

*“More than a Music, It’s a Movement”:
West Papua Decolonization Songs, Social
Media, and the Remixing of Resistance*¹

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Since 2010, in the southwest Pacific Islands there has been an outpouring of decolonization songs.² This music expresses solidarity with West Papuans’ struggle for independence from Indonesia—through lyrical texts and also by implication in the artists’ choice of musical style. Increasingly, local supporters of West Papuans’ self-determination have been creating do-it-yourself (DIY) videos to accompany these songs, which they circulate on the Internet, mostly via YouTube and Facebook. Mostly unprofessionalized, this corpus of songs and song-video mash-ups (hereafter, “song-videos”) can be considered the southwest Pacific region’s dominant medium of popular political dissent in support of the Free West Papua movement. Previously, Pacific Islanders had occasionally composed and recorded songs of colonial defiance (Webb-Gannon, Webb, and Solis 2018). This movement is different, however, since it involves a substantial number of songs, most of which circulate in amateur or fan-produced video form. Moreover, the songs have emanated from all of Melanesia’s culturally diverse nation-states and, quite recently, from Indigenous Australian and Aotearoa/New Zealand musicians as well.³

This recent surge of songs and videos results from a concatenation of linguistic, musical, technological, economic, and political factors, whereby the creative application of globally circulating digital tools, such as social media and video-sharing sites, has resonated with traditional, preexisting Melanesian practices of borrowing and exchanging songs and dances, which in the past were considered prestige trade goods. In short, what we identify and examine in this paper are products of an Oceanian remix culture that creatively recombines components of various musical genres, languages, and image content and that operates almost entirely informally,

that is, outside the various local Melanesian mass-media channels. We propose that this remix culture has transformed a set of West Papua songs expressing resistance to Indonesian colonization into an Oceania-wide wave of support for West Papua's decolonization.

We begin by outlining the struggle for independence in West Papua and its links with reinvigorated regional consciousness in western Oceania. Next, we propose that Free West Papua songs and song-videos continue long-standing practices associated with Melanesian participatory cultures of song and dance, and we lay out the ways that we will engage the concept of remix (defined in a later section) in an attempt to understand some of the meanings of this musical phenomenon for Melanesians and other Oceanians. Following this is an analytical overview of a corpus of fifty songs that considers aspects of musical genre; song text language ideologies, discourses, and tropes; and the content and aesthetics of the videos that have been attached to the songs. We conclude by proposing that the remix phenomenon shaping the digital musical expression of solidarity for West Papuans has had a significant bidirectional impact, both culturally and politically. West Papuans have been reenergized by the display of political-musical solidarity from both amateur and professional Oceanian musicians, and we suggest that remixed media in support of the decolonization of West Papua has contributed to a renewed anticolonial Melanesianism and a more inclusive Pasifikanism.

WEST PAPUA'S DECOLONIZATION, MELANESIANISM, AND PASIFIKANISM

West Papua, the territory comprising the western half of the island of New Guinea, was invaded by Indonesia in 1962–1963 after its Dutch colonizers assured West Papuans that they would be granted independent nation-statehood. Since then, the Indonesian government and military have stood accused not only of widespread environmental despoliation in West Papua but also of the incarceration, rape, torture, and rampant killing of an unknowable number of West Papuans who have resisted its colonization agenda (Webb-Gannon and Elmslie 2014). Since 1964, West Papuans have campaigned for independence from Indonesia. Both the conflict and plight of the people involved were ignored globally for decades, except during the years surrounding Papua New Guinea's (PNG) and Vanuatu's independence (1975 and 1980, respectively), when a counter-colonial Melanesian Way discourse began to circulate and gain popular support.

This discourse, developed by PNG lawyer and intellectual Bernard Narokobi and expanded on by Walter Lini, Vanuatu’s inaugural prime minister, emphasized solidarity among Melanesian countries and territories. It included a mild critique of Western political and cultural hegemony in the Pacific region while also celebrating pan-Melanesianism (Narokobi 1983; Premdas 1987), or what Lini called a “Melanesian Renaissance” (1983, 6). During this period, there was an early groundswell of support for West Papua’s decolonization among Melanesian solidarity groups, including from PNG activist organization Melsol, which was launched in 1984 at the University of Papua New Guinea, but this subsided in subsequent decades, largely due to political inertia at the PNG state level.

However, in recent years, the Free West Papua resistance movement has gained considerable global support, particularly among the populations of West Papua’s fellow Melanesian states (Webb-Gannon and Elmslie 2014; see also Hernawan 2017, 352–353). This new Melanesianism is characterized by a political tone that is proud and at times defiant, and it is accompanied by a shift in musical-style choice and lyrical content and reinforced by image content that can be graphic in nature. In earlier decades, songs promoting Melanesian nationalisms and regionalism were mostly cast in an easygoing island-reggae or string-band idiom; more recently, they have begun to employ the more overtly political forms of (localized) roots reggae and socially conscious rap, often incorporating precontact indigenous musical elements as well (Webb and Webb-Gannon 2016).

Independence politics has been reenergized by social- and citizen-media content emerging from West Papua on the issue of decolonization (Robie 2016; Titifanue and others 2016).⁴ At the subregional (ie, Melanesian) political level, West Papuan leaders have successfully begun to mobilize for unity, a process that gained new momentum in 2015 when West Papua was granted observer status at the Melanesian Spearhead Group, which has in turn fueled the renewed Melanesianism about which we write. All of these developments are in different ways incorporated into a stream of Melanesian songs and song-videos that support West Papua’s decolonization, some of which even comment reflexively on the role of social media in mobilizing the struggle across the Pacific.

Linked to issues of identity, creativity has been enlivened by politics in particular ways in the southwest Pacific. Musicians compose songs in support of West Papua’s independence and fan-activists make videos of these, which further stimulates the musicians and activists, and so on. As we will discuss, Black Atlantic genres such as reggae and hip-hop both reflect and

create connections between the still-colonized and decolonized indigenous peoples of Oceania.⁵ Remix thus serves as a distinct thread of articulation, in terms of musical style and lyrics, between politicized indigenities in the Pacific. Drawing on both local musical styles and those associated with the African diaspora, musicians are espousing a *wansolwara* (Melanesian Pidgin: shared ocean) discourse, or a “common ocean of islands” understanding (Hau‘ofa 2008): “Wan nesia, Pa-pa-pasifika,” as musician Jagarizzar sings in his 2012 song “Wan [One] Nesia.”⁶ Through the sharing of songs and videos in support of decolonization in West Papua throughout Oceania and elsewhere via social-media channels, a new wave of Pasifika indigenous identity has emerged, whereby West Papuans have begun to envision themselves—and are being envisioned by other Pacific Islanders—as part of a unified Oceania.

PACIFIC ISLANDS MUSIC AND REMIX

“Hybridization” and “creolization” are terms that are employed and debated in discussions of the complex politics of cross-cultural musical interaction under conditions of globalization (see Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000; Martin 2011; Solomon 2015; Stokes 2004). We engage the overarching concept of “remix” to analyze a cluster of songs calling for the decolonization of West Papua. Eduardo Navas defined remix culture as “the global activity consisting of the creative and efficient exchange of information made possible by digital technologies that is supported by the practice of cut/copy and paste” (Navas 2006). Further, he explained that while remix culture has roots in Jamaican music, it has been extended to other art fields and has come to figure prominently in mass-produced popular-media products, particularly on the Internet (Navas 2006). For Navas, remix has become “a binder—a cultural glue” that “needs cultural value to be at play” (2012, 4).

