

A person wearing a red shirt is shown from the back, focused on carving a large, light-colored wooden block. They are using a chisel to shape the wood. The background is slightly blurred, showing another person's face in the upper left. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting an outdoor or well-lit workshop environment.

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THE “BLACK PACIFIC” AND DECOLONISATION IN MELANESIA:
PERFORMING *NÉGRITUDE* AND *INDIGÈNITUDE*

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In the 19th century Melanesians were pejoratively labelled black by European maritime explorers (*mela* = black; *nesia* = islands).¹ Emerging scholarship on the Black Pacific (Shilliam 2015; Solis 2015a, 2015b; Swan [as interviewed by Blain 2016]), a parallel to Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic* (1993), focuses on historical and contemporary identifications and articulations (“affinities, affiliations and collaborations” [Solis 2015b: 358]) between Oceanian and African diasporic peoples, cultures and politics based upon shared Otherness to colonial occupiers.² The essay that follows contributes to this work by presenting a perspective from Melanesia. It attempts to demonstrate that over time, encounters with Atlantic-based notions of Black Power and *négritude*, that is, the identity politics associated with Black consciousness, as well as global discourses of Indigenoussness, contributed to the production of popular forms of counter-colonial expression, one of the most significant—although underexplored—of which is music. Encounters with such ideas and expressions occurred person-to-person, sometimes through an intermediary, and also through various kinds of text, often in the form of recorded music, for example. The impact of each type and specific instance is of course unique, and context dependent.

“Come Independence Come”, by the late New Ireland singer-songwriter Phillip Lamasisi Yayii, is probably Papua New Guinea’s (PNG) earliest decolonisation song, and was released commercially in 1975, the year in which PNG became independent. Lyrically, the song asks:

Can’t you leave us alone?
Why must you pester us?
We have our values that we all are proud of
So pack yourself and leave us alone. (Webb 1993: 44–45)

Besides expressing a strong desire to shake free of European colonial influence, the lyrics mention pride in local “values”. Yayii appears to have

been alluding to a kind of cultural or multi-ethnic nationalism in the song, an inchoate “Melanesian Way” (Kabutaulaka 1994: 71). Around a decade later, Tony Subam, a founding member of the PNG pan-traditional fusion band Sanguma—modelled in part on the British Afro-Caribbean group Osibisa (Crowdy 2016: 3; Matbob 2013) and the Latin rock band Santana—released the song “Indonesia, Leave Our People Alone”, which expressed solidarity among Melanesians in the struggle against the Indonesian occupation of West Papua (Webb 1993: 64). At almost the same time, Freddy Fesaitu of the Fijian reggae band Rootstrata composed “Brother Kanaki” in support of independence in New Caledonia (or Kanaky, as it is known by Melanesians) (Webb and Webb-Gannon 2016: 67), which was written as a kind of response to the 1985 song “Frère Kanak”, by the Kanak anti-colonial band Yata (on which, more below).

In the years that followed, Melanesian and Melanesian-descended musicians made significant contributions to expressions of pride in regional Indigenous heritage and rights: Papua New Guineans Ben Hakalitz and Buruka Tau, for example, became members of the renowned Australian Aboriginal rock and pop band Yothu Yindi, and recently Eddie Elias (also from PNG) and Australian South Sea Islander Georgia Corowa joined Aboriginal musician Xavier Rudd’s reggae band, The United Nations. Another Australian South Sea Islander musician, Ziggy Ramo Fatnowna, began his 2016 track “Black Thoughts” by rapping: “Black lives matter / that’s the subject matter / tell you to climb then they burn down your ladder”. The PNG (now Australian) “future soul” singer Ngaiire Joseph’s modern “origin and rebirth” story is told in the song and music video “Once” (Fuamoli 2015); the song made a prominent national Australian radio list of the most popular music of 2016. “Koiki”, the Torres Strait Island rapper Mau Power’s 2017 song, opens with a conch-shell signal and the distinctive Torres Strait Island drum-and-rattles dance rhythm, followed by the voice of a female newscaster intoning: “The civil rights movement swept across Australia in the 1970s / many people fought for their basic human rights”; thus, it establishes the context for a musical celebration of Eddie Koiki Mabo, the esteemed Indigenous land rights campaigner.

Woven through these various musical expressions is a thread that links a Melanesian *négritude* (Lawson 1997: 16) with what James Clifford termed *indigénitude* (2013: 15). Tracing that thread, as we do in this paper, uncovers a narrative of popularly articulated Indigenous agency, one that has been “largely lost in the historiography of the decolonisation of Melanesia” (Gardner and Waters 2013: 115). We are speaking here of *négritude* in two senses: in the first case, a tightly connected Francophone intellectual tradition

represented most clearly by the poet-politicians Aimé Césaire of Martinique and Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal, who communicated their ideology in literary form and worked to institutionalise it in the arena of formal, postcolonial state-building (Burton 1996). This version of *négritude* was introduced to Melanesia in the late 1960s, through university classes and other means, as will be seen. However, in the colonial era not many Melanesians had access to a university education, and secondary school teachers were predominantly European and unlikely to encourage the expression of subversive ideas. Nonetheless, a more demotic sense of *négritude* (perhaps better styled simply as “negritude”) came to have a pronounced role in the region. This second instance of negritude was a global sense of Black Pride that drew on Pan-African, Anglophone postcolonialism and American Black Power, as well as on the Francophone movement. Our study adds to the larger body of knowledge about how this second kind of negritude took shape, by focusing on the interplay between formal, institutional actors and what we might call, following Antonio Gramsci, “organic intellectuals” (Forgacs 1988: 304). These organic intellectuals, who provided much of the popular discourse of both *négritude* and *indigénitude*, took as their primary tool the African diasporic musical traditions that were increasingly becoming a global argot for such work. It is perhaps no surprise that this political philosophy would have found its way to the Melanesian people in musical form, for in a region where the faculty of hearing is highly valued, music was already a vital form of popular expression. In fact, it became a foundational element of a new postcolonial expressive culture (Bensignor 2013; Crowdy 2016; Hayward 2012; Jourdan 1995; Webb 1993).³

As already intimated, expressions of Melanesian *négritude* and *indigénitude* find common ground in links with and allusions to Black transnationalism.⁴ They overlap in their address of the social-psychological state that W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) called double consciousness. Du Bois famously described double consciousness in *The Souls of Black Folk* as “a peculiar sensation ... this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (Du Bois 1903: 3). A kind of “two-ness”, in which the ever-present knowledge that one is not simply one’s self but is also someone else’s Other, has the capacity to alienate Black people from both white worlds and blackness; nonetheless Du Bois saw double consciousness as something not uniformly debilitating. To have it was also, in his description, to be “gifted with second-sight in this American world” (Du Bois 1903: 3). While Du Bois initially saw double consciousness as a peculiar result of the chattel slavery of Africans in the new world, as Paul Gilroy notes, he came

to view it as “a means to animate a dream of global co-operation among peoples of colour” (1993: 126). Indeed, his vision specifically linked his pan-African vision of “a common history ... a common disaster, and ... one long memory” with the people of Asia and “into the South Seas” (Du Bois 1940, quoted in Gilroy 1993: 126).

