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Place, Race, and the Politics of Identity in the Geography of Garinagu Baündada

Doris Garcia

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

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PLACE, RACE, AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY IN
THE GEOGRAPHY OF GARINAGU BAÜNDADA

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Geography & Anthropology

by

Doris Garcia

B.A., City College of New York, 2002

M.S., Central Connecticut State University, 2006

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Map of Honduras in Central America
Prepared by: Paul Karolczyk and Doris Garcia

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CABEI	Central American Bank for Economic Integration
CAHDEA	Consejo Asesor Hondureño para el Desarrollo de las Etnias Autóctonas (Honduran Advisory Council for the Development of Autochthonic Ethnic Groups)
CAMANTUG	Nacional Cámara de Turismo Garifuna (National Garifuna Tourism Chamber)
CARICOM	Caribbean Community and Common Market
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CODETT	Comité de Defensa de Tierras de Triunfo (Defense Committee for Triunfo Land)
CONDECOGA	Coordinación Nacional para el Desarrollo de las Comunidades de los Garifunas (National Coordination for the Development of the Garifunas Communities)
CURLA	Centro Universitario Regional del Litoral Atlántico (Regional University Center of the Atlantic Coastline)
ELAM	Escuela Latinoamericana de Medicina (Latin American School of Medicine)
ENMUNEH	Enlace de Mujeres Negras de Honduras (Link of Black Women of Honduras)
FDN	Fuerza Democrática Nicaraguense (Nicaraguan Democratic Force)
FEDOHNY	Federación de Organizaciones Hondureña de Nueva York (Federation of Honduran Organizations of New York)
FSLN	Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (The Sandinista National Liberation Front)
GAPAC	Garifuna Political Action Committee
GCU	Garifuna Coalition, USA, Inc.
HAMPAC	Honduran American Political Action Committee
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INA	Instituto Nacional Agrario (National Agrarian Institute)
IPM	Instituto de Previsión Militar (Institute of Military Prevision)
LAM	Ley para la Modernización y Desarrollo del Sector Agrícola (Modernization and Development of the Agricultural Sector)
MUGAMA	Mujeres Garifunas en Marcha Pro-Educación (Women on the Move Pro-Education)

N'COBRA	National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America
NYCLU	New York Civil Liberties Union
NYPD	New York City Police Department
ODECO	Organización de Desarrollo Étnico Comunitario (Ethnic Community Development Organization)
OFRANEH	Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña (The Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras)
ONECA	Organización Negra Centroamericana (Central American Black Organization)
OAS	Organization of American States
SEDINAFROH	Secretaría de Estado en los Despachos de Pueblos Indígenas y Afrohondureños (Secretariat of State in the Ministry of Indigenous and Afro-Honduran)
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programs
SOA	School of the Americas
UNAH	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras (National Autonomous University of Honduras)
UNIA	Universal Negro Improvement Association
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WCAR	United Nations World Conference Against Racism
WHINSEC	Western Hemisphere Institute for Security and Cooperation
WGO	World Garifuna Organization
WOLA	Washington Office on Latin America

ABSTRACT

The Garinagu, who are commonly referred to by the name of their language, Garifuna, emerged out of the historical geographical processes of colonialism and capitalism on Saint Vincent Island in the Lesser Antilles. Exiled by the British to New Spain's Captaincy General of Guatemala in 1797, the Garinagu formed communities and cultural bonds to the land, namely, but not exclusively, along the north coast of the territory that would become part of the Honduran nation-state in 1821. Today, the Garinagu are rapidly becoming a landless population. Since the mid-1970s, the Honduran government has pursued the expansion of tourism on the north coast against the Garinagu's opposition. By the early 1990s, the Honduran government and oligarchs expanded cattle ranching and palm oil monoculture plantations into the area. Using critical ethnography, I chart the contradictions created under capitalism by the state and elite-led socio-economic reproduction of Honduras' north coast. I apply geographical concepts of place, race, and the politics of identity to show that place is a repository of tensions, conflicts, and practices since it is in place that human form social relations (e.g. class, gender, race, identities). These concepts help to explain the fragmentation of the Garinagu from a self-sustaining and closely bonded communal society into a fragmented and landless society. I refer to the Garinagu in this manner because the new state and elite-shaped social relations on Honduras' north coast and the cultural values assimilated from the Garinagu migration to the United States have undoubtedly transformed the Garifuna society's relationship with place. My central research question asks: how has the Honduran government's ideology of economic development and the global economic forces fragmented the Garifuna society? I investigate the economic policies implemented by the Honduran government which are connected to global economic forces and political economy to illustrate how the Garinagu's historical land struggle

and the construction of race have shaped their experience, identity, and relationship with place. Moreover, I analyze how the Garifuna leaders and the Garinagu in general have responded to these economic and political forces. In sum, my analysis adds to the examination of the Garinagu's cultural politics and state-sponsored violence that has historically accompanied economic development in Honduras.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Research Background

I became interested in my research topic for several reasons. First, as a person of African descent and of Garifuna ethnicity who was born in Honduras and grew up in the United States, I have straddled racialized geographies throughout my life. In Honduras, the dominant culture defines me by the pejorative terms *morena* or *negra* (colonial definitions of a black person). In the United States, some people generally referred to me as Hispanic or Latina. Many Spanish speaking people and other ethnic groups have referred to me as Afro-Latina, *morena*, or *negra*. My experiences and those of other Garinagu in these racialized geographies, the influence of the African American struggle for liberation (e.g. slavery, Civil Rights Movement), and the Honduran state's and elites' demeaning ways of describing the Garinagu as lazy in relation to working the land are the reasons why I examine race in this project. Second, I was born in a self-sustaining Garifuna community. I recall collecting fresh laid eggs from my family's hen house in the mornings, accompanying my grandmother to her farm, swimming in the sea and nearby rivers, washing clothes in the clean river, and taking breaks to eat fried fish and *ereba* (grilled cassava) prepared by the women in the community. I recall watching the elders in the community prepare food for a *lemesi* (mass) and watching men drumming while women helped neighbors cover their family's home with wet colorful adobe plaster. My purpose in mentioning these cultural practices is not to romanticize place. Rather, it is about establishing the reason why I still wanted to address the land struggle in this project, although the 2009 coup d'état prevented me from carrying out ethnographic fieldwork on Honduras' north coast. This is the reason why I conducted my fieldwork solely in the United States.

Third, as an undergraduate student, I became interested in examining scholarship about the Garinagu¹ produced by researchers, most of whom bell hooks would call “the privileged interpreter-cultural overseers” and uncovering how this knowledge has shaped the Garinagu’s self-perception (1990:9). Cultural critic and gender theorist bell hooks’ examination of cultural politics helps me to understand cultural processes and to recognize matters defining certain cultural geographies. Speaking of what shaped her intellectual development, hooks states that it happened by “merging critical thinking in everyday life with knowledge learned in books and through study . . .” (1994:2). Precisely the convergence of “theory and practice” that hooks references that I am most interested in because critical thinking challenges “systems of domination: racism, sexism, class elitism” (1994:2). Hence, hooks’ work is most prominent in this dissertation.

Lastly, I became interested in examining the convergence of cultural politics, power relations, place, and race in relation to the global economy. To understand this process, I began to probe how the Garinagu, as an oppressed group, fit into this convergence and how race and class shaped this process. This last question is important because prior to embarking on my research, I believed that I would be researching a social movement struggling for land rights. Instead, I found myself researching a society fragmented along class divisions, conflicting regional and political ideologies, and divergent economic interests.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to understand the social fragmentation of the Garinagu. This fragmentation is evident in the split between the Garinagu who conform to the state’s economic development efforts and of those who maintain and defend their territory and their cultural

¹ I use Garifuna (singular) which refers to the language and a person or Garinagu (plural) not to set Garinagu apart from their black counterparts, for Garinagu are black people. I use both terms as a form of ethnicity.

practices (e.g. fishing, farming), practices which are denied through the privatization of beaches. To situate these processes, I examine how various Garifuna groups' cultural, political, and economic practices intersect with changes that have been created on Honduras' north coast including the nearby Bay Islands and Cayos Cochinos, although most of my analysis of the Garinagu's land struggle will focus on Honduras' north coast. I will refer to the Bay Islands and Cayos Cochinos as area islands hereafter.

To understand how the various Garifuna groups function, first I focus on educated Garinagu and the Garifuna leaders, most of whom were either born, raised, or have been longtime urban residents, in one of Honduras' cities or in the United States, because they see themselves as comprising the middle class. Their self-conceptions derive from assimilating the national dominant group's values and social relations. As demonstrated by their social practices in the borough of the Bronx in New York City, they organize galas in making an all-out effort to become part of the political power structure in the United States reflecting their adopted values. In Honduras, the Garifuna middle class endeavors to balance their professional quasi-activist careers with conformance to the dominant culture. In assimilating new values, the Garifuna middle class have also reshaped their socio-cultural identity and developed different economic interests as reflected in their goal to become shareholders in Honduras' tourism industry and seeking to establish assembly plant industries and a host of other profit-driven economic endeavors. Thus, middle class and educated Garinagu including leaders both in Honduras and in the United States, see Honduras' north coast as a place to be commodified rather than a Garifuna cultural hearth. In borrowing Cornel West's words, I refer to this group as the "working class with a bourgeois identity" (1990:100). The second group I examine is the oppositional group which includes The Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (Organización Fraternal Negra

Hondureña, OFRANEH). This group struggles to defend place by organizing marches and denouncing local government repression domestically and abroad. The Garifuna middle class practices complicate OFRANEH's land organizing in Honduras because they are disengaged from the land struggle and uphold a different relation with place. The socio-economic reproduction of Honduras' north coast has fragmented the Garifuna society and generated Garinagu's *baiindada* (struggle) in every aspect of this community's life.

Research Statement

In this dissertation, I chart the contradictions created under capitalism in the socio-economic reproduction of Honduras' north coast by exploring how the concepts of place, race, and the politics of identity help explain the transformation of the Garinagu into a fragmented and landless society. My central research question asks: how has the Honduran government's ideology of economic development and the global economic forces fragmented the Garifuna society? I refer to the Garinagu in this manner because the new state and elite-shaped social relations on Honduras' north coast and the cultural values assimilated from the Garinagu migration to the United States have undoubtedly transformed the Garifuna society's relationship with place. The economic transformation of Honduras' north coast, global economic forces, together with the Garinagu's assimilation encouraged me to use the past tense fragmented or the noun fragmentation in defining the Garifuna people cultural, political, and economic breakdown. In answering my research question, I endeavor to show two things. First, owning land means the Garinagu have control over resources and place. Having control means that they enjoy some level of autonomy, although socially they are subjected to Honduras' laws. Second, the Garifuna middle class's focus on social mobility signals a departure from pursuing community empowerment and substituting it with individual needs. In applying the geographical concepts

of place, race, and the politics of identity in understanding the Garinagu's land struggle and fragmentation, I will show first that place is a repository of tensions, conflicts, and practices since humans form social relations in place (e.g. class, gender, race, identities). Humans do not conceive social relations in an imaginary bubble, but construct them as the outcomes of social interactions and activities. Second, these geographical concepts will also help to explain the fragmentation of the Garinagu from a self-sustaining and closely bonded communal society into a fragmented and landless society. Neglecting these processes would limit our understanding of the geographical scope and source of Garinagu's *baiindada* (struggle) against oppression, domination, and cooptation.

Place therefore offers a fundamental way by which we can recognize material practices of human quotidian lives, which are not independent of each other, but are characterized and comprised by a host of interrelated social practices. These practices, in my view, define the complexity of place. Using critical ethnography which offers a basis for challenging conventional scientific practices and identifying injustices and social conditions that influence human struggles, I use theorist and feminist geographer Doreen Massey's concept of the reproduction of place to show how and why place is continually reproduced through the introduction of new economies that generate different social relations, tensions, and conflicts (1991:323). Complementing Massey's theory are theorists and geographers David Harvey's, Bobby M. Wilson's, and Andy Merrifield's analyses of the construction of power relations and socio-spatial conditions. I also borrow anthropologist Arturo Escobar's concept of the "defense of place" (2001:139) to show that regardless of the Honduran government's repression, many Garinagu use local resources or "jump scale" to defend what remains of their communities on

Honduras' north coast (Smith 1992:60). These concepts help to grasp the centrality of place in relation to the social construction of race and the politics of identity.

Chapter Outline

This dissertation is organized into eight chapters. Chapter 1 introduces this project. A literature review in Chapter 2 highlights the significance of three geographical concepts: place, race, and the politics of identity. This literature review situates my work about the Garinagu within a critical theoretical framework. Concentrating on these geographical concepts helps to contextualize the oppressive geographies that the Garinagu straddle in Honduras and the United States. These concepts also reveal the Garinagu's relationships with place and perspective of place. Central to this contextualization are global economic forces that have transformed many Garinagu's social, political, and economic relationships with place. To situate my work, I use the geographical works of Wilson (2005, 2002, 2000) and geographer and scholar of gender studies Katherine McKittrick (2007) on race and place. Although their works do not directly focus on the Garinagu, they look at the construction of power relations and hegemonic socio-spatial conditions of blacks in the United States which resonates with my work on the Garinagu. Geographer Sharlene Mollett's work on the Garinagu offers a good angle from which I can draw some inspiration as well (2006, 2010, 2013). Mollett's work is important because anthropologists have generated the most scholarly work about the Garifuna people. Anthropological studies on the Garinagu by Keri Vacanti Brondo (2013) and Sarah England (2006, 1999) are also foundational to my research.

Chapter 3 discusses the significance of critical geography as a methodology in examining the Garinagu's relationship to their land and land struggle as a whole. At the heart of my approach is a call, as several critical and seasoned voices have done before me, to vigorously

interrogate the colonial gaze using theories of positionality and situated knowledge. Situated knowledge holds that knowledge is not absolute, but partial. Since knowledge is partial, scholars must not define themselves as experts about the Other's behavior, meanings, and practices whether cultural, economic, or political. I use this approach because it complements geographical inquiry, encourages researchers to acknowledge the Other's position, and draws from post-colonial works or any work that challenge racist practices. My work therefore uses an interdisciplinary approach.

Chapter 4 shows how the Garinagu have long organized against oppression in Honduras in defense of place. Their organizing has been underscored by the formation of organizations in Honduras and also in the United States where they are part of a segmented labor market. This chapter delves into their historical social trajectory in Honduras and the United States. In exploring their trajectories, I show how the Garinagu have struggled to retain their communities on Honduras' north coast while occupying a marginalized position in Honduran society. In exploring the importance of a host of Garifuna organizations, I also address ideological differences and politics that have contributed to the fragmentation of the Garinagu. Addressing these differences is not intended to create conflicts among the various groups nor favor one organization over another. The intent is to examine the politics and practices of these organizations' leaders and supporters, their impacts on the Garifuna organizing, and their consequences on the Garifuna communities.

The second point explored in Chapter 4 is how the formation of the Garifuna organizations has transformed most Garinagu residing in the United States, their relationship with the land, and the land struggle in Honduras. Central to my examination is to show how the Garifuna organizations have responded throughout the years to global economic forces and how most

Garifuna middle class and the Garinagu in general in Honduras and the United States have gradually abandoned the land struggle in Honduras as indicated by most of their organizational activities in the United States. As the Garifuna cultural hearth, the Honduras' north coast is where they say they belong, though domestic and foreign capitalists and some Garinagu's collusion in land sales undermine this sense of belonging. Malcolm X denounced nationally and abroad African Americans sense of belonging, place, and socio-conditions in the United States. In examining several of his speeches, he spoke about African Americans working conditions, denial of education, equal protection under the law, political disempowerment, access to public spaces (e.g. restaurants, hotels etc.), and how African Americans contested these conditions (see Malcolm X 2001; Shabazz1991). Paraphrasing Malcolm X, geographer James Tyner states, "belonging was not a matter of choice" for people of African descent "but rather a matter of contestation" (2006:5). It is precisely this contestation that must also be incorporated into analysis of the Garifuna organizations in deciphering the various strands of their organizing.

In Chapter 5, I examine the geography of race in the Garifuna experience between Honduras and the United States. To situate their experience, I begin my analysis with the development of the banana plantation industry in the late nineteenth century on Honduras' north coast where the Garinagu, West Indians, and *mestizo* workers converged. Underpinning the development of the banana plantation industry were land concessions, tax breaks, and several other incentives the Honduran government offered foreign investors from the United States in exchange for modernizing Honduras. As these capitalists gained a foothold in the Honduran economy and political system, Honduran politicians resorted to racist practices to regain their power. Paralyzed by this development, Honduran politicians instituted a range of immigration policies and created a national symbol, Lempira. These politicians characterized Lempira to be a

valiant indigenous who fought against the Spanish colonizers, and they in turn made him a national currency (Euraque 2003:229). The reason behind this project was an attempt to homogenize Honduran society and national identity and exclude the Garinagu from their land. Excluded from this national imaginary were the Garinagu who became one of the main groups to face the wrath of the Honduran government and elites' racist practices. Contrary to racist practices in Honduras, in the United States, the Garinagu face similar yet different socio-spatial patterns. The United States is similar to Honduras in having socio-spatial patterns comprised of "order and meaning much of which is racial in origin and design" (Davis and Donaldson 1975:1). It is different from Honduras because the Garinagu are part of the segmented labor force.

The different geographies the Garinagu straddle have shaped their self-perception and relationship with Honduras' north coast. Focusing on these aspects of the Garifuna society does not constitute romanticizing cultural differences, praising exoticism, or adhering to buzz words such as transnational identity or resilience. Instead, I treat the Garinagu as social actors having agency. My work explores a gap in knowledge by examining the Garinagu disparate racial discourse. Drawing from Merrifield's analysis, I argue that their discourse is couched in the construction of place under capitalism (1993b:520). These forces have molded the worldviews of the Garifuna middle class and the Garinagu in general in the United States as they move, in borrowing bell hooks' words, from "one set of class values to another" (1990:1). Hence, the Garifuna middle class have become indifferent to the Garinagu's land struggle in Honduras because they see land simply as a commodity. The Garifuna middle class's outlooks illustrate the Garifuna fragmentation as a culture along class lines. Presided over by a patriarchal capitalist society, the Garifuna middle class outlooks on race also promotes and rewards the

diffusion of certain ideologies that replace racist practices with assimilation, diversity, and multiculturalism – terms the dominant culture constructed to create the illusion of inclusion. In fact, the deployment of these terms belies socio-economic conditions, racialized landscapes, and mutes progressive ideas or any form of sustainable or critical racial discourse among the Garinagu as a whole.

Chapter 6 explores the Garifuna middle class's economic, political, and social practices in the United States and its disconnection from the Garinagu's land struggle in Honduras. Their disconnection speaks of their new identities but also of the politics of place produced by the local political landscape in which they reside. To illustrate, they organize galas in upscale venues, voter registration drives, political fundraisers, and civic meetings. They also pursue business partnerships in Honduras and in the United States because they believe that the Garinagu integration into the national and global economy is unavoidable. It is this globalized society that the Garinagu seek to join. Engaging in different practices from their counterparts in Honduras has shifted the Garifuna middle class's relationship with the Honduras' north coast, meaning some do not see it as the Garifuna cultural hearth. Instead, some see and promote New York City as being the Garifuna's cultural hearth. In other words, they do not attach their cultural practices and identity solely to Honduras' north coast. Instead, some have aligned them with their place of residence.

In Chapter 7, I discuss Honduras' geography and land tenancy to situate contemporary land-related conflicts. Second, I address the political and economic environments within which the government conceived its plans for tourism and other national economic policies. Third, I examine the laws implemented that have made the Garinagu a landless society. In the early 1990s, the Honduran government of Rafael Leonardo Callejas Romero (1990-1994) instituted a

host of neoliberal policies. These policies included the Modernization and Development of the Agricultural Sector Law (Ley para la Modernización y Desarrollo del Sector Agrícola, LAM) for the expansion of cattle ranching, agribusiness, and monoculture palm oil plantations and the Law of Municipalities (Ley de Municipalidades) designed to empower local governments. As a result of the implementation of these policies, the Callejas' government and several other administrations that followed gutted key articles of the Honduran constitution.

In recent years, the Honduran government pursued other national economic plans. Conceived by economics professor Paul Romer and touted by President Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo Sosa (2010-2014) in the post-coup d'état period as a solution to uplift over 50 percent of Honduras' unemployed workers, architect (Romer) and enforcer (Lobo Sosa) designed charter cities to shift greater political power from the central government to a municipal governing system. Another key element of the charter cities plan is natural resource extraction such as oil drilling. The Honduran government granted multinational company British Gas Group an exploration license to drill petroleum in a 35,000 square mile area surrounding the Moskitia coast (Palencia, 2014; OFRANEH, personal communication, December 2, 2013). Chevron has lined up to secure a concession as well ("Chevron dialoga acuerdo en el país," 2014). This economic move razes the few places which the Honduran government has not privatized.

Lastly, I examine how the Garifuna activists and middle class have responded to the Honduran government national economic policies. Included in this examination is the Garifuna middle class's contradictory outlook of Honduras' north coast and the role they continue to play. Also included is how the Garifuna middle class' position has complicated organizing efforts by oppositional groups such as OFRANEH. Many members of the Garifuna middle class believe in the inevitability of capitalism and endorse any economic policy the Honduran government

implements as long as they are financially rewarded and they are able to maintain their careers as quasi-professional activists.

In Chapter 8, I reflect not only on what has been discussed throughout this dissertation but also address other important points. To do so, I enter into a discussion that has significant and broader implications. First, the Garinagu fragmentation and landlessness are directly tied to the global economic forces that produced them as a culture. Second, the various political perspectives and personal interests most Garinagu manifest have engendered disunity among the Garifuna leaders in pursuing concrete and aggressive strategies in challenging the violence synonymous with capitalism. Instead, they have been coopted to embrace values and customs produced under this economic system. Lastly, the Honduran government tries to mask its violence with spurious nationalism. For example, the government's recognition of the Garinagu as an indigenous group and the annual celebration of their presence in Honduras in April 12 are some of the practices that in part inform belonging into the nation-state. However, the Garinagu land dispossession, commodification of their culture and bodies, and the Honduran government and the elites' racist practices suggest that the Garinagu belonging is simply an illusion. The Garinagu must therefore reassess their alliance to a racist and violent society. I also discuss my work contribution to the vast scholarship generated about the Garinagu.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The Significance of Place

With the emergence of radical scholars in the mid-1960s, the field of geography began to experience partial decolonization. Some progressive scholars questioned the field's lack of social commitment and its emphasis on environmental determinism, humanistic geography, and quantitative-spatial geography. This period coalesced with the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, the Vietnam War, Puerto Ricans' and Native Americans' activism, women's movement, decolonization in Africa, and the Cold War geopolitics and its impact on the so-called Third World countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, and a host of other developments (Peet 1998:67; 1969:1). Among those calling for change were Clark University graduates Bobby M. Wilson and Herman Jenkins who asked: "can geography, as a set of concepts and tools, be of relevance in solving the problems of the Black American community?" (1972:1). Raising this question meant interrogating the field of geography's "white epistemological framework," (Wilson & Jenkins 1972:1) a framework "contaminated with this most jingoistic prejudice" (Blaut 1969:1). The field, after all, was "born and raised in the homelands of imperialism" (Blaut 1969:1). Some socially conscious geographers began to address "profound social problems" (Donaldson 1969:1). From these developments, critical students and faculty at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts formed *Antipode: A Radical Geography Journal*.

The creation of *Antipode* and the paradigmatic shift in geography sought to challenge "quantitative-spatial geography, including modification like behavioral geography" (Peet 1998:74). From this movement emerged radical geography. By 1974, David Harvey produced his seminal work *Social Justice and the City*, which marked a departure from his 1969 book

Explanation in Geography and its role in geography's quantitative revolution (Peet 1998:75). In *Social Justice and the City*, Harvey laid out his argument about the Marxist theory of historical materialism by examining land use in urban areas and providing concepts for understanding human-environmental interaction and its relation to the formation and representation of social practices. In other words, Harvey addressed the production of the geography of difference in exploring political economy in relation to the environment. Thus for Harvey "the proper conceptualization of [place] is resolved through human practice with respect to it" (2009:13). In other words, Harvey contends, there are no "philosophical answers to philosophical questions that arise over the nature of [place] – the answers lie in human practice" (Harvey 2009:13). Harvey's work provided the foundation for progressive scholars searching for a viable social theory. Like Harvey, William Bunge also abandoned quantitative spatial geography in 1969 and published his work *Fitzgerald: Geography of a Revolution* in 1971. In this book, he began to see the urban sphere (e.g. Detroit, Michigan) critically and dialectically. Similar to Bunge's work, Brazilian geographer Milton Santos' *Geography, Marxism, and Underdevelopment* (1974) was certainly important in presenting an examination of urban development and developing nations.

Many female scholars also made their marks in the partial decolonization of the field of geography. Canadian Alison Hayford's *The Geography of Women: An Historical Introduction* addresses women's invisibility in geography and the social sciences which have been mainly concerned with "[white] man" history (1974:1). Doreen Massey focused on labor and uneven development in her 1974 work, *Towards a Critique of Industrial Location Theory*. In her book *Space, Place, and Gender*, she states that geography matters to the "construction of gender, and the fact of geographical variation in gender relations, for instance, is a significant element in the production and reproduction of both imaginative geographies and uneven development" (1994:

2). Harvey and Massey focus primarily on the city, while Bobby Wilson and James M. Blaut focus on race and place. Blaut did not limit his work to race and place; he also explored nationalism (1987). These are some of the works that influenced the direction of geography in a more critical direction. It is within this critical approach that my work is situated because it looks at political, social, and economic processes found in place which define social relations and give geographical expression to human activities. It is through this lens that I try to weave the threads between the Garifuna activities and practices in the United States and in Honduras.

An examination of geographical scholarship about place offers a robust debate concerning the meaning of place. David Harvey contends that the term “place” possesses multiple meanings such as “milieu, locality, location, locale, neighborhood, region, territory, city, village, town, megalopolis, community, and nations” (1996:208; also see Massey 1994:1; 1991:321). Many scholars across a broad range of political spectrum have dissected the multiple meanings of place. However, this dissertation adheres to a critical and not to a humanistic approach. For humanistic geographer Edward Relph’s “sense of place” thesis considers the notion of place and belonging (1976:63). Relph defines sense of place as “may be authentic and genuine, or it can be inauthentic and contrived or artificial. These notions of authenticity and inauthenticity are taken from phenomenology, but they are ideas which have, under a variety of slightly different guises had long currency” (1976:63). For Relph, authentic sense of place should be understood to be a “direct and genuine experience of the entire complex of the identity of places – not mediated and distorted through a series of quite arbitrary social and intellectual fashions about how that experience should be, nor following stereotyped conventions” (1976:64). Authentic sense of place, Relph concludes derives from a “full awareness of places” (1976:64). Every culture has a sense of place and awareness of place. However, such understanding varies

according to a culture practices and interaction with the environment. Without further engaging into a lengthy discussion of Relph's thesis, I strive to show that he divorces the tensions and contradictions that exist in place. Although the Garinagu have a sense of place, they continue to be brutally driven and displaced from their territories and communities suggesting that the global economy, the Honduran governments, and the oligarchs are the ones defining the Garinagu belonging. Under global economic forces, powerful groups create these conditions because they are seeking to "dominate the organization and production of [place] . . ." which includes land use and territory (Harvey 1990:222; see also Savage, Longhurst, & Bagnall 2005).

By the 1980s, radical geographers such as Doreen Massey challenged humanistic geographers' ideas about place. Massey's analysis of sense of place, for example, can be used as one way of questioning Relph's localized analysis of place (1994:146). Massey asserts that in an era of globalization, a process that involves substantial movement of goods and people, capital, and the transformation of cultural practices, it is difficult to define "what we mean by 'places' and how we relate to them" (1994:146). Massey, therefore, asks how can people "retain any sense of a local place and its particularity" amid the current "fragmentation and disruption" of society produced by global forces (1994:146). Under the conditions Massey describes, it is hard to maintain a sense of place when societies such as the Garinagu are dispossessed from place to make way for tourism and other economic ventures.

Regardless of place's multiple definitions Harvey argues, place reveals much about "social, political, and spatial practices in interrelation with each other over time" (1996:208; see also Merrifield 1993a:522). Some of the implications found in the multiple meanings of place are "how we 'place' things and how we think of 'our place'" (Harvey 1996:208). Harvey's analysis is grounded on the social production of time and space (history and geography) concepts which

“affect the way we understand the world to be” (1996:208). These concepts also provide a “reference system” concerning our “‘situatedness’ and ‘positionality,’” meaning where does a society or group situate itself in relation to place and how does place in turn shape a society cultural practices (1996:208; see also Massey 1994:1). Implicated in this situatedness is what humans refer to as “‘a place called home,’” which provides an individual with a sense of place (Massey 1994:1). Place naming can be situated within the confines of social practices. Garifuna writer Victor Virgilio López García states that the Garifuna people name for Tornabé is *Afulurijani* (1991:64). Tornabé as a name originates from ‘Turn-Bay,’ a name American capitalists created during the zenith of the banana plantations in the area (1991:64). *Durúbuguti Beibei* is Garifuna for San Juan and *Dubugati* is Garifuna name for Punta Piedra. All these places are located along Honduras’ north coast.

The Garinagu’s practices on the north coast and the nearby islands of Cayos Cochinos and Roatán also shape their positionality because they adapted to their environment and formed communities. Their adaptation allowed them to maintain existing cultural practices such as such as fishing, subsistence agriculture, and use of plants for medicinal and spiritual purposes. Throughout the years, the Garifuna people’s cultural practices have experienced a host of changes due to the Honduran state and elite-shaped social relations of Honduras’ north coast and the cultural values assimilated by the Garinagu. Because of the Garifuna people’s cultural bond to the land and cultural practices, Honduras’ north coast represents who they are as a culture. The Garifuna people’s cultural practices inform their sense of place. Yet, these cultural practices are in peril because the Honduran government and local elites, foreign investors (mainly from the United States and Canada), and various members of the Garifuna middle class in Honduras and in the United States share these groups’ values and economic policies. The Honduran

government's economic policies and local elites' and foreign investors' practices have expanded the tourism industry, agribusiness, and monoculture palm oil plantations. Many members of the Garifuna middle class see their social mobility contingent upon the development of these economies, chiefly tourism, and their connection to the Garinagu in Honduras through this lens. These developments have undoubtedly defied the Garinagu's idea of Honduras' coastline and area islands. Most Garinagu believe that their communities have a specific character and "rootedness" to borrow Massey's analysis of place and people (1991:319). The various dominant groups have rendered the Garinagu's cultural bond to the land meaningless since the north coast represents the circulation of capital. Diverging ideas of place show that political struggles are, therefore, "based on place" and not on some imaginary social interaction (Massey 1991:319).

In the United States, European colonizers confined Native Americans to an open prison called Reservations. As law professors Vine Deloria, Jr. and Clifford M. Lytle point out, the federal government enforced the expansion of its reservation policies in the 1880s "to help the Indians organize a government through which they could be governed" (1984:28; see also LaDuke 1997). In Honduras, the Garifuna people rapid dispossession from their land by the state and elite-led socio-economic reproduction of Honduras' north coast is achieving two things. First, it is creating a reservation for the tourism industry through the commodification of the Garifuna people's bodies and culture. Second, it has accelerated the Garinagu migration to the United States in recent years and thus increasing their number in the segmented labor force in this country. The Honduran state and local elite are, therefore, systematically freeing place to carry out their economic endeavors and in turn sever some form of autonomy the Garifuna people enjoyed in the past.

Place also upholds a host of “metaphorical meanings” (Harvey 1996:208; see also Massey 1994:1). These metaphorical meanings reside in the construction of power relations and socio-spatial conditions implicated in the placing of “people, events and things in their ‘proper’ place” (Harvey 1996:208). This is evident in the creation of spatial barriers, place (s) description, and denial of access to educational, political, or social institutions. In Honduras, *mestizos* describe the Garifuna communities on the north coast by the pejorative *morenales*, which roughly translates to communities of people with black skin. According to Euraque, many Garifuna intellectuals in the 1950s and 1960s used the term to refer to the Garifuna communities (2004:182). However, Euraque does not explore how the Garifuna intellectuals came to use the term *morenales*, or their understanding of its colonial root. In returning to *mestizos*’ usage of the term, the intent in using *morenales* and other pejoratives is to denigrate and to “stigmatize” a place’s inhabitants (Cox 2002:148). Another form of stigmatizing the Garinagu in the *mestizos* description is to construct an image of the Garinagu as believers in black magic, as Garifuna *come pescado* (fish eating Garifuna), lazy, and as practitioners of backwards agriculture (M. Miranda, personal communication, March 17, 2011; Mollett 2006:90). Stigmatizing and denigrating the Garinagu is a political ploy which coincides with the effort to remove them from the north coast. Consequently, the Honduran elites are rebuilding the north coast as a new place by privatizing beaches and denying the Garinagu in Honduras and those visiting from the United States access to their traditional spaces and to a space that everyone must access. The Garinagu engaged in fishing are also denied access to this cultural trait, which is no different from what the Miskito also in Honduras continue to experience. Anthropologist Keri Vacanti Brondo states that conservation endeavors such as the 2004 Cayos Cochinos Marine Protected Area (CCMPA) Management Plan “restricted” the Garinagu access to the area whereas “mestizo elite and

foreigners” access to the area is not restricted (2013:6; M. Miranda, personal communication, September 19, 2013). The objective of the Honduran government and elites is to make places unlivable for the Garifuna people.

In the United States, on the other hand, the Garifuna population centers are largely located in spatially segregated areas, referred to as ghettos, inner-city or crime-ridden areas. Yet, most Garinagu residing in these locations see themselves as members of an emerging middle class. Entrance into this group requires assimilating capitalistic values and practices regarding the north coast-economic development. Accepting these economic beliefs, the middle class oriented its relationship with and perception of Honduras’ north coast. As a result, they prefer to be aloof from the Garinagu land-rights activism, viewing it as being antithetical to their middle class identity and aspirations. Similar to Harvey, Doreen Massey holds that “places are shared spaces” (Massey 1994:137). She derives her approach from the interplay of a host of social relations which generate “internal tensions and conflicts” (1994:1; 1991:323). In articulating this relationship, Massey addresses the contradictions found in place showing the centrality of geography in our understanding of human activities. More importantly, she challenges how people think about place in their quotidian life by seeking alternative to conceptual paradigms of place (Massey 1994:1).

For political geographer Kevin Cox, social relations are inevitable connections between humans regardless of the inequities built into them (2002:148). Cox goes on to say that in order for humans to relate “people have to make contact, they have to connect. At the same time, they may come to know their *place*, in quite literally geographic as well as social terms” (2002:147-148 emphasis in original). Ultimately, however, how this connectivity is defined rests upon social practices – what a particular culture does and how it does it. In the Garinagu’s case, their

connectivity to the *mestizo* is dictated by oppression and subordination. This is evident with the Garinagu dispossession from their land on Honduras' north coast to make way for a new socio-economic reproduction. Local and foreign capitalists are constructing a new place on the coastline with specific social relations demonstrating that places are continually "reproduced" or reconstructed under capitalism (Massey 1991:323; see also Harvey 1996:295). The continual reproduction of place that occurs under capitalism does not only homogenize the "economy," "culture," or "anything else;" it is also another source of uneven development and alteration of the "uniqueness of place" (Massey 1994:156). Each place is unique because it develops specific "local social relations" (Massey 1994:156). The reproduction or construction of place creates "power differentiation" which is a central feature for the functioning of any economy (Harvey 1996:320). When producing power differentiation and specific local social relations, disregarding existing ones, a struggle generally follows because place's history and "specificity" are fragmented (Massey 1994:156). The Garinagu challenge the Honduran government, local elites, and foreign capitalists' mixture and insouciance of local social relations because many beaches are privatized and land taken away. Hence, the Garinagu are rapidly becoming a landless culture and a consumption-based society.

The production of power differentiation and specific local social relations fits into Andy Merrifield's argument of the material landscape. He argues that the "material landscape and practices of everyday life occurring in different places under capitalism are inextricably embedded within the global capitalist whole" (1993b:520). In other words, there is a flow of people, capital, goods, and social production spatially. The global economic forces certainly apply to our understanding of the Garinagu's land struggle because capitalism does not reside in some abstract space. It is mobile as in the case of assembly plant industries or *maquiladoras* and

“place-bound” as in the case of agribusiness (Merrifield 1993b:521; 1993a:103). Placed-bound does not mean that capitalism begins and ends in a place. What Merrifield means is that once a company relocates its production to a specific place, it becomes placed-bound and seeks certain accommodations from the local government. Because it is placed-bound, Merrifield argues capitalists do not foresee contradictions. This is a practice used by multinational corporations globally. For example, in Honduras the banana plantation workers challenged their salaries and working conditions starting in the late nineteenth century whereas the plantation owners secured the government’s protection by supporting corrupt presidents and controlling the country’s political apparatus (Euraque 1996:7; Laínez & Meza 1973:17; Nieto 2003:107).

A recent example of what Merrifield addresses is that the Honduran government passed a host of laws weakening certain segments of Article 107 of the Constitution in the early 1990s and ultimately amending it in 1998. Altering this article paved the way for foreign buyers to own land on the north coast. Some members of the Garifuna middle class in Honduras and in the United States with connection to this process coaxed the Garinagu to secure private land titles for communally-owned land without consulting their respective communities. The Garifuna middle class argued that the land could then be used as collateral in business transactions. In addition, some members of the Garifuna middle class from the United States encouraged other Garinagu to become shareholders in the tourism industry rather than suggesting ways in which Garinagu in Honduras can protect their land and communities against the Honduran government and local elites economic policies. Besides securing legal protection, companies rely on the local government to shield them from any local rebellions. The Honduran national police force in Honduras’ capital, Tegucigalpa, deals with the Garifuna activists protesting the usurpation of their land. Another point to make is that Honduran capitalists, too, such as Miguel Facussé

Bargum, who owns the agribusiness and palm-oil firm Dinant, also demand certain accommodations from the local authorities, that is, their ability to usurp the Garinagu land without any legal consequences (“Raíces históricas de la fortuna de Miguel Facussé Barjum,” I. Chávez, personal communication, April 24, 2010). What the capitalists’ politics and local government economic policies and the Garinagu’s response demonstrate is that place “emerges through social struggle and imposes itself as a potential barrier for capital to overcome” (Merrifield 1993b:103). Place is therefore an embodiment of tensions and conflicts.

Reflecting on the connection between place and the internalization of capital, Massey argues that place “is not concrete, grounded, real, but rather that space – global space – *is so too*” (2004:7 emphasis in original). Massey articulates what she defines as “power-geometries,” that is, relations between the local and global economies (2004:11; 1991:317). In evoking power-geometries, Massey endeavors to explore the “politics of place” (2004:12). By this, she means that “local places are not simply always the victims of the global; nor are they always politically defensible redoubts against the global. For places are also the moments through which the global is constituted, invented, coordinated, produced. They are ‘agents’ in globalization” (Massey 2004:11). Massey’s assertion challenges literature that places emphasis only on locality rather than also incorporating global economic forces. Implicit in Massey’s analysis is the exclusion of some groups from the power structure.

While lending institutions and governments from advanced capitalist nations impose conditions on the Honduran government to adhere to certain economic policies (i.e. neoliberalism), Honduran politicians and elites continue to build an economic and political infrastructure based on inequity, oppression, and racism because they want to gain leverage in the power-geometries. That said, it does not mean that they were not racist or oppressive before.

It simply means that their practices exacerbated under the new economic conditions. The Garifuna middle class in the United States and in Honduras seek a better position in the power-geometries because they conceptualize it to mean inclusion. On this ground, they cease to defend the place that is Honduras' north coast. Instead, they embrace capitalist values grounded on individualism, consumerism, and cultural homogeneity. These specific values inform their discourse and politics of sustainable agriculture.

In addition to Massey's assertion that place is globally interconnected, she also borrows anthropologist Arturo Escobar's concept of "a defense of place" (2001:139). Escobar argues that a defense of place may constitute both a theoretical framework and "political action" in examining placed-based movements to be "multi-scale, network-oriented subaltern strategies of localization" (2001:139). Focusing on place, Escobar declares, does not mean disbaring space as a "domain of resistance and alterity, since both place and space are crucial in this regard, as they are in the creation of forms of domination" (2001:141). Escobar's position is to question the "privilege accorded to space in analysis of the dynamics of culture, power, and economy" (2001:141). Escobar's call for the centrality of place is his way of affirming the significance of place in people's lives (2001:140). Indeed, place must be central in our understanding of culture, power, economy, and conflicts because they are interconnected to the global economic forces which are persistently reproduced in place as Massey asserts. During the Honduran government's implementation of neoliberal policies beginning in the 1980s and in subsequent years, the Garifuna leaders responded ("The Inspection Panel," 2007; Anderson 2009:161). They challenged the local government's economic policies with local street marches but also by connecting with some Garinagu in New York City. With the help of the Garifuna leaders in New York City, the Garinagu from Honduras addressed their concerns to the United Nations

demonstrating that although place-based conflicts are interwoven into global economic forces, they also galvanize local residents to take action in the defense of place accessing and using a host of resources.

Contrary to Escobar, Massey claims that defending place may be challenging or, as she phrases it, “*not* defensible” due to the “construction of that place . . . power relations, and the way its resources are mobilized” (2004:12 emphasis in original). Place may not be defensible for the Garifuna middle class in Honduras and in the United States because of its values and politics but for the Garifuna activists in both countries who believe that their cultural identity and culture region is defined by place, they defend it regardless of government oppression. In the end, Honduras’ north coast and area islands have become bases for capitalists to feed their material practices. Many Garinagu, on the other hand, resist such practices. These processes do not leave room for romantic notions about human geography and activities; rather, they place these processes and material practices at the center of analysis, making the concept of place multifaceted and complex.

Place is thus central in understanding processes because there is a “permanent tension between the free appropriation of [place] for individual and social purposes, and the domination of [place] through private property, the state, and other forms of class and social power” (Harvey 1990:254). For example, as a result of the privatization of many beaches, many Garinagu see themselves in a constant struggle in asserting their position over place. Yet, some members of the Garifuna middle class in the United States and Honduras do not see the privatization of Honduras’ north coast to be disempowering the community. To the contrary, many members of the Garifuna middle class believe that privatization is empowering. The reason for this is because they have assimilated attitudes, values, and visions of place from the powerful

discourses of bureaucrats, politicians, and developers. Within this analysis, I situate the Garinagu fragmentation since many activists in this community, mostly in Honduras but also in the United States, mobilize in defense of place. In the meantime, most members of the Garifuna middle class are disengaged from activism centering on land struggle. The permanent tension that Harvey addresses destabilizes not a person but a whole culture region since each social actor upholds a different view of and relationship with place.

Race and Place

As Harvey and Massey declare, place is riddled with metaphorical meanings. The socially constructed concept of race is at the center of this process. Prior to the 1960s, geographers were not prominent in addressing race and racism critically (Gilmore 2002:17; Jackson 1987:3). Agreeing with geographers David Harvey, Don Mitchell, Peter Jackson, and Jan Penrose, geographer and activist Ruth Gilmore notes that in the twentieth century, geographers followed three main frameworks in addressing race: “environmental determinism, areal differentiation, and social construction” (2002:17). All these approaches Gilmore explains adhered to two assumptions: “(1) social formations are structured in dominance within and across scales; and (2) race is in some way determinate of sociospatial location” (2002:17). Blaut expands on Gilmore's analysis noting that the various theoretical frameworks employed in the early nineteenth century were a “biblical argument grounded in religion” while from 1850 to 1950 there was a “biological argument, grounded in natural science” (1992:290). Yet, while radical geographers in the 1960s sought to understand social inequity, Bobby M. Wilson argues that they “marginalized or under theorized race in its analysis of social formation” (2002:34). In order to have these pre-1960s practices revamped, Wilson concludes, geographers must tackle race historically to “reveal [its] real structure,” meaning where it derives (2002:33).

Contextualizing race historically in relation to place is thus vital because it is implicated in “the production and reproduction of social relations in the sense that particular territorial forms both produce and reflect particular social process” (Jackson 1987:4). Implicated in this historical knowledge are geographical variations for every place develops its own racist practices. Drawing from critical feminists’ analysis in the field of geography, and also anthropology and the humanities, who have affected social and political changes, and “existing knowledge,” helps to understand racialized places in which the Garinagu exist (Moss & Al-Hindi 2008:1). The insights of geographers Audrey Kobayashi, Linda Peake, Katherine McKittrick, Sharlene Mollett and several other scholars are invaluable because their analysis of race and place is universal in its application, although race and place are products of specific “historical geographies, varying across place according to process such as colonialism, migration, labor markets, and built environments . . .” (Kobayashi & Peake 2000:392; see also McKittrick, 2007; Mollett, 2006 and 2010). In the United States, for instance, scholars cannot engage in social analysis without tackling the “geographies of whiteness” (Kobayashi & Peake 2000:393). Geographical interest in the geographies of whiteness emerged in the 1980s and is part of “a genealogy of engagement with issues of ‘race’ and racialization” (Shaw 2006:851). Contrary to the United States, in Honduras, there is the *mestizaje* framework which the dominant culture constructed during the post-colonial period and western scholars studying Honduran society adopted.

In the mid-1920s, Honduran politicians with the support of intellectuals constructed *mestizo* to mean a mixture of Europeans and Indians. For historian Andrew Juan Rosa, “Simply put, the *mestizo* is a sterile, static, and monolithic racial mixture of Indian, European, and African ethnicity” (1996:276 emphasis added). Professor of Spanish Richard Jackson considers this “ethnic and cultural fusion,” to be “the physical, spiritual, and cultural rape of black people”

(1976:1). Yet, in Honduras, as it is the general practice in Latin America, the dominant group defines *mestizo* to mean the union between Spanish and Indians. Other terms included *mestizaje* or miscegenation and *indigenismo* for indigeneity. For Honduran politicians, their *mestizaje* framework represented whitening their society as they imagined a new place. It also reinvigorated their already existing racist practices. What Honduran politicians produced was the “geography of difference” (Harvey 1996:334). It is within this geography of difference and racialized places that the Garinagu, in drawing from Audrey Kobayashi and Linda Peake’s analysis, are “identified, given stereotypical characteristics, and coerced into specific living conditions, often involving social/spatial segregation and always constituting racialized places” (2000:393). The Honduran elites labeled the Garinagu using the pejoratives of *moreno* or *negro* signaling to the Garinagu that they are “outsiders” or the Other (Euraque 2007:84). The Garinagu challenge these labels by resorting to multiple identities such as “Afro-Honduran,” reaffirming their ethnicity of the Garifuna, but also using “indigenous.” In so doing they position themselves as citizens of Honduras yet occupying a marginalize position.

The Garinagu deployment of indigenous is rooted in the presumed collective rights accorded to them in the 1990s by the Honduran government in which it recognized nine groups within the country as being indigenous (Hooker 2005:286). I believe that the recognition of the Garinagu as indigenous was a discursive ploy designed to maintain existing social hierarchy and obscure its “oppressive social relation” in borrowing geographer Gillian Rose’s words (1994:46). What is evident is that racialized places are the “legacy of uneven geographies” (McKittrick and Woods 2007:2). These geographies are a source of incessant struggle as evident with the Garinagu contesting a history of marginalization and oppression highlighting racist practices. In their analysis of racism in the twenty first century, Kobayashi and Peake state that “whiteness”

is “a set of cultural practices and politics based upon ideological norms that are lived but unacknowledged” (2000:394). Their analysis on racism provides a good angle by which to tackle race in the Garifuna experience.

In the United States, the Garinagu fall under various labels because besides speaking their mother tongue, Garifuna, they also speak Spanish, and their surnames are generally Spanish. The Garinagu so-called otherness is compounded by their “accent,” although every culture has an accent. To challenge this otherness while pursuing social mobility, the Garifuna middle class began using the descriptor Garifuna American. Undoubtedly, the Garifuna middle class racial identity in the United States aligns with place-specific signifiers (African American, Italian American etc.). Hence, the transformation of place under capitalism supports Merrifield’s argument that the material landscape and quotidian life are embedded in the global economic forces (1993b:520). Global economic forces are therefore place-driven. The forces of capitalism (1993b:516) that Merrifield speaks of together with the set of values that hooks discusses in her analysis of African American middle class in the United States support my view that these forces have molded the Garifuna middle class’s racial discourse in the United States (1990:1). The Garifuna middle class has become indifferent to the land struggle in Honduras despite the fact that geographically most Garinagu in the United States are concentrated in spatially segregated areas. In other words, they do not live in affluent neighborhoods such as Riverdale in the Bronx. They live in areas primarily populated by working class African Americans, Latinos, and Caribbean. Thus, in some small ways, Honduras is similar to the United States. Speaking of the United States, geographer and gender scholar Katherine McKittrick states that it is imbued with racialized spaces making history a “geographic story that is . . . a story of material and conceptual placements and displacements, segregations and integrations, margins and centers

and migrations and settlements” (2006:xiv). Honduras adheres to similar patterns. These geographic binaries underscore “the classificatory *where* of race” (McKittrick 2006:xiv emphasis in original). It is the *where* of race, which McKittrick and geographer and urban scholar Clyde Woods put forth that informs the geography of race in the Garifuna experience and place (2007).

The Politics of Identity

Massey argues that “individuals’ identities are not aligned with *either* place *or* class; they are probably constructed out of both, as well as a whole complex of other things, most especially ‘race’ and gender” (1994:137 emphasis in original). Indeed, in challenging what he calls “essentialist thinking,” Karl Marx, and neo-Marxists exclude the concept of race from their analysis, Wilson agrees with Massey’s assertion that class is not the only factor that must be taken into account when analyzing individuals’ identities (2000:65). For Wilson, “even at the point of production, workers are just not workers; they have other identities (e.g., racial, ethnic, religious, gender). Identities other than class can take center stage, forming the basis for new politics” (2000:65; see also Cox 2002:147). Class then is not the only unifying force among workers; race must be filtered into discussions because as geographer Laura Pulido argues “our class experiences are always racialized and our racial experiences are always classed” (2002: 763). On these grounds, difference in time and space generate geographical variations in terms of “racial meanings attached to various groups” (Pulido 2002:763). In keeping with Massey’s, Wilson’s, and Pulido’s observations, the concept of the politics of identity, then, is a loaded term. For Kobayashi, it refers to the racially and historically marginalized groups’ social movements seeking to gain recognition (2009:282).

Some geographers refer to the politics of identity as a “politics of difference” whereas David Harvey describes it as the “geography of difference” (1996; Jackson & Penrose

1993:104). Interest in the politics of identity in the field of geography originated in the late 1960s during the partial decolonization of the discipline. Some scholars viewed geographer William Bunge's brief collaborative research with African American leaders in Detroit, Michigan as a significant period because it altered his view of the urban sphere (Kobayashi 2009:282). Yet, an adequate geographic framework about the politics of identity as a whole but also in regards to revolutionary groups remains elusive (Kobayashi 2009:83). However, there is ongoing debate about it. Kobayashi's analysis thus will also play an important role in my examination of race in the Garifuna experience because her inquiry is broad in scope.

Citing sociologist Manuel Castells and geographer Nigel Thrift, Don Mitchell contends that identity is not "rooted to place" but it is in flux (2000:274). Although it is in flux, Mitchell explains, identity "exists as a nexus" because regardless of what means are employed whether by conquest or global economic changes, identities are "radically transformed" (2000:276). Social theorist, Stuart Hall agrees that identity is constantly in flux. Hall therefore advises that "we should think . . . of identity as a 'production,' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (1990:222). However, in the end, Halls simply says "cultural identity . . . is a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being.' It belongs to the future as much as to the past . . . Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation" (1990:225). Place is therefore where "everyday life is situated" and where all sorts of social practices develop (Merrifield 1993b:522). It is within these dialectical parameters that I situate the Garinagu's identity.

Situating Work within the Existing Literature

Wilson's works connect examination of conflicts in place to the economic structure wherein racist practices derive. Wilson contends that capitalism ascribes "differences to race, gender, class, regions, nations . . . in 'brute fashions'" (2000:5). This is where his exhausting analysis of race and place and the politics of identity reside, which I incorporate into my analysis of the Garinagu. Drawing from Wilson's analysis on Black experience in the United States, I say that the Garinagu have adopted a "new individual and collective identity," bringing "racial identity into politics" (2000:7). Their articulation of the term indigenous, which itself is one of the legacies of colonialism, is an ascribed identity debated and articulated by the United Nations, although not one single "system body" of the United Nations has ever adopted it ("Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues," 2004:1). Although the Honduran government recognizes "nine" ethnic groups including the Garinagu, its move does not imply an inclusive and heterogeneous society (Anderson 2007:389). This recognition simply means the illusion of inclusion. Yet, administrators of the Garifuna organizations such as OFRANEH generally invokes the term indigenous, which has shaped its politics in its land struggle. It invokes this term because there is a myth attached to it, that is, the Garinagu are Honduran citizens. Indeed, they are, but their treatment suggests that they are not. In using the word myth, I am questioning the Garinagu's belonging. On one hand, the government recognizes them as citizens of the nation-state. On the other hand, they are increasingly dispossessed from their land, they experience daily racism, and the Honduran government denies them their human rights. The Garifuna people though are not the only group denied their human rights in Honduras. The masses and dissenting voices experience similar oppression as well.

Judging from the political, economic, and social marginalization and blatant racism they experience daily, the Garinagu are in fact outsiders as Euraque states (2007:84). As another Garifuna organization in Honduras, ODECO, utilizes the concepts of Garifuna and Afro-descendant (see Anderson 2007:387). ODECO's longtime director, Celeo Álvarez Casildo began articulating this concept in the early 2000s. OFRANEH and the Garifuna middle class in Honduras and in the United States, however, reject the Afro-descendant categorization because as I learned during my ethnographic fieldwork, they associate it with being African rather than with being Honduran. The Garinagu in the United States employ the concept Garifuna but some also employ Hispanic,² Latino(a), and Garifuna American. Their usage of these terms implies that they see themselves as part of the country's political and economic integration. The Garinagu political identity then, regardless of geography, is connected to the dominant group's racist practices and history, practices linked to "real structure" – meaning the economic infrastructure (Wilson 2002:33). In Honduras, the colonizers constructed race during the colonial era and carried it over to the post-colonial era. Colonizers in the United States, "(re)constructed" race at different historical moments: "Reconstruction, post-reconstruction, the Great Depression" (Wilson 2002:33). Generally, scholars describe the existence of Reconstruction between 1863 to 1877 and the beginning of the Great Depression with the "stock market crash of 1929" (Alexander 2010:35; Zinn 2005:386). These historical moments shaped race-connected practices because each period has produced specific racist practices.

² Under President Richard Nixon's (1969-1974) administration, the U.S. Census Bureau coined the term Hispanic. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, it was not until "the 1970 census that the concept of reporting on Hispanics as a distinct group existed and then only in a 5 percent sample of the census questionnaires distributed" (2012). The diffusion of the term Hispanic "official" usage began in 1973 in which the government "applied" it to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare for the purpose of "developing racial and ethnic categories which it could use for data-gathering purposes" (United States Census Bureau, 2012). The term "Hispanic" encompassed Mexican, Puerto Rican, Central Americans, South American, Caribbean, and Spanish peoples who share some common cultural values" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012; see also Miranda 1997:150). According to historian Malvin Lane Miranda, not all "Hispanics" welcomed the term, but the media popularized it (1997:150).

Katherine McKittrick uses an approach similar to Wilson's. In assessing blacks' historical trajectories, she finds "how black human geographies are implicated in the production of [place]" (2007:4). One of the trajectories McKittrick addresses is how black people's sense of belonging is constructed through a host of exclusionary practices in shifting power relations and displacement (2007:4). McKittrick draws a parallel between black subjects' oppression and domination and the fact that they are rewarded for "consuming, claiming, and owning things," meaning black subjects "are rewarded for wanting and demarcating 'our place' in the same ways that those in power do" (2007:5). She, therefore, advises that black subjects must reflect on the relationship between consumption and "conquest" in order to gain control over their lives (2007: 5). For people of African descent, place is different. They have "a different sense of place" which is determined by race and class (McKittrick 2006:x). I apply the same analysis to my understanding of the Garifuna people's social, economic, and political exclusion, particularly in Honduras but also in the United States.

Wilson's and McKittrick's work explores the tensions that underscore black geographies and the convergence of race and place. These tensions underpin the incessant struggle rooted in disempowerment and displacement of black people diasporically. Wilson and McKittrick's works are certainly important in my examination of the Garinagu because their works speak of the underlying oppression black people continue to experience. We must consider geographical variations when theorizing or understanding black subjects' lived experiences and disempowerment. This is one significant contribution of my work. It does not provide a general assessment of black people; it looks at a specific group relationally, meaning it examines local and global economic forces in relation to hegemonic spatial practices and draws a comparative analysis with similar groups in other regions.

Geographer Sharlene Mollett's works (2005, 2010, and 2013) on racialized places and the Garinagu-Miskitos land struggle in the Departamento of Gracias a Dios in Honduras are important in situating my work because her usage of geographical concepts such as race and place position my understanding of the politics of race and place in Honduras. Mollett illustrates this in her examination of contested places in Gracias a Dios in the Honduran Río Platano Biosphere Reserve and Mosquitia coast. Underpinning Mollett's argument is that the Garifuna-Miskitos and *colonos* land conflict is the "longstanding state nationalist project of 'whitening' where racial imaginaries are encoded in environmental arrangements and ascendant conceptions of suitable and unsuitable land use practices" (2010:43). Therefore, the land struggle of contemporary Garinagu and other indigenous groups in Honduras is not simply about "land and territory; rather such struggles seek to counter the idealization of whiteness as a racial and cultural project and the premise of *mestizo* citizenry" (Mollett 2013:1230 emphasis added). Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork and historical data and linking her findings to racial and post-colonial studies and political ecology, Mollett incorporates race into her analysis of political ecology since this theoretical frame "rarely addresses the significance of race in natural resources conflicts" (2006:78). Also, through these theoretical frames, Mollett consistently looks at two social actors, the Garinagu and Miskitos, but also includes the Honduran government and local land invaders such as the *ladino colono*. Mollett's work also highlights place and identity in examining the Garinagu and Miskito discourses. For both groups and other indigenous, place represents their heritage or "ancestral" land because they engage in subsistence economy (2013:231). Mollett situates the Honduran government's role in the Garinagu and other indigenous land struggle within the confines of the colonial racial construction, indigenous spatial marginalization in contemporary Honduran society, and the inability of state institutions

such as the National Agrarian Institute (Instituto Nacional Agrario, INA) to properly establish clear land ownership boundaries (2013:1231).

While Mollett raises important points in her work, she, perhaps deliberately, excludes very crucial details that I believe must be included in examining the Garinagu's land struggle. She does not include how the laws implemented in the early 1990s impact the Garinagu land ownership in Honduras. In addition, she does not take into account the expansion of the monoculture plantation and agribusiness controlled by the Honduran oligarch Miguel Facussé Bargum. Instead, the underlying premise of her analysis is intraethnic conflict. Indeed, there is an intraethnic element in the conflict. However, in Honduras this must be situated within a broader process, meaning that the land conflict is widespread in Honduras, and it is attached to the global economy. My work fills in this gap and contributes to existing scholarship because it re-evaluates the complexity of the Garinagu's land struggle by linking it to the Garifuna middle class's politics in the United States and in Honduras.