Scholars of the Pacific Islands have pointed out the relevance of the concept of remix to Oceania. For Katerina Teaiwa, remix challenges the view of indigenous peoples as representing “traditional, emplaced or static cultures, or locked into just reflecting the colonial experience and a colonial ‘other’” (2014, 13–14). “Remixing,” she proposed, “is there in most Pacific performance genres, signaling centuries of cultural exchange, trade and dialogue between islands” (Teaiwa 2014, 14). Referring to music in the PNG highlands, Gabriel Solis described this process as “mixing bits from the ancestral past, bits from the local but more recent past, and

bits from elsewhere in living memory” (2016, 63–64). April Henderson expressed it as follows: “The marriage of words with beats potently stirs pools of possibility, destroying, creating, and remixing the old world to spin it anew” (2010, 304).

The cutting and mixing of musical elements to create new musical styles and substyles (Hebdige 1987) is a metaphor that maps well onto long-standing Melanesian practices, whereby communities traded their ritual complexes with each other, including spells, songs, dances, musical instruments, and visual markings, treating these as prestige items. Indeed, song and dance complexes in many Melanesian societies “were not conceptualised as ‘traditions,’ as possessions intrinsic to some particular group’s identity,” but rather as “luxury goods and were produced or acquired in the first place to move along lines of communication between groups” (Harrison 1993, 147). Engaged in trading systems, Melanesian groups maintained relations “by producing and exchanging a variety of goods including cultural or religious forms” (Harrison 1993, 146).

Simon Harrison provided the example of the Mountain Arapesh of PNG, among whom dance complexes were “very highly prized” and the desire for what they perceived to be the “superior quality of the cultural forms of the coastal peoples” was insatiable. They bought these dances, which included “new styles of body decoration, songs and techniques of magic and divination,” along with “large quantities of pigs, tobacco, bird plumes and shell valuables.” Whenever a newer dance form became available, the old dance would go out of fashion and be sold off to a “community further inland along the trade route” (Harrison 1993, 146).

John Singe referred to a “striking pan-culturalism” that he observed across Melanesia, adducing as an “astonishing example” an occurrence in Rabaul, PNG, in which “my wife from Saibai [in the Torres Strait Islands], a man from Kupaire (northeast of the Pahoturi River mouth in P.N.G.) and another from Kerema (in P.N.G. hundreds of kilometres east of Saibai) performed together without rehearsal the ‘Kookaburra’ dance—a simple but popular Torres Strait form. The tune and actions from each area were almost identical. Influences are absorbed by a group and transmitted to other groups creating a lifestyle which is an amalgamation of many features” (1979, 248).

Lamont Lindstrom wrote that in many parts of Melanesia, new knowledge—including songs—must derive not from individuals but rather from authoritative sources, such as “spirits, ancestors, or people . . . from beyond the local community” (1990, 316). Starting in the 1950s, Mela-

nesian popular music has had a history of borrowing and textual substitution—of cutting, copying, pasting, and mixing components of many genres and styles, including Protestant hymnody, Pacific Island maritime songs, hillbilly and other American old-time music forms, country, rock and roll, reggae, contemporary rhythm and blues (R&B), and hip-hop.⁷

In relation to West Papua decolonization music, we propose that the notion of remix as both metaphor and technological process is fitting for six primary reasons, which we formulate as a schema and refer to over the pages that follow: (1) as already discussed, such remixing resonates strongly with precolonial-era trade in ritual complexes in Melanesian island groups; (2) the music's production is characterized by a shift from analogue to digital techniques; (3) the music recombines African diasporic musical styles with local indigenous style elements; (4) musicians collaborate intra-regionally through the Internet, sharing musical beats, loops, and lyrical texts, and the new music is disseminated globally, often after picking up images and themes via activist networks on social media; (5) textual themes and tropes circulate and are copied, cut and pasted, and shared; and (6) grassroots, DIY music creation and dissemination have in many ways overturned the older music industry-driven model, particularly in the way that visual material is attached to audio content.

SONGS OF FREEDOM

West Papua decolonization songs can generally be distinguished according to whether they were written by West Papuans or by members of other Pacific Island communities to express solidarity with West Papuans. Songs in the former category are often sung in West Papuan languages or Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia or Bahasa Melayu) and in all likelihood exist in song-video form in greater numbers than those of the latter category,⁸ which are sung in several Melanesian languages, Tokelauan, Pacific-English variants, Patwa (Jamaican creole),⁹ English, and French. For this study, we analyzed fifty songs from the latter category (see table 1¹⁰), all of which are composed by indigenous Oceanian peoples (a few songs on our list were composed and performed by West Papuans living outside their homeland). Excluding two songs dating from 1985 and 1986, all can be found on the Internet. The songs are listed in chronological order by date of release or first Internet appearance, and they are identified by title and, when known, performer(s). Also indicated is the place of origin of the performers (see the two-letter identification key at the bottom of the table).

TABLE I List of West Papua Decolonization Songs and Song-Videos

Number	Origin ^a	Song Title and Performer	Song Release Date	Style	Song-Video URL ^b
1	WP	“Nogat Mani” by the Black Brothers	1982	Disco/Rock	video no longer available
2	PG	“Halivim Olgeta” by Brukim Bus	1985	Rock	no video available ^c
3	PG	“Indonesia Leave Our People Alone” by Tony Subam	1986	Reggae	no video available ^d
4	PG	(a) “West Papua” by Telek / (b) “West Papua (Merdeka Mix)” by Telek featuring Ngaiire	2004/ May 2010	Acoustic Ballad/ Reggae	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAqtJb5m6dE https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvTHpJk8r6M
5	WP	“Redemption Song West Papua” by WestPa Rebellion	June 2012	Reggae	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8GRu6ZqcQSo
6	HW/PG	“Rebel Rockin” by O-Shen	Sept 2012	Reggae	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YtQZex4m82c
7	PG	“Tears of Freedom” by Crutchman and H-M3 N	Sept 2012	R&B/Rap/Reggae	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wBmzscQ4io
8	WP	“Melanesia My Home Land” by unknown performer	Oct 2012	Indo Pop	video no longer available
9	PG	“Freedom from Oppression in West Papua” by unknown performer	Oct 2012	Reggae	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKdk5PR8oAM
10	VU	“West Papua” by Masamp Crew	Nov 2012	Reggae	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PgV6oLnX5fg
11	VU	“Rise Up” by Vanessa Quai	April 2013	Reggae	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wO12aPKObg4

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TABLE I *Continued*

Number	Origin ^a	Song Title and Performer	Song Release Date	Style	Song-Video URL ^b
12	KY	“Free West Papua” by unknown performer (lyrics by Weda)	Aug 2013	Reggae	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4yUNBsmxeho
13	KY	“West Papua” by Soul Syndikate and Dub Trooper	Sept 2-13	Reggae	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvxpulYod_Y&index=2.2&list=PLbnEogGnABakeGFjUvW3XwzvjaV-8qyaF
14	VU/SI	“Come Away for West Papua” by Ozzy Taseru and Young Davie	Oct 2013	R&B	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkJn-lijW7w
15	AU/PG	“Full Freedom” by Airileke	Oct 2013	World Music	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yfj6blGjcXE
16	VU	“Free (West Papua)” by Smol Fyah	Nov 2013	Reggae	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-gM3aLFg8js&index=18&list=PLbnEogGnABakeGFjUvW3XwzvjaV-8qyaF
17	KY	“Free West Papua” by Lirik Kanak Gong	Dec 2013	Reggae	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mToKL9L2WlY&list=PLbnEogGnABakeGFjUvW3XwzvjaV-8qyaF&index=17
18	VU	“West Papua Rise Up” by Stan & the Earth Force	March 2014	Reggae	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LeET6Z-AnzY
19	PG	“Papua, Papua, Merdeka, Merdeka” by unknown performers	March 2014	Rap	video no longer available
20	FJ	“Rise Morning Star” by Seru Serevi	March 2014	Reggae	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJ5yHzwMlsY
21	VU	“Three Meals” by Local Remedy and Bata Jakes	July 2014	Rap	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZ1qfLpdwX8