In Melanesia the development of double consciousness, of seeing a black self through the eyes of a white Other resulted from colonisation (Moore 2005), and sorting it out has been part of the long-term process of the divesting of colonial power. John Kasaipwalova, the Trobriand Islands (PNG) writer and black activist, was aware of this in the early 1970s:

It is a fact in Niugini that black men when placed in the presence of whites, feel inferior, confused, and consequently look up to white men for guidance, reassurance, and even the definition of their cultural identity. This inferiority complex ... is a dialectical product of an aggressive system of colonial behaviour and exploitation by the white executed either consciously or unconsciously. Because of this state of inferiority confusion, black man mistrust himself [*sic*] and shows a positive lack of confidence in his fellow men. Given this general picture it is then not untrue to assert that this is the psychological basis for disunity among black people in Niugini. (John Kasaipwalova, quoted in Nelson 1972: 184)⁵

In the struggle against this internalisation of inferiority, from the earliest years of contact, Melanesians adopted and adapted the cultural resources of others through acts of mimesis, trying them on like a costume, as it were, “as a conscious attempt to seize the power of the person or thing being mimicked” (Carr 2014: 10). *Négritude* is but one example, and in various parts of Melanesia its influence came to inform not only language and writing, but art, music and fashion as well.

Tracing the rise of Melanesian *négritude* and its subsequent alignment with a Melanesian *indigénitude*, both key “performed” modes of identity that were developed in order to ameliorate the psychologically alienating impact of colonialism, this essay is organised into two sections, both of which in various ways highlight music. The first of these, spanning the late 1700s to World War II, surveys preconditions in the formation of Melanesian Black identity. The second more detailed section charts the articulation of Black and Indigenous empowerment through what we discern to be two waves of decolonisation consciousness in the region: the period of the 1960s to the 1980s, and a renewed movement that dates from around 2010.⁶

PART ONE: THE BLACK PACIFIC IN MELANESIA

Maritime Beginnings

The history of cultural exchange between Pacific Islanders and African Americans began in the late 1700s when Hawaiians, African Americans and other African-descended peoples laboured together in the whaling industry and contributed to the development of sea shanty singing (Carr 2014: 56).⁷ Recent work in creolistics has identified substantial structural similarities between Atlantic and Pacific English lexifier creoles. Among other reasons, this is attributable to the fact that

during the critical years of Pacific Creole formation in the 19th century, a considerable number of people who spoke Atlantic English lexifier creoles (such as African and African descended mariners and beachcombers) were present on islands throughout the Pacific and that a significant number of Pacific Islanders were integrated into both the Pacific and the Atlantic shipping and trading networks. (Faraclas *et al.* 2012: 150)

From the early 1840s, hundreds of men from Melanesia's island and coastal villages left their homes to work in the sandalwood trade in New Caledonia and Vanuatu. Melanesian seamen gained a special reputation for their skill, Loyalty Islanders (Kanaky/New Caledonia) in particular, who apparently had a "love of wandering" (Chappell 1997: 91; see also Howe 1977: 15).

In the second half of the 19th century, African American performance culture—initially through the distorted filter of blackface minstrelsy—became popular in Australia and New Zealand (Miller 2009: 128–29; Waterhouse 1990) and the surrounding waters. The late 1850s minstrel song "Old Cabin Home" by T. Paine, for example, is mentioned as being a favourite of a "half-caste Samoan" sailor working on a labour recruiting ship in Vanuatu waters in the late 19th century (Cromar 1935: 58). After the 1852 publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which drew public attention to the evils of slavery, there was considerable enthusiasm among the Australian public for "Tommer" plays, the irony of which, given Australia's entanglement at the time in its own slave-like labour recruitment, is noted by Melissa Bellanta (2014). "Black face entertainment in Australia", writes Benjamin Miller (2009: 93–94), "reinforced and disseminated myths that justified dispossession, enslavement, oppression and murder of Aboriginal people and communities", a statement that applies equally to the South Sea or "black" Islanders working in Australia.

In operation between 1848 and 1904, this recruitment program involved the transportation of more than 60,000 Islander men, women and children to New South Wales and Queensland (predominantly from what are now the Solomon

Islands and Vanuatu) as indentured labourers in the pastoral, agricultural and maritime industries. Conditions were harsh and wages in excess of 30 million dollars in current terms were withheld from these workers (Moore 2015a, 2015b). Given this history, the appeal for the Australian descendants of those Melanesian labourers (known as Australian South Sea Islanders) of global Black politics and cultural expressions with which they later came to identify (see Webb-Gannon and Webb, forthcoming) is understandable.

Black Entertainment

Following the American Civil War and the abolition of slavery in the United States, which were critical events in the evolution of Black Atlantic consciousness, African American performance troupes including former slaves and their direct descendants began touring the Pacific. Among the most notable of these was Frederick J. Loudin’s Fisk Jubilee Singers (FJS), who performed Jubilee songs (spirituals) in Australia and New Zealand from 1886 to 1889. Despite Australia’s racist treatment of its own Indigenous black peoples, the FJS, whose song lyrics focused on slavery, redemption and freedom, were given a warm reception around the country (Bellanta 2014; Serroff and Abbott 2002).

While in Australia Loudin announced plans for FJS performances in Melanesia:

Mr. Loudin has a project in view of active benevolence in the Southern Seas. When the tour of the singers is finished in Australia, he intends to visit Fiji, the New Hebrides, and possibly New Guinea, with the object of singing to the natives. He firmly believes that under the auspices of the missionaries, with whom he proposes to communicate, such a tour would be productive of great good. It would not be undertaken with the view of any monetary gain, and he thinks it would form a fitting close to his visit here. (*The Queenslander*, 22 October 1887)

Clearly Loudin believed the considerable musical accomplishments of his FJS would contribute to uplift initiatives in the region; nevertheless, for reasons unknown the tour of these islands did not eventuate.

Missionaries actively circulated the Jubilee songs, however. As early as 1877 on the small island of Nguna to the north of Efate, Vanuatu, the missionary Peter Milne translated “Angels Hovering Round” into the local language (Don 1927: 171; see also Miller 1978: 174), and in 2010 one of us (Webb) recorded Johnny Mark of the Maskelyne Islands, who was well into his 90s at the time, singing an English version of the song. In 1888, even as the FJS were touring Australia and New Zealand, missionaries in PNG commented that the singing of a church congregation near Port Moresby “resembled that of the Jubilee singers” (quoted in King 1909: 263).

In 1895, a missionary working on Dobu Island (PNG) wrote: “the hymn that has taken the people to-day is [the Jubilee song] ‘Turn back Pharaoh’s army—*Hallelujah*’—a very lively tune” (Billing 1930: 75). In 1892 “Angels Hovering Round” was also translated into the Dobu language (Tinney 1892–1902). These anecdotes indicate something of the appeal of Black Atlantic Jubilee song form in Melanesia at the time, and of the way missionaries viewed Islanders: as being “like negroes”, as one put it (Nottage 1988: 130). Interestingly, by the 1930s, a locally devised modern entertainment form known as *Salvesen* (or *Salvesen Ami*), based on missionary-taught Jubilee songs (as well as Sankey gospel hymns) and customary dance movements had become popular in the southeast Malakula area of Vanuatu (Webb 2011).