I also situate my work within anthropologists Keri Vacanti Brondo's and Sarah England's studies. Brondo's recent work, *Land Grab: Green Neoliberalism, Gender, and Garifuna Resistance in Honduras*, provides a useful platform for my work. Departing from a research question, "can 'freedom,' understood as well-being, be achieved under the structure of neoliberalism?," Brondo seeks to "unearth the structural causes of inequalities, and the means by which power impinges on the abilities of some actors to shape the future of resources use and management" (2013:9). Her targeted groups are mainly the Garinagu and "*mestizo*" women but also include what she refers to as "expats," mainly Canadians (2013:9 emphasis added). Brondo conducted her ethnographic fieldwork in various Garifuna communities in Honduras such as Sambo Creek, Rio Esteban, Cayos Cochinos, and several others. Positioning the Garinagu's land

struggle under the rubric of neoliberalism in shaping their access to and control over natural resources, Brondo examines the different forms of tourism and legislative framework established by the Honduran government in conjunction with multilateral lending institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

To address the Honduran government's legislative framework, Brondo discusses the political boundaries that redefine the Garifuna communities' spatial boundaries. Brondo points out that the municipality of Jutiapa asked Garinagu residing in the community of La Louba, meaning on the other side, to "pay taxes" since they were separated from Sambo Creek which falls under the political jurisdiction of La Ceiba's municipality (2013:74). Brondo estimates that "about 50 Garifuna individuals in nine houses live in La Louba, all descendants of an 86-year-old Garifuna woman who inherited the land from her mother and now holds a private title" (2013:74). According to Brondo's findings, these are the families the municipality of Jutiapa is "asking" to pay taxes (2013:74). Brondo traces the Garinagu's land conflicts to the early 1970s when in the aftermath of Hurricane Fifi in 1974 "60 percent of Honduras' agricultural production, and the banana companies abandoned many more of their plantations" and landless peasants' occupied "unused lands" (2013:36). Because of these processes, "landless and jobless mestizo peasants" settled on the north coast (Brondo 2013:36). As the number of landless and jobless peasants increased, the Garinagu began to legalize their land by the early 1980s as "individual private owners" (Brondo 2013:37). Compounding these changes were a host of neoliberal legislative laws, which put the Garifuna leaders and communities under considerable pressure. As a result, the Garinagu held marches in the country's capital, Tegucigalpa.

Brondo places her work within the feminist political ecology framework and she speaks of the Garinagu "matrilineal inheritance" and the Garinagu knowledge of place and space, although

she does not directly articulate these concepts (2013:76). Citing the Latin American studies scholar Diana Deere, Brondo forwards the argument that women's access to land positions them as contributors to food security, access to "credit and other services," and empowers women in their household and relationships (2013:80). While this may be the case for *mulatas* women under neoliberalism, what exists in the Garifuna society is a traditional gender division of labor where women work the land and men fish and hunt, although some women fish and men do work the land. Growing up in a Garifuna community, I witnessed that women did not use working the land as a bargaining chip in their relationships. This practice is commonly equated with Western societies. The Garinagu's land struggle is not linked to women's dispossession from their land. The dispossession impacts the whole community.

Brondo's work offers useful points in situating my work because it explores the laws established beginning in the 1970s and beyond which created the legal structure affecting the Garinagu. However, there are several shortcomings in her analysis. Brondo's work does not directly examine the significance of place in the lives of the Garinagu. In other words, she does not bring place to the forefront of her analysis. In addition, she does not explore the Garifuna middle class's politics. My work tackles Brondo's shortcomings in that it examines the production of place within hegemonic spatial practices.

Contrary to Brondo, Sarah England's 2006 work, *Afro Central Americans in New York City: Garifuna Tales of Transnational Movements in Racialized Space*, is also where I situate my work. Using transnational migration and ethnic social movements as her theoretical framework, England bases her argument on "redefinitions of citizenship, human rights, and national belonging" (2006:xi). Yet, England contends that the Honduran government and elites' appropriation of the Garinagu's land for agribusiness and other economic ventures undermined

the Garinagu's citizenship, human rights, and national belonging. Consequently, the Garinagu are "virtually landless, dependent on neighboring cities for employment in a poorly remunerated service sector and on remittances" from the United States (England 2006:4-5). For England, the Honduran government's economic activities ignited the Garinagu's movement locally and abroad. To situate the Garinagu's social movements broadly, England's analysis centers on "networks of relationship," meaning family and community experiences within "larger structures of inequality in which they are embedded" and grassroots organizations "strategies and ideologies" (2006:6). Using ethnographic fieldwork, England examines these networks of relationship by researching the Garinagu organizing in Limón, Honduras and in New York City (South Bronx, Harlem).

Besides examining the Garinagu's networks of relationship with respect to their grassroots mobilizing, England also speaks of changes of their identity that includes black, indigenous, Latino, and Garifuna. England refers to identity spaces that the Garinagu straddle to be a "border zone" (2006:7). She places her work within a "racialized and gendered global labor force" by examining the Garinagu migration patterns (2006:8). Guiding her study is Arturo Escobar's and Sonia E. Álvarez's approach of a "new way of 'doing politics'" in Latin America in which the *mestizo* male is no longer the one setting the rules of power change (2006:9 emphasis added). For England, this power shift seems to also include groups such as the Garinagu. Escobar's and Álvarez's approach adheres to Foucault's argument that "social movements are both economic struggles and struggles over meaning and representation" (2006:9). On this ground, England's main argument is that the Garinagu's "collective identities and political strategies" are intrinsically connected to the ways the Garifuna "experience and envision their place in the individual division of labor" (2006:9). At the heart of England's work is the border zone which

conceptualizes a convergence of different identities and ideas (2006:7). Space of convergence is thus occupied by the Latino(a), Garifuna, black, and Afro Latino(a). For England, each of these factors is distinct, but they come together through international labor. In essence, while her work is invaluable, England uses space metaphorically not physically. Although England's examination of networks of relationships is useful, my work takes this thought a bit further by looking at material practices within a global economy and the Garifuna middle class's role in the landlessness of the Garinagu in Honduras.

My work shows the centrality of place in understanding economic and political processes because tension is embedded in the appropriation and control over place as Harvey argues (1990:254). In addition, my work offers a different approach in examining the Garinagu spatially and relationally. This critical approach challenges existing literature that is most often supported by the idea of the Garifuna people as a unique culture in Central America. My work problematizes such a perspective and situates the Garinagu not only as people of African descent in spaces of oppression and domination, but also as social actors.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research employs multi-sited critical ethnographic fieldwork and triangulated mixed-methods comprised of cross-section and semi-structured interviews, collaborative ethnography, and participant observation. Before entering discussion about the various methods use in this dissertation, I am first defining ethnography. Geographers Kevin St. Martin and Marianna Pavlovskaya point out that ethnography is “the direct observation and documentation of some group or community, their practices and habits, and, primarily, aspects of their culture” (2009:370). For professor of education and social research Martyn Hammersley and sociologist Paul Atkinson, ethnography is another method within the social sciences with multiple meanings which include “‘qualitative inquiry,’ fieldwork,’ ‘interpretive method,’” (2007:2). Martin and Pavlovskaya explain that although ethnography is embedded with anthropology, as positivism waned in the 1970s, ethnography emerged as central to cultural geography and its “critical response to positivist and structural forms of explanation” (2009:370). As I pointed out in chapter two, critical scholars trace their reaction to positivism to inspirations they drew from the tradition of Marxism, non-European scholars’ rebellions, and a host of national and international movements taking place during that period. It is from these processes that critical geographies evolved.

Geographer Gillian Hart states that critical ethnographies “offer vantage points for generating new understandings by illuminating power-laden processes of constitution, connection, and dis-connection, along with slippages, openings, and contradictions, and possibilities for alliance within and across different spatial scales” (2006:982). Hart’s usage of spatial scales is connected to sociologist Michael Burawoy’s analysis of “global ethnography”

(Hart 2004:5). Contrary to Hart, for communication scholar D. Soyini Madison, critical ethnography is an “interpretive or analytical method” (2005:12). Critical ethnography is all of the above because it offers a basis for challenging conventional scientific practices and identifying injustices and social conditions that influence struggles. This method is thus appropriate in explaining the political and economic forces both domestic and global which are producing a new place on Honduras’ north coast and fragmenting the Garinagu’s lives in so many different ways. Critical ethnography aligns with my research because it helps to explain the relation between “structure, agency and geographic context” (Herbert 2000:550). I use critical ethnography in this dissertation as a way of challenging representations made by the European colonizers, Honduran elites, and some scholars of the Garinagu and examining national and global political and economic forces and their impact on the Garifuna communities.

Collaborative ethnography is another method used in my research. I view this method to be an extension of what anthropologist Charles R. Hale defines as “activist scholarship” also known as “action research,” “participatory action research,” “grounded theory,” “public intellectual work,” and “engaged research” (2008:3). According to Hale, activist scholarship methods “embody a politics, which the authors affirm and critically explore; this affirmation, in turn, far from an admission of ‘political bias,’ is a step toward deeper reflection on the entanglement of researcher and subject and, by extension, toward greater methodological rigor” (2008:8). Collaborative ethnography allows researchers to engage in political practices developed within a specific group and in the “production of ethnographic text” (Hale 2008:3; see also Lassiter 2005:83; see also Rappaport 2008:2). I strive for this methodological rigor. Although scholars have used collaborative ethnography since the early nineteenth century, its growing appeal in the last few years has been to engage researchers in a more productive and

progressive dialogues with the oppressed communities (Lassiter 2004:2). Anthropologist Joanne Rappaport suggests that collaborative ethnography should serve as a constructive “alternative research” (2008:2) tool outside of the academic milieu because it departs from traditional approaches and it engages in “‘political culture’ carved out of the background of cultural domain within a given society” (Escobar 1992:405; see also Touraine 1992:127). Like any other method, collaborative ethnography has its downsides. “Intimate” relationships forged between researchers and the interlocutors can be productive, but they can also generate friction (Lassiter 2005:115). Indeed, at times using collaborative ethnography could become somewhat awkward for distrust could arise between interlocutors and the researcher.

To illustrate a case of distrust, some interlocutors revealed to me weeks after interviewing them that they had withheld information from me because they realized that they could write their own book. Several interlocutors did not speak English preventing me from providing them with dissertation chapters to read. I suspect that if they had read some of the chapters, they would have provided their own particular input about their relationship and perception with and of place (Shurmer-Smith 2002:126). In other words, because the interlocutors uphold different perspectives of places and spaces, their input can greatly enhance the narrative written by the writer. The second reason for considering their input is to show that “knowledge and power” in the construction of “meanings of words and images” are not a researcher’s exclusive domain (Shurmer-Smith 2002:128). The interlocutors maintain certain interpretations about the meanings of words and images. Other Garinagu, however, appreciated the fact that I reminded them of some details about the Bicentennial commemoration of the Garinagu’s ancestors’ arrival to Honduras held in Washington, D.C. in 1997.

In addition to collaborative ethnography, I used multi-sited ethnography because ethnographies are not “local” or “global” activities (Hart 2006:982). They are representations of human mobility. Researchers using this approach follow biography, migration, and Diasporas. Multi-sited ethnography is far from being a complete representation of people and places. Instead, anthropologist George Marcus proposes, “any ethnography of a cultural formation in the world system is also ethnography of the system” (1998:83). Consequently, we cannot apprehend it “only” as single-sited ethnography. Rather, we should understand it as a spatial linkage. Positioning the Garinagu within the global economies, the reproduction of place, and the introduction of a new social relation explain this spatial linkage because place is an integral force and a significant feature in how this process affects social relations of a society. Multi-sited ethnography applies to my work because it looks at geographical processes. For example, the Garinagu in East New Orleans experience significant spatial barriers than their counterparts in the Bronx. One contributing factor to these spatial barriers is the availability of good public transportation in New York City. Access to public transportation allows the Garinagu to attend a host of activities including meetings. In addition, they can connect with many grassroots organizations. Second, New York City’s economy offers more opportunities in comparison to New Orleans. Most Garinagu I met in New Orleans work in the service industries (e.g. hotels or motels). Others work in primary industries (e.g. oil extraction). In New York City, a large number of Garinagu work in building maintenance, media, as public servants, in financial institutions, and nonprofit organizations.

I experienced some setbacks with multi-sited ethnography; I did not spend sufficient time in a place to connect or reconnect with the Garifuna community. Instead, I saw myself simply as a bill collector, meaning just spending enough time to collect the data and then leave. In this

sense, I over-stretched myself. Consequently, I made the Bronx, New York the central site and East New Orleans, Louisiana and Houston, Texas peripheral sites. I moved out of the Bronx in 2004 to pursue my Master's degree in Connecticut and from there I moved to Baton Rouge in 2007. Although I would periodically visit the Bronx while residing in Connecticut, and I embarked in fieldwork research in Honduras for two months in 2006, I realized during my ethnographic fieldwork in 2009 and 2010 in the Bronx that the Garifuna community has changed demographically, socially, politically, and economically. These changes posed a challenge since even people I knew before shied away from me, although being away from a number of years does not, in my view, warrant rejection. East New Orleans, on the other hand, was the only place where I spent more time because of its geographical proximity to Baton Rouge and relatively sustained activities regarding the land struggle on Honduras' north coast.

Despite recent debates about multi-sited ethnography, anthropologists Simon Coleman and Pauline von Hellermann still believe on its "salience" (2011:2). Sociologist Pablo Lapegna, however, takes issue with multi-sited ethnography. Juxtaposing multi-sited ethnography and what he refers to as global ethnography, Lapegna argues that one of the key aspects of the "'broader context' of an ethnographic research is the use of ethno-history, a strategy at odds with the MSE [multi-sited ethnography] perspective" (2009:11). Citing Marcus, Lapegna states that Marcus "takes issue with historical-ethnographic explanations because they ' . . . are not produced or given within the frame of ethnographic work itself but by the contextualizing discourses in which the ethnography comes to be embedded'" (2009:11). Although multi-sited ethnography lacks historical explanations as Lapegna contends, I still find it a useful tool with minor imperfections.

For data collection, I used triangulated mixed-methods, which employs a combination of “several data-collection techniques (typically interviews, observation, and documentary evidence) to investigate the same question” (Blee & Taylor 2002:111). Agreeing with Norman K. Denzin, Kathleen M. Blee and Verta Taylor note that triangulation “increases the amount of detail about a topic . . .” (2002:111). I used cross-section and semi-structured interviewing, oral and life histories, telephone interviews, and participant observation. Semi-structured interviewing has been successfully used as a significant tool in providing greater breadth and depth of information in understanding “mobilization” (Blee & Taylor 2002:92). Through its usage, researchers can gain access to the groups’ “motivations and perspectives” as well as “meaning” and “identities” - that is, changes and self-perception (Blee & Taylor 2002: 92). Semi-structured interviews also ensure that “human agency” assumes center stage in the examination of a group because it allows researchers to gain insight into the activists’ quotidian lives (Blee & Taylor 2002:92-93). Contrary to quantitative fieldwork, in semi-structured interviewing “analysis and interpretation are ongoing processes” because it demands that researchers begin “analyzing data as it is being collected” (Blee & Taylor 2002:110). Another aspect in analyzing semi-structured interviews is that researchers try to “clarify concepts and categories through successive, alternating waves of data collection and interpretation” (Blee & Taylor 2002:110). I incorporate the same approach into oral history analysis.

As a subtype of semi-structured interviews, oral histories function as a “technique of bridging, seeking to understand social contexts through stories of individual experiences and to comprehend experiences of the past through stories told in the present” (Blee & Taylor 2002: 102). In other words, oral histories are “personal windows on struggles” revealing what archival sources may not reveal (Blee & Taylor 2002:103; Brodtkin 2007:54). This is an appropriate

method for examining the Garinagu's political and cultural practices because their oral histories are openings through which to scrutinize some of the root causes of their struggles. Life histories, on the other hand, are "oriented toward understanding the activist experiences of individual respondents over time" (Blee & Taylor 2002:103). Thus, the combination of oral and life history narratives provide insight into the Garinagu's ideological and political practices.

In this research, I also engaged in participant observation, which allowed me to observe what is happening at a specific place and time. I conducted participant observation by attending regular meetings and social gatherings. Using field notes, I recorded my observations and wrote questions about them. I also noted ideas about my research while in the field. These notes provide "accounts of people, places, interactions, and events" experienced as a participant-observer (Lichterman 2002:121). I achieved this by examining settings where the Garinagu held their events, how they dressed, what they ate, the music they listened to, and what they said and how they said it. To take field notes requires the participant-observer to be informed about a "theme" or "concept" (Lichterman 2002:127). For example, before attending a meeting, I called or e-mailed the organizer(s) in advance to find out what agenda items they will discuss during the meeting. Once researchers record themes, concepts, theories, and expectations, they must elaborate on their "experiences during the first contacts with a field site" (Lichterman 2002:127). This process helps to identify key people and relationships. Participant observation is well-regarded by sociologists because: (1) it "produces rich descriptive accounts of everyday life;" and (2) it is "the prime method for building on the edifice of interactionist sociology" (Lichterman 2002:121). To facilitate the coding and analysis process, participant-observers must have a clear idea before going to the field of what they are observing and through what lens are

they are observing it. The same analytical method that can be used for semi-structured interviewing may also be used for participant observation.

Another method used in my research was gathering archival material at the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library at Tulane University in New Orleans, which houses a collection of banana plantation owners' records from Honduras. Although the archival information did not yield useful material on the Garifuna people's land ownership, it introduced me to the spatial relation between Honduran politicians and elites and plantation owners in New Orleans. Information obtained also addresses workers' demand for higher wages. However, I secured some relevant information from my interlocutors, although in some cases they did not provide concrete historical information. My longtime membership in a Garifuna internet listserv also helped me to stay informed on a range of land related-developments in Honduras.

Using a voice recorder, I conducted twenty-seven interviews between 2009 and 2013. In a spreadsheet, I created a participant profile, which includes the interlocutors' name (pseudonym), location of interview, age, gender, place of birth, place of residence, education, occupation, and proficiency to speak Garifuna. Out of the twenty-seven interlocutors interviewed ranging in age from their early twenties to mid-seventies, ten were females and seventeen males. Four interlocutors were between the ages of 20 and 29, six between the ages of 30 and 39, seven between the ages of 40 and 49, five between the ages of 50 and 59, three between the ages of 60 and 69, and two between the ages of 70 and 79. Educationally, eleven are college graduates, three of which are females and eight males. Out of seven with some college credits, three are males and four with some trade that include females. In terms of place of birth, nineteen were born in rural Honduras and eight in urban settings in Honduras. As for place of residence, twenty-four reside in the United States and three reside in Honduras. Information on their place

of residence assisted me in assessing their political, cultural, and economic practices.

Linguistically, twenty-one interlocutors speak Garifuna fluently while the remaining had some understanding. The older population demonstrated more interest on discussing language and land, which they associate with preserving the Garifuna culture. Some graduates from Cuba's Latin American School of Medicine (Escuela Latinoamericana de Medicina, ELAM) showed significant interest on the language and linked it to the preservation of the Garifuna's culture and their territory on Honduras' north coast. Some people in their mid to late forties residing in the United States and actively involved in the land struggle envision starting a commercial business endeavor (e.g. aquaculture) when they return to Honduras.

With the exception of the Garinagu who came from Limón, Honduras that I interviewed in East New Orleans, most interlocutors came from different communities in Honduras. Most were born in Garifuna communities whereas one-third grew up in middle class families in major Honduran cities such as La Ceiba and Puerto Cortés. Out of the twenty-seven interviews, I conducted four by telephone. Among those interlocutors, two resided in Florida, one in the Bronx, one in Honduras, and one was visiting the United States. The remaining interviews were face-to-face. In the Bronx, I completed eleven personal interviews, which mostly took place at Casa Yurumein community center, where most Garinagu converge. In East New Orleans, I interviewed four persons in private homes. In Houston, I interviewed six people, two in a restaurant and the remainder in private residences. In Seattle, Washington, I conducted an interview at an interlocutor's apartment. Conducted mostly in Spanish with a few in English and Garifuna, interviews lasted an average of two hours. I secured over 90 percent of my interviews through gatekeepers. However, I also secured interviews at social gatherings. Each interlocutor signed either a Spanish or English agreement. I translated and transcribed information compiled

from Spanish and Garifuna or both into English. Because some of the interviews did not yield useful information, I transcribed only twenty interviews. I listened to the interviews that I did not transcribe to ensure I did not exclude useful information. Once I transcribed the interviews, I edited them to ensure that there were not any grammatical errors or misspelling and provided a copy to each interlocutor who requested to receive one. I never received comments or feedback from any interlocutor on any transcript.

Next, I coded and logged the interviews to identify themes or similarities in the collaborators' answers and to extract the most relevant information. The coding process is about "creating a point of view or statement" and organizing passages in interviews descriptively which help organize a researcher's analysis (Madison 2005:37). Some of the key themes I coded were identity, land struggle strategy, race and racism, gender, political perspectives, place, cultural practices, and capitalism. I selected these themes based on the content of the interlocutors' narratives. Because my interlocutors both travel to and have families in Honduras and state-sponsored violence against Garinagu in Honduras is a common occurrence, I assigned each interlocutor a pseudonym. The only time their real name is disclosed is when I received documents or videos circulated on the Garifunalink internet listserv or found the same information on the internet or YouTube. Otherwise, I ensured that their identity, rights, and safety of all interlocutors are fully protected in keeping with Louisiana State University's Institutional Review Board research guidelines.

During the initial preparation, I designated Honduras as my fieldwork site. Due to the country's 2009 coup d'état, I decided that it would be a perilous undertaking for a Garifuna woman to conduct research on the land struggle in Honduras. Hence, I switched my fieldwork site to the Bronx in New York City, Los Angeles, California, and New Orleans, Louisiana. In

view that no one from Los Angeles responded to my request for interviews, I proceeded to carry out my fieldwork in the Bronx, East New Orleans, and Houston, Texas. Because I had lived in the Bronx since my early teens, I am familiar with its geography, was active in some Garifuna cultural organizations, and was able to make contacts in the larger Garifuna community. My work in New York City centered on the South Bronx. I chose East New Orleans and Houston because of their geographic proximity to Baton Rouge, and I learned that land organizing efforts were active in each city. I spent a little over a week in Houston, in part, because most of my contacts there were not interested in talking about the land struggle in Honduras or had a different reason for not wanting to talk which I may never know. Instead, what I found out in Houston was that there is a growing Garifuna evangelistic community in the Fifth Ward. These evangelists are members of the *Liguilisi Garifuna Lugudemehabu Bungiu* (Christian Garifuna Mercy of God Church) founded by its pastor, Braulio Valerio.

Pastor Valerio allowed me to speak about my research to his congregation. At the end of the mass, I spoke with Pastor Valerio about granting me an interview. Instead, he provided me with a Garifuna children's book written in Garifuna. Another person I interviewed was trying to organize the Garinagu in Houston around the land struggle in Honduras. However, throughout the interview, he was busy showing me pictures taken with Panamanian born and former Honduran President Ricardo Rodolfo Maduro Joest (2002-2006) rather than talking about organizing and mobilizing. The only individual who granted me a useful interview is involved in gaining ownership of his family land in La Ceiba to build luxury hotels. The remaining interlocutors' information was not useful. Although I secured many useful interviews in the Bronx, similar to Houston, in the Bronx, a growing conservative religious Garifuna group is not interested in land and the land struggle in Honduras. At Saint Augustine Church in the

Morrisania neighborhood in the South Bronx, the Catholic Garifuna congregation granted me five minutes to talk about my project. After speaking, their *mestizo* Colombian priest wished me good luck and focused on his Adam and Eve sermon. No one ever granted me an interview. Instead, one of the leading “sisters,” shared with me that they were exploring ways of having their congregation, which conducts masses in Garifuna and Spanish, to be recognized by the Pope (field notes, June 6, 2010). I share this information for two reasons. First, it is intended to show geographical variations in different sites where I conducted my research. Second, the Garifuna people’s cultural practices have been spatially transformed.

Theoretical Issues

In this project, I examine the concepts of positionality and situated knowledge to contextualize how scholarship produced by many anthropologists has informed the Garinagu’s self-perception and representation and how these scholars’ findings have empowered them. For example, most Garinagu decry their ancestor’s first point of departure: Africa because their frame of reference has been informed by narratives the European colonizers produced and most western scholars follow. As for scholars empowering themselves, what I refer to is the commodification and production of knowledge or what geographer James Sidaway defines as “academic competition and marketization” which centers on their “whiteness, maleness . . . [and] class affiliations” (2000:260-1). My examinations of various sources such as Audrey Kobayashi (1994), geographers Kim V. L. England (1994), Gillian Hart (2001), Andy Merrifield (1995), Gillian Rose (1997), and feminist theorist and philosopher of science and technology Donna Haraway (1988), reveal that positionality is embedded in ideology and power, meaning it shapes how scholars see the Other and how they maintain power over the production of knowledge and the representation of the subjects they study.

Critical feminist scholars in the field of geography have deconstructed positionality by examining the politics of hierarchy within the discipline. Kobayashi calls for dismantling “the guardians of the discipline” (1994:73), meaning white male patriarchy or “disrupting the ‘whiteness’ of fieldwork in geography” (Abbott 2006). In so doing, Kobayashi contends that marginalized voices would be “erasing the circle, and redefining scholarly endeavors, as a means not only of interpreting, but also of affecting social change” (Kobayashi 1994:74). One of the preferred consequences of Abbott and Kobayashi’s assertions would be to incorporate critical curriculum into ethnographic courses before students go into the field. In addition, faculty and administrators in the field of geography and social science, in general, must reflect the needs of the population that they serve and research. A balance between scholars and subjects would avoid what Abbot and Kobayashi criticize. In creating a balance, it would minimize the colonial gaze the Garinagu have been subjected to.

Non-European scholars, such as bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Gayatri Spivak, and others, have put middle class white women’s power on trial as well because some members of this group, in a way that is similar to their white male counterparts, has come to be the designated voice of the oppressed. White female researchers have become the privileged interpreter or cultural overseers of the Other despite the fact that women occupy a marginal position in the social hierarchy. This does not mean that some white male and female geographers have not produced “exceptional work,” but more diverse geographers, chiefly non-Europeans, are needed to “enhance our disciplinary discourse on race in several ways” (Pulido 2002:45). Kobayashi states that non-European women works have kept sexism and racism under “a critical ‘gaze,’” “enriched our theoretical agenda,” and have transformed our “ethnography fieldwork practices

by challenging positionality and relationship with the community research” (1994:74). Hooks’ extensive work among other scholars featured in this project speaks of the critical gaze.

In deconstructing the significance of cultural criticism in African Americans’ life, hooks states that it has generally operated as a “force promoting critical resistance, one that enabled black folks to cultivate in everyday life a practice of critique and analysis that would disrupt and even deconstruct those cultural productions that were designed to promote and reinforce domination” (1990:3). For example, hooks states that although black people watched serial dramas or humorous programs on televisions in the past that did not represent them, they still enjoyed viewing these programs while concurrently critiquing them. Most Garinagu grow up watching Mexican or Venezuelan soap operas, serial dramas that enforce the dominant culture practices and degrade black people since black people always play the role of servants and minstrel characters. However, the Garifuna people in Honduras and in the United States, similar to many Spanish speaking viewers, remain a loyal audience. In fact, an elder Garifuna woman in Houston, Texas informed me not to come to her apartment to interview her during certain time because it interferes with her favorite soap opera schedule. I grew up watching soap operas and I do not remember any member of my family critiquing the depiction or absence of black people from these programs. Instead, my family concerned itself with discussing betrayals, the elites’ cultural practices, religion, and other elements that define Spanish speaking soap operas. Hooks’ work is thus vital in my assessment of the Garifuna people, particularly in my assessment of race and their politics.

In addition to enhancing the field of geography’s racial discourse, hooks declares that anti-racist white scholars “understand the need, at least intellectually, to alter their thinking. Central to this process of unlearning white supremacist attitudes and values is the deconstruction of the

category ‘whiteness’” (1992:12). These attitudes and values are entrenched in safeguarding the patriarchal system. Hooks states that although men have created the patriarchal system, in the end the relationship between men and women is not about oppressor (men) and women (victims) because even the most oppressed women “exercise some power” (1984:90). The oppressor and victim binaries prevent women from creating “different value systems” (hooks 1984:86). In creating different values, women must counter prevailing thoughts that “women are different from men; think and act differently; conceptualize power differently; and therefore have an inherently different value system” (hooks 1984:86). To counter these prevailing thoughts, we must include a critical understanding of how people have been taught to socialize, cultural practices, and values learned, particularly in a capitalist system. These factors remain integral in shaping an individual or a group frame of reference, which in turn informs their worldviews.

Despite what hooks and other scholars assert about white supremacy and the patriarchal system, there is an underlying assumption in the field of geography that the field is “neutral” and that research can be conducted through a homogenized approach while disassociating the “practice from its historical role in imperialism” (Abbott 2006:326). Many middle class white women, also marginalized in their respective fields, carry their whiteness into the fieldwork. Some scholars describe anthropologist Nancie González as the “leading Garifuna ethnohistorian” (Brondo 2013:20) or “the most prominent ethnographer” (Euraque 1998:156). Although González has certainly generated considerable work about the Garifuna people, it does not mean that scholars must not scrutinize her work. For instance, no one has put González’s definition of the Garifuna people’s ethnogenesis as “esoteric,” “foreign,” “obscure” (González 1988:xii). No one has questioned her 1975 conversation with biology anthropologist, Michael H. Crawford who states that González was “interested” in anthropological genetic studies of Garinagu

fertility, diet, mating, skin color, molecular system, and education (1984:viii). I cite one sample of such work carried out by anthropologists Pamela J. Byard, Francis C. Lees, John H. Relethford. Using “any number of biological characters (morphology, dentition, serology, etc.),” in 1976, Byard, Lees, and Relethford sought to answer the first question which concerned the “physical distinctiveness of the Garifuna relation to neighboring groups of African extraction, known locally as Creoles [in Belize]” (1984:149). Byard, Lees, and Relethford are basing their research on González’s 1969 findings. González states,

In physical appearance the Carib differs little, if any, from other Negroid peoples in the area. Most non-Caribs who have lived in the area for any length of time insist that they can distinguish Caribs merely by looking at them. Some claim that the Carib is slightly lighter in color, that he has higher cheek bones, that he is somewhat shorter and stockier than the Negro. (1969:25)

Byard, Lees, and Relethford second “concern” focuses on “skin color variability within the population, due to sex, age, and local difference” whereas their third concern is to “estimate the admixture proportions of various ancestral groups to the present-day Garifuna based on skin color measurements . . .” (1984:149-150). Byard and her cohorts similar to González “carry with them the marks of their own histories and cultures” in their representation and imagining the Other (Haraway 1989:2). Their representation and imagining of the Other suggest that they did not concern their study with understanding cultural differences, but instead their concern was with maintaining the colonial gaze.

For Madison, ethnographers must assess their “positionality” by engaging in self-evaluation and recognizing their “own power, privilege, and biases just as [they denounce] the power structures that surround [their] subjects” (2005:6-7). Donna Haraway’s analysis is certainly important in exploring positionality and the production of knowledge because she focuses on researchers’ vision in what she refers to as visual metaphors characterizing their

knowledge. It is this visual metaphor Haraway defines as “persistence vision” or the narrow perceptions that some Western researchers have of oppressed peoples as a result of being influenced by the dominant ideologies of race and patriarchy (1988:581). This persistence of vision emphasizes that a self-reflective consideration of race and the impacts of racism must be applied when studying the Other or oppressed communities.

For Haraway, “The eyes have been used to signify a perverse capacity-honed to perfection in the history of science tied to militarism, capitalism, colonialism, and male supremacy-to distance the knowing subject from everybody and everything in the interests of unfettered power” (1988:581). Her rationale for making this declaration is that the subjugated people are not exempt from the colonial gaze since they are not in position to refute scientific inquiry. On the contrary, they welcome it because

they are knowledgeable of modes of denial through repression, forgetting, and disappearing acts-ways of being nowhere while claiming to see comprehensively. The subjugated have a decent chance to be on to the god trick and all its dazzling-and, therefore, blinding-illuminations. ‘Subjugated’ standpoints are preferred because they seem to promise more adequate, sustained, objective, transforming accounts of the world. But how to see from below is a problem requiring at least as much skill with bodies and language, with the mediations of vision, as the ‘highest’ techno scientific visualizations. (1988:584)

The Garinagu continued to be placed under this “direct, devouring, generative, and unrestrictive vision . . .” that Haraway speaks of, making their so-called exoticism a career maker for many scholars (1988: 582). Many white middle class’s access to the Garinagu and other cultures is a result of European colonialism and many have in turn kept the colonial gaze and practices.

White women, Haraway contends, adopted some of the practices and values of the patriarchal society in terms of how they view the Other both in and outside the field (1988:586). Science is therefore a “contestable text and a power field; the content is the form” (Haraway

1988:577). I return to Nancie González's work to illustrate what Haraway points out in which González betrays her obvious Eurocentric views in denigrating statements such as:

today, my Carib/Garifuna friends often ask me, 'Why are you doing this?' They find it strange that an American white woman of English descent should devote so much of her life to studying an obscure, relatively small, foreign black population with an unwritten language (at least until the 1960s) and an esoteric religious system. (1988:xii)

Is this what her alleged friends really think of González or what she actually thinks of her friends? For González, researching the Garinagu to develop a deeper understanding of their culture seems to have less importance than reflecting and challenging her Eurocentrism and whiteness. It is about what she construes to be a position of power afforded by her intellectual faculties. Clearly by the choice of her words, González seems to forget that the Garinagu, similar to many colonized groups, behave as whites want them to behave: adoring the master and hating themselves. González's words as a white academic researching a historically oppressed black people shows how cultural hegemony is preserved. Drawing from Haraway's analysis, González's statement represents the "persistence of vision" or the narrow perceptions some Western researchers have of the Other as a result of being influenced by dominant ideologies of race and patriarchy (1988:581). This persistent vision emphasizes that a self-reflective consideration of race and the impacts of racism must be applied when studying the Other or oppressed communities.

As for what González's friends think of her, I can only say that she fails to acknowledge the devastating impacts European colonialism and slavery had on the Garinagu. To challenge the colonial gaze, it is helpful to follow bell hooks who urges to look into the representation of "whiteness in the black imagination" (1992:170). To do so hooks suggests that blacks "appeal to memory;" in other words, blacks and other colonized people must return to the historical

processes that created them as the Other, that shaped their experiences, and that informs their lives today (1992:170). Several Garinagu I have encountered articulate whiteness in the black imagination when they assert their desire not to be objects of study or subjected to the European gaze. However, because of colonialism and slavery, others feel empowered by the incessant attention they receive from white scholars (Haraway 1988:584).

The convergence of race, class, and gender as illustrated with González's statements that shapes her frame of reference speak of "fieldwork experiences and most importantly the production of knowledge" (Sundberg 2003:186). Scholars must continue to speak out against the politics of the fieldwork because in geographer and feminist scholar Juanita Sundberg's view it creates the "conditions so crucial to masculinist forms of objectivity: namely, distance, disinterest, and disembodiment" (Sundberg 2003:186-188). Overcoming and exposing power relations in any fieldwork, requires that researchers remember that their "subject position is constituted in spaces of betweenness or a position that is neither inside nor outside" (Katz 1994:72). Geographers Lynn A. Staeheli and Victoria A. Lawson state that feminist fieldwork has been important because it is concerned with "relations and processes" that have "opened up gender relations and patriarchies as crucial structural forces in society" (1994:97). This is why I couched my project in a principle of pedagogy that includes "an engagement in theory, fieldwork methodology, and ethics" that has "the potential to foster the production of academic knowledge that is aware of and reflexive about its own assumptions, questions, and categories and therefore more responsible for its biases" (Sundberg 2003:187).

Field Experience

I faced significant barriers during my ethnographic fieldwork. The first was gender. Out of twenty-seven Garinagu I interviewed, seventeen were men some of whom were leaders of an

organization. Some of these men referred to me as “young lady” not as a researcher and another interviewed me first before I could interview him. Another one was more concerned with his personal feelings for me rather than granting me an interview. However, the most contemptible interview was interviewing an interlocutor while he massaged his genitals. Undaunted by his activities, I looked at him directly into his eyes throughout the duration of part one of the interview which lasted for an hour and an half. For part two of the interview, I brought my husband who noticed this man’s fixation with his genitals. I am sure that my experience is far from unique. Geographer and feminist Cindi Katz states that an ethnographer goes into the field as a “kind of ‘stranger’” (1994:68). Indeed, I was because I met Garinagu I have never met before. However, I went into the fieldwork secure in my conviction that my prior involvement with the Garifuna social organizations in the Bronx prepared me for the misogyny and patriarchal hegemony found in the Garifuna society as is the case in other societies.

As I reflected on the collaborator’s preoccupation with his genitals, I carried out the interview because it took place outside of his house in broad daylight and I wanted to show that his activities did not intimidate me. Yet, he wanted to continue to define my position and role. While attending a meeting, without any prior consultation, he assigned me to read his organization’s constitution. Although I had spoken with him as the president of the group about my role, he consistently challenged my position (field notes, August 1, 2010). This collaborator’s actions signal that my body was out of place and it needed to be returned to its proper place. His behavior underscores “masculinit[y] in action” (Hyndman 2001:262). Reflecting on geographer and professor of gender studies Linda McDowell’s observation, Kim V. L. England states that because women “may be perceived by men . . . as ‘unthreatening or not ‘official,’ confidential documents [are] often made accessible, or difficult issues broached

relatively freely” (1994:85). This may be the case, but what about challenging the patriarchal system. How does a female researcher (whether beginner or seasoned) defies the patriarchal system?

The second barrier I faced in the field was race. While attending a tribute to the Garifuna songwriter and singer Marcelino Fernandez, also known as Don Marasa, in the South Bronx, a white male journalist writing about the number of languages spoken in New York City approached me. He asked me if I was Garifuna and if I spoke Garifuna to which I replied “yes.” He proceeded to treat me as an interviewee, but I informed him that I was researching the Garinagu. After learning about my status, his questions about my research went from general to personal. Realizing that he was dealing with an uncooperative subject, he approached a Garifuna male who I knew and who only several minutes earlier declined my request to interview him. However, standing behind me, the white journalist and the Garifuna man talked for nearly an hour as if they were old friends (field notes, May 29, 2010). Since they were standing directly behind me, I heard their conversation. Listening to the journalist introducing himself and his work indicated to me that they did not know each other. I also understood the difficulties I face as a black woman researching a black group that continues to be gazed namely by middle class white scholars and journalists’ unrestrictive vision. Thus, non-Europeans but mostly black women in particular certainly encounter barriers to gain access to spaces that considered normally exclusive for European scholars or Garifuna men.

The last barrier I faced in the field was the insider/outsider binary and positionality. Before embarking in ethnographic fieldwork, I understood that ethnographic fieldwork is firmly grounded in an “empirical methodology that is devoted to the analysis of research data acquired by means of first-hand interactions with members of a local community over a substantial period

of time” (Mullings 1999:337). Despite understanding what Beverly Mullings is saying, I began struggling with the insider/outsider binary and positionality that accompanied these interactions. I felt that these concepts overlap because in the final analysis I was dealing with positionality. For instance, as an insider/outsider, do I racialize or culturalize my relationship with my interlocutors? Sociologist and race and gender theorist France Winddance Twine suggests that being an insider can generate problems because “insiders are expected to conform to cultural norms that can restrict them as researchers” (2002:12). As a black insider/outsider, on the other hand, Twine suggests that it can be advantageous because it reveals “different – not better – kinds of knowledge” (2000:13). However, she warns that racializing researchers assume that “racial subordinates have a particular worldview” because they understand the subalterns oppression (Twine 2000:14). Twine believes that this is not the case. Citing race critic and gender scholar Philomena Essed, Twine declares, “people have ‘multiple identifications’” (2000:15). Thus, it is not race that determines good or bad research. For Twine, prevailing dominant ideologies and racialization limit researchers. She also asserts that researchers’ class privilege, which includes education, can mitigate the assumption of “insider” or subaltern status.

To illustrate prevailing ideology concerning race, I cite two examples. In assessing the Garinagu’s identity in the United States, anthropologist Sarah England states,

if he [Don Miguel – one of her collaborators] is walking and talking with someone else from his natal village, however, a passerby might believe that he is from Africa. This is because he will most likely be speaking in Garifuna, the language that was created by his ancestors over 400 years ago on the island of St. Vincent when African maroons mixed with Island Carib to form the ethnic group to which don Miguel belongs: the Garifuna (also known as the Black Carib). (2006:1)

Is this what a pedestrian would think or what England thinks? And is England aware that she is reinforcing a myth about the Garinagu ethnohistory in questioning their African origin? She is indubitably doing so.

Another example I cite is that of anthropologist Adrienne Pine. Describing her 1997 fieldwork experience in Honduras, Pine states, “my interactions with Hondurans were colored by the identities we assigned to each other. My elite status as white North American anthropologist was both a help and a hindrance to my research” (2008:6). Pine invokes her class status but also her whiteness in defining her interaction with Hondurans. Certainly, Honduran *mestizos* welcome the arrangement because they decry their blackness and ascribe to whiteness. Citing Gerrit Huizer and June Nash, anthropologist Faye V. Harrison observes that ethnographers are only “successful” in their work in “reconciling differences, combating internalized racism and the privileges of Whiteness and affluence, and struggling to build a common ground” (2010:89). To be successful as Harrison argues, ethnographers must continuously assess their values and beliefs, factors that, in my view, shape their frame of reference, as is the case for all people.

Contrary to Twine, Beverly Mullings asserts that outsiders may likely have “a greater degree of objectivity and ability to observe behaviors without distorting their meanings” (Mullings 1999:340). While that might be the case, scholarship about the Garinagu indicates otherwise as I show with England’s analysis of Don Miguel in the previous page. To her credit, Mullings also points out that the insider/outsider debates are “less than real because they seek to freeze positionalities in place, and assume that being an insider or outsider is a fixed attribute. The insider/outsider binary in reality is a boundary that is not only highly unstable but also one that ignores the dynamism of positionalities in time and through space” (1999:340). The fluidity of the insider/outsider binary explains why initially I asked myself how these concepts apply to

me when I am Garifuna? In various occasions, I told myself that although I am using critical methodology in my assessment of the Garinagu, I would not treat them like González or other scholars had done. I also realized that I do not have all the answers; otherwise, I would not be researching the Garinagu. In this context being Garifuna makes me an insider on the basis of cultural affiliation and personal experiences as a Garifuna. However, I wholeheartedly believed that I am an outsider. Before embarking on ethnographic fieldwork, I realized that I have changed and that I have to rethink my ideas about myself as a Garifuna and the Garifuna community rather than walking into the fieldwork with a set of assumptions. It also meant reassessing what I saw and how I saw it.

To illustrate what I mean by what I saw and how I saw it, I elaborate on my experience attending New Horizon Investment Club's tenth anniversary gala event at the Eastwood Manor Catering on May 22, 2010. The color themes of the event were blue, white, and silver. I arrived to the event wearing a black dress, natural hair, and was unaccompanied whereas every other guest's outfit reflected the theme of the event, they wore relaxed hair styles or wigs and most had a companion. I tried to convince an acquaintance to accompany me to the event, but she was not interested. At the event, some people I greeted rebuffed me whereas others responded warmly as the Garinagu generally do. An entry in my field note states, "I felt rejected" (May 22, 2010). Then, I began to question my positionality in relation to my perceived rejection. Did they reject me or was my definition of rejection in reality attributed to the fact that these people have not seen me around?

Most of the attendees at the event did not know who I was. I quickly realized that the reason for attending the event was twofold. First, I was there to study this group and second to reconnect with this community. However, the first reason superseded the second reason. I thus

came to terms with the fact that most attendees perhaps believed that I was just another guest. I do not know what they thought of me because they never told me. I thus refuse to sail on the boat of assumptions since this is when researchers concoct their own interpretations of what the Other thinks or what the Other behavior means.

Qualitative methodologies have a long connection with “cultural and social and feminist geographies, in part as a reaction to quantified social geography” (Crang 2002:648). This does not in any shape or form imply that we must confine qualitative methodologies to female scholars only and hence labeled it as women’s domain. We must see it as a major breakthrough and contribution by women in advancing the social sciences and in redefining academic inquiry and its commitment to society and social change. Although some academic works have made significant contributions, we must also reassess whether or not qualitative methodologies must continue adhering to the “listening” approach (Crang 2002:648). How does listening help the group (s) researched and where do researchers draw the line without compromising their work and safety and the safety of those groups they study? It is a slippery road that requires further examination. Although I am not providing an answer to this difficult question, I am borrowing from investigative journalist Jeremy Scahill’s analysis to provide some input. In the bonus section to his 2013 documentary, *Dirty Wars*, which examines the United States’ global military activities, Scahill shares his perspectives of what it means to be a good journalist. He states that journalists must “stop thinking of [themselves] as a protected class that you don’t have to have a human stake in the lives of the people that let you into their homes. When you dismiss that you say I’m going to approach them not as a [scholar] but as a fellow human [being] . . .” (2013). Researchers are somewhat like investigative journalists and as such they must treat their subjects

first and foremost for who they are: a fellow human being with different cultural, political, social, and economic practices.

CHAPTER 4 THE FORMATION OF GARINAGU ORGANIZATIONS

Early Struggles and Influences

This chapter explores how the Garinagu have long organized against oppression in Honduras in defense of place as demonstrated with the formation of organizations in Honduras and also in the United States. In delving into their organizations' historical social trajectory, I also explore ideological differences and politics that have contributed to the fragmentation of the Garinagu. The second point explored in this chapter is how the formation of the Garinagu organizations has transformed most Garinagu residing in the United States, their relationship with their territory, and the land struggle in Honduras. I therefore initiate this discussion with a brief narrative of the Garinagu's early engagement in Honduras formation as a nation-state. The Honduran elites' plan for independence from Spain engaged the Garinagu in the eighteenth century. Juan Francisco Bulnes, a Garifuna by a Vincentinian name of Walumugu, served as a general during Francisco Morazán's fight for independence (J. Espinosa, personal communication, September 23, 2011; see also Centeno García 2004:90-91).

Morazán, a son of a French Creole³, was born in Tegucigalpa in 1799 (Koch 2013:133). Heading a regime of "2,000 Garinagu in a community called Pueblo Nuevo [New Place]," Walumugu and his troop fought along Morazán. In return for his efforts, Morazán "gave Bulnes control of the whole territory of the north coast" (J. Espinosa, personal communication, September 23, 2011; López García 1991: 43). Due to limited information available on Bulnes, it

³ In the United States, the term creole refers "exclusively to the people and culture of lower Louisiana" who "tend to be a mixture of French, Spanish, Caribbean, and African Cultures" (Nerad and Washington 2014:91; Hall 1992:157). However, in other parts of the Americas (Central and South) it has "broader" meanings (Hall 1992:157). Originating from the Portuguese word "*creoulo*, meaning a slave of African descent born in the New World," the term was given multiple meanings depending on geography (Hall 1992:157 emphasis in original). European colonizers used the term in the nineteenth century to refer to those people born in Louisiana of at "least partial African descent, and slave and free, and was used to distinguish American-born slaves from African-born slaves when they were listed on slave inventories" (Hall 1992:157). The most widely accepted definition is a "person of non-American ancestry, whether African or European, who was born in the Americas" (Hall 1992:157).

is difficult to further elaborate on his background and to expand on the territory of the north coast Morazán awarded him. Yet, this piece of history, many Garinagu claim, is nowhere to be found in Honduras' historical narrative. It is this omission that some members of a new generation of Garifuna activists invoke in their land struggle in Honduras and that has encouraged them to form institutions such as the First Garifuna Hospital. I therefore dedicate a considerable part of this chapter to the Garifuna people's political and socio-spatial conditions in their struggle over place.

In 1957, the Garinagu formed Renovación (Renewal) in the city of La Ceiba only to be replaced in 1958 by La Sociedad Abraham Lincoln (The Abraham Lincoln Society), which was named in honor of the U.S. President Abraham Lincoln who “abolished slavery” in the United States (J. Ávila & T. Ávila 2008:300). It is important to note that although the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863 “as a strategy against the South, freed only blacks enslaved to Confederate states that were in rebellion at the time, [it] nevertheless marked the beginning of a series of profound and irrevocable legal and societal shifts away from the barbarity of white domination and toward the democratic equality promised by the American Revolution” (Lusane 2011:27; see also Bennett 2007:6). As historian Lerone Bennett, Jr. contends, President Lincoln “was *not* ‘the great emancipator’” he is defined to be (2007:6 emphasis in original). Yet, he has been labeled to be one. African American's spurious emancipation seemed to have resonated with the Garinagu in Honduras. Identifying with their black counterparts' socio-spatial conditions in the United States, La Sociedad Abraham Lincoln demanded changes to the “political and social policies for the black community of Honduras through the pursuit of social justice” (J. Ávila & T. Ávila 2008:300). They linked their thirst for social justice to their socio-spatial conditions.

In Honduras, the racist state and culture denied the Garinagu “access to public parks and pressed them into menial labor such as clearing the street of dead dogs” during part of the twentieth century (Anderson 2004:391). By the 1950s and 1960s “overt” racist practices “were dismantled,” but institutionalized racism prevail (Anderson 2004:391). For example, in 1961, members of Nueva Juventud Limoneña (Limoneña New Youth) met with President Ramón Villeda Morales’ (1957-1963) secretary to send doctors to Limón where many Garinagu were suffering from gastrointestinal problems. Villeda Morales’ secretary informed them that he had “sent five doctors to that community and nobody wanted to go. However, the first Garifuna doctor [Dr. Alfonso Lacayo Sánchez] would be graduating soon” (Sambulá 1998:43). Dr. Sánchez graduated in 1967 and had delivered medical services throughout numerous Garifuna and *mulatos*’ communities before and after he graduated (Sambulá 1998:55 emphasis added). By 1962, several Garinagu participated in the Communist Party of Honduras to address a host of issues ranging from socio-economic conditions in Honduras to Latin America’s political milieu (J. Ávila & T. Ávila 2008:301). The October 3, 1963 military coup d’état headed by General Oswaldo López Arellano (1963-1971 and 1972-1975) ousted “self-styled urban petty bourgeois reformer” President Villeda Morales from power (Euraque 1996:70). For the “leadership of the San Pedro Sula bourgeoisie,” Villeda Morales’s removal represented “the reentrenchment of traditional Tegucigalpa-based caudillo politics” and “a slap to the regional identification of San Pedro Sula elites with the Villeda Morales presidency” (Euraque 1996:75). Villeda Morales’ ouster derailed the Garinagu’s struggle against racism. In fact, Euraque points out that the Garifuna activist Moises Moreira “died in 1965 after being persecuted as a member of the Communist Party of Honduras” (2004:182). Despite the Honduran government repression, the Garifuna activists still sought political empowerment.

The Garifuna communities of the Departamento of Colón drafted socially conscious Dr. Sánchez (1926-1985) in 1963 to become the deputy of the region under the Liberal Party. Accompanied by several Garinagu, he campaigned throughout Colón's municipalities and visited various Standard Fruit Company sites organized by the workers' union president Hector Acosta Romero. As a former banana worker, Dr. Sánchez identified with the workers' plight across ethnic groups and they supported him (Sambulá 1998:56-57). Realizing that Dr. Sánchez had become a rival, the military regime accused him of "upholding leftist ideas" (Sambulá 1998:57). Based on this accusation, the military regime incarcerated him and tortured several of his friends and family members (Sambulá 1998:60). Since Dr. Sánchez refused to join the military regime's political machine, the regime forced him out of Limón where he had built a clinic with the help of the Garifuna community including The Society of Brothers (La Sociedad los Hermanos) in 1962. The community of Limón centralized existing organizations then under Patronatos⁴ for the development of the community. In Limón, existing organizations at that time were Nueva Juventud Limoneña (Limoneña New Youth), La Sociedad los Hermanos (The Brothers Society), Consejos de Maestros (Teachers Council), Organización de Danzas Folklóricas 500 (Organization of Folkloric Dances 500), and Cinco Estrellas (Five Stars) (Sambulá 1998:46). The Garinagu in Limón expanded their geographical outreach. The Garinagu in Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, Tela, Atlántida, and in New York City organized Patronatos to support the Limoneños' efforts (Sambulá 1998:46). The Garinagu's efforts in Limón suggest that they were pursuing ways to develop their community and territory on Honduras' north coast. In 1965, Dr. Sánchez established a clinic in San Marcos de Colón in the Departamento of Choluteca located

⁴ Patronatos function as councils that address each community's needs. I asked several Garinagu about the origin of Patronatos. Most do not know, but some state that the Honduran government formed them in the 1980s. Judging from my findings, I believe that Garinagu formed Patronatos and that perhaps the government altered their autonomy in the 1980s.

in southern Honduras, where he resided until he moved to La Ceiba in 1971. It is within this volatile political environment that the Garinagu formed their organizations in Honduras, experienced the early fragmentation of the Garifuna culture, and started their incessant struggle over place. The various Garifuna organizations mentioned here were the precursors to OFRANEH. In the United States, the Garinagu formed the Carib American Association, Inc. over sixty years ago and Fenix Social Club, Inc. over fifty years ago (J. Ávila, 2009). There is not much written about the early organizations the Garinagu formed in the United States. Therefore, it is difficult to discuss these organizations activities.

Eighteen years after La Sociedad Abraham Lincoln's formation, the Garinagu and English speaking blacks formed OFRANEH (S. Irióna, personal communication, March 13, 2013). Influenced by the African American Civil Rights Movement, Black Nationalist leaders such as Malcolm X, and Black Power organizations like the Black Panther Party which "influenced" the Puerto Rican Young Lords, the Garifuna activists embraced some of these organizations' principles which did not seem to include land (Jones and Jeffries 1998:36). Longtime Garifuna political activist, black cultural nationalist, and OFRANEH co-founder, Sara Irióna states that before enrolling at New York University in 1968, her father brought her magazines about Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King from the United States to Honduras. Irióna's introduction to the ideas of Malcolm X and King, and her experiences in New York City during the late civil rights movement, sparked a realization in her that the oppression of black people in Honduras was no less different to that of their counterparts in the United States and elsewhere in the world (S. Irióna, personal communication, March 13, 2013).

Her consciousness along with that of several other people of African descent (the Garinagu and English-speaking blacks)⁵ in Puerto Cortés, Honduras propelled OFRANEH's formation in 1975. At least ten people began meeting at Irióna's home to discuss the socio-spatial conditions of black people in Honduras and OFRANEH's formation. This group concluded that OFRANEH's mission must be to unite "Blacks in Honduras and change the political and economic dynamic" in the country (S. Irióna, personal communication, March 13, 2013). Veteran activist, Isidro Chávez contends that OFRANEH's formation came about to extirpate "discrimination in Honduras" (personal communication, April 24, 2010). Despite the various versions offered on OFRANEH's original mission, the election of Clifford Clarence Clark Brooks' wife (both founding members) as OFRANEH's first female president reflected a pan-African unity which the organization's early founders pursued (S. Irióna, personal communication, March 13, 2012). Irióna underscores this unity by the fact that the Clarks "gave prominence to the Garifuna's culture because they understood that it was an authentic, dynamic culture and always contributed to that to be the main point" (personal communication, March 13, 2012). Her assertion seems to suggest that the Garinagu's ethnicity placed them above their Criollos counterparts hence the Garinagu should play a central role in OFRANEH's development whereas the Criollos' role must be peripheral. There was therefore an imbalance entrenched in this unity. However, it seems this arrangement suited both groups. Despite this imbalance, the Garinagu recognize the Clarks' contributions and many Garinagu celebrate and respect this unity (J. Rochez, personal communication, March 17, 2012). Following Clifford's demise in early 2013, countless Garinagu circulated e-mails in Garifunalink listserv recognizing him as a pioneer of black people causes in Honduras.

⁵ Garinagu also refer to this group as Criollos or Creole.

Because the Garifuna intellectuals such as Dr. Sánchez resided in the city of La Ceiba, OFRANEH's leaders formally registered the organization there in 1976, where it was headquartered until its relocation in November 2012 to Sambo Creek, Atlántida, which is a Garifuna community located east of La Ceiba (S. Irióna, personal communication, March 13, 2012). The unity that OFRANEH achieved in 1975 in Puerto Cortés seemed to have been rejected by the Garinagu in the city of La Ceiba since the organization became exclusively Garifuna. In this city, former OFRANEH's secretary Armando Dosanto explains that the Garinagu "invaded" OFRANEH thus effectively disengaging with the Criollos' community (personal communication, December 20, 2013). This is important to point out to show that there might have been a struggle for power within OFRANEH as a black organization. Many Garinagu in La Ceiba joined OFRANEH as affiliates. Dosanto purports that the driving force behind the Garinagu's interest in the organization was "the attitude that derived from the majority of the members" (personal communication, March 29, 2012). He further claims that it was difficult to get organized in urban areas (A. Dosanto, personal communication, March 29, 2012). Although he does not explain why, a possible reason is that perhaps the Garinagu did not engage the Criollos. Either way, many Hondurans and foreigners recognize OFRANEH as one of the leading Garifuna organizations in Honduras. I say Garifuna because OFRANEH primarily addresses issues concerning the Garinagu and has relocated to a primarily Garifuna community, although it is being invaded today by tourists. As I learned during my research, throughout OFRANEH's formative years, it was not engaged in any organizing related to their territory on the north coast despite the fact that the Garinagu's land ownership remained precarious. Instead, OFRANEH was primarily focused on combating racism and pursuing other political goals.

Some Garinagu relocated OFRANEH's mission geographically during its formative years. The Garinagu founded a branch in Tegucigalpa but also in the United States. In 1978, OFRANEH's geographic scale of activism expanded when Irióna and other Garinagu co-founded a branch in New York City. Although OFRANEH only lasted in New York City at least for two years, its founders addressed the political persecution of Garinagu and non-Garinagu activists in Honduras (S. Irióna, personal communication, March 13, 2012). In 2012, the Garinagu in New York City revived OFRANEH in the South Bronx (J. Rochez, personal communication, May 5, 2012). Sponsored by The Honduran Active Society in New York (La Sociedad Hondureña Activa en Nueva York, SHANY), it seems OFRANEH's return marked a renewed commitment to its mission and vision in the United States. Exactly what role OFRANEH in New York City will play this time around, particularly in relation to the Garinagu's land on Honduras' north coast, remains unclear.

In view of the short 1970s lifespan OFRANEH's branch experienced in New York City, the Garifuna activists explored other avenues. Their activism was a continuation of the Garinagu's engagement in geopolitics and not concerned with the Garifuna's land ownership. Formed in 1969, Honduran United Front (Frente Unida Hondureña) became a Garifuna's umbrella organization, which Irióna describes as a "solidarity group" since it included various Garinagu and non-Garifuna activists' organizations from Latin America (personal communication, March 29, 2012). In Brooklyn, Our Lady of Mercy Church provided these solidarity groups with a space to carry out their work and training. Their training was related to the Cold War and not to land ownership matters. These groups established linkages with the Information Center of Honduras (Centro de Información de Honduras) formed in Boston in 1982 by Honduran *ladinos*. During the period of the Garifuna's political activism, global geopolitics

dominated by the Cold War between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was at its climax. Likewise, in 1979 the Sandinista National Liberation Front in Nicaragua removed the United States' backed-dictator, Anastasio Somoza Debayle, from power. By the 1980s, the United States had thrown its support behind the Nicaraguan Contras who were "guerilla forces attempting to destabilize and overthrow what the American government regarded as a communist threat in 'its own backyard'" (Painter 1995:130). Therefore, nations asserting their sovereignty, and groups challenging the global struggle for hegemony between the United States and the USSR surely perceived the two superpowers as creating "disorder" rather than "order" (Painter 1995:134). Those who questioned or, in many instances, did not question this disorder, their very existence, security, mobility, resources, and everyday lives were trodden on by the direct or indirect actions or ideology of either of the superpowers but chiefly the United States. The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) agents received instructions to maintain the United States' hegemony in Latin America, the Caribbean, and elsewhere in the world generally but not exclusively using "covert paramilitary operations" (Kornbluh 2004:3).