22	AU	“Free West Papua” by Provocalz	Aug 2014	Rap	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19Jy77Midtk
23	VU	“Free West Papua” by Gazza and the Middle House	Sept 2014	Reggae	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-eEHoNNG9s
24	PG	“Wokabaut i go long Madang Taun” by Wansolwara Dance	Sept 2014	String Band	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hW2yDqKbY2Y
25	AU	“Freedom West Papua” by Joe Geia	Nov 2014	Reggae	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eHhVV6tz9Y
26	PG	“West Papua Freedom” by Daniel Bilip featuring Sirisha Rholes Bilip	Dec 2014	Mel Dance Pop	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DcYh2b3i1BQ
27	VU	“Free West Papua” by Lexar	Dec 2014	Reggae	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PR5DfCpaxOE
28	KY	“West Papua” by Jay P Nalei and Evelyne	Jan 2015	Rap	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-86R9-k9Lz8
29	PG	“Papua Merdeka (Independent Hype)” by Jaggarizzar	Jan 2015	Reggae	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ze8Kf3HHVjk&index=7&list=PLbnEogGnABakeGFjUvW3XwzvjA-V-8qyaF
30	FJ	“Free West Papua” by Wilo Usuramo	March 2015	Reggae	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytC9Q1aYTMo&index=14&list=PLbnEogGnABakeGFjUvW3XwzvjA-V-8qyaF
31	FJ	“Be the Light (West Papua Merdeka)” by Fijian Singers/Choirs	March 2015	Gospel/ Choral	https://www.facebook.com/freewestpapua/posts/1015347955555010
32	AO	“To the West” by Andrew Faleatua	April 2015	R&B	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UVhAZoFB3LM&list=PLbnEogGnABakeGFjUvW3XwzvjA-V-8qyaF&index=21

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TABLE I *Continued*

Number	Origin ^a	Song Title and Performer	Song Release Date	Style	Song-Video URL ^b
33	VU/KY/ SI/PG	“Three Meals Remix” by Local Remedy	April 2015	Rap	https://soundcloud.com/remedybeats/three-meals-remixft-sprigga-meknaka-bloodjay-p-naleitujahkhazin56-hop-rodprodby-bata-jakes
34	KY	“Free West Papua” by Lynrik Kanak Gong	May 2015	Kaneka	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLmK5293jXg
35	SI	“Blood Tears” by Pyramid Crew	June 2015	World Music	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLUQj5dPJZ4
36	SI	“Free West Papua Merdeka” by SoulJay	June 2015	Reggae/Soul	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kv9SQap_9Z4
37	SI	“Morning Star” by Papa Yanni [Yannie]	June 2015	Power Ballad	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iq2_7iip73w
38	PG	“Free West Papua (One People, One Soul)” by Telek	Aug 2015	String Band	https://soundcloud.com/wantokmusik/telek-free-west-papua-one-people-one-soul
39	AO	“Papua i Sisifo” by Te Vaka	Oct 2015	World Music	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7p8qAHkOlpo
40	WP	“Melanesian Brothers and Sisters” by Black Orchid String Band	Nov 2015	String Band	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=orE2m_nAUfs
41	HW/PG	“Let Me Out” by O-Shen	July 2015	Reggae	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-d_JAk_j7U&index=2&list=PLbnEogGnABakeGFjUvW3XwzvaV-8qyaF

42	FJ	“Freedom Merdeka” by Kaivili	2016	World Music/ Funk	https://www.reverbnation.com/kaivili
43	WP	“Hey Wantok” by unknown performers	July 2016	String Band	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3o5pvKN3Cs
44	KY	“West Papua Prayer” by unknown performers	Aug 2016	Reggae	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6OqQ7QO2wY
45	AU/PG	“Free West Papua” by Benny and Nuii	Oct 2016	Reggae/Rap	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VzTtp-dF8d8
46	AU/PG	“Sorong Samarai” by Airileke featuring Twin Tribe	Nov 2016	Reggae/World	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=faJfu-FJ]Vto
47	VU	“Free West Papua” by T’mamere Natives	Nov 2016	Reggae	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-iuv9k3dp-A
48	KY	“Free West Papua” by Soutanowia LSB	Jan 2017	String Band	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y09YELxKuNU
49	VU	“Merdeka (Free West Papua)” by Vanessa Quai	Jan 2018	Reggae	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nxAn_YHmlBE
50	AO	“Genocide Free West Papua” by Genocide featuring Flowz and J10	Nov 2018	Rap	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZ52COQVbIA

^a Key: WP= West Papua; PG=PNG; HW=Hawaii; VU= Vanuatu; KY=Kamaky; SI=Solomon Islands; AU=Australia; FJ=Fiji; AO=Aotearoa/New Zealand.

^b All URLs accessed 12 February 2019.

^c This song can be heard on the Brukim Bus cassette album PAC-76, side B, track 4.

^d This song can be heard on the Tony Subam cassette album PAC-86, side A, track 1.

These songs and song-videos tell the story of the Melanesian and wider Pasifika advocacy initiative that calls for the decolonization of West Papua and of how, steadily, song by song, resistance is being remixed into a political movement. An analysis of the songs in table 1 reveals that they mainly appeared over the five-year span between 2012 and 2016, proliferating around 2014–2015. Melanesians composed four-fifths of the fifty songs; half of the songs emanated from musicians in Kanaky/New Caledonia, PNG, and Vanuatu. We propose several historical reasons for this in the next section.

Before proceeding to an analysis of the songs and song-videos, and in order to more clearly illustrate how and why West Papua resistance songs came to be remixed into an Oceanian movement for West Papua’s decolonization, it is helpful to trace this song stream back to its source: the song “Nogat Mani” by the Black Brothers (song 1). This song was influential in the early careers of the prominent PNG musicians George Telek and Tony Subam.

THE REMIX TURN: FROM ANALOGUE TO DIGITAL

In 1982, West Papuan resistance rock-reggae-disco outfit the Black Brothers released “Nogat Mani.” In the track, the Black Brothers protested the Indonesian occupation of West Papua, singing (in translation from Tok Pisin¹¹):

Got no money, got no food (that’s me now)
 Got no home, got no country (that’s me now)
 I’ve lost everything (that’s me now)
 I’ve lost everything (that’s me now)

This was the first West Papua protest song to be widely known outside the easternmost province of Indonesia. It also demonstrates a vital link between the West Papuan music ethnologist Arnold Ap and the swelling stream of West Papua liberation songs in the southwest Pacific in recent years.¹² Taking the lead from Ap’s 1980–1981 song “The Orphan Child,” “Nogat Mani” lyrically draws on the “archetype of destitution in Indonesian popular culture,” which is also found in various parts of PNG (Glazebrook 2004, 9). Ap used the orphan metaphor to signify West Papua’s “abandonment by the Dutch and neglect under Indonesia” (Glazebrook 2004, 9).