In the Torres Strait Islands in the last decades of the 19th century, the pearl-shell and *bêche-de-mer* industries brought Islander pearl divers, many of whom were coerced into labour and treated callously (Loos 1980), into contact with black West Indians and African Americans (Solis 2015a: 303). Maritime and port encounters were prime occasions for musical exchanges and led, in northern Australia, to the development of an Australian form of minstrelsy, and later, blues. According to the distinguished Indigenous rights activist Eddie Mabo, new songs began to be composed in the Torres Strait Islands in the 1950s that “were similar to African-American songs and eventually replaced European music in the dance halls at Thursday Island and other islands with large populations” (Mabo 2005: 49).

The ancestry of Indigenous Australian jazz and blues singer Georgia Lee is interesting in this context: her grandfather was from the West Indies and her grandmother from the Loyalty Islands (New Caledonia), while her father was born in the Torres Strait Islands around 1877 (Neuenfeldt 2015: 205). Lee, who sang jazz and blues to entertain African American troops in Cairns, Australia, during World War II, used music to raise awareness of racial discrimination against Australian Indigenous peoples. In 1949, she made explicit links between the situation in Australia and racial discrimination in the US by singing “Strange Fruit”, a song about the lynching of African Americans around the turn of the 20th century that was made famous by Billie Holiday (Neuenfeldt 2015: 208).

Culture contact between Melanesians and Africans and African-descended peoples can be understood as very early stirrings of what is now being referred to as the Black Pacific. Such contacts were being made as Melanesians were being drawn into a wider world through the activities of Christian missions and the labour trade. At this time, some Melanesians at least, including those who were denigrated for their phenotypic blackness, became aware of the existence of other black peoples, and possibly also the comparative freedom the latter enjoyed, which would later become a source of considerable empowerment for Melanesians.

Military Meetings

Approximately 200,000 African American military personnel served in East Asia and the South Pacific from 1942 to 1945 (Lindstrom and White 1990: 27). Seeing black and white servicemen working in co-operation was consciousness-raising for Melanesians (Banivanua Mar 2016: 128; Chappell 2005: 303). In the words of Solomon Islander Jonathan Fifi‘i, who in 1942 was a sergeant in the Solomon Islands Labour Corps: “We saw from the way other black people lived, when they came during the war, that we were being treated like dirt. They were being treated as equals” (1989: 136).⁸ Bonding between Islanders and African American military personnel was facilitated through cultural exchange. One image in the photographic study *Island Encounters: Black and White Memories of the Pacific War* shows Solomon Islanders teaching African American Seabees how to make thatch shading (Lindstrom and White 1990: 21), while another depicts African American soldiers bartering with Solomon Islanders for betel nut (1990: 22). In turn, Americans, including black personnel, introduced new music genres to Melanesians including blues, jive and swing (Webb 2005: 289), at a time when Black Atlantic music styles were rapidly challenging the global dominance of European folk, religious and art-derived music forms (Small 1998: 4).

John Guise, who became PNG’s first Governor-General, wrote of the camaraderie between Melanesians and African American troops: “It made us think that the brown and black person were just as good as the white people [*sic*]” (Nelson 1982: 173). Witnessing the relatively high status of black American troops was also a factor in the establishment of the Maasina Rule movement that emerged in 1944 in Solomon Islands, which advocated the end of British occupation and self-determination (Matsuda 2012: 296; Akin 2013). Through the sharing of music, dance, philosophy, food, betel nut, survival skills and friendship, Melanesians and African Americans enriched each other culturally. Mimesis of Atlantic blackness enhanced Melanesians’ awareness of their double consciousness and prepared the way for the development of a Melanesian *négritude* and later, *indigènitude*, locating Melanesian self-determination struggles such as the Maasina Rule movement within an emerging Black Pacific identity.

PART TWO: DECOLONISATION IN MELANESIA

The First Wave—Melanesian Négritude

The German scholar Ulli Beier and his English-born artist wife, Georgina Beier, were catalysts in the development of a Black Pacific in Melanesia in the 1960s. Having taught at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria, the Beiers taught African anti-colonialist ideologies to aspiring artists and politicians in Papua New Guinea and fostered a *négritude*-focussed arts movement (Dawrs

2009: 10–20). Developed in France in the 1930s by African and Antillean students in Paris who opposed colonialism, *négritude* both drew from and inspired Black consciousness movements around the world. Melanesian elites embraced the movement in the 1960s as a philosophy compatible with the decolonisation processes taking place in their own region, one that celebrated the blackness of Melanesia's Indigenous peoples *and* the connections they were able to forge with other decolonised black peoples and cultures around the world.⁹ *Négritude* highlighted for Melanesians their double consciousness and presented possible avenues for asserting agency by bringing awareness of the ways in which other black people had fought for political independence and decolonisation of the mind.

Even as the Beiers mentored students at the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) and others keen to connect with the “global ferment of the late 1960s” Melanesian leaders were being drawn towards expressions of Black consciousness (Banivanua Mar 2016: 185) as a result of their own Black Atlantic travels. Michael Somare, who in 1975 became PNG's first Prime Minister, visited decolonised Ghana in the late 1960s and commented: “Many of the African politicians, civil servants and academics we met clearly thought that we had not been fighting hard enough for our independence ... I made up my mind that, next time, Papua New Guinea would show a more progressive face to our African friends” (quoted in Chappell 2005: 204). Papua New Guinean civil servant and intellectual Albert Maori Kiki was also inspired by community development initiatives in Nigeria (Chappell 2005: 306), and during travels to Australia in 1969 tapped into the Black consciousness mood prevalent among Black Aboriginal activists (Banivanua Mar 2016: 183). In a series of newspaper articles published in the late 1970s, Papua New Guinean politician, jurist and philosopher Bernard Narokobi sought to articulate a “Melanesian Way” that connected Melanesian cultures to a forward-looking Melanesian nationalism, a philosophy that according to Ton Otto (1997: 60) resembled the *négritude* movement of the 1930s to 1950s by virtue of its regional, Indigenous, anti-colonial and spiritual focus.

New Caledonians also found *négritude* compelling (Chappell 2005: 310). The Kanak activist, politician and intellectual Nidoïsh Naisseline argued in his master's thesis that Kanak youths who had migrated from the Loyalty Islands to Nouméa were “doubly marginalized, from their home society and from settler-dominated Noumea” (Chappell 2010: 52–53). Through his leadership of the Kanak independence movement (upon his return from study in Paris in the early 1970s he founded the anti-colonial Foulards Rouges group) and in his role in forming the Palika pro-independence party, Naisseline aimed to combat double consciousness. He worked to dismantle the “colonial system [that] attains its goal [in] that it animalizes the colonized and the latter accepts

his inferiority and hates himself” (Naisseline, quoted in Chappell 2010: 51). Naisseline “drew inspiration from Aimé Césaire’s *négritude* poetry and the Black Panthers’ demands” (Chappell 2010: 52; see also Topping 1977: 8).

