

Gipson Suu's speech, Bard's Apothecary, 22 April 2026

When I was a kid in Nalca, my uncle used to hunt wild pigs, and one day he brought home a small cassowary for me and my friends to look after. We were cruel and threw rocks at it. Has anyone here been chased by a cassowary? No? They are pretty scary. They can run at 50 kilometres an hour. They can jump up 1 or 2 metres. We had to climb a tree to escape its vicious beak and claws. So, I never imagined that I would write a story with a cassowary as a hero of our independence struggle.

Jacob and the Cassowary actually began as an English exercise, but somehow developed into something else. When it was finished we asked a number of artists to illustrate it, but they all said the story was too political. I felt discouraged and hopeless. And then I met Michael Molony at his art exhibition in an Irish bar, this bar, Bard's Apothecary. I told him about West Papua, and all the political issues, and Indonesia's oppression, and bingo, he agreed to paint my story.

It has been a great honour and a blessing for me to work with Michael. I will never forget his kindness. And his paintings of our country, our people, our animals, is fresh, and new, and exciting. Even our enemies look okay.

Our book has attracted a lot of interest, but I wonder if anyone has noticed the difference in the mountains at the beginning of the book, and the mountains at the back of the book. They are different mountains. My family has lived in the chain of mountains that runs from west to east through New Guinea for thousands of years, and those mountains are at the front of the book. The mountain at the back of the book is Mount Langhi Ghiran, at the south edge of the Great Dividing Range. Near Beaufort, and Ararat. Didn't Moses build his ark at Ararat? So, if my clan, the Suu, want to meet the Molony clan, we just have to walk down to Merauke, swim across Torres Strait, hop onto the Great Dividing Range, walk a couple of thousand kilometres, then turn right, and presto, we are in Molony territory. Easy. We can do it.

Now, before I finish, I want to thank all the Patrons from the bottom of my heart for paying for this book to be printed. And also Carmel and Matt for hosting this launch in their lovely bar. We all believe the book will give readers a new understanding of West Papuans and our liberation struggle, and will encourage them to help us get our independence. Perob Perob Waaaaa Waaaa Waaaa.