In 1980, two years before the song’s release, Port Moresby, PNG,

businessman Raymond Chin released an entire cassette of Black Brothers songs after securing the recording rights from an Indonesian label.¹³ Its success prompted him to enter the music production business in earnest. Chin continued to work with the Black Brothers, who lived in Port Moresby, and the early success of Chin’s CHM Supersound label was due in large part to the sales accrued from a thirteen-cassette album series of Black Brothers music released between 1980 and 1983, the penultimate of which was the eponymous *Nogat Mani*.

At the time, PNG had only recently gained national independence, and, in the 1980s and 1990s, protest against Indonesia was actively discouraged. After sowing the musical seeds for building Melanesian communal solidarity with West Papua, in 1983 the Black Brothers resettled in Vanuatu before being deported to Australia in 1988. Not coincidentally, two songs protesting Indonesia’s occupation of West Papua were included on albums by PNG musicians in the mid-1980s. One of these, “Halivim Olgeta” (Tok Pisin: Help Them All) (song 2), is by a group of Rabaul-based studio musicians who went by the name Brukim Bus (Tok Pisin: breaking through the bush, or shortcut). The lead singer on the recording is George Telek. As we will discuss, Telek continued his musical involvement with the West Papua decolonization movement in the decades that followed.

Across the 1990s and into the new millennium, Chin’s business expanded to radio, television, and the Internet. It eventually became clear, however, that the analogue music industry in PNG, and in Melanesia more widely, had largely failed to deliver lasting economic gains for local musicians (see Wilson 2014).

Leaping ahead to September 2016, Powes Parkop, governor of PNG’s National Capital District and one of the few major politicians in the country who proactively supports West Papua’s independence, flew the surviving members of the Black Brothers to Port Moresby from Vanuatu and Australia to perform at the capital’s celebration of the forty-first anniversary of national independence. It had been thirty-eight years since the band self-exiled from Indonesia and settled in Port Moresby. Joining the Black Brothers were the Black Sistaz, three daughters of the late August Rumwaropen, one of the band’s original members. At a press conference, the manager of the Black Brothers, Andy Ayamiseba, laid out his vision: “We’re hoping that we could recruit some [new members] from Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Solomons, and Kanaky, so it becomes a Melanesia trademark. Black Brothers is more than a music, it’s a movement” (EMTV

Online 2016). The Black Brothers' return to PNG inspired the idea of expanding the band, including by incorporating next-generation family members so as to become a regionally representative activist brand and to galvanize further support for West Papua's independence. The band and its resistance music had been remixed for the new era.

PNG singer George Telek is the link between the impact the Black Brothers had on musicians in PNG and the regional upsurge of West Papua freedom songs. From 1990 to 2010, musician David Bridie led a small group of Melbourne-based activists and indigenous music advocates in promoting political solidarity with West Papuans. Telek's popular 2004 song, "West Papua," which was produced by Bridie, is pivotal in this story. In 2010, "West Papua (Merdeka Mix)"—a reggae-style version produced by Australian-PNG musician Airileke and featuring Telek, as well as Ngaiire and two of the Black Sistaz—was launched, coupled with a colorful song-video featuring members of Australia's Melanesian diaspora as co-performers (song 4b).¹⁴ This video circulated widely via social-media and video-sharing networks and sparked the Melanesian remix turn that we discuss in this article. At the time of writing, it had received more than three hundred thousand views online.

We now turn to analyze the songs in relation to musical genre and style, lyrical texts, and song-video content, including how these features are informed by the technologies and digital networks available to Pasifika musicians.

MUSICAL GENRE AND STYLE

Although distinguishing musical genres is a fraught process, as Fabian Holt explained, "all is not chaos" since "many terms for Western popular musics are in global circulation, and there are more specific conventions in local and national traditions" (2007, 15). In all, 33 of the 50 West Papua decolonization songs that we have identified are substantially informed by African diasporic genres, the most readily identifiable of these being reggae and rap, which together account for almost three-quarters of all the songs (26 reggae, 9 rap). Even so, in 4 of those 26 songs, reggae elements are remixed with other styles, such as rap, soul, contemporary R&B, and world music (songs 7, 36, 45, and 46), and 2 of the 4 songs that we categorize as world music (under Pasifika genres) are strongly infused with Black Atlantic style features (songs 15 and 42). As we will demonstrate, mixing (or remixing) of genre elements is evident in many of the other songs on

the list. In total, 12 of the 50 songs display new-Pasifika musical characteristics: 5 are Melanesian string-band songs; 1 is of the kaneka genre (from Kanaky/New Caledonia); 1 could be termed a Melanesian dance-pop song; and 5 feature a world-music fusion of Pasifika (or new-Pasifika) and transnational popular music elements. The remaining 6 songs draw on various contemporary popular music style features.

A focused analysis of select songs reveals how Melanesian musicians cut and blend musical style elements and thus extend long-standing musical practices. This also demonstrates something of the diversity and creativity of Pasifika musicians' expressions calling for the decolonization of West Papua.

Melanesian musicians are accomplished composers and performers of reggae, which as a decolonization genre is encountered in a range of sub-styles. They have absorbed the classic sound of international stars from Jamaica's Bob Marley and Toots Hibbert to South Africa's Lucky Dube (for example, songs 9, 10, 13, 17, and 47), as well as the more contemporary dancehall and other pop-inflected reggae with Auto-Tuned vocals and synthesizer effects (songs 27 and 29). “Free West Papua” by Gazza and the Middle House of Vanuatu (song 23) features a light, R&B-influenced sound popular in Polynesian reggae, with acoustic guitar, keyboard, congas, and harmonized vocals; curiously, for a reggae song and band, the bass guitar is absent. “West Papua Rise Up” by Stan and the Earth Force (song 18) combines Wailers-style high-gain rock lead guitar, with rugged, earnest vocals over a “bubble rhythm” reggae foundation (see also song 34).

“Tears of Freedom,” a 2012 song by Crutchman and H-M₃N of PNG (song 7), is based on an R&B-style four-bar, four-chord (one per bar) looped sequence, featuring various interacting keyboard riffs propelled by programmed drums. At 0:26, layered, processed vocals are heard; a reggae rhythm kicks in at 1:18, and the vocables, “ai-ye ai-yo,” begin. Most interestingly, this appears to be appropriated (in modified form) from Telek's “West Papua (Merdeka Mix)” of 2010, as the part in Telek's song where Ngaiire and the Rumwaropen sisters can be heard singing those vocables is sampled and worked into the “Tears of Freedom” mix starting at 3:56. The reggae rhythm drops out at 2:09, and rapping begins at 2:12. This kind of alternation of styles more or less continues until the end of the song.

“West Papua Freedom” by PNG Southern Highlander Daniel Bilip and featuring Sirisha Rholes Bilip also relies on loop-based programming to

create PNG or Melanesian up-tempo dance pop (song 26). A simple syn-copated rhythmic hook that is heard throughout the song's verses in the chordal keyboard part gives way in the chorus to a driving disco-type beat. The voices of both Bilip and Rholes Bilip are treated with Auto-Tune, and Rholes Bilip projects a striking female vocal quality sometimes associated with Melanesian music—tense and nasal or thin in tone—which is arguably the song's most unique and appealing characteristic.