In 1974, Walter Lini, who became Vanuatu’s founding Prime Minister and whose left-leaning views were influenced by the political philosophies of the African American abolitionist Frederick Douglass and the African socialist Julius Nyerere (Premdas 1987: 109–11), stopped over at the United Nations in New York on his return from the sixth Pan-African Congress in Tanzania. There he met Pauulu Brown, a Black Power activist and engineer from Bermuda. On Lini’s invitation, Brown came to Vanuatu and advised on independence policies (Banivanua Mar 2016: 198–99). Ni-Vanuatu were receptive to Brown’s Black Power politics in relation to their ancestors’ mistreatment in the South Sea Island labour trade era, 1848–1904. At a well-attended talk at Lelepa during his 1974 visit to Vanuatu, Pauulu Brown linked “Islanders’ history of Blackbirding in the Pacific to the enslavement of Africans, connecting deep local memories to an international story” (Banivanua Mar 2016: 200).

Melanesian *négritude* was communicated through the arts as well as in politics. Developments at the elite level, such as in literature—poetry, plays, novels—and art, have been well-documented. Less well known, however, are popular expressions, including dance and music, which as intimated at the beginning of this article had the potential to reach a wider local audience. In 1977, for example, Richard Talonga, a founding member of the Aboriginal Islander Dance Theatre (AIDT) performing group and a “Blackbirder” descendant of South Sea Island labourers in Queensland, toured to Nigeria with three members of that group to perform in the World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (Robinson 2000: 110). In the same year, members of the AIDT toured to Tahiti, New Caledonia and Papua New Guinea.

In the mid-1970s, Goroka Teacher’s College (now the University of Goroka) (PNG) staged performances of the 1974 South African musical theatre work *Ipi Tombi*, and took it on tour to other major PNG centres. The formation of the pan-traditional fusion band Sanguma at the Creative Arts Centre (CAC) in Port Moresby, PNG, in 1977, was clearly related to the *négritude* ideas circulating at UPNG at the time (Crowdy 2016: 16–19), since it involved the nurturing of pride in and knowledge of local traditions. But it also involved a nascent *indigénitude*, through its concern over the loss of local music diversity in the face of rapid social and cultural change (Crowdy 2016: 22, 26). Expatriate CAC lecturers worked with students as they developed a new kind of local music, one that was not merely imitative of foreign forms (Crowdy 2016: 21–22, 34–35). The Black and ethnic pride bands Osibisa and Santana were among the few well-known models for such an idea.

One of the most striking musical realisations of Black consciousness in the region came from West Papua in the 1970s and 1980s, by way of that territory's renowned rock-reggae fusion band, the Black Brothers. Formed in 1974, the band expressed its anti-colonial Black Power politics, most obviously through its name, style and stance. Band members sported Afro hairstyles, berets, black leather jackets and sunglasses, and posed with their fists raised, thus making "direct reference to racial pride and political solidarity of the seventies Afro-American tradition [which] to Jakarta ... might as well have been 'Black Panthers'" (Pickell 2002: 225). We have discussed elsewhere the Black Brothers' musical links to the Nigerian percussionist Babatunde Olatunji and the Latin rock band Santana (Webb and Webb-Gannon 2016: 66–67). The band's sound contained obvious political and musical affinities with the music of the above-mentioned British Afro-Caribbean Black pride band, Osibisa, which formed in 1969. This can be clearly heard in that band's 1971 song "Survival", and in the Black Brothers' song "Huembelo" of the late 1970s (Black Brothers, n.d.). By 1980, however, the Black Brothers had turned towards the Black Atlantic styles of reggae and disco, as well as sentimental pop styles familiar to their fans in Indonesia. In keeping with their opposition to the Indonesian occupation of West Papua, in the 1980s the band self-exiled to PNG, and later, Vanuatu. The Black Brothers' songs were popular across Melanesia in the 1980s, and some of these called for West Papuan independence. Their activism extended to concern for the environment across the Pacific Islands in those years, which can be discerned from their songs "Nuclear Waste" (2010a) and "Pacific Must Be Free" (2010b).

There was both musical and political cross-fertilisation between the Black Brothers and Sanguma at the time. While in Holland in 1982, the Black Brothers recorded the Sanguma song "Yalikoe" (retitled "Jaliko"), having heard it during a tour of PNG in 1979 (Crowdy 2016: 48). The record cover iconography (Black Brothers 1994) promoted the band as clearly West Papuan and Indigenous, which strongly suggests the influence of Sanguma. As noted at the outset, shortly afterwards Sanguma member Tony Subam recorded a reggae song promoting West Papuan independence in which he lyrically compared Indonesian occupation of West Papua with apartheid in South Africa.

Another band formed in the 1980s, Black Sweet, some of whose members came from the Melanesian Kei Islands of Maluku, also became popular in West Papua. Visually, Black Sweet combined the Black Power and Indigenous elements of the Black Brothers' earlier and later styles. Black Sweet included former members the Black Brothers and yet another popular political band, the Black Papas. "Papas" is a pun as well as an acronym for Papua Pasifik Selatan (South Pacific Papua), which links Papua to the Pacific rather than

Asia and so conveys the band’s anti-colonial stance (Pickell 2002: 225). The Black power image and anti-colonial messages of this cluster of bands—which included a further two, one actually named Black Power and another, Black Family (Pace Bro 2017)—are clear evidence that Black consciousness and connections to Black Atlantic aesthetics had by the 1970s become a major source of inspiration in the arts-inspired Melanesian decolonisation movements of the time.

In 1984, the Australian Aboriginal reggae song “Black Boy” by Coloured Stone became popular across the Pacific Islands. Its message of Black pride invigorated many Melanesians: “Black boy / black boy / the colour of your skin is your pride and joy”. According to the band’s songwriter, Bunna Lawrie, “In New Caledonia it resonated so much with radio listeners that the local station listed Coloured Stone at number one and Michael Jackson at number two” (Cacetta 2017). In comparing Coloured Stone to Michael Jackson, Lawrie was not merely pointing out parallels between Melanesia and the Black Atlantic. He was both delighted and gratified that Melanesians had found a “local” Black pride song ultimately more appealing than a Michael Jackson global “megahit”. Here, Black Pacific sentiment was found to be an antidote to Melanesian alienation from the self, allowing the internal identity rift that Du Bois identified as double consciousness to flourish into the global alliance of black and brown people that he saw as its radical possibility.