Given the geopolitical milieu, dissenting voices and revolutionaries struggling to overthrow economic, political, and social inequality and oppression throughout the Americas, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, parts of the Middle East, and Europe amplified the Garinagu's geopolitical activism (S. Irióna, personal communication, March 13, 2012). Not surprisingly, the Honduran government labeled the Garifuna activists in New York City as "terrorists" and accused them of receiving funding from the USSR, Cuba, and the Sandinistas (S. Irióna, personal communication, March 29, 2012). In fact, it was the Honduran government and its henchmen trained at the United States School of the Americas (SOA) located at Fort Benning, Georgia,

renamed Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) in 2001 that were financially benefiting from the Cold War activities (School of the Americas Watch, 2014; Hassan, 2004). Despite the despotic government paranoia, the Garinagu's international political activism persisted throughout the 1980s (S. Irióna, personal communication, March 29, 2012). As the Cold War drew to an end with the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the Garifuna's activism also changed by shifting attention to the land struggle that has been unfolding in Honduras.

CONDECOGA's Origins and Perspectives

Scholars researching the Garinagu have either purposely ignored some organizations or are unaware of them. The National Coordination for the Development of the Garifunas Communities (La Coordinación Nacional para el Desarrollo de las Comunidades de los Garifunas, CONDECOGA) is one of these organizations. It is vital to address CONDECOGA's activities because it exposes a different type of the Garifuna's political activism in relation to place. By the 1980s, the United States' persistent Cold War policies in Central America expanded the region's military power and violence. For example, President Ronald Reagan's (1981-1989) Cold War policies toward El Salvador and Nicaragua but also in Honduras "resulted in massive violence and violations of human rights" in these countries (Ronniger 2010:34). Reagan's policies consisted of funneling funds to tyrannical groups in countries such as El Salvador (Ronniger 2010:34). As a result of the violence that had persisted in the region throughout the Cold War, many dissenting voices and political activists disappeared and many others secured asylum abroad. Several educated Garinagu fled to the United States in the late 1970s and several important developments took place among the Garifuna activists associated with OFRANEH (S. Irióna, personal communication, March 29, 2012). First, using Kobayashi's observation of the Black Panther's formation, I draw a parallel to show that there was an

“emerging forms of radical identity politics” among the Garinagu in Honduras, who have not been seen since this period (2009:283). Second, CONDECOGA’s members challenged power-geometries or power structure that excluded the Garinagu as integral members of the Honduran society. Third, the Garinagu seeking some form of self-determination used their racial and ethnic identity, in borrowing Kobayashi’s analogy of blacks’ social movement in the United States, to be “fundamentally irreconcilable with the larger nation” (2009:282). They therefore sought to form a separate nation.

Several Garinagu who formed CONDECOGA met covertly every Sunday for a year at Benjamin Manaisa Lacayo’s residence in Honduras. Some of CONDECOGA’s members were former OFRANEH’s members (A. Dosanto, personal communication, March 29, 2012). Formed in the country’s capital, Tegucigalpa, CONDECOGA’s main objective was to form a nation using the Native American model of reservation in the United States (A. Dosanto, personal communication, March 29, 2012). For CONDECOGA’s members, emulating this model meant remaining part of Honduras but having complete autonomy over their communities’ affairs. However, as I explained in chapter two using law professors Vine Deloria, Jr. and Clifford M. Lytle’s assessment, the United States federal government created reservations to rule Native Americans, but also to dispossess them from their land to make way for European settlers. Hence, Native Americans do not enjoy full-fledged autonomy as CONDECOGA’s members seem to believe. CONDECOGA’s members based their nation-building project on the fact that the Honduran government did not understand black people’s “idiosyncrasy” and they strived to separate from the dominant group’s imposition and oppression (A. Dosanto, personal communication, March 29, 2012). CONDECOGA’s members’ actions suggest that they were attempting to exercise autonomy on the basis of cultural commonalities but not based on

economic exigencies. Based on cultural traits, CONDECOGA's members took their nation-building project to the Honduran Supreme Court. Not surprisingly, the Supreme Court told them "to change everything from the principles and objectives because it was a medium of creating a nation within a nation" (A. Dosanto, personal communication, March 29, 2012). Fearful of state-sponsored violence, which remains entrenched in the country's political structure, CONDECOGA's members rapidly disbanded and some joined OFRANEH, while others such as Dionisio Guevara fled to Brazil, and Salvador Suazo fled to Nicaragua where he finished his education (A. Dosanto, personal communication, March 29, 2012). I tried to find out if other Garinagu have attempted to form a nation before in Honduras. However, because it is difficult to gain access to Honduras' archival resources electronically, I am unable to present such information.

After CONDECOGA disbanded, some of its members joined OFRANEH and tried to steer it in a different direction that avoided confrontation with the Honduran state. However, CONDECOGA's members quickly abandoned this strategy. Instead, they sought to undermine state-sponsored forms of Garinagu's activism directed by the Honduran government; in other words, they tried to overthrow the Honduran government's influence over the Garifuna organizations. One of CONDECOGA's co-founders, Armando Dosanto, maintains that the Honduran state formed what he calls Garifuna non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in communities such as Corozal located east of La Ceiba. Dosanto offers several reasons for the formation of these NGOs in the 1980s and early 1990s. First, the proliferation of NGOs had much to do with "the attitude of the Honduran government to control the lives of the communities of the interior to impose the only representation before the government of Honduras" (A. Dosanto, personal communication, March 29, 2012). Second, it was the only way

the Garifuna communities could “negotiate directly with governments, and I mean inside and outside of the country” (personal communication, March 29, 2012). In other words, “it was a way for the Garinagu to incorporate into this style of organizing – to directly have support come to the communities” (A. Dosanto, personal communication, March 29, 2012). Judging from CONDECOGA’s members’ discourse, it seems that the Honduran government realized that forming NGOs meant dividing and fragmenting the Garifuna communities and curtailing the organization’s members’ activism and aspirations in gaining control over the Garinagu’s land and place.

CONDECOGA and OFRANEH’s members regarded the formation of The Advisory for the Development of Ethnic Groups in Honduras, (La Asesoría para el Desarrollo de las Étnias de Honduras, ASEPADE) by the Honduran state as confirmation of their suspicions. Formed in the late 1970s according to Armando Dosanto, the Honduran government created ASEPADE to advise OFRANEH on economic development (personal communication, December 20, 2013). Heading ASEPADE were Juan Ramón Martínez an “intellectual” from Olancho, his wife, Nora Midence Martínez, and two additional staff, who the state presented simply as advisors to the Garifuna organizations (Euraque 2004:235; A. Dosanto, personal communication, December 20, 2013). However, CONDECOGA’s members were suspicious of ASEPADE’s activities and its goals. They believed that the government was trying to curtail the Garifuna’s activism, undermine Garifuna organizations’ autonomy, and prevent them from demanding specific projects for their communities (A. Dosanto, personal communication, March 29, 2012). CONDECOGA’s members rapidly confirmed their suspicions.

Financed by various private financial institutions, under the watchful eyes of the Honduran government, the Solidarity Group Programs came into existence in the 1970s as an umbrella

organization. Its name suggests that this was a grassroots effort pulling different organizations from so-called developing nations together to improve the lives of the region's inhabitants. In fact, the Programs' underlying premise was that "poor" and low-income women namely in rural areas can only prosper if they have access to credit (Otero 1993:3). Under Accion's (Action) guidance, a "premier microfinance organizations in the world" founded in 1961, the Honduran state formed ASEPADE in 1984, a date which contradicts the one given in Dosanto's account ("Our History," n.d.). By March 1987, the "Second International Conference Solidarity Group Programs" took place in Honduras according to economist Maria Otero, Accion/AITEC "representative" in Honduras at the time of this conference (Otero 1993:iv). Dosanto did not view micro-credit groups favorably. In fact, he defines them as "not good" and "dangerous" (personal communication, December 20, 2013). According to a United Nations report, microfinance emerged because of the "formal" financial institutions failed to extend financial assistance to the poor who includes women (2009:ix). The failures of the financial institutions paved the way for some organizations to "redress gender inequality" so that women can access credit (United Nations 2009:ix). Organizations involved in microfinance use myriad of methods in lending money to the poor. Some use "group-based approaches to service provision" while others combine "group and individual lending" because it can become a barrier on more "successful entrepreneurs" (2009:ix). Despite the availability of microfinance, debates are abundant about how effective and sustainable this economic system has been in empowering women, the United Nations report also points. The report further indicates that "while there is evidence that microfinance has a positive impact on income, there are limits to the income gains" (United Nations 2009:ix). Since microfinance organizations formation in the 1970s and 1980s, they have become a staple in developing nations' economies. Microfinance can be therefore

included in Harvey's "accumulation by dispossession," which entails among other things the commodification and privatization of "public assets" (2005:160). These practices are entrenched in neoliberal state economic policies. Adherence to these policies has resulted in "uneven geographical development" and "contradictory political form" built into the system (Harvey 2005:64). In my view, commodification and privatization have further widened the gender inequality gap and poverty.

The struggle between CONDECOGA and ASEPADE persisted. Increasingly, OFRANEH's director at that time, Tomás Álvarez, solely relied on ASEPADE's input. Álvarez's dependence signaled that ASEPADE's administrators were steadily overturning OFRANEH's directorship, hijacking the organization, and ruining the Garinagu's "individual creativity" (A. Dosanto, personal communication, December 20, 2013). Second, Garinagu Mario Fermin Nuñez and Lionsia Solorzano worked for ASEPADE in 1980. Nuñez and Solorzano's involvement with ASEPADE may suggest that they did not or may not have been interested in the state's motives. Some Garinagu interpreted the Honduran government activities as an imposition of the dominant group's corrupt practices (S. Irióna, personal communication, March 29, 2012). Dosanto believes that the Honduran government's ultimate objective was to derail the Garifuna's social relations and replace them with a style of leadership that agreed with the state (personal communication, March 29, 2012). Generally, the Garifuna communities organize around specific issues affecting their respective communities. Thus, their activism is tied to and guided by their respective cultural and political practices, but not by the government. They continue to challenge government's oppression or on occasions seek its assistance because they are bonded to place and they have adopted certain practices from the dominant culture.

As a final assault on the government's efforts to derail the Garifuna organizations, CONDECOGA's member, Armando Dosanto, confronted ASEPADE's administrators for seeking projects on behalf of the Garifuna community without the designated community's knowledge. Dosanto failed to explain what these projects were (personal communication, March 29, 2012). Realizing what was happening, CONDECOGA's members knew that it was their responsibility to curb the Honduran government's influence over OFRANEH. Hipólito Centeno's election as OFRANEH's director in the 1980s stabilized the organization. CONDECOGA's and OFRANEH's members had every right to resist the Honduran government's intrusion. By the mid-1980s, "organizations directed by Honduran professionals had emerged in the name of the indigenous" people (Anderson 2009:121). One of these professionals – meaning those with a higher education – is Garifuna Tulio Mariano González. According to Dosanto, after Midence Martínez (*mestiza*) divorced her husband, educated Hondurans formed the Honduran Advisory Council for the Development of Autochthonic Ethnic Groups (Consejo Asesor Hondureño para el Desarrollo de las Etnias Autóctonas, CAHDEA) in 1988. OFRANEH administered CAHDEA with González as CAHDEA's director (A. Dosanto, personal communication, March 29, 2012). Similar to its predecessor, the Honduran Council of Indigenous Promotion (COHPI), CAHDEA was in charge of expanding the indigenous "framework to include groups understood in racial terms as Black – Garifuna and Creoles" (Anderson 2009:121).

CONDECOGA's members' actions suggest that because the Honduran Supreme Court forced them to withdraw their nation-building project, they continued to challenge power relations in a different way. Kobayashi cautions that scholars must not confine identity politics solely to "territorial oppression" for not all identity politics are territory-oriented (2009:283).

Citing the Black Panthers' activism and formation in Oakland, California as an example, Kobayashi maintains that this group struggled to gain control of African American communities in Oakland and in many other cities in the United States where they were economically, politically, and socially marginalized and experienced state-sponsored violence.

CONDECOGA's members sought similar but yet different path.

Happy Land and the New Organizations

In the United States, a tragedy spurred the formation of the Garifuna organizations in 1990. On March 25, 1990, the Garinagu's presence in New York City was thrust into the national spotlight when Cuban Julio González set fire to the Happy Land Social Club, a dance hall located at 1959 Southern Boulevard in the South Bronx. Frequented by poor Central Americans and a few African Americans, the fire claimed eighty-seven lives, fifty-nine of whom were Garinagu from the South Bronx (Ávila n.d.:1). The Happy Land fire was the second deadliest fire in New York City after the March 25, 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire which claimed the lives of 146 people, most of whom were young immigrant women (United States Department of Labor, n.d.). In the aftermath of the Happy Land tragedy, the Garinagu held a town hall meeting with then Mayor David N. Dinkins. Two years later during a Catholic mass at St. Thomas Aquinas Church, Dinkins informed members of the Garifuna community of the allocation of land "south of Happy Land" to build a Garifuna recreation center (Li, 2010). Mayor Dinkins' office would secure the funds from Jay Weiss's (Happy Land's lessor at the time of the fire) \$150,000 fine. Additional funds offered by the Honduran President Callejas Romero and the Archdiocese of New York would pay for the center's construction (Li, 2010). The irony of Callejas Romero's gesture is that during this very same period he was introducing neoliberal economic policies in Honduras, which threatened the Garinagu's territories, and

communities in this country. Perhaps, he viewed the Happy Land fire as an opportunity to shift the Garifuna leaders' attention away from what was unfolding in Honduras. Two decades later, "two-thirds of the land" allocated for the Garifuna's community center in the South Bronx "remains vacant while the remaining third was converted into an apartment building" (Li, 2010). Some Garinagu believe that the center was never built because sectarianism distracted the Garifuna organizations and individuals involved in the process from the task at hand and instead "started fighting for preeminence" (R. Armenia, personal communication, January 23, 2011). This suggests that individual Garifuna and organization leaders were mostly concerned about building their personal power and public image rather than unity.

In the aftermath of the Happy Land tragedy, "more than 20 groups were formed to serve the needs of Hondurans," which critics describe as counterproductive (J. Ávila n.d.:1). Critics maintain that instead of forming new organizations, the Garinagu should have built upon existing Garifuna solidarity groups formed years earlier (S. Irióna, personal communication, March 29, 2012). In 1991, a year after the tragic fire in the South Bronx, the Garifuna leaders organized three Intercontinental Garifuna Summit Meetings to promote their economic and political advancement. Most of the early the Garifuna activists did not participate in these meetings. As a cross-border endeavor attended by the Garinagu from Central America and from throughout New York City's boroughs, the first summit meeting took place from July 4 to 6, 1991 in Brooklyn's Medgar Evers College "to adopt a bold and decisive challenge to seriously and collectively begin to focus on our Garifuna culture, and to mobilize all Garinagu to seek meaningful solutions to our varied problems" (J. Ávila & T. Ávila 2008:22). This event attracted public attention when the *New York Amsterdam News*, an African American owned newspaper published an article about the summit meeting. This summit meeting focused on culture, as illustrated by its theme

“Uwala Busiganu, Garinagu Wagia or Don’t Be Ashamed, We Are Garifuna.” The summit’s motto “Garinagu’s Path to the 21st Century” reflected a long-term objective (J. Ávila & T. Ávila 2008:22).

The summit’s objectives outlined in 1991 were to promote the Garinagu’s political, economic, and social empowerment, internationalize the Garifuna culture, and establish economic bonds among the Garinagu in the Diaspora. Promoting these objectives also meant joining hands not only with white ethnic groups but also African Americans, Caribbean, Hispanic, and other ethnic groups that form part of the economic and political milieu in New York City. The Ávilas twins, who gained prominence after the Happy Land Social Club tragedy, note several accomplishments of the summit: the creation of a Garifuna student club bearing the name of Libaña Baba (Father’s Grandchildren) at City College of New York (CCNY), the Lumalali Garifuna radio program (The Garifuna Voice) hosted by Felix Miranda, and HIV/AIDS workshops (A. Ávila & T. Ávila 2008:30 emphasis in original). The Garifuna leaders held a follow-up summit meeting in Los Angeles from July 3 to 5, 1992, but a third envisioned meeting never materialized. In Los Angeles, attendees included members of the Honduran Black Society of California (SONOHCA). Although the Los Angeles meeting was a continuation of the first summit, its theme “*Afareinraguni, Awaraiiguni, Agibudaguni Liadun Aban* or Separation, Dispersion, Reunification” reflected the dislocated black body reconfiguring space and engaging more concretely in international counter hegemonic practices (A. Ávila & T. Ávila 2008:30 emphasis in original). Several organizations emerged from the summit meetings.

In 1990, the Garinagu formed the now defunct Federation of Honduran Organizations of New York (Federación de Organizaciones Hondureña en Nueva York, FEDOHNY) as an umbrella organization with a “\$210,000 settlement from a lawsuit against Happy Land’s

landlords” (Dooley, 1995:n.p.). Some of FEDOHNY’s founding members included longtime activist and now deceased Dionisia Amaya Bonilla, who also co-founded Women on the Move Pro-Education (Mujeres Garifunas en Marcha Pro-Educación, MUGAMA), and Sara Irióna. Mirtha Colón served as FEDOHNY’s board member and Antonieta Máximo as the organization’s president. As José Francisco Ávila states, Garinagu formed FEDOHNY as an “umbrella organization of Honduran groups and the result of the first real attempt to put together a pressure group was formed as a direct response to the Happy Land fire” (n.d.:1). However, FEDOHNY did not serve as an umbrella organization, since most people involved were more concerned with pursuing their own personal interests.

In 1994, FEDOHNY’s administrators named Walter L. Krochmal as its executive director. A son of a *mestiza* woman from Honduras and an Eastern European Jew, Krochmal was born in the United States and spent part of his young life in Honduras. Krochmal had worked with the Garifuna community prior to joining FEDOHNY (“Roots in Eastern Europe and Honduras,” n.d.). Headquartered at the New York/New England Exchange (NYNEX) building on East 175th Street in the Bronx, Krochmal gathered Happy Land fire victims’ names for the Department of Parks and Recreation (“Happy Land Memorial,” n.d.). Tasked with organizing classes to teach English and computer skills, he also organized reproductive health-related workshops for women, entrepreneur training programs, and focused on “creative writing and other subjects, with more than 100 community members receiving certificates at the program’s peak” (“Federation of Honduran Organizations in New York, Executive Director,” n.d.). In addition, Krochmal translated “the New York City Boiler Manual into Spanish for Building Superintendency Program participants and organized study groups for the exam, resulting in 90% of participants passing the test, and many still holding superintendent positions to this day”

(“Federation of Honduran Organizations in New York, Executive Director,” n.d.). Highlighting Krochmal’s contributions to FEDOHNY does not mean the organization could not have been successful without his efforts. The intent is to name some of the social actors involved in FEDOHNY’s formation, growth, and decline.

Difference in style and vision between Máximo and Krochmal led to his departure in 1995. Three years after his departure, Hurricane Mitch devastated Honduras and several other Central American countries in late October 1998. FEDOHNY collected nonperishable items for hurricane victims; however, it did not address the Honduran government’s seizing of the Garinagu’s land following Mitch’s devastation. During my brief involvement with FEDOHNY, there was no indication of any interest in the land struggle in Honduras. Instead, under Máximo’s leadership, FEDOHNY ceased to exist as an organization. Máximo was seemingly more concerned with interviewing Honduran bureaucrats, poets, religious leaders, and other people she deemed important rather than overseeing the organization’s day-to-day operations. With FEDOHNY’s collapse, other Garifuna organizations sought to replace it.

By 1992, also in the Bronx, Garinagu founded Hondurans Against AIDS, Inc. headed to this day by Mirtha Colón, a social worker. Housed in Casa Yurumein community center which the Garinagu formed in 2008, Hondurans Against AIDS, Inc. educates and conducts workshops namely but not exclusively in black communities in Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panamá which have been devastated by AIDS. On June 5, 2010, I attended an event that Hondurans Against AIDS, Inc. advertised as the Fulton Street Festival (Festival de la Calle Fulton), which also celebrated Casa Yurumein’s second anniversary. Casa Yurumein’s members organized the event as a block party. An event flyer created by Hondurans Against AIDS, Inc. indicated that HIV/AIDS testing would be offered along with education on several other health

related issues. However, the only activities that took place at the event were several Garinagu vendors, musicians, and an information table for Martin Munitz's law firm. Event organizers did not even distribute the fifty-seven page booklet about HIV/AIDS written by Colón and anthropologist Alfredo González, suggesting a lack of consistency in disseminating information to the public or lack of funding in hiring more staff to perform public outreach tasks. Eager to learn about the statistical information compiled by Hondurans Against AIDS, Inc., I visited the organization's website, which was a Facebook site. The site did not contain statistical information about HIV/AIDS in black communities much less a narrative about the transmission of HIV/AIDS. Instead the site featured several pictures of workshops Colón conducted in Central America, pictures of her attending an AIDS conference in Ethiopia in 2011, a flyer announcing Casa Yurumein's Baruada Award event, and an advertisement for Garifuna art class. Lacking basic information at least about the transmission of HIV/AIDS, may suggest that there is inconsistency among the Hondurans Against AIDS, Inc. staff in disseminating information to the public. The site is significant because the Garifuna leaders and the Garinagu in general access to technology have influenced communication with members of the community and with the world.

By January 1993, The Garifuna Council of New York came into existence. Its mission was to prepare the community for twenty-first century challenges (J. Ávila n.d.:2). However, it seems that this organization did not prepare anyone for the challenges ahead, for it ceased to exist, although it is hard to verify when (J. Ávila n.d.:2). By the late 1990s, members of MUGAMA, some of whom also co-founded FEDOHNY, founded Garifuna House Committee, to provide day-care services, and establish an adult education learning center among other services (J. Ávila n.d.:2). On February 1, 1998, Garifuna House Committee founders met at Hunter College and "the organization registered the organization on March 1, 1999, as a New

York Not-for-Profit Corporation, under the name Garifuna House, Inc.” (J. Ávila n.d.:2). Similar to FEDOHNY, Garifuna House, Inc. existence was short. On May 9, 1998, a group of Garinagu formed Garifuna Coalition USA, Inc. (GCU) to serve as a Garifuna advocacy organization, and officially incorporated it in 1999 (T. Ávila 2008:285). GCU’s mission is to serve “as an advocate for Garifuna issues and a united voice for the Garifuna community in New York City. It promotes the autonomy and unification of the New York Garifuna community through grassroots organizing and community development” (Garifuna Coalition USA, Inc. 2014.). Although it is described as a coalition, the only organization I have seen affiliated with GCU is New Horizon Investment Club, formed in 2001. While initially headquartered at an apartment on Unionport Road in the South Bronx, in 2009 GCU relocated to 149th Street in the South Bronx where the Garifuna organizers opened Garifuna Coalition Advocacy Center (GCAC). Both organizations have slightly different functions. GCAC operates six days a week and functions as an information clearinghouse. The organization states on its website,

Like other working poor, Garifuna families have significant social service needs. Through an agreement with Phipps Community Development Corporation, a 35-year-old multi-service provider of educational, vocational and community development programs, the Garifuna Advocacy Center makes referrals and avails community members of English-as-a-Second. (Garifuna Coalition, USA, Inc. 2014)

Although I inquired about the annual number of Garinagu receiving services from the organization during my May 2010 visit, a staff member informed me that a Garifuna woman had just received a MetroCard (public transportation card) to secure much needed services from PHIPPS Community Development Corporation. It is therefore difficult to quantify the number of people that GCAC serves. While the services that GCAU delivers to the Garifuna community are important, one observation is that GCAC did not invent the wheel, since it is delivering similar services once delivered by FEDOHNY. Today, GCU is under the leadership of José

Francisco Ávila also the co-founder and president of New Horizon Investment Club. Another observation is that judging from GCU's administrators' actions, they focus on promoting cultural and political activities in the United States more so than addressing land ownership and the land struggle in Honduras, which some members addressed before.

According to Mario Moran, who is linked to GCU, in 1986, he began to understand “what will happen with the north coast of Honduras (personal communication, May 25, 2010). He rapidly began advising the Garinagu about the impending development of Honduras' north coast. By 1996, Moran began joining forces with Garifuna activist Dionisia Amaya, who was the founder of MUGAMA and co-founder of FEDOHNY. Moran “forecasted that the north coast of Honduras was going to become the most value property in Honduras and that unless we get involve two issues were going to take place: tourism is one. And when tourism [develops], the Garinagu were going to start losing the land and that's when I raised – basically what I said was we need to start taking action to legalize the ownership of our land – getting titles” (personal communication, May 25, 2010). Moran's reasons for forecasting impending development in Honduras' north coast was because of his involvement in real estate (personal communication, May 25, 2010). As a result of his “vision” of what would happen with Honduras' north coast, he became involve with GCU and Casildo (M. Moran, personal communication, May 25, 2010). In fact, Moran claims that he produced the documents used in the land struggle (personal communication, May 25, 2010). In the end, Moran “withdrew” from the land struggle (personal communication, May 25, 2010). However, he became more interested in investing in the tourism industry in Honduras and empowering the Garinagu politically in New York City.

In recent years, some Garinagu focused on integrating their community into the Bronx's political landscape. As his GCU's predecessor did before him, José Francisco Ávila carried the

baton. In 1999, José Francisco Ávila's twin brother, Tomás Alberto Ávila, wrote his first proposal calling for the creation of The Garifuna Nation, Inc., which would serve as an umbrella organization focusing on the Garinagu's economic, social, and political advancement. Functioning as a "civic clearinghouse" in New York City, The Garifuna Nation would channel the Garinagu's political concerns to officials at local, state, and federal levels (Ávila 2008:92). To expand the Garinagu's political activities, on May 10, 1999 Tomás Alberto Ávila submitted his second proposal titled "Garifuna Political Action Committee" (GAPAC). GAPAC's mission was "to influence the political process in the state of New York in order to improve the quality of life of Garinagu and urban communities" (J. Ávila & T. Ávila 2008:35). To achieve this, he envisioned voter registration drives to encourage Garinagu to participate in the electoral process. Neither The Garifuna Nation, Inc. nor GAPAC materialized. However, by 2010, GCU held its first "The Garifuna Voter Education and Registration Project" (Garifuna Coalition, USA, Inc. 2014.). The project's objective was to "register and mobilize 12,000 new Garifuna voters for the 2012 general election and the 2013 New York Local Elections!" (Garifuna Coalition, USA, Inc. 2014). To register Garinagu voters, GCU set-up tables with two staff members at Ferry Point, Bill Rainey, and Crotona parks in the Bronx, and at Linden Park in Brooklyn. In addition, GCU's organizers with The Garifuna Voter Education and Registration Project held workshops at Casa Yurumein and The Garifuna Advocacy Center in the South Bronx, and the Biko Transformation Center in Brooklyn (Garifuna Coalition, USA, Inc. 2014).

José Francisco Ávila revived GAPAC in 2004 as the Honduran American Political Action Committee (HAMPAC). On February 9, 2004, he authored a press release defining HAMPAC's mission as focusing "on voter education, grassroots organizing, issue advocacy, and candidate endorsement" (2004:1). A month after forming HAMPAC, José Francisco Ávila announced that

it would participate in the New York State Assembly Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force and attended the Annual Legislative Conference, better known as Somos el Futuro. By 2009, the Garifuna leaders selected Guatemalan born Garifuna Jerry Castro-Cayetano, GCU's former executive director who had held various low-level political posts in New York City, as a viable candidate to fulfill their political aspirations. For these Garifuna leaders, Castro's participation exposed Garinagu as a powerful and recognizable cultural "brand" (M. Moran, personal communication, June 8, 2009). To their dismay, and seemingly without providing a reason, Cayetano vanished and resurfaced in Houston, Texas. For Moran, the Garifuna's identity symbolizes a marketing tool for political integration into New York City's political landscape and an entrance into the capitalist metropolis. Positioning Garinagu as a recognizable brand also means establishing political alliances, as GCU has done with Puerto Rican politicians such as Reverend and New York State Senator Rubén Díaz, his son and current Bronx Borough President, Rubén Díaz, Jr., his son's predecessor Adolfo Carrión, or with African American New York State Assemblyman Eric A. Stevenson (M. Moran, personal communication, May 25, 2010). The new Garifuna leaders and middle class's political engagements in New York City are, in their view, a means of attaining both political and social legitimacy in their place of residence. Judging from these developments, their political engagements in New York City suggest that they are disengaged from their homeland on Honduras' north coast.

While GCU and a host of other Garifuna organizations had been formed in the United States, the Garinagu simultaneously conceived several organizations in Central America. In 1994, the Garifuna leaders in Belize invited various Garinagu and other black people from Central America to attend a meeting in Dangriga, Belize (T. Ávila & J. Ávila 2008:39). Following this meeting, in 1995 they formed the Central American Black Organization

(Organización Negra Centroamericana, ONECA). Comprised of members from Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panamá, Honduras, and Belize, and with at least twenty-eight affiliates in Latin America, ONECA's mission was "to establish a platform of unity, and organization as the basis for the identification and ultimate solution to the problems of the Central American(s) Black community" (T. Ávila & J. Ávila 2008:39). Its annual assembly meetings are held in different Central American regions and in the United States. Conceived as a unifying entity for people of African descent in the region, and headquartered in La Ceiba, ONECA's existence, along with other Garifuna organizations, underscores the cross-border organizing efforts of people of African descent. Although it is difficult to assess ONECA's impact on the Garinagu and black people in Central America in general, it seems that it is still addressing relevant issues. An e-mail announcing ONECA's General Assembly event held in Dangriga, Belize from December 2 to 5, 2009 outlines themes such as "land, territorial boundaries, food security, and land titles, traditionally Garifuna land" included in the assembly program. Incorporating these issues into ONECA's program suggests that there is a real concern with addressing the usurpation of the Garinagu's land (Organización de Desarrollo Étnico Comunitario, personal communication, November 6, 2009). Given my limited information about ONECA, it would require further research to ascertain its efficacy.

Besides focusing on forming organizations since the Happy Land tragedy, the Garifuna leaders in the United States also focused on cultural concerns that they discussed in their various 1991 and 1992 summit meetings. For example, in commemorating their ancestors' 1797 arrival to Honduras, on October 4, 1993, Tomás Alberto Ávila prepared a proposal calling for the creation of a bicentennial committee. On June 10, 1995, the Bicentennial Committee Pro-commemoration met at St. John Baptist Church in the South Bronx and assigned titles and duties

to the leadership. This effort would be geographically connected because ODECO, OFRANEH, and other Garifuna organizations in Honduras participated in organizing the event (J. Ávila & T. Ávila 2008:25-28). A year after the Bicentennial Committee Pro-commemoration met in New York City on March 24, 1996, various Garinagu met in La Ceiba.

Several organizations sent representatives including Fred Batiz of The Organization for the Improvement of Punta Gorda (Organización Pro-mejoramiento de Punta Gorda), Tulio Mariano González of the Independent Center for the Development of Honduras (Centro Independiente para el Desarrollo de Honduras), ODECO's Casildo, and OFRANEH's Horacio Martinez Calix "to discuss the creation of a National Black organization which would coordinate all the issues dealing with the Black community and seek their solutions from the government" (J. Ávila & T. Ávila 2008:42). The group formed a committee to address the bicentennial project and also sought to establish unity among the Garifuna leaders which eventually never materialized. Instead, Iriona states that the bicentennial project drove a wedge between ODECO and OFRANEH in Honduras. Casildo prepared and submitted a proposal to the Honduran Minister of Cultural Affairs and to the National Congress on April 11, 1996. In the proposal, the committee requested \$500,000 to cover the cost of the event. President Carlos Roberto Reina Idiáquez (1994-1998) supported the proposal (J. Ávila & T. Ávila 2008:42).

On May 30, 1996, the Honduras National Congress passed Decree Law 70-96 declaring 1997 the "year of Garifuna Bicentennial" and April 12 as Garifuna Day. By June 14, 1996, the state issued commemorative postage stamps featuring a Garifuna drum and a Garifuna John Canoe dancer wearing a mask. Reina Idiáquez's presumed social inclusion and unwavering support culminated with the passage of executive Decree Law 017-96 on October 2, 1996 calling for the formation of a presidential commission to oversee the bicentennial event. Seemingly

jubilant over the state's recognition, on October 25, 1996, the bicentennial committee financed Casildo's trip to New York City and lavished him with a reception. Casildo also spoke at Howard University's Ralph J. Bunche International Affairs Center, where he focused on Garinagu's presence in Honduras and the "status of Blacks in Honduras" (J. Ávila & T. Ávila 2008:43-45). For the Garinagu involved in the organizing of the bicentennial project, socializing with government bureaucrats and securing state recognition may have been a significant milestone.

Judging from the Garifuna leaders' reception of the Honduran government's actions, it appears that they perceived their spatially connected cultural activism as yet another significant victory in defying spaces of oppression. Perhaps blinded by their presumed victory, they ignored that the political regime in Honduras must have viewed the Garinagu's bicentennial remembrance projects as an ideal distraction from neoliberal policies that dominated the country's economic and political scene and the Garinagu's dispossession from their land. The political regime may have been using the Garinagu to organize the cultural event as something that would attract visitors to their tourism project. In his examination of money, consumption, and tourism, geographer Luke Desforges states that it has become important in recent years in understanding the significance of "places and people" in tourism geography in relation to the formation of new economies (2001:353). The Honduran government and local oligarchs have been pursuing such endeavors using the Garifuna's culture as their commodity. These so-called exotic beings (Garinagu) delivered and they are still delivering. In drawing from professor of pedagogy and African American studies, Nagueyalti Warren's analysis of black leaders in the United States, the spatial interconnectivity of the Garifuna's cultural activism did "little to eliminate economic and political oppression" which has only worsened (1990:26). It also failed

to unite the Garifuna leaders as initially intended or to open the eyes of the middle class. Instead, OFRANEH and ODECO, the most visible Garifuna organizations in Honduras, grew further apart. Consequently, today the Garinagu's remembrance has become a contentious issue among the Garifuna leaders in Honduras, as each seeks to outdo the other for attention. In the meantime Rosa Armenia observes, "the enemy is watching us," meaning the Honduran politicians and elites, as most Garifuna leaders seek to maintain their quasi activism and visibility while neglecting their landlessness status (personal communication, January 23, 2011). It also appears that the Garifuna leaders in the United States have distanced themselves from the remembrance event in Honduras. The Garinagu held an event advertised as *Baruwa* Garifuna (Garifuna Nation) at Casa Yurumein on April 12, 2014. In attendance were the Garinagu from New Orleans, Los Angeles, and from other regions. What this development signals is that the Garifuna community in the Diaspora has redefined its relationship with place – that is Honduras' north coast.

ODECO's Formation and Practices

Some former OFRANEH's members formed ODECO in 1992. Dosanto affirms that ODECO's formation is a "product of [the Honduran] government [']s initiatives" (personal communication, December 20, 2013). In 1991, former president of the Honduran Medical Employees Union, Celeo Álvarez Casildo attended one of the summits that the Garinagu had organized in New York City (Ávila, n.d.). A year later, Casildo, who was also a former OFRANEH's member, together with other Garinagu in Honduras formed ODECO to address the needs of people of African descent in Honduras. As stated on ODECO's blog site, its mission is to,

reduce economic, social, political, cultural violations and environmental exclusion of Afro-Hondurans communities and population through advocacy,

awareness, training and the defense of human rights with a clear vocation to support the processes of integration and democratization of the Central American descendant civil society. (Organización de Desarrollo Étnico Comunitario, n.d.)

Considered to be the youngest labor leader in Honduras, Casildo needed bodyguards for protection during his years as a labor activist (S. Irióna, personal communication, March 13, 2012). In 1992, on the eve of Columbus Day or the “Day of the Race” as it is named in Honduras, Casildo organized a demonstration in La Ceiba called the Peaceful March of Resistance: Indigenous, Black, Popular, in which different social actors participated (e.g. Garinagu, labor activists, environmentalists, and religious leaders) (Anderson 2009:125). Despite ODECO’s early activism, Mollett states that ODECO’s formation interrupted existing cooperative relationships between the Garinagu and Miskitos because the Garinagu turned their attention to “their rights to communal village land titles” whereas Miskitos stripped the Garinagu from their claim as an “indigenous group” (2006:95). According to Mollett, the Garinagu and Miskitos comprised the grassroots organization named Comité Vigilante de Tierras (Vigilant Land Committee) today known as RAYAKA in the community of Belén (2006:95). Yet, in spite of the conflicts ODECO’s formation created among the Miskitos and the Garinagu in Honduras, in the United States, the Garifuna activists began cooperating with ODECO. Irióna frequently traveled to Honduras in the early 1990s to work for ODECO as a consultant (personal communication, March 13, 2012).

We can trace the building of Casildo’s image and power to the Garifuna bicentennial remembrance in 1997. Positioning himself as the Garinagu’s only spokesperson with culturally-oriented rhetoric, for most Garinagu today Casildo is part of the very culture he sought to initially undermine in his early years as a labor activist in Honduras. The Garinagu’s conflicting relationship with Casildo suggests why many of them view him as a paradoxical figure. In

Honduras, Casildo aligns himself with the Honduran government and elites. He also maintains a base among mostly educated urban Garinagu. Moreover, he enjoys broad support from the Hondurans Against AIDS, Inc. and to a certain degree GCU. Since Casildo attracts sizeable international funding, there is a consensus too among his critics that he is a shrewd, organized, and focused person (R. Armenia, personal communication, January 23, 2012; R. Contreras, personal communication, February 20, 2011; I. Chávez, personal communication, April 24, 2010).

Casildo's critics also accuse him of banning critical voices from ODECO. For example, seasoned activist Isidro Chávez "asked him [Casildo] why a new person cannot be selected to oversee ODECO" (personal communication, April 24, 2010). Casildo did not answer Chávez's query. Instead, Casildo never invited Chávez back to another ODECO meeting. Given Casildo's tactics and the fact that he has been ODECO's president since the organization's inception in 1992, Chávez explains that Casildo "created an organization for his own survival because it is said, that to see him nowadays, one must make an appointment. Well, that is ODECO" (I. Chávez, personal communication, April 24, 2010). It seems that Casildo's survival is based upon conformity with the Honduran government and elites since he has ceased to challenge the power structure; instead, he has become part of it. For Chávez, making an appointment to see Casildo signifies a departure from the Garinagu's social interaction. In other words, it signifies that different forms of social relations that contradict their traditions mediate the Garinagu's socialization in the city. In Garifuna communities, one does not call someone to meet. A person just stops by and chats with that person because the Garinagu's interaction is generally ruled by certain types of spatial proximity. This interaction has been fragmented since many Garinagu in their respective communities now own cell phones and televisions and have

internet access. As I learned during my fieldwork in 2006, access to the internet has been facilitated by the businesses that the Garinagu residing in the United States have established in their respective communities in Honduras as evident with the satellite dishes shown in figure 4.1. Among the Garifuna elders, access to this technology has fragmented the Garifuna society. Thus, making an appointment is viewed by many of them to be a socio-spatial barrier that has ruptured cultural practices such as gathering around the community elders to listen to stories about what happened at the farm or while fishing or travelling overseas.



Figure 4.1 Satellite Dishes in *Tibiniriba* (Rio Esteban)
Departamento of Colón
Source: Doris Garcia, 2006

Throughout my ethnographic fieldwork, several Garinagu provided me with telephone numbers to other Garinagu to interview. During each exchange not a single Garifuna indicated that they would first contact that person. The reason for this is because Garinagu's social interaction is still governed by certain cultural practices. Thus, even if their social interaction is subjected to substantial changes under different social relations, they still are resisting certain practices, though they may not be aware of it. Don Mitchell defines resistance as an "attempt to redefine or break down the structures of power that govern resister's lives" (2000:148).

Although Mitchell is primarily referring to large groups such as labor groups, one can apply the same principle to individuals. Chávez engages in small-scale resistance as he seeks to maintain the Garinagu's social interactions, which in his view the urban Garifuna middle class refutes.

These urban Garifuna middle class, like their counterparts in New York City, adhere to different social relations that fit their elitist-oriented politics, bourgeoisie identity, status, and role however nominal their position and power are in the broader social structure. Roberto Contreras echoes Chávez's sentiment. He states that Casildo "has so many contacts, so many connections with all the governments, but sadly comrade those contacts only benefit him personally, to strengthen him economically, and the little group that surrounds him, but not the people, not the people" (R. Contreras, personal communication, February 20, 2011). Others are more diplomatic about what they say about Casildo. Armando Dosanto states that politically Casildo is "well with any president that is in power and that is good, that's his politics; the only way he can achieve what he wants or what he needs by which he can help the communities, and that is not bad. The problem is that we spend time critiquing that" (C. Casildo, personal communication, March 29, 2012). To probe into what these Garinagu are claiming, I examined organization documents which ODECO circulated on the Garifunalink listserv and archived on its internet blog site.

I will not list all of the documents Casildo circulated in Garifunalink or archived in ODECO's blog site, but will only cite a few. One of Casildo's e-mails announced the graduation of eighth participants of a school for training for Afrodescendant leaders in human rights (C. Casildo, personal communication, June 19, 2009). Gaining knowledge about human rights in Honduras is a much needed skills and very important training. Unable to locate the 2009 program, I turned my attention to the 2011 training literature. The module lists "Afro-

descendant population in the Americas, philosophical conception and national and international laws for the Protection of the Human Rights, the experience and struggle of people of Afrodescendants and the defense of their communities rights: Garifuna people's case" (Organización de Desarrollo Étnico Comunitario, 2011). This is certainly a promising module because it addresses the oppressed people's concerns. Forty-seven people, mostly blacks from Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Honduras, and one Miskito attended the training headed by Dr. Marco Antonio Sagastume Gemmel from the Universidad San Carlos de Guatemala, another faculty member from the Regional University Center of the Atlantic Coastline (Centro Universitario Regional del Litoral Atlántico, CURLA), a regional branch of the National Autonomous University of Honduras (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras, UNAH), and a Costa Rican faculty member (Organización de Desarrollo Étnico Comunitario, 2011). Most participants were in their late teens to early twenties, but there were also three adults in their forties, including a Garifuna activist from the United States.

The training spanned four months and each week participants traveled to and lodged in ODECO's facility. ODECO conducted the training, fed participants, and transported them to different communities to view hospitals or schools conditions (B. Cayetano, personal communication, December 6, 2013). ODECO also reimbursed participants for their commute. Several organizations sponsored ODECO's training including the Ford Foundation (B. Cayetano, personal communication, December 6, 2013). Two questions must be asked: what information did the facilitators present to the participants and how did the facilitators frame the information. If the facilitators informed participants that Honduras is a country of laws and that they must learn these laws to understand what is happening in their respective communities or nationally, that is good. For example, Article 68 of the Honduran Constitution states, "Every person has the

right to have his physical, mental, and moral integrity respected” (Honduran Const. art. 68). However, judging from the rampant human right violations against Hondurans, it is difficult to believe that the country has laws when the government does not follow or apply them fairly. If participants learned that the state policies are in part the cause of the endemic poverty, murder, and violence against grassroots organizations and human right activists, then the training served its purpose in addressing oppression and inequality in Honduras. I asked Brigido Cayetano from the United States about what he learned about human rights after attending the training. He replied, “the training was formidable. I learned about Malcolm X, Nelson Mandela, Rosa Parks, Joseph Satuye and many other black heroes” (B. Cayetano, personal communication, December 6, 2013). I asked Cayetano to elaborate about his understanding of human rights. He replied, “you have the right from the time you are in your mother’s belly to freedom of speech. This is why the United Nations wrote human rights [The Universal Declaration of Human Rights] in 1948” (B. Cayetano, personal communication, December 6, 2013). Lastly, I asked Cayetano if he thought that having over half of the population living in poverty with high unemployment and illiteracy rates is a violation of human rights, he did not answer. Instead, he praised the training and ODECO, and wondered how much ODECO paid for each participant since it provided them with lodging and food throughout the duration of the training.

Again, while ODECO’s training is important, Cayetano’s accolades and understanding of human rights suggest that the facilitators may have used a non-critical frame. Cayetano’s stance also reflects Casildo’s politics. I asked various veteran Garifuna activists how these trained young men and women helped the Garifuna communities overcome displacement from their lands in Honduras or address the endemic violence? They all agreed that they do not see the usefulness of these trainings because they believe they are “very much supported by the

government” since it is not “subversive” (A. Dosanto, personal communication, March 29, 2012). In other words, such human rights training does not pose a threat to the status quo because it is not critical of state oppression and terror carried out against Garinagu and any other Honduran who pose a threat to the power structure. It is therefore Casildo’s accommodationist approach that resonates with the Honduran state and elites, which maintains his power and what some Garinagu refer to as his “castle” a reference to Satuye Cultural Center where ODECO is headquartered in La Ceiba (A. Dosanto, personal communication, March 29, 2012).

Politically, Casildo launched the Campaign Pledge (Compromiso de Campaña) in 2001 with the presidential election of Maduro Joest, a Panamanian-born right-wing National Party member. Every four years since then, presidential candidates, regardless of their political affiliation, have visited ODECO’s office to sign the pledge designed to “improve the political, economic, social, cultural, technical, and scientific and environmental conditions of the Afrohonduran people and their communities” (Organización de Desarrollo Étnico Comunitario, personal communication, April 17, 2009). In the aftermath of the June 28, 2009 coup d’état which ousted democratically elected President José Manuel Zelaya Rosales, a Liberal Party member, and installed *de facto* President Roberto Micheletti, right-wing National Party member Lobo Sosa apparently won the presidential election of November 2009 with the U.S. government’s consent. Lobo Sosa signed ODECO’s pledge, which was in his best interest since ODECO’s blackness contributed to legitimatizing the illegitimate government.

Promising to govern in a “humanist” and “Christian” way, meaning the bible in one hand and the gun in the other, Lobo Sosa put his approach to work (“Honduras Nov 29, 2009. Porfirio Lobo Sosa Presidente Electo!”). He first severed “dialogue with ethnic activists” and dismissed “indigenous professionals from government institutions for their political affiliations” (Anderson

2012:54). Next, Lobo Sosa carried out repressive policies against dissenting voices such as journalists and activists in general. Yet, despite Lobo Sosa's actions, through the Legislative Decree 203-2011 of October 12, 2010, his government formed The Secretary of State for the Development of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Honduran (La Secretaría de Estado para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas y Afrohondureños, SEDINAFROH) (La Secretaría de Estado para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas y Afrohondureños, n.d.). SEDINAFROH's vision is "to improve the quality of life of the indigenous and Afro-Honduran population through economic, cultural, political and social productive development" (La Secretaría de Estado para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas y Afrohondureños, n.d.).

Headed by former ODECO's treasurer Luis Green Morales, SEDINAFROH is a result of "Campaign Commitment signed by the constitutional President of the Republic, Don Porfirio Lobo Sosa with ODECO March 19, 2009 as part of the Second National Solidarity Conference held in Tegucigalpa" (Secretaría de Estado en los Despachos de Pueblos Indígenas y Afrohondureños, n.d.). SEDINAFROH's formation upset many indigenous groups in Honduras because they felt that the Garinagu would be afforded more attention than them, meaning indigenous population such as the Pech, Lenca, and other groups. In reality, this was not the case. Facilitated by ODECO, I believe the Lobo Sosa government used Garinagu as a stabilizing group, although they were equally targeted by state-sponsored violence under the Michelitti's regime as evident with the closing of the First Garifuna Hospital ("Medical Education Cooperation with Cuba," 2009). In visiting SEDINAFROH's website to find out about projects carried out in any community, not a single one is listed (Secretaría de Estado en los Despachos de Pueblos Indígenas y Afrohondureños, n.d.). Yet, the Garifuna organizations or individuals in the United States did not voice concerns or perhaps inquired about what projects SEDINAFROH

pursued and completed. Instead, they seem to have interpreted tokenism as Garinagu forming part of the power structure. In fact, the formation of SEDINAFROH is just another way of creating the illusion of inclusion. Albeit nominally, Casildo has become part of the *caudillismo* (authoritarian power) in Honduras. It is this system imposed on him by the Honduran state, which he embraces, that allows him to form part of the political economy. In turn, Casildo speaks out on issues he and the state deem appropriate and retrieves when necessary. Case in point, Casildo did not utter a word about the 2009 coup d'état. It is thus Casildo's positionality that matters to him rather than the Garinagu people's dispossession from their land and their struggle against oppression and domination.

Collectivism or Individualism?

We have seen thus far that the Garinagu formed different organizations with dissimilar specialties both in the United States and in Honduras. It is therefore appropriate to discuss how their organizations helped the Garinagu defend place during the early stages of neoliberalism in Honduras. I will elaborate on neoliberalism's consequences in chapter seven. In this segment, I focus on the Garifuna's behaviors as they responded to global economic forces. Did they operate collectively or individually? In the period after the Happy Land Social Club tragedy, the Garifuna activists in Honduras and the United States engaged in a sustained land struggle movement. By the early 1990s, the Garinagu's dispossession from their land became central to OFRANEH's activism and in framing its discourse. OFRANEH linked Garinagu's removal from their land with racism. It also denounced Honduran state-sponsored violence against the Garinagu. In the United States, the Garifuna activists collected signatures to send to the Honduran government and organized meetings to raise consciousness about the Garinagu's land

usurpation. Iris Cristales defines her duty to mobilize as a way of defending “Garifuna patrimony” (personal communication, June 7, 2010).

While the Garinagu organized in New York City, a more vigorous struggle developed in Honduras. On October 11, 1996, OFRANEH and ODECO organized The March of the Drums (La Marcha de los Tambores) to Honduras’ capital, Tegucigalpa denouncing land usurpation. I elaborate on this matter more extensively in chapter seven. By the late 1990s, as the Honduran government pressed on with its neoliberal economic policies, ODECO’s cohorts in the Bronx, Casildo, and staff traveled widely denouncing the growing land violations in Honduras. In Honduras, OFRANEH mounted its own struggle separate from ODECO. To denounce land violations in Honduras, in the late 1990s, Pabla Trujillo, a member of the ODECO’s camp, along with several others visited the United Nations, the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), and the Organization of American States (OAS) in Washington, D.C. During one meeting with OAS members, Trujillo and company were informed, “you have to solve things first with your government; you have to sit down with them and solve it. And if they don’t do anything and the problem continues, then you have to bring us like what you did in trying to negotiate with them” (P. Trujillo, personal communication, May 24, 2010). Contrary to OAS assertions, Trujillo states that the United Nations representatives informed Garinagu petitioners that “within the whole human rights component there is no land . . . there is nothing that will protect your land during this time” (personal communication, May 24, 2010). The United Nation’s seemingly dismissive words do not reverberate with its earlier reception of Lombardo Lacayo Sambula, one of the leading and revered leaders of the Garifuna land struggle in Honduras in the early 1990s who came to the United Nations to denounce the Garinagu’s land usurpation in the village of Limón. I elaborate on this development at length in chapter seven.

After futilely lobbying INGOs in the United States, ODECO's cohorts met with the Honduran government, but without success. They then hired a lawyer from Arizona State University to represent the Garinagu in Honduras, but again to no avail (P. Trujillo, personal communication, May 24, 2010). Meanwhile, OFRANEH's representative, too, traveled to the United Nations to address the land conflict issue with the help of Garinagu in New York City. As stated by veteran activist Rosa Armenia, OFRANEH's representatives were more concerned with keeping leadership of the organization than fostering an inclusive movement. Casildo's actions reflected a similar position on power-sharing. According to Armenia who participated in organizing the meetings for the Garifuna leaders, Casildo declared himself to be the Garifuna community's sole spokesperson (personal communication, May 24, 2010). Regardless of the approach each camp employed, it is clear that both sides organized domestically and internationally to draw attention to the land struggle in Honduras, a conflict embedded in global economic structural forces. The Garinagu's international activities reveal that their activism was a result of global economic and political forces resulting from the spatial mobility of capitalism and its concomitant geographical differences such as class, gender, and ethnicity.

The intensification of these processes generates a struggle over place between local people, state, global financial institutions, and multinational corporations. Through the Garinagu's international activism and with a common strategy in forming collective action, they came to the United Nations' doorsteps. More significantly, it was their *defense of place* that also motivated them. I am complementing Escobar's analogy of the defense of place with geographer Sally Marston's concept of "domesticating the state" (2004:178). Speaking of the United States government, Marston explains that women's organizing played a significant role in pressuring the state to take a more proactive role in "increasing responsibility for public and social welfare"

(2004:178). The Garifuna leaders sought to domesticate the Honduran government by applying political pressure through the United Nations to protect their territory, resources, and communities on Honduras' north coast. Among the Garinagu's international activists, the common theme that brought them together was dispossession, meaning the loss of all form of rights such as land, human and environmental rights (Harvey 2005:178). Yet, the Garifuna leaders engaged in intraorganizational feuds caused by two factors. First, the Garifuna leaders did not see their international exposure contributing to existing ideological divisions because they were more concerned with safeguarding their popularity. This lack of vision put their international activism at risk.

Absence of vision, combined with difficulties in maintaining their international activism, complicated the work of new Garifuna leaders and suggested that international activists "are hard to construct, are difficult to maintain" because each group promotes its own specific ideas about how leadership should be shaped (Tarrow 2001:2). Yet, the urban-based emerging Garifuna leaders "encouraged" accessing INGOs because they provide "opportunities and incentives for actors . . ." (Tarrow 2001:2). Second, although differences reflected in the Garinagu's intraorganizational conflict speaks directly to the difficulties in maintaining cross-border activism, it also informs us that solidarity adopts its own particular set of boundaries, boundaries that are grounded in specific individual interests and political allegiances that can fundamentally divert activism or weaken it structurally. What we see here is that activism is not geographically isolated. Activism is spatially mobile because colonialism transformed human geography and capitalism altered social relations as evident with migration. Those Garinagu residing in the United States provided activists in Honduras with the resources to mobilize in defense of place.

Specific boundaries, individual interests, and political allegiances fracturing the Garinagu's spatial activism did not derail their efforts. In Brooklyn, they held a Garifuna Leadership Retreat from May 7 to 9, 1999 at one of their comrade's home. Attended by Central Americans and Garinagu residing in New York City, the retreat theme was Leadership for the Next Millennium. Prominent in the meeting's agenda were the Garifuna land crisis and Article 107 of the Honduran Constitution. Attendees might have considered the retreat to be a regional preparatory meeting for the July 2001 United Nations World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) held in Durban, South Africa, during which an estimated fifteen Garinagu from Honduras, including Cristales from the Bronx and ODECO's group, attended. Members of OFRANEH also attended the conference. At WCAR, the Garinagu broadened their platform by framing their discourse around human rights. Drawing from political scientist and human rights activist Kwame Dixon's analysis of black people organizing tactics in Latin America, Garinagu's discourse gave rise to a "black identity-based organizing" (2008:85). The Garifuna leaders' discourse while attending WCAR must be included in Dixon's analysis because they contextualized land dispossession and injustice they continue to experience in Honduras over a decade later. Interestingly, two months prior to WCAR, on May 18, 2001, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) held its first Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in Paris recognizing nineteen endangered ethnic groups as a "cultural heritage," among the Garinagu ("United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People," n.d.). This recognition came about because of the intense organizing of various Garifuna organizations from Belize and with support from Nicaragua, Honduras, and Guatemala ("United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People," n.d.).

UNESCO's proclamation outlined threats to the Garinagu's cultural survival and included an action plan tackling a host of social problems the "Garifuna Nation" faced, especially land rights and racism ("United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People," n.d.). UNESCO's recognition is revered by Garifuna organizations. For example, OFRANEH defines this recognition as a "distinction that possesses a nominative weight" (Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña, n.d.). From OFRANEH's vantage point, this validation epitomizes belonging. UNESCO's recognition is also included in *The People's Garifuna Dictionary*. Evidently, UNESCO's recognition appears to be a "global brand whose seal is slapped on [people] . . ." ("Is Unesco Damaging the World's Treasures?" 2009). Perhaps, black people in Latin America, as may be the case elsewhere, see UNESCO's recognition as an affirmation of their existence as social actors living in an oppressive and racist society, and as a way of emerging as subjects in their struggle. For the Garifuna activists, UNESCO's recognition may represent a means by which to connect with INGOs, defy local government, and underpin their activism in the face of incessant economic and state violence. While largely symbolic, in many ways, UNESCO's recognition remains the weapon of choice among new Garifuna leaders in framing their discourse and in internationalizing their land struggle. Though the Garinagu's recognition by the United Nations serves as another resource in addressing their land struggle, racism, and other related socio-spatial conditions, the reality is that it does not curtail Honduran government repression or exploitative global economic forces. The recognition has become an additional tactical strategy that the Garinagu can use in challenging oppression.

The Garinagu's international activists also sought to counter global neoliberal forces by devising their own economic plans. For instance, during ONECA's third annual general assembly meeting in 1998 in Bocas del Toro, Panamá, an area populated by poor indigenous

people and people of African descent, ONECA embraced the “La Playita” tourism project, an economic endeavor developed by Panamanians in response to the tourism efforts dominating Honduras’ economic policies. The Garinagu developed the La Playita project during their January 1999 meeting held at GCU. At the time, GCU vice-president Mirtha Colón designated attendees José Francisco Ávila and Tomás Alberto Ávila “to lead the development of the Tourism Master Plan for the Garifuna Communities of Honduras” because of their real estate background and “commitment to the economic development of the Garifuna communities” (Ávila n.d.:15). The Ávilas assembled a team comprised of Garinagu, Panamanians, and an American. José Francisco Ávila wrote a report identifying, among other things, the geographical concentration of Garifuna communities. Following several revisions, Dionisia Amaya Bonilla hand-delivered the report to Casildo in La Ceiba in 1999. Casildo rejected the report. José Francisco Ávila believed that Casildo rejected it because he disagreed with the “inclusion of [other] Garifuna organizations, since . . . ODECO should be the only organization included” (Ávila n.d.:16).

Conflicts in perspective between Ávila and Casildo led to Ávila’s departure. Despite his leaving, ONECA used Ávila’s report for its “Central American African Descendants Integrated Sustainable Development Master Plan” presented at the 2000 Intercontinental African Descendants Summit held in La Ceiba, Honduras (Ávila n.d.:16). Due to a lack of information, it is difficult to assess the efficacy of this plan. Some Garinagu also focused on devising a tourism plan in the Garifuna communities. Within their strategies, there were noticeable changes unfolding. Many Garifuna activists construed Honduras’ north coast as the cradle of their identity and culture, but were yielding to unprecedented global economic forces which were altering “the local . . . place, labor, and tradition” and substituting it with spectacle of

consumption (Escobar 2001:141). Most Garinagu did not show much interest in the tourism plan discussions, but Garifuna activists, including Irióna and Casildo, worked with Panamanians of African descent employed by The Church Center for the United Nations to find a solution to the land violations taking place as a result of the tourism development projects being vigorously pursued by the Honduran government (S. Irióna, personal communication, March 29, 2012).

Internal conflicts seething within the international nexus unquestionably began to rupture the new Garifuna leaders “imagined communities” (Anderson 1991:xi). Although Benedict Anderson’s usage of this concept refers to national identity, I am borrowing it and modifying its meaning to refer to the Garifuna leaders’ values. Within this group, different ideological camps developed as they struggled for supremacy and material interests. Concern with power thus took precedence over devising a robust strategy to confront the local and global scale of capitalism, and to defy its impact on the Garinagu and their communities. In their quest to safeguard their imagined community, the Garifuna leaders, particularly those representing ODECO and GCU, ignored tensions developing within their organizing. This was due to the fact that they saw their educational background, mechanisms in resolving the Garinagu’s plight, and engagement with INGOs and the state as shared values that sheltered them as a group in position of leadership. Rather than devising a more inclusive approach, they consolidated their power with Casildo as their leader. As the Garifuna leaders from the United States withdrew, the Garinagu’s land usurpation only escalated. Their withdrawal does not imply that it was the root cause for the escalation. What it implies is that it fragmented the unity that they could have formed.