Three songs from Solomon Islands were released in June 2015. With its soft-edged synthesizers, booming drums, choral backing, and minor-key panpipe (an instrument associated with Solomon Islands) hook, "Blood Tears" by Pyramid Crew (song 35) has absorbed elements of the light world-music style heard in the Disney film *The Lion King*. The insistent "Free West Papua" sotto voce chant that is low in the mix later in the song contributes to the song's subdued yet hopeful tone. Related musically and also in terms of mood, "Morning Star" by Papa Yannie (song 37) incorporates film-score and soul-pop ballad elements. In "Free West Papua Merdeka" by SoulJay (song 36), power-ballad lead guitar is heard over a relaxed reggae groove, and the song features soulful, R&B-style lead vocals. A bridge section introduces the reverb-drenched sound of a children's choir singing calls and responses over the metal-like guitar lines.

"Freedom Merdeka" by the Fijian musician Kaivili (song 42) is a funk jam, driven by percussion (including log drum) and bass, with Hammond-organ stabs and subtly interwoven samples of Melanesian traditional singing and Fijian meke chanting. Broadly speaking, it resembles "Full Freedom" by Airileke (song 15), which is a possible source of inspiration. "Hey Wantok" (song 43) is a traditional string-band song such as could have been heard anywhere in insular and coastal Melanesia in the 1970s, with its familiar tonic-subdominant-tonic-dominant-tonic (I-IV-I-V-I) harmonic sequence. While the strummed ukulele provides the rhythmic underpinning typical of the style, a Melanesian handheld hourglass-shaped drum can also be heard maintaining the pulse throughout and occasionally decorating it.

"Free West Papua" by Benny and Nuii (song 45) interestingly fuses a pop-reggae sound with string-band electric lead guitar for the opening fifty seconds. Then, after a sung chorus that lasts forty seconds, Benny raps in a style and sound associated with Australian hip-hop band The Herd and other bands on Australia's Elephant Traks label. The use of reggae in Melanesian and other Oceanian musical styles is not new (Fijian singer George Veikoso and Aotearoa/New Zealand band Herbs are classic

examples); however, many of the West Papua solidarity songs feature a roots-reggae sound that contrasts with the softer pop-oriented island reggae that is common in Melanesia.

The uptake of other African diasporic genres, rap in particular, resonates with the spirit of defiance that the songs channel. Remix as a musical process has origins in Jamaican reggae, dancehall, ska, and dub. The use of remix-related genres (reggae, rap, and other black diasporic styles), which carry a “critical trace of colonial resistance” in this Oceanian movement for West Papua’s decolonization (Navas 2012), is political, as is the use of remix as a technique; the cutting and pasting of remix genres with Melanesian style components highlights indigenous agency (Solis 2015a, 2015b). The global black anti-oppression movement is invoked, and this remixing of reggae and local musical styles expresses pride in cultural identity and place. Through remixing, each song and song-video calling for West Papua’s decolonization becomes part of something bigger than itself.

LYRICAL TEXTS

Language ideologies are at work in this set of decolonization songs. This is to be expected, since the linguistic conditions that prevail in Melanesia are highly complex and have been impacted by the history of colonialism in those islands. Language ideologies are “culturally shaped attitudes” about the nature, uses, and value of “particular languages and linguistic varieties” (Jourdan and Angeli 2014, 266). Analysis of the choice of language for each song’s lyrical text produces some interesting results (see table 2).¹⁵

Given their decolonization agenda, songwriters likely weighed considerations of comprehensibility against those of identity. While languages

TABLE 2 Distribution of Dominant Languages in Song Texts

English		Pidgin			Patwa	French	Bahasa Indonesia
Standard	Melanesian	Tok Pisin	Pijin (Solomon Islands)	Bislama			
23	7	9	1	1	8	7	1

of colonization—English and French (with an isolated snippet of Bahasa Indonesia)—are employed, as is nonstandard or Melanesian English, as well as three Melanesian Pidgin languages and, in some reggae songs, appropriated forms of Patwa.¹⁶

It is noteworthy that 40 songs employ English, French, or Bahasa Indonesia (although the latter was very rare), while Melanesian English, dialects of Melanesian Pidgin, and Patwa feature in a total of 26 songs. It is significant that only one of the songs from Vanuatu, the country contributing the second highest number, employs Bislama, the Melanesian pidgin spoken almost universally there. A search for explanations for this must consider the prevalence of the reggae genre among decolonization songs from Vanuatu and a preference for Patwa and Melanesian English over Bislama; it is not insignificant that 8 of the 50 songs, or around 15 percent of the entire corpus, employ Patwa. It should also be noted that Vanuatu, where over 240,000 people speak more than 110 languages, has the highest language density of any country in the world (François and others 2015).

While the texts of 32 songs are monolingual and one is trilingual (featuring English, Tok Pisin, and Bahasa Indonesia), it is noteworthy that 13 of the 50 texts (around one-quarter) are bilingual. In all, 8 of the 13 bilingual texts feature an indigenous language. The decision to use Melanesian English, Patwa, or even multiple languages indicates that these songs were not written just for local listeners or even necessarily for West Papuan listeners. Rather, they were intended to contribute to a regional decolonization movement in which many different populations throughout Melanesia and Oceania would be able to tune in to the core message of the songs and remix the messages into their own songs.

DISCOURSES AND TROPES

Content analysis of the lyrics reveals the prevalence of five key discourses that have formed around the issue of decolonization both in Oceania more widely and in West Papua's case specifically. Because of the Oceania-wide appeal of the songs' themes, the lyrical discourses and tropes work together to engender in the listener empathy for West Papuans or to prompt action on their behalf. The five discourses include human rights; indigeneity (including land or place attachment); regionalism; wantokism (Tok Pisin: one talk, sharing one origin or kinsfolk); and spirituality (expressed in either Christian or Rastafarian terms). It is not possible to go into greater

detail here. To exemplify these discourses, we have selected a number of lyrical excerpts from across the corpus of songs we analyzed.

1. Human Rights

- “Human rights have been abused still no one care, International party still no interfere” (song 14)
- “Torturing they’re torturing innocent tribesmen” (song 13)
- “Respect their land their right to self-determination” (song 9)
- “Pour une petite pierre la vie d’un homme n’est que poussière” (French: For a tiny stone [gold] the life of a man is only dust) (song 17)
- “We live in the time of human rights” (song 16)
- “Facing the Indonesian genocide of their people” (song 22)

2. Indigeneity (including land or place)

- “Corporations taking advantage of our brothers / West Papua is getting dragged right through the gutter / Gold oil and minerals stolen in abundance” (song 21)
- “Kanakanaka to the roots still boiling taro” (song 6)
- “Stealing (ow!) they’re stealing their lands” (song 13)
- “Indigenous worldwide we send strength to survive” (song 22)
- “We will show the world we be indigenous Melanesians” (song 23)
- “Lest we forget all the roots of the tree” (song 32)
- “I can see fallen braves” (song 37)

3. Regionalism

- “We call for Indonesia pull back your borders” (song 10)
- “L’échange se rétablit entre nous / Peuple de l’Océanie / Oh Mélanésie” (French: Exchange is restored between us / People of Oceania / Oh Melanesia) (song 12)
- “Pasifika cry, Melanesia are cry, Vanuatu we are cry” (song 18)
- “Come Polynesia; Come Micronesia; Come Austronesia” (song 20)
- “Yumi wansolwara yumi wanpela” (Tok Pisin: We are from the same ocean, we are one) (song 24)
- “Brother-nesia yumi come together” (song 28)

4. Wantokism (including ethnicity)

- “Hear the voices of my buddies’ crying soul” (song 14)