Colonisation (and its legacy) has been both deeply felt and deeply resented in Melanesia. This is clearly conveyed by the New Ireland (PNG) man¹⁰ interviewed in Dennis O’Rourke’s 1982 film, *Shark Callers of Kontu*:

First the Germans came to rule us. [German administrator] Boluminski [...] gave a big stick to his police-boys, and they took over our lives. Their [white] officers would say, “Teach the Kanakas a lesson. Cane them and beat them until they understand who is the boss”. Then the English took over. If we tried to approach them, they would say, “Clear off!” Their behaviour was uncivilised. They trained some of our people to speak English and do their work, and so the pattern was set forever. The Japanese came to fight but they didn’t do so well. They lost, and the Australians took over. We were confused by what you all [the whites] were doing to us. All the time officials were telling us what to do. It’s still the same today. Little has changed—now it’s our own people who boss us. (Transcribed from the film subtitles)

In the view of this villager, the abuses of power under the colonial system became part of its legacy. To recall Kasaipwalova’s words (quoted above), “black man mistrust himself [*sic*] and shows a positive lack of confidence in his fellow men” (Nelson 1972: 184).

Decades on, politics at the nation-state level are considered a “relatively insignificant abstraction” (Solis 2012: 87) for many people in Melanesia, possibly as a result of a kind of expectation fatigue. Also, in Tarcisius Kabutaulaka’s view, the “Melanesian Way” that Bernard Narokobi articulated through print media “to the majority of people ... meant little or nothing” (1994: 71). To the extent that they engaged aspects of the *négritude* movement, Melanesian politicians and writers between the 1960s and 1980s attempted to connect Melanesian elites with the global Black Power and decolonisation movements, but these were slow to reach those living outside urban areas. Music went some way towards filling this role, and the impact at the time of the ideas and mood of Black and ethnic pride promoted by the bands Sanguma and (in particular) the Black Brothers should not be underestimated.

A Second Wave—Melanesian Indigènitude

In the years following the political independence of Fiji (1970), PNG (1975), Solomon Islands (1978) and Vanuatu (1980), the impact and influence of Melanesian *négritude* began to lessen as the new countries established their own political, economic and social-cultural rhythms and a general mood of optimism prevailed, albeit briefly. But the continuing occupation of West Papua and New Caledonia was unsettling. Throughout the 1980s, political and cultural leaders of these territories worked steadily in their attempts to disturb and dislodge the colonial presence, to strive for their right to self-determination. Around this time, Gardner and Waters note, “the new discourse of globalization” gained credence, and from the outside the extent of sovereignty in the new Melanesian states began to be questioned (2013: 116).

Indigenous agency shifted towards what James Clifford has termed *indigènitude* (2013: 16). This was already apparent at the beginning of the 1980s in the music and self-representational aesthetics of the Black Brothers and Sanguma, as we have pointed out. “Like *négritude*”, writes Clifford, “*indigènitude* is a vision of liberation and cultural difference that challenges, or at least redirects, the modernizing agendas of nation-states and transnational capitalism” (2013: 16). He continues:

Indigènitude is less a coherent ideology than a concatenation of sources and projects. It operates at multiple scales: local traditions (kinship, language renewal, subsistence hunting, protection of sacred sites); national agendas and symbols (Hawai’ian sovereignty, Mayan politics in Guatemala, Maori mobilizations in Aotearoa/New Zealand); and transnational activism (“Red Power” from the global sixties, or today’s social movements around cultural values, the environment, and identity, movements often allied with NGOs). (Clifford 2013: 16)

Amidst the volatile anti-colonial climate in New Caledonia of the mid-1980s, in Montravel, the so-called Melanesian city located on the outskirts of Nouméa, Théo Menango and Kanak musicians from various parts of the country founded the band Yata. The name is back slang (word play where words are spoken as though spelled backwards) for the Kanak chief Ataï, who in 1878 led an organised uprising against the French. As Menango explains:

We chose this name because he [Ataï] is a forefather, and at the same time, everybody was talking about Karl Marx, and other famous people in the world. We felt that it was necessary to show that we are descended from our grandfathers who were symbolic figures in the history of our country. It is a duty of remembrance to immortalise such figures. (Menango n.d., translated from French)¹¹

Out of identification with the Black Pride movement in the United States, Yata promoted a new musical fusion of soul, funk, disco and the local guitar idiom.¹² According to Menango, “at the time we didn’t realise that [our album was] being produced by Jean-Marie Tjibaou through the OCSTK, the Kanak Cultural, Scientific and Technical Office” (Menango 2016).

As a young priest in the late 1960s, Tjibaou, who went on to become one of Melanesia’s greatest independence leaders, had worked with youth in Montravel, during which time he became aware of the great need to foster pride in Kanak culture (Théophile Menango, interview with Michael Webb, 1 December 2017, Nouméa). Later (in the 1980s), with the encouragement of the ethnomusicologist Jean-Michel Beaudet, Tjibaou and several other Kanak leaders envisioned the formation of what might be called an *indigénitude* musicology, one not unrelated to that conceived by the Senegalese poet and statesman Léopold Senghor’s “*négritude* musicology” as outlined by Tsitsi Jaji (2014: 66–110). Through workshops, they encouraged the fusion of the style elements and political stance of reggae with the traditional “tchap” rhythm and sound of the Indigenous leaf parcel and bark clapper idiophones and other customary instruments, in the creation of a new style of music that became known as *kaneka*.

One Kanak musician described *kaneka* as “the modernisation of the ancestors’ *pilou* [traditional dance] adapted to our time” (quoted in Ammann 1998: 12). As Emmanuel Tjibaou (Jean-Marie’s son) explains,

The groups of the first wave of *kaneka* deal essentially with identity claims: accession to sovereignty, recognition, the need to say who we are, not only Kanak, but to say that we are of such a village, that one speaks such language, etc. They also speak of “colonial justice”: many people were imprisoned during the Events [the bitter resistance struggle of the 1980s]; the justice of the day was strongly in favour of the power in place. (Bensignor 2013: 19, translated from French)

On this second point, many *kaneka* songs in the 1980s and 1990s commemorated resistance leaders such as Eloi Machoro and Tjibaou who lost their lives in the struggle. In the lyrics of their song “Kaneka”, Krysband declared, “kaneka is our reggae” (Ammann 1998: 19). In the new millennium *kaneka* songs began to focus on topics celebrating aspects of Indigenous identity.

The rise of *indigènitude* worldwide in the 1980s and 1990s has been associated with neo-liberal reforms that “compromised the viability of indigenous communities and undermined their relationship with the state” (Anderson 2011: 107). In New Caledonia and West Papua, the performance of *indigènitude* might also have been guided by a desire to develop decolonisation strategies that drew strength from local ideas and cultural commonalities. Although the intention of Melanesian *négritude* was to positively reconceptualise the blackness that had been central to Melanesian double consciousness, it was nevertheless Atlantic-oriented, and hinged on connections to outsiders, that is, Black Atlantic political activists, philosophers and artists. Problematically for Kanaks and West Papuans, by the 1980s Black Atlantic activists and the Black Pacific leaders of independent PNG, Fiji, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands became less concerned with the political independence of remaining colonies. Hence with the diminishing of wider Black support, Kanaks and West Papuans turned inward to Indigenous heritage and customs in their address of continuing colonialism and neo-colonialism.