As the Garifuna leaders in the United States withdrew, some Garifuna leaders in Honduras continued the struggle. In 2000, OFRANEH president Gregoria Flores brought Garifuna land activist Alfredo López Álvarez’s case before the Inter-American Human Rights Commission.

The Honduran police detained López Álvarez on April 27, 1997 and “jailed [him] for seven years on trumped-up drug charges” (Ryan, 2008; Inter-American of Human Rights Commission, n.d.). The new generation of Garifuna activists has not ignored OFRANEH’s activism. ELAM’s graduates follow OFRANEH’s philosophy. For these activists, OFRANEH is the organization they respect most and support today in the struggle because they “want more real struggles, struggles very much linked to the community reality, but struggles that respond to what is happening in our communities and which requires a spokesperson of the organization in denouncing what is really happening today in our black communities” (J. Espinosa, personal communication, September 23, 2011). For these new activists OFRANEH represents the needs of black people and the real struggle. They along with veteran activists see OFRANEH as their “base organization – the organization that truly represents the demands of our Garifuna people. It gives us the advantages that we can elevate our voices, we can transcend internationally with our demands, and we can one way or another carry out our actions of community mobilization” (J. Espinosa, personal communication September 23, 2011).

Today, OFRANEH, headed by Miriam Miranda, is considered by veteran Garifuna activists to be “vigilant of any violations; it is the one which jumps and tells the government to stop that” (A. Dosanto, personal communication, March 29, 2011). OFRANEH’s vigilance has earned its followers a place on the Honduran government’s and elites’ target list, figuratively speaking. On May 30, 2005, former OFRANEH’s director Gregoria Flores suffered gunshot wounds in broad daylight while “collecting testimony to present before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights” (“Garífuna Indigenous Activists Under Attack in Honduras,” 2005). On March 28, 2011, the Honduran national police shot Miriam Miranda in the stomach with a tear gas canister and illegally detained her (personal communication, March 29, 2011). Since OFRANEH’s

members prevented the Honduran government's control over their organization in the 1980s, unlike ODECO, OFRANEH has become the oppositional black organization in Honduras. Embedded in social and spatial contradictions, the Garifuna's international activism resulted from powerful global economic and political forces.

The Garifuna Nation

The significance in addressing the Garifuna Nation is to show how the Garinagu in the United States have drifted away from the land struggle in Honduras. Their actions suggest that nationhood is not based on land. It is based on the Garinagu's spatial dispersion. Their distribution is more in line with Anderson's notion of the role of imagined communities in defining nations. Citing British historian and political scientist George Hugh Nicholas Seton-Watson, for Anderson nations "are *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (1991:6 emphasis in original). As for communities, Anderson contends that they "are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (1991:6). In the Garinagu's case, I question the motive of their action, but not the falsity of their action because it suggests a cultural fragmentation and disconnection from Honduras' north coast.

The notion of nationhood is in vogue among most Garinagu today. In September 2013, José Francisco Ávila attended and addressed a four day Regional Reparations Conference in St. Vincent. At the conference, "attorneys, government representatives and representatives of the reparations commissions will consider legal options [against Britain] . . . the Chairpersons of the National Reparations Committees will select a Regional Reparations Commission Chair" (Caribbean Community Secretariat, 2013). The Regional Reparations Commission is seeking

reparations based on the enslavement of Africans. In an interview with *The Vincentian* newspaper, Ávila spoke of his willingness to work with the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) Reparations Commission, “along with Garifuna representatives from the Diaspora, ‘in seeking justice for the crime of genocide committed against our ancestors by the British’” (King, 2013). Ávila states that this is an auspicious time to organize Garinagu diasporically “into the Garifuna Nation” (King, 2013). Ávila also states that he has been exchanging ideas with Los Angeles Garifuna leader Ruben Reyes about the Garifuna Nation and addressing the British’s genocide against Garinagu in the late eighteenth century.

In keeping with the September 2013 conference in St. Vincent, José Francisco Ávila from New York City representing GCU, Wilbor Guerrero and Ruben Reyes from Washington and California are mobilizing to form what they call the Garifuna Nation. On September 26, 2013, Ávila e-mailed a draft for the creation of the Garifuna Nation to over fifteen people, including me. According to the draft, the Garifuna Nation’s mission is “to transform the current social, cultural, political and economic environment in the Garifuna communities into one of [a] partnership support system, promoting participation, activism and awareness through the existing infrastructure of the existing organizations located in each Garifuna Community in the Diaspora” (J. Ávila, personal communication, September 26, 2013). To fulfill this mission, the Garifuna Nation will “conduct applied research, policy analysis, and advocacy, providing a Garifuna perspective in five key areas – civil/human rights, education, employment and economic status, and health” and assist its affiliates operating regionally (J. Ávila, personal communication, September 26, 2013). The Garifuna Nation’s declaration indicates that regardless of the Garinagu’s spatial distribution, they “represent a single, united ethnic community known as the Garifuna Nation” (J. Ávila, personal communication, September 26, 2013). Besides ethnicity

uniting members of the Garifuna Nation, this organization “has basic rights to autonomy and self-determination and the right to preserve Garifuna language and culture” (J. Ávila, personal communication, September 26, 2013).

The central concerns of the Garifuna Nation are: “Advocacy and Empowerment, Language and Culture in Education, Land, Health, Economic Development, and Social Issues” (J. Ávila, personal communication, September 26, 2013). Also included is working with CARICOM’s Reparations Commission in “seeking justice for the crime of genocide committed against our ancestors by the British” (J. Ávila, personal communication, September 26, 2013). Lastly, the architects of the Garifuna Nation would “build on José Francisco Ávila’s experience in negotiating the seven percent [shareholder] participation in Los Micos Beach Resort with the Honduras Ministry of Tourism, on November 25, 2005” (J. Ávila, personal communication, September 26, 2013). Governed by a board of directors and a paid “chief administrative head,” among some of the Garifuna nation’s member organizations in New York will be GCU, Hondurans Against AIDS, Inc., the Council of Evangelical Garifuna Churches, Inc. and several other organizations from Chicago, Detroit, and Houston (J. Ávila, personal communication, September 26, 2013). Organizations from Honduras feature ODECO, OFRANEH, and the Martin Luther King Foundation (Fundación Martin Luther King) (J. Ávila, personal communication, September 26, 2013). The Garifuna leaders list numerous Central American and Caribbean countries as participants as well.

In response to Ávila’s and his cohorts’ initiative, former GCU executive director Jerry Castro Cayetano, and Cheryl Noralez, president and founder of Garifuna Heritage Foundation in Los Angeles, voiced their distrust of both Reyes and Ávila’s initiative. Responding to Guerrero’s congratulatory e-mail to Ávila for generating the Garifuna Nation draft, Rosita

Álvarez stated that Ávila, Reyes, and Guerrero were simply re-inventing “the wheel,” since Garifuna cultural nationalist Theodore Aranda from Dangriga, Belize initiated an identical project in the 1990s for which he delivered a speech at Our Lady of Victory Church in the Bronx (R. Álvarez, personal communication, September 30, 2013). Distributed at the meeting was Aranda’s writing about reparations. Álvarez thinks that Ávila and his brother attended the event and obtained a copy of the information that he seems to be duplicating (personal communication, September 30, 2013). England’s findings perhaps corroborate Álvarez’s claim. Her findings show that during the 1997 Garifuna’s Bicentennial celebration of their ancestors’ arrival to Honduras in 1797, the Garifuna organizers of the event purport that “the Garinagu constitute a single ethnic ‘nation – unified by their common language, culture, and origins in St. Vincent – despite their current geographical dispersion and fragmented citizenships’” (1999:8). England goes on to say that “their politics emphasizes the historical reality of displacement, exile, mobility, and multiple communities, but also the possibility that the Garifuna Diaspora may be re-united across national-state borders as the Garifuna Nation . . .” (1999:8). Aranda’s 2003 writing maintained the politics of identity alive.

Indeed, referring to himself as “Paramount Chief,” Aranda’s article “World Garifuna Organization (WGO) in Brief” published on September 30, 2003 defines WGO as a “registered Non-Government, Non-Profit Organization, established April 12, 2000, to pursue the Unification, Cultural Preservation and Economic Development of Garifuna People” (Aranda, 2003). Members of the WGO include the Garifuna people residing in the “six nations” comprising Honduras, Nicaragua, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Belize, the United States, and Guatemala. Outlined as Aranda’s objectives are the “‘Consecration of Balliceaux into a Sacred and Holy Site’” and organizing a “Summit for next year 2004, in ‘Education’ and ‘family to

directly impact black economy social concerns and education. WGO's central objective is the development of a "Black Consciousness' . . . 'Unity'" and to be "connected locally, regionally, and internationally . . ." (Aranda 2003:3-4). In other words, Aranda is seeking to unify the Garinagu in the Diaspora. What would this black consciousness be? In examining Aranda's speech delivered at the Belize Black Summit in 2003, he seems to interrogate the representation and histories of black people, Western epistemology, and the function and commitment of local institutions in Belize to black people and other oppressed groups. For instance, he states, "the Church and State have both kept the black people ignorant of their history and ancestral achievements, leaving them naked to the onslaught of colonialism" (Aranda 2003:2). In challenging European epistemology, Aranda also interrogates the description of Greece as the cradle of civilization and knowledge. Instead, he argues that Africa is the cradle (Aranda 2003:2). In thinking of a new beginning, it seems that the narrative emanating from Belize, at least from Aranda, may have been adopted from African American cultural nationalists like Amiri Baraka, Malcolm X, and many others, since he secured his doctorate in the United States.

In assessing Ávila's Garifuna Nation language and comparing it against Aranda's writing, it is clear that Ávila and his cohorts may have duplicated Aranda's ideas with the exception that they use Garifuna Nation instead of World Garifuna Organization. Álvarez is possibly correct that Ávila and his cohorts are re-inventing the wheel. In Álvarez's response to my inquiry about the Garifuna Nation, she states, "Dr. Theodore Aranda founded World Garifuna Organization in the 1990's in order to begin and lay the foundation to a Garifuna Nation" (personal communication, October 1, 2013). Álvarez asserts that Ávila and his cohorts' initiative was a direct result of Aranda's early efforts (personal communication, October 1, 2013). Second, one noticeable common strand among Aranda, Ávila, Reyes, and Guerrero is that they are all

creating a bureaucratic umbrella organization and position of authority for themselves. However, in Ávila's case, he is also promoting his own ideas such as pushing the 7 percent shareholding in Honduras' tourism project, which I discuss in chapter seven. Each social actor then is competing for the "Paramount Chief" position. Although listed as a Paramount Chief, a reference to eighteenth century Garifuna leader, Joseph Satuye, who struggled against the British in St. Vincent, is Aranda, I believe that each of the remaining people see themselves as such. Their affinity for chieftdomhood is that "for men of African descent to strive for male power over and above Europeans or in collusion with European males, by definition leaves women out on the margins. [Black men] in past or contemporary history have not mounted a campaign to destroy the capitalist system, but to share power within the existing paradigm" (Lake 1998:9). In the meantime, each of those Garifuna men aspiring to be paramount chiefs do not take into account that the Garifuna organizations are not homogenous since geography and social relations shape their politics and organizing practices. The Garifuna Nation organizers' narrow sighted suggests that in centralizing the Garifuna organizing, individual organizations power will be diminished.

In probing into reasons behind the creation of the Garifuna Nation, Brigido Cayetano, who supports Ávila's, Reyes', and Guerrero's endeavor, stated that OFRANEH was simply focusing on domestic issues in Honduras but it does not speak for the Garinagu everywhere (personal communication, December 6, 2013). Though their politics and positions certainly differ, both OFRANEH and ODECO are visible and OFRANEH focuses on the Garinagu's land struggle. Third, the Garinagu's articulation of reparation concepts certainly introduces an important discourse. I asked Álvarez if the Garinagu modeled their reparations movement after the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N'COBRA), which African Americans

formed. She replied, “due to the pain, suffering and death the Garinagu endured during the long journey on the high seas to Roatán, our case for reparations is a Garifuna advantage. We are seeking reparations for the injustice and crime committed against our Garifuna people by the British” (R. Álvarez, personal communication, October 1, 2013).

Judging from the Garinagu’s discourse about reparations, it is clear that most leaders have not come to terms with slavery. If they did, they would link the cultural formation of the Garinagu to colonialism. If they participate in the CARICOM Reparations Commission, as Ávila says, the Garinagu must step back and reassess their language and understanding of slavery and the Garinagu’s historical narrative. If they participate, exactly what role would the Garinagu play in this movement? Are the Garinagu from New York City partaking in this movement to get publicity? Have they studied other reparations movements? While these Garinagu may not be truly in sync with CARICOM’s Reparations Commission ideologically, historically, and perhaps politically and vice versa, it must be noted that the Garinagu are beginning to see place and space differently and may be articulating a new Garifuna’s historiography. It is also important to ask if the CARICOM reparations movement is a grassroots effort or an establishment organization led by politicians and notable people.

Conclusion

As I have discussed in this chapter, differences in affiliation and loyalty generate different ideologies that can generate instability as leaders lose sight of their initial goals and make themselves the center of attention (Gecas 2000:99). These factors, in part, have hindered unity among the new Garifuna groups. Implicated in the Garifuna’s intra-cultural dispute is the new leaders’ thirst for personal visibility and attention to specific individual politics. OFRANEH in the meantime struggles to reclaim the Garifuna cultural hearth in Honduras. This

is why the Honduran government continues to target this organization. The government, however, does not target ODECO because this organization conforms to the very forces it struggled against during its early existence. This is why the state rewards Casildo in so many different ways, and why he reciprocates equally. It is through this symbiotic relationship that he secures access and resources. This “fatal coupling of power and difference,” in borrowing Gilmore’s word, is at the center of Honduran social relations (2002). Contrary to the Garifuna leaders in Honduras, in the United States, the Garifuna leaders’ politics is that they will “support those organizations [in Honduras] that are carrying the struggle and are dealing with the land right issue. But, [they] will not have an active participation in that part” (M. Moran, personal communication, May 25, 2010). It is this politic that is governing individual interests, acculturation, and eternal thirst for social mobility that informs the Garifuna leaders’ outlooks toward their territory on Honduras’ north coast and the land struggle.

CHAPTER 5

THE GEOGRAPHY OF RACE IN GARIFUNA EXPERIENCE

Constructing a New Place

Similar to the United States, Honduras is a place “imbued with racialized histories and geographies” (Mollett 2013:1229). Differences, however, exist in their construction and maintenance since the slave “institution varied considerably” culturally and structurally in Latin America and also in the United States in spite of “the outward cultural uniformity of the slave-holding group” (Patterson 1977:418). Slavery in Honduras existed since the 1540s when “the first sizable cargo of 1,000 to 1,500 enslaved Africans [were] brought to the region of Olancho . . . to mine gold for the Spanish” (Chambers 2010:4). Besides existing in the “mining regions of central Honduras,” African captives were also found in several areas along the “North coast, particularly Trujillo, Puerto Caballos (later Puerto Cortés), and San Pedro Sula, where some gold deposits were found. Slavery was officially abolished in 1824” (Chambers 2010:4). Comprising Honduras’ enslaved population were “African-born, creoles, and those imported from other regions of the Americas” (Chambers 2010:4). Citing nineteenth century missionary G. Feurig, anthropologist Edmund T. Gordon states that the term “‘Creole’ was used primarily to designate English Creole speakers of African descent; however, it also named persons of European Amerindian descent who spoke English Creole and were born on the Coast” (1998:40). On Honduras’ north coast “slavery was instituted sporadically” because the region lacked a large plantation economy and was heavily populated by “indigenous groups, Maroon communities, and European (mostly Dutch and English) pirates” (Chambers 2010:4; see also Gordon 1998:33). Due to the absence of a large plantation economy, the Spanish colonizers marginalized the region.

During Latin America's colonial period, Spaniards, like Portuguese, placed an emphasis on "racial 'purity' or unpolluted whiteness," in shaping their presumed racial and culture superiority (Jackson 1976:7), an approach also used in the United States to "normalize the social relations of domination" (Quijano 2005:56). As the colonial regime's underlying principle, it also constructed a "three-level system" comprised not only of blacks and whites, but also of various "mixed" groups such as *Zambos* which was a racial category for the offspring of African and Miskito, *ladino*, and *mulato* in Honduras (Wade 1986:1). Although initially the Spanish Crown used "ladino" as a term "to label subjects of the empire who 'spoke rudiments of the official languages [Castilian Spanish or Vulgar Latin],'" post-colonizers construed it to represent the *mestizo* identity (Euraque 1998:154).

For sociologist Aníbal Quijano, racial segmentation was simply a way of controlling and exploiting indigenous and African people in the form of slavery, indentured servitude or commodity production (2005:57). The mixed groups which the colonial regime invented and recalibrated since the colonial era confined blacks to the lower social strata and elevated the social status of Indians who were initially deemed uncivilized at the onset of colonialism. In geographer David Delaney's assessment of the construction of race in the United States, he explains that the colonial regime's practices illustrate the "centrality of "'place,' or geography" in the construction of race and the formation of racial boundaries (1998:3). The Garinagu were thrust into this process as well. Accounts of the Garinagu's ethnogenesis hold that their ancestors, led by Chief Joseph Chatoyer, struggled fiercely against the British colonizers on St. Vincent rather than submitting to slavery. Chatoyer, whose name is also commonly spelled as Satuye, was killed in battle in March 1795 while "fighting against the English on Dorsetshire Hill" (Young 1971:107). With Chief Chatoyer dead, in 1797 the British removed approximately

2,000 Garinagu from St. Vincent to Balliceaux and then transferred them to their final destination on Roatán Island, a Caribbean island twenty miles off Honduras' north coast (Anderson 2009:3). It is the Garinagu's forced removal from St. Vincent in the eighteenth century that explains their presence on Honduras' north coast and that subjected them to the racism that prevails in this country. In Latin America, European descendants, at least those who see themselves as such, judiciously carried out their forebears' racist practices in, most notably, their unremitting "war on blackness" (Andrews 2004:118) or "ethnic lynching, the process of restoring whiteness by bleaching out black people . . ." (Jackson 1976:1). Guided by their presumed ancestral and cultural superiority, "whites" in Latin America systematically excluded blacks and the indigenous populations from the civilized nation they sought to construct during the post-colonial era because they were not "aesthetically pleasing" (Jackson 1976:7). Similar to other black subjects in other once-colonized regions, the Garinagu are still experiencing such exclusion.

Part of the elites' nation-building project in Honduras entailed injecting, figuratively speaking, white blood into the country's perceived black blood in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries despite the fact that by this period a multitude of identities comprised Honduran society. Luring Europeans to Latin America was the elites' attempt to whiten the population (Andrews 2004:119) and once and for all "throw off the burden of that corporeal malediction" of blackness (Fanon 1986:84). The whitening or *blanquiamiento* process found followers among many Latin American intellectuals and nationalists, most of which believed that the indigenous people vanished through *mestizaje* or miscegenation. The whitening project Quijano states was a way to "'Europeanize'" Indians and "black" (2005:63; see also Mollett 2013:1230). The whitening project was, therefore, a new way of constructing place and seeing

the land. Given these processes, Americas' identities "cannot always be so easily disentangled as locally discrete moments;" it necessitates our understanding of places as "geographical and/or figurative points of contact in this fictive discourse" (Spillers 1991:9). Honduras' society was not impermeable from these processes. In fact, it is the result of these processes.

Black people have been present on Honduras' shores since the sixteenth century despite the elites' efforts to deny their presence in the country's poorly recorded historiography, demography, and human geography. The denial of their presence is especially evident in the country's economic narratives even though African captives free labor but also indigenous generated the conqueror's wealth. Drawing from Merrifield's analysis of place, economically, Honduran politicians in alliance with capitalists from the United States constructed a material landscape "imbued with meaning in everyday place-bound social practices" and continued their forebears' project (1993b:520). Stemming from this mutual landscape construction was a post-colonial modification of the colonial socio-spatial hierarchy in which capitalists introduced the racial ideologies of *mestizo*, *mestizaje*, and *indigenismo* (Euraque 1998:155; Hooker 2005:300; see also Mollett 2013:1230). These ideologies produced disparate racial discourse and racial categories during the formation of the banana plantation in the late nineteenth century and beyond.

Using racist discourse as a means of balancing power relations, historian Darío A. Euraque argues that during the 1920s Honduran oligarchs sought to regain power both politically and economically from American capitalists, "at least in the ideological sphere, by asserting a national unity based on a homogenous Honduran *mestizo* race and excluding, in particular, the West Indian immigrants brought in by the banana companies but also the indigenous north coast Garifuna populations [and Criollos]" (1998:152 emphasis added). While Euraque's argument is

indubitably useful, it is important to recalibrate it because he is not challenging Honduran oligarchs' racist practices per se. Instead, he examines Honduran oligarchs' alienation from the power structure as a cause for their relentless racist practices and discourse. These practices occur because of the contradictions built into capitalism which began during colonialism. Thus, Honduras' local oligarchs during the post-colonial era continued existing racist practices constructed during colonialism. Honduran oligarchs were, therefore, already engaged in racist practices prior to the advent of American capitalists from the United States.

The Development of the Banana Plantation

Contemporary scholars such as historians Glenn A. Chambers, John Soluri, Darío A. Euraque, political scientist Elisavinda Echeverri-Gent, and several others, have examined the development of the banana plantation economy in Central America. I would therefore not belabor the various points on the development of the banana plantation in Honduras. Instead, in this segment, I provide a brief background to situate the Garinagu's experience in the development of the banana plantation in relation to place, land, and race. In 1804, the schooner *Raymond* sailed to New York from Cuba to deliver a cargo of Cuban Red bananas (Soluri 2003:51 emphasis in original). By 1850, J & T Pearsall became one of the main traders importing bananas and other goods from Cuba to the North Atlantic seaports (Soluri 2003:51). American importers also bought bananas from the Dominican Republic (Echeverri-Gent 1992:277). In the aftermath of the United States' Civil War "the number of banana traders increased significantly and Jamaica began to displace Cuba as the main" supplier (Soluri 2003:51). American importers bought their bananas from "native growers either by contract or on an informal open market" (Echeverri-Gent 1992:277). By 1837, traders carried a different type of banana from Martinique to Jamaica, and later to Panamá and the rest of Central America

called Gros Michel (*Musa acuminata*) (Soluri 2003:52). In Honduras, Gros Michel cultivation began on the Bay Islands and the north coast toward the end of the nineteenth century (Chambers 2010:27). Chambers estimates that from 1860 to 1900, “local growers” controlled the banana cultivation and “independent farmers descended from migrants from the department of Olancho” who were geographically concentrated on Honduras’ north coast in the city of La Ceiba (Chambers 2010:27). The farmers “cultivated the banana and sold the fruit to North American merchants who had access to seafaring vessels” (Chambers 2010:27). The Garinagu were also among the local growers.

In my conversations with some Garinagu, they indicated that the banana industries rented land from some Garinagu in Honduras. As I began to probe into the historical development of the banana industry in Honduras, some secondary sources revealed that as early as the 1870s several Garinagu were “banana growers and urban and rural landowners” (Euraque 2003:238). In fact, Euraque’s findings point out that Tela’s archival records state that from the 1910s to 1920s several Garinagu banana planters such as Pascual Valerio “were considered ‘capitalists’” (2003:238). Euraque also states that the Valerios “owned much of the lands occupied by Garifuna and West Indians in the only black neighborhood in Tela, Barrio Las Brisas” (2003:238; 2004:192). Besides some Garinagu becoming “capitalists,” some of them became middle class as a result of working in the banana plantation industry as machinists (S. Irióna, personal communication, March 13, 2012). Since there were Garifuna landowners, how did land concessions, which became central in the Honduran government’s economic policy, impact their status and communities on the north coast? Since the Garinagu are referred to as capitalists, where did they secure the financial capital to purchase land? Did the Garinagu’s political alliance with the Liberal Party in the 1930s, and the massacre of Garinagu in San Juan, Tela on

March 14, 1937 by Honduran soldiers by orders of the Dictator Tiburcio Carías Andino (1933-1948), a National Party member, prompted the Garinagu's reaction to economic development in Honduras? These are important questions requiring further exploration.

Local growers control over the banana production began to change between 1870 and the early part of the twentieth century when Honduran politicians' attention "centered on establishing banana plantations on the North Coast" (Chambers 2010:22). The looming political economy shift in Honduras developed when New Yorker Minor C. Keith was operating Tropical Trading and Transport Company in Costa Rica and The Colombian Land Company and Snyder Banana Company in Panamá. In the early 1890s, "hurricanes destroyed several Boston Fruit Co. in Jamaica," "droughts destroyed other [banana] plantations in Cuba and the Dominican Republic," and "floods ruined Keith's plantations in Costa Rica" (Echeverri-Gent 1992:277-8). Faced with financial crisis, Keith and Bostonian Andrew W. Preston of the Boston Fruit Company joined forces and merged their businesses on May 30, 1899 and formed the United Fruit Company (UFCO) (Echeverri-Gent 1988:46-48; 1992:278). Keith's economic scheme also reached Guatemala. In Guatemala, the government conceived the International Railroad of Central America in 1877. Historian John F. Dosal points out that the United Fruit "built its Guatemalan empire . . . during the first phase of the Liberal reform, when Generals Justo Rufino Barrios (1873-1885), Manuel Lisandro Barillas (1885-1891), and José María Reyna Barrios (1892-1897) "pursued a modernization program that served the interest of the coffee planters" (1993:17). Faced with substantial foreign debts, in 1904 the government reached an agreement with Henry F. W. Nanne, administrator of Keith's Costa Rican Railway. Under this agreement, Keith's company invested and carried through the construction of the railroad line while the Guatemalan government retained ownership of "the railroad tracks" (Opie 2009:13). Part of the

concession also involved Keith's company securing the labor force. Keith procured his workers from "the United States, Jamaica, China, Italy, Germany, England, Ireland, France, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Mexico, and local Guatemalan" meaning *mulatos* and the Garinagu (Opie 2009:17; see also Echeverri-Gent 1988:43). Migrant workers to Guatemala included European Americans and African Americans from Louisiana, Alabama, Texas, Missouri, Ohio, California, the Carolinas, Kentucky, Atlanta, Georgia, and Mississippi. African Americans migrated to escape "gang labor, sharecropping, or plantation work," Jim Crow or just seeking a new place to settle (Opie 2009:19).

Because of land concessions, in 1899, UFCO chose Honduras as an ideal place for its banana production. Hence, Honduras, along with other Central American countries, became a favored place for banana production when compared to Jamaica where securing land concessions was difficult due to the land ownership system established under the British colonial structure (Echeverri-Gent 1992:278). Credited with pursuing the policies that led to attracting foreign capital to Honduras is President Marco Aurelio Soto (1876-1883). His economic and political efforts did not alter the legacy of "social and cultural structured based on a hierarchy" established by the colonial regime which prevails today (Chambers 2010:22). It simply safeguarded it. Soto's successors retained the land concession policy he pursued during his administration. Historians Lester D. Langley and Thomas D. Schoonover state that President Manuel Bonilla (1903-7 and 1911-1913) "fostered alliances with foreign capitalists and envisioned Honduran development as a partnership of the country's land and labor with foreign capital and know-how" (1995:56). Thus, from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, land concessions dominated the country's economic policies.

Bonilla's government "signed Decree No. 99 awarding land concessions to Victor Camors in the Departamento of Colón and on the north coast, which was later transferred to Trujillo Railroad Company a subsidiary of United Fruit Company" (Láinez and Meza 1973:17). From 1900 to 1930, out of fifty-seven land concessions received by the banana industries, "thirty-seven were granted between 1910 and 1920; half of the remaining concessions were given after 1920 and half before 1910" (Euraque 1996:7). UFCO and several foreign-owned banana industries in the region seized the opportunity to acquire land. By 1914, the banana plantation owners "owned 416,500 hectares of land [roughly about 1,029,194 acres]" (Láinez and Meza 1973:20). The cities of Tela and La Ceiba in the Departamento of Atlántida, and Trujillo in the Departamento of Colón, became the major "banana towns on the Caribbean" areas where high concentrations of Garifuna communities resided (Euraque 2003:232). Joining the banana plantation economic bonanza was archaeologist, Doris Zemurray Stone's father (Harrison 2013:53), the Russian Jew immigrant Samuel Zemurray, who had settled in Mobile, Alabama (Chambers 2010:28) and established the Hubbard-Zemurray Company in 1902 which was later renamed Cuyamel Fruit Company (Bucheli 2005:48). Zemurray bought UFCO's shares (shareholding) in 1907 (Euraque 1996:7). As a major leader of the banana plantations, Zemurray wielded considerable influence on Honduras' politics.

Euraque claims that Zemurray's financial support of Honduran politicians in 1911 led to President Miguel Dávila's ouster from power. Zemurray rewarded Dávila's rival, General Manuel Bonilla, with \$100,000 (Euraque 1996:7). Joining the crowd of banana tycoons at the turn of the twentieth century were the Italian brothers, Lucas, Felix, and Joseph Vaccaro. The Honduran government awarded "the Vaccaro Brothers and Company a concession in 1905 to export fruit from La Ceiba in exchange for a promise to build canals in the region served by the

Salado and Porvenir Rivers” but also “jetties, docks, and structures necessary for the development of the region” (Chambers 2010:28). The Vaccaros established Vaccaros Brothers & Company later renamed the Standard Fruit and Steamship Company headquartered at the American Bank Building in New Orleans, Louisiana. Through their company, the Vaccaros exported bananas from the city of La Ceiba to their operational base in New Orleans. Besides the Vaccaros involvement in the banana trade, they were also involved in mahogany production (Lloveras 1945:1). Ultimately, the Vaccaros were selling land in Honduras. In 1945, they sold “one piece known as El Desprecio (The Scorn) consisting of 5,350 manzanas,” which only had about “100 [mahogany] trees” and another “piece, known as ‘Palma Real,’ which consists of 1,408 manzanas” (Lloveras 1945:2). Apparently, Palma Real (Real Palm) had 16,000 mahogany trees before logging began. However, most of them were “exported and quite a number have been burned” (Lloveras 1945:2). The Vaccaros also built Banco Atlántida, Hospital D’Antoni, beer breweries, and several other businesses. By the 1960s, the United Fruit Company, “the quintessence of United States imperialism” controlled Honduras where the “largest landholder” was the banana plantation owner (Nieto 2003:107). From the 1870s to 1970s, many “observers” in the United States considered Honduras to be the “‘banana republic’ par excellence” (Soluri 2005:2). Coined by the United States writer William Sydney (pseudonym, O. Henry) in his 1904 novel, the “banana republic” nation has become synonymous with corruption, underdevelopment, drug trafficking, poverty, violence, and political instability (Soluri 2005:2).

In Honduras as elsewhere in Central America, “land [became] a *means* of production in the sense that a production process literally flows through the soil itself. Under capitalism, this means that the soil becomes a conduit for the flow of capital through production . . .” (Harvey 1985:91 emphasis in original). The exchange value which land gains under capitalism demands

certain conditions, namely political access and a labor force. Facilitating access in Honduras was a weak state marred by political instability as demonstrated by frequent coup d'états and corruption. Given the flagrant corruption entrenched in the Honduran political system, collusion with local officials, and the host of dictators running the country, the United Fruit system established,

dependent economies with semicolonial characteristics. “The Octopus,” as the company was known in the region, manipulated governments at will, meddled in their political fights, provided financial assistance to candidates of its choice, and fixed the scales of favor of whoever offered it the most attractive conditions. It was a state within a state. (Nieto 2003:108)

These conditions yielded favorable results for American capitalists such as “concessions and privileges outside the law: tax exemptions, evasion of tariffs and duties, free import and export of earnings, and the payment of a minuscule percentage of its multimillion dollars in profits” (Nieto 2003:108; see also Euraque 1996:6-7; see also Timms 2007:67). The weakening of the state became advantageous for American capitalists. The building of Banco Atlántida and Hospital D’Antoni by the Vaccaros modernized Honduras and politically paralyzed Honduran elites. Capitalists used this practice in Honduras throughout the early twentieth century and beyond. The northerners (Keith and Preston) and southerners (Vaccaros brothers and Zemurray) understood Honduras’ political disorder and benefitted substantially from land availability and many other incentives as noted by Nieto but also echoed by Euraque and geographer Benjamin F. Timms. I consider the presence of American capitalists in the region to be an extension of economic imperialism following the decline of the plantation economy in the southern United States as a result of the abolition of slavery in 1865. The Honduran government’s national economic policies together with global economic forces shaped the reproduction of Honduras’ north coast and the fragmentation of Garinagu culture.

The banana plantations, which Honduran capitalists initially ignored because of their focus on the New York and Honduras Rosario Mining Company became an integral component of the country's economy mostly in the early twentieth century (Euraque 1996:5). This suggests that the "construction and transformation" of place explains how the interconnection between social relations and the material landscape is responsible for the expansion of capitalism across space and the socio-conditions created within this system (Merrifield 1993b:520). For Honduran capitalists, the construction and transformation of place tilted the power structure and intensified their already racist practices because they saw themselves economically and politically marginalized as Euraque argues. Therefore, they perceived their nation-building project to be meaningful and necessary and their racial discourse central to achieving their goals. Massey's argument of relational construction of place and its interconnection to the global power-geometries then assures us that "local places are not simply always the victims of the global; nor are they always politically defensive redoubts *against* the global. For places are also the movements through which the global is constituted, invented, coordinated, and produced" (Massey 2004:11 emphasis in original). This was true during the epoch of the banana plantations and later and it is true today. The production of local places also created what David Harvey calls the "geography of difference," which in this case consisted of the convergence of different excluded ethnic groups (1996:334).

The Geography of Difference

Echeverri-Gent argues that West Indians comprised the majority of the banana plantation labor force in Honduras whereas the involvement of the Garinagu workers was smaller (1992:279). However, Euraque maintains that the Garinagu were the "first stable black population employed by the banana companies" and that this group "remained critical to banana-

company employment much later than many commentators suggest” (2003:239; see also Mollett 2006:90). Euraque’s observation but also Mollett’s seems sensible for several reasons. First, the Garinagu in Guatemala have been exposed to American capitalists who were undoubtedly better aware of the Garinagu’s geography in Honduras than were the Honduran government and local elites (Euraque 1998:162). Second, in Honduras, the Garifuna communities were strategically located in areas where the banana plantations flourished. Third, the banana plantation owners preferred Garinagu because of their “industriousness” (Anderson 1997:30) a notion “rooted in racial ideologies that encourage black workers in tropical environments” (Mollett 2006:90). Yet, the Honduran government described the Garinagu as “‘perpetually indolent and lazy’ with regards to farming their own land” (Mollett 2006:90). The representation of the Garinagu was another way of pushing them from their land, a practice very familiar to them. According to Mark Anderson, the British colonizers’ “rhetoric of representation” in St. Vincent “seized upon the blackness of the Garifuna to question their purity and legitimacy-their nativeness . . .” (1997:31). England states that the British used this representation “to justify attempts to remove them [the Garinagu] from their lands on the windward side of the island, resulting in the Carib War of 1796 in which the Garifuna were defeated” (1999:10). The Honduran government and elites use similar tactic.

In addition to the Garinagu, another group of black people in Honduras who formed an integral part of the banana plantation labor force are the Criollos who have populated the Bay Islands since the seventeenth century (George 1952:359). Joining the Garinagu and the remaining black workers were *ladinos*, *mestizos*, or *mulatos*, all of whom share the same physical characteristics. Foreign workers already employed in the railroad project in Guatemala received notification that “they could find work on railroad construction projects in Honduras,

Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Costa Rica” (Opie 2009:21). This spatial mobility suggests that there was a disposable labor surplus from which planters recruited without necessarily drawing from the pool of workers located abroad. However, planters might have engaged in continual recruitment because of workers’ persistent strikes throughout the banana plantations. It is well-documented that working conditions on railroads and banana plantations were inhumane. Banned for many years in Honduras, Ramón Amaya Amador’s novel *Prisión Verde* or Green Prison, sketches a vivid picture of working and living conditions in the banana plantations ranging from overcrowded living quarters, hazardous exposure to agrochemicals, poor wages, and racism (2006;see also Soluri 2005).

To illustrate one of many examples of what Amaya describes as inhumane working conditions in the banana industry, I cite an interview with a 70-year-old Garifuna woman I met in Guadalupe, Honduras in 2006. Catalina Sanabria is an illiterate woman who worked for 20 years in the *empacadora* or packing plant in the banana industry in Olanchito and Coyoles, Colón. Two Garinagu women including Catalina and several *mestiza* women washed and weighed bananas (C. Sanabria, personal communication, August 18, 2006). According to historian John Soluri, the United Fruit Company began “using women” in packing plants in Honduras in the early 1960s (2005:187). The banana industry assigned women to sort out the bad bananas from the good ones. Companies such as Chiquita refer to the good or unblemished ones as ““specials”” (Soluri 2005:187). The workers treated the special ones with “chemicals to prevent fungal rots before being weighed, stickered, and packed into boxes” (Soluri 2005:187). Some of the chemicals the banana companies such as United Fruit Company used were Dithane. It then added chlorine “to the water tanks” in 1965 to control fungus and switched to a “systematic fungicide (Thiabendazole)” in 1968 (Soluri 2005:187). Neither the union

representatives in Honduras pressured the banana industry owners to provide their workers with protective gears nor the owners made a gesture to do so (Soluri 2005:187). At the time of my interview with Catalina, she reported that she suffers from headaches. She also lost movement on three fingers. She only has movement in her thumbs and one index finger. When she retired from the banana company she worked for, which name she did not disclose, the company gave her 3,000 Lempiras (\$142). Because the company did not give her a pension, she survives with help from her sons (C. Sanabria, personal communication, August 18, 2006).

Besides the inhumane working conditions, black people faced blatant racism from whites and the Central American *mulato* population. Honduran oligarchs resented black people receiving “preferential employment,” and competition for wages increased as the number of West Indians recruited by the banana companies from British colonies burgeoned (Euraque 1998:159). Originating from “Barbados, British Guiana, Grand Cayman, St. Vincent, St. Kitts, Leeward islands, Trinidad and British Honduras,” by 1929 there were “10,000 West Indian workers” laboring on banana plantations in Honduras (Echeverri-Gent 1988:60;1992:283). The banana plantation owners inserted a wedge between the local and West Indian workers in that they used the latter as “strike breakers or scabs, thus facilitating an enduring suspicion of and animosity toward West Indian labor by Hondurans” (Chambers 2010:8). Culturally, West Indians’ identity differed from *ladinos* and the Garinagu and they “fought to maintain their identities as fruit company workers, Protestants, and English speakers” (Chambers 2010:12). Their “outsider” status challenged the notions of “white only” immigrants, and escalated the ruling class’ existing racist practices (Chambers 2010:12). Thus, the anti-black sentiment that unfolded in Honduras in the 1920s and later, “which traditionally targeted the Garifuna and other Afro-mestizo populations, was the initial reason for the tense relations among locals and West

Indians” (Chambers 2010:3). Certainly, the economic conditions and hostile environment created by the Honduran politicians pitted the various ethnic groups against each other, fomented distrust, and prevented them from understanding the root causes of the tense relations that Chambers addresses.

The ethnic segmentation Chambers addresses resonates with what professor of law Michelle Alexander’s observation in the aftermath of the Bacon’s Rebellion⁶ in 1675 in the United States when members of the plantocracy “extended special privileges to poor whites . . . to drive a wedge between them and black slaves” (2010:25). This wedge Alexander points out “effectively eliminated . . . future alliances between black slaves and poor whites” (2010:25). In Honduras, the wedge the Honduran politicians created between the Garinagu and West Indians did not always work. For example, West Indian dock workers and black activists Roy Gayle Green and Lloyd Sentine’s important role in the “local committees” of the 1954 strike challenges the tense relations that Chambers talks about (Euraque 2004:204). Their activism suggests that the Honduran politicians and intellectuals social scheme was not completely fulfilled since there was some degree of cultural intercourse taking place among the various groups.

Working and living conditions, demands for back wages, and the provision of health services were the central reasons for the workers’ strikes. The convergence of various ethnic groups, the Garinagu, *ladinos*, and West Indians undoubtedly contributed to the diffusion of political ideas that ignited the workers’ movement. Influenced by the formation of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) which Jamaican black nationalist Marcus Mosiah Garvey formed in 1914, and regional leftist groups such as the Frente Democrático

⁶ The Bacon’s Rebellion refers to a rebellion carried it out by Nathaniel Bacon, a “white property owner in Jamestown, Virginia, who managed to unit slaves, indentured servants, and poor whites in a revolutionary effort to overthrow the planter elite” in 1675 (Alexander 2010:24). Uniting this group was part of Bacon’s scheme “to seize Native American lands . . . to acquire more property” (Alexander 2010:24). When members of the plantocracy “refused to provide militia support” to Bacon, he fought back (Alexander 2010:24).

Revolucionario Hondureño (The Honduran Revolutionary Democratic Front) in Honduras, West Indian workers saw their racial identity central in forming a cohesive labor movement (Opie 2009:7). Although these organizations influenced Honduras' labor movement, it was black people, Sara Irióna observes, who first initiated several movements in Honduras culminating with the 1954 general strike in Honduras (personal communication, March 29, 2012) when "40,000 workers . . . paralyzed not only the banana company operations, but also all other sectors associated with the export economy" (Euraque 1996:71). The 1954 strike was successful, anthropologist Adrienne Pine claims, because it "changed the face of labor relations there [Honduras] for many years afterward" (2008:16). Irióna claims that despite black people initiating the labor movement, the Garinagu and other black people in general, did not articulate a separate political and economic agenda (personal communication, March 29, 2012), although an estimated "90% [of black people] were found in the banana-producing coastal departments of Cortés, Atlántida, Colón, and Islas de la Bahía, [Bay Islands]" (Stokes 1950:16). Instead, the Garinagu organized as a "political movement at that time" (S. Irióna, personal communication, March 29, 2012). A host of factors contribute to workers' struggle.

First, "the central point of tension between capital and labor lies in the workplace and is expressed in struggles over the work process and the wage rate" (Harvey 1985:84). Class struggle therefore is an outcome of capitalism because it commands among many things "land," "money power," and labor force to make capitalism "place dependent" (Merrifield 1993b:521-522). Because it is place dependent, capitalism is "vulnerable to political contestation," imputed or "inscribed in place" (Merrifield 1993b:521-22; see also Massey 2004:11). Local "resistance and fightback (i.e. fending off in some way the 'global' forces) or in terms of building alternatives" characterize these social forces (Massey 2004:11). Local resistance of the

Garinagu, West Indians, and *mulatos* informs us that capitalists generally forget about human agency because their relationship with the state shields them by averting any conflict that interferes with the flow of capital.

Second, it is true what Merrifield argues that place forms through social struggle which becomes a barrier for capitalism (1993b:103). Thus, the “dominant form of [place], that of the centres of wealth and power, endeavors to mound the [places] it dominates . . . and it seeks, often by violent means, to reduce the obstacles and resistance it encounters there” (Lefebvre 1991:49). It is within these processes that racism in Honduras exacerbated the situation between workers and domestic and foreign capitalists. From racist practices stemming from the domestic and global economic forces, one finds that racial identity also shaped black workers’ collective efforts challenging the orthodox “Marxist binary model of a class struggle between capitalist and proletariat” (Wilson 2000:68). Wilson is on point in his assessment that class is not the only factor that we should consider in our analysis of class struggle, identities must be also included. As political geographer Kevin Cox also asserts, “identities are multiple” (2002:147). Class is not, therefore, the only unifying force among workers; race must be filtered into discussions because as Laura Pulido argues our experiences are racialized. Based on this understanding, differences in time and space generate geographical variations in terms of the construction of race (Pulido 2002:763). Race is indeed a social construct that has defined human interaction and shaped our frame of reference of who we are as a society.

The Anti-Black Sentiment and a New Cultural Identity

Citing Francisco Scarano, Chambers states that “the historical experiences of people of African descent have often been buried beneath a homogenizing discourse of national unity in a popular undercurrent of anti-black intellectual thought” (2010:9). Chambers further indicates

that the West Indians experience has been “submerged beneath an ‘all-inclusive’ nationalizing agenda, but also through the homogenization of blackness in the literature that emphasizes the Garifuna experience above all others” (2010:9). Consequently, because the Garinagu have been present in Honduras before their West Indian counterparts, the Garinagu “bore the brunt of anti-black sentiment and continue to experience racism and prejudice that marginalizes them within Honduran society politically, socially, and economically” (Chambers 2010:9). Euraque’s analysis of Honduran politicians’ economic policy in the 1920s and 1930s agrees with Chambers’ assessment.

Honduran politicians shifted their attention to passing rigorous “immigration laws” in 1929 and 1934 requiring immigrants “to deposit \$2,500 when entering the country” (Euraque 1998: 152). President Miguel Paz Barahona (1925-1929) fueled existing racist discourse by proclaiming in the 1920s that Honduras “needed ‘serene races’” (Euraque 1998:158; 2003:244). For Barahona, blackness represented social and cultural disorder. Correcting this social ill required not only reinvigorating the state’s racist practices, but also echoing racist beliefs in borrowing from Blaut’s analysis, Europeans’ “biological” superiority (1992:299). Denigrating black people justified many “anti-labor” laws passed and introduced to the Honduran congress in the 1920s (Euraque 1998:152). The intent of such laws was to characterize Honduras’ society as strictly *mestizo* and thus advance a “fictitious national image of racial and ethnic homogeneity” (Mollett 2006:79). This social construct came to represent a new identity befitting to the elites’ social and political agenda. Barahona’s successor, President Vicente Mejía Colindres (1929-1933), “institutionalized” various racist policies linked to the Agrarian Reform Law of 1924 (Euraque 1998:158). Under this law, the exporting of Europeans to Honduras would whiten what Honduran politicians perceived to be a dark population. Members of the Liberal Party,

which many Garinagu blindly support, complemented their Agrarian Reform Law by “contracting J.H. Komor, a British subject, to promote ‘white immigration’” (Euraque 1998:158). Instead of Europeans migrating to Honduras, Lebanese, Palestinians, and Syrians became the new migrants and the “dominant commercial elite” to this day (Euraque 1998:161). Jews too migrated and are today part of the dominant elite as well. Although Honduran oligarchs’ plans to whiten the country did not materialize, they still equate “the nation with one particular identity” while excluding others, namely black people, who they viewed as a hindrance to the nation-building project (Medina Kroshus 1997:760). The Honduran oligarchs had to perceive blacks as subhumans to exclude them from the nation-building project. Their perception derived from their ideology which in turned shaped their practices.

The Honduran politicians’ racist practices were their way of purging blackness from what they construed to be an ideal *mestizo* nation. Socially, the *mestizo* construct came to represent Latin America society and the national identity by eliminating black people and erasing their “historical and cultural contributions” (Rosa 1996:276). Academically, *mestizo* like *mestizaje* came to represent a theoretical framework for white scholars, in particular, studying Latin America society (Rosa 1996:276). Similar to white scholars, for the Honduran oligarchs, their *mestizo* framework excluded black people “by notions of *mestizaje*, the idea” of conjuring up “a unique people through particular forms of racial and cultural mixture” and imagining a culture comprised only of European ancestry (Gordon 1998:121 emphasis added). The brown-skinned person was thus deemed aesthetically pleasing to the nation’s architects. Under this rationale, the Honduran politicians and intellectuals “rendered” black people “invisible” (Hooker 2005:301). This invisibility prevails today.

Anti-immigration laws together with racist language and Honduran politicians' racist policies found support among the country's elites. For example, López Pineda, owner of *El Sol* newspaper, called on the Ku Klux Kan (KKK), a white terrorist group from the United States, for assistance in a national whitening project of the 1930s (Euraque 1998:159). Evidently, Pineda was ignorant of the fact that the KKK did not consider people like him to be of European ancestry either. However, because he perceived himself to be "white," he thought the KKK would aide him in his cause since both groups could establish a mutual agreement based on their common vision: to eradicate black people and reinforce white supremacy. Among some of the intellectuals who agreed with Honduran politicians' racist discourse included Froilán Turcios, Ramón Rosa, and Alfonso Guillén Zelaya. Turcios (1875-1943) supported the state's racist policies and spoke of the "danger of racial mixture" whereas Rosa supported the migration of Europeans to Honduras (Euraque 1998:159; 1998:160; 2003:243). For Zelaya (1887-1947), the presence of people of African descent in Honduras not only "displaced Hondurans," but worse still increased the risk of Honduras becoming "a nation of *mulattos* for years to come" (Mollett 2006:90 emphasis added). Although Honduran elites developed a penchant for a phenotype closely resembling "whiteness," it seems that this approximation did not satisfy Zelaya's representation of the white society he envisioned (Jackson 1976:4). Instead, he decried it because it did not represent the white society that the Honduran elites sought to create.

Besides *mestizaje*, Honduran elites conjured up *indigenismo* and incorporated it into the racial discourse. Although the Honduran state did not afford the indigenous population equal rights, much less view them as humans, Indians and the narrative of *indigenismo* nevertheless came to represent "paradigmatic symbols of national identity" (Hooker 2005:301) and "the ancestral spirit of the nation" (Gordon 1998:121). Indians then became aesthetically pleasing.

Having satisfied the prescribed physical criteria, the dominant culture in Honduras deemed the Indians' humanity comparable to that of Europeans, although this was not always the case.

According to Isidro Chávez,

during the period of independence, the Honduran legislation differentiated between two indigenous groups, the Indians of the south, center and west comprised by Lencas and Mayans, and Mayans Chorti and the Indians from the forest [selvatico] area located on the north coast and currently in the Departamentos of Yoro, Olancho, Colón, and Gracias a Dios. The first ones appeared sparsely in 19th century legislation to totally disappear in the present century due to progressive loss of their indigenous languages and to the accelerated process of ladinization. It has not yet ended. This absorption into the mestizo culture provoked the absence of protective laws of their land, languages, and cultures without the treatment and the exploitation to which they were subjected stop. The so-called forest tribes [tribus selvaticas] in the Honduran legislation are comprised of the indigenous groups who were not ruled by the Spaniards or were not reduced by short or interrupted periods. These tribes are the Xicaques or the Tolupanes, the Payas or Pech, the Sumus, Tawakas, the Miskitos, the Sambos, and the black Garifunas. (personal communication, April 24, 2010)

Indeed, the so-called forest tribes or "*indios selváticos*" (forest Indians) was a late nineteenth century label referred largely to the Miskito inhabitants of the Honduran Mosquitia" (Mollett 2006:89). Through a "religious missions led by the Moravians [missionary] and the government-sponsored Spanish education, the state sought to 'elevate [civilize]'" the savage Indians (Mollett 2006:89; see also Césarie 1972:18). The *mestizaje* and *indigenismo* construct then came to represent the national racial discourse in constructing what Honduran politicians perceived to be a new cultural reality. Within these racial parameters and a sea of hypocrisy, the architects of the new cultural identity safely purged blackness from their conceived nation, at least in the politicians and elites' mind. Hence, in 1926, the Honduran elites solidified their nation-building project when they made the Lempira the country's national currency (Euraque 2003:229). Considered by the elites to be "an indigenous chieftain who died fighting the Spaniards in the 1520s," although there is no adequate "evidence for Lempira's historic

existence,” he came to symbolize the new valiant society (Euraque 2003:229). Bureaucrats commissioned a portrait of Lempira and distributed copies of leaflets with his image to *mulato* laborers on the banana plantations who, surely, were more concerned with surviving inside the *Green Prison* than with the elites’ racist practices (Euraque 2003:229-230).

Nonetheless, the passage of legislation naming Lempira as the nation’s hero in 1926 framed a new cultural identity. For example, the state named “avenues, schools, stadiums” Lempira as a way to shape place identity (Euraque 2003:231). Lempira’s passage also transformed consumption patterns with the naming of “coffee and cigarette brand names” (Euraque 2003:231). To produce the ideal image of this fictitious indigenous hero, Lempira’s image has been continuously altered. During the early twentieth century, the elites constructed his image as

homely, short, and naked except for a loincloth, wearing a headdress with three upright feathers in front over short hair. On later coins his head is in profile, his expression is more dignified, and his shoulders are covered. In recent decades, on paper currency the feathers have disappeared from his headband, his hair has become longer, and he has had a look of innocent idealism of him. (Pine 2008:11)

Today, the dominant culture plasters, figuratively speaking, this fictitious indigenous chieftain on most Honduran souvenirs and July 20th is a national holiday. During this holiday, *mestizos* organize competitions about who would earn the coveted title of “*la india bonita* (the prettiest Indian girl) and *el indio guapo* (the handsomest Indian boy)” (Pine 2008:10 emphasis in original). Drawing from Andy Merrifield analysis of space, the Honduran elites’ post-colonial practices suggest that “imagery, too, may centre around symbolic representations of landscape (monuments, landmarks) which, while put in place through dominant spatial practices, become imbued with meaning in daily life” (1993b:525). Through these practices, the elites imposed their norms and values on the masses in post-colonialism and forced them to see blackness “as a

threat to the ‘*mestizo*’ nation,” reinforcing extant terms such as *negro* and *moreno* not only on the Garinagu but black people as a whole (Euraque 2003:231 emphasis added). In this manner, the nation-building project was a means to disempower blacks and reinforcing socio-spatial boundaries. What the Honduran state and elites’ practices signify is that ideologies feed practices and practices maintain ideologies.

The creation of the Lempira served various purposes. Honduran elites created a new socio-spatial hierarchy by manufacturing a mythical political discourse of a strong nation amid economic and political paralysis. Their actions shifted attention from the poverty affecting the country and workers’ exploitation in the banana plantations. Drawing from Wilson’s analysis of Black experience in the United States, the Honduran elites racialized the working class’s identity preventing blacks including the Garinagu and *mulatos* “from seeing their socio-conditions differently” (2002:36). This social segmentation allowed Honduran politicians to frame a national identity. In borrowing from Cox’s analysis of the construction of nation, I define the construction of race in Honduras as a “labor process,” which makes racial categories an integral component for its survival (2002:203). Given these conditions, capitalism “installs a regime of extreme material insecurity, a struggle for material advantage, and an enmeshing of people in geographically extended webs of market exchange: a world of labor migrations, imports, exports, financial flows, geographically expanding markets everywhere and for everything” (Cox 2002:190). Echoing Lefebvre’s theory on the social production of space, geographer James Tyner maintains that space “is produced through the interactions of ideas (or discourses) and practices” reflecting power and ideology as well as values (2006:64). In Honduras, capitalism has been a key factor in shaping national identity in relation to land and several aspects of the society. The Honduran oligarchs’ practices framed a *mestizo* national identity which prevails to

this day, and they based their project in material insecurity compounded by their forbears' racist practices during the colonial era.

Perceptions of Race

Despite overwhelming evidence about race stemming from capitalism, it is not generally understood to be a social construct. It is instead “conceptualized as transhistorical, essentially corporeal, or allegorical or symbolic” (McKittrick and Woods 2007:7; Wilson 2002:34). It is because of this conceptualization that “black geographies disappear – to the margins or to the realm of the unknowable” (McKittrick and Woods 2007:7). Most people in Honduras see race as an offshoot of natural forces and racism as a normal social practice. Mario Moran states,

I know that when I was growing up [in Honduras], there were three races: yellow, white, and black – that’s what I was taught as a child . . . until I came to the United States December ’69, and until I started going to school here in America, whites called me black and blacks –there was no such thing as African- Americans. We were blacks. But, blacks who were born here used to call me foreigner because . . . I didn’t speak English at that time and I have a name like Mario Moran. As Richard Pryor would say “what kind of name is that for a nigger?” Anyway, now, when you have been exposed to that – I knew that I was black, but I have never been discriminated and I’ve heard the term discrimination until I got to America. It wasn’t until I got here that I got to understand that we were discriminated in Honduras. (personal communication, June 6, 2009)

Moran, an inner-circle member of New York City’s Garifuna middle class, is not alone in believing that he was not discriminated against in Honduras. While researching in the Bronx in 2010, an acquaintance invited me to eat traditional Garifuna food at her in-laws’ apartment in the public housing projects in the South Bronx. Sitting quietly in the living room consuming my meal, stories about living and growing up in the city of La Ceiba dominated the conversation. At some point, the conversation turned to partying. A Garifuna woman in her early to mid-sixties seized the moment. She stood up and proudly declared “I went to dance with my white [*mulatos*] friends in a dancehall in La Ceiba in the ‘60s where *morenos* were not welcomed, yes,

me, yes, me,” pounding her chest (field note, May 30, 2010 emphasis added). Her declaration did not represent an indictment of racist practices in Honduras or their connection to the Garinagu’s dispossession from their land. Instead, she described it as if dancing at a segregated dancehall with her “white” friends was a privilege that only she had the honor to experience.

Neither Moran’s nor the elderly lady’s narratives imply that they never experienced racism in Honduras. What their narratives reveal is that dominant socio-spatial practices shaped their frame of reference in a way that prevented them from adequately contextualizing racist practices. As such, in borrowing Wilson’s words, they do not link “race-connected practices” associated with social-spatial boundaries (2002:54). Not understanding race-connected practices makes it difficult but not impossible to develop “critical consciousness” (Freire 2000:35). This is due in part to the fact that Garinagu writers, in drawing from hooks’ analysis, have not produced a body of “critical cultural analysis” that interrogates the representation of blackness (1990:4). If the Garinagu would have produced critical work, the Garinagu may have developed a different discourse about the politics of race, and might have been more vigilant and critical, although some are. Engaging in critical consciousness means challenging the status quo and “search[ing] for self-affirmation” (Freire 2000:36). Lacking critical consciousness construes race-centered practices and discourses to be an inescapable reality and accepting myth to be a reality. In so doing, “We make false starts because we have been programmed to depend on white models or white interpretations of non-white models, so we don’t even ask the correct questions, much less begin to move in a correct direction” (Bambara 1970:133). Because we have come to depend on these models as scholar and activist Toni Cade Bambara argues, the Garifuna elderly woman, Moran, and many others see racism as something primordial. Race and racism are seen as normal. It is, therefore, the normalization of racism and its maintenance through ideology and a

host of social practices that prevent most Garinagu from being able to see and understand it as a social construct impacting their humanity and shaping their discourses. In their view, racism becomes an unquestionable development which is best left unchallenged. Consequently, being a patriotic Honduran is more important for Garinagu than critically addressing hegemonic spatial practices.

In keeping racial discourse unchallenged, race in contemporary Honduran society has come to rule every-day interactions. For instance, *mulatos*, *indios*, and *ladinos*, as they are referred to in Honduras more so than *mestizo* and *blanco*, generally address the Garinagu and black people in general derogatively as *negra*, *negrita*, or *morena* (black, little black, or black-skinned) denoting feminine and *negro*, *negrito*, “*negron*,” or *moreno* (black, little black man, big black, or black-skinned) denoting masculine. As a colonial term, *moreno* originates from “*moro*, the word for Moor, and it was ‘originally used, as it is still, to describe a black horse’” (O’Farrill 2012:29 emphasis in original). By the sixteenth century “‘*moreno* became the general term used to refer to blacks and mulattoes alike’ – and thus a category for identities threatening to colonial and Christian power in the Spanish-controlled Americas” (O’Farrill 2012:29 emphasis in original). As for the diminutive suffix “*-ito*, added to *negro*, renders *negrito* . . . ’ a common racialized epithet’ suggestive of an ‘endearment between white and [blacks],’ one that is ‘never free of the infantilizing, patronizing connotation that ‘little’ carries when applied to an adult black male’” but also black woman (O’Farrill 2012:24 emphasis in original). *Mulatos* addressing black people with words ending in *ito* or *ita* characterize these pejoratives to be endearing despite the fact that *mulatos* themselves are blacks. In the United States, many Garinagu including some holding socially progressive views occasionally refer to other Garinagu as *morenos* or *morenas*. Some claim using these terms out of anger whereas others employ it in everyday language in a way that

resembles African Americans use of nigga or nigger. Most Garinagu and African Americans are unaware of the terms' colonial roots and racist implications because of the normalization of language; hence, many Garinagu do not see the social harm and perpetuation of oppression these terms cause.