- “One skin one tradition one culture” (song 15)
- “Free West Papua wantok bilong yumi” (Tok Pisin: Free West Papua our kinsfolk) (song 38)
- “Their fathers and sons don’t come from Indonesia” (song 3)
- “Give back the freedom of our black children” (song 10)

5. Spirituality

- “Forever Jah will be by your side” (song 11)
- “We still are fight for we freedom Lord” (song 18)
- “But there’s a Man above all / Who will not gonna let you down / He is always there in your pain” (song 14)
- “I believe one day the Lord will hear your cry” (song 26)
- “Let’s join hands with Melanesia and pray” (song 36)
- “Free West Papua ol pipal bilong God” (Tok Pisin: Free West Papua, God’s people) (song 38)

Content analysis also revealed the prevalence of six recurring tropes or textual devices: (1) the idea of rising up, which was often coupled with references to raising West Papua’s Morning Star flag, as well as merdeka (Bahasa Melayu: freedom), whereby the metaphor of rising up is akin to the West Papuan concept of (me)lawan (Bahasa Indonesia: oppose)—frequently invoked by West Papuans encouraging one another in the struggle for independence; (2) references to mothers and children, a universal trope signaling the most vulnerable of the oppressed in conflict situations; (3) water (tears, rain, seas, and ocean), an important symbol in the Pacific’s sea of islands (Hau’ofa 2008), and blood; (4) fire as refiner and destroyer of corruption, a popular reggae idiom; (5) blackness, a central trope in black diasporic music; and (6) dreams, either broken or as yet unrealized. Once again, text excerpts illustrate our coding:

1. Rise up and stand together (including the symbols “Merdeka” and “Morning Star”)
 - “Rise up warriors / Stand up and fight for this nation” (song 11)
 - “Let the Morning Star rise let the culture’s freedom fly high” (song 16)
 - “Let us rise up rise up with West Papua / Together in one spirit we call for freedom” (song 31)
 - “I’ve seen war and escaped it with my family so with the Morning Star I stand in solidarity” (song 50)

- “Elevons nos voix pour la West Papua” (French: Let our voices rise for West Papua) (song 28)
2. Mother and child
- “Hey Mr Indonesia why you killing them innocent mothers and children” (song 23)
 - “Children die there’s no more tears to cry” (song 32)
 - “West Papua ples mama karim mi (Tok Pisin: West Papua, place where my mother gave birth to me) (song 8)
 - “Thought I could hear the sound of mothers crying” (song 37)
 - “And if they love their children / They’ll teach them to love their fellow man / And if they love their children / We surely love our children too” (song 3)
3. Water and blood
- “We are drowning in the pool of our blood and tears” (song 31)
 - “Prenez les larmes de vos mères sur les lits de vos rivières” (French: Take the tears of your mothers in the streams of your rivers) (song 28)
 - “The tears of blood raining down” (song 32)
 - “We wail when the ocean cries” (song 32)
 - “Another brother in blood tears” (song 35)
 - “Tears fall like rain as I turn my eyes to the Morning Star” (song 37)
4. Fire
- “I’m starting a fire better bring your hoses” (song 6)
 - “Like a fire burning bright shines this pilgrimage” (song 16)
 - “Te afi kua kakaha” (Tokelauan: the fire is already burning) (song 39)
 - “We burn down oppression” (song 18)
 - “Fifty years across the fire’s burning” (song 37)
5. Blackness
- “Ya we see apartheid in South Africa ya / And separation in New Caledonia” (song 3)
 - “So many mountains black man won’t you afraid” (song 10)
 - “Tino o te la / Tu fakatahi” (Tokelauan: People of the sun / Stand together as one) (song 39)

- “One skin” (song 15)

6. Dreams

- “Come away in a dream / ‘cause life is not what as [*sic*] it seems” (song 14)
- “I want to be free / Yes be free as a bird that I heard in a dream” (song 26)
- “Can you see the broken dreams?” (song 32)

As these excerpts demonstrate, the discourses and tropes overlap at times. While not all of these discourses are apparent in every song, they nevertheless cycle. The first four in particular are picked up on by other songwriters and are remixed into new songs. The tropes, especially the first three, appear with such frequency that it must be assumed that they are deliberately being taken up and remixed. Songs from individual musicians throughout Melanesia and across Oceania are not isolated messages of support for West Papua but rather are part of something larger: the shaping of a remix culture that is part of a heightening of Oceanian decolonization consciousness and that holds West Papuans’ plight at its center.

SONG-VIDEOS AND IMAGE CONTENT

The videos accompanying the songs are of two types, which we identify as “DIY” and “official.” Official videos are professionally crafted, usually by those involved in the production of the original recording; that is, they have had content created specifically for them. In all, 34 of the 48 videos (three songs have no accompanying video, and there are two videos for song 4) can be classified as DIY and 10 as official (songs 4a and b, 9, 11, 15, 25, 36, 40, 46, and 48). The DIY type comprises two subtypes, which we refer to as “photomontage” and “graphics montage” in order to distinguish the predominant image medium of each: film footage and photographs in the first and icons, logos, GIFs, clip art, and posters in the second. As might be expected, there is some overlap between these two types of video. In both cases, the image content is taken from the Internet and, commonly, remixed into slide-show sequences. A third, “sub” DIY type is the static video, which consists of a sole slide that can serve as the cover for a single (see, for example, songs 21, 26, 47, and 50).

With reference to “Free West Papua” by Gazza and the Middle House (song 23), Ni-Vanuatu music producer Local Remedy shared his thoughts

with us on songs and the fan-created DIY videos: “It goes with the remix culture. . . . For this [fan-created video] you have Gazza with the song, and then you’d have [graphic artist] Stanley Wai design the original cover work, and then you’d have someone else who has included all the other [visual] content. . . . The audio is original to what it is, but it’s just the images that change.”¹⁷

When we asked how fans created the videos, Remedy responded: “You can use Windows MovieMaker; you can use Premiere Pro. Like, people here, a lot of people, they know how to use that software. Yeah, like, with social media, YouTube, you just go on YouTube and they find the tutorials that explain how to put it together. But that stuff is quite simple. Ah, actual editing using Photoshop—a lot of people, they know how to put it together. They can just download something off Google and then merge it in with whatever’s there.”

Local Remedy went on to explain that “a lot [of this is done] here in Vanuatu—a lot of it [is by] students—university students—so, whether they feel connected to the music, or maybe they have a lot of time on their hands? I find it’s a lot of late secondary school students and university students that have access to computer labs. A lot of people have laptops at home. But like I say, it’s hard to say because a lot of them hide behind user names and the blogs.” Such videos are uploaded to YouTube and other platforms and shared through personal Facebook pages.

BODIES, FLAGS, AND MAPS

Across all song-video types and subtypes, the most prevalent visual tropes are bodies, flags, and maps. “The body in Melanesia,” wrote Bruce Knauff, “is a performative that binds people together in intricate webs of meaning and experience” (1999, 84). All of the official videos feature footage of singing and playing bodies (musicians), and occasionally dancers and dancing, as do several of the DIY clips. One frequently used image of performers shows Australian-Pacific reggae-funk-hip-hop band Blue King Brown holding a “Free West Papua” banner, along with members of Australia-based West Papuan-initiated musical activist collective Rize of the Morning Star, on stage in front of an audience of ten thousand people at the World of Music, Arts, and Dance festival in Adelaide, Australia, in 2012. This image appears in the videos for songs 6, 17, 18, 19, and 29.