For Clifford, *indigènitude* is “performed” (Clifford 2013: 16). Jean-Marie Tjibaou, mentioned above, organised the Melanesia 2000 festival in 1975 to put New Caledonia’s Indigenous cultures on display as a means to foster Kanak pride and bolster confidence in local living heritage. Tjibaou hoped to convince Kanaks that colonialism and double consciousness had not been fatal to their culture and ultimate wellbeing. He wrote:

If Kanaké’s ancestors returned in the year 2000, they would recognise the man by his name. They would recognise his system of ritual, his genealogies, the structure of his customs, his language, even though impoverished, his humour, in a word the way he lives his life, as he has through history. (Tjibaou 2005:31)

Similarly, in West Papua the independence leader and ethnologist Arnold Ap collected and archived songs and performances from Indigenous groups across West Papua in order to protect them from systematic eradication (Elmslie and Webb-Gannon 2012), as well as assert West Papuan cultural vitality and agency. In the absence of weapons, West Papuans resisted with culture (Glazebrook 2006; Rayfiel 2007). Tragically, both leaders were assassinated: Tjibaou in 1989 by a disaffected member of the independence movement, and Ap in 1984 by Indonesian military personnel.

Musicians elsewhere in Melanesia also began to perform *indigènitude*; the popularity on the global world music festival circuit of the Narasirato Pan Pipers of Malaita, Solomon Islands, is but one prominent example. Following the Pacific War musicians in the Western Solomons experimented with new instruments and tunings (Topurua 1996), which resulted in the establishment of a so-called bamboo band tradition (Webb 2014). Founded in the early 1990s, the Narasirato Pan Pipers later had an Asia-Pacific “top ten” hit with the song “My Culture Is My Life”,¹³ a lively two-chord piece stamped out on bamboo bass tubes and blown on pantrumpets and panpipes, with the addition of traditional percussion and vocals. One of the ensemble’s few songs sung in English, the lyrics include the following lines:

My culture is my reality [...] / Let’s say “Be careful or you lose your culture”
 / ‘Cause it’s your life and identity / It protects your path towards your future
 (now) / [...] Identify your culture / It’s your virtue and value / Your life / Your
 reality. (Narasirato Pan Pipers 2007)

In his subsequent career as a solo performer, former member Charles Maimarosia, who sang the lead vocal on “My Culture”, claims to have “found a unique bridge between ancestral pan pipe music [and] Blues tunes” (Maimarosia, n.d.).¹⁴ The meaning of “Blues” here is not immediately obvious—Maimarosia describes ‘Are ‘Are panpipes as being constructed to play the “blues scale” and “jazz scale”—but there are two mutually compatible ways of thinking about it. The first is to note that terms like blues and jazz have travelled globally somewhat independently of the relatively fixed meanings they have in their culture of origin, and so for instance, the term “jazz” came to describe a range of forward-looking bands featuring horns in Francophone West and Central Africa, such as T.P.O.K. Jazz in the Congo and Bembeya Jazz in Guinea. At the same time, it is notable that in the popular bamboo band music that emerged in the Solomon Islands after World War II there is a strong presence of “boogie woogie” bass patterns which sound very much like the blues-based popular songs African American GIs would have listened to when they were present in Melanesia. Whatever Maimarosia means by “Blues” more specifically, he is certainly connecting himself with Black Atlantic popular music.

Over the decades Indigenous-led movements in New Caledonia and West Papua kept independence hopes alive, and by 2010 a renewed Pacific Island *indigènitude* and a re-inspired Pacific *négritude* had become almost indistinguishable. This new wave of counter-colonial sentiment, or Pacific renaissance (Dateline Pacific 2016; Mackley-Crump 2015; Newton-Cain 2016) has raised the issue of decolonisation, in West Papua at least, to top priority status among key Pacific Island political and non-governmental

organisations. The momentum driving this most recent surge in identity politics in the Pacific derives, we believe, from a new sense of Melanesian grassroots empowerment enabled by digital networking, reengagement with the symbolism of the post-war Black Power movement and the strategic deployment of the “symbolic repertoire” of *indigénitude* (“the sacred”, ‘Mother Earth’, ‘shamanism’, sovereignty’, the wisdom of ‘elders’, stewardship of ‘the land’”) [Clifford 2013: 16]).

In Melanesia in the 1980s, *négritude* intermingled with an inchoate *indigénitude* in the music and style of the Black Brothers, as discussed above. In this second wave of Pacific anti-colonial sentiment, the Black Sistaz, a vocal trio comprising the daughters of that band’s vocalist and guitarist August Rumwaropen, Petra, Lea and Rosa, are maintaining their father’s vision for a free West Papua. They cite as a source of inspiration women leaders of the Black Power movement of the 1970s, including the former US Black Panther Elaine Brown (Heine 2017). In the image on their website homepage, they appear dressed in black and prominently display pig’s-tusk necklaces, while posing with their fists raised, Black-Panther style (Black Sistaz 2016). The Black Sistaz’ repertoire includes traditional songs from West Papua, such as those collected by Arnold Ap. It is worth noting that several groups committed to keeping Ap’s archive in circulation label themselves “Black”: Black Paradise based in Jayapura, West Papua, and Black Orchid in Melbourne, Australia.

Powes Parkop, Governor of PNG’s National Capital District, brought the surviving members of the Black Brothers and also the Black Sistaz to Port Moresby in 2016, for the 41st anniversary of national independence celebrations. At a press conference for the event, manager Andy Ayamiseba stated: “Black Brothers is more than a music—it’s a movement” (EMTV Online 2016). Across Melanesia, the Black Brothers and Black Sistaz have become a multivalent “performance” celebration of Black and Indigenous power and identity, promoting the cause of decolonisation in Melanesia.

This so-called Pacific renaissance has involved the revival of Black Power politics, and while links with the Black Atlantic are still evident they are no longer dominant in its unfolding. Robbie Shilliam’s statement concerning Aotearoa/New Zealand applies more widely, including to Melanesia. He writes that we have “witnessed a subtle shift from identifying with Blackness to inhabiting Blackness on indigenous grounds” (Shilliam 2015: 107). The Pacific renaissance is marked by Pacific Islanders’ merging of Black Atlantic cultural components and Black consciousness with Indigenous cultures for their own decolonisation purposes. The Black Atlantic has been “Pasifika-ised” through an increasing focus in particular on Melanesia’s self-determination movements, in West Papua especially.

This is illustrated in the way prominent Pacific Island musicians, including the band Te Vaka, have supported the West Papua independence movement. Andrew Faleatua’s 2015 song “To the West”¹⁵ combines elements of Black Atlantic and Polynesian musical styles. A soul-gospel ballad, it is sung with emotion over a beat based on a sampled Sāmoan traditional rhythm; other sound signifiers of Pacific Island *indigènitude* in the recording include a conch shell. The lyrics contain the lines:

Can you see the broken dreams / To the west to the West Papua
 The tears of blood raining down / To the west to the West Papua
 Lest we forget the blood of our own line / Lest we forget all the roots of the tree
 Lest we forget we wail when the ocean cries / Lest we forget Pasifika yeah.
 (Faleatua 2015)

The first two lines refer to broken dreams of independence and the brutal physical treatment and murder of West Papuan dissenters by Indonesian soldiers. In the second pair, Faleatua defines Pasifika to include West Papuan Melanesians, who he considers “our own line”, roots of one Pacific tree and people of one ocean.