At the heart of the Garinagu's use of *moreno* or *morena* or any other disparaging terms is that they are uninformed that the "representations of the African Diaspora history and culture have assumed a binary formation – us and the Others – a residual construction surviving from the master/slave heritage" (Clark 1991:42). Consequently, most Garinagu have not even begun deconstructing representations designed to promote and reinforce domination which in Kobayashi and Peake's analysis of race would help the Garinagu contextualize racism. For these scholars, racism represents space of white supremacy and the "location of social privilege" (2000:383) and blacks as the Other (hooks 1990:3). Lacking this understanding only reinforces the master/slave heritage that African diaspora scholar Vévé A. Clark articulates and, of course, the domination that bell hooks addresses.

Some Garinagu challenge racial discursive productions. For instance, Miguel Santos who is looking into building luxury hotels in La Ceiba once his legal struggle over his family land is over challenges *mulatos* addressing black people as a whole as *negrón* instead of engineer or *licenciado*. In Honduras, a college or university graduate with a Bachelor of Arts degree is addressed as *licenciado (a)*, although the word also means lawyer. Honduran fascination with higher education titles has become a cultural trait expressing a high value for social status. However, even if a black person has the same educational credentials as a *mulato*, generally a black person is greeted as *negrón* or *negra* rather than *licenciada (o)*. These social markers disempowered Garinagu and black people in general because they signify exclusion including

from their land and the maintenance of the socio-spatial hierarchy. As Santos's actions show, exclusionary practices become "terrains of resistances" in borrowing Routledge's words (1993: xvii) suggesting that place is the embodiment of "real human activities" (Merrifield 1993a:530). The construction of racial discourse concomitant with other conditions reinforced colonial discourse associated with the banana plantation economy.

Other examples illustrating how racial discourse prevails in contemporary Honduran society are manifested in the sphere of mass consumption and the Garinagu representation by Honduran politicians. Honduras businessman, landowner, and biofuels leader Miguel Facussé Bargum named one of his snack lines, Zambos, a word used during the colonial-era to racially categorize people of mixed African and Indian parentage. The snack packaging shows a monkey preparing to eat a sweet plantain whereas another of Bargum's snacks features the slogan "Salvajes del Trópico" or Savages of the Tropic (figure 5.1). Ironically, the latter snack is



Figure 5.1 Dinant Corporation's Zambos Snack Division
Source: Dinant Corporation, 2014

made from cassava, a crop the Garinagu have always used for making *ereba*, a staple food in their diet. Yet, for many years, *mulatos* denigrated the Garinagu for consuming *ereba*. Today, Facussé Bargum has appropriated much of the Garinagu's land and cassava and peppered his products with racist narratives. Facussé Bargum's action implies two things. First, racism not "only operates through culture, it is also the expression of structural conflict. Individuals are actions in a power structure. Power can be used to reproduce racism . . ." (Essed 1991:viii). Second, the Zambo image in Facussé Bargum's product speaks of the reproduction of racism because it reinforces extant depictions of black people in the so-called *mestizo* society's imagination and reinscribes the image of the savage, wild, and barbarian. In this manner, the depiction of the Other through the imagery of product advertising represents how *mestizos* employ racist practices to keep alive the self-presumed whiteness of Honduran elites.

The second example represents the deployment of racism in Honduran politicians' discourse. In the aftermath of the 2009 coup d'état, President Lobo Sosa told the Garinagu while attending their April 12 ancestral celebration in the Garifuna community of Sambo Creek "*Sigan Bailando y Bebiendo Guifiti que esa es Su Cultura no la Dejen*" (continue dancing and drinking your guifiti because that is your culture and do not let it go) (I. Centeno, personal communication, April 17, 2010 emphasis added). E. Roy Cayetano, editor of *The People's Garifuna Dictionary Dimureiágei Garifuna* and Ruben Reyes author of *Garüdia: Garifuna Trilingual Dictionary*, spell guifiti as gífiti (2005:45; 2014). Gífiti meaning bitters is a Garifuna drink traditionally prepared by community elders for medicinal purposes and personal consumption. Using any type of liquor, Garifuna elders infused the drink with two types of anise, cloves, chamomile, nutmeg, and pieces of the *contrigo* tree, which gives the drink its bitter

flavor. Yet, in the last thirty years, commodification has stripped gífiti of its original cultural meaning in a similar way to hip hop in the United States and Rastafari in Jamaica.

The Garifuna middle class did not interrogate Sosa's patronizing and paternalistic discourse. Instead, they seem to see it as a recognition and affirmation of Garifuna culture, an uncritical vantage point which seems to be an accepted trend among most Garinagu. Activist Trujillo sees Sosa's statement as a matter of individual interpretation and the fact that Honduran presidents "lack eloquence" (personal communication, May 24, 2010). For Moran, Sosa's statement signaled incorporating the Garifuna's culture into capitalism or as he maintains "taking the culture to tourism, which is how I have envisioned it because that was the other things that I have envisioned was the fact with us to participate, it would have to be power – once again, was the culture" (personal communication, May 25, 2010). Moran seems unconcerned about the white gaze and the objectification of the Garifuna people as illustrated in figure 5.2. This figure shows two Québécois tourists in the city of La Ceiba one hugging a Garifuna young boy while the other gazes. Sharing Moran's perspective, Benitez indicates, "personally, for me what he [Lobo Sosa] said is not a lie. We all know that for Garinagu gífiti is consumed in every celebration. So, why do we have to get offended by the truth?" (personal communication, May 25, 2010). For Moran and other Garinagu, Lobo Sosa's words are devoid of racism and not connected to the Garinagu's dispossession from their land. They treat his racist discourse as presenting a window of economic opportunity for commodifying the Garifuna cultural traditions into a profitable spectacle of consumption, which is already the case. Israel Centeno states, "*pobre aquellos Garifunas que asistieron al Circo donde los payasos fueron ellos y los duenos del Circo fueron los Blancos Explotadores*" (poor Garinagu who attended the circus where the

clowns were them and the circus owners the white exploiters) (personal communication, April 17, 2010 emphasis added).

Evidently, Moran, Benitez and many Garinagu believe that the “mantle of invisibility,” in borrowing hooks’ assessment does not exist (1995:35). And, if it does not exist, it means that the “mark of oppression” has been eliminated by sheer magic (hooks 1995:35). Their compliance and complacency show that the Garifuna middle class, and most Garinagu in general, resist critical imagination in addressing racism, whether institutionalized or not, because they fear upsetting the status quo. As a result, most Garinagu with the exception of organizations such as OFRANEH have failed to equate their displacement from their land with racism. Figure 5.3 shows a banner that reads, “The dispossession of the Garifuna people from the land and the territory is racism.” The Garifuna protesters carried this banner during their march in



Figure 5.2 Québécois Tourists in the City of La Ceiba
Source: Courtesy of Dawn Paley, 2010

Tegucigalpa in 2011. Organized by OFRANEH, the Garifuna people protest was in response to the dispossession of a Garifuna community from Punta Gorda, Roatán located in the Bay Islands (Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña, 2011). The Garifuna middle class complacency is compounded by “inarticulateness” in confronting painful and complicated issues (hooks 1992:2).



Figure 5.3 Garinagu Protesting Dispossession from their Land in 2011, Tegucigalpa
Source: Honduras Resists, 2011

Bell hooks advises that a “fundamental task of black critical thinkers has been the struggle to break with the hegemonic modes of seeing, thinking, and being that block our capacity to see ourselves oppositionally, to imagine, describe, and invent ourselves in ways that are liberatory” (1992:2). The Garifuna intellectuals and the Garinagu in general must break away from their inarticulateness to truly challenge not only racist images of black people in the dominant group’s mind but racist practices as a whole.

The Garinagu in the United States

Contrary to how racist practices are expressed in Honduras, the United States developed a two-tiered system comprised of black and white and various “mixed” groups (Wade 1986:1). In the United States race has been vigorously enforced throughout the country’s history. In Latin America, *mulato* “forms a buffer zone between whites and blacks” (Jackson 1976:6). The

Honduran dominant culture equates *mulatto* with white. In the United States the category *mulatto* appeared as a racial category in the U.S. Census from 1850 to 1890 and from 1910 to 1920. The U.S. Census Bureau defined a *mulatto* as a person of “mixed ‘Black’ and ‘White’ ancestry” (Mukhopadhyay & Henze 2014:166). The Census Bureau expanded its definition and used “quadroons” to classify “those persons who have one-fourth black; ‘octoroon,’ those persons who have one-eighth or any trace of black blood” (Mukhopadhyay & Henze 2014:166). The Census Bureau used other definitions, including *negroe* and *colored*. These racial categories coincided with the colonial concept of *nigger* to define race relations in the United States. We cannot then understand the Garifuna experience in the United States without fully understanding that “the sociospatial patterning” of the United States because as geographers George A. Davis and O. Fred Donaldson contend its construction is based on order and meaning (1975:1). This process is situated in racial spatial terms such as “integration, segregation, colony, community control, separation, ghetto, inner-city, apartheid, busing, ‘keeping their distance,’ ‘knowing their place’” and spaces of consumption (Davis & Donaldson 1975:1).

Bobby Wilson’s far-reaching work examines the interplay between political economy, race, place, and the consumption sphere, mainly as it pertains to African Americans social mobility in the postbellum southern United States. Whites sought to maintain white supremacy by excluding African Americans from spaces of consumption because they were no longer able to exert the same control that they had during the years of slavery (2005:588). To reaffirm their power, Wilson concludes that whites enforced spatial segregation (Wilson 2005:588). This was one way of maintaining the racialized pattern of the socio-spatial organization of the United States. Racist socio-spatial patterns are also reflected in toponyms and other geographic terms such as “the Black Belt, Coontown, Buttermilk Bottom, Black Bottom, Harlem, walls, Cotton Curtain,

ghetto, and inner city” (Davis and Donaldson 1975:1). These socio-spatial problems must then be understood within the historical framework of slavery and perpetual African American struggle to overthrow white supremacy, from slavery’s racial coding (nigger, negroe, coon, sambo, mammy etc.) to the KKK’s murderous practices and state-sponsored violence. The purpose for creating socio-spatial problems was an “attempt to fix the meaning of [place] reflecting a hegemonic cultural norm . . .” (Tyner 2006:64). This hegemonic cultural norm, albeit somewhat different from Honduras, is what Honduran elites sought to accomplish in the 1920s with the passage of the Lempira as the national currency, the creation and institutionalization of *mestizo* as an identity and ideology, and the denigration of the Garinagu and black people as a whole.

The black liberation struggle in the United States that began during slavery and grew to a larger scale with events such as the Civil Rights Movement was a way of annihilating white supremacy and cultural hegemony. Because of the black liberation struggle, the U.S. Congress ratified the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868 granting people of African descent citizenship, but also opened the doors to millions of immigrants entering the United States. The Fifteenth Amendment granted African American men the right to vote in 1870. Continuing to challenge the socio-spatial order, the Civil Rights Movement destroyed *de jure* segregation, and secured laws such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965. These and many other accomplishments are what Cornel West calls African Americans’ “gifts” to the world (2010). Although their gifts are enormous, *de facto* racial segregation still exists and white supremacy still dominates cultural production and black representation. The dominant culture keeps these concepts alive by a host of practices fueled by racist ideologies. To demonstrate, bell hooks argues that there is a misconception in the contemporary United States between blacks and whites, and I would also

add other ethnic groups, that racism is obsolete. Growing up in the Marble Hill Housing Project in the Bronx, New York, I heard Garinagu, Dominicans, European Americans, and a host of other groups quip, “African Americans demand too much.”

Another equally significant contemporary example is the election of President Barack Obama in 2009. The so-called experts (blacks, whites, and other groups) hopping from one mainstream television network to another define President Obama’s election as a representation of “post” racial United States. This “post” racial narrative signals to African Americans that the struggle for justice and equality is over. They have made it. The explanation hooks’ gives elucidates such a misguided notion,

This erasure, however mythic, diffuses the representation of whiteness as terror in the black imagination. It allows for assimilation and forgetfulness. The eagerness with which contemporary society does away with racism, replacing this recognition with evocations of pluralism and diversity that further mask reality, is a response to the terror . . . Black people still feel the terror, still associate it with whiteness, but are rarely able to articulate the varied ways we are terrorized because it is easy to silence by accusations of reverse racism or by suggesting that black people who talk about the ways we are terrorized by whites are merely evoking victimization to demand special treatment. (1995: 47)

Because of the various masks white supremacists use, many Garinagu, similar to other people including the experts, see black people’s efforts countering “hegemonic spatial practices” as unnecessary (McKittrick and Woods 2007:7). The reason for this is because the white dominant culture has built an image of the United States that denies its true historical and contemporary reality, and presents it as a just society. Phrases such as “the land of the free,” “the melting pot,” “the American Dream,” “the land of opportunity” or the “bastion of democracy” support their practices. Most Garinagu routinely evoke some of these phrases because they have come to associate myth with reality. Another equally effective tool whites use is the media. Negative stereotype images portraying African American men as thieves, rapists, buffoons, and lazy and

women as welfare recipients are a staple in mainstream media discourse (see Alexander 2010). The Garinagu and millions of people domestically and globally continue to consume these images. Audiences around the world, including many African Americans themselves, accept these images passively and uncritically as accurate representations of African Americans in the United States. Although these images lack accuracy, they nevertheless gain currency. Why this is the case is explained by bell hooks,

Like fictions, they are created to serve as substitutions, standing in for what is real. They are there not to tell it like it is but to invite and encourage pretense. They are a fantasy, a projection onto the Other that makes them less threatening. Stereotypes abound when there is distance. They are an invention, a pretense that one knows when the steps that would make real knowing possible cannot be taken or are not allowed. (1995:38)

From the public housing project where I grew up, the only view I could appreciate from my family's twelfth floor apartment was the tall buildings imposed on the landscape and bodies on the street going about their daily lives. On various occasions from among these many bodies, my mother handpicked two and declared, "whenever you see a black and a Puerto Rican guy together, they are up no good." Unhappy with her comments, one day I asked her "how do you know that?" She did not reply. My mother like other Garinagu came to believe in a fantasy created by racists without realizing that the Garinagu's bodies also form part of the exploited group and they are, in borrowing Clyde Wood's words, at the "front lines of globalization and a global racialization" as evident with their mostly low paying jobs in the United States and dispossession from their land on Honduras' north coast (2002:63). An overwhelming number of Garinagu live in the so-called ghettos and most hold low paying jobs as porters, home attendants, domestic workers, and janitors. My mother worked as a domestic worker and home attendant for many years. In fact, occasionally, she would assign one of her older children, including myself, to cover for her on Saturdays. Yet, despite the Garinagu's economic and social alienation and

fragmentation, distrust among the Garinagu and African Americans abounds just like it abounded between West Indians and African Americans because each group is forced by racial and class oppression to compete for the same meager resources.

The African American liberation struggle influenced the Garinagu cultural practices and identity. Cultural nationalist Sara Irióna reflected on how this influence shaped her 1973 marriage in New York City. For her wedding, she had her hair braided in African style and the bride and groom wore African attire prepared by the bride's sister. Irióna also states "we had music and everything but it was drums and there was singing in Garifuna . . . Our wedding cake was made out of the darkest chocolate we could find; [the cake colors were] black, green, and red and so when we cut it one can see the colors of the black revolution," which were adopted from the colors of the black liberation flag introduced by Garvey in the 1920s (personal communication, March 29, 2012). One can connect Irióna's cultural nationalism to Harlem as an "incubator for the rebirth of West African Culture" in the 1960s and 1970s when Miss Natural Standard of Beauty Contest was held in 1963 and many more cultural and political activists took place in the neighborhood (Olugebefola 1995:2). Yet, many Garinagu has misunderstood these developments because like many people in the United States, they have been miseducated about the African American liberation struggle.

Speaking of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X, Tomas Cevello, a member of the New York City's middle class group, states "one was for peace [Dr. King] and one was a little more violent [Malcolm X]" (personal communication, May 24, 2010). As Cornel West states during an interview with former co-host of Al Jazeera's Fault Lines investigative series, Avi Lewis, King's image have been "deodorized, sanitized, and sterilized" to fit conservative and liberal politics whereas Malcolm X's militancy has been added to the terrorist list (2010). Erroneous

distinctions made about these men represent how each group or individual “sees a thing or event” in a way to reconcile them with their “interests and ideological stance” (Baraka 1992:19). Against this background, scholar and human rights activist Grace Lee Boggs summarizes distinctions between King and Malcolm X. For Boggs, “[King’s] goal was *integration* but his strategy was *confrontation*, and in the actual struggle the first was turned into its opposite by the second,” although the Civil Rights Movement was about confrontation (2005:271 emphasis in original). Part of this confrontation became more evident in the last years of King’s life before his April 4, 1968 assassination in Memphis, Tennessee. Before his assassination, King’s April 4, 1967 speech’s “Beyond Vietnam,” written by historian and theologian Vincent Harding, linked the plight of African Americans to Southeast Asians and to other members of the so-called Third World impacted by capitalism and imperialism (Goodman, 2014). King’s speech signaled a shift in his politics.

While King’s declared “*aim* was civil rights legislation and integration, the *means* of confrontation taught Black people that all the civil rights legislation in the world could not solve their real grievances and led them to question whether, after all, whites were good enough to integrate with” (Boggs 2005:271 emphasis in original). So, “as the saying goes, ‘Why fight to get into a burning house’ or ‘Why integrate with cancer?’” (Boggs 2005:271; see also Belafonte, n.d.). Malcolm X, on the other hand, used the concept of the “*struggle for Black Power*” and black revolutionary nationalism, a tradition that developed from African American’s socio-spatial conditions (Boggs 2005:272 emphasis in original). He believed that “Black Power could be achieved only by a *struggle for power*, or what he called the Black Revolution. Hence his famous phrases, ‘by all means necessary’ and ‘by ballots or bullets’” (Boggs 2005:272). Although Malcolm X did not leave a blueprint to follow, he did “leave us a site for Black [or any

oppressed group] political discourse,” (Wood 1992:15) and “political development” (hooks 1994:192). Hence, “for many of us, his unequivocal critique of internalized racism coupled with his unapologetic stance on the need for militant resistance was the kind of political intervention that transformed our consciousness and our habits of beings” (hooks 1994:192). Erroneous distinctions made by interpretations of King and Malcolm X distort their politics and goals, again, to fit a group’s or individual’s values, politics, and frames of reference. Most Garifuna people have concocted their own narrative, better yet, they have repeated what they have heard and learned from the dominant culture about King and Malcolm X as some of the interlocutors’ narratives show at the beginning of this discussion.

In East New Orleans, most Garinagu were adamant to connect with African Americans. Language barrier can serve as a barrier too. Most Garinagu interviewed in East New Orleans did not or barely spoke English. Those who did speak fluent English are not part of the land struggle in Honduras and several members of this same group are married or dating African Americans. In New York City, some see a linkage with other blacks, but most seem to gravitate toward establishing social alliances with whites and Latinos, even though they have been influenced by African American’s struggle. For instance, Moran states that when he became involved in Garinagu activism for the first time,

the first thing that I did was I started writing . . . newsletter and actually what I did was translate a lot of the articles from Ebony, Jet, which is why I read Black Enterprise. So, my whole idea of getting involved in the movement was actually based on the African American movement. And, again I used a lot of material of Jessie Jackson and Martin and all of them. (personal communication, May 25, 2010)

Moran is one of the leading figures in New York City striving for the Garifuna middle class social mobility. Iriona believes that there is a “natural connection” between Garinagu and African Americans, though she claims that African Americans’ leadership rightly focused on

issues in the United States during the Civil Rights Movements (personal communication, March 29, 2012). However, this is not entirely accurate because African American activists' discourse and efforts upheld an international outlook.

Impact on Contemporary Discourse

Using Kobayashi and Peake's analysis of the geography of race, I state that scholars cannot pursue a social analysis in the United States without tackling the "geographies of whiteness," while in Honduras there is this *mestizaje* framework the dominant post-colonial culture constructed and western scholars adopted in studying Honduran society (2008:157). Within these racialized places, some groups are racially labeled, excluded, and spatially segregated. As I have shown thus far, the Garinagu straddled these geographies. In the United States, Garinagu' bodies are racially recoded because other than their mother tongue, Garifuna, most Garinagu also speak Spanish and have Spanish names. I say most because the Garinagu from Belize generally speak Garifuna and English whereas those from Honduras and Guatemala speak Garifuna and Spanish, and those from Nicaragua also generally speak Spanish. Consequently, most people in the United States refer to Garinagu as Latino(a), Afro-Latino(a), and Hispanic. Some Garinagu decry these categories while others, particularly the younger generation and some members of the middle class, embrace them, namely the categories of Latino(a) or Hispanic.

Most Garifuna middle class embrace these ethnic categories and also Garifuna American to assert a new identity that supports their politics. Increasingly, manifesting among the Garinagu in New York City, Houston, Los Angeles, and I suspect in several other urban areas having large Garifuna communities is the Garifuna American descriptor. GCU's José Francisco Ávila circulated various e-mails on the Garifunalink listserv urging Garinagu to write Garifuna as their ethnicity on the 2010 U.S. Census form. Paradoxically, Ávila also calls on Garinagu to define

themselves as Garifuna Americans. Identifying as Garifuna on the census form is only a symbolic gesture, since the Census forms contain no official state-recognized category for the Garinagu. The Garifuna middle class explore their ethnic and racial identity options because these descriptors inform their politics. What the Garifuna middle class's activities suggest is that identities form through social relations embedded in place. Those Garinagu who reject the Latino(a) category and identify as black, speak of how geography generates multi-dimensional racial discourse for many Garinagu. Irióna declares,

We consider ourselves of African roots and when we are here in the United States and walk in the streets anyone can say that we are blacks . . . African Americans. We are not seen as Latinos because we do not appear to them as Latinos and usually . . . we mix a lot with Afro Americans. We do not lean that much towards the so-called Latin American community. In fact, the Latin American programs on television, such as Univision do not represent us that much even here. In other words, we would prefer that we are counted among African Americans. In other words, the African American community is larger than it is counted because we are counted as Latinos and so that was part of the message . . . and we like people of African descent. We solidarize and we understand the problems that impact the Afro American people because if our children grow up here, they are seen the same way. (personal communication, March 29, 2012)

Adding to the Latino(a) or Hispanic discourse is that while there is nothing wrong with the Garinagu forming alliances with Latinos, as many do, very often these alliances may pose a problem. Like the *mestizos* in Honduras, Latino (especially those with “brown” skin) politics conform to whiteness and negate blackness. One reason for this is that many Latinos, like millions of people in the United States, are miseducated about African Americans’ experiences, struggles, contributions, and about their own blackness. Moreover, “imperialism [and] colonialism” inform the Latinos’ identity politics for they have been coerced “to internalize negative perceptions of blackness, to be self-hating” (hook 1992:167). One finds these internalized perceptions of blackness across Central and South America and Spanish-speaking Caribbean islands such as Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. Most Dominicans articulate

a pernicious discourse about their blackness. Professor of English Silvio Torres-Saillant observes that Dominicans decry “their blackness” because they retained the former colonial master’s (Spanish) ideas about blackness and emulated the new master, the United States (1998:126). This social interaction attests to Iriona’s statement about the Garinagu’s troubling racial discourse.

Contrary to the United States, in Honduras the Garinagu are challenging the derogatory terms of *negro* or *moreno* more openly in a variety of ways. Some prefer to be referred to as Garifuna because it makes them “feel happier, because it is pride” (J. Cespedes, personal communication, June 4, 2010). There is also a new generation of Honduran activists reclaiming their African roots and blackness, which seems to be central in their discourse. This is evident with the First Garifuna Hospital’s logo which depicts not only cultural and political symbols associated with their identity but also a map of Africa (figure 5.4) which suggests a spatial nexus (“Primer Hospital Garifuna,” n.d.).

Among contemporary Garifuna artists, the renowned artist and songwriter, Aurelio Martinez, authored and recorded the song *Africa* in 2000 signaling some important cultural and historical changes. Here is a sample of the song lyrics I translated from Garifuna to English:

English (short version)

I will travel to Africa
To see the traces our ancestors left
I will never forget Africa
I will never forget Africa
Oh, Africa, eh, Africa
The blacks’ ancestors
There are Garinagu who have forgotten their roots
There are blacks who have forgotten their ancestors
But I will never forget Africa . . .
(Martinez, 2000)



Figure 5.4 First Garifuna Hospital Logo
Source: Primer Hospital Garifuna, 2014

Martinez's musical contribution adds to a host of Caribbean musicians who write songs and sing about Africa as being part of their collective memory and to reclaim their identity and history. Among these musicians are Rastafarians Peter Tosh, Winston Rodney known by his artistic name as Burning Spear, and Bonny Wailer from Jamaica, and Midnite, a root reggae band from St. Croix. The Garinagu's ethno-musical practices as evident with Martinez's song articulate black geography, a geography that imagines a new place. However, most Garinagu prefer the song *Yurumein*, which refers to St. Vincent as their ancestral homeland rather than Africa. In her analysis of the Garifuna leaders' politics of identity, England states that the Garifuna organizers of the 1997 Garifuna Bicentennial celebration referred to St. Vincent as the "homeland from which the Garinagu have been exiled and as the territorial base of their culture, race, and identity" (1999:8). This is a common theme among many Garinagu.

The usage of Afrodescendant or Afrohondureño(ña) also illustrates a preference for challenging racialized geographies on one hand and it signifies embracing one's blackness and African roots on the other by some Garinagu. However, this development has unleashed a

political war between OFRANEH and ODECO and most Garifuna middle class in Honduras and in the United States. Before addressing this war of political identity, I first discuss the origin of the Afro prefix concept. Juan Pablo Sojo's *Afro-Venezuelan Notes and Themes* essay published in 1943 applied the prefix Afro as a way for black people to rid themselves of colonial racial identities such as *negro* and *moreno* (García, 2013; see also Ihrie & Oropesa 2011:9; see also Jackson 1979:112).

In the aftermath of Casildo's trip to the 2001 United Nations World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, he began using the Afro prefix. Tensions emerged over its usage, particularly in recent years. Many Garifuna middle class from Honduras and the United States circulated e-mails on Garifunalink listserv denouncing the Afro concept (R. Armenia, personal communication, September 20, 2013). During interviews some of these people asserted that the general consensus is that most Garinagu reject it. However, those contacted offered little information to support their claim. In Honduras, Miranda decries Afro, Afrodescendants, and Afrohonduran because the Garinagu are not the only groups that fall under the term Afro; humanity as a whole does because all people "definitely come from Africa" (personal communication, September 19, 2013). Although she acknowledges this historical origin, it seems that using Afro conflicts with OFRANEH's land struggle (M. Miranda, personal communication, September 19, 2013). Miranda's statement suggests that she does not accept the Garinagu's blackness because it does not fit her politics. Throughout Latin America in the 1990s, states introduced legislative reforms "establishing collective rights for ethnic groups" (Anderson 2009:106). Honduras was one of these countries. Drawing from Wilson's assessment of "localizing black identity," the Honduran government's move suggests that the state constructed Honduras as a place of "shared meanings" for all its inhabitants, although this does

not reflect the reality of the Garifuna people (2000:181). As a result of the ethnic groups' presumed recognition, organizations such as OFRANEH define themselves as citizens of the Honduran nation and legitimize their land struggles. Speaking of black Colombians, anthropologist Bettina Ng'weno states, "'Afro-Colombian' was not the self-description of choice of most people with whom she worked (2003:10). Ng'weno's usage of Afro-Colombian in her dissertation is motivated by the desire to form a "connection to Africa" (2003:10). Because the Garinagu generally identify themselves using their ethnic descriptor, Garifuna, this is the reason why I use Garifuna or Garinagu. However, I also use people of African descent or black people.

Casildo seems to disagree with Miranda's politics. Casildo sustains that at the Americas International Conference organized by the Organization of American States in 2000 and WCAR in South Africa affirmed "that Afrodescendants are descendants of Africans within which Garinagu are found. So, it is not a bad word [Afrodescendant] as some may see it. Afrodescendants are those descendants of Africa, where humanity comes from" ("Afrodescendiente no es una mala palabra," 2014). Other Garifuna middle class in Honduras find the Afrodescendants/Afrohonduran terms meaningless because racism in Honduras is "part of the '60s and '70s," basing this assertion on myriad unions between the Garinagu and *mulatos* (R. Contreras, personal communication, February 20, 2011). Racism, however, is not part of the past as Contreras asserts; it is entwined into the fabric of the Honduran society developed during slavery, reconstructed during the banana industry, and safeguarded through a host of practices.

To counter Contreras' assertion that racism in Honduras is part of the past, I cite one sample, though by no means the only one. In post-Hurricane Mitch, the Cuban government offered the Honduran government 600 scholarships for Hondurans to study medicine in ELAM (J. Espinosa, personal communication, September 23, 2011). The Honduran government "sent

out only 269 students out of which only eight were Garifunas” (J. Espinosa, personal communication, September 23, 2011). In 2000, the Cuban government “sent out 250 scholarships, and they [Honduran government] did not send one single Garifuna” (J. Espinosa, personal communication, September 23, 2011). Because of their exclusion, the Garifuna students mobilized and the Cuban government awarded them twenty scholarships (J. Espinosa, personal communication, September 23, 2011). What the exclusion of the Garinagu from receiving scholarship signifies is that racism prevails in contemporary Honduran society. The maintenance of racism is linked to the prevailing idea about the *mestizo* society and the state and elite-led socio-economic reproduction of Honduras’ north coast. The Honduran government and local oligarchs do not want educated the Garinagu. They want the so-called exotic Garifuna to be the spectacle of consumption as they built a new place.

Similar to Miranda’s rejection of Afrodescendant, the Garifuna leader Ruben Reyes also decries such as a category. Speaking about the Garinagu’s ethnohistory during a question and answer session following a public showing of his film *Garifuna in Peril*, he stated, “Africa is our father and the Arawak our mother. I am not Afro descendant. I am Garifuna. There are only a few African words in our language” (field note, April 19, 2013). First, colonialists not only created new cultures but also transformed the identities of the people they colonized. Of course, this transformation includes language. Literary theorist and cultural critic Edward W. Said argues, “neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination . . .” (1994:9). This domination is manifested in the transformation of language. The Garifuna language transformation went from African and

Arawak words to include English and Spanish words as well. Second, referring to the African father assertion, Dosanto states, “there is no accurate scientific basis for such asseveration” (personal communication, February 25, 2014). The “gender dominated Garifuna society is the only answer” (personal communication, February 25, 2014). Reyes’ genderization of place – Africa the father and Arawak the mother – and rejection of his ancestral African heritage attests to the conflicting views many Garinagu endorse.

Stuart Hall’s analysis that identity is constantly in flux is right on target. Echoing similar sentiment, Paul Gilroy states that identity provides a way of understanding “the interplay between our subjective experience of the world and the cultural and historical settings in which that fragile subjectivity is formed” (1997:301). Based on Hall’s and Gilroy’s analysis, this is the reason why the Garinagu are constantly redefining their image to fit the prescribed ethnic category of Latino(a), Hispanic, and Garifuna American, not only because of their interaction with Spanish speaking people but because of geography. Bodies are racially coded, displaced, replaced, and molded under capitalism. The Garifuna middle class strives to mold itself to fit the host culture norms. Place is no doubt a complex concept built out of complicated social processes stemming from geographies of difference and power-geometries found within capitalist societies. Place is also where “everyday life is situated” and where all sorts of social practices developed (Merrifield 1993b:522). This includes the formation of identity

Conclusion

The geography of race in the Garinagu experience has generated a complex racial discourse, self-perception, and relationship with place. In Honduras, their experience has been shaped principally by the development of the banana industry beginning in the late nineteenth century. During this period, the Garinagu entered the global market as wage earners and petite

bourgeois capitalists. Their entrance into this global economy situated the Garinagu in a tenuous place where the Honduran government was developing a new economy in the midst of their established communities. Although it is unclear if the Garinagu engaged in any land struggles during this period as they began doing in the early 1990s, the point is that the global economic forces, as evident with the banana industry, fragmented their culture along class lines. The working conditions and racist practices in the banana plantation industry, compounded by the Honduran politicians' and elites' construction of a new national identity deriving from their racist practices, shaped social integration and relations in Honduras and the Garinagu's racial discourse. Geographical variations further reshaped the Garinagu's experience. In the United States, the Garinagu redefined their identities to fit their politics. Thus, in most major urban areas in the United States where the Garinagu live, they generally identify as Garifuna American and decry the prefix Afro. Their new self-ascribed identity, Garifuna American, suggests that the Garinagu, namely the middle class, are reconciling themselves to the cultural politics of a different place that offers them distinct resources. However, by and large their racial discourse and frame of reference inform their social, political, and economic experiences in Honduras.

CHAPTER 6

SOCIAL PRACTICES AND MOBILITY IN THE BRONX

A Brief History of the Bronx

In this chapter, I discuss the Garifuna middle class's economic and political integration in the United States as well as in Honduras. Included in this discussion is the myth of belonging and cultural practices surrounding their social mobility. Because there is a disconnection the Garifuna middle class and race, I will also factor in this concept into the discussion. Before I examine their practices, I provide a brief history of the Bronx and how the Garifuna community settled in this borough. Geographically separated from Manhattan by the Harlem River (Great Kill) and divided by the Bronx River (Aquahung), the Bronx, New York bears the name of the colonial landowner Jonas Bronck, who was either a "Swedish developer" or a Dutch born in Hoorn, Holland (Cook 1913:9; Rooney 1995:22). Bronck was a former East India Company commander who settled in Old Morrisania, the area of present-day South Bronx, in 1639 on "a five-hundred acre tract" he bought from the Mohegan Indians, namely from the sachems Ranachqua and Tackamuck (1913:9; Rooney 1995:22). Bronck built a "stone dwelling, a bar, several tobacco houses and two barracks" for his labor force comprised of Swedes, Germans, Danes, and Dutch between Harlem River and the Bronx River, in Old Morrisania (Cook 1913:9; Rooney 1995:22). Upon his death in 1643, his widow Antonia Stagboom remarried and "sold the estate to Jacob Jans Stoll" (Cook 1913:11). After passing through various proprietors, British Colonel Lewis Morris and Captain Richard Morris purchased the estate on August 10, 1670 (Cook 1913:12). However, the Landmarks Preservation Commission's 2010 report states that the "English crown granted Lewis Morris the entire south Bronx in 1697" which remained the Morris's property until the 1840s.

The Morrises previously resided in Barbados where Richard Morris's wife, Sarah Pole, owned a sugar plantation (Cook 1913:12). They later imported African captives from the Caribbean to toil on their plantation in the Bronx and in New Jersey ("Plants and People, remembering the Bronx River's African-American Heritage," 2014; see also Adams 2003:9). In fact, Lewis Morris's family "owned one of the largest slave holding estates in the north Morrisania, in what was then Westchester county but is today the Bronx" (Singer 2008:69). Besides the Morrises, all wealthy landowner families in the Bronx owned slaves. Indeed, the last "held slave in the state of New York belonged to the Morris family" in 1827 (Landmarks Preservation Commission, 2010:3). Occupying 1,920 acres of land at the southernmost part of the Bronx, Morrisania remained "the agricultural hinterland for the still small city of New York" by 1791 (González 2004:5; see also Kirschke 2005:1). To facilitate Lewis G. Morris's (Morrisania's last lord) business activities between his estate and Manhattan Island, he built the High Bridge crossing the Harlem River in the mid-nineteenth century and the New York and Harlem Railroad (González 2004:11; Rooney 1995:24). From this period, the Bronx witnessed a surge of subway, bridge, tunnel, and road construction and became "the third greatest building community in the United States, Manhattan ranking first and Chicago second" (Cook 1913:29). The Bronx came to be characterized by manors or "huge land grants owned by wealthy families, worked either by slave labor or by tenants as family farms" (Ultan & Unger 2001:8).

Added to the British landholdings were West Farm and Hunt Point that was named after slave plantation owner Thomas Hunt. Historical records list Hunt as owning ten African captives in the 1790 census and 136 by the end of the same year (González, 2013). African captives toiled in the Hunt family's business producing flax and honey to export to Ireland (Rooney 1995:22). Writer Harry T. Cook states, "directly opposite the Hunt burying ground is a

small enclosure in which the slaves of early residents are interred” (1913:101). To the north of Fordham was the manor of “Philipsburg, owned by the Philipse family,” an area extended along the “Hudson River shoreline well into modern Westchester County” (Ultan & Unger 2001:8). Through marriage, Jacobus Van Cortlandt, after who Van Courtlandt Park in the Bronx is named after, joined the Philipse family. Van Cortlandt became the owner of much of the northwestern part of the Bronx. The Pell family owned the manor of Pelham, which constituted the northeast of the Bronx. These were the Bronx’s eighteenth century elites whose vision was to create an “English society” (Ultan & Unger 2001:8). American capitalist Jordan L. Mott arrived in the Bronx in 1828 where, with land bought from Governor Morris II, he started manufacturing coal-burning stoves (Rooney 1995:24). Mott went on to found Mott Haven Village in 1849 (González 2004:20). It is Mott Haven, Morrisania, Hunt Point, and other places such as Crotona Park East, Claremont, and Melrose that were first to converge in forming the Bronx and to benefit economically from receiving “rapid transit connections” with neighboring Manhattan (González 2004:7).

By the mid nineteenth century, in addition to West Farm’s mills, the Bronx had “extensive foundries, gas works, breweries, piano factories, and numerous smaller establishments, supplemented by railroads, ferries, and a horsecar line” (González 2004:16). During the late nineteenth century, the politicians reorganized the Bronx’s built environment. Formerly part of Westchester County, in 1874 New York City annexed Melrose, Morrisania, West Farms, and Kingsbridge towns located west of the Bronx River. By 1895, New York City annexed Pelham and Eastchester, Wakefield, and Westchester from east of the Bronx River. All annexed territory formed the Borough of the Bronx in 1898 (Landmarks Preservation Commission, 2010:2; also see Cook 1913:23). The Bronx’s population swelled after annexation from 33,000 in 1895 to

430,980 in 1910 and 950,000 by 1920 (Cook 1913:23). From the late nineteenth century to the 1960s, descendants of early settlers, and eastern and northern European immigrant newcomers dominated the Bronx's cultural landscape, particularly the South Bronx (González 2004:38).

Politically, the Morrisses dominated the political scene in the eighteenth century in the Bronx, then German-American Louis F. Haffen became the Bronx's "first Borough President" serving two terms 1897 to 1909 (Landmarks Preservation Commission 2010:10). Demographic and ethnic changes after World War II transformed the borough's political landscape. Born in Caguas, Puerto Rico, Herman Badillo was the first Puerto Rican to be elected Bronx Borough president (1966-1970) and in 1970 became the U.S. Congressperson from New York's 21st District in the South Bronx (Enciso & North 1995:1). Other Puerto Ricans followed. Fernando Ferrer's 1987 election as the Bronx Borough president (1987-2001) signaled another milestone for Puerto Ricans. Ferrer replaced Simon Stanley (1979 to 1987), a Jew, who was incarcerated for two years on charges of "racketeering in the Wedtech scandal" (Lynn, 1991). It is New York City's political landscape that the Garifuna middle class strives to form part of as I would show in this chapter.

The Garinagu in the Bronx

The Garinagu began arriving to the United States during the years following World War II. Some scholars consider two factors to be responsible for their migration: the decline of the banana production in parts of Honduras and the global economic restructuring of the 1940s (England 2006; 1999:11; see also González 1988). Garifuna men found employment in New York City's manufacturing industry but, more significantly, many became merchant marines. As some became members of the New York City-based National Maritime Union, they received better wages and benefits (England 2006:44). This group settled in New York City

neighborhoods such as Harlem. Besides manufacturing and seafaring jobs, the Garifuna men also worked in building maintenance jobs. Garifuna women began migrating to New York City in the 1960s. Employed in traditionally black-dominated domestic service jobs such as nannies and home attendants, they too settled in Harlem (England 2006:2). By the 1970s, many Garinagu moved from Harlem to the Bronx, concentrating in the neighborhoods of Mott Haven, Longwood, Hunt Point, Crotona Park East, Melrose, and Morrisania. A report by the Garifuna Coalition, USA, Inc., estimates that “200,000 [Garinagu] live in the South Bronx, Brownsville and [East New York in Brooklyn], and on Manhattan’s Upper West Side [Harlem]” (2007:6). Other places with Garifuna communities include West Farms, East Tremont, Mount Eden, Marble Hill, and Soundview.

At the time of the Garinagu’s arrival to the Bronx, chiefly the South Bronx, urban decay was this area’s emblem, and white socio-spatial separation, dubbed white flight, was at its zenith. Figure 6.1 illustrates the demographic changes experienced in the Bronx before and after the Garinagu’s arrival. Sarah England states that many Garinagu found the “Hispanic flavor” in the South Bronx a pull factor attracting them there (2006:51). However, at the heart of this demographic shift was not the Bronx’s Hispanic flavor, but its deindustrialization (“The Bronx: An Economic Decline,” 2003:3). Deindustrialization resulted from the relocation of capital outside of the United States in the 1950s and 1960s when capitalists emphasized “acquisitions and new ventures” and “maximizing corporate profits” without regard for the local labor force (Wilson & Green 1989:33). These economic conditions “put incredible pressure on the employment base of many urban regions. A combination of shrinking markets, unemployment, rapid shifts in spatial constraints and the global division of labour, capital flight, plant closings, technological and financial reorganization, lay at the root of that pressure” (Harvey 1987:263;

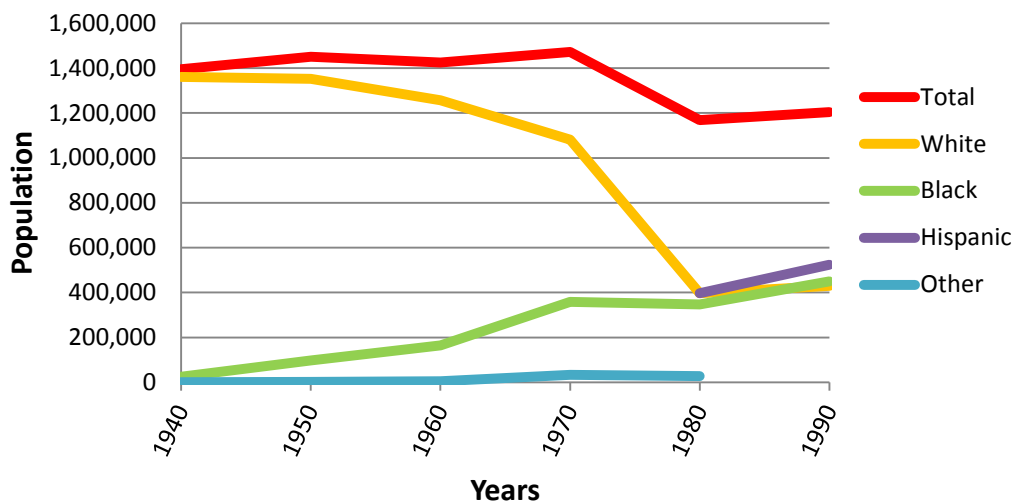


Figure 6.1 Change in Racial Composition of Population in the Bronx, New York City 1940 to 1990

Prepared by: Doris Garcia

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *United States Census of Population, General Population Characteristic, New York* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, various years).

see also Cox & Mair 1988:307). Disregard for local economy exacerbated urban decay and expanded already existing “receptacles for next arriving groups” (Blaut 1983:35). Ghettoization, Blaut concludes, is a “necessary component” of capitalism because it is a way of “maintaining a super-exploited sector of the labor force within the advance capitalists’ countries” (1983:40).

The Garifuna communities form part of this super-exploited sector in the Bronx and other urban areas in the United States. Compounding this super-exploitation in New York City is the inaccessibility to affordable housing, low wages, and racism (see Green & Wilson 1989:45).

One can trace the absence of affordable housing in New York City to the zoning initiated in this city in 1916. By 1926, the United States Supreme court ruled for the “right of cities to subsume the unfettered individual’s ability to determine use of land in favor of constricting this to plan for the general public interest” (Wilson 2007:21). The intent of zoning in places such as New York City and elsewhere in major cities paved the way for “the making of privileged city sections (the

downtown, massive industrial districts)” (Wilson 2007:21). These city sections feed the “industrial giant” that New York City is today and “protect real-estate values” (Wilson 2007:21).

The rebuilding of blighted buildings in the South Bronx began by the early 1990s. Despite these changes, most areas today remain impoverished. It is in this social apartheid that most Garinagu live, and from where the Garifuna middle class is attempting to build an economic base by forming a group of Garifuna entrepreneurs in New York City. The socio-economic conditions of neighborhoods with large Garifuna populations in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan are demonstrated in figures 6.2, 6.3, and 6.4 that show the spatial distributions of median household income ranges. Please note that the highlighted green area at the northern tip of figure 6.4 is the Marble Hill neighborhood. Originally, Marble Hill was part of Manhattan Island until the builders of the new landscape separated it by construction of the Harlem River Ship Canal in 1895 (Smith, 2012). Marble Hill is thus “hooked on the Bronx [but] legally Manhattan’s” (Smith, 2012).

Economic Integration

On May 21, 2000 José Francisco Ávila and ten Garinagu formed New Horizon Investment Club. This group gathered their financial resources “to learn how to invest in the stock market and subsequently become active participants in the economic development of the Garifuna Community Residing in New York City, teaching members how to become successful strategic long-term investors” (New Horizon Investment Club, 2010). To join New Horizon, a person pays \$300 and then \$25.00 each month as a New Horizon’s associate (T. Ávila, 2012). The associates’ commitment to amassing wealth and their visions of economic integration allowed New Horizon to invest “\$250,000 in the stock market” (T. Ávila, 2012). Ninety-nine percent of New Horizon Investment Club’s associates are Garinagu (Colón, 2010).

To promote and expand New Horizon Investment Club's economic services, in 2012, GCU and Garifuna Advocacy Organization launched the Bronx Immigrant Entrepreneurship Initiative Program (Colón, 2010). These organizations designed the program "to not only help immigrant entrepreneurs scale the many unique obstacles they face in their efforts to start and grow businesses in the Bronx, but overall to also support Bronx immigrant communities and empower them to grow and create jobs" (Colón, 2010). On February 21, 2010, New Horizon's associates celebrated their Third Garifuna Food Expo at St. Martin of Tours Church in the South Bronx (New Horizon Investment Club, 2010). A host of club events that include organizing celebratory galas and fundraisers accompanied the investment strategies of the New Horizon's members in their pursuit for wealth.

On May 22, 2010, I attended New Horizon's Blue and Silver First Decade Gala at The Eastwood Manor Caterers on the northeast of the Bronx. The Eastwood Manor is where GCU regularly holds its galas. After paying a \$75 admission fee, I walked into a dancehall decorated with mirrored walls and sparkling crystal chandeliers. Inside the dancehall, bourgeois-oriented working class Garifuna men and women impeccably dressed in blue or silver-colored fashions, with some women in light brown curly wigs, socialized. Seated among a group of Garinagu, I canvassed the ballroom. Decorating the round tables were silver linen, white and blue balloons, blue napkins, and chairs wrapped with silver cloth and blue ribbons. A large digital projection screen and microphone awaited New Horizon's president, José Francisco Ávila, and a host of other Garinagu eager to be heard. Entertainment before and after the echoing cacophony of speeches included, reggae, calypso, salsa, rhythm and blues, and Garifuna music. A smiling bartender tended to the guests' drinking needs. Platters of chicken cutlets, lasagna, baked salmon, fried plantains, Italian bread, and fruit salad decorated one corner of the ballroom.

Absent from this menu was anything reflecting the Garinagu dishes such as *ereba* (grilled cassava) and coconut bread (field note, May 22, 2010).

As the guests enjoyed their meals, some Garinagu passed the microphone from one speaker to another. Some Garinagu spoke about the Garifuna race or “la raza Garifuna” and others indicated that they were happy that Garinagu had reached “Wall Street” (field note, May 22, 2010). Others urged Garinagu “to consume what your people produce,” referring to the importation of *ereba*, produced by Garifuna women in Honduras and packaged and sold by *Wabagari* (Our Life) Distribution under the brand name of Casabe O’Big Mama (field note, May 22, 2010). Headquartered in La Ceiba, Garifuna Lina Hortensia Martínez Laredo owned *Wabagari*. New Horizon “established a commercial partnership with *Wabagari*” to distribute its product in New York City in 2008 (New Horizon Investment Club, 2010; Press Release, 2008). New Horizon’s website states that *ereba* is sold at three neighborhood stores in the South Bronx. The Garinagu vendors sold the product at Casa Yurumein’s second anniversary celebration on June 5, 2010. The U.S. State Department named Martínez in October 2010 “an alumna of the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) and the Central American Peace Scholarship (CAPS), as State Alumni Member of the Month” (“U.S. Department of State Honors Lina Hortensia Martinez Loredo of Honduras as State Alumni Member of the Month,” 2010).

Following the parade of speeches and the alacrity demonstrated by Garinagu attending the Silver and Blue First Decade Gala, José Francisco Ávila played Matt Markowich’s brief report prepared for Money Track in 2009. In this report, Ávila and his twin sibling appear standing next to Wall Street’s iconic Charging Bull sculpture. In the same report, Ávila indicates that

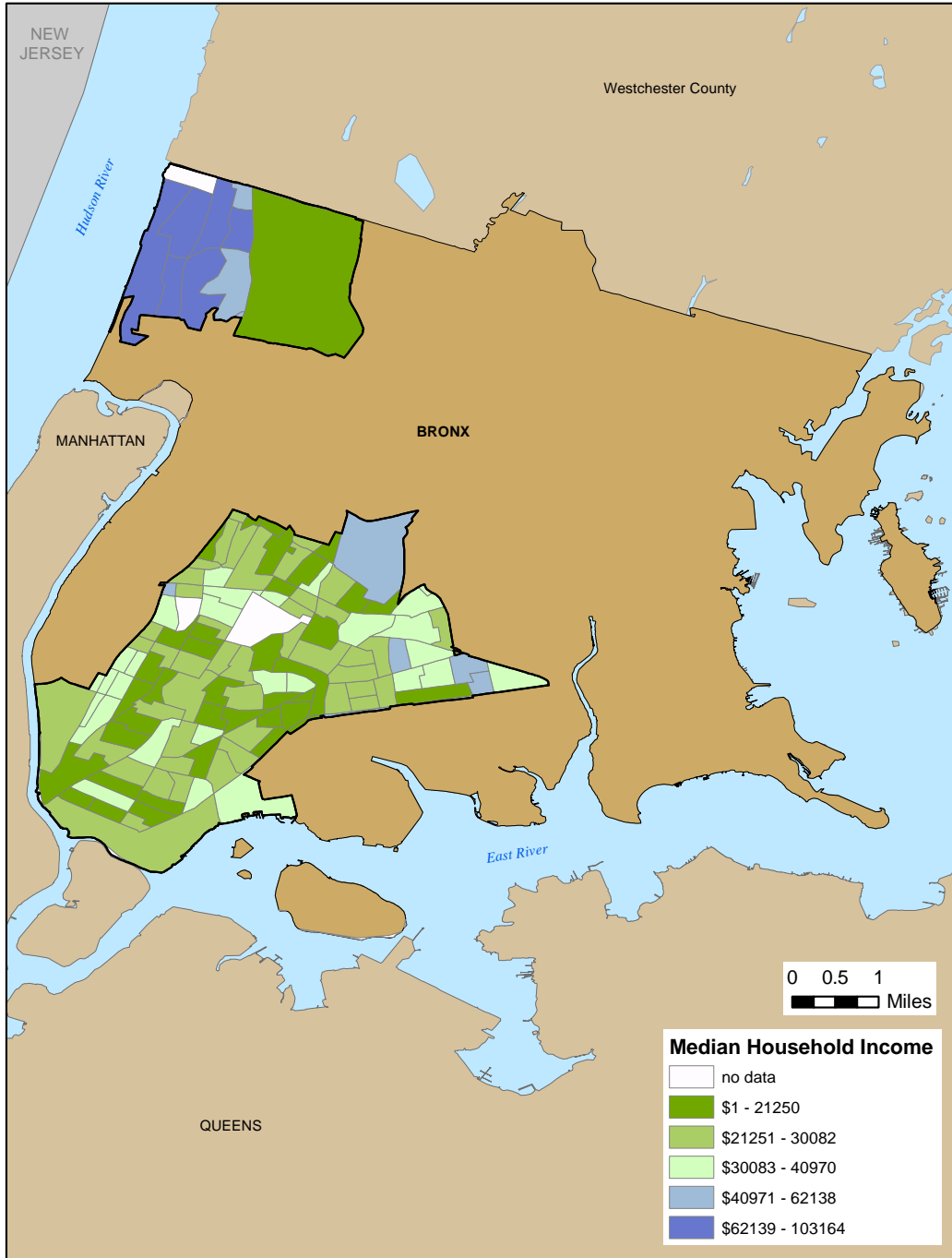


Figure 6.2 Median Family Income in Garinagu Concentrated Neighborhoods in the Bronx, New York, 2011

Prepared by: Paul Karolczyk and Doris Garcia

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2007-2011

American Community Survey, Table S1903

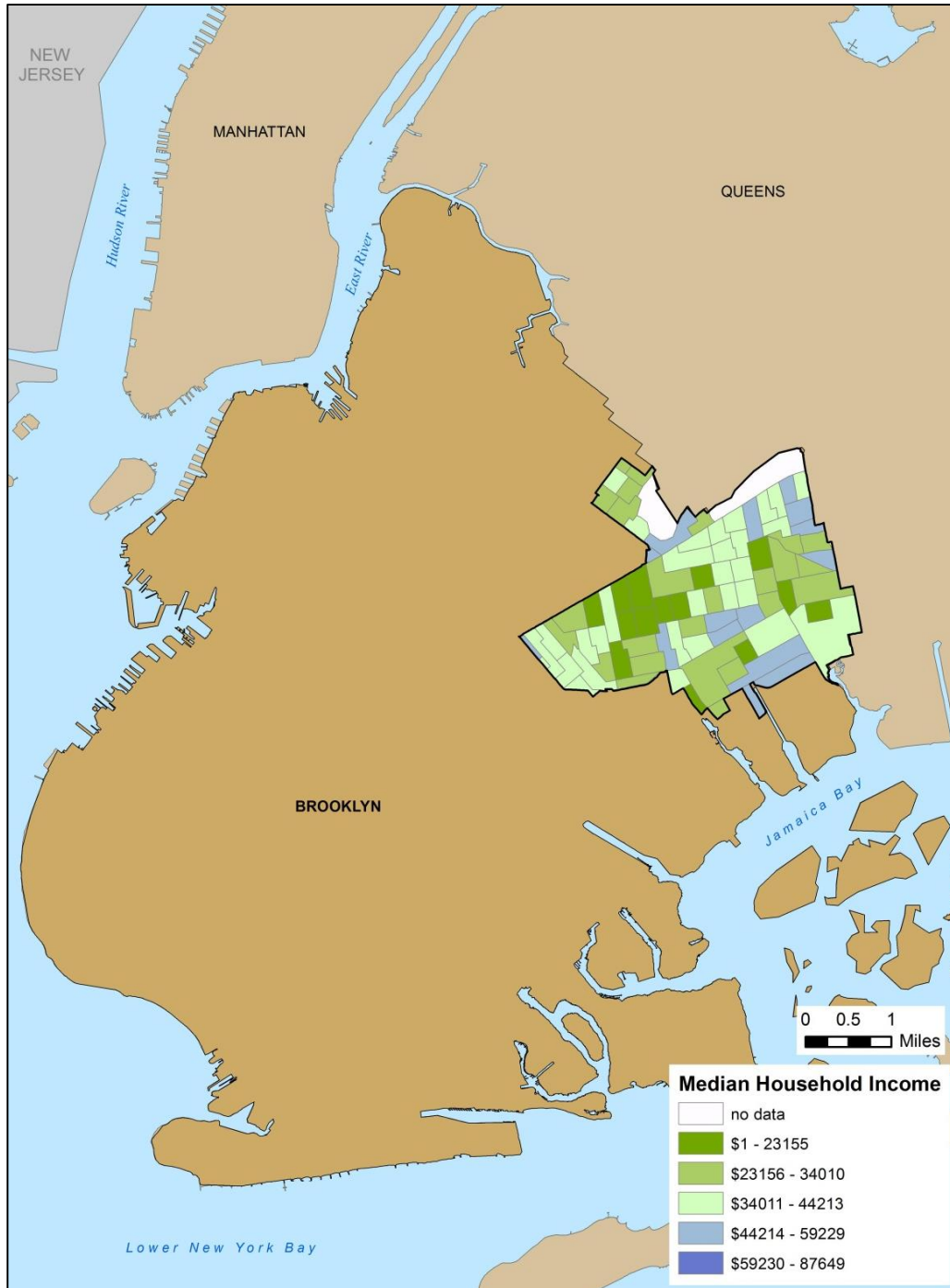


Figure 6.3 Median Family Income in Garinagu Concentrated Neighborhoods in Brooklyn, New York, 2011

Prepared by: Paul Karolczyk and Doris Garcia

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2007-2011

American Community Survey, Table S1903

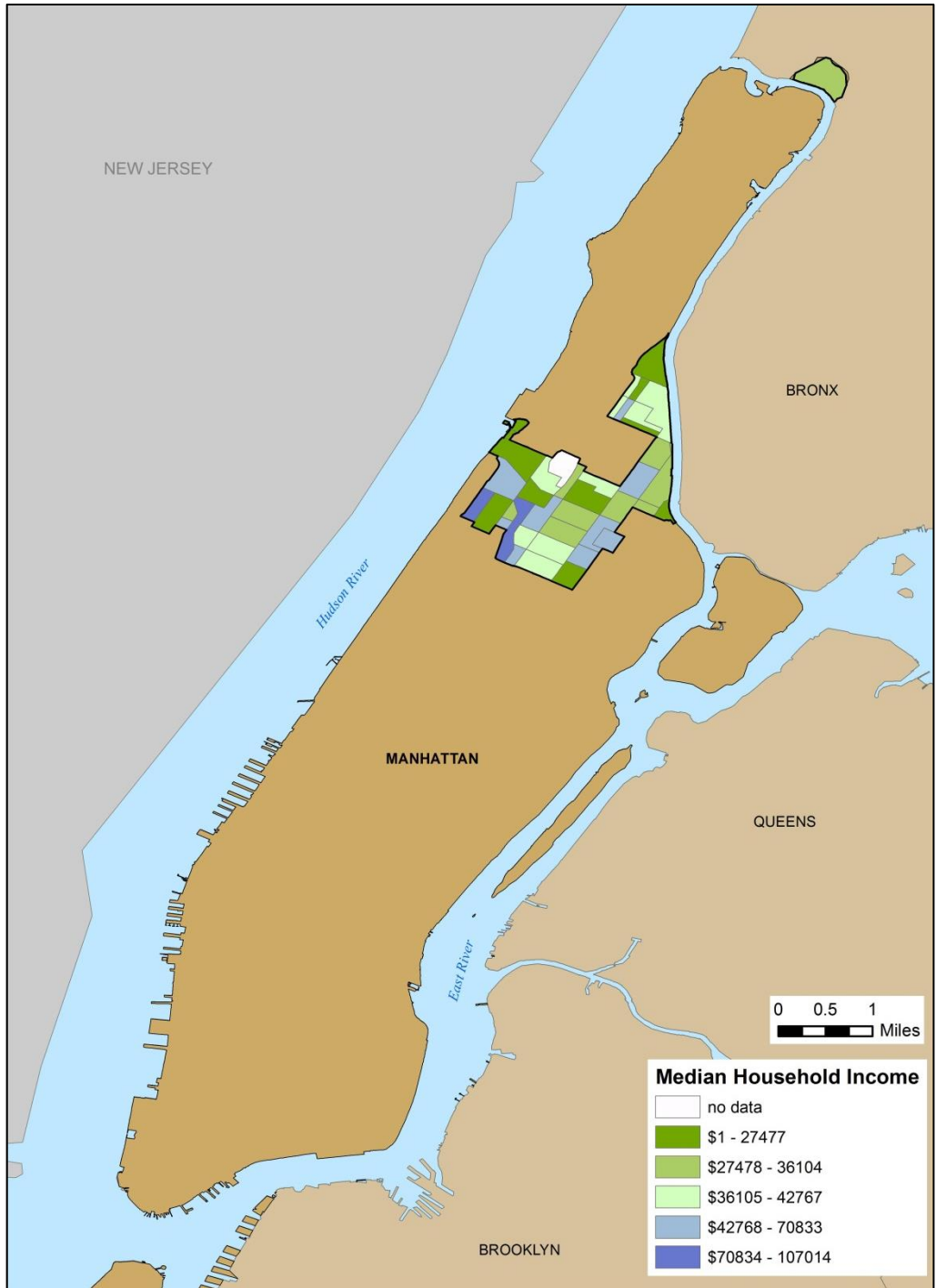


Figure 6.4 Median Family Income in Garinagu Concentrated Neighborhoods in Manhattan, New York, 2011

Prepared by: Paul Karolczyk and Doris Garcia

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2007-2011

American Community Survey, Table S1903

New Horizon is all about “how to create capital” (field note, May 22, 2010). Ávila concluded, “I have confidence in the market” (field note, May 22, 2010). After awarding Ávila with a silver bull engraved on a wooden stand, he stated “what I do is for the benefit of our people” (field note, May 22, 2010). Ávila’s statements deserve some analysis.