Violated West Papuan bodies figure prominently in photomontage videos. By way of basic zooming and dissolving techniques, these videos dis-

play graphic images of West Papuans who have been tortured, mutilated, and murdered by Indonesian forces. Two particularly graphic photographs recur in song-videos, both of which show Indonesian soldiers posing with their dead West Papuan victims: the first, from 2004, is a photograph of the corpse of Yustinus Murib (see songs 12, 17, and 19), while the second, from 2013, depicts the corpse of Wendiman Wonda (see songs 12 and 13). A leaked video from an Indonesian soldier's cell phone in 2010 depicts Indonesian troops torturing two West Papuan men with knives and fire.¹⁸ This video received significant attention on social and news media at the time and was remixed in videos for songs 13, 17, and 19. A number of videos prominently feature visually striking footage of Indonesian security forces firing on a peaceful crowd of West Papuans gathered for the Third Papuan National Congress event in 2011 and, on the same occasion, forcing West Papuans to march like slaves and hop along the ground while crouching (see songs 8, 12, 17, 31, and 32).

Common, too, are photographs of protest gatherings in support of West Papua's independence, taken in many locations around the world. Two images from inside West Papua are constantly used: the first shows a young female protester, her face painted with the Morning Star flag, exuberantly fist-pumping the air (see songs 12, 17, 19, 32, and 41), and the second is of a male wearing a Morning Star flag headband, his arms raised ecstatically in a V shape, possibly to represent anticipated "victory." An image of a 2011 West Papua independence rally, ten thousand strong, appears in songs 17 and 41, and footage of a large march in Solomon Islands in 2015, organized in support of West Papua joining the Melanesian Spearhead Group, appears in songs 35 and 36. A photograph from August 2012 depicting Australian activists for West Papua in front of a Lush cosmetics store in Melbourne (the company had launched a campaign for West Papua's independence) is seen in the videos for songs 12, 17, and 41. Images of forty-three West Papuan refugees celebrating their arrival in Australia in 2006 are mixed into the videos for songs 6, 17, and 19. Photographs of "warriors"—often holding bows and arrows—appear in the majority of videos.

This constant remixing of images of protest events illustrates the networked, multidirectional relationships between the freedom song-videos and the new-Pasifika decolonization movement for West Papua. In many instances, the songs' videos, which contribute to publicizing episodes of violence in West Papua and tie in with grassroots activist interventions, precede Pacific nation-state demonstrations of support for West Papua.

Clearly, songs and singing in the Pacific Islands are a powerful catalyst for political mobilization.

The Morning Star is by far the most featured flag, although those of the various Melanesian countries are also common, and the red, green, and yellow stripes of the Rastafarian or reggae flag appear in some videos as well.¹⁹ In cases where the Morning Star is part of the design of people’s clothing, such as on hats or T-shirts, or where a person’s face or body is painted in the colors and design of that flag, the bodies and flags tropes overlap. Such visual content aims to provide evidence of Indonesia’s genocidal agenda (seen through degraded and disfigured bodies) and of the mounting global support for West Papua’s independence (as exemplified by protest gatherings). Images of flags and maps assert the right to self-govern as a nation (see, for example, songs 45 and 46), an idea that “remains a stubborn rock” in Melanesia (Gardner and Waters 2013, 118). A single still from the song-video for “Papua Merdeka (Independent Hype)” by Jaggarizzar illustrates the powerful symbolic content that is packed into photomontage videos (figure 1; song 29). In the video, this image, a color photograph, appears at 2:08 and is seen for four seconds. It shows a West Papuan protestor whose face and body have been vividly painted in the colors of the Morning Star flag. Contrasting identity markers are also visible: the protestor wears an elaborate traditional bird of



FIGURE 1 Still from the video for “Papua Merdeka (Independent Hype)” by Jaggarizzar (song 29).



FIGURE 2 Still from the video for “Free West Papua” by Benny and Nuii (song 45).

paradise and cassowary feather headdress, as well as a shell necklace and earbuds. Perhaps the latter signifies the freedom, under globalization, to craft one’s own emotional space.

A screenshot from a graphics montage video for “Free West Papua” by Benny and Nuii juxtaposes flags, activist group logos, and protest slogans (figure 2; the image first appears in the video at around 0:06). On the middle left and middle right of the frame, the flags of the independent Melanesian nations—PNG, Kanaky/New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and Fiji—are displayed, while the Morning Star is prominent in the center in several guises. A clenched fist of defiance can be seen in four contrasting poster reproductions situated within the frame. In the top left and right corners, the words “Papua Online News” are depicted in the colors of the reggae flag, and in the bottom left corner is a poster representing activist group KNPB (the West Papua National Committee). A hashtag slogan in the center at the top of the frame, #WP4MSG, stands for “West Papua for Melanesian Spearhead Group.”

It is not possible here to undertake a detailed iconographic analysis of the visual content of all of the songs’ videos. These few remarks must

suffice to demonstrate that a DIY remix process and aesthetic has been constructed around decolonization songs for West Papua. West Papuans, Melanesians, and, increasingly, Pasifika peoples more broadly are making use of such processes and aesthetics in a way that draws the songs and song-videos that have emerged in support of West Papua’s decolonization into a long-established Pacific-wide vision—a movement—for self-determination.

BEYOND MELANESIA

In this article, we have demonstrated that music (with related visual media) is a fundamental means through which Melanesians communicate solidarity with West Papuans in the face of the Indonesian occupation. By way of a six-point remix schema, we have attempted to account for the proliferation of Free West Papua songs, explaining that a digital remix music culture has developed around the issue of West Papua’s decolonization, and this has helped propel the issue into the wider arena of Oceanian politics. Indeed, the remix of song-videos in support of West Papua has been integral to the processes through which Oceanian politics at the state, grassroots, and activist levels has rallied around the West Papua cause. To recall, these song-videos are, to use Navas’s terms again, a “binder—a cultural glue” (2012, 4), linking themes from global Black Power political movements to Oceanian decolonization aspirations, to cases of torture in West Papua, and to regional activist expressions of defiance on behalf of West Papua.

With a focus on West Papua’s plight, ripples of a second-wave Melanesianism have moved out into the waters beyond Melanesia into regional politics, activism, and, of course, songs and song-videos, especially when the latter began to proliferate in Melanesia after 2010. Historically, Polynesians have observed Melanesian decolonization politics with some detachment, a situation perhaps attributable in part to their elevated status in colonial times relative to other Pacific Islanders (Lawson 2013). In recent years, however, since the emergence of a remix culture in which Free West Papua songs have become a phenomenon in Oceania, “West Papua” has become a key issue in a wider political movement throughout the Pacific Islands.

Pasifika politics, which developed around Pacific Islander ethnic identity within Aotearoa/New Zealand, have widened in recent years to champion the rights and celebrate the identities of all of Oceania’s indigenous peo-

ples, both at home and in diaspora, and have also more recently embraced West Papua's decolonization movement. On the state level, for example, in August 2015, the head of the Pacific Islands Forum identified decolonization and human rights in West Papua as one of five priority issues that it would discuss at its 46th annual meeting in PNG in September 2015. Further, in September 2016, seven Pacific Island countries—Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tuvalu, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Tonga, Nauru, and Palau—raised the issue of human rights violations in West Papua at the seventy-first United Nations General Assembly.