Social media, in addition to arts media, has enhanced Melanesian Black agency. In the past, West Papuans have been blocked by an Indonesian Government media ban from disseminating news of the atrocities being carried out against them. Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, however, have nullified Indonesia’s ban on international media and enabled West Papuans to join a global Black consciousness movement at the same time as publicising their own.

Lyrically, the song “Free West Papua (Unity Riddim) Solwara System”¹⁶ by the Fijian musician Wilo Usuramo points to role of new media in alerting the outside world to what is happening in West Papua. It begins with what sounds like an inversion of the opening line of the Australian Aboriginal band Yothu Yindi’s major hit “Treaty” (1991):

Say we see it upon da news and we heard it upon the radio / Read about it on
 Facebook Indonesia being the crook / Politicians telling lies but their soldiers’
 selfies tell no lie / See dem walking with dem smiles as if we the world are blind /
 But we can see all the killings done in West Papua / Innocent people with the
 right to live rise up West Papua (rise up rise up). (Usuramo 2015)

The word “Riddim” in the title relays that it is a reggae song, and “Solwara System” is a play on the *wansolwara* (Melanesian pidgin, ‘one or the same ocean’) unity concept and on the notion of a Jamaican sound system, the public broadcasting of the latest popular recordings. Usuramo delivers his

lyrics in a kind of patwa, which is common in Melanesian roots reggae songs, particularly those from Vanuatu. This excerpt is mostly self-explanatory; however, the reference to soldiers' selfies alludes to a case where Indonesian soldiers posed next to the mutilated body of a West Papuan man. The image was leaked and widely circulated via the Internet in order to draw attention to such human rights abuses as were clearly taking place.

All around Melanesia, too, civil society has been organising in support of West Papuan independence, and since 2010, literally dozens of protest songs advocating a "Free West Papua" have been produced by non-West Papuan Melanesians as a symbol of solidarity and circulated via YouTube, Facebook and SoundCloud. The majority of these songs are in the Black Atlantic genres of reggae and hip hop, but the content of the songs is Melanesian, relying on tropes such as *wantok* (Melanesian pidgin for 'one talk', speakers of the same language) and *wansolwara* to unite Melanesians in support of West Papua (Webb-Gannon and Webb, forthcoming).

The Indigenous Melanesian concept of *wansolwara* has become the call rallying the entire Pacific Islands region behind West Papua as a new Black power movement, and in shaping the Black Pacific not as a Black Atlantic counterpoint but rather an endogenous movement with longstanding Atlantic articulations. In 2014, the late Pacific poet and scholar Teresia Teaiwa attended a gathering of artists, academics and activists in PNG that was titled the Madang Wansolwara Dance 2014. It was called a "dance" rather than a "conference" due to its creative focus and structure. Interestingly, for the workshop a song known to all the attendees was required, and the Solomon Islands hit from the late 1950s, "Wokabaoti long Saenataone" (Walkabout in Chinatown), which has been widely covered over the years in versions from Fiji to West Papua, was selected. The original lyrics convey "love for and fear of an urban life-style", which many found "exciting and threatening" at the same time (Jourdan 1995: 142). New song lyrics in Tok Pisin in support of West Papuan independence were composed to replace the original lyrics in Solomon Islands Pijin (Fig. 1). A new Black version of the original Indigenous song was the result, one that involved a switch in the pidgin language used.

The point of the event, according to Teaiwa, was to "re-ignite a movement of solidarity across the Pacific", particularly in relation to decolonisation issues (Fightback 2014). The *wansolwara* movement "really fills a gap", Teaiwa reflected, "that was left when the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP) movement fell into inertia in the late 1990s and early 2000s" (Fightback 2014). The Wansolwara Dance inspired Teaiwa to continue building awareness in New Zealand that West Papua was under colonial occupation (Fightback 2014).

Original chorus	Translation
<i>Tingting baek long iu</i>	Thoughts go back to you
<i>Lusim hom long taem</i>	Left home long ago
<i>Tu yia ova mi no lukim iu</i>	It's over two years since I've seen you
<i>Tasawai mi no laekim iu</i>	That's why I don't love you
<i>Man i karangge hed i lusim mani</i>	A confused man who fritters money away
New chorus	Translation
<i>Morning Star sanap strong</i>	Morning Star* stand firm
<i>Yumi kam wantaim yu</i>	Let us go forward with you
<i>Sainim lait na yumi go</i>	Shining the light as we go
<i>Yumi wokabaut i go</i>	Let us be on the move
<i>Yumi wansolwara yumi wanpela</i>	We are from the same ocean we are one people
	* The West Papua flag

Figure 1. Comparison of Wokabaoti long Saenataone (Walkabout in Chinatown) lyrics with those for the Wansolwara Dance song, Walkabout, Long Madang Town (2014).

* * *

The Solomon Islands reggae band Jah Roots sang in its 2008 song “Blackman’s Culture”¹⁷: “If you won’t respect your colour / then you will not respect your culture” (Jah Roots 2008). For Jah Roots, being Black and Indigenous is part of a whole: black because Melanesian, Black because the music is roots reggae, and Indigenous because of the emphasis on local culture, with traditional seed rattles prominent in the musical mix. Herein lies the significance of Melanesian *indigènitude* for the Black Pacific, we have argued. Melanesians were made to believe that their blackness was undesirable, and this led to a sense of double consciousness. From the mid-19th century Melanesians became aware of the agency of Atlantic black people, and some attempted to appropriate this through mimesis, which included the adoption of Black Atlantic music styles. Music has remained a connecting line in the pursuit of decolonisation, an emotional balm in battling double consciousness. For the Australian South Sea Islander hip hop group Impossible Odds, Black Atlantic music’s value in identity terms

is inestimable. In the song and video “Everything”, Fred Leone raps such childhood recollections as “Singing in the bath Bob Marley, Charlie Pride”, and Georgia Corowa sings of growing up “strumming on your own guitar / thinking you were B.B. King / some big jazz star” (Impossible Odds 2011).¹⁸

As a result of meeting African American servicemen during the Pacific War and learning of the impact of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements in the USA, as well as the decolonisation of Africa and the Caribbean, Melanesian artists and politicians alike were invigorated and emboldened by Atlantic Blackness. Following the independence of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, the interest in Black consciousness-inspired politics waned, however. The intellectual elites who had espoused them became caught up in running the newly independent governments and supporting institutions of the four young states. The *négritude* movement failed to make a deep impact at the popular level.