Overseen by the Bowling Green Association, the charging bull sculpture statute became the focus of a space of consumption, attracting millions of visitors both nationally and globally soon after its installation. In borrowing Harvey’s words, it is precisely this “‘pseudo-place’ or ‘non-place’” that the Garifuna middle class associates with social mobility and belonging (Harvey 1996:317). This bull sculpture has become a symbol capturing the imagination of the Garifuna middle class. Although this group is at the margins of power in the social structure, their activities and discourse suggest that they perceive the urban sphere through the lenses of bureaucrats, developers, and speculators. And like for millions of people in the United States, the bull has come to symbolize the American Dream. The American Dream narrative, however, represents how ideologies shape practices and practices maintain ideologies.

Also, evident in the Garifuna middle class’s discourse is a constant reframing of their identity and racial discourse which confirms Hall’s assessment that identity is a social production (1990:222). Their usage of the Garifuna race rather than ethnicity reveals this change. Such usage suggests that the Garifuna middle class is asserting an identity, which in its view commands inclusion and respect. Professor of comparative literature David Theo Goldberg argues that ethnicity now tends “to facilitate naturalization of the group formation and internalization by ethnic members of their group identity” (1993:76). The interplay of naturalization and internalization is “enabled primarily by rhetoric of origin, ascribed or self-

ascribed, that is reflected through the ethnic content” (Goldberg 1993:76). Goldberg’s argument parallels Stuart Hall’s argument that identity is constantly in flux.

Another significant aspect of the Garifuna middle class’s discourse apparent during its gala event is that, undoubtedly, there is a certain economic ideology of what it means to be Garifuna in the United States, but most importantly in capitalist United States. This ideology is predicated on the idea of entrepreneurship in which development is guided by certain practices, images, and discourses. Hence, ideologically the Garifuna middle class is experiencing what sociologist, theorist, and political activists W.E.B Du Bois calls a “double-consciousness,” meaning “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” (2003:9). Seeing themselves through this lens implies a negation of their culture and history. To explore the why and how of entrepreneurship, I consult historian Manning Marable’s examination of African American elites’ economic status and outlooks in capitalist United States since they are closely reflected in the Garinagu elites’ ideology and practices. Marable states,

Easily the most decisive element of the Black elite, both in the United States and in the Third World periphery, is the entrepreneur. The black businessperson is the linchpin of underdevelopment and capital accumulation within the Black community. The goal of the Black entrepreneur is to make profits, period. How he/she accomplishes this task is secondary to the goal. The nonwhite businessperson is the personification of the legitimizing and rational character of capitalism. For white corporations, he/she serves to perpetuate the illusion that anyone can ‘make it’ within the existing socioeconomic order, if only he/she works sufficiently at it. For the state, the Black entrepreneur represents the role model of proper civic behavior that the unruly and ‘nonproductive’ Black masses should follow. (2000:138)

In Marable’s judgment, black elite entrepreneurs are essentially ideological bait in a capitalist society, meaning that this economic system provides the opportunity for individual upliftment.

Non-whites just need to try a little harder and engage in certain practices. Their persistence will

be rewarded by becoming role models to their people. These black elites thus become caretakers of the wealthy whites' assets by following the capitalist prescribed recipe of success, building an image, and engaging in certain practices. For example, the Garinagu perceived such images and events as the Ávilas standing next to the bull sculpture, holding their galas at Eastwood Manor Caterers, and consuming certain foods to indicate their ascendance within the socio-economic class hierarchy.

In the same vein that the Garifuna middle class build on the "social myth" (Frazier 1957:161) Marable calls "Black capitalism," this group also serves as a liaison between capitalism and the rest of the Garifuna population just like the African American clergy did while becoming "the bedrock of Black petty bourgeois" (2000:137). The white establishment viewed African American pastors "as an ideological buffer between themselves and the often-dangerous Black masses. The Black messengers taught the Gospel of Christ to the weary, promising sweet visions of freedom in the afterlife" (Marable 2000:137). In a similar way, when José Francisco Ávila tells fellow Garinagu that what he is doing is on their behalf suggests collective benefit and implies a sense of communalism that invites trust and confidence. In other words, it was his way, in borrowing Wilson's words, of "connecting identity," specifically Garifuna identity, to social mobility and assuring the Garinagu that they are the beneficiaries of this endeavor (2000:72). What Ávila seems to understand is that images of prestige, social status, and departure from Honduras' north coast resonate with the New Horizon Club members and its gala's attendees. Drawing from Wilson's analysis of African Americans in the United States, Ávila seems to create these images simply by "stirring the souls" of the Garinagu using identity politics (2000:73). In this case, Ávila's message parallels the role of the clergy as a conduit to proselytizing on behalf of the white establishment as demonstrated by Marable's

argument. Without engaging in such practices, members of the Garifuna middle class believe that their social mobility cannot come to fruition. As such, they must adhere to the racist stereotype of the ““good”” domestic worker who serves their white boss by being “faithful, trustworthy and grateful” to them (Davis 1983:94). These racist notions do not seem to permeate the Garifuna middle class’s consciousness because they, in echoing hooks’ assessment of African Americans, have difficulties pursuing “liberatory paradigms of black subjectivity” which is in “part a failure of critical imagination” (1990:18-19). What seems to be of central importance to this group is the myth associated with their social mobility.

The Garinagu in New Orleans

Contrary to the Garifuna middle class in the Bronx, in East New Orleans, members of the organization Vallecito Faya slightly differ in ideological orientation from the Garinagu in New York City. Their organization’s attention is directed to cultivating plantains and other crops in Vallecito to sell in the municipality of Limón and throughout Honduras. Vallecito, a hamlet of the municipality of Limón in Colón, remains a place of struggle today between the Garinagu and Miguel Facussé Bargum and *ladino* land invaders. Compounding the Garinagu’s land struggle in Limón is drug trafficking, a problem existing in Honduras for many years, but which began affecting the Garifuna communities only in recent years. Despite difficulties in Limón and in organizing meetings in East New Orleans, Vallecito Faya’s members held a few monthly meetings. From March 4 to August 1, 2010, only three meetings were well-attended. The Garinagu from Houston and Mississippi attended August’s meeting. Because of the strong presence of Limoñenos in Louisiana and in other southern states, all the attendees were from Limón in comparison to the Garinagu in New York City who come from diverse Garifuna communities in Honduras and other nations (Belize, Guatemala, and Nicaragua). Vallecito

Faya's members held their monthly meetings at a privately owned Garifuna woman's house in East New Orleans, which required private transportation to reach. They decorated the coffee table in the living room where they held their meeting with a hand-made crocheted cover having the black, yellow, and white colors of the Garifuna flag. Garifuna food and beverages were served at the meeting. Each meeting referred to Miguel Facussé Bargum, one of Honduras' ruthless large landowners, but attendees also discussed fundraising activities to protect *Iseri Lidawamari*, a cooperative farm in Vallecito, Limón. Funds raised were generally around \$1,000 which Vallecito Faya members used to purchase flashlights in the United States to send to security guards protecting the Garifuna farms in Vallecito from *ladino* land invaders.

On June 8, 2010, I attended one of Vallecito Faya's fundraising events held at Gari Mix Restaurant and Club in the East New Orleans business district. A Garifuna woman from Limón owned the club until it closed in 2012. Club owners painted the interior walls with the black and yellow colors of the Garifuna flag. To enter the club, patrons paid an admission fee of \$15. The club was equipped with a bar, disc jockey, dance floor, Garifuna drummers and dancers, and a stage for live performances. Inside, Vallecito Faya's president, Brigido Cayetano, served guests cups of "Hi Hi," a sweet Garifuna drink he is attempting to commodify. Entertainment featured a live performance by Limoñena Ruby Aruba, who is shunned by the Garifuna middle class in New York City. Wearing a sexy dress having the Garifuna colors, a pair of black lace gloves, fishnet stockings, and a blond wig, Aruba sang in Garifuna and danced to pre-recorded music. Most members of the audience ignored her performance. This was the only fundraising event the Garinagu in East New Orleans organized during my fieldwork. Meeting cancellations were common due to poor attendance. Cayetano associates poor fundraising attendance to the lack of transportation and interest but also to people's work schedules. Most Garinagu in East New

Orleans are employed in the service industries, which commonly requires them to work during the weekends. In addition, their immigration status makes it difficult for many of them to negotiate time off. By mid-2011, Cayetano relocated to Limón and ceased all activities in East New Orleans.

While differing in many respects, the Garinagu in East New Orleans emulate the Garifuna middle class in New York City. Speaking of the partnership between Lina Martinez and New Horizon Investment Club to import *ereba* to the Bronx, Brigido Cayetano states, “it is my understanding that she has cassava in New York, in the supermarkets, and other places. So, that is the vision that I have in regards to Faya. This is why I tell you – that is why I aspire to the presidency [of *Iseri Lidawamari*]” (personal communication, October 10, 2010). Both the Garifuna middle class in East New Orleans and New York City aspire to form part of the global economy. Their economic practices therefore suggest their conflicting views of place regarding Honduras’ north coast. Malcolm X’s assertions are useful in understanding the Garifuna middle class’s economic practices. In his 1960 speech at the Harvard Law School Forum, Malcolm X declared “once the slave has his master’s education, the slave wants to be like his master, wants to share his master’s property, and even wants to exercise the same privileges as his master even while he is yet in his master’s house” (Kelley 1998:426). Malcolm X’s criticism of educated African Americans was an indictment of their assimilation of a white-oriented middle class mentality. In assessing Malcolm X’s criticism of African American middle class education, historian Robin D. Kelley observes that it “implied that the black bourgeoisie was incapable of siding with the masses and giving up their class interests – what African revolutionary Amilcar Cabral described as committing class suicide” (1998:426). Malcolm X, therefore, saw black middle class’s practices as a submission to white supremacy.

Cornel West argues that Malcolm X's political discourse called for black bourgeoisie "psychic conversion" (1994:136). This was Malcolm X's "black rage," a rage deeply grounded in the struggle for self-determination and liberty (West 1994:137). West also links Malcolm X's black rage with his "great love for black people." Hooks modifies West's assessment saying that Malcolm X possessed a perpetual thirst for "justice," which served as the "catalyst for his rage" (1995:13). This was a rage by which blacks in the United States could gain freedom. Malcolm X's rage is absent from the Garifuna middle class's discourse. In integrating into capitalist United States and distancing themselves from the land struggle in Honduras, most of them do not link the ramifications of their political and economic practices to the removal of the Garinagu from their land. Benitez, a member of the Garifuna middle class inner circle in the Bronx, concludes "I believe that sadly we will be displaced [from the land] but our culture will be kept as it has been kept to this day" (personal communication, May 25, 2010). Because the ideas diffusing from New Horizon's leaders center on social assimilation and economic integration, Benitez does not link the Garinagu's displacement from their territory to the forces of capitalism. Instead, she follows the prescription of New Horizon's leaders, "if you can't beat them [capitalists] join them by competing against them, which is the whole idea of raising capital in New Horizon . . . talking about economic development from the Garifuna community 'cause unless we become entrepreneurs, unless we mechanize and produce – mass produce – again . . . that's what colonialism was all about; that's what imperialism was all about" (M. Moran, personal communication, May 25, 2010). Moran, however, has not only resisted capitalism, he has adopted billionaire Texas real estate mogul Trammell Crow's model of profiting from land development (M. Moran, personal communication, May 25, 2010).

Moran decided upon adopting Crow's land development approach to apply it to the Garinagu's plight in Honduras as the Honduran government rigorously pursued tourism in 1992 (M. Moran, personal communication, May 25, 2010). Moran believes that it was his duty to educate the Garinagu about tourism because it was an unavoidable economic change. Given his "interest in real estate and . . . interest in the culture," he believed that the "Garifuna culture was gonna play a major role in tourism" (M. Moran, personal communication, June 8, 2009). Therefore, "understanding how tourism develops and understanding culture [was important]" (M. Moran, personal communication, June 8, 2009). This help explains why Moran sold the Garifuna's land via the internet in the early 1990s (R. Armenia, personal communication, September 14, 2013). The Garifuna middle class's politics of identity has shaped their views of place. Consequently, they are not developing a progressive agenda that can help safeguard the Garinagu's land on Honduras' north coast. Instead, guiding the ideas diffusing from the visible Garifuna leaders in New York City are capitalist-oriented. They are more concerned with preaching individual ownership and competition rather than addressing oppression and domination. Hence, in evoking David Harvey's thoughts, they have accepted "exclusionary . . . doctrines (the promise of eternity in a world of rapid change)" (2001:12). They thus see place dazzled with glitter. It is, therefore, this form of "reasoning framework" that isolates spaces for the development of critical consciousness (West 1994:36).

The Myth of Belonging

Many members of the Garifuna middle class in the United States see themselves as makers of the Garifuna social mobility by equating social mobility with assimilating western values. In 2007, GCU's administrators organized their first gala and on November 20, 2010 held their third one at the Eastwood Manor Caterers. Attended by over three hundred Garinagu and non-

Garinagu guests from the New York City metropolitan and tri-state areas (e.g. New Jersey, Connecticut) and California, Gunchei dance (Quadrille Dance) show entertained attendees (Colón, 2010). As Garifuna blogger Teofilo Colón states, Gunchei is “according to Garifuna American Choreographer MARIANO MARTINEZ, *‘the most formal, social dance of The Garifuna culture. Known to many as the Quadrille Dance. A waltz if you will’*” (2010 emphasis in original). Colón concludes, “Most people associate The Punta Dance with Garifuna People so it was refreshing to see another Garifuna cultural dance performed with style, elegance and grace. Kudos to the Garifuna Americans of The J Dove Productions Dance Company” (2010). Colón stated in his speech after receiving an award from the gala organizers, that it was special receiving the award in front of people he “consider[s] the ROYALTY of The Garifuna Community in New York City” (Colón, 2010). If the Gunchei dance is part of the Garifuna’s culture as Colón contends, the question arises how did the Garinagu adopt it? Did they adopt it from European colonizers or more recently introduced it as a fictitious but socially respectable cultural invention of the Garifuna middle class in the United States to help them overcome socio-spatial barriers as they integrate into capitalist United States? Who are the people who associate Punta Dance with Garifuna?

To answer the questions posed above requires some background into the origin of Gunchei. From the Latin word *quadratus*, meaning square, Parisian aristocracy embraced quadrille dance in the aftermath of the French Revolution (1789-99). Embracing the quadrille dance meant an attempt to foment a national identity. As a cultural practice associated with the upper social class, quadrille dances “became very elaborate and a mark of prestige” (Guilbault 1985:32; see also Miller 2007:79). By the mid-nineteenth century, quadrille diffused mostly to Western Europe, but also to the French and British colonies in the Caribbean where it is still practiced in

St. Lucia, Jamaica, and Carriacou as the Kwadril. In the Caribbean, the French plantocracy was known for enjoying quadrille dances. Anthropologist Rebecca S. Miller states that African captives “learned the dance . . . from watching and imitating” the master or whenever the master “asked the slaves to play music” (2007:81-82). In a society where African captives faced extensive constraints upon their spatial mobility, it is incomprehensible how the masters allowed the slaves to become an audience at their gatherings when the extent of their interaction was about “the honoring of the master [and the mistresses] and the dishonoring of the slave” (Patterson 1982: 11). Another important point to make is that I doubt that the master asked African captives to play music as Miller suggests; the masters ordered them to carry out their wishes. Once the Europeans abandoned quadrille dance, the masses retained it.

Given quadrille’s historical trajectory and the fact that the French and British colonists were present in St. Vincent, the Garinagu may have adopted it from either group. Anastasia Pascual remembers dancing quadrille during the late 1950s up to the mid-1970s in Honduras (personal communication, February 11, 2013). However, she resents the fact that the Garinagu have “abandoned this Garifuna’s tradition” (personal communication, February 11, 2013). Judging from the Garifuna middle class’s practices, it seems that the Garinagu never completely abandoned it. Instead, as evident with members of the Garifuna middle class, it seems that they see quadrille as an elevation of their values and as a cultural trait. For members of the Garifuna middle class, quadrille is refined while the traditional Punta is not. Decrying Punta and replacing it with quadrille is a form of cultural rejection. Cultural rejection by members of the Garifuna middle class can be also associated with their outlook on slavery. Most Garinagu are fond of saying that they were never enslaved, though as a culture, they emerged from slavery.

According to the unchallenged colonial master narrative of the Garinagu's ethnogenesis, a slave ship possibly owned by the Spanish or the Dutch, traveling from West Africa to the Caribbean with a cargo of African captives wrecked as a result of a hurricane near Bequia Island in the Lesser Antilles. The shipwreck's survivors and maroons (a colonial appellation for runaway African captives) from nearby islands took residence on St. Vincent where they adapted to the customs of the island's inhabitants who were variously referred to by the European colonizers as Arawaks, Arawak-Indians, Carib Indians, Charibs, Charaibs, Carib, Caribe, and Yellow or Red Caribs (Anderson 2009:3; Honychurch 1997:291; González 1988:xi; Young 1971:1). Twentieth century anthropologists referred to these inhabitants as "Island Caribs," although "they called themselves" Kalinago (Honychurch 1995:21). It is fair to say that segments of the master narrative are well-supported. Abundant data exists of the pre-colonial presence of Kalinago on St. Vincent, and of intermarriage between newly arrived Africans and maroons and the Arawaks (Anderson 2009:3; González 1988:21). It is also fair to say that indeed many slave ships wrecked in the Caribbean Sea. While such components of the master narrative yield a degree of sound information, we must reappraise other parts to create a new historical framework that speaks of the agency of Africans and their descendants in the African Diaspora. Did a shipwreck, in fact, occur? If so, was it caused by a hurricane or the Garinagu's African ancestors? These are key questions to ask since the shipwreck narrative has become an accepted belief. Blaut argues, "Beliefs tend to gain acceptance if they support the myth, and are either rejected or denied attention if they do not do so" (1993:59). The intent in briefly probing into the Garinagu's ethnogenesis is not to answer whether the shipwreck did or did not occur. The plan is to critique the reality of the Garinagu's ethnogenesis by taking an approach which

involves, in borrowing from bell hooks' words, "decolonizing our minds and imaginations, [learning] to think differently" and "to see everything with 'the new eyes'" (1994:7).

The first step in questioning the shipwreck myth considers whether the supposed shipwreck was actually caused by a hurricane. By claiming that a hurricane caused the wreck, the story takes away from the Garinagu's African ancestors' agency in being able to liberate themselves aboard the slave ship, a "location through which . . . hardship and human cruelty" gave a "new meaning to the vessel itself" – that is, as from being a space of captivity and domination to a space of struggle for freedom (McKittrick 2006:xii). Adequate evidence exists which supports the possibility that a slave rebellion could have resulted in African captives taking possession of the slave ship, for it was a common occurrence throughout the trans-Atlantic slave trade (see Greene 1944:348; Postmas 1990:165; Holloway, 2010; Beckles and Shepherd 2007: 12; James 1989:9; Robertson 2001:72). This could help us understand if African captives' struggle for freedom may have caused the vessel carrying the Garinagu's African ancestors that presumably wrecked.

Second, in questioning the shipwreck myth, one must also consider that the durations of the trans-Atlantic slave trade varied with an average voyage from West Africa coast lasting over two months (Eltis, 2007; also see Uya 1976:67). These voyages tended to have "higher rates of mortality, per voyage and per day at sea, than did other ships" (Klein et al. 2001:107). Historian Johannes Postmas' examination of the records of the Dutch slave trading company, Middelburgsche Commerce Compagnie, reveals that the mortality rate among captives was 12.3 percent (1990:156). The high mortality rate was certainly expected. African captives "were packed in the hold on galleries one above the other. Each was given only four or five feet in length and two or three feet in height, so that they could neither lie at full length nor sit upright"

(James 1989:8) and men and women “were separated, kept naked, packed close together, and the men were chained for long periods (Eltis, 2007). Given such conditions, smallpox, syphilis, fevers, ophthalmia, dropsy, seasickness, gastro-intestinal, and food and water shortage made conditions aboard the slave ship torturous (Greene 1944:348; West 1997:8). So, if a hurricane caused the shipwreck which led to the Garinagu’s African ancestors as European colonizers state and scholars maintain, how could ailing and injured African captives have escaped their bonds and managed to survive a hurricane’s violent waves, currents, rain, and winds?

Yet, the shipwreck narrative remains strong much like other myths such as cannibalism. The Garinagu have come to believe this myth first because, in borrowing hooks’ words, “they do not want to see images that might compel them to militance” (1992:6). Second, as historian Larry Levine states in the documentary *Ethnic Notions*, when people see an image so many times, the image begins to gain “meaning” and they begin to believe that, in fact, the image is an accurate depiction of who they are (Riggs, 1987). I apply hooks’ and Levine’s argument to the Garifuna people’s understanding of their ethnogenesis and of their self-perception. If certain false accounts of historical events are repeated, then a distortion of the people and places making that history results. In this way, the acceptance of the shipwreck narrative makes it difficult to know the true of the Garinagu’s ethnogenesis and how their culture and relationships with their lands actually started and developed. We know that it began in Africa. However, having become a popular belief within contemporary Garifuna culture, the shipwreck narrative becomes an obstacle to uncovering the historical facts of the Garinagu’s ethnogenesis and cultural evolution. In deconstructing the shipwreck’s myth, it would shed light on the cultural relationship between the Garinagu and their African ancestors, a relationship that many feel is best to forget or ignore. Former Haitian professor of anthropology and social sciences Michel-

Rolph Trouillot states, “silences are inherent in history because any single event enters history with some of its constituting parts missing. Something is always left out while something else is recorded” (1995:49). Deconstructing the Garinagu’s ethnogenesis remains unfinished. Yet, the Garifuna middle class, and most Garinagu in general, do not address what is missing because it does not fit their politics and practices today as evident with their narrative of quadrille.

As a Garifuna middle class’s practice in a capitalist society, elevating quadrille therefore suggests that “it is better not to be black in a country where being black is a liability” (Jones 1963:123-24). Tracing African American middle class cultural development in the United States, chiefly in the post-Reconstruction period, cultural critic, writer, and political activists Everett LeRoi Jones’s (Amiri Baraka) analysis helps us understand how this group’s assimilative practices aided them in shedding their blackness. Many African American middle class perceived jazz to be a “hindrance to racial progress, since jazz often presented it as a referent for sexuality, primal passions, and exotic ‘primitivism’” (Franklin and Higginbotham Brooks 2011:387). For African American artists, however, artistic experience represented a way of reshaping “the black image in the larger public mind” (Franklin and Higginbotham Brooks 2011:381). Undoubtedly, each component of African American society shaped by social mobility in the United States informed their cultural values. Jones’ analysis again succinctly captures African American cultural contestations. He states,

It was the growing black middle class who believed that the best way to survive in America would be to disappear completely, leaving no trace at all that there had ever been an Africa, or a slavery, or even, finally, a black [person]. This was the only way, they thought to be citizens. For the Creoles and mulattoes of the South, this was easier – there was a quickly discernible difference between themselves and their darker brother since it was the closeness of the father (and mothers) to the masters that had produced them in the first place. (1963:124)

These are precisely the same practices that members of the Garifuna middle class are engaged in because they believe that their very survival in the United States, as a specific group striving for economic and political integration, rests on shunning anything that remotely resembles their African heritage and who they are as black people. In assimilating these practices, the Garifuna middle class are unconcerned about losing their communities on Honduras' north coast. Instead, they create a new social identity associated with middle class status or "acting white" in borrowing Goldberg's words (1993:69). The Garifuna middle class perceives their newly reconstructed social identity as offering a way to attain upward social mobility in the United States.

Speaking of African Americans' "exile" to Europe, Jones states that their adoption of a new cultural identity in the 1940s as reflected with the "goatee, beret, and window-pane glasses were no accidents" (Jones 1963:201). They were bee bop "symbols" (Jones 1963:201). Jones contends that adopting these "socio-cultural symbols" was a way to formally conform to western values (1963:201). Members of the Garifuna middle class are undergoing a similar cultural transformation to blacks in the United States. Their silver and blue gowns, and wigs, whether brown or blond, reflect this change. This change results from a form of cultural politics that prevents them from calling for a progressive agenda and values antithetical to western values. Instead, they are pushing other Garinagu to embrace these values while negating their own traditional values. Only when they find it to be opportune in advancing their own immediate aspirations do they articulate "race matters" in borrowing Cornel West's words, politics of identity, and the land struggle in Honduras (2001). Invoking the concept of race in accentuating the Garifuna's social mobility suggests that in the same way the Garifuna middle class adopt western values, they undermined their culture and their homeland on Honduras' north coast.

Again, I will draw a parallel between African Americans in assessing the Garifuna middle class's cultural practices. Drawing from bell hooks' comparative analysis of African Americans racial discourse, there is no doubt that the Garifuna middle class's identity politics relate to their economic and political integration agenda. Hooks argues that "assimilated black people evoked an identity politics rooted in the privileging of a model of integration, wherein allegiance to blackness was abdicated in the interest of erasing race and promoting an ethos of humanism that would emphasize commonalities between white and blacks" (1995:241). The Garifuna middle class follows similar path. They encourage the Garinagu in Honduras, as I discuss in chapter seven, to become shareholders in the Honduran government tourism project. Of course, not all Garinagu subscribe to the social mobility doctrine articulated by the Garifuna middle class.

Most Garinagu that I interviewed believe in their economic, political, and social upliftment in the United States and in Honduras, but they must not pursue them by decrying and commodifying their culture. For instance, Armenia defines the Garifuna middle class in the United States as "Oreo cookies," meaning black on the outside but white on the inside (personal communication, January 23, 2011). Armenia explains her definition as follows: "So, we have whitened, we have elevated, we are rubbing elbows with people from different levels; so, we don't have to be so Garifuna unless the only difference that makes us so Garifuna is that here it is a fashion to dance with the ethnic characteristics" (personal communication, January 23, 2011). Here Armenia is explaining the geography of the new social identity bolstering the Garifuna middle class's social mobility and the geography of race shaping the Garifuna middle class's practices.

Armenia also points out other contradictions manifested today in the spatial ambiguity of the Garifuna positions and social mobility, which she calls "Garifunism," or Garinagu's

representation and integration methods in New York City and the tools used in pursuing that representation and integration in Honduras. Armenia succinctly states,

it is easier here to infer the issue of well the political and economic, but being in Honduras we are nobody because even from the land [Garinagu] are being removed. So, why the people who live [in the United States] have constructed beautiful houses but we are not affecting the economic development of Honduras . . . Because in the end, if they leave [the United States], they do not have the resources to support their economic activities and even the house they would lose. So, they would end up deteriorating because what [humans] make must be maintained. So, that is the difference, but generally speaking in having been capable of purchasing a house in the big neighborhoods in La Ceiba has made people think that that has connected them with the economic power because now they have a car, they have a beautiful house in one of the colonial [neighborhood] and they go back and forth so they can have a middle class lifestyle. But, that is not the reality in affecting the political and economic structure . . . all the preeminence in making decisions within the power. So, in the communities we have had our own mayors and that same conduct with the exception of Lombardo and he was worried about the land. (personal communication, January 23, 2011)

Armenia is not only questioning the socio-spatial conditions of the Garinagu but also the illusion of belonging. Echoing Blaut's assessment of faculty's cultural practices in higher education, there is this presumption among the Garifuna middle class that they belong to an "ethno-class" (1979:158). By ethno-class, Blaut means adhering to certain cultural practices. This is what the new Garifuna leaders associate with class and prestige. The new Garifuna leaders in New York City use class and ethnicity as measurements of asserting legitimacy. Redefining their identity from Garifuna to Garifuna American and transforming their relationship with the land are some of the dominant culture's ideologies and values that they have assimilated to inform their cross-border activism.

I attribute the weakening of the land struggle's activism in New York City to practices assimilated by the Garifuna middle class in New York City. Armenia summarizes changes in the Bronx by stating, "apparently they [the Garifuna leaders] have not understood the essence of the

land conflict, which [some] have been trying to work on by themselves and lose sight of the international help. And others have sought international help in a different direction and that's where it is now" (R. Armenia, personal communication, January 23, 2011). The Garinagu have thus used international cultural politics while simultaneously neglecting ties to previously important international social issues such as the land struggle. I must recalibrate one aspect of Armenia's statement concerning the Garinagu's impact on Honduras' economy. The Pew Hispanic Center's report states "remittances to Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua – nations that receive almost all their money transfers from the United States – totaled some \$10.2 billion" (2001:2). Although it is hard to ascertain what percentage of this figure represents remittances sent to Honduras, it still represents a significant contribution to Honduras' economy. It must also be mentioned that the Garinagu use their remittances for building roads, clean water supply systems, sewage disposal systems, and medical facilities in their respective communities.

Unlike Armenia, other Garinagu address race to a larger Garifuna audience. The first Garifuna Cultural Heritage Awards celebration held on March 13, 2010 at Hosts Center for the Arts & Culture in the Bronx displayed various Garinagu performers. Among these performers was the Garifuna Folkloric Ballet of Honduras headed by its longtime artistic director, Crisanto Armando Melendez. One of the Folkloric Ballet's performers recited "our ancestors came from Africa; Asante, Fun, Yoruba; this is our history; I absolutely refused to be part of the silenced ones, of those who cry or are afraid; I accept myself; I am certainly black" (Monaco, 2010). These words indicate that there are isolated voices resisting the hegemonic practices embraced by the Garifuna middle class.

Different perspectives existing among members of the Garifuna middle class raise the question: how does the Garifuna middle class see the urban space in relation to their cultural practices and Honduras' north coast? In an e-mail José Francisco Ávila circulated on Garifunalink listserv, he states,

During a recent visit to Honduras, I attended the Afrodescendants Women Forum in Tegucigalpa, where I had a conversation with various Garinagu where someone commented 'It would be nice if we could hold events like these, more often, instead of just in April. To which I answered, in New York City, you can attend a Garifuna event just about every week, which really surprised them. I continued, as a matter of fact I will dare to say that New York has become the epicenter of the Garifuna Culture! That really blew their mind! I am certain that someone will disagree, therefore, let me share some factual evidence. According to Mayor Michael Bloomberg 'Our city has always led the nation - not just in celebrating holidays, but in pioneering the most innovative and ambitious new ideas. In so many areas, whatever happens, happens here first. New York is, as Mayor Koch once famously said, "where the future comes to audition.'" (personal communication, May 31, 2013)

First, Ávila's declaration suggests that he embraces Bloomberg's Eurocentric model. Borrowing from Blaut's analysis on Europeans presumed superiority, the Eurocentric model is predicated on the belief that Europeans "are seen as the 'makers of history,' advances, progresses," and modernity while those so-called developing nations are devoid of imagination (1993:1; see also Said 1979:7). Hence, their only recourse is to imitate Europeans. I argue that Bloomberg is applying the same model. Second, Mayor Ed Koch (1978-1989) perpetuated "the mythology" that New York City is a harmonious cultural mosaic because of its diverse ethnic population (Green and Wilson 1989:94). While New York City does have a diverse ethnic population, it does not mean that all the city's inhabitants enjoy equality as we shall see. Koch's reaction to New York City's Mayor, John Lindsay's (1966-1973) initiative in 1971 contradicts his mythology. Lindsay announced in 1971 the construction of a low-income housing in Forest Hill, Queens, a neighborhood heavily populated by Jewish middle class. Neighborhood residents

mounted a fight. Consequently, city officials used the site proposed for low-income housing to build housing for the elderly. Koch “shredded his liberal credentials and emerged as the leader of the white backlash movement frightened” by the city ethnic landscape (Green and Wilson 1989:27). Yet, it seems that members of the Garifuna middle class embrace Koch’s mythology because it fits their ideology of integrating into the city’s political landscape.

Lastly, Ávila’s promotion of the Garifuna middle class’s practices in New York City suggests that for him the urban sphere is where culture flourishes and from where it diffuses to the rest of the world. His statements speak of the colonized mindset that denies black agency, values, and Honduras’ north coast as the Garifuna cultural hearth; instead, he yields to the dominance of white supremacy. His views also suggest that organizing scores of social events signal the Garifuna people’s progress and social recognition that can only be attained in the capitalist metropolis, New York City. Changes in the Garifuna middle class’s perceptions push them further away from devising realistic political strategies that could enable them to foster a healthier dialogue among the larger Garifuna community to challenge hegemonic spatial practices. Their understanding of place has been fragmented as evident with their cultural practices (e.g. galas). It seems that the Garifuna middle class organizes galas and other events to safeguard a false sense of belonging projected through imagery. This imagery is directly linked to spatial meaning found in the urban sphere. After all, as theorist, philosopher, and sociologist Henry Lefebvre argues, spaces “conceal their contents by means of meanings, by means of an absence of meaning or by means of an overload of meaning” (1991:92). By this Lefebvre means that spaces like places do not reveal a full understanding of a society’s reality. It is the concealment of this reality or the overload of meanings and concealment of true meanings that

negate critical imagination among the Garifuna middle class and gratify the meaning they draw from the urban sphere.

“Civic Participation”

On July 4, 2010, Hondurans Against AIDS, Inc. and GCU’s leaders organized a “Garifuna community civic meeting with New York City Mayor [Michael] Bloomberg.” I e-mailed Pabla Trujillo to inquire about the purpose of this meeting. Trujillo replied, “the meeting with the New York City Mayor was basically for visivilization [sic] of the community in New York and the United States, remember that most of the immigrants communities this is one of the first step [s] only” (personal communication, July 18, 2010). For Trujillo, the Garifuna middle class in New York City must also engage in a host of political practices to gain the visibility that other ethnic groups have gained in this polyethnic city with more than nineteen million inhabitants. Most of these groups have come to define the city’s political landscape. In the Garinagu’s case, they have advocated the proclamation of Garifuna Heritage Month in the Bronx and organized voter registration drives, and held civic meetings with New York City’s mayor.

To begin gaining the visibility which members of the Garifuna middle class believe they can attain in New York City, on December 1, 2010, José Francisco Ávila circulated an e-mail in Garifunalink listserv which reads,

we successfully petitioned [current] Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr., to once again proclaim Garifuna Heritage Month in the Bronx. Furthermore, we were successful in petitioning Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and Assemblyman Michael Benjamin to sponsor Legislative Resolution K1120 memorializing Governor David A. Paterson to declare March 11 - April 12, 2010, as Garifuna American Heritage Month in the State of New York. We invite all Garinagu and friends to join us in celebrating Garifuna American Heritage Month 2011, in observance of the 214th anniversary of the exile of the Garifuna people from St Vincent and their settlement in Central America. (personal communication, December 1, 2010)

As a result of advocacy by the GCU and several other Garifuna organizations, the Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. and GCU “celebrated the proclamation of March 11 to April 12, 2011” as Garifuna Heritage Month (J. Ávila, personal communication, March 13, 2011). Held at the Bronx County Courthouse and attended by several Garifuna leaders including prominent Belizean Garifuna E. Roy Cayetano, the event, as Ávila’s e-mail concludes, “highlighted the great contributions of the Garifuna Americans to the fabric of New York and the Bronx, and to pay tribute to the common culture and bonds of friendship that unite the United States and the Garifuna countries of origin” (personal communication, March 13, 2011). A banquet, “‘Abrazo Garifuna” (Garifuna Embrace), held on April 5, 2011 celebrated the common culture and bonds of friendship Ávila highlights in his e-mail. Garifuna heritage month’s proclamation took place on the twenty-first anniversary of the Happy Land Social Club tragedy. New York State Democrat Assemblyman Eric Stevenson, who is African American and represented the 79th Assembly District until early January 2014 when he was convicted “on bribery and extortion” worked with the Garinagu on their proclamation project (Weiser, 2014). Stevenson whose district includes Morrisania, “sponsored a Resolution in the New York State Assembly to declare March 11- April 12, 2011, as the Garifuna American Heritage Month in the State of New York” (J. Ávila, personal communication, March 13, 2011). Stevenson presented the resolution to the Garinagu at the Second Annual Garifuna Heritage Awards and Cultural Night on March 26, 2011 at the Hostos Center for the Arts and Culture in the Bronx (J. Ávila, personal communication, March 13, 2011).

Mobilizing around Garifuna Heritage Month has become a ritual for GCU and for many Garinagu. Initiated either by “an individual,” “local group,” or legislative process, proclamations are largely symbolic and do not hold any political significance (“Proclamation Index Paterson,”

n.d.). A proclamation's petitioners, however, view it as having important meaning. For GCU's administrators, the proclamation gives them a chance to mingle with city and state politicians who they saw as a major milestone in recognizing the Garinagu's presence in New York City. As Ávila declares, the recognition of Garifuna Heritage Month demonstrates that the Garinagu "have risen from obscurity to the pinnacle of Recognition and honored the legacy of Thomas Vincent Ramos" (Ávila, 2011). Do all Garinagu know who Thomas Vincent Ramos was or what impact the Garifuna Heritage Month proclamation will have on changing the Garinagu's socio-spatial conditions and relationship with Honduras' north coast?

Born in Tulian, Puerto Cortés, Honduras, to Cecilio Ramos and Santolina Rhys (Welsh last name) in 1887, in 1923 Ramos settled in Dangriga, Belize. He died on November 13, 1955, a year after he was "naturalized as a British subject" (Ramos 2000:5). For many Garinagu, Ramos' most important accomplishment is the Garifuna Settlement Day, "initially known as Carib Disembarkment Day" (Ramos 2000:5). Observed on November 19 since 1943 in Stann Creek Town and 1977 nationwide in Belize, the day recognizes the Garinagu's late nineteenth century arrival to Belize. In celebration of Belize's tenth independence anniversary in 1990, the government issued a twenty-five cent stamp featuring Ramos. Ramos' underlying belief was to integrate the Garinagu into Belizean society (Ramos 2000:8). Ramos, a devoted Christian and loyalist to the British Empire, along with other Garinagu mobilized in 1941 for the Garinagu's recognition. In a letter Garifuna Profilio Marin sent from the District Commissioner's Office to Ramos in 1941 commending him on the mobilization for recognition, Marin states,

As a proud member of this much neglected and backward race (sorry to say) and as one who is honestly wishing to see it emerge into a respondent betterment in every respect, I would here suggest that you and the members of the suggested committee get together make some arrangement whereby the people, ESPECIALLY THE YOUTH, be properly informed and impressed about the history of our race which is another vitally important step on which

the coming generation need to build, as a foundation for their better preservation than had been in the past. For we all know from experience that race consciousness and racial love had not been sufficiently emphasized . . . instead, there has been and there still is among certain members of this race a decided tendency towards racial and self-determination. (Ramos 2000:10)

Clearly, Marin not only articulates racial pride, but also upholds the colonial mindset. Marin also seems to support British colonists' racial discourse. At the same time, Marin supports the Garinagu's self-determination, but it is hard to ascertain if he is referring to political, economic, or cultural self-determination.

Judging from Ramos' writing, as we shall see, it appears that the Garinagu were seeking cultural integration. In various articles presented in Ramos' granddaughter, Adele Ramos-Daly's book *T.V. Ramos - The Man and His Writings* (2002), Ramos calls for the Garifuna women to teach the Garifuna children and praises the first Garifuna teacher Santiago Beni for teaching Garifuna children at a Catholic school in Stann Creek. Despite Ramos' activism, he was also very loyal to the British occupation of Belize until its independence in 1981. In his article *Settlement Day Celebrations: Message of Loyalty to His Excellency* published November 23, 1943, Ramos states "Today we commemorate the 120th Anniversary since our ancestors landed on these shores under protection of the Great British Empire, the champion of weaker races" (Ramos 2000:32). In the same article, Ramos states that despite the economic crisis affecting Belize, the British government has "not in the very least slackened in its watchfulness to protect us against invasion either by air, land or sea by ruthless enemy whose aim is to destroy the peace and happiness of free peoples of the world," but with "God's help" this crisis will be averted (Ramos 2000:32). Despite Ramos' loyalty to the British Empire, Adele Ramos-Daly maintains there was another side to him. He chaired UNIA in Stann Creek (2005). UNIA advocated for black racial pride, self-determination, and repatriation to Africa (Giffin 2005:210). Garvey's

pan-Africanist message resonated with people of African descent globally. In fact, Belizean Samuel A. Haynes formed a branch of the UNIA in Belize in the early 1900s (Boyce Davies 2008:154; also see Hill 2011:639).

Given Ramos' loyalty to the British Empire, at what point in his life did he become a Garveyite? Judging from Ramos' poems and articles, he does not seem to express UNIA's principles. Therefore, there is a paradox in Ramos' viewpoints. In historian Wilson Jeremiah Moses's analysis of "classical black nationalism" which he defines as an "ideology whose goal was the creation of an autonomous black nation-state, with definite geographical boundaries – usually in Africa," he argues that black nationalists' perspectives in the nineteenth century may seem incomprehensible to many today because it was driven by religious ideologies (1996:3). However, for classical black nationalists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it provided "a means of preserving shreds of dignity and self-respect in the face of the almost universal military, technological and economic domination by whites over blacks" (Moses 1996:3). Ramos' cultural ideals, similar to black classical nationalists, "resembled those of upper-class Europeans and whites Americans" rather than those of Africans or the black masses (Moses 1996:3). Although Ramos' views similar to the black classical nationalists' were not driven by cultural relativism, there is a slight difference between them. Black classical nationalists were following a mythical framework in the nineteenth century. Ramos, on the other hand, was preaching a passive integrationist approach in the 1940s at a point when more progressive black ideas had developed. Ramos' integrationist approach is what the Garifuna middle class follows. Using Ramos' approach has not transformed the Garinagu's social-spatial conditions. On the contrary, this social recognition continues to keep them at the margins of the social hierarchy. Geographer and regional urban planner Clyde Woods states that the "creation

of and reproduction of distinctive ethnicity, class, resources, sectoral, and constructional practices are the very definitions of identity in the social constructed region” (2002:64). The Garifuna middle class aspires to form part of the identity region that Woods addresses and their political practices reflect this aspiration.

Comprised of 12 community districts, Congressional District 16 but also District 7 and 17 prior to the 2012 redistricting covered most of the Bronx (Paul, 2011). The 16th district covers the northern Bronx and half of southern Westchester County including the cities of Mount Vernon, Yonkers, and Rye. From 2003 to 2013 the district included the neighborhoods of Bedford Park, East Tremont, Fordham, Hunt Point, Melrose, Highbridge, Morrisania, Mott Haven and University Heights (“New York’s 16th Congressional District”). Politically, most of the South Bronx today is a Puerto Rican political stronghold due in part to what Sonia Song-Ha Lee defines as racial tension between Puerto Ricans and African Americans over “antipoverty funding” and its leader Ramón Velez’s “mass voter registration drives” in January 1968 in Hunt Point (Lee 2014:217). Although Lee claims that tension over resources was the main cause of struggle between these two groups, African Americans nevertheless still have a strong political presence in the 16th district as well. The Concourse Village is one example. It is populated by a working class population residing in a “housing development that is 81 percent black” (“Bronxites Speak Out Against Council Redistricting-Again,” n.d.). Much of “northern Manhattan” is also another African American political stronghold (Taylor, 2014). However, redistricting which takes place every ten years in the United States as a process is designed to redraw the boundaries of voting districts to reflect demographic changes and to offer equitable congressional representation. How does this political and geographical reorganization impact the

Garinagu? The Garifuna's voter registration drives reflect their response to changes in the Bronx and their desires to also join the Bronx's political landscape.

Following President Barack Obama's call for civic engagement, former Mayor Michael Bloomberg's Immigrant Civic Engagement Zone of New York City invited GCU to participate in the voter registration drive campaign. On July 29, 2010, GCU announced the Garifuna's Voter Education and Registration Project for the November 2, 2010 New York State elections (Garifuna Coalition USA, Inc. 2014). Hoping to register 5,000 Garifuna voters, GCU kicked off initiative at The Garifuna Advocacy Center, Casa Yurumein, and in Brooklyn at MUGAMA, Inc., Wabatou Cultural Center, and The Biko Transformation Center, a center named after South African anti-apartheid activist Stephen Bantu Biko (Colón, 2010). In the Bronx, GCU set up information and registration tables with Garifuna representatives at Ferry Point, Bill Rainey, and Crotona Parks and at Linden Boulevard Park in Brooklyn, where Garinagu gather throughout the summer on Sundays to play soccer. In addition to registering Garinagu for the New York State elections, the voter registration drive served other purposes: (1) "to educate Garinagu about the political process," and (2) "to educate legal residents of their qualification for naturalization, and provide them with the information of places where they can complete this process" (Garifuna Coalition, USA, Inc., 2009; M. Moran, personal communication, November 3, 2010). For members of the Garifuna middle class, the fundamental reason for registering Garinagu is because "civic participation and voter engagement are critical components toward reducing barriers for poor and disenfranchised communities" (Garifuna Coalition, USA, Inc. 2009; M. Moran, personal communication, July 29, 2010). Albeit peripheral, it seems that for the Garifuna middle class, the voter registration represents political legitimacy.

Besides voter registration drives, members of the Garifuna middle class also organize civic meetings. On July 14, 2010, José Francisco Ávila and Mirtha Colón organized the “Garifuna Community Civic Meeting with New York City Mayor [Michael] Bloomberg.” Held at the Lincoln Hospital Auditorium in the South Bronx, this ninety-three minute event was well-attended by the Garinagu. A member of Bloomberg’s entourage was 71-year-old Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly. Sitting alongside participating Garinagu in the audience’s front row was the Honduran Consulate in New York City, Francisco Quesada, whose presence Colón acknowledged while speaking at the podium (J. Ávila, 2010). Yet, Quesada did not speak on behalf of the Garinagu residing in New York City; instead, they spoke on their own behalf, suggesting that they used different methods in challenging the Honduran government’s oppression outside of Honduras.

Before José Francisco Ávila introduced Mayor Bloomberg to the cheering crowd, Colón and Ávila stated that the purpose of the civic meeting was “to discuss some of the problems that affect our community here in New York. We would like the Mayor to help us strengthen our work in alleviating these problems” (Colón, 2010:n.p.). Once Colón introduced Ávila as the moderator, he stated that this “is a civic meeting designed to discuss issues facing New York City, in search of steady and significant social, economic, civic, and cultural improvements of the Garifuna community in New York City because the Garifunas’ issues are every community in New York’s issues” (Ávila, 2010). Ávila went on to state that the “ideas and recommendations discussed here tonight will serve as the basis for a local advocacy agenda. If the issues identified here tonight are important to you, we strongly encourage you to become involved with a local advocacy group or organization such as the ones here and even the local

community boards” (Ávila, 2010). Once Bloomberg took the podium, he thanked Ávila for “his census outreach work” (Ávila, 2010).

To the Garinagu’s thunderous applause, Bloomberg said *seremein* (Garifuna word for thank you), which he translated as meaning “good night” (Ávila, 2010). He also stated that if it “wasn’t too hot outside I would finish the night with *hudutu*,” a traditional Garifuna dish. Bloomberg thanked the New York Fire and Police Departments for keeping “us safe” (Ávila, 2010). Questions and answers session followed his speech. Rather than questions, I would describe the audience member’s statements as being, more accurately, comments and praises for the mayor and government. Edgar Cordova praised the Bloomberg administration for expanding charter schools which is the government’s way of scaling down public education by privatizing it (Colón, 2010:n.p.).

Other Garinagu inquired about the availability of resources for Garinagu entrepreneurs. Garinagu attendees also asked questions about low-income housing and gentrification, which Bloomberg acknowledged to be a problem. He added that “now we started a plan to rehab or build 165,000 units of affordable housing. We are actually a little bit ahead of schedule, the guy that started that I did an event with today, Shaun Donovan” (Colón, 2010:n.p.). According to the Coalition for the Homeless, there were 40,000 people living in city shelters in 2010 and 53,615 as of January 2014 (Coalition for the Homeless, n.d.). Next, Garinagu participants asked several questions about securing a community center. Speaking in Garifuna, Milton Guity asked if the Bloomberg administration could help the Garifuna community build a place in memory of the Happy Land fire of 1990. Mayor Dinkins had offered Garinagu the opportunity to build a center soon after the fire, but their bickering stalled the plan as some Garinagu who participated in the

process point out. In any event, Ávila poorly translated Guity's words to mean that the Garinagu were seeking closure from Bloomberg for the Happy Land tragedy.

Another question came from the Garifuna Sara Logan, who commented about Manhattan's safety being better than the Bronx's. Because the Garinagu asked noncritical questions, Mayor Bloomberg and Commissioner Kelly glowed when talking about the low crime level in the Bronx. Complementing Bloomberg's response about the low crime was mentioning Operation Impact as being a program implemented by Kelly to ward off crime in areas such as the Bronx. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, billionaire Republican Michael Rubens Bloomberg was inaugurated on January 1, 2002 as New York City's 108th Mayor, preceded by Republican Rudolph Guliani. With post-9/11 nationalist sentiments still high today among many New Yorkers, fear among others, and critical analysis deriving from others, Bloomberg named then 61-year-old Raymond Kelly as the city's police commissioner, a post he first held under Mayor Dinkins in 1992. In 2002, Commissioner Kelly established the first counterterrorism bureau and also conceived the stop-and-frisk campaign ("Raymond Kelly," n.d.).

The New York Civil Liberties Union's (NYCLU) website states that since the stop-and-frisk program's initiation, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) stopped and questioned New Yorkers over 4 million times (New York Civil Liberties Union, n.d.). Most of those stopped were black people and Latinos. According to NYCLU "nine out of 10" of those stopped were innocent (New York Civil Liberties Union, n.d.). Stop-and-frisk numbers posted by NYCLU covering the period of October 1 to December 31, 2003 for all police precincts in New York City reveal that the 40th, 41st, and 42nd precincts, all located in the South Bronx heavily populated by Garinagu, reported 424 and 274 stop-and-frisks respectively (New York Civil Liberties Union, n.d.). In Brooklyn, the 73rd precinct in Brownville also where Garinagu reside

reported 451 stop and frisk events whereas in Harlem, the 26th precinct reported 212 (New York Civil Liberties Union, n.d.). During Stop-and-Frisk's first year, the NYPD stopped New Yorkers 97,296 times, out of this number 80,176 people or 82 percent were totally innocent ("Stop-and-Frisk"). By 2010, NYPD made 601,285 stops out of which "518,849 (86 percent) were totally innocent, 315,083 (54 percent) were black, 189,326 (33 percent) were Latino, 54,810 (9 percent) were white" (New York Civil Liberties Union, n.d.).

Following a class action lawsuit in August 2013, Judge Shira Scheindlin ruled that stop-and-frisk was unconstitutional because it is a "policy of indirect racial profiling" which targeted non-whites (Goodman, 2013). Mayor Bloomberg and Commissioner Kelly responded angrily to the ruling and ensured the removal of Scheindlin from the case (Goodman, 2013). In a November 6, 2013 interview with Democracy Now! news hour producer and co-host Amy Goodman, New York City Police Officer Adhyl Polanco, who has opposed stop-and-frisk since 2009, states that his superior ordered him to stop random teenagers just for walking home (Goodman, 2013). Polanco further states that his superior also prevented him from reporting certain cases of violent crimes as a way to create the appearance that the city's crime rate was low (Goodman, 2013). Like Polanco, many New Yorkers and organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) held marches in New York City protesting stop-and-frisk. In an interview with Goodman from Democracy Now!, sociologist Natalie Byfield draws a parallel between the five innocent black and Latino teenagers who were found guilty in 1989 for raping a white female jogger in Central Park in New York City and stop-and-frisk. Byfield connects the racialization of the case that subsequently led to the conviction of the teenagers to make it acceptable to "criminalize black youth – Latino youth – male youth" who are "equated with crime. So, it made it easier for practices of stop-and-frisk to

happen” (2014). Similar to the “War on Drugs,” stop-and-frisk became a new means of putting “blacks back in their place” (Alexander 2010:5).

The Garinagu attending the civic meeting did not ask Bloomberg or Kelly how many of the innocent New Yorkers stopped-and-frisked were Garinagu. The Garinagu did not ask why the NYPD targeted blacks and Latinos or how they see blackness. They did not ask Kelly why he said that he “wanted to instill fear [in African Americans and Latinos]” (Goodman, 2013). The Garinagu should have asked these questions and many more because they reside in neighborhoods heavily populated by non-whites and where more residents are stopped- and-frisked. In addition, the law enforcement does respect Garinagu’s lives. In 2007, off-duty NYPD Officer Raphael Lora shot five times and killed 41 year-old Garifuna and father of six, Fermin Arzu (Colón and Ávila, 2007). The extrajudicial killing was in response to Arzu crashing his van in the “cop’s Bronx block” (Marzulli, 2013). Claiming self-defense, Officer Lora “thought [Fermin] was going for a weapon in his glove compartment, but no gun was found” (Colón & Ávila, 2007). Mirtha Colón and José Francisco Ávila issued a press release in 2007. In it, they state “we are not going to tolerate the abuse of our brother’s civil and human rights . . . ” (Colón & Ávila, 2007). They also state that Arzu’s murder reminded many New Yorkers of the murder of unarmed Guinean immigrant Amadou Diallo who the NYPD shot forty-one times in the vestibule of his Bronx apartment in 1999. The judge repealed Officer Lora’s manslaughter conviction in 2011 allowing him to retire and “collect 75% of the pension” (Marzulli, 2013). Arzu’s killing should have also reminded Colón and Ávila of the state-sponsored violence against the Garifuna activists and those surviving on Honduras’ north coast. I draw a parallel to Arzu’s case from Kobayashi and Peake. They state that “racism is a product of specific historical geographies, varying across place according to processes such as

colonialism, migration, labor markets, and built environments . . .” (Kobayashi & Peake 2008: 156). Yet, the Garinagu attending the civic meeting with Mayor Bloomberg did not raise questions about stop-and-frisk or Arzu because it seems they were easily pleased by the Mayor’s mispronounced recitation of a few Garifuna words.

Conclusion

What I have illustrated in this chapter is the Garifuna middle class’s economic, cultural, and political practices in New York City. They organize galas, voter registration drives, and civic meetings in an attempt to gain visibility. There is nothing wrong with their practices. The problem is that when they engage in these practices they shun their own cultural traditions because they believe that assimilating the dominant culture’s practices signals inclusion. In fact, it is simply an illusion of inclusion. Their preoccupation with assimilation has distanced them from the land struggle in Honduras to the extent that they have defined New York City as the Garinagu’s culture hearth. This perspective suggests that the Garinagu residing in the United States have disassociated themselves from their homeland and adapted to another one instead.

CHAPTER 7 THE MAKING OF A LANDLESS SOCIETY

Honduras: Geography and Land Tenancy

The Garifuna activists have been organizing for over two decades to protect their communities and territories along Honduras' 456-mile Caribbean north coast, and on the Bay Islands and Cayos Cochinos. Their communities have been settled in this region since the early nineteenth century before the formation of the nation-state of Honduras. The Garinagu's interaction with the physical environment through cultural practices of subsistence agriculture and fishing, have shaped their belonging to the coastal region. Yet, the Honduran government and oligarchs, multilateral international lending institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), and Inter-American Development Bank in cooperation with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and foreign individual investors remain resolved to remove Garinagu from the north coast to appropriate the region into the space of free market capitalism (Pine 2008:19). In this chapter, I contend that the ideology of economic development executed by the Honduran government and elites in the 1970s and later, in tandem with a recent set of laws implemented since the early 1990s, and the policies of international lending institutions, transformed the Garifuna people into a landless society.

Bordering Guatemala to the west, El Salvador to the south, Nicaragua to the east, and the Caribbean Sea to the north, Honduras is a rugged mountainous country of 8.4 million inhabitants. Forty-six percent of its population or over 3 million people reside in the city whereas 54 percent or over 4.5 million reside in the rural areas (González 2006:9). Although Honduras occupies 112,492 square kilometers of land surface "only between 24 and 38 percent [is] suitable for agriculture" (Nelson 2003:1). The remaining 60.8 percent of Honduras' surface

area features slopes with steep grades exceeding 40 percent and uncultivable soils (Brockett 1987:83). Approximately 66 percent of Honduras is covered by forest, which is rapidly disappearing due to deforestation, land degradation, and hurricane damage (Nelson 2003:1). Honduras' coastline occupies 16.4 percent of the country's land (Centeno García 2004:95). It is in this fertile littoral region where the Garinagu formed forty-two communities spatially distributed from Masca in the Departamentos of Cortés and Atlántida to Plaplaya in Gracias a Dios, that is coveted by the Honduran government, local elites, and foreign investors (figure 7.1) (Centeno García 2004:96). Included in this region are the Bay Islands and Cayos Cochinos in the Caribbean Sea located about 25 miles off the Honduran coast.

Four important cities and ports are also located in these areas: Puerto Cortés in Cortés, La Ceiba and Tela in Atlántida, and Trujillo in Colón. It is important to note before proceeding that although figure 7.1 shows the locations of the Garifuna communities, it does not reveal the everyday reality which the Garifuna inhabitants in these places experience. It is this everyday reality that brings me to geographer Dennis Wood's assessment of the production maps. For Wood, guiding the map production is the narrative and the image the producers construct. This is the reason why Woods states that "every map shows this . . . but not that" (1992:48). I apply Wood's rationale to the Garifuna's communities highlighted on the Honduras' map. The map lists many Garifuna communities, but the Garinagu no longer populates some of these communities or are no longer the majority of the population. The reason for this is because the Honduran local officials and elites continue to dispossess the Garinagu from their land as evident with the situation in the community of Cristales and Rio Negro and several other communities. Canadian Randy Jorgensen, who I discuss, at length later in this chapter secured considerable vast of territory belonging to Cristales and Rio Negro communities (Organización Fraternal



Figure 7.1 Locations of Garifuna Communities in Honduras
 Prepared by: Paul Karolczyk and Doris Garcia
 Source: Editorial Guaymuras in collaboration with Salvador Suazo, n.d.

Negra Hondureña, personal communication, December 15, 2011). Also, at the behest of the Institute of Military Prevision (Instituto de Previsión Militar, IPM), on April 7, 2011 “around 3:00am heavily armed preventive police arrived to the community of Punta Gorda in the Bay Islands to forcibly remove forty Garinagu families” (C. Álvarez, personal communication, November 21, 2013; Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña, personal communication, April 7, 2011).

