from-indonesia/>.

<sup>35</sup> Ashley Westerman, Ryan Benk, David Greene, "In 2020, Protests Spread Across the Globe with a Similar Message: Black Lives Matter," National Public Radio, December 30, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/12/30/950053607/in-2020-protests-spread-across-the-globe-with-a-similar-message-black-lives-matt>.

<sup>36</sup> For representations of Melanesians more broadly, see Kabutaulaka, "Re-Presenting," 118–119.

<sup>37</sup> Note the similarity with settler colonialism's attempt to change culture and even "breed out" indigeneity. Arvin, "The Polynesian Problem," 36.

<sup>38</sup> Elvira Romkabu, personal interview, December 20, 2021.

<sup>39</sup> Ni Luh Putu Murni Oktaviani, I Gusti Agung Alit Suryawati, Ni Made Ras Amanda Gengel, "Konstruksi Realitas Isu Papuan Lives Matter di Media Online," *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 1, no. 2 (2021), <https://ojs.unud.ac.id/index.php/komunikasi/article/view/73760>.

<sup>40</sup> W. F., personal communication, August 12, 2021; J. H., personal communication, July 11, 2021. I am using initials to protect the identity of these sources as they live in West Papua and could face retaliation for statements deemed critical of Indonesia. Octovianus Mote, personal communication, August 8, 2021.

<sup>41</sup> Ezra Sihite, "Anggota TNI AU Injak Kepala Warga Papua, Tragedi George Floyd Diungkit," July 28, 2021. Viva.co.id, <https://www.viva.co.id/berita/nasional/1390830-anggota-tni-au-injak-kepala-warga-papua-tragedi-george-floyd-diungkit>.

<sup>42</sup> The Gecko Project and Mongabay, "'Potentially Lethal' Police Assault on indigenous Papuan Man was Caught on Camera," *Mongabay*, October 27, 2020, <https://news.mongabay.com/2020/10/potentially-lethal-police-assault-on-indigenous-papuan-man-was-caught-on-camera/>.

<sup>43</sup> Marni Cordell, "Australia Trained Indonesia Police Officer Accused of West Papua Violence," *The Guardian*, August 2, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/03/australia-trained-indonesian-police-officer-accused-of-west-papua-violence>.

<sup>44</sup> Krithika Varagur, “Black Lives Matter in Indonesia, too,” *Foreign Policy*, June 16, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/06/16/black-lives-matter-papua-indonesia/>.

<sup>45</sup> “ULMWP Calls for Suspension of Indonesia from UN Rights Council over Assault on Deaf Papuan,” *Asia Pacific Report*, July 31, 2021, <https://asiapacificreport.nz/2021/07/31/ulmwp-calls-for-suspension-of-indonesia-from-un-rights-group-over-deaf-man-assault/>.

<sup>46</sup> Febriana Firdaus, “The Silent Song,” Rest of World.com, <https://restofworld.org/2021/the-silent-song/>.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Lisabeth Ryder, founder, West Papua Action Network USA, personal communication, August 13, 2021.

<sup>49</sup> W. F., personal communication, August 12, 2021. Jenny Munro has noted that “technocratic racism” and a “settler colonial context” have worked to exclude Papuans from HIV prevention work in the region. Jenny Munro, “Global HIV Interventions and Technocratic Racism in a West Papuan NGO,” *Medical Anthropology* 39, no. 80 (2020): 716.

<sup>50</sup> Kusumaryati, “#Papuanlivesmatter,” 456.

<sup>51</sup> Elvia Rumkabu, personal communication, December 20, 2021.

<sup>52</sup> Rumkabu in Kusumaryati, “#Papuanlivesmatter,” 465–466.

<sup>53</sup> Kabutaulaka, “Re-Presenting,” 110.

<sup>54</sup> Kusumaryati, “#Papuanlivesmatter,” 456.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 470.

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