Négritude nevertheless lived on to inform the performance of *indigénitude*, which led to the rise of the *kaneka* sound in New Caledonia around 1990, and since 2010 in the stream of local reggae and hip hop songs demanding a free West Papua (Webb-Gannon and Webb, forthcoming). With Melanesians’ expanding connectedness and digital citizenship, *négritude* has increasingly become an activist philosophy of the people, where it is merged with *indigénitude* in Facebook groups such as “Black Pacific” (n.d.) and “We Bleed Black and Red” (n.d.), collectives which support West Papuan self-determination. Since around 2010, *négritude* (with *indigénitude*) has fuelled a grassroots Melanesian movement and a Pacific renaissance in support of decolonisation in West Papua and other anti-colonial causes including protection of the environment.

Melanesians do not experience blackness and indigeneity as mutually exclusive categories but rather as “modalities of identity formation” that are “mutually entangled” (Anderson 2009: 21, 22). At various points historically, *négritude* and *indigénitude* have proven to be valuable resources in Melanesians’ protracted and ongoing struggle against colonisation and its long shadow. It is worth noting here that in many ways, despite their distinct terminology, *négritude* and *indigénitude* spring from the same epistemological mould—namely from a sense that the autochthonous black or brown self can offer the base for an integrated, holistic identity. In this regard both are opposed to the other major Francophone postcolonial epistemology, *créolité*, which asserts that the Black cultures of the Atlantic world have the capacity to become universal, to represent what Glissant calls the “*tout-monde*” because of their inherently multiple perspectives, their incorporation of doubleness (Camal 2012; Martin 2008; Griffiths 2014).

Moving between *négritude* and *indigénitude*, by contrast, Melanesians have made music that indicates a global, if not universal, culture and politics that stems from linked particularities rather than from merging into the *tout-monde*. From the 1980s in particular, they have drawn strength from these performed modes to heal the challenges posed by the double consciousness they inherited as a result of being designated the “black islanders”. Working to invert the intended meanings of that racial construct, they have helped shape an emerging Black Pacific.

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NOTES

1. Bronwen Douglas writes that the French navigator Dumont d’Urville’s “demeaning racial stereotype of Melanesians was significantly shaped by experiences in Vanikoro” in the Santa Cruz group of islands in the Solomon Islands in 1828, when his party was repeatedly intimidated by local armed men (Douglas 2010: 17). Since colonising West Papua in 1962, Indonesia has perpetuated the denigration of that territory’s Melanesian population.
2. Throughout the paper we employ the lowercase /b/ to refer to the pejorative labelling of Melanesians according to various shades of phenotypic “blackness”, and the uppercase /B/ to indicate political-cultural Blackness.
3. See Gilroy (1993: 74–75). The role of music and of organic intellectuals in spreading discourses of *négritude* is not limited to Melanesia. Writing in the journal *Africa Today* in 1967, W.A. Jeanpierre (1967: 10) pointed to soul music as “la *négritude des sources*”, that is, *négritude* at its roots.
4. Space constraints preclude us from exploring here the ways *négritude* and *indigénitude* relate to the Melanesian notion of *kastom*. Anthropologists see Narokobi’s “Melanesian Way” (referred to below) as an early and not particularly sophisticated form of *kastom* discourse (Lindstrom 2008: 165). As Lindstrom explains, “Kastom was, and is, a rhetoric based on the selected recognition of some, though not all, elements of what anthropologists like to call ‘culture’. It is not the same thing as culture, at least in the anthropological sense of this” (Lindstrom 2008: 165). The song “My Culture Is My Life” by Narasirato Pan Pipers of the Solomon Islands, discussed below, is perhaps an example of the overlap between *indigénitude* and *kastom*, although it is possible that the song was prompted as much by the band’s interactions with musicians and audiences

at international festivals as it was from local reflections. To reiterate, our focus in this paper is on Melanesian links with Black transnationalism. Absent from our account as well is how the developments we discuss fit with Melanesian expressions of Christianity, although we are aware that there are significant intersections (see for example Webb 2015).

5. See also Tjibaou (2005: 23–24).
6. In the second section we concentrate on the two remaining settler states in Melanesia, New Caledonia and West Papua. For details pertaining to the situation in the former Melanesian colonies, see Webb and Webb-Gannon (forthcoming).
7. On James Cook’s second Pacific voyage, the ship *Resolution* included a black man, James Tobias Swilley, who was servant to the ship’s carpenter. He was, however, among the crewmen of that ship that were killed in New Zealand in December 1773, before Cook sailed through Melanesian waters.
8. According to Lawson (2015), this was at a time when black Francophone intellectuals elsewhere were beginning to distance themselves from the movement due to mounting perceptions of its elitism and essentialism.
9. Narokobi’s “Melanesian Way” could also be considered an early iteration of Melanesian *indigenitude*, given its appeal to Melanesian traditional ways of life as the values foundation of new Melanesian nation-states.
10. The man is not named in the film.
11. It appears that Menango had come under the influence of the Kanak priest Fr. Apollinaire, who in a thesis completed in Paris as part of post-graduate study proposed Ataï “as a hero and model for the Melanesian people” (Waddell 2008: 57).
12. In part, the band built on the earlier recordings of the early Kanak “protest singer” Jean-Pierre Swan, who had been studying in France at the time of the 1968 student riots. Swan stated in an interview that upon his return from France, he introduced the Afro hairdo and elements of what he called the “beatnik” style to young Kanaks (Jean-Pierre Swan, interview with Michael Webb, 1 December 2017, Nouméa).
13. “My Culture Is My Life” by Narasirato Pan Pipers can be heard on Spotify.
14. Maimarosia’s recent solo album is titled *‘Are ‘are*, after the name of his language and cultural group.
15. “To the West” by Andrew Faleatua can be heard on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UVhAZoFB3LM>
16. “Free West Papua (Unity Riddim) Solwara System” by Wilo Usuramo can be heard on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytC9Q1aYTM0>
17. “Blackman’s Culture” by Jah Roots can be heard on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEBL8Yrolrg>
18. “Everything” by Impossible Odds can be heard on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWBsBPG1nxU>

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ABSTRACT

In the 19th century Melanesians were pejoratively labelled black by European maritime explorers (*mela* = black; *nesia* = islands). Emerging scholarship on the Black Pacific focuses on historical and contemporary identifications and articulations between Oceanian and African diasporic peoples, cultures and politics based upon shared Otherness to colonial occupiers. This essay contributes to such scholarship by presenting a perspective from Melanesia with a focus on music, a popular form of countercolonial expression. It examines in two broad phases person-to-person and person-to-text encounters with Atlantic-based notions of Black Power and *négritude*. The Pacific War serves as a dividing line and turning point, during and following which such encounters began to intensify. The discussion links these African diasporic intellectual traditions/discourses/epistemologies with that of *indigénitude*, that is, performed global expressions of Indigenoussness, through allusions to Black transnationalism and the ways both movements address the “inferiority confusion” that arose from experiences of colonisation. It demonstrates how in the last 35 years in particular, Melanesians have worked to invert the demeaning intention of their colonial racial construction and, in the process, have helped to create what may now be thought of as the Black Pacific.

Keywords: Black Pacific, Melanesia, *indigénitude*, *négritude*, decolonisation, popular music

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