According to Casildo, communication with IPM, minister of defense, SEDINAFROH, and other government institutions prevented the removal of Garinagu (personal communication, November 21, 2013). On November 21, 2013, former president Lobo Sosa issued Definitive Property Title of 154,601.091 square meters of land to the Garifuna community in Punta Gorda originally held by IPM (C. Álvarez, personal communication, November 21, 2013). How long Honduran officials and oligarchs will honor this land title remains unclear. Managed by Infantry Colonel Jorge Federico Centeno Sarmiento, IPM is a Social Security Special Regime, which includes the Honduran Armed Forces, national police, firefighters, and others and is “designed to guarantee all of its affiliates and beneficiaries prompt issue of loans and social services” established under IPM’s law (“IPM Visión y Misión,” n.d.). Yet, IPM’s actions suggest that it is also in the business of land usurpation and it goes to great length to accomplish its mission. On May 23, 2014, members of the Honduran National Police, Military Police together with the Operation Xatruch III military unit tried to force the Garinagu residents from Puerto Castilla using tear gas canisters to disperse “a peaceful protest” (McCain, 2014). Once the tear gas overtook the protesters, an estimated “500 security force members entered the community, dousing anyone within reach with pepper spray” (McCain, 2014). This flagrant violation of human rights impacted the community’s “Children’s Garden and terrorized the residents” (M.

Miranda, personal communication, May 27, 2014; also see McCain, 2014). Because of the usage of tear gas, six young children “were hospitalized and many infants were evacuated and placed in a ship docked in the community’s shore to avoid intoxication caused by the bombs” (M. Miranda, personal communication, May 27, 2014). These are only few of many examples of the Garinagu’s land dispossession. This is the Garinagu’s reality in Honduras, a reality fomented by the environment of violence that defines Honduras society and that rules land ownership in the country.

The Honduran government recognizes four different types of land tenancy: private, *ejidal* (state owned land), national, and communal,” but also *dominio pleno*, which is presumably the most secure form of legal land ownership (Centeno García 2004:106; see also Nelson 2003:2). According to Garifuna writer Santos Centeno García’s investigation which does not provide a year of his study, the Garifuna communities he visited, which he does not mention by name or location, “54% of them hold *ejidales* titles while the remaining 46% are communally owned land which are today being usurped” (2004:106). Richard T. Nelson also lists four categorizes,

state or baldío [empty], private, *ejidal*, and ‘reformed.’ Baldío lands are legally, according to the constitution, the property of the national government. However, over time, peasants, large landholders and even sizeable commercial operations have occupied large sections of these national holdings. Many consider these illegally occupied parcels to be their own and can show usufruct titles (*dominio util*) issued by local authorities. As late as 1952, fully 52% of the Honduran land area was owned by the state. (2003:2 emphasis added)

Biological anthropologist William H. Durham declares that “little is known about the history of land tenure changes in Honduras” (1979:113). However, by examining historian Hector Perez-Brignoli’s 1973 table of land titles issued in Honduras from 1600 to 1949, Durham identifies two types of land titles, *ejidales* and private (1979:113). Historian Thomas P. Anderson’s work, albeit Eurocentric, declares, “one of the most important historical groups in Central America

includes those who control the land” (1988:6). This power of large landholders is rooted in colonialism. As Anderson goes on to say, the Spanish monarchy and its “agents left the *hacendados* broad latitude to deal with the Indian laborers and to control the local administration of justice” (1988:6 emphasis added). Because only the wealthy were landholders, land ownership was concentrated in the hands of a small group of *hacendados* or plantation owners. In the post-colonial period, the oligarchy broadened its power to the “national level of politics, making and unmaking presidents [and] arming its own followers. In rural Honduras to this day, many great landholders bear the honorary title of colonel” (Anderson 1988:6). The *hacendados*’ economic and political practices have led to the concentration of land in the hands of a few. Pérez- Brignoli refers to this system of land ownership as “centralism” (1989:59). Honduras’ post-colonial political economy and land tenure laws remain within the centralist system.

In interviews with Garifuna elders about land ownership, 74-year-old Anastasia Pascual explains that the Garifuna landowners historically did not have titles, but passed their land from generation to generation (personal communication, February 11, 2013). Although the historical period she refers to is unclear, she states that communities routinely loaned pieces of land to landless Garinagu for farming and building houses. In fact, Pascual points out that when her family migrated from Limón to Rio Esteban in 1951, the community provided the family with land. This system varied geographically. For example, in 1886, the Garifuna communities of Cristales and Río Negro in the port of Trujillo, Colón “secured communal titles for 9,000 hectares of land, which sadly today has been invaded by the state, individuals, and by unscrupulous local officials” (Centeno García 2004:105). The Association of the Communities of Cristales and Rio Negro (La Asociación de Comunidades Cristales (*Kristalu*) y Rio Negro (*Blagríba*)) mentions that these communities have held “a private title legally registered for

13,000 hectares since 1886” (personal communication, October 23, 2012). It seems that in these communities Garinagu’s first land-related activism began in the nineteenth century due to the presence of the banana plantation, which “under the state’s eyesight usurped Garinagu territories” (Centeno García 2004:109). The banana plantation economy might had introduced Garinagu to unfamiliar forms of land ownership and forced them to secure land titles. I tried to gather data to map how much land the Garifuna communities have lost since the early 1990s, but abandoned the attempt because INA, which is responsible for handling land tenancy, lacks reliable and adequate publicly available land data.

The Early Formation of a New National Economy

In this segment, I begin to lay out the formation of a tourism-based economy. As the state sought to expand tourism from the Mayan archeological site in Copán,⁷ in the early 1970s, military dictator López Arellano became interested on the north coast Garifuna communities such as Tornabé (*Lagiriga-wewe*), San Juan, and Río Tinto (López García 2006:44). The state perceived the coastline as ideal for developing “a huge Tourism Project in Tela” near the Micos Beach and Golf Resort. Located between Tornabé and Punta Sal Protected Park, promoters named it Torna-sal (López García 2006:31). Victor Virgilio López García states that despite the state’s \$20 million expenditures on preliminary studies for Torna-sal, it did not materialize (2006:45). With economic activities brewing, the military regime reversed social programs instated under Villeda Morales’s administration by ending the agrarian reform and economic policies favorable to the working class and attracting foreign investors (Nieto 2003:113). However, the military regime kept INA in existence. The Villeda Morales’s administration formed INA to oversee land titling, although from 1962 to 1966, INA “distributed land to a mere 281 families” reflecting the absence of a genuine agrarian reform in Honduras (Bulmer-Thomas

⁷ The Mayan archeological ruins are located in the western and fertile valley of the Departamento of Copán.

1990:304). Next, López Arellano turned his attention to the Garifuna communities. He tried to secure their land, although sources explaining López Arellano's plan does not elaborate how exactly he was hoping to achieve that. However, once the Garinagu learned of López Arellano's tourism plan, the Garinagu in Tornabé, San Juan, and Río Tinto began to organize "to defend themselves against possible forced removal" (López García 2006:25). Simulating goodwill, state officials visited the Garifuna community of Tornabé to notify inhabitants of Torna-sal's impending arrival and development of the tourism project.

In 1972, the same year the Torna-sal project was put into motion the López Arellano regime established the Honduran Institute of Tourism (Instituto Hondureño de Tourism, IHT) which has been "predicated in 1962 by the Law of Tourism Development" and named Jacobo Goldstein as its director (Euraque 2004:236; López García 2006:31). Perhaps to quell organizing by the Garinagu resisting the tourism economic project, Goldstein "facilitated IHT's resources for the Festival de Danzas Garifunas to participate in the 1972 San Isidro Carnival in La Ceiba" (López García 2006:45; Euraque 2004:169). Garifuna Armando Crisanto Meléndez's dancing group's participation in the Carnaval of La Ceiba of 1972 "elevated" his group to the "National Garifuna Ballet" (López García 2006:33). The inclusion of Meléndez's group cemented his aspirations to integrate the Garinagu into the cultural economy and pushed Honduras from "a state of underdevelopment and dependence" on other countries (López García 2006:33). Today, Meléndez remains the director of the Garifuna Folkloric National Ballet of Honduras. López García argues that despite existing political oppression in the 1970s, "socio-cultural preferences began to open up for other races. Thus, the Garifuna intellectuals took advantage of these changes to project a good image of Honduras both nationally and internationally" (2006:46). The socio-cultural preferences López García addresses served two purposes. First, they

countered the Garinagu organizing and positioned them within a spectacle of consumption. Second, rather than resisting cultural destruction, the Garifuna intellectuals joined the economic development. The Garinagu's engagement in Honduras' economic development was not about liberation but about the personal aspirations and patriotism of some Garifuna individuals.

By July 29, 1974, Hurricane Fifi destroyed "60 percent of Honduras' agricultural production, and the banana companies abandoned many more of their plantations. The north coast became a resettlement area for landless and jobless *mestizo* peasants . . ." (Brondo 2013:36 emphasis added). Under the modernization law, the state distributed unused national and private land to peasants to form cooperative enterprises, leaving large landowners untouched. The state thus encouraged a resettlement pattern. INA ridiculed the Garinagu and other indigenous subsistence practices as being primitive and encouraged peasants to appropriate the Garinagu's land (England 2006:111-12). In applying anthropologist, Anthony Oliver-Smith's analysis, Hurricane Fifi, and as we shall see later in this chapter Hurricane Mitch in 1998, as a "natural force encountered a society whose environment, infrastructure, and population had been rendered severely vulnerable by social and economic processes deeply embedded in particular approaches to development" (2009:1). Throughout the years, the Honduran government's lack of concern for the Garinagu and the poor in Honduras has maintained the social and economic vulnerability that Oliver-Smith addresses.

In 1974, General Gustavo Álvarez Martínez forced the Garinagu "at gunpoint" from their communities of Cristales y Río Negro in Puerto Castilla to surrender their communally owned land to the National Port Authority (Empresa Nacional Portuaria, ENP) (M. Miranda, personal communication, May 27, 2014). Their dispossession forced the residents "to relocate to a very constricted area," an area overcrowded today due to the population growth (McCain, 2014).

This was not the first time the Honduran government forced the Garinagu to relocate. In 1940, the government relocated them south of their original settlement area for the construction of the United States military base (M. Miranda, personal communication, May 27, 2014).

OFRANEH's Miriam Miranda states that the Garifuna community of Puerto Castilla

received [land] title in 1889 under the name of 'La Puntilla' from the hands of President Luis Bogran which included 12 miles in length and width. [President] Manuel Bonilla reindorsed the title in 1904 when he issued a title to the community of Cristales y Río Negro. In 1921, part of the lands were conceded to Truxillo Railroad Company and transferred again to the community of Cristales y Rio Negro en 1942. (personal communication, May 27, 2014)

Today, the primary occupant of the Puerto Castilla port is Dole, a multinational corporation (McCain, 2014). General Álvarez Martínez was one of many Honduran graduates from SOA and one of the CIA's leading allies in Honduras (School of the Americas Watch, n.d.). Historian William M. LeoGrande explains that Álvarez Martínez was "Washington's man - 'a model professional,' U.S. Ambassador John Negroponte once called him" (1998:393). LeoGrande goes on to say that the CIA "helped [Alvarez Martínez] rise to the top of the Honduran military, and he had helped the CIA wage war against Nicaragua. Alvarez was personally close to both Negroponte and CIA Station Chief Donald Winter, who asked Alvarez to be the godfather of his child" (1998:393-94). It is Álvarez Martínez's close relationship with the CIA that allowed him to act with impunity against the Garifuna communities.

Accompanying the usurpation of the Garinagu's land in 1974 was the passage of Decree Law No. 135 which formed the National Investment Corporation (Corporación Nacional de Inversiones, CONADI) (National Investment Corporation, 1974). According to a document disclosed by Wikileaks, a global digital journalistic nonprofit organization dedicated to publishing news leaks and classified government information, CONADI was "designed to

promote new industry and support those operations and organize a national capital market” (National Investment Corporation, 1974). CONADI became a node for the convergence of elites and military leaders. One of its key figures is the military regime ally Facussé Bargum, who through CONADI, secured loans from Bank of America and Lloyds Bank International to expand his company Dinant Chemicals of Central America S.A (Quimicas Dinant de Centro America, S.A) (“Raíces históricas de la fortuna de Miguel Facussé Barjum,” 2011). The National Congress issued Decree No. 106-90 emitted in 1990 which outlawed CONADI (“Honduraslegal,” n.d.). Amid the economic policies the Honduran government developed in the 1970s, we can observe the political chaos governing the country which persisted beyond this period. The military dictator Juan Alberto Melgar (1975-1978) removed López Arellano from power in a 1975 coup d’état. Marred by “corruption and drug-trafficking scandals,” Policarpo Juan Paz García (1978-1981) ousted Melgar Castro in a coup d’état in 1978 (Nieto 2003:114). Developments discussed thus far provided the foundation for the tourism expansion but also kept the doors open, as it has been a practice in Honduras, for foreign investors to partake in the process.

Foreign investor Puerto Rican Temístocles Ramírez de Orellano illegally purchased “5,000 hectares [12,355 acres]” of land for about “24 Lempiras per hectare (approximately \$4.86 per acre)” in Puerto Castilla, Colón, home to many Garinagu (Kerssen 2013:93; Rosset, 2001). By 1983, either the Honduran or the United States government forced Ramírez de Orellano to forfeit the land to build the United States Regional Center for Military Training (Centro Regional de Entrenamiento Militar, CREM) where the United States trained Honduran, Salvadorans, and contra forces in “counterinsurgency and irregular warfare” (McSherry 2005:223; see also Moreno 1994:41). Conceived during President Roberto Suazo Córdova’s (1982-1986) visit to

Washington, D.C in 1983, he “agreed to the U.S. construction of a \$250,000” military training center. In 1984, the United States military instructors trained “some 4,000 troops” (Leonard 2011:158). The training center was also “the site of a secret detention center that held disappeared prisoners from all the countries in the region” (2005:223). Ramírez de Orellano took his grievance over the seizure of his land to the United States government and the Honduran government paid him “15,600,000 Lempiras a value of 2,275 Lempiras per hectare (approximately \$460.50 per acre), nearly 100 times the 1975 purchase price” (Kerssen 2013:93). Today, the Garifuna communities in Puerto Castilla face displacement from their land. With funds from the United States, “three heliports are being built” in the environs of the Naval Base of Puerto Castilla (Base Naval de Puerto Castilla) training establishment in Colón (“En los próximos días finalizará construcción de tres helipuertos en Colón,” 2014). The naval base’s commander general, Mario Fortín, states that the building of the heliports “form part of the shield against narcotraffic” (“En los próximos días finalizará construcción de tres helipuertos en Colón,” 2014). As I described in this chapter, the United States government in collaboration with the Honduran government have used Puerto Castilla as a military base before World War II. The same development took place in the early 1980s when in keeping with General Gorman’s military expansion plan, the United States government included “a \$150 million air and naval base at Puerto Castilla” to expand “maneuvers and the construction of several new airfields, a new radar installation” (LeoGrande 1998:316). The purpose of this plans were to set-up “a naval blockade of Nicaragua and for interdicting arms being smuggle into El Salvador” (1998:316).

Political Reorganization

Following the 1978 coup, the Honduran right-wing business and military leaders regrouped. Callejas Romero, Osmond Maduro former Honduran president Ricardo Maduro Joest’s relative,

and colonel Gustavo Álvarez Martínez head of the Honduran Armed Forces (1982-1984) formed the Association for Honduras Progress (Asociación para el Progreso de Honduras, APROH) (“Raíces históricas de la fortuna de Miguel Facussé Barjum,” 2011; see also Bulmer-Thomas 1990:311). Described by professor of Latin American studies Victor Bulmer-Thomas as a “semi-fascist organization,” (1987:235; 1990:311), APROH members advocated for the United States “military intervention against the Nicaraguan Sandinistas a necessary precondition of regional economic development” (Lansford, Muller, & Isacoff 2012:605). Supporting APROH’s endeavors was Korean Evangelist Reverend Sun Myung Moon who contributed \$5 million in 1983 for the purpose of “countering Honduran ‘subversives’” (Lansford, Muller, & Isacoff 2012: 605). By 1984, the Honduran government exiled Álvarez Martínez first to Costa Rica and then to Miami, where he remained until his return to Honduras in 1988 as a religious person. In January 1989, the Chinchoneros’ Popular Liberation Movement (Movimiento Popular de Liberación Chinchonero) one of Honduras political groups formed in 1979 in response to the military regime oppression of political dissidents claimed responsibility for the killing of Álvarez Martínez and his chuffer in Tegucigalpa (“Asesinado el General Álvarez Martínez,” 1989; see also Nieto 2003:115).

In addition to the military’s alliance with the elites domestically and abroad, one of its main sustenance was the “greatest purveyor of violence in the world:” the United States government (King, 1967). Militarily, SOA continues to train many Honduran military officials. In fact, Melgar Castro and Paz García are also among its graduates (¡Presente! n.d). To create the illusion of democracy, the United States President Jimmy Carter (1977-1981) called for “democratic reforms” in exchange for an “increase” in economic aid (Nieto 2003:115). In 1980,

Honduran elected rancher Roberto Suazo Córdova from the Liberal Party therefore becoming the first democratically elected president. Facussé Bargum served as Córdova's economic advisor.

The 1980s democratic transition also orchestrated the election of businessman José Azcona del Hoyo (1986-1990) also from the Liberal Party and longtime military ally and businessman Callejas Romero from the National Party. Although other political parties exist in Honduras, just like in the United States, two dominate the political landscape: the Liberal and the National Party. The United States government substantially rewarded the architects of the presumed democratic transition. From 1981 to 1985 during which time "old-fashioned imperialist" John Dimitris Negroponte served as the United States Ambassador to Honduras, the military regime's coffer swelled from "\$5 million to nearly \$100 million, and more than \$200 million in economic aid, making Honduras the largest aid recipient in the region" (Hassan, 2004). As the military regime enriched itself, in Atlántida, it usurped the Garinagu's land in Tela Bay (Bahia de Tela), Rio Miel, and Punta Piedras (M. Miranda, personal communication, April 11, 2014). Amid the seemingly peaceful democratic transition, several developments were taking place in 1987.

Although unsuccessful, leaders of the Garifuna, Miskito, Tolupan, Pech, Tahwaka, Lenca, Pech, and Criollos, proposed the "Law for the Protection of Autochthonous Ethnic Groups" to the Honduran government. The law demanded among other things land titling and control over their resources (Anderson 2009:121-22). Also, in response to state oppression and economic policies, university students, which included Garinagu, formed the Revolutionary University Front in 1987. For Roberto Contreras,

being involved in that Front, we [students] initiated a struggle process in solidarity with the peasant movement in relation to the defense of the agrarian reform because as it got close to 1990 and Rafael Callejas' government, it was all about reforms. He created a law called the Law of Agriculture Modernization and that law impacted the agrarian reform. This process would facilitate the big landowners to acquire possession of the peasant land and

would directly impact the Garifuna community. In that sense, we then got involved in a struggle of solidarity with the peasant movement. And it was in 1991, 1992 that I integrated into the struggle for the defense of the Garifuna community in Honduras. (personal communication, February 20, 2011)

Members of the Revolutionary University Front held workshops to educate the peasants about the impending changes. OFRANEH's director, José Hipólito Centeno García's leadership, supported the Front's efforts and sympathized with the peasant movement because they believed that "if the agrarian reform is destroyed, the Garifuna community would follow because up to that moment the Garifuna communities were not touched" (R. Contreras, personal communication, February 20, 2011). However, as I have shown, the Honduran government was already appropriating the Garinagu's land for tourism before the 1990s. Also, judging from Honduras' historical economic policies, there has never been a consistent agrarian reform that fostered social equity and transformed the social hierarchy. On the contrary, the lack of land reform in Honduras has exacerbated inequality throughout the years. Scholars of Latin America Carmen Diana Deere and Magdalena León, however, state that the agrarian reform "efforts" in Honduras "wound down" in the 1980s, although they do not specify whether or not it was in the early, middle, or the end of this decade this development happened (2001:95). Judging from developments in Honduras, it is difficult to agree with their findings.

The Garinagu's land-related activism in defense of place has been ongoing. Territorial "pressure" upon the Garifuna communities intensified following the 2009 coup d'état. The removal of the Garifuna landowners was part of the Sosa's administration "'Christian humanism'" (M. Miranda, personal communication, April 17, 2011). The Honduran state's treatment of the Garifuna people is similar to the treatment of Palestinians by the Israeli government in that both groups are dispossessed and displaced from their land. Speaking of the Palestinians dispossession from their land, Ali Abunimah, co-founder of the *Electronic Intifada*

news service, refers to this process in the occupied Palestinian territories as “‘Judaizing’ what remains of Palestinian land” (2014:xi). Using similar tactics, the Honduran state is determined to establish different socio-economic and social relations throughout Honduras’ north coast as demonstrated in some Garifuna communities which are being increasingly populated by Honduran elites, Canadians, and other foreigners.

Article 107 Amendment and its Consequences

David Harvey notes that there is a “permanent tension between the free appropriation of [place] for individual and social purposes and the domination of [place] through private property, the state, and other forms of class and social power” (1990:254). This permanent tension remains entrenched in Honduras’ political economy which Garifuna pressure groups challenge. In the 1980s, the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), also known as the “Washington Consensus” swept Latin American countries (Williamson, 2004; see also North American Congress on Latin America 1999:12). Troubled with debts, accumulated “not to finance productive investments, but to finance the government’s patronage employment and large military and police forces,” the government in Honduras followed the SAP’s architects’ (IMF, WBG, USAID, and CABEL) demands (Easterly 2002:1; see also Chase 2002:1). With support from the Honduran elites, SAPs became the law of the land. Because SAPs’ execution required certain conditions such as implementing new laws regulating municipalities, under the IMF’s watchful eyes, the Córdova’s administration modified the Constitution which called “for economic and social development in the municipalities to form part of the national development programs . . .” (Merrill, 1995). New laws allowed “municipalities to sell *ejidal* lands, which were reaffirmed two years later in an ‘Agricultural Sector Modernization’ law. These changes provided the legal pretext for the current intrusion into Lenca [and the Garinagu] territory, even

though the subsequent ‘encroachment into indigenous land’ and ‘land grabs’ violated Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization which enshrines people’s land rights” (Beeton, 2013). Included in the SAPs package was the reactivation of tourism.

During the early 1980s, the Honduran government “began promoting tourism as a national development strategy – emphasizing the important Mayan archeological site of Copán, the scenic beaches and colonial history of the North Coast, and the relatively pristine coral reefs of the Bay Islands” (Stonich 2000:10). Part of the north coast landscape is illustrated in figure 7.2 which shows the Garifuna fishermen getting ready to go fishing whereas figure 7.3 displays more clearly the mountains and trees. The Honduran government similar to other governments in Central America sought to attract foreign investors. To do so, the government established “Tourism Zones” and “provided generous tax and import incentives” (Stonich 2000:10; see also Kerssen 2013:76). The main tourism zones are the north coast, the Bay Islands, and the Cayos Cochinos, regions where the Garifuna communities are located. To advertise this region, the government organizes them as “(1) the nation’s ‘living cultures,’” which is comprised of the Maya ruins and Honduras’ “seven indigenous and ethnic groups, “(2) eco-adventure opportunities; and (3) beachfront ‘fun and sun’” (Brondo 2013:48). The living culture is the description for the Garifuna communities. With Callejas Romero’s election in 1990, his administration aggressively expanded on Cordova’s policies.

Article 107 listed under Chapter II of the Honduran Constitution that outlines Individual Rights, prohibits foreigners from purchasing or owning land within forty kilometers or 25 miles of the nation’s coast, islands, islets, and reefs of the coastline (Honduras Const, art. 107). Callejas Romero’s government began to promote tourism leading to the passage of Decree Law 90-90 in August 27, 1990 by the National Congress. This Decree “weakened” Article 107 of the



Figure 7.2 Garifuna Fishermen in *Tibiniriba* (Rio Esteban), Departamento of Colón
Source: Doris Garcia, 2006



Figure 7.3 Beach in Río Coco, Departamento of Colón
Source: Doris Garcia, 2006

country's Constitution (Kerssen 2013:76). The passage of this Decree allowed foreigners to own properties in areas "designed by the Ministry of Tourism to be tourism zones" (Brondo 2013:42). Decree 90-90 also allowed foreigners to purchase "up to 3,000 square meters for residential use in urban areas and unlimited amounts in urban or rural areas for tourism or other development projects" (Brondo 2013:42). In addition, Brondo states that "people" who I guess are foreigners could circumvent the 3,000 square meters by "forming stock corporations in which they name Honduras the original shareowners" (2013:42). Citing anthropologist Susan Stonich, Brondo asserts that because of Law 90-90, property ownership by foreigners in the Bay Islands burgeoned (2013:42). By 1992, the Marbella Tourist Corporation began "usurping property in the Garifuna community of Triunfo de la Cruz in Tela Bay, the largest Garifuna settlement in Honduras with 9,000" inhabitants (Kerssen 2013:76). As a result of this development, the Garifuna leaders formed the Defense Committee for Triunfo Land (Comité de Defensa de Tierras de Triunfo, CODETT). In the aftermath of CODETT's formation, threats from "authorities" began to pour in and by 1997, "three community leaders were murdered and a prominent anti-Marbella activist, Alfredo López" was arrested on false "drug trafficking charges" (Kerssen 2013:76; see also Ryan, 2008). Thus, Garifuna people live amidst "a sea of violence" (M. Miranda, personal communication, June 12, 2012). This sea of violence persists.

As indicated in chapter four, Hurricane Mitch devastated Honduras in late October 1998. Again, evoking Oliver-Smith's words, Mitch was similar to most "natural disaster" in that it was "multidimensional because was both a physical and social 'event/process'" (2009:8). As Hondurans dealt with the devastation Mitch left behind, President Carlos Roberto Flores Facussé (1998-2002) owner of the "national brewery (Cervecería Hondureña), several maquiladoras [assembly plants], and the influential newspaper La Tribuna," continued his predecessors'

economic policies exacerbating conditions in already devastated Garifuna communities (Pine 2008:4). Flores Facussé is Facussé Bargum's nephew. According to anthropologist Mark Anderson, in 1998 the Honduran National Congress began to mobilize to reform Article 107 of the Constitution that would allow foreigners to own land within "forty kilometers from any ocean or national border" (2009:131). Pressured by government officials, members of the National Congress met on the night of November 30, 1998 and voted to amend Article 107 (Brondo 2013:49). The Garifuna leaders and other indigenous groups protested changes made to the Constitution and their movement received international coverage. The Garifuna organizations mobilized using the "media and letter writing campaigns" and electoral power to pressure political candidate to have the National Congress "un-reform the constitution" (Brondo 2013:49). From OFRANEH's office, Luisa Aguilar began to fax information to various non-governmental organizations in New York City about what was happening to the Garinagu's land in Honduras in post-Hurricane Mitch.

As a result of Aguilar's activity, "an indio" architect named Antonio Rico threatened Aguilar (personal communication, February 24, 2011). According to Aguilar, Rico asked her at a parking lot in La Ceiba "what is it that Garifunas want?" (L. Aguilar, personal communication, February 24, 2011). She replied "Garifunas want development" but not the way "it is being promoted. The Garifunas would be left out." Rico replied, "I am an advisor to a group in Congress and do you know how much it costs when people interfere . . . it only costs 15,000 Honduran pesos . . . at that time it did not reach \$500 or \$600" (L. Aguilar, personal communication, March 24, 2012). Rico's statement implied that for less than \$500 or \$600, a politician and an oligarch could order her killing or anyone who interferes with their economic plans. A few weeks after Rico and Aguilar's conversation, she left the country (personal

communication, March 24, 2012). Aguilar had every right to be concerned about her life and the Garifuna communities. The Honduran government sought to relocate the Garinagu residents from their devastated community of Santa Rosa de Aguán in the Departamento of Trujillo (L. Aguilar, personal communication, March 24, 2012). Yet, Honduran officials seemed unfazed by the Garifuna people and their leaders' reaction. According to Brondo, officials from the Honduran Institute of Tourism stated that the amendment of Article 107 was "just to make things easier, so that if you wanted to sell [land], you could sale immediately, with no approval process [from the Ministry of Tourism]. It [the reform] didn't obligate the Garifuna to sell" (2013:48). Furthermore, the official indicated, "No one said they had to [meaning sell their land]. Because they already have their lands, and the lands are communal, not individual. So if someone wanted their lands, they would need to get everyone to agree" (2013:48-49). As we shall see, the Honduran government and oligarchs just continue to usurp the Garinagu's land.

In 1999 as the 2001 elections approached, "Garinagu organizations" used their electoral power to pressure presidential candidate Rafael Pineda Ponce of the Liberal Party and president of Congress to undo the amendment to Article 107(Brondo 2013:49). Fearing a political backlash, on October 12, 1999, Ponce "authorized Rodrigo Castillo Aguilar of the National Congress to sign an Act of Compromise with the Garinagu" (Brondo 2013:49). Brondo does not indicate who these Garinagu organizations were, since Casildo from ODECO initiated these political pledges in 2001 as I indicate in chapter four. In any event, the political pledge stated that the "proposed reforms for Article 107 would not be incorporated into the Legislative Agenda, and thus Article 107 would be ratified" (Brondo 2013:49). However, Brondo goes on to say that following the signing of the pledge, the Garifuna organizations reneged on their commitment on the grounds that Ponce would not keep his promise.

In the aftermath of the Article 107 amendment, “Canadian developers . . . fenced off land and begun construction of a tourism complex with 1,600 hotel rooms and a water park” in Tornabé and to the east in Triunfo de la Cruz (*Dúfigati*) and other land developers built vacation houses next to the Garifuna people’s traditional houses (Volgenau, 1998). Canadian land ownership in Honduras has burgeoned since then. Former muffler salesman from Saskatchewan, Canada and founder and owner of Adult Video Only, Randy Jorgensen, nicknamed the ““porn king,”” (Paley, 2010) illegally appropriated the Garinagu’s land in the community of Rio Negro and demolished properties for the “construction of a cruise pier called Panamax,” but it is named Banana Coast (M. Miranda, personal communication, March 17, 2011). Accompanied by OFRANEH, on December 13, 2011 leaders of the Cristales and Rio Negro communities “presented a demand against Jorgensen to annul several fraudulent contracts and sales of community owned land” (M. Miranda, personal communication, March 17, 2011). According to journalist Dawn Paley, Jorgensen finds the Garifuna people’s land usurpation accusations amusing. Instead, he refers to their charges of him acquiring land to build his luxury Campa Vista villas in Trujillo catering to Canadian retirees to be nothing more than ““extortion”” (Paley, 2010). Listed as CEO of Life Vision Developments and owner of Life Vision Properties, Jorgensen has every reason to find the Garifuna people’s charges against him comical because his relationship with the local government and oligarchs shields him. With funding from the “Canadian Shield Fund (including funds from the controversial mining company, Barrick Gold and the Canadian Oil and Gas Company),” Jorgensen is “converting a beautiful coastal area of Trujillo into a large scale tourism project that includes a series of vacation home developments and a cruise ship dock, displacing and destroying indigenous Garífuna communities” (Eidt, 2013).

Through the support of Ramón Lobo Sosa, the former president Lobo Sosa's brother, Jorgensen developed a cozy relationship with Porfirio Lobo Sosa himself. At the invitation of the Lobo Sosa's administration, on November 27, 2010, Jorgensen had a breakfast meeting with him at the Christopher Columbus Hotel in Trujillo attended also by Ramón Lobo Sosa (Life Vision Properties, 2010). Lobo Sosa also presented Jorgensen in 2011 with a "CEO of Life Vision Developments, with a special award and recognition at the Annual Meeting of the Ministers held in Trujillo" (figure 7.4) ("Randy Jorgensen Meets with President Lobo," n.d.). As stated in Life Vision Properties' website, this company is "the largest Developer of ocean front properties in Trujillo," which currently "have over 1500 acres in development in residential and commercial real estate. Life Vision Properties is very serious about the responsibility for the care of your property in Honduras" (2011). Charactering its practices as caring and responsible certainly outrage the Garifuna people, who continue to be dispossessed from their land as Life Vision Properties expand its projects in Trujillo. Kimberly Berge's articles states, "Ultraluxury Silversea Cruises is the first cruise line to sign on to call at Banana Coast, the newest western Caribbean cruise destination at Trujillo, Honduras. The 296-passenger Silver Cloud is scheduled to call Dec. 17, 2014" (2013). Owned by Jorgensen, the Banana Coast Landing "is a themed retail destination with approximately 50,000 Square Feet of retail shopping, including jewelry stores, designer boutiques, and a themed restaurant and bar. The site is home to an Excursion Marina and a large, sandy beach. A finger pier will accommodate two post-Panamax cruise vessels by 2012" (Banana Coast Landing, n.d.).



Figure 7.4 Randy Jorgensen (left) Shaking Hands with Porfirio Lobo Sosa
Source: Life Vision Properties, 2013

The report goes on to say that the “facility’s design evokes the Banana Coast’s glory days of yesteryear, when the economy was fueled by the banana trade. Big commerce, steam trains, foreign consulates, and American capitalists were mainstays in the colonial town, which boomed from the 1920s to 1940s” (Banana Coast Landing, n.d.). In romanticizing the brutality associated with the banana plantations in Honduras and throughout Central America, Jorgensen is appealing to the taste and values of racist middle class whites and *mestizos* whose politics and racial discourse align with those of white Europeans and European Americans from the United States. In the meantime, the Banana Coast Landing’s website depicts a young smiling black woman holding the Honduran flag. We can explain the contemporary political economy of Honduras as follow. First, the Honduran government and local oligarchs are rehashing the same economic model they used in the late nineteenth century when the banana plantation flourished in Honduras. This economic model entailed modernizing certain areas of Honduras’ infrastructure as long as they get a piece of the action. In the meantime, the Honduran peasants and blacks labored in the inhumane conditions developed by the banana plantation owners.

Today, while the Honduran government and elites exploit the Garinagu's bodies and culture in reproducing Honduras' north coast, the acquisition of their land remains a fundamental component of this process. Second, complementing this process is advertising. Advertising a place as a tourist destination involves creating a sublime place. As geographer J. D. Goss states,

destination marketing works by (re)presenting socially desirable consumer lifestyles with icons of a particular place, and suggesting, through various rhetorical devices, a substantive connection between them drawing upon and reproducing socializing and spatializing discourse. Destination marketing is, therefore, simultaneously implicated in the construction of place imagery and the constitution of subjects who experience that image in specific ways. (1993:663)

The place imagery Goss speaks of is the place of consumption and spectacle.

While Canadian developers continue to take pleasure in Callejas Romero's economic policies and his successor's amendment of Article 107, the Honduran elites also take advantage of the spoils. First, despite the Garifuna leaders' on-going efforts, OFRANEH states that "up until 1993 there was a Garifuna's territory beginning in Santa Rosa de Aguán to Plaplaya which included seventeen Garifunas communities" (personal communication, March 17, 2011). In the aftermath of Facussé Bargum's nephew, Carlos Roberto Flores Facussé, (at that time the Honduran president), amendment of Article 107 of the Honduran Constitution, Facussé Bargum appropriated 250 acres of land to plant oil palms. The land he usurped begins in Punta Farallones, a Garifuna hamlet in Limón, and ends in Vallecito. This hamlet is "located within the lands of the [Garifuna] cooperative Ruguma" (M. Miranda, personal communication, August 27, 2012). The Honduran Supreme Court declared Facussé Bargum usurpation of the Garinagu's land illegal (M. Miranda, personal communication, August 27, 2012). Yet, the Supreme Court's declaration went unnoticed by Facussé Bargum because he, similar to other oligarchs in Honduras, is untouchable by the law of the land that also supposed to protect other citizens like

the Garinagu, as many Garinagu state. Facussé Bargum resorted to other tactics to usurp the Garinagu's land. Isidro Chávez declares that Facussé Bargum agitated mostly poor *mulatos* from the nearby community of the Icoctas to occupy the Garinagu's held land in Vallecito, Limón. Once they secured the land, they transferred it to Facussé Bargum (personal communication, April 24, 2010). On other occasions, Facussé Bargum sent out his henchmen to intimidate or threaten the Garifuna leaders and landowners (B. Cayetano, personal communication, April 14, 2010).

Today, Honduras produces “more than 300 metric tons of African palm oil, almost 70% of which is exported. This plant is now cultivated on 120 thousand hectares (compared to 40 thousand during the 90s and 80 thousand in 2005), the majority of which is situated in the northern parts of Colón, Atlántida, and particularly in the Valley of Aguán” (International Federation for Human Rights, 2011:8). Dinant Corporation “owns about one-fifth of all the agricultural land in Bajo Aguán, more than 22,000 acres of well-groomed plantations that supply oil for export and for its snack foods, margarine and cooking oil business” (Malkin, 2011). As Roberto Contreras succinctly states,

land is concentrated on the hand of a few people, it does not fulfill the social purpose; instead it is fulfilling a mercantile purpose but for the benefit of a corporation, like that of Miguel Facussé and precisely the law of agriculture modernization that came to strengthen a few people so that they can monopolize the land and destroyed the small and medium size peasants who owned the large tract of land because at that time by taking away all of the logistics, all of the financial and technical support from the peasantry, the peasantry was unable to produce the land. It could no longer produce it. Consequently, the law of agriculture modernization supposedly was to produce the land in a private manner but no longer to the public. So, they began to give the largest extension of lands to certain corporations and it was like that that these corporations practically dedicated themselves to the African Palm. (personal communication, February 20, 2011)

Nature, Lefebvre argues, “creates and does not produce; it provides resources for a creative and productive activity on the part of social humanity; but it supplies only use value . . .” (1991:70; see also Smith 2008:6). Yet, despite nature’s importance, it is “being murdered by ‘anti-nature’” (Lefebvre 1991:71) because “capital is continually invested in the built environment in order to produce surplus value and expand the basis of capital” (Smith 2008:6). Thus, the social production of nature develops from the production of space. In other words, nature is a social construct shaped by a particular place or space.

While Canadians and local Honduran elites savored their accomplishments, amendment of Article 107 continued to devastate the Garifuna communities. First, the Garifuna communities underwent a process of land titling which excluded functional habitat (Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña, personal communication, October 3, 2012). In its most limited definition, functional habitat refers “to community lands *plus* the surrounding lands, rivers, wilderness and marine areas upon which communities depend *even though they may not have direct ownership of them*” (Kerssen 2013: 80 emphasis in original). In its broadest sense, the concept refers to a “territorial space that includes multiple communities, cultural interactions and relations of production and exchange” (Kerssen 2013:80). Excluding the functional habitat from the land title created spatial barriers for the Garifuna communities because land and sea are integral components of the Garinagu’s cultural practices.

Land invasions encouraged in the 1970s re-emerged. In the summer of 1990, several armed Olanchanos (from the Departamento of Olancho) appeared in Vallecito for the first time looking for land (I. Chávez, personal communication, April 24, 2010). Their presence alarmed the inhabitants for “it was only in Vallecito where the only parcel of land was communally owned for farming” (I. Chávez, personal communication, April 24, 2010). The Garifuna people

organized with Lombardo Sambulá Lacayo (Dr. Alfonso Lacayo Sánchez's son) as their leader. By 1993, they secured titles for 1,400 acres of land for the "six cooperatives [named Sinduru Free, Walumugu, Saway, Saway Sufritinu, Satuye, and Ruguma], which are located today in the Vallecito territory" (I. Chávez, personal communication, April 24, 2010). According to Brigido Cayetano, in 1997 former President Idiáquez hand-delivered Vallecito's land title to Sambulá. Complementing the Garinagu's land struggle in Vallecito was the support they received from those Garinagu residing in New York City. In New York City, the Garifuna activists formed a board of directors. Its members organized dances to raise financial support for the Garinagu's movement in Limón. Dances are one of the common methods the Garinagu use to raise funds to support specific community projects in Honduras. On May 1, 1991, the Garinagu in Limón formed *Iseri Lidawamari* (New Dawn Movement). The Garinagu in New York City also organized and supported Lombardo's appearance before the United Nations to denounce the violation of their human rights. As Isidro Chávez observed:

Lombardo travelled twice to the United Nations to present the problems that we were having with Facusse . . . the first problem we had there was with the military who had taken ownership over the land and they said they had set up an investment scheme; but, in fact, they put our land as a guarantee [for the loan they were securing from the World Bank]. And when they learned in the United Nations that the problem existed, they ordered that the bank . . . should not authorize loans to those people [some members of the military]. (personal communication, April 24, 2010)

When the United Nations learned of developments in Vallecito, it "ordered the bank [World Bank Group] not to authorize loans to those people [military in Honduras]" (I. Chávez, personal communication, April 24, 2010). Chávez asserts that the military officials involved in the land usurpation instead sold the land to Facussé Bargum. In borrowing from Routledge's analysis of social movement in India against development, the Garifuna organizers in the early 1990s jumped scale to challenge the "legitimacy of state hegemony through the withdrawal of consent

and the active articulation of resistance” (1993:37). Through their years of *baündada*, the Garifuna people have learned that the Honduran government and the country’s legal system would not and does not provide its citizens such as the Garinagu with any form of protection. Procuring external assistance was thereby their only recourse in challenging land dispossession and oppression.

In addition to securing land titles, under Sambulá’s tenure, *Iseri Lidawamari* received both local and global funding. For instance, the United Nations created Rescate Cultural-Ecológico (rescue ecological culture) designed to support a host of indigenous-oriented community projects ranging from bilingual education programs, cooperative agriculture, and the building of a training center (England 2006:177). Besides the land recovery, *Iseri Lidawamari* Movement also transformed the political landscape when Limoneños elected Sambulá as Limón’s mayor (1994-1998). Cayetano explains that many Garinagu from nearby communities and cities in Honduras traveled to Limón to cast their vote. Limoneños residing in New York City sent a representative to Limón and helped finance Sambulá’s campaign (B. Cayetano, personal communication, April 14, 2010). Many Garinagu consider Lacayo Sambulá’s election to be the consolidation of the Garinagu’s political activism in Honduras. Under Sambulá’s initiative and OFRANEH’s efforts, the Garinagu put the state on notice that they were not going to comply with it. A new generation of Garifuna activities matches their efforts. Juan Espinosa declares,

he [Lombardo] was a visionary comrade and some comrades accompanied him on this endeavor, collaborated, and defended, and followed the process in finding logistics and mechanisms to be able to carry out this process so that we believe that there should be more involvement from brothers [and sisters] that reside here [United States]. We cannot be detached from the problems that our place of origin is faced with. This must be done based on information, by sending more information. Obtaining more information would generate a higher level of consciousness concerning the problem that is confronted today in terms of the removal [of Garinagu] from the land of our, of our communities, that is to say, we repeat – as a culture, but a culture must have a

territory, that is to say, there is no culture without territory, that is why we do not neglect the struggle. In this content, we believe that the factor – that the role of the Garifuna people abroad that each day is a strong community and large one, it is in the economic aspect. (personal community, September 23, 2011)

Despite gains the Garifuna people made in the 1990s, Facussé Bargum had extended his palm oil landholdings from “Punta Sal in Tela, Atlantida to Sico Valley near the Rio Platano Biosphere in Colón” by 1996 (“Raíces históricas de la fortuna de Miguel Facussé Barjum,” 2011). His holdings now cover a large part of the Honduras coastline land because he rejected the Garinagu’s 1997 land titles. Instead, he resorted to stealing the Garinagu’s land by “planting 100 hectares of palm oil. Today, his territory surrounds Vallecito. In total, 86% of Garifuna land has been seized by non-Garifunas over the last 18 years, despite a Supreme Court ruling upholding the Garifunas’ title to the land” (“Honduras: Stand with the Garifuna people as they Recover Ancestral Lands,” 2012). It is through this lens that the Garinagu inhabitants relate with and connect to Honduras’ north coast and to Sambulá’s legacy. Developments addressed in this chapter thus far support Doreen Massey’s analysis that place is enmeshed in a host of social relations, which generate “internal tensions and conflicts” (1994:137; 1991:323). In articulating this relationship, Massey is addressing the contradictions found in place as we continue to see in this chapter.

Modernization and the Agricultural Sector/Law of Municipalities

In this section, I outline the continuation of the making of the Garinagu landlessness. A pernicious legislative framework included in Callejas Romero’s economic policies in the 1990s was Decree 31-92 enacted in 1992, which created the Law for the Modernization and the Agricultural Sector (LMA) (Callejas Romero, 1992). The law focuses on food production and seems to be inclusive in its objective. For instance, some of the objectives outlined in Chapter II,

Article 0004 states that LMA “establishes the adequate conditions for the producers whatever their form of organization or business may be, to develop efficient food production and other agriculture products while ensuring the conservation and protection of the soils, water, forest, flora and fauna” (Callejas Romero, 1992). It also calls for the development of the rural region and the generation of jobs. However, it does not specifically state how the state would protect indigenous territories and communities in the rural and the north coast regions. According to Brondo, the USAID crafted the LMA for the Honduran government to execute. The LMA’s objectives were: “(1) to eliminate state intervention in the agrarian sector, (2) to limit appropriations and promote private ownership and (3) to promote new foreign and domestic investment in agriculture (because the law as intended to increase the amount of [legally titled] land available on the market” (2013:43). Hence, many smallholders, Brondo states are “suffering from economic hardship chose to sell their land to wealthier landowners and to the giant banana producers who desperately wanted to expand their landholdings” (2013:43).

Although Brondo contends that the *mestizo* peasants chose to sell their land, professor of law Lauren Carasik states that the 1992 Law for the Modernization of Land “gutted many of the protections written into the original agrarian reform efforts, creating pressure on peasant land cooperatives to sell their land to large landowners” (2012). Small farmers sold their land for “a mere 1,000 lempiras per manzana (about \$52 US dollars for 1.7 acres)” (Shell, 2012; see also “Raíces históricas de la fortuna de Miguel Facussé Barjum,” 2011). With funding from the World Bank, Facussé Bargum, the leader of snack and biofuel enterprises and alleged drug-trafficker in Honduras was waiting to partake in this bonanza, particularly land located in the fertile land of Valle of Aguán (Aguán Valley) (“Drug Plane Burned on Prominent Honduran’s

Property,” 2004). Traveling to Sangreleya, Trujillo during my fieldwork research in 2006, I noticed large plantations of palm oil.

Before the National Congress created LMA, it passed the Law of Municipalities (Ley de Municipalidades) in October 1990 through Decree 134-90. This law was a combination of electoral reform and decentralization of the central government. The government put into place a formidable political apparatus that I consider the culmination of the Garinagu landlessness. Decree Law 134-90 granted the country’s 298 municipalities autonomy over their budgets, tax collections, investment, natural resources, electoral process – meaning separate elections for mayors and presidential candidates, and development programs, among others (El Congreso Nacional, 1990). The Law of Municipalities came out of the “National Program for Decentralization and Municipal Strengthening established as part of the Administration's policy of State Modernization” (“International City/County Management Association” 2004:4-2). I suspect that due to its involvement in training that the USAID might have been behind the creation of the Law of Municipalities. In 1989, USAID “increased its support of the municipal level by providing it with technical assistance and training in order to improve the administration of the local governments” (“International City/County Management Association,” 2004:4-2). USAID’s involvement seems to suggest that the Municipal Reform Law might have been modeled after the United States political system. Because of this law, the government annexed various Garifuna communities and incorporated them into urban areas. Since then foreigners have received titles to the Garifuna communities land (M. Miranda, personal communication, October 3, 2012).

The incorporation of the Garifuna communities into urban areas was a departure from the policies of the 1950s, for at that time the Honduran government did not recognize the Garifuna

communities as urban areas. Under Honduras' previous laws, the Garifuna communities had to have a population of over 1,000 to be considered urban (López García 2006:32). Among the communities classified as urban were Corozal with a population of 1,296, Triunfo de la Cruz 1,082, Limón 1,447 and Santa Rosa de Aguán 1,284, San Juan and Tornabé (location of the Proyecto Turístico Bahía de Tela and today Micos Beach and Resort) with a little over 1,000 (Euraque 2004:178; López García 2006:32; M. Miranda, personal communication, October 3, 2012). Under the Law of Municipalities, the central government also produced a new form of political structure that empowered municipalities to convert the Garinagu's land into a national park without "consulting" the inhabitants (Brondo 2013:51). Brondo notes that this same process took place in Tela Bay. Against the Garinagu's opposition, the government carried out the Tela Bay project land acquisition by amending the Constitution allowing the local government "to annex community lands (as in the case of Tornabé, Triunfo de la Cruz, and San Juan)" (Brondo 2013:51). Since this transaction, local officials in Tela have sold "200 hectares" of Garinagu's land (Brondo 2013:51). In other instances, the local government co-opted the Garifuna organizations such as the Patronatos.

The same situation that took place in Tela and in many other Garifuna communities also took place in Walumugu. According to Garifuna scholar, Salvador Suazo, "the area known as Walumugu District is a Garifuna corridor located in the municipality of Juan Francisco Bulnes" in Colón (personal communication, June 21, 2014). Comprising Juan Francisco Bulnes are the Garifuna communities of "Plaplaya [Bülagüríba], Bataya [Badayaugati], Coyoles [Koyolesi], Pueblo Nuevo [Ñon Ton], Buena Vista [Buena Wista] and La Fe [Pârinchi], plus a distinguished family that lives in a coconut plantation named Thigh-bone [Taibónu]" (S. Suazo, personal communication, June 21, 2014). In the aftermath of Francisco Bulnes' assassination in the

1880s, his three children founded Ñon Ton or New Town which was hispanized as Pueblo Nuevo (S. Suazo, personal communication, June 21, 2014). These communities, similar to many other Garifuna communities, are in peril. Under Walumugu's three-term *mestizo* Mayor, several illegal land sales to foreigners linked with criminal activities took place. The Garinagu reported the case to the central authorities, but their concerns fell on deaf ears (M. Miranda, personal communication, March 17, 2011).

In 2004, the Maduro's government approved the Law of Property (La Ley de Propiedad) which gave birth to the Property Institute (Instituto de Propiedad, IP). Consequently, the government merged the National Geographic Institute (Instituto Geográfico Nacional, IGN) and several other institutions with overlapping tasks to oversee and "guarantee the property legal security and to integrate different registries for the protection and regulation of the land and land registry" ("Reforma Institucional," 2012). The Honduran legislature passed the property law in 2004 that merged several bureaucratic institutions and the formation of the Land Administration Project of Honduras (Proyecto de Administración de Tierras de Honduras, PATH) with the intent "to regularize and modernize property ownership" (Anderson 2007:384). Included in this project were black people OFRANEH represented and indigenous inhabitants. Yet, these social actors were wary of the government's plan (Anderson 2007:385). According to Anderson, an OFRANEH "senior representative" stated, "when illegality is made legal, peoples still have the right to justice" (2007:385). On this sea of legitimate suspicion, in December 2008, the World Bank funded PATH's phase two by approving a \$3,000,000 loan ("Program de Administración de Tierras de Honduras II, PATH II," n.d.). Usurpation and dispossession of the Garifuna inhabitants from their land has only grown because there are no land protection guarantees in Honduras.

Besides economic gains made by the central government and elites, the Municipal Reform Law also strengthened the dominant political group. Through the law's execution, the Honduran central government created cadres or gatekeepers to safeguard and preserve the ruling class' interests in this poor nation. Mayoral posts in Honduras have been occupied primarily by *mulatos*, except in 1992 when Garifuna Sambulá won election in Limón. Otherwise, *mulatos* hold municipal offices where the Garifuna communities are geographically concentrated ("Principales Corporaciones Municipales Elecciones Generales 2009"). For example, Santa Fé, Colón is the only Garifuna community represented by a Garifuna from the right-wing National Party. This was the case in 2006 while researching in Honduras. The violence and corruption associated with the Honduran electoral system, particularly since the 2009 coup d'état, can help us to understand why 64 percent of the Mayors were from the National Party ("Principales corporaciones municipales Elecciones Generales 2009"). In addition, Lobo Sosa "designated" Garifuna Venancio Sabio Quevedo as governor of Atlántida, a region which is one of the battlegrounds for land between the Garifuna residents and the government ("Gobernador Político de Atlántida es Afrohondureño," 2010). It is also startling to learn about the number of Garinagu joining the National Party when most are ardent supporters of the Liberal Party. As my interlocutor Crecencio Valdez stated, "I have been a Liberal from the crib" (personal communication, May 31, 2010). Although the Garifuna communities can form an alternative political coalition, they would not do so because they have become puppet regions of the dominant group; hence, they do not have community control over the established institutions that influence their lives. Instead, they work within the existing legislative system created in the 1990s and the political apparatus that have made them a landless and fragmented society.

In view of changes in Honduras' political landscape since the 2009 coup d'état, I asked several members of the Garifuna middle class in the United States how Lobo Sosa's government helps the Garinagu in Honduras. In Honduras, Isidro Chávez gives Lobo Sosa the benefit of the doubt, but he does not "believe him" (personal communication, April 24, 2010). Tomas Cevello in New York City declares that it "is too soon to say – too soon for judgment on "Pepe" Lobo. First of all, he [Lobo Sosa] took a country in turmoil. He has to iron out a lot of things not only in Honduras but all over the world, the acceptance from the international community that needs to be the first thing to be ironed" (personal communication, May 24, 2010). Felicita Benitez from the Bronx replies, "well, it is my understanding that he [Lobo Sosa] signed some decrees last year in favor of the indigenous and the Afro-descendants" (personal communication, May 25, 2010). Then, she asked me to share with her what he has done. Echoing similar thoughts, activist Pabla Trujillo declares,

I don't know how he's gonna help. However, I learned that he was president of the congress. What I have described about the [land] struggle during that time he was the president of the congress during that time. So, he knew about the problem. He knows about the problem. I'm not sure what he did in terms of helping them [Garinagu] during the time . . . I see Honduran having a lot of problems in dealing with their own laws. I feel that Honduras doesn't have respect for law. (personal communication, May 24, 2010)

A January 24, 2014 *La Prensa* article states that President Juan Orlando Hernández's (2014-) administration planned to eliminate four organizations among them SEDINAFROH and the Secretariat of Justice and Human Rights. Hernández who cheered the coup d'état and "led the illegal 2012 ejection of four members of the Supreme Court and the illegal naming of a new attorney general to a five-year term," targeted organizations such as SEDINAFROH created under Lobo Sosa's administration (Frank, 2014).

OFRANEH referred to SEDINAFROH and the Secretariat of Justice and Human Rights organizations also formed during Lobo Sosa's administration as "extinct" (personal communication, February 3, 2014). Although Hernández's administration has not eliminated SEDINAFROH, Lobo Sosa's compliance with ODECO's campaign pledge suggests that he only used it to secure the Garinagu's votes and appease them amid the political crisis that the Honduran oligarchs manufactured and the United States government approved. Yet, several Garinagu interviewed believe that because a Garifuna woman served as the Lobo Sosa family's midwife and the fact that his government named several Garifuna leaders to various nominal ministerial posts, they feel included in the broader social fabric of Honduras. Members of the Garifuna middle class choose not to see the danger of their politics. I define their politics to be dangerous because it encourages the use and abuse of the Garinagu culture and the snatching of their land. This is illustrated in Mario Moran's statement.

because I'm an eternal optimist, I'm actually encouraged by the fact that he [Lobo Sosa] accepts that he's from Trujillo; I'm encouraged as a matter of fact that every speech that I heard he say, he actually states the fact that his mother's midwife was a Garifuna woman lady and the Garifuna lady brought him to this world, Doña Catalina. I like the fact that Bernard Martínez [Garifuna] is the Minister of Culture, Sports and Arts. I like the fact that Luis Green is the Minister of Ethnic Issues. Now, why do I like that? Because in contrast with what happened with the previous government [Manuel Zelaya ousted in a coup d'état] – where for the first time we actually have four people – four Garinagu in the senate. What's significant about "Pepe" Lobo is the fact that this is the conservative party. This is the party that most Garinagu do not support and as a result they have never taken us into consideration and yet - again, now we have – and I'm happy for Bernard. Yes, we have four senators in the previous government but they were not representing the Garinagu interest. They were representing the interests of those who sponsored their campaigns. (personal communication, May 25, 2010)

It does not matter to Moran why Lobo Sosa would speak about his place of birth and the Garifuna midwife. What matters to Moran is that Lobo Sosa references place and the Garinagu's domestic services. As for Bernard Martínez Valerio, his position as Secretary of State for the

Departments of Culture, Arts and Sports was ephemeral. As a “trade unionist and black activist” and “first black Presidential candidate,” *mulato* politicians chased him out of office (Martínez Valerio, n.d.). In addition to Valerio’s ousting, land usurpation remained ongoing under Lobo Sosa’s administration. Yet, despite these developments, the Garinagu in Honduras and in the United States see themselves to be culturally powerful, which is false liberation. What is the purpose of being culturally powerful when a group is politically and economically powerless? Being politically and economically powerful means having land and having land can also mean enjoying some form of autonomy. Having land is more effective than being culturally powerful because it balances power relations. In saying this, I am not implying that the Garinagu should neglect their culture. It is part of who they are. Therefore, they must preserve it and protect it. However, they cannot remain exclusively focused on culture as their only survival strategy. The Garifuna activists and the Garinagu in general must become politically conscious as the Garinagu did with Dr. Lacayo Sánchez in the 1960s and Sambula did in the early 1990s. If they do not, it means that there is a sense of defeatism that dominates their psychic.

Whenever the Garifuna leaders have the opportunity to address the Garinagu’s land struggle to a global audience, some do not seize the moment. On April 19, 2013, I viewed *Garifuna in Peril* at the Langston Hughes African American Film Festival in Seattle, Washington. Directed and produced by Garifuna Ruben Reyes and Ali Allie, the film exams the Garifuna’s culture (e.g. language), HIV, and land dispossession in Honduras. Most of the movie, however, focuses on the first two issues. When the movie addresses land dispossession, it sanitizes the violence. It does not reveal the Honduran government and elites’ brutality. Instead, it presents the Garifuna Patronato to be complicit in the selling of the Garifuna’s land to foreigners. Indeed, some members of the Patronatos are complicit in this conflict. Using Braulio

Martínez's association with a Patronato in Triunfo de la Cruz, "the mayor of the municipality of Tela insisted in selling the Garinagu land illegally to foreigners and investors in tourism" (M. Miranda personal communication, January 5, 2011). The municipality sold "twenty-two manzanas of Triunfo de la Cruz that the municipality of Tela used to pay a debt to its union" (M. Miranda, personal communication, January 5, 2011). Although some members of the Patronatos are complicit, which shows the fragmentation of the Garifuna society, the Honduran government and oligarchs have continued to orchestrate and maintain the state of violence and intimidation against the Garifuna opposition leaders. I asked Reyes and Allie during the question and answer session, why they do not address the Honduran government violence against the Garinagu. Ali responded, "the Honduran government is pleased with the film" (field notes, April 19, 2013). The Honduran government has every right to be pleased, for the movie advertises Honduras as a place of laws and respect for human rights rather than a violent and racist society.

What I have so far outlined is that "the conquest and control of [place] . . . first requires that it be conceived of as something usable, malleable, and therefore capable of domination through human action" demonstrating that "there can be no politics of [place] independent of social relations. The latter [conquest and control of place] give the former [conceived place] their social content and meaning" (Harvey 1990:254; 1990: 257). The politics of land in Honduras and spatial barriers constructed through a host of laws speak not only of the steps taken to homogenize place but also of the "difficulties" for those excluded by the dominant group to assert control over place (Harvey 1990:257). What follows in the following segments in this chapter is how the Garifuna activists in Honduras and in the United States responded to the Honduran government's economic policies and global economic forces in the making of a landless society.