In another example, on the Pasifika-wide activist level, a group of Māori students performed a haka (a Māori ceremonial dance) in support of West Papua outside the New Zealand Parliament.²⁰ This Pacific-wide support for West Papua's decolonization was also on display in 2015, when Auckland-based women's collective Oceania Interrupted presented a striking "artistic intervention" titled "Free Pasifika—Free West Papua" (see Te Papa Tongarewa 2019). Performers covered their mouths with mask-like cloths in the Morning Star flag colors and bound their hands to symbolize the international silence regarding West Papua. Oceania Interrupted achieved worldwide attention when such images were shared on social-media sites, accompanied by the statement, "Our freedom as indigenous Maori and Pacific women in Aotearoa/New Zealand is inextricably bound up with that of our indigenous West Papuan brothers and sisters" (Leilani Salesa, quoted in Tavola 2013). The release by Aotearoa/New Zealand-based and quintessentially Oceanian world-music band Te Vaka of the 2015 song "Papua i Sisifo" served as a glue binding such expressions together. The song proclaimed, "West Papua, we're with you now" (see song 39).

Indigenous Australians have also become active in the emerging Oceanian solidarity movement for West Papua. A powerful example of this was the 2013 Freedom Flotilla initiative involving Indigenous Australians and West Papuans, which attempted a ritual exchange of vessels containing water, which were transported by boat from Australia to West Papua in order to challenge current nation-state border policies and highlight the sovereignty struggles of both peoples (Freedom Flotilla 2013). Australian Aboriginal rapper Provocalz subsequently rhymed about the Flotilla, referring to the colors of the Australian Aboriginal flag: "Black yellow red stand in solidarity of course / While the Freedom Flotilla by the media ignored" (see song 22). Renowned Australian Aboriginal singer-songwriter Joe Geia was also inspired by the Flotilla and its symbolism to sing

in 2014: “Freedom Flotilla they bring our love / A message from me to you / With love from above / Sweet, sweet love from above” (see song 25).

CONCLUSION

In this article, we have shown how empathy for West Papuans and their plight has resulted in an unprecedented and remarkable outpouring of musical creativity across Melanesia and beyond. Moreover, these songs, most often circulated in DIY song-video form, have in important ways contributed to the emergence of a new Pacific-wide movement in support of decolonization—one that continues to gain momentum. Such activity points to the power and potential of Pasifika unity and Pacific peoples’ determination to be in command of their own circumstances. As one West Papuan was recently quoted as saying, “Some of our singers have been arrested and murdered. But we continue to sing freedom. . . . When we live inside our culture we are free” (Jackson 2017). Musicians across Oceania are contributing to the flow of freedom songs, while anonymous grassroots activists remix these with visual messages to heighten the songs’ impact and, through social-media outlets, extend their reach. Decades after most Pacific Island territories achieved self-rule, a new region-wide resistance movement has emerged in response to the continuing colonial occupation of West Papua. Even if the flow of songs appears to have peaked, at least for the time being, Internet views of the most prominent song-videos show no sign of subsiding.²¹

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Notes

1 Over the course of more than a century, the western half of the island of New Guinea has been given various names according to the political designs of

its changing colonial occupiers. Here, in solidarity with West Papuans who chose the name in 1961, we use the term “West Papua” to denote the entire territory that the Indonesian government has designated the provinces of Papua and Papua Barat.

2 In this article, we refer to these songs variously as decolonization, resistance, solidarity, protest, and freedom songs. We selected the songs for inclusion in the study primarily on the basis of our familiarity with them from previous research but also through a comprehensive Internet search conducted over a period of two and a half years, up until mid-2017. We include two songs from 2018 to indicate that the relevance of such song-videos continues (song 50 was created in 2017 and released on YouTube in 2018).

3 In Hawai‘i, under the title *Wansolwara: Voices for West Papua*, “fierce” (anticolonial) poetry and visual art have also been produced and published to protest Indonesian occupation of the territory (Hawai‘i Review 2015).

4 A string of documentary films has also raised the visibility of West Papua’s political situation, notable among which are *Land of the Morning Star* (2003), *Pride of Warriors* (2009), *Strange Birds in Paradise: A West Papuan Story* (2009), and *Forgotten Bird of Paradise* (2009).

5 For a discussion of the term “Black Atlantic,” see Gilroy 1993, 72–110.

6 This song can be heard on YouTube as a static video clip: “Wan Nesia—Jagarizzar and Yung Yanny Featuring Dehvande—2012 Island Beats” (6 Dec 2012), accessed 28 Nov 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBoz6W9kJWI>.

7 See Webb 2019, and also Webb 1993, for a discussion of these processes in relation to an earlier typology of popular music production in PNG, although with less emphasis on the cultural practices discussed in the present article. See also Crowdy 2006.

8 Our preliminary Internet search suggests that this is the case. However, more research in this area is needed.

9 Patwa is distinguishable from Melanesian English in both grammar and pronunciation. The difference is perhaps most immediately perceivable by listening to the recordings rather than reading the transcribed lyrical texts.

10 Information on all numbered songs discussed in this article, including song-video URLs, can be found in table 1.

11 One of three distinct variant forms of Melanesian Pidgin, Tok Pisin is spoken in PNG. The other forms are Solomon Islands Pijin and Bislama, which are spoken in Vanuatu.

12 For a discussion of the life, work, and death of Arnold Ap, see Glazebrook 2004.

13 See the “About” section on the CHM Supersound website, accessed 16 May 2019: <https://www.chmsupersound.com/about/>.

14 See Diettrich, Moulin, and Webb 2011, 36–37, for a discussion of this video.

15 For this study, we transcribed and translated the texts of all fifty songs. The French transcriptions and translations were undertaken on our behalf by a musicologist specializing in the francophone Pacific. Both the text and translation of the Tokelauan song were sourced from the Te Vaka website, accessed 16 May 2019: http://www.tevaka.com/music/s/papua_i_sisifo.

16 We refer to Patwa as having been appropriated since there is little evidence that any of the songwriters or singers have formally learned the language. It appears, rather, that they have adopted it aurally as a result of listening to reggae music.

17 The quotes from Mark Taiki (aka Local Remedy) are taken from a lengthy interview with the artist conducted by Michael Webb on 3 February 2017 in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

18 See “West Papuans ‘Tortured, Terrorised’” (7 Oct 2013), accessed 16 May 2019: <https://www.smh.com.au/world/west-papuans-tortured-terrorised-20131006-2v2ae.html>.

19 The combination of red, yellow, and green was adopted from the Ethiopian flag by many African nations and pan-African organizations, as well as by adherents of Rastafarianism in Jamaica, through which it is closely linked with reggae music.

20 This performance can be viewed on YouTube: “Maori Students Perform the Haka in front of the New Zealand Parliament for West Papua” (2016), accessed 16 May 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AC72yJ1RYOQ>.

21 The song “Sorong Samarai” (song 47), which was published on YouTube in November 2016, had received over 107,000 views by June 2018.

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Abstract

In the 1980s, Melanesian musicians began to compose songs protesting the Indonesian occupation of West Papua. Thirty years on, and facilitated through social media, such songs have begun to proliferate across Melanesia, with musicians from elsewhere in Oceania now contributing. The continuing colonial occupation of West Papua has led to the coalescence of a new wave of Pacific-wide performed resistance. In this study, we focus on a corpus of fifty freedom songs that not only are a manifestation of this movement but are also bound up in the digitally enabled remixing and dissemination processes of the identity, unity, and decolonization discourses that drive it. This article explores links between songs, a popular protest medium, and fan-produced accompanying videos and the new-Pasifika discourse of wansolwara (Melanesian Pidgin: shared ocean), which we argue is closely related to emergent understandings of Pacific indigeneity.

KEYWORDS: Melanesia, West Papua, decolonization, reggae, remix, social media, Pasifika