Pressure Groups

Over the years in Honduras, the Garifuna pressure groups have resorted to various tactics to counter a host of national economic schemes ranging from tourism to monoculture palm oil plantations. On October 11, 1996, OFRANEH and ODECO organized La Marcha de los Tambores (The March of Drums). ODECO's Casildo unity with OFRANEH seemed to have taken place before power and class became central to Casildo's existence as a Garifuna leader. The Garinagu from across Honduras convened in Honduras' capital "to demand their rights to communal land. They also demanded that the Honduran government adhere to the Covenant [sic] No. 169 of the ILO" ("The Inspection Panel," 2007). The outcome of this march Anderson declares was an "agreement on land titling" (2009:161).

On April 1, 2011, an estimated 7,000 Garinagu descended on Tegucigalpa. Organized by OFRANEH, The Foundation for the Health of Our People, formed by ELAM's graduates, and their Garifuna grassroots organizations, these groups named their march Alliance 2-14 (J. Espinosa, personal communication, September 23, 2011). For march organizers, the 2-14 drums beat "represented the dignity of our people, but also to send a clear message of Garifuna people's struggle and to denounce the entire process of land usurpation, denouncing the entire process of the third exile, denouncing all of this project of selling the national sovereignty" (J. Espinosa, personal communication, September 23, 2011). It is therefore the "magic" of the drums that the Garinagu sought to use as a representation of their struggle against oppression, domination, and racism (B. Cayetano, personal communication, April 13, 2010).

March organizers thus declared that there was "nothing to celebrate in Honduras," referring to the upcoming Garifuna's remembrance of their ancestor's removal from St. Vincent and arrival to Honduras (J. Espinosa, personal communication, September 23, 2011). Fifty Garifuna

organizations representing their respective communities comprised Alliance 2-14. Each organization functions autonomously at a local level but through OFRANEH at a national level. Every Alliance 2-14's member organization "has its own Patronato that is a member of the alliance and is represented in Alliance 214" (J. Espinosa, personal communication, September 23, 2011). For the marchers, the unremitting dispossession of the Garinagu from their land signifies another form of "exile" (J. Espinosa, personal communication, September 23, 2011). While the Garifuna activists were marching, chanting, and performing, other Garifuna participants performed cleansing rituals designed to "dissipate the spirit of violence that characterizes the current regime of Porfirio Lobo" (J. Espinosa, personal communication, September 23, 2011; Anderson 2012:69). As the Garifuna protesters voiced their land usurpation in the streets, Casildo was "having lunch in an air conditioned office" with Lobo Sosa (J. Espinosa, personal communication, September 23, 2011). For Espinosa, Casildo engaged in "celebrating officialism" an approach, which his critics claim, defines Casildo's stand and politics in Honduras (personal communication, September 23, 2011).

Again, Routledge's observation helps us to understand the Garinagu's marches. Speaking of social movements in India in relation to economic developments, he states that the social actors' "goals, scale and success have frequently depended upon the particular economic, political and cultural conditions existing at the time of the movement's mobilization" (1993:16). Seeing that these conditions threatened them, the Garifuna activists defended their place that supports Escobar's argument about the defense of place. It also supports geographer Ruth Gillmore's argument that "a geographical imperative lies at the heart of every struggle for social justice" (2005:16). To support their struggle, the Garifuna drums, which uphold a central aspect in their culture, became vital in their resistance. The Garifuna protesters usage of drums

supports Routledge's argument that "cultural codes" are "spatially specific" and "cultural expressions of resistance" (1993:37). Drums represent a salient cultural artifact in the Garifuna culture. As Brigido Cayetano states, "when the drum beats you do not need to make an invitation everybody comes" (personal communication, April 14, 2010). This is part of the Garifuna African traditions. Some Garifuna leaders view the drum as their only weapon against economic and political forces. Quoted by the Cultural Survival Quarterly, Alfredo López, OFRANEH's vice president and founder of the first Garifuna community radio station, Sweet Coconut (*Faluma Bimetu*) based in Triunfo de la Cruz, declares "'Against their weapons, our drums are all that we have'" ("Honduras: Stand with the Garifuna people as they Recover Ancestral Lands," 2012). Indeed, the Honduran government and local oligarchs have the national police, the military, and their henchmen. Foreign investors have the Honduran government and local oligarchs' protection. The Garifuna citizens have much more than a drum to counter their oppression; they have economic pressure that they can use.

The Garifuna leaders can do many others things in addition to protesting, connecting with a network of organizations abroad, and jumping scale. Direct pressure in the sphere of political consumerism is certainly an important route the Garifuna leaders can pursue by borrowing from African Americans' movement. In 1955, the Montgomery Improvement Association "modeled its transportation system, mass meetings, and ability to organize community leaders directly on the Baton Rouge boycott" of 1953 which was "spearheaded" by Mt. Zion Baptist Church's Reverend T. J. Jemison (Frystak 2009:67; King 2010:158). Initiated by several African American women such as Jo Ann Gibson Robinson in Montgomery, Alabama, the Montgomery bus boycott was a response to segregation in busses, where blacks had to seat in the back of the bus or relinquish their seats to white passengers despite the fact that "75 percent of the city's

ridership was black” (Wilson 2000:84). It is from the black experience that the Montgomery bus boycott began on December 5, 1955 when “fifty thousand people - walked off from public city buses in defiance of segregation” propelling Dr. King as a national figure in the Civil Rights Movement (Robinson 1987:8). For thirteen months, black domestic workers relied on car pools organized by blacks or walked long distance to challenge racist practices in the United States. African Americans’ actions “caused consternation among local businesspeople” because they were hoping to attract new business to the city (Wilson 2000:108). In December 1956, the federal courts ordered the buses to be integrated (Robinson 1987:8). Although spatial variations exist in terms of experiences and black people’s demands and the fact that the Garifuna people are fighting for land, the point is that the Garifuna pressure groups can borrow from African American activism because the Garifuna consumers buy the very same products (e.g. snacks, margarine etc.) Facussé Bargum’s company produces.

Economic pressure might not appeal to the Garifuna leaders and the Garinagu in general because they blindly believe that UNESCO’s May 18, 2001 proclamation of the Garifuna’s culture as a masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity and their status as “indigenous” in Honduras shelter them. However, the Garinagu’s situation is not a matter of indigenous status. Their situation is about oppression and domination. It is about pushing the Garinagu from their land to be consumed by tourism and tourists, which is already occurring. In his 1964 speech, *Message to the Grass-roots*, Malcolm X states, “land is the basis of all independence. Land is the basis of freedom, justice, and equality” (Breitman 1990:9). The Garifuna pressure groups must not simply accumulate tactics. They must explore other strategies if they want freedom, justice, and equality. As addressed thus far, local and foreign capitalists are constructing a new place on Honduras’ coastline with specific social relations demonstrating

that places are continually “reproduced” (Massey 1991:323). The reproduction of Honduras’ north coast represents different social relations and the fragmentation of the Garinagu as a society.

The Garifuna Middle Class’s Position

As the Garifuna pressure groups embarked on marches in 1996, the Honduran government seized the opportunity for co-option. The Garifuna middle class living in the United States and some in Honduras focused on the Garinagu’s bicentennial event held in 1997. It appears that the economic and political milieu directly affecting the Garinagu seemed inconsequential to the Garifuna middle class in 1996. Nine days before La Marcha de los Tambores, President Reina Idiáquez issued Executive Decree No. 017-96 approving the formation of a “presidential commission to coordinate the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the arrival of the Garifunas to Honduras” (J. Ávila & T. Ávila 2008:43). Historian Roberto Pastor Fasquelle, Minister of Culture of Honduras together with Casildo and several others comprised the commission (J. Ávila & T. Ávila 2008:43).

The Honduran government’s congenial response to the Garifuna middle class and the elites’ cultural politics require some reflection. Undoubtedly, the government understood that it was in its best interest to appease the Garifuna people and their leaders. Thus, employing cultural nationalism was an effective route to go in distracting them. The government’s strategy undermined the unity that the Garinagu in Honduras and from the United States could have forged in forcefully denouncing the Garinagu’s land usurpation. I can only interpret the attention that the Garifuna middle class received from the government to be co-option, which they apparently perceive to be inclusion and recognition. The government’s efforts set the stage for

the commodification and politicization of the Garifuna's culture. Roberto Contreras explains why.

the government now has to see what resources are available so that these groups carry out that famous celebration of the anniversary of the Garifuna presence in Honduras. So, the political parties become involve, above all that campaign commitment that they sign for ODECO and in that campaign commitment, a budget of a million and a half of lempiras was secured, you see, precisely that million and a half was for ODECO so that they can carry out the celebration and the government imposes its rules. You will celebrate in this and this direction. That is to say that the government of that party practically takes possession of blacks' commemoration and imposes its own political idiosyncrasy that is why it has been politicized and that is why the Garifuna would begin to lose its own cultural identity. Why? Because we move according to those that are sponsoring the event and not in accordance to the cultural and moral values that must government our people. (personal communication, February 20, 2011)

However, the Garinagu remember the commemoration event OFRANEH organized in Trujillo in 1986 and 1988 as a period of solidarity among the Garifuna people because the Garifuna leaders controlled the event (R. Contreras, personal communication, February 20, 2011).

After the bicentennial event, members of the Garifuna middle class in New York City had an epiphany in 1998. They realized that Honduras was and is still experiencing a "land rush" (Volgenau, 1998). As stated by "Maxima Thomas, director of the Garifuna Museum in Tela . . . 'Investors not only are buying beachfront but also farmland. The Garifuna will have no place to grow crops'" (Volgenau, 1998). The reason was because local and foreign investors (e.g. United States and Canada) were eager to invest in the Marbella tourism project to build hotels, apartments, a shopping mall, supermarket, swimming pools, a golf course, tennis courts and even an airport (Volgenau, 1998). Although most Garinagu in Honduras could not contextualize the legal mechanisms that facilitated the project to move forward, they began to denounce Article 107 amendment. In listening to the difficulties longtime activist Pabla Trujillo had articulating the meaning of Article 107 in relation to the Garinagu's landlessness, it was clear the challenges

the Garifuna leaders face in framing a sound strategy. Yet, they understood that land dispossession would generate a host of problems for the Garifuna residents on Honduras' north coast. Trujillo states:

we were afraid because of poverty in our community. And, we know that the best land in Honduras happens to be our land, where we settled. And the other thing is that if someone comes to you, you don't have no money and I'm offering you a lot of money, being that you're poor, what is it that you're gonna do, you're gonna sell. (personal communication, May 24, 2010)

Generally, the Garinagu in Honduras do not sell their land because they are "poor." They sell their land because they are forced to do so or risk being murdered. Reporter Gerry Volgenau lists a couple of cases. A Garifuna man in Tela who was urging the Garinagu in the community not to sell their land was shot in October of 1996 and someone murdered a Garifuna leader from San Juan in Honduras' capital, Tegucigalpa (Volgenau, 1998). Today, Honduras ranks second after Brazil as having the highest number of "deaths of land and environmental defenders" (Global Witness 2013:11). From 2003 to 2013, Honduras had 109 deaths and Brazil 448 (Global Witness 2013:11; see also "Honduras: UN official urges action to tackle chronic insecurity for lawyers, journalists," 2012). According to a table Global Witness prepared, there is an increase of deaths of land and environmental defenders in Honduras since the 2009 coup d'état. Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and Guatemala have high death rates as well (Global Witness 2013:10).

The Garifuna middle class' economic ambitions complicated OFRANEH and other Garinagu mobilization. Several Garinagu interlocutors asserted that although ODECO is a black organization, its administrators "are blacks whose ideas are that of a privileged class within the Garifuna communities" (R. Contreras, personal communication, February 20, 2011). Contreras refers to ODECO's administrators' complicity in the loss of the Garinagu's land beginning in the

late 1990s and beyond. From 1998 to 2000, Contreras served as INA's regional director for the Atlantic coast area. Tasked with granting communal titles to the Garifuna communities in volatile areas such as Tornabé, San Juan, and Triunfo de la Cruz, Contreras claims that he faced significant opposition from Casildo, who argued that the Garifuna people obtain individual land titles (personal communication, February 20, 2011).

By awarding the Garifuna people individual land titles, the owners can sell their land or use it as collateral in a business transaction in the event that they need money "to travel to the United States" (R. Contreras, personal communication, February 20, 2011). The Garinagu can only sell their communally owned land to another Garifuna member of the community. Many Garifuna residents collected signatures in different communities to show that members of a particular community support individual landownership rather than communal. Those who signed the petition meant they supported individual titles perhaps without understanding the implications of their actions. Casildo and several Garifuna leaders mounted a struggle eventually leading to Contreras's dismissal (R. Contreras, personal communication, February 20, 2011). Contreras considers Casildo's actions to be "the worse crime that ODECO could have committed against the Garifunas" (personal communication, February 20, 2011). Yet, under Contreras's leadership, Garifuna communities in Rio Esteban (*Tibiniriba*), Santa Fe (*Giriga*), Guadalupe, San Antonio (*Márugurugu*), Cusuna, Irióna, Rio Miel, Callos Venados, the Rosita, and Nueva Go, and Tornabé received communal titles, which the municipal government disregarded (R. Contreras, personal communication, February 20, 2011). Casildo's actions and of those of other Garinagu in Honduras speaks of their fragmentation under neoliberalism as their relationship with place is altered. Under this economic system private property rights have "replaced communal

landholding in peasant and indigenous communities” (Chase 2002:2). This is true in Honduras as it is the case throughout most Latin American countries.

Casildo’s other activities have involved accompanying Honduran presidents to the Garifuna communities. Dressed in a dashiki generally worn by the Garifuna drummers and black cultural nationalists globally, Casildo, former President Lobo Sosa, and his entourage attended the Garinagu’s commemoration of their 214 years’ presence in Honduras on April 12, 2011. Held in Bajamar, Puerto Cortés, one of the battlegrounds over land between the Garifuna people and the government, the Garifuna leaders from Travesia, Plaplaya, and several other communities attended the event. These leaders asked Lobo Sosa to have the roads repaired and to build a clinic for their communities (“Lobo emite decreto para mejorar calidad de vida de etnia garífuna,” 2011). In response, he approved a Decree supporting “this ethnic group land tenure, development and cultural and education development” (“Lobo emite decreto para mejorar calidad de vida de etnia garífuna,” 2011). Research did not reveal if the government carried out any projects in these Garifuna communities following the Decree. What is evident is that Lobo Sosa’s promise in the presence of a “respected Garifuna” such as Casildo and his attendance to a Garifuna event neutralized the Garinagu. Drawing from theorist, scholar, and co-founder of the Republic of New Afrika, Imari Abubakari Obadele’s analysis of black leadership in the United States, it was clear that some Garifuna leaders “almost always profit from [their] subservience” and they are “motivated by a conviction that there is no other course” (1968:37). Casildo continues to play the role of subservience.

The subservience of some Garifuna leaders has posed a problem because it has transformed how they view place. The Garinagu’s practices and relationship with the land are therefore riddled with contradictions. Some inhabitants view their relationship with the land as a cultural

identity but concurrently many view it as a commodity rather than a means to empowering the Garifuna people. For example, some Garinagu believe that establishing assembly plants in Garifuna communities is the correct path to follow. Assembly plants entered the Honduran economy as part of the package put together by neoliberals in the 1980s connected to the Export Processing Zones (EPZs). It is in these zones where “manufacturing firms operate tax-free” (Kerssen 2013:24). Tanya M. Kerssen states that in 2003 “only 17 percent of garment workers were employed by Honduran firms; the largest employers were US companies (53 percent) followed by South Korean companies (15 percent)” (2013:24). Honduran elites such as Mario Canahuati partook in the spoils. He is Lovable Group’s director that “owns four EPZs that manufacture products for Costco, Hanes, Russell Athletic, Footlocker, JC Penny and Sara Lee” (Kerssen 2013:24). I learned in 2006 that many Garinagu work in these assembly plant industries. Yet, many Garifuna middle class in Honduras and in the United States welcome assembly plants.

The reason for welcoming assembly plant industries is that members of the Garifuna middle class sees these “floating prisons” as empowering the Garifuna people educationally and economically (Adams cited by Richardson 2001:73). In the United States, longtime land activist Efrain Escobar states, “if a maquiladora comes to our community, what I say is welcome. What we see is that our children educate themselves to come to work in the maquiladora. I think it is an advancement and development for our community. I see it in a positive way” (personal communication, June 7, 2010). Roberto Contreras, another longtime land activist, also shares Escobar’s perspective. What is more disturbing about Escobar’s statement as I also found among several Garinagu interviewed residing in Honduras and in the United States is that most of them or a family member own a piece of land in Honduras, have been or are actively involved

in the defense of the land, and speak of land as being Garifuna identity. Yet, their capitalist outlook raises questions about how much they value the land when the survival of what they generally refer to as “Garifuna identity” is contingent upon having land. Under capitalism, the Garinagu’s interaction with the physical environment has been transformed because the Garifuna middle class have adopted the very same perspective capitalists use.

Contrary to Contreras and Escobar, ODECO’s Casildo has been consistent with his practices since he became a professional career activist through the formation of ODECO. ODECO’s flyer advertising the Garifuna and Afrocaribbean Culture Great Carnival certainly resonates with Ávila’s New Horizon Investment Club approach in the United States. An e-mail Casildo circulated in Garifunalink listserv together with an attached flyer reads “Garifuna and Afrocaribbean Culture Great Carnival, guifity, flavor, love, candidness, and sweat” (personal communication, April 21, 2010). In La Ceiba, Casildo seems to be one of the main overseers of the Honduran state and elites’ interests. He facilitates these groups’ national economic policies. In so doing, Casildo supports the very same government that assaults the Garifuna people whenever they appropriate the public sphere to protest oppression and domination. However, this same government allows the Garifuna people to appropriate the public sphere once a year during the Garifuna’s ancestral celebration in April 12 only to form part of the spectacle of consumption. The reason why the Honduran government pushes them from their land is so that the Garifuna people can become the objects of attraction and entertainment as the brochure indicates, “*Honduras . . . es Caribe!*” or Honduras is the Caribbean (figure 7.5).

Casildo thus assists in facilitating the building of “consumption of space” as evident with the expansion of tourism (Gottdiener 1993:133). As sociologist Mark Gottdiener explains, tourism is “when people seek a qualitative space – sun, snow, the sea; when capitalism

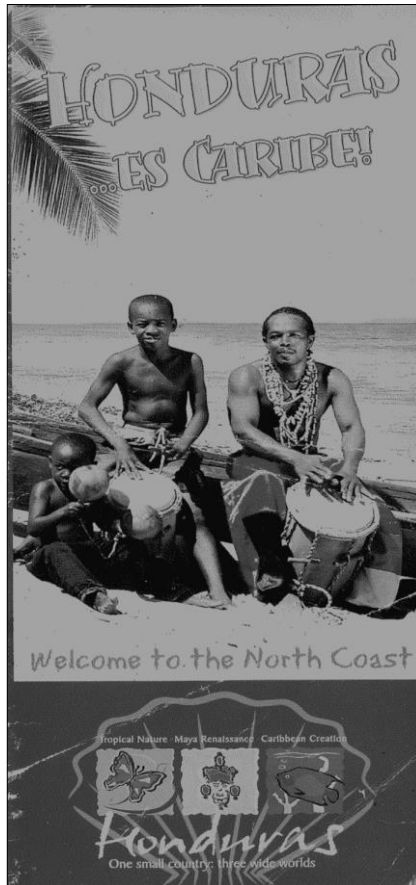


Figure 7.5 Travel Brochure
Source: Honduras, 2006

transforms the circulation of commodities for people into the circulation of people through commodified places” (1993:133). Besides the commodification of nature, we must also incorporate the commodification of the body and culture. In this case, I am referring to the Garifuna’s body as an “absent presence” (Longhurst 2009:430). It is absent as a human being but present as an object of tourists’ gaze. In this manner, the absent and present “reveals that although the body seems present, in fact, it functions . . . as Other to the mind . . .” and sight (Longhurst 2009:430). It is this otherness that disembodied the Garifuna people as human beings, but re-positions them and their culture as objects. In essence, the commodification of place, nature, people, and culture is “the commodification of everything” (Harvey 2005:165).

The Garinagu's history under colonialism has been valued thereby generating a thorny nexus between culture, economy, and politics.

Contrary to the perspectives and positions of the Garifuna middle class in Honduras, the Garifuna middle class in the United States economic practices also include the Honduras' north coast. In a Garifuna documentary, *Historia de Sambo Creek*, Augusto Suazo, a resident of Sambo Creek states that as part of Ávila's economic plan, "in 1990 Francisco Ávila founded a hotel" in Sambo Creek ("Historia de Sambo Creek," n.d.). Building hotels seemingly left the community wanting more. Suazo proclaims that Sambo Creek needs more hotels to accommodate the growing number of tourists visiting this community ("Historia de Sambo Creek," n.d.). Besides building hotels, members of the Garifuna middle class also became involved in The Micos Beach Project "negotiations." Their involvement in the "negotiations" was for the Garifuna investors to become shareholders in the project, but also served as a bridge between the Garifuna residents in Honduras and those in the United States.

In October 2004, New Horizon Investment Club's president, José Francisco Ávila, sent a letter to Thierry de Pierrefeu then Secretary of Tourism for Honduras under President Maduro Joest. In the letter, Ávila congratulates President Maduro Joest for his trip to the Dominican Republic where he sought to finalize investment for the Tela Bay project (J. Ávila, 2004).

Ávila also informs Pierrefeu of New Horizon's shareholders interest in forming a partnership in the Proyecto de Turismo Costero Sostenible, Sustainable Coastal Tourism Project (PTCS) "contracted through credit agreement number 3558-HO on 22 November 2001 with the World Bank and the Programa Nacional de Turismo Sostenible [National Program for Sustainable Tourism]" (J. Ávila, 2004). PTCS is a master plan for multiple tourism projects along the north coast of Honduras that includes Los Micos Beach and Golf Resort. Named after the Micos

Lagoon, this is an area belonging to the Garifuna communities of Tornabé, Miami, and San Juan in the municipality of Tela, Departamento of Atlántida.

On August 22, 2005, the Patronatos from the communities of Tornabé and Miami met at the Honduran Institute of Tourism office. Ávila was present at this meeting not as “an investor rather as a [pro bono] financial advisor” (J. Ávila, personal communication, July 6, 2012). A letter of intent “confirms the intention of the Honduran Institute of selling 190.00 shares of stock in DTBT [Tela Bay Tourism Development, Inc.] for \$1,000,000” (J. Ávila & T. Ávila 2008: 121). Quoting himself, Ávila states, “*the signing of this agreement is a historical milestone which marks the first day of a shinning future for the Honduran Garifuna community . . .*” (2008: 121 emphasis in original). On November 25, 2005, the Garifuna investors became shareholders of 7 percent of Tela Bay Tourism Development. The stock Option Contract would provide Garinagu investors with a “five year period (2006-2010) to exercise the purchase of the stock” (J. Ávila & T. Ávila 2008: 123).

For the Ávilas, “the economic social formation of the Garifuna communities can be classified as a capitalist subworld due to the low development of its productive forces which results in the presence of non-capitalist production forms and circulation” (2008:123). The term subworld signifies not only the Ávilas’ lack of knowledge about the impact of capitalism on society but also the denigration of the Garifuna people. As cited by the Ávila brothers, less than a month after the tourism negotiations began, Casildo issued a press release dated September 7, 2004 which states that the “government of Honduras granted Definitive Property Title to the Garifuna community of Miami in the municipality of Tela, Departamento of Atlántida in the amount of 24 hectares, 98 areas, 80.01 square meters” (2008:124). José Francisco Ávila formed a strategic partnership with the National Garifuna Tourism Chamber (Cámara Nacional de

Tourismo Garifuna, CAMANTUG). Again, as cited by the Ávilas OFRANEH's Gregoria Flores and Amilcar Colón denounced Thierry Pierrifeu's tourism plan and the Garifuna activists as a whole involved in the negotiations stating that they believed that the project would only benefit foreign investors not the Garifuna people and labeled the participation of the Garifuna people as a "betrayal" (2008:123). As stated by the Ávilas, Casildo supported the economic endeavor as long as "it includes the Garifuna communities as an integral part of the development process" (2008:125). Apparently, after some skirmish between José Francisco Ávila and Casildo in Honduras for control over the tourism partnership, Ávila left the 7 percent agreement in Casildo's hands to this day with the understanding that the funds would be allocated to a trust fund and used for the education of the Garifuna youths (J. Ávila, personal communication, June 8, 2009).

Other Garinagu observers differ with Ávila's narrative. Roberto Contreras contends that Ávila only negotiated 5 percent with the government (personal communication, February 20, 2011). He also claims that Ávila never delineated the fine details with regard to the Garifuna's shareholding benefits that the Garifuna investors would receive, but the Honduran government suggested hiring locals, although that, too, never materialized (R. Contreras, personal communication, February 20, 2011). Benitez, a member of New Horizon Investment Club, however, decries such statement. She states that New Horizon's aim was to organize "workshops [for the Garifuna people] so that they can organize as micro-enterprises so that they are prepared when [the tourism project] takes place" (F. Benitez, personal communication, May 25, 2010). Instead of going along with New Horizon's plans, Benitez states, the Garifuna people in their respective communities in Honduras and their relatives in the United States decried New Horizon's proposal.

For Benitez, the rejection of the plan by the Garifuna people was simply disastrous. Therefore, she nonchalantly forecasts that the Garifuna people will be displaced from their communities because “we Garifuna do not have sufficient capital to compete with these big companies and we want and need investment in Honduras, but the government will do that” (personal communication, May 25, 2010). In Benitez’s view, because the Garifuna people lack capital, they also lack power. The Garifuna people can only find power in money not in a social movement fostered by their collective consciousness. Her vantage point suggests a very elitist’s perspective. Benitez’s discourse is suggestive of ideas that seem to be hierarchally diffusing from the Garifuna middle class in the United States as evident with their shareholding meeting with Pierrifeu.

Among the Garifuna middle class living in the United States, Mario Moran believes that “unless we [Garinagu] got involve in educating our people about land and tourism and so forth, what I foresaw was that we were going to basically be eventually relocated from the places of residence which were the Garifuna communities” (personal communication, June 8, 2009). He also endorses the idea that “the value of the land is actually based on its use” (personal communication, May 25, 2010). In other words, it is only when land yields capital that the Garifuna middle class must appreciate its importance. Endorsement of the Honduran government’s schemes by members of the Garifuna middle class shows complete disregard for their impacts: environmental degradation, commodification of nature, land usurpation, and violence. Their actions also contradict the Garifuna people’s motto that the Honduras’ north coast defines their cultural identity. As Roberto Contreras states about the identity of the Garinagu settled on the Caribbean coast during the colonial era, there is that “linkage of the

human being to the land, sea, river, and lagoon. This is where the spirit is, that ancestral identity” (personal communication, February 20, 2011).

Today, some Garifuna middle class speaks of the Garifuna people’s “rich history and deep culture” (field note, May 29, 2010). The Garifuna people “are strong” because “we walked from Trujillo to Tegucigalpa to secure documents for our land” (field note, May 29, 2010). Hostess Luz Solis articulated these words during a tribute to legendary Garifuna songwriter and singer, Marcelino Fernandez, who is also known as “Don Marasa.” What Solis’ words represent is that the Garinagu must remember their land struggle in Honduras as a symbolic effort and part of their collective identity and memory signifying historical strength. What is central in their discourse is culture; a landless culture. In the meantime, the Garifuna children on the north coast beaches of Honduras have learned to say “‘give me money’ in English” something they never did before (Volgenau, 1998).

The Garifuna middle class aligns its political and economic discourse with its preoccupation with social mobility preventing it from seeing the political economy of place and oppression. Its blindness plays a role in the devastation of the vast majority of the Garifuna communities along the north coast as Garifuna men and women and young and old rely more and more on tourism for their survival. Thus, the reproduction of place that Massey speaks about has changed the relationships of the Garifuna people with the land in Honduras and in the United States. How they see the land complicates the efforts of pressure groups such as OFRANEH.

Cultural Commodification, Gender, and Migration

In the end, the Garifuna people in Honduras did not emerge victorious from Ávila’s tourism negotiations some Garinagu claim. There were only two winners according to Contreras. The corporations secured the Garinagu’s land on Honduras’ north coast to build

hotels. The other winner was Casildo. The Honduran government “partially” financed the construction of Casildo’s Satuye Cultural Center in La Ceiba (R. Contreras, personal communication, February 20, 2011). In the meantime, capitalists exploit the Garifuna’s culture, women, and force other Garinagu to migrate to the United States. Many Garifuna men, Contreras states are “only used to grab the drum and beat those drums and dance” (personal communication, February 20, 2011). In the Bay Islands, white middle class tourists exiting and boarding their cruise ship fix their gaze on these so-called exotic tribes, beating their drums. A tourist Yolanda Lippens’ video shows Garifuna men and women dancing at the Roatán Bay pier on May 14, 2008 while the cruise ship docks. Once docked a white couple takes picture with the Garifuna dancers who “welcomed” them (Lippens, 2011). The rest of the video shows the tourists visiting Garifuna communities. The Garifuna dancers perform the *wanaragua* (a traditional Garifuna dance) inside of a thatch house with cement floors and no windows. In reviewing several tourism brochures and vacation guides I collected throughout the course of my research fieldwork in Honduras in 2006, I found the Garifuna’s culture present in most pages. One source advertises *wanaragua* as “The Garifuna Experience” (Honduras 2006:30). The commodification of the Garifuna’s culture is one of the main reasons why the Honduran government and local oligarchs dispossess the Garifuna people from their land.

In other instances, as I learned in conversation with other Garinagu in 2006, some Garinagu performed at *mulatos*’ owned establishments in exchange for tips not for a fee. The Garifuna women braid tourists’ hair. Foreign-owned hotels want Garifuna women to sell them their coconut bread. Some Garinagu women have refused to do so. In other cases, some Garifuna families invite tourists to reside with them for a fee. This is happening in the Garifuna community of Rio Esteban. Judging from how tourism impacts the Garifuna communities, it is

important to ask: is this what Moran means using the Garifuna's culture for tourism? If so, then tourism has been effective in bringing development, modernity, and much more to the communities, including prostitution, which I include in my discussion of women's exploitation and oppression.

Contreras states that "our girls, well, those . . . that life gave them beauty, well, they are only good to be female companions when the big tourists come around with their money" (personal communication, February 20, 2011). The Garifuna women serve as companions mostly, but not exclusively, to European males and their descendants looking for a so-called exotic tribe to make their dreams in the vernacular region they call the Caribbean paradise becomes a reality. These women's so-called exoticism and tropical accent dazzled the senses of these noble men of means. The Garifuna and *mulato* men of "means" in Honduras and those visiting from the United States also take pleasure in these women's bodies.

Women's bodies are given a value, particularly when their bodies are seen "by the eye and by the phallus" (Lefebvre 1991:302). The commodification of their bodies signals the continuous project of the "capitalist patriarchal" system (hooks 2000:104; 1984:38). Under this system, women are simply seen as the object of consumption and as consumers. Drawing from hooks' analysis of "gangsta culture" in addressing sexism and misogyny, she states that the "sexist, misogynist, patriarchal ways of thinking and behaving that are glorified in gangsta rap are a reflection of the prevailing values in our society, values created and sustained by white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (1994:116). Gangsta rap also "celebrates the world of the material, the dog-eat-dog world where you do what you gotta do to make it . . ." (hooks 1994:117). Hooks therefore advises that we must critique the "politics of hedonistic consumerism, the values of the men and women who produce gangsta rap" (1994:117). In

Robyn Dowling's case study of retail practices, she argues that "the role of consumers is constructed as a feminine one, images of femininity reconstituted by advertising are important in maintaining an objectified femininity, and commodities . . ." (1993:295). Under capitalism, this construction indicates that women's mobility is "troubling to the patriarchal gaze" (Massey 2004:11). As such, they must be subdued through rigorous commodification and consumption. So, the Garifuna women are doing what they gotta do to make it in the dog-eat-dog world because the capitalist patriarchy society tells them that their external beauty is the only thing that defines their humanity.

In applying hooks', Massey's, and Dowling's analysis to the Garifuna women's oppression and domination, we must not only defy the very system that created and safeguard this cultural practices, but also critique the Garifuna people's silence on women's oppression and domination. This is evident in every aspect of the Garinagu's life. Speaking of the Garinagu's early 1990s land struggle in Limón, veteran activist Isidro Chávez declared that although women were involved in the movement, they were there "only to make company" (personal communication, April 24, 2010). His statement suggests that the struggle against oppression and domination is a male domain, although in drawing from hooks' analysis of black males in the United States, black males in Honduras are "utterly disenfranchised in almost every area of life" (1994:110) . Second, his perspective supports the notion that black people must only struggle against external forms of oppression and domination but it does not constitute undertaking these same forces existing within the Garifuna society connected to and in many ways produced and safeguarded by the very same racist patriarchal capitalist system they try to defy.

Statements such as Chávez's prevent the Garifuna people from even whispering women's exploitation. Instead, what dominates their discourse, as it is the case in Honduran society, is

that women must be virtuous whereas men are genetically predisposed to see women mostly as objects of their advances. Or, as Anastasia Pascual declares “*el hombre pertenece al mundo,*” the man belongs to the world (personal communication, February 11, 2013). In other words, men have free range to do what they want because it is in their nature or the world is theirs. I draw from hooks’ analysis about how other groups view feminism to explore why Garifuna people do not speak out more forcefully about women’s oppression and domination. She states that

many women [and men] are reluctant to advocate feminism because they are uncertain about the meaning of the term. Other women from exploited and oppressed ethnic groups dismiss the term because they do not wish to be perceived as supporting a racist movement; feminism is often equated with white women’s rights effort. Large numbers of women see feminism as synonymous with lesbianism; their homophobia leads them to reject association with any group identified as pro-lesbian. Some women [and men] fear the word ‘feminism’ because they shun identification with any political movement. (1984:23)

Indeed, feminism is generally associated with whites. Other cultures might perceive embracing the feminist movement to be a threat to the capitalist patriarchy system. Among the Garifuna leaders and the Honduran society in general questioning women’s oppression means challenging the very same system that some whites, blacks, indigenous, and other groups (men and women) in the United States and elsewhere in the world defy. In addition, it would mean questioning their own positionality as men since the capitalist patriarchy system determines men’s positionality according to ethnicity and wealth. Therefore, compromising their positionality is one path that most men in general are not willing to take, if they were to challenge women’s oppression and domination. In saying this, I am not implying that dismantling the patriarchy system is not achievable. It is attainable and some Garifuna women challenge black women’s oppression.

Founded by black women in 1994 and headquartered in Tegucigalpa, Link of Black Women of Honduras (Enlace de Mujeres Negras de Honduras, ENMUNEH), is concerned with black women's well-being. Among some of its objectives is to improve black women's "social, economic, and cultural condition" and "revalorize black women's image" (Enlace de Mujeres Negras de Honduras, n.d). Although ENMUNEH does not spell out women's oppression in its brochure, the organization addresses gender inequality. However, it should also link this oppression to the patriarchal system. To do so does not require transforming the "meaning" of power a reference hooks makes in her critique to radical feminists and bourgeois white women who sought to "obtain power in the terms set by the existing social structure as a necessary prerequisite for successful feminist struggle" (1984:83-85); it simply means women adopting a new value system that also integrate poor women. The Garifuna organizations must integrate such approach in its agenda just like OFRANEH integrates racism into the Garifuna people's land struggle. Second, the Garifuna writers and leaders must address cultural judgment. Whenever the Garifuna women's status is questioned outside of their communities, observations are riddled with cultural judgments. Citing Nancie González, Euraque states that the Garifuna population increased in the 1920s because of "Garifuna fecundity" (Euraque 2003:241). Such a cultural judgment suggests that the Garifuna female sexuality is a cultural trait that put her on position of power or advantage even to the point of rescuing the demise of her community.

Lastly, I turn to the recent surge of the Garifuna migration to the United States in addressing their dispossession from their land on Honduras' north coast. Alongside thousands of immigrants from Central America, namely El Salvador and Guatemala, across different ethnic groups, the Garifuna adults have been crossing the Mexico-United States border. The difference in their recent migration is that Garinagu adults are also traveling with their "toddlers" (Garsd,

2014). The Garifuna children have joined the “47,000 unaccompanied” and accompanied minors from Central America crossing the border (Frank, 2014). The Garifuna children and adults are also part of a larger migration of people from peripheral to core countries. This movement includes people from the African continent crossing the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe, Europeans, namely from Eastern Europe, migrating to Western Europe and to the United States, Asians, Arabs, and Haitians trying to reach the United States by undertaking dangerous journeys to escape poverty, violence including domestic violence, political instability and persecution which all results from geopolitics and national and global economic forces (Kassam 2014; “Haitian migrants killed as boat capsized,” 2013). Citing human rights activist Ruben Figueroa from Shelter 72 (Albergue 72) which houses immigrants in Tenosique near the Guatemalan border, Jasmin Garsd writes that the shelter’s employees have seen “an increase of Garifuna women and children. A year ago, we’d get maybe two Garifuna migrants in our shelter every day. This year, we’re getting 10 or 15 Garifuna every day” (2014). The number of Garinagu [migrants] riding the trains has also increased. Figueroa states, “you used to see maybe 15 Garifuna riding on top of the trains. Now you see 50 or 60 Garifuna, many families, young women with children on any given day” (Garsd, 2014).

Nicknamed *the Beast*, the trains are a network of “freight trains that runs the length of Mexico, from its southernmost border with Guatemala north to the United States,” (Sayre, 2014). Operated by Ferrosur and Kansas City Southern de Mexico, the trains transport not only “grain, corn or scrap metal” but also hundreds of undocumented immigrants mostly riding on the roofs of its cars (Sayre, 2014; Villegas, 2014). In response to the surge of Garifuna adults and children migrating to the United States, OFRANEH sent a letter to Democrat Senator Barbara Mikulski from Maryland addressing this crisis and linking the Garinagu’s exodus to their displacement

from their land (M. Miranda, personal communication, June 12, 2014). ODECO's coordinator, Edwin Álvarez, attributes the mass movement of Garinagu migrating to United States to the Garinagu communities becoming "key corridors for drug traffickers" (Garsd, 2014). Indeed, as I learned during my 2006 research, in recent years drug traffickers began using many Garifuna communities to transport their cargo abroad. Drug trafficking is not a recent development in Honduras. It is an old practice among Honduran elites and politicians as I pointed out elsewhere in this dissertation. Yet, during the Cold War, the United States government did not initially show interest in pursuing its so-called war on drugs policy. Senior Associate at the Washington Office on Latin America, Coletta Youngers states that although the United States government was initially reluctant to embrace a war on drugs because it diverted resources from the military, once the USSR was no longer a competitor, the United States government needed to maintain hegemony in the region (2000:6). Thus, the "U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) latched onto the drug war" (Youngers 2000:16). However, much more developed out of the United States latching out to the drug war policy.

A series of articles written by Gary Webb (1955-2004) in 1996, an investigative journalist and staff writer for the *San Jose Mercury News*, exposed the relationship between the CIA and its backed guerrilla army, the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (Fuerza Democrática Nicaraguense, FDN), the "largest" group comprising the group named the Contra (Against) (Webb, 1996; see also Kornbluh 2004:421). According to Peter Kornbluh, author and director of the National Security Archive's Chile Documentation Project, Pentagon documents show "a contra operation in Honduras called 'Condor' that was unrelated to Chile's Operation Condor" (2004:478). Indeed, historian Thomas M. Leonard states that the "Contra troops and supporters" used Honduras' southern Departamentos such as Olancho and El Paraíso as their base and

Tegucigalpa, the country's capital, as their administrative office for hosting their "foreign visitors and as a propaganda distribution center" (2011:160). With the United States government support, the Contras sought to overthrow The Sandinista National Liberation Front (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, FSLN) government in Nicaragua in the 1980s (Webb, 1996). As I stated in chapter four, the Sandinista ousted the United States-backed dictator Somoza Debayle in 1979. Webb's article also shows that to supply the Contras with arms, under the watchful eyes of the CIA, some FDN members introduced cocaine into African American communities in the San Francisco Bay area in the 1980s and used the proceeds to secure the weapons (Webb, 1996). Although what I just discussed relates to Nicaragua, it is also directly tied to Honduras because the Contras in alliance with the United States government used some places in Honduras as their base. I share this information to show that the source of Honduras' contemporary drug crisis is, in part, a result of the U.S. government's drug war policy in the region and a grip on its backyard.

Historian Dana Frank gives two reasons for Honduran mass migration. First, the rampant criminal practices of the post 2009 coup d'état government, and second the United States government's support of the country's politics (2014). Frank also factors in privatization and globalization and the United States government's historical control over its *backyard*. While gangs in Honduras are responsible for their share of the violence in the country, Frank states that the real "dangerous gang is the Honduran government" and the United States funding (2014). The violence in the country is reflected in the number of homicides committed. According to the United Nations Drug and Crime 2000-2012 report, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala have high homicide rates, although Mexico has the highest with 10,737 per 100,000 in 2000 and 26,037 per 100,000 in 2012 (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2012). The number of

homicides highlighted in table 7.6 shows the insecurity from which thousands of Honduran, Salvadoran, and Guatemalan are trying to escape. Other factors afflicting the Honduran masses are unemployment and poverty. As of 2010, 67 percent of Hondurans lived in poverty. Between 2006 and 2009, poverty rate decreased by 7.7 percent. However, between 2010 and 2012, the poverty rate increased by 13.2 percent (United Nations ECLAC 2012:14; Johnston and Lefebvre 2013:1). The wide spread corruption in Honduras continues to find fertile ground because the various government institutions, such as the police force works “closely with drug traffickers and organized crime” (Frank, 2014).

Table 7.6 Selected Countries in Central America with High Homicide Counts between 2000 and 2012
 Prepared by: Doris Garcia
Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2012

Country	2000	2005	2009	2010	2012
Honduras	3,176	3,212	5,280	6,236	7,172
Guatemala	2,904	5,338	6,498	5,960	6,025
El Salvador	2,341	3,778	4,382	3,987	2,594

A handful of Garifuna people became involved in drug trafficking fairly recently. Thus, the Garifuna leaders from OFRANEH, just like their Miskitos counterparts, are not only engaged in relentless land struggle, but also face the wrath of violence that accompanies the surge of drug trafficking. In fact, several members of OFRANEH, including its coordinator Miriam Miranda, were briefly “attacked and kidnapped by heavily armed men” on July 17, 2014 in the Garifuna territory of Vallecito (Trucchi, 2014). Yet, although drug trafficking is a major problem throughout much of Latin America and the Caribbean, in Honduras the Garifuna’s landlessness is at the heart of their fragmentation, and as Miranda points out in her letter to U.S. Senator Mikulski, is also a major contributor. The Garifuna’s landlessness is, therefore, undoubtedly the

root cause of their migration, which results from the efforts of a violent government and local oligarchs, and global economic forces.

Conclusion

The Garinagu residing in the United States who are economically and politically marginalized, are more concerned with seeking economic and political integration in the U.S. and are disengaged from the land struggle in Honduras. These Garifuna people believe that forming a partnership with the tourism projects in Honduras would change the Garifuna people's situation from a landless society to integral members of the Honduran society. The actions of those Garinagu who believe in forming a partnership with the tourism industry can only be described as opportunists masquerading as aligned with fellow Garifuna.

CHAPTER 8 DISCUSSION

As I stated at the onset of this project, I have been preoccupied with the Garinagu's social and structural fragmentation prior to pursuing my doctorate degree. This has not been just another preoccupation. This has been a preoccupation informed by my everyday experiences and of those around me. Helping me to defy these experiences was my exposure to the works of critical thinkers across ethnic lines and gender. However, the influence of black political activists' ideas of justice and equality in the United States some of whom I feature in this dissertation also assisted me in defying my everyday experiences. Malcolm X, for instance, did not sanitize the brutality of white supremacy in the United States; he spoke with bluntness about the lives of black people and other groups living under oppression and domination in the United States and internationally. He also provided a platform for oppressed groups to use to overthrow oppression and domination. For example, he spoke about the importance of land in empowering people and challenging spatial barriers imposed by the dominant culture. Malcolm X's ideologies, similar to many other men and women in the struggle, demonstrated the contradictions that define human relations.

Precisely the contradictions articulated by Malcolm X and by many other critical thinkers that inspired me to ask in this project: how has the Honduran government's ideology of economic development and the global economic forces fragmented the Garifuna people? The term fragmentation appealed to me because the Garifuna people, similar to other societies, emerged from the process of colonialism and capitalism in the Lesser Antilles in the Caribbean and then exiled to Honduras. They also face similar challenges as other groups such as land dispossession and cultural commodification. I situate these challenges within the global economic forces. To chart the contradictions created by the Honduran government and the elite-

led socio-economic reproduction of Honduras' north coast together with the global economic forces, I employed a critical approach using three geographical concepts: place, race, and the politics of identity.

Using the concept of place, I learned about the complexity of place in determining and in shaping human relations and activities and human-environmental interaction. In the case of the Garinagu, place has shaped their identity and cultural practices. However, the global economic forces, such as the banana industry, capitalists from the United States developed in the late nineteenth century in many parts of Central America in alliance with each respective government in the region, led to the formation of different social relations among Garinagu. In response, the Garifuna leaders began to mobilize and form organizations, which they continue to do today. In addition, the Garifuna people's migration to the United States after World War II changed their society from a group bonded to the land to a fragmented culture along class line. The Garifuna people's recent mass migration from Honduras to the United States required additional research for one reason. The Garifuna people are not just escaping violence; they are more importantly escaping land dispossession. Their land dispossession sets them apart from their *mestizo* or English speaking counterparts because their activities (e.g. cultural, social, political, and economic) derive from their human-environmental interaction. As capitalists altered the demands of the global economy, the Garifuna people face eminent threats in safeguarding their territory and protecting their ways of lives on Honduras' north coast. Threats to their territory and communities began to take shape in the 1970s as the Honduran government conceived an economic scheme to expand tourism to the north coast. The government tourism plans began to materialize in the 1980s and expanded in the late 1990s with the gutting of Article 107 of the Honduran Constitution and the implementation of a host of other laws the nation's presidents and

the National Congress approved. Since then, the Garifuna activists have been battling the local government using different resources in defense of their place.

The fragmentation of the Garifuna people has been most visible in each group's political perspectives about place. The Garifuna middle class and career activists in the United States and those closely affiliated with the Honduran government in Honduras, for instance, are not bonded to the land or struggle for the defense of place. They have come to see the north coast and the Garifuna's culture namely through the lens of domestic and foreign developers – simply as a commodity. Adherences to the commodification of the Garifuna's culture and place have generated conflict among the Garifuna leaders – between those who struggle to preserve the Garifuna's territory and communities on Honduras' north coast and those who favor the local governments and oligarchs' economic schemes. The conflicts that the production of the north coast has produced among the Garifuna leaders and the Garinagu in general have undoubtedly widened the door for the Honduran government, local elites, and foreign capitalists to appropriate the Garifuna people's territory and culture. Having said that does not mean that even if unity existed among the Garifuna leaders, the local government and elites and global economic forces would not have been equally brutal in their pursuit of the Garifuna people's land and the commodification of their culture on Honduras' north coast and area islands. What I am saying is that the Garifuna leaders' disunity and their response to the local and global economic forces was a contributing factor to the Garifuna's land dispossession. These are the economic and social processes that my work sought to deconstruct in this dissertation. Deconstructing these processes, allows me to understand the fragmentation of the Garinagu's culture and their communities on the Honduras' north coast, their political, economy, and cultural practices in the

United States, and the global economic forces that have produced a new place and different social relation.

Through my examination of the processes here mentioned, I also understood that regardless of the brutality by which the Honduran government and oligarchs operate and accommodationist views some of the Garifuna leaders have adopted, some Garifuna activists and most of the Garifuna people in general remain willing to risk it all in the defense of place. This demonstrates, as it has been the case among other societies struggling over place (e.g. decolonization in Africa, Palestine, and elsewhere), that the root of every oppressed group struggle and the oppression and domination unleashed by the dominant culture derive over resistance over place since human activities and practices formed in place. Human activities are not geographical coordinates, which are imaginary. For domination and struggle over place to occur, there must be a driving force. This force resides in the economic system developed in a place whether locally conceived or globally interconnected or a combination of both. In my view, these processes shape social relations. The point therefore in the usage of the concept of place in my analysis of the Garinagu's fragmentation in this dissertation has not been to romanticize place or to make their traditional cultural practices central in this project. Other scholars have extensively covered the Garifuna people's traditional cultural practices. Instead, the intent was to provide a wider analytical perspective to contextualize the reproduction of place in relation to race and the politics of identity.

The second geographical concept I discuss in this dissertation is race. As I argue in this dissertation, race is a social construct with brutal implications. First, it segments society. The segmentation of society has inevitably fomented distrust among groups in seeing and understanding their socio-spatial conditions in ways that can be liberating. The difficulty in

pursuing this path is that through ideologies and practices, the dominant culture has made race an integral part of society through its institutionalization, enforcing certain cultural practices, and constructing racial categories. Most societies have therefore come to understand race to be a fundamental component of human formation, seeing one's humanity, and defining social interaction. Consequently, otherness has eclipsed cultural differences. Second, because race has concealed cultural differences and one's humanity, many members of a society have come to see and understand that the construction of race is not human made. It is generally understood in this manner because it bears no significant impact on certain groups. This is nowhere more apparent than between blacks and whites. Most whites in the United States, regardless of socio-economic conditions, perceived themselves as a privileged group (Jensen 2005:115). This is, of course, associated with the different stages of race and racial social segmentation developed by the dominant culture in the United States. These stages include the colonial period, Reconstruction, and the Great Depression. Dominating each period was the expansion of capitalism. Through each period, black people responded to the brutality that accompanied each of these developments.

In Honduras, I trace the construction of race to five periods: the colonial period, the banana plantation economy, the economic and political marginalization of the already racist government and oligarchs during this period, the emergence of the *mestizo* intellectuals' nationalism which was a response to the state's racist discourse, and the maintenance of racism in contemporary Honduras society through a host of practices. These groups' reaction suggests that the global economic forces foment economic and class insecurity catapulting more rigorous forms of domination and oppression toward other groups. The Garifuna leaders and the Garinagu in general have responded, as I have described in this dissertation, to domination and oppression

using the resources available to them, borrowing from other groups as evident with the Garifuna political activists from CONDECOGA emulating the Native Americans false sense of nationhood, borrowing from African American political activists, linking to institutions outside of Honduras, and embracing many other tactics. Through these interconnections, most of the Garifuna leaders and organizations have been able to mount a fight. However, their discourse on race in relation to their territory and communities on the north coast and their social interaction in Honduras and with other groups in the United States remain troubling. The reason for this troubling racial discourse is that certain historical developments during and after the colonial era shaped their frame of reference but also equally important is because most are concerned with their presumed social mobility today.

Because prevailing racist practices in Honduras inform the Garifuna people's frame of reference and the Honduran society as whole have not addressed racism in the same way black activists and scholars have done so in the United States, few of the Garifuna leaders associate their dispossession from their land and communities with racism. Instead, most of the Garifuna leaders hold on to the illusion of inclusion. In so doing, each group creates specific political perspectives that fit their narrative. In addition, for most Garifuna people, being a patriotic Honduran becomes more important than challenging existing racist narratives. Consequently, most Garifuna leaders have rarely paid attention to the contemporary racial discourse associated with Honduran politicians and Honduran society as a whole, perception of blackness, and the preservation of a presumed "white" Honduran society. Instead, most Garinagu hold on to their frame of reference and adopt a new discourse as evident with those in the United States. The Garifuna people's spatial experiences deriving from global economic forces continue therefore to inform their understanding of race and shape the politics of their identity.

The Garifuna people's politics of identity has been influenced by a host of factors. The European colonizers defined them as Black Caribs. Simply put, the term Carib is an expression of the colonialists' discourse just the same way the Caribbean is a *conceived space*. Language therefore became a powerful tool that shaped the colonialists' ideologies, although these ideologies were the reflection of European colonizers mindset rather than a being reality. Under the Spaniards rule in Honduras, this group included the Garifuna people in their *moreno* and *negro* racial categories which I explain in chapter five. Throughout the years and depending on geography, the Garifuna people's identity has included indigenous, Afrohonduran, Hispanic, and Garifuna American. The usage of each descriptor by the Garifuna people has been shaped by their politics and economic interests. In Honduras, some Garifuna leaders adhere not only to Garifuna but equally to the indigenous descriptor in their attempt to defy oppression and domination and in their defense of place. Yet, other Garifuna leaders embrace not only Garifuna but also Afrohonduran because they believe that it is their way of embracing their blackness.

As for the Garifuna leaders and most Garinagu in general, they have developed a penchant for Garifuna American. For them, this descriptor signals inclusion into the United States cultural, economic, and political landscape. It is therefore these interests that encourage them to embrace this new form of identity. Other Garinagu believe that in using the Garifuna descriptor only, they set themselves apart as a unique ethnic group. It also signals challenging the *moreno* and *negro* pejoratives in Honduras. Their usage of Garifuna only is a response to defying otherness. Using Garifuna also represents invoking their identity as each group does. In reiterating the Garifuna people's practices insofar as the politics of identity affirms Hall's and Mitchell's analysis that identity is constantly in flux. Its fluidity is constituted by time and space and from ideologies and practices associated with capitalism.

In using the geographical concepts presented in this dissertation and answering how the Garifuna people have been fragmented as a result of the Honduran government, local elites, and global economic forces, I strive to contribute two things to the existing scholarship about the Garifuna people. First, cultural practices of domination and representation of the Garifuna people are couched in ideological, social, and political processes associated with capitalism. For Lefebvre, for instance, practices of domination form because powerful actors “read and grasped” the landscape differently in comparison to other groups (1991:143). This is what the Honduras’ north coast represents to the Honduran government and local oligarchs and foreign investors. For most Garifuna people, the landscape is imbued with meanings, history, and unrestricted access to resources. Based on their discourse about Honduras’ north coast being their cultural identity, this is what the region represents to most Garinagu. The physical landscape is thus interwoven in all manner of human conditions and social relations. However, conflicting views exist among the Garifuna people. The Garifuna middle class’s preoccupation with social mobility in Honduras and in the United States is more concerned with capitalizing from its adopted political perspectives. These perspectives are embedded in the capitalist patriarchal system more so than in the Garifuna people’s cultural practices and values.

The Garifuna middle class’s activities have received little or no attention. Instead, scholars have been most concerned with the Garifuna activities and the Garinagu people’s social networks in challenging spaces of oppression and domination. While these assessments are important and contribute to our understanding of the Garinagu’s fragmentation, they have largely confined to presenting the Garifuna people as an oppressed and unique group that has maintained its culture in Central America. Indeed, the Garifuna people are an oppressed group. However, there must be a paradigm shift that addresses how spaces of oppression and domination the

Garifuna people straddled have fragmented them socially, economically, culturally, and politically. As I have demonstrated in this dissertation, the Garifuna leaders and the Garinagu in general have responded to this fragmentation in different ways, most of which have been counterproductive in advancing their struggle. Instead, most of their response is couched in defeatism, accommodationism, and the accumulation of tactics. Saying this does not constitute that the Garifuna leaders and the Garinagu's efforts throughout the years must not be recognized. My point is that the Garifuna leaders and the Garinagu as a whole must reevaluate their long-term objectives that must include their vision and mission, where do they see themselves within and in relation to the Honduran society racist practices and violence, other societies diasporically, and how can they preserve their culture without commodifying it. Malcolm X's message might guide them.

In his *The Ballot or the Bullet* speech delivered at the Cory Methodist Church on April 3, 1964, Malcolm X declared, "I'm not going to sit at your table and watch you eat, with nothing on my plate, and call myself a diner. Sitting at the table doesn't make you a diner, unless you eat some of what's on that plate" (Breitman 1990:26). In this masterful metaphor, Malcolm X maps tensions and conflicts in place by explicating the politics of place and hegemonic spatial practices. Place, race, identities, and land remain central in the diasporical struggle of black people. Malcolm X's timeless analogy is indeed befitting in understanding the Garinagu's socio-spatial conditions in Honduras and in the United States. The reason for this understanding is because regardless of the Garinagu's presumed indigenous status in Honduras, social mobility in Honduras and in the United States, they straddle geographies of oppression.

Second, the representation of the Garifuna people during colonialism, by most scholars and writers including the Garinagu, and by the dominant culture in Honduras has been dominated by

a Eurocentric narrative. In this project, I sought to reassess this narrative by critiquing the colonial master-narrative, which has gone unchallenged by scholars and by offering a new narrative that speaks of the Garinagu's agency. In not challenging scholarship generated about the Garinagu, their self-perception and their relation to place have been greatly shaped by the master-narrative. This understanding has certainly influence their discourse about contemporary racial narratives in contemporary Honduran society. This is evident in spaces of consumption and exclusion from place. The dominant culture in Honduras and in other societies has constructed blackness to be something worth to continue exploiting and confine to a denigrating category. This exploitation is represented in the commodification of the Garinagu's culture but also of their bodies. The Garinagu do not equate this representation with the oppression of women and the new social relation the Honduran government and local elites are developing on the Honduras' north coast. What most Garinagu see, including the oppressed women, is the presumed material reward offered under this patriarchal capitalist system. I hope my analysis of the processes addressed in this project answered the question I set-out to answer.

In the end, I learned that critical cultural geography and ethnography help to explain relations between "structure, agency and geographic context" and also guide researchers in uncovering the "*processes and meanings* that undergird sociospatial life" (Herbert 2000:550 emphasis in original). In this context, I uncovered not only the fragmentation of the Garifuna society but also came out with the understanding that this fragmentation is grounded in global economic forces. These forces have produced specific cultural, political, and economic practices and also racial and identity discourses among the Garinagu in Honduras and in the United States. These were some of the most compelling reasons for pursuing this project.

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GLOSSARY

Garifuna Words:

Afulurijani	Garinagu name for their community on Honduras' north coast named Tornabé.
Badayaugati	Garinagu name for their community on Honduras' north coast named Bataya.
Buena Wista	Garinagu name for their community on Honduras' north coast named Buena Vista.
Baündada	struggle
Bimetu Faluma	sweet coconut
Bülagüríba	Garinagu name for their community on Honduras' north coast named Plaplaya.
Kristalu and Blagríba	Garinagu name for their community on Honduras' north coast named Cristales y Rio Negro
Dübügati	Garinagu name for their community on Honduras' north coast named Punta Piedra.
Dúfigati	Garinagu named for their community on Honduras' north coast named Triunfo de la Cruz.
Durubuguti Beibei	Garinagu name for their community on Honduras' north coast named San Juan.
Ereba	grilled cassava which is a staple in Garifuna's gastronomy.
Giriga	Garinagu name for their community on Honduras' north coast named Santa Fé.
Koyolesi	Garinagu name for their community on Honduras' north coast named Coyoles.
Lemesi	religious mass
Ñon Ton	Garinagu name for their community on Honduras' north coast named Pueblo Nuevo.
Pârinchi	Garinagu name for their community on Honduras' north coast named La Fé.
Seremein	thank you
Taibónu	Garinagu name for their community on Honduras' north coast named Thigh-bone.

Tibiniriba Garinagu name for their community on Honduras' north coast named Rio Esteban.

Non-Garifuna Words:

Morenales a pejorative term for Garifuna communities, which translates to people with black skin. It originates from the colonial word of *moreno*.

Source: Garifuna words used in this dissertation come from my own knowledge of the language, The People's Garifuna Dictionary, and Salvador Suazo's work.

VITA

Doris Garcia received her Bachelor of Arts degree in interdisciplinary studies from the City College of New York, her Master of Science in international studies from Central Connecticut State University, and her doctorate in geography with a minor in anthropology from Louisiana State University. Her research and teaching focus on critical geography, feminist theory, social movements, the African Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean, and qualitative